



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: June 12, 2023
Contact: Jason Olinek
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RTS No.: 15816
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: June 29, 2023
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Heritage Designations – 515 and 521 Hawks Avenue – BC Mills Houses

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment, pursuant to Section 593 of the *Vancouver Charter*, by-laws to designate the structure and exterior of each of the heritage buildings located at 515 and 521 Hawks Avenue [(PID: 015-376-915, The South ½ of Lot 19 Block 76 District Lot 181 Plan 196; and PID: 015-376-923, The South ½ of Lot 20 Block 76 District Lot 181 Plan 196 (together, the “Lands”)], both listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register (VHR) in the ‘B’ evaluation category, as protected heritage properties (the “heritage buildings”);
- B. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment, pursuant to Section 592 of the *Vancouver Charter*, a by-law to authorize the City to enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement with respect to the Lands in order to:
 - i. secure the rehabilitation and long-term preservation of the heritage buildings;
 - ii. vary the Subdivision By-law to permit a subdivision of the Lands to create two new parcels (the “heritage parcels”), so as to result in each of the heritage buildings being located entirely on an individual parcel, and to make permissible the development proposed under the Development Permit Application Number DP-2021-00929 (the “DP Application”); and
 - iii. vary the *Zoning and Development By-law* in respect of the heritage parcels to allow for the existing heritage buildings to be contained on the newly created

heritage parcels, as proposed under the DP Application and as more particularly described in this report;

- C. THAT the agreement described above shall be prepared, registered, and given priority on title to the Lands, to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services, in consultation with the Director of Planning;
- D. THAT Recommendations A to C be adopted on the following conditions:
 - i. THAT the passage of the above resolutions creates no legal rights for the applicant or any other person, or obligation on the part of the City and any expenditure of funds or incurring of costs in relation thereto is at the risk of the person making the expenditure or incurring the cost; and
 - ii. THAT the City and all its officials shall not in any way be limited or restricted in the exercise of their authority or discretion, regardless of when they are called upon to exercise such authority or discretion.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to designate the structures and exteriors of each of the heritage buildings located at 515 Hawks avenue and 521 Hawks Avenue (also known as the “BC Mills Houses”) as protected heritage properties, and to authorize the City to enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) to ensure their long term preservation. The proposed HRA will result in variances to the *Subdivision By-law* and the *Zoning and Development By-Law* to permit each of the heritage buildings to be located entirely on their own individual parcel.

The General Manager of Planning Urban Design and Sustainability is prepared to approve the DP Application should Council approve the recommendations of this report.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY

Pursuant to Section 582 of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council may, by resolution, establish a heritage register identifying real property that Council considers to be heritage property and may, by resolution, add real property to the register from time to time.

Pursuant to Section 593 of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council may, by by-law, on terms and conditions as it considers appropriate, designate real property in whole or in part as protected heritage property.

Pursuant to Section 592 of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council may, by by-law, enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement with the owner of heritage property, which may vary or supplement certain by-laws and permits.

Pursuant to Sections 592, 593 and 594 of the *Vancouver Charter*, Council must hold a public hearing on the proposed heritage designation by-law and the Heritage Revitalization Agreement by-law.

The following Council Policies are applicable to this proposal:

- *Vancouver Heritage Program (2020)*
- *Heritage Policies (2020)*
- *Strathcona/ Kiwassa RT-3 Guidelines (1992, amended 1996)*
- *Subdivision Bylaw No.5208 (1978, last amended 2022)*

CITY MANAGER’S/GENERAL MANAGER’S COMMENTS

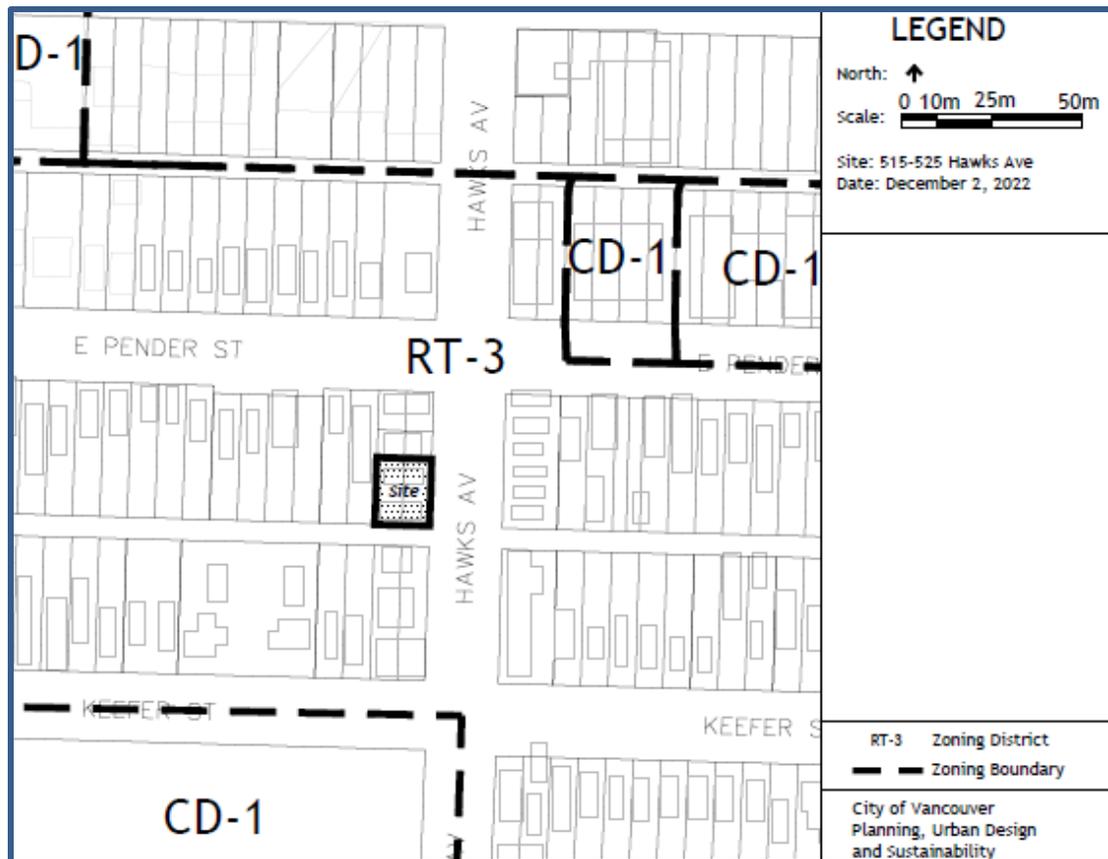
The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

REPORT

Site and Context

The Lands are located in the Strathcona Neighbourhood in an area zoned RT-3 at the intersection of East Pender Street and Hawks Avenue (see Figure 1). The *RT-3 District Schedule* generally permits low-density residential development and apartments, with greater densities permitted on corner parcels or on sites eligible for infill development.

Figure 1: Site, Surrounding Zoning



Heritage Value

Erected between 1903 and 1904, the heritage buildings at 515 and 521 Hawks Avenue are valued for their association with the British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company (BCMTT) which pioneered prefabrication building construction in the region. The company existed from 1889 until the late 1920s and produced prefabricated houses and institutional buildings which were shipped in modular pieces to as far away as San Francisco (see Appendix A). Over time the pre-fabrication industry, although innovative, was not financially viable in Vancouver at the time and the company did not survive the economic downturn which followed the building boom of 1910 – 1913 (see Appendix D for more information).

The heritage buildings, known as the BC Mills Houses, are the earliest known examples of the BCMTT's prefabrication system and are valued as two of only eight known BCMTT buildings remaining within Vancouver (one of which is the Presbyterian church at 1795 Napier Street), and, together with the building located next door at 507 Hawks Avenue, as the only surviving grouping of BCMTT houses in the City. The heritage buildings clearly illustrate BCMTT's unique sectional building system with its distinctive vertical battens. The adjacent house at 507 Hawks Avenue is also known as one of the BC Mills Houses, but it is not listed on the VHR (due to previous modifications) and is not included in the HRA or heritage designation by-law before Council. A fourth house at 501 Hawks Avenue was built in 1905 but is not known as one of the BC Mills Houses.

Development Application and Proposed Incentives

The zoning applicable to the site is RT-3. The current site is approximately 283 m² (3,050 sq. ft.) in area. The proposal is to create two new parcels of approximately the same size, one for each heritage building (see Appendix B). The proposed subdivision variances form the primary incentive for the owners to agree to designate and conserve the heritage buildings. A summary of the proposed density is provided in Appendix C.

The *RT-3 District Schedule* contains broad discretionary provisions for relaxations of densities on corner sites, which reflect the unique "end-of-block" historical development (see Compatibility of Conservation with Community Plans and Land Use Regulations).

In the case of the 500 Block of Hawks Avenue, the original end-of-block was only partially subdivided and not strata titled leaving the current 'Tenant In Common' ownership structure for 507, 515, and 525 Hawks Avenue, in which the three ownerships all have an equal undivided interest in each of the three parcels. (501 Hawks Avenue is under separate ownership.) All three ownerships have signed the HRA and support the proposal which would allow for a subdivision of the Lands resulting in each of the houses being located entirely on an individual parcel, and ultimately separate ownership of the three houses. In return for this benefit the protection and rehabilitation of the two heritage buildings are proposed.

No floor area additions are proposed for the houses. There are no changes in massing or impacts on surrounding properties. Currently no off-street parking exists for each of the houses. Under the Parking By-law there is no requirement to provide more off street parking in this case. Should Council approve the HRA and heritage designations, and they are subsequently completed, enacted, and registered on title, an application may be made for the subdivision of the Lands as provided for by the HRA and the *Subdivision By-law*.

Based on the evaluation of the proposed development, the proposed conservation, the compatibility of development with the zoning, and the proforma evaluation (see Financial Proforma Evaluation), staff concluded that the proposal, including the HRA and heritage designations, are supportable.

Compatibility of Conservation with Community Plans and Land Use Regulations

The Intent of the RT-3 zoning district schedule is, in part, to “... encourage the retention of neighbourhood and streetscape character, particularly through the retention, renovation and restoration of existing character buildings”. As well Section 3.5 of the *Strathcona/Kiwassa RT-3 Guidelines* states: “A pattern established throughout “Old Strathcona” is a higher intensity of use on corner sites... Row houses, duplexes, single family dwellings and apartments are some of the examples, usually located cross-width on two lots.... Applicants may propose comparable forms of development on corner sites not already developed in such a manner...”

The preservation of the heritage buildings aligns with the zoning district schedule and contributes to the historic architectural character of the Strathcona Neighbourhood. The parcels created are consistent with historic development on corner and end-of-block sites. Staff conclude the proposal meets the intent of the *RT-3 District Schedule* and associated guidelines and is supportable in this respect.

Condition of the Heritage Building and Conservation Approach

The heritage buildings are in very good condition, retaining visual and physical integrity of the original BC Mills prefabricated panels (see photographs in Appendix A). The original siting of the heritage buildings will remain undisturbed and no additions are proposed. Rehabilitation measures include repairs, painting, and re-introduction of period windows and other details for both houses as outlined in the conservation plan submitted with the application. Mature landscaping will also be maintained. The historic features of the prefabrication system will be retained and will remain visible. Staff conclude that the conservation measures proposed are supportable and consistent with the City’s *Heritage Policies* and the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

Neighbourhood Notification

Staff did not conduct a neighbourhood notification as part of the review of the DP Application given the minimal impact the proposal would likely have on any surrounding properties. All requirements regarding notification for the public hearing have been met as prescribed by the *Vancouver Charter* in respect of the heritage designation and the approval of the HRA.

Vancouver Heritage Commission Comments

The Vancouver Heritage Commission was presented with the proposal on June 20, 2022 and unanimously supported the DP Application (see Appendix E).

Financial Proforma Evaluation

Real Estate Services staff reviewed the applicant’s proforma evaluation in accordance with Council’s approved policies. The Director of Real Estate Services advises that the proposed variances requested by the applicant as compensation for the heritage encumbrance on land

value are supportable and provide no undue profit, subject to the work being completed in accordance with the HRA.

Public Benefits

The Public Benefits Summary is included in Appendix F. Development Cost Levies (DCLs) are not applicable to this heritage project as it consists solely of retention and conservation of the existing floor area. No Community Amenity Contribution is applicable. The rehabilitation heritage premium costs are estimated at approximately \$50,000.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report's recommendations.

Legal

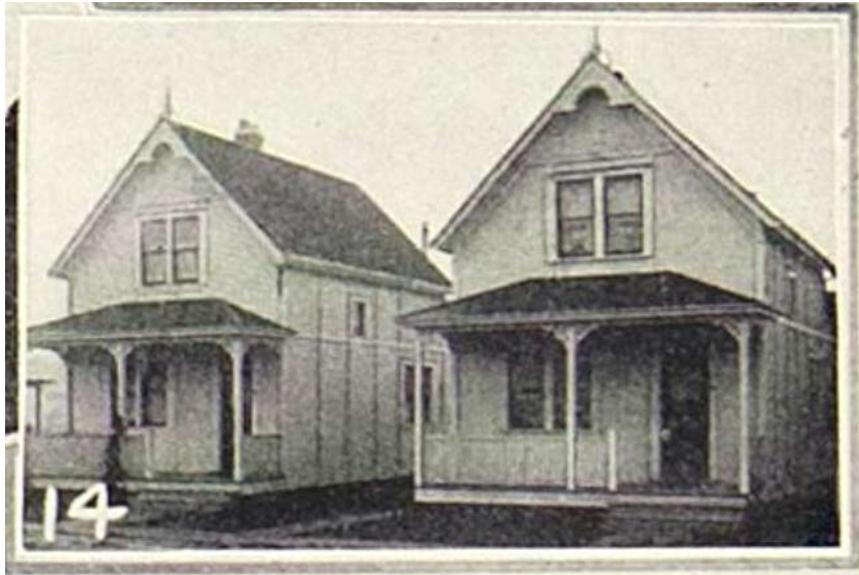
Section 595 of the *Vancouver Charter* requires that, if sought, Council must compensate an owner for any reduction in the market value caused by a heritage designation. A legal agreement (HRA) has been executed by the owners, and in that agreement the owners explicitly acknowledge that they have received full and fair compensation for the designation of the two heritage buildings, and the associated obligations for the continued conservation and maintenance of the heritage buildings. The HRA will be registered and given priority on title to the Lands following enactment of the heritage designation by-laws and the by-law to approve the HRA, and prior to issuance of a development permit.

CONCLUSION

The heritage designation of the heritage buildings, known as the BC Mills Houses at 515 and 521 Hawks Avenue, which are listed in the 'B' category of the Vancouver Heritage Register, and the proposed HRA, will ensure the long-term conservation and maintenance of the heritage buildings, their protection from exterior alterations which affect their heritage value, and from demolition. The owners have agreed to the designation of the heritage buildings as protected heritage property, and the proposed HRA will vary the *Subdivision By-law* and the *Zoning and Development By-law* to allow for the development as proposed. Therefore it is recommended that Council approve the heritage designation of the heritage buildings and the proposed Heritage Revitalization Agreement.

* * * * *

515 – 521 Hawks Avenue
Photographs



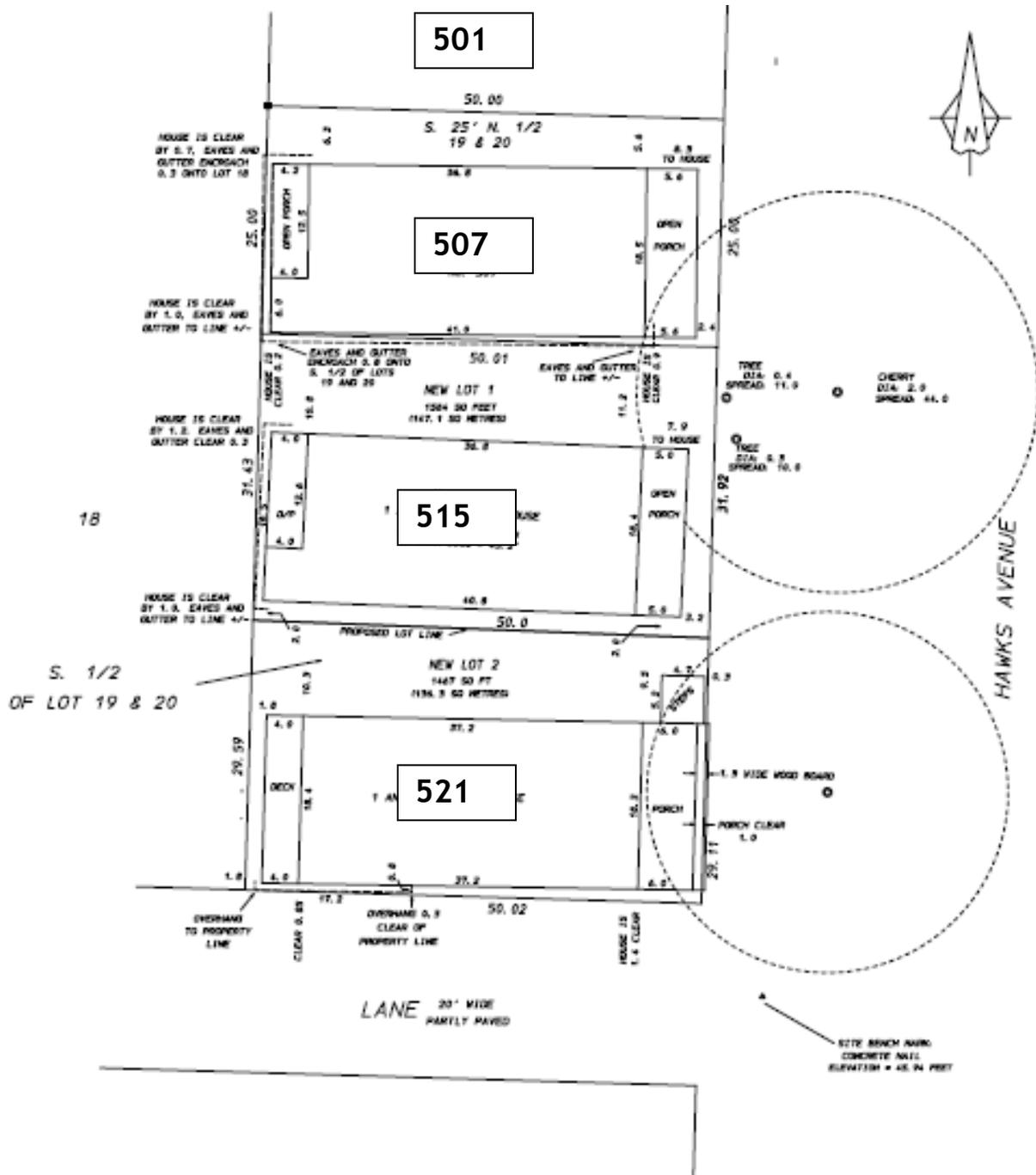
521 and 515 Hawks Avenue (left to right) circa 1905

The two houses were built as prototypes for marketing purposes for the BC Mills modular house system. The modular wall panels are visible on the sides of the houses in this photo and the current photo below

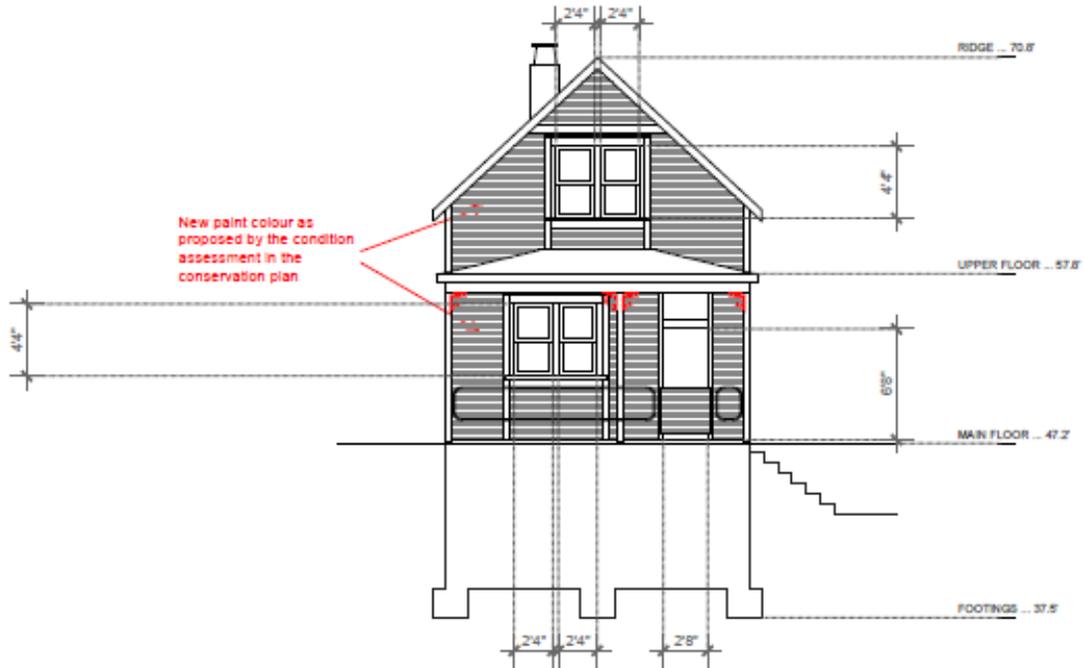


521, 515, and 507 Hawks Avenue – left to right (Current Photo)

515 – 521 Hawks Avenue
Drawings

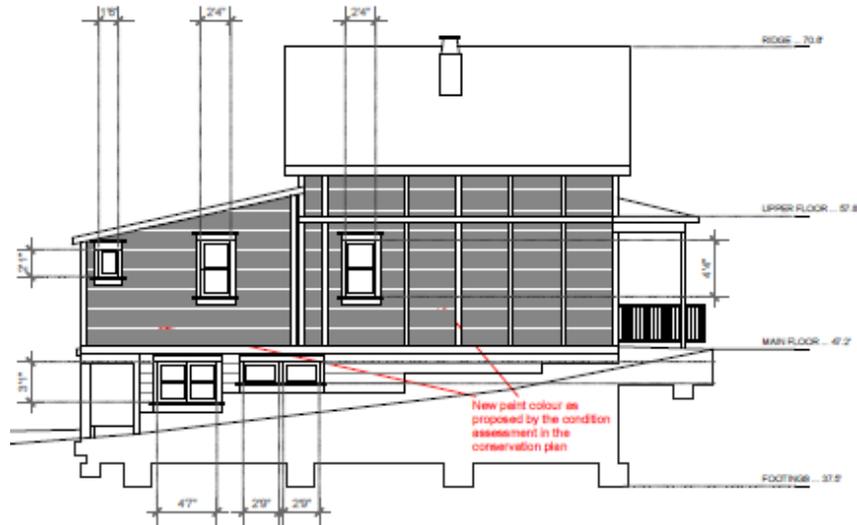


Site Plan / Survey



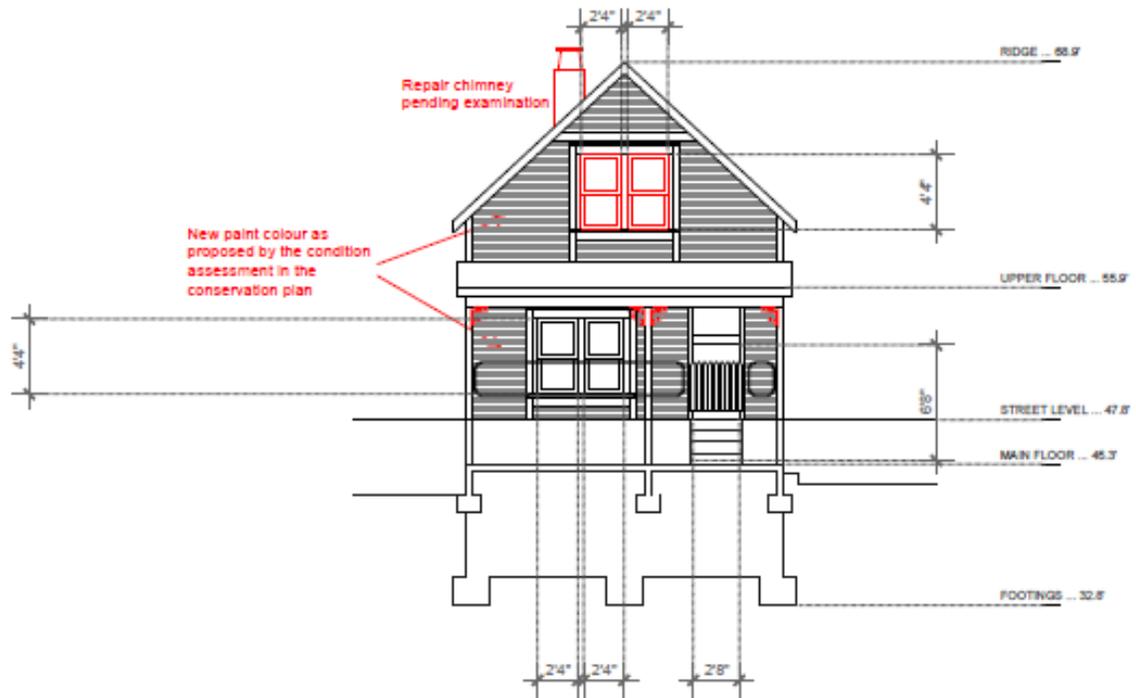
PROPOSED

Front Elevation of 521 Hawks Avenue



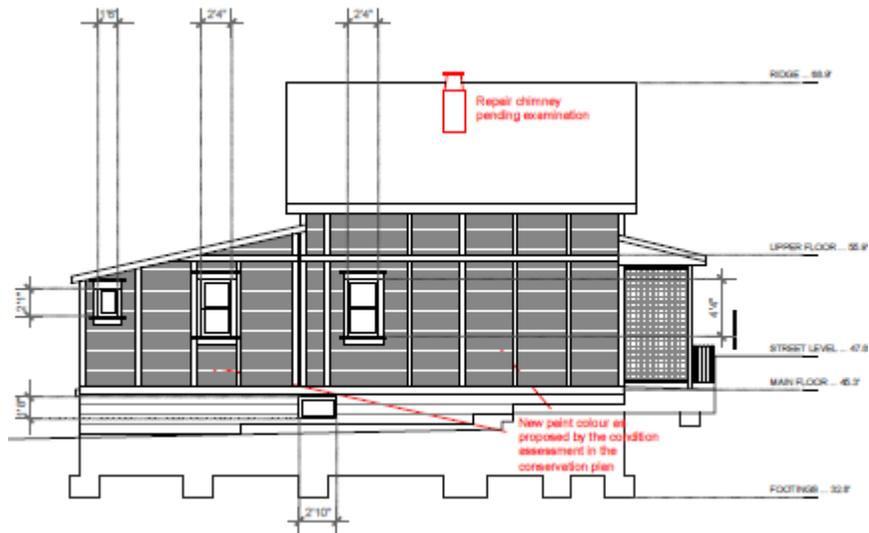
PROPOSED

South Elevation of 521 Hawks Avenue



PROPOSED

Front Elevation of 515 Hawks Avenue



PROPOSED

South Elevation of 515 Hawks Avenue

515 – 521 Hawks Avenue
TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Table 1: Existing Parcels

House	Existing Parcel Area	Permitted Parcel Area	Proposed Parcel Width	Permitted Parcel Width
515 and 521 Hawks Av	283 m2 3,050 sq. ft. Approximately	306.7 m2 (3,300 sq. ft.) minimum	(18.4 m) 60 feet minimum	(7.64 m) 25 feet minimum

Table 2: Proposed Parcels

House	Proposed Parcel Area	Permitted Parcel Area	Proposed Parcel Width	Permitted Parcel Width
515 Hawks Av	142 m2 1,525 sq. ft. Approximately	306.7 m2 (3,300 sq. ft.) minimum	(9.2 m) 30 feet minimum	(7.64 m) 25 feet minimum
521 Hawks Av	142 m2 1,525 sq. ft. Approximately	306.7 m2 (3,300 sq. ft.) minimum	(9.2 m) 30 feet minimum	(7.64 m) 25 feet minimum

Table 3: Density

House	Existing Density	Proposed FSR and Density*	Permitted Density
515 Hawks Av	178 m2 (1,910 sq. ft.)	1.25 FSR 178 m2 (1,910 sq. ft.)	Discretionary on Corner Sites
521 Hawks Av	170 m2 (1,836 sq. ft.)	1.20 FSR 170 m2 (1,836 sq. ft.)	Discretionary on Corner Sites
Total	348 m2 (3,746 sq. ft.)	1.21 FSR 348 m2 (3,746 sq. ft.)	Discretionary on Corner Sites

* the HRA allows for a maximum density of 1.28 FSR to allow flexibility for the final proposed common property line however no additional density is proposed and the floor areas of the buildings are to remain unchanged.

515 - 521 Hawks Avenue Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The BCMTT grouping is a row of three identical one-and-a-half storey pre-fabricated houses of the historic British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company. Located at 507, 515, and 521 Hawks Avenue between Keefer and Pender Streets in the Strathcona neighbourhood of Vancouver BC, the gabled houses have a simple vernacular design with Victorian elements.

Heritage Values

This grouping of three houses is valued for its association with the British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company; as the company's earliest erected examples of Ready-Made houses; for their unique prototype design never again produced; as amongst the last surviving BCMTT houses in Vancouver; as the only surviving BCMTT building grouping in Vancouver; for its close proximity to Hastings Mill; for its representation of BCMTT's unique and innovative construction technique and aesthetic; for its historical association with the Edwardian development era in Strathcona; and as working-class, rental homes for most of their existence. Erected in late 1903 and early 1904, the BCMTT grouping holds associative significance for its strong connection to the British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company's Vancouver Hasting Mill (1889 - late 1920s) on Burrard inlet. These three houses are the earliest known examples of the 'Ready-Made House' system - designed, patented and produced by BCMTT between 1904 and 1910 and shipped across Western Canada and even to San Fransisco after the 1906 earthquake. These three surviving examples of the company's Ready-Made system are valued for their unique design, as three of only eight known BCMTT buildings remaining within Vancouver, and as the only surviving grouping of BCMTT houses in the city.

The grouping is valued for its siting in a relatively close location to the Hastings Mill factory itself, and for the houses' one-of-a-kind design considered a prototype for the Ready-Made system. Although prefabricated buildings were common in North America the BCMTT product stood out with its distinctive designs and innovative construction technique. Consisting of precut lumber and panels that were insulated and pre-painted, construction was straightforward and the product was practical to ship. Two of the three buildings clearly illustrate this unique sectional building system with their distinctive vertical battens covering the joints between the panels, which express elements of the grouping's aesthetic and scientific heritage values.

The subject grouping holds historical significance for its association with a period of strong growth in the Strathcona neighbourhood. Following a continent-wide depression that lasted much of the 1890s, the local economy took a turn for the better in response to the 1897 Klondike Gold Rush. The first few years of the 20th century saw residents begin flowing into the area again and buying up the remaining empty lots. These houses represent an early period in Vancouver's history when families settled close to the lumber mills and other heavy industries strung out along the Burrard Inlet to the north.

The subject houses hold cultural significance for their predominant use as rental properties for working class families. In the early years especially, the majority of the tenancies here lasted only for a year or two and involved residents with working-class occupations such as drivers, labourers, fishermen, and porters. This, as well as the wide range of ethnic backgrounds among the houses' residents, is very much in line with the demographic pattern of the Strathcona neighbourhood.

Character-defining Elements

The elements that define the heritage character of the BCMTT grouping are its:

- original location on Hawks Avenue in the Strathcona neighbourhood
- original siting close to the street, inline with each other and with the historic townhouses across the lane to the south
- residential form, massing and setback with modest front yards
- one-and-one-half storey height with single storey lean-to shed roof additions at rear
- main floors and entrances at grade
- medium pitch front-gabled roofs
- full-width front porches (originally hip roofs, restored only on 521 Hawks) with slim, square columns
- wide fascia along sides and decorative bargeboards on gables
- tongue-and-groove soffits
- lap siding on all walls and gables (covered in stucco at 507 Hawks)
- vertical and horizontal battens hiding panel joints (obscured by stucco at 507 Hawks)
- original window openings
- double-hung wood windows at 521 Hawks and on front porch and north elevation at 515 Hawks
- wood window trim and projecting sills (trim shadows obscured by stucco at 507 Hawks)
- original front door openings with transom light above wood front doors
- brick chimneys on south-facing roofs

515 – 521 Hawks Avenue
Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

On June 20, 2022, the Vancouver Heritage Commission reviewed the DP Application and resolved the following:

WHEREAS 507 Hawks Avenue, 515 Hawks Avenue (VHR “B” listing), and 521 Hawks Avenue (VHR “B” listing) were erected between 1903 and 1904, and are valued for being the earliest known examples of the British Columbia Mills Timber and Trading Company (BCMTT) prefabrication system; are three of only eight known BCMTT buildings remaining within Vancouver; are the only surviving grouping of BCMTT houses in the city; and as working-class rental homes for most of their existence;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Vancouver Heritage Commission supports:

1. The overall proposal to subdivide the existing land parcel into three lots, one lot for each house;
2. The heritage designation of 515 Hawks Avenue and 521 Hawks Avenue; and
3. The rehabilitation of and Conservation Plan for 515 and 521 Hawks Avenue as presented at the June 20, 2022 VHC meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Staff Comments:

Reference to “three” lots includes 507 Hawks Avenue. Although not the subject of the HRA or this report, the owner of 507 Hawks is a co-owner of the site and therefore is a signee of the HRA. Once executed, the subdivision would also allow the house at 507 Hawks Avenue to be located on its own parcel as a consequence of the change in land title.

**515 – 521 Hawks Avenue
PUBLIC BENEFITS SUMMARY**

Project Summary:

Subdivide the Lands to create two new parcels, with retention of two heritage buildings on each of the newly created parcels, along with associated heritage by-law(s) protecting the heritage buildings..

Public Benefit Summary:

The project would result in the conservation and long-term protection of two heritage resources.

	Current Zoning	Proposed
Zoning District	RT-3	RT-3
FSR (site area = 283 sq.m. (3050 sq.ft.))	Discretionary on corner sites	1.21
Buildable Floor Area	Discretionary on corner sites	348 m2 (3,746 sq.ft.)
Land Use	Residential	Residential

Summary of development contributions expected from proposed development

DCL (City-wide) ¹	\$0
DCL (Utilities) ¹	\$0
TOTAL	\$0

Other benefits:

Proposed on-site heritage premium costs are estimated to be approximately \$50,000

¹ DCLs are payable at building permit issuance based on rates in effect at that time and the floor area proposed at the development permit stage. DCLs are not applicable to this heritage project as it consists solely of retention and conservation of the existing floor area. See the City's [DCL Bulletin](#) for details.