Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – December 8, 2010

Minute No. 61
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – December 6, 2010

Item No. 23 The Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 - Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block) - 228 King Street (Point Douglas Ward)

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and submits the following to Council:

1. That the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block), 228 King Street not be placed on the Buildings Conservation List at this time as its long-term economic viability is questionable.

2. That at such time as the Chinatown Development Corporation has prepared a firm redevelopment proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit; a demolition permit may be issued.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Browaty,

That Rule 10(3) of The Procedure By-law No. 50/2007 be suspended in order that the following item, which was received less than 96 hours preceding the committee meeting, be considered by Committee.

Carried

Moved by Councillor Browaty,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On December 6, 2010, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Further, on December 6, 2010, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development received from Raymond Wan, Raymond S. C. Wan Architects Inc., a communication dated December 6, 2010 from Bernie Wolf in support of the recommendation not to place the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block), 228 King Street on the Buildings Conservation List.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

ISSUE: To consider an application to demolish the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block), 228 King Street which is on the Inventory of Buildings under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
P. Regan	D. Joshi	N/A	P. Sheegl, Deputy CAO

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block), 228 King Street not be placed on the Buildings Conservation List at this time as its long-term economic viability is questionable.

2. That at such time as the Chinatown Development Corporation has prepared a firm redevelopment proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit; a demolition permit may be issued.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- The owners of the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly the Robert/ Coronation Block), 228 King Street, intend to cease operating their business. They have an offer to purchase from the Chinatown Development Corporation who intends to demolish this building which is on the Inventory of Buildings under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).
- The Historical Buildings Committee has evaluated the structure to be a Grade III status and is recommending that it be placed on the Buildings Conservation List.
- The Chinatown Development Corporation is proposing to purchase the property and to use the site as a temporary gravel surface parking. The future plan is to develop a seniors' housing complex.
- The Chinatown Development Corporation does not currently have a development plan nor do they have funds in place for seniors' housing; they contend that until they are sure that the building can be demolished they cannot access development funds.
- They point out that the owners have not invested in the property in many years and that it is not economically feasible to upgrade the building for new tenants based on the age, condition of the structure and the requirements of the Manitoba Building Code.
- They wish to demolish the existing building and use the vacant land as a surface parking lot indefinitely, until such time as they are ready to build. This is a conditional use within the Downtown Zoning by-law and will require approval.
- The Downtown Zoning By-law 100/2004 does not permit non-accessory off street parking at grade. Also, it does not permit gravel as parking lot surface treatment without variation. The Planning, Property and Development Department (Planning and Land Use Division) does not generally support conditional use applications for temporary or permanent surface parking lots in the Downtown.
- Allowing surface parking on an interim basis may discourage the timely development of the site due to the significant income that is generated at low cost to the owners. The ongoing existence of a surface parking lot would negatively affect the neighbourhood and the Downtown.
- Consideration should be given to other options such as minimal upgrading of the existing building for the interim use of tenants such as a restaurant or some other commercial enterprise.
- The Shanghai site is located within a Character Sector of the downtown. The Character Sector represents three important cultural areas in the Downtown, and includes the neighbourhoods of the Warehouse Sector (which is made up of the Exchange District, Chinatown and Civic Centre), the Legislature Precinct and the Forks. Under the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law 100/2004, the intent for this sector is to reinforce valued current built form and to enhance the pedestrian environment. This two-storey historical building occupies a full city block between Alexander and Pacific; demolition would further erode the built fabric of the Chinatown neighbourhood. The block immediately north of the Shanghai site has four contiguous surface parking lots along the west side of King Street. The intersection of King and Alexander would have surface parking on all four corners, and there would be no buildings left standing on the west side of King Street, between Pacific and Alexander, representing a significant erosion of the built fabric both from a heritage and pedestrian perspective.

- It should be noted that it has been the practice of the Department to not support the creation of new temporary or permanent non-accessory surface parking lots in Downtown Winnipeg. Allowing a temporary surface parking lot would set an undesirable precedent for other sites in the Downtown, as the City has no guarantees that these surface lots will ever be fully developed into viable buildings.

HISTORY

This is one of the oldest remaining buildings in downtown Winnipeg, built for a variety of retail tenants, it was constructed a year after the first real estate and construction boom of 1881. When completed in 1883, the main tenant of the block was the City of Winnipeg, which occupied space in the building during the construction of City Hall (1883-1886), including a ground floor Council Chamber, the Mayor's office and offices of various city departments. It is also notable as the home of the Shanghai Restaurant for the last sixty years. (See Appendix A for a complete history of the structure.)

The Historical Buildings Committee evaluated the building on December 17, 2009. Based on age, architectural and historical significance only the building received a Grade III status. A structural evaluation of the property was not available although the basement showed a number of efforts to stabilize the property.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: June 7, 2010

Project Name:

Recommendation by the Historical Buildings Committee to List the Shanghai Restaurant Building (formerly Robert/Coronation Block), 228 King Street, on the Buildings Conservation List.

COMMENTS:

The recommendations contained in this report include that the building not be placed on the Buildings Conservation List at this time as its long-term economic viability is questionable and that at such time as the Chinatown Development Corporation has prepared a firm redevelopment proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit; a demolition permit may be issued.

There are no financial implications associated with these recommendations.

"Original Signed By"
Mike McGinn, CA
Manager of Finance

CONSULTATION

In preparing this Report there was consultation with:

N/A

SUBMITTED BY

Department	Planning, Property and Development
Division	Planning and Land Use
Prepared by	Giles Bugailiskis, Lee Caldwell, Marsha Christiuk, Kurtis Kowalke
Date:	June 15, 2010
File No	.O:\Reports Directive\Planning and Land Use\Heritage\2010 Reports\RIS Shanghai 228 KING.doc

APPENDIX A

228 KING STREET – SHANGHAI RESTAURANT BUILDING
(ROBERT/CORONATION BLOCK)



This elongated, two-storey brick and stone commercial block is one of the oldest in downtown Winnipeg, built a year after the first real estate and construction boom of 1881. John Higgins, a pioneer merchant of the city who had retired in 1879, moved to develop three neighbouring pieces of property in 1882-1883 with the construction of the Higgins Block (renamed the Empire Block), northwest corner of Main Street and Logan Avenue, 620-624 Main Street (demolished ca.1954), the Catherine Block (later known as the Jubilee Block), at the northeast corner of Alexander Avenue and King Street, 249-253 King Street/215-225 Alexander Avenue (demolished 1975) and the Robert Block (renamed the Coronation Block), 228-238 King Street.

Designed in the Italianate style, the block features three public façades: north, south and east. The ground floor was originally divided into seven narrow spaces, all fronting onto King Street and an eighth doorway that led to the stairs to the second floor offices and suites. A modest tin-clad cornice with stylized bracketing separated the ground floor from the brick walls of the upper storey that utilized brick pilasters to divide the wall into a number of bays, each filled with two or three arched windows with wood sills and ornamental brick drip moulding. The roof was finished with another tin cornice of similar design to the lower element. Second storey window designs of the front façade were continued on the north and south façades. Numerous changes have been made to the block since construction. The ground floor has been altered many times to suit the needs of new retail tenants; the north section of the ground floor cornice has been completely removed. The rear of the block has seen a number of additions completed over time.

The interior is a mixture of old and new, renovated ground floor retail space and second storey office and residential space, some of which dates back more than 100 years. At the north end of the ground floor is the Shanghai Restaurant, occupying this space and being one of the City's best-known eating establishments since the 1940s. Originally, the south end of the upper floor was

offices but was converted into residential space. To the north is a metal fire door beyond which is the residential suites, found on both sides of a long, central hallway. Skylights allowed natural light into the hallway and transoms allowed this light into the suites. Common toilet and bath rooms were also present. At the north end of the hallway is another metal fire door, creating another large space similar to the south end. Again it is divided into numerous suites and rooms off winding hallways. Some of the space includes original wood finishes; other rooms have been partially or completely renovated. All of the second floor space except for the south end has suffered severe water damage because of lack of heat and roof failure since the 1970s.

When completed in 1883, the main tenant of the block was the City of Winnipeg, which occupied space in the building during the construction of City Hall (1883-1886) including a ground floor Council Chambers and Mayor's office and offices of various city departments in the south end of the second floor.

The structure's internal support system has become weak and in some instances nearly failed completely. Newer support systems can be found throughout the basement. The block's exterior has seen major renovations to the original layout and finish, especially the ground floor retail space where numerous remodels have been completed as new tenants have moved in.

This block has been an integral part of this historic streetscape for well-over 100 years. Filling the entire block of King Street with side façades running along both Alexander and Pacific avenues, the Robert (Coronation) Block is an integral part of this buffer zone just north of Winnipeg's Warehouse District.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior:

- The east- facing commercial block with main façades fronting King Street and Alexander and Pacific avenues
- Boxy, rectangular plan featuring rounded corners on the northeast and southeast ends, with a brick superstructure
- Rectangular segmentally-arched windows on the second storey featuring wood sills and ornamental brick drip mouldings
- Details including the metal cornices with bracketing between the first and second floors and at the roof, pilasters on the second floor, belt courses, etc.