Minutes – Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management – September 12, 2011

REPORTS

Minute No. 30 Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 – 15 Chester Street (Elmwood – East Kildonan Ward)

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and recommends to Council:

1. That Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, be removed from the Buildings Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).

2. That a demolition permit may be issued at such time as the owner has prepared a firm development proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit.

3. That in the event that the application is not pursued expeditiously within twenty-four (24) months after adoption of the report by Council, the matter shall be deemed to be concluded and shall not be proceeded with unless an extension is subsequently approved by Council.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Browaty,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in and forwarded to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Carried

Sandy Hopkins, Habitat for Humanity, submitted the following documentation in support of the delisting of the Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, from the Buildings Conservation List of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77:

- Communication dated September 7, 2011
- Aerial Photograph of the subject property
- Drawings (2) of the subject property

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Application to delist and demolish Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Downtown Development, Heritage and Riverbank Management – Executive Policy Committee - Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
J. Kiernan	B. Thorgrimson	N/A	Deepak Joshi Chief Operating Officer

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, be removed from the Buildings Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).

2. That a demolition permit may be issued at such time as the owner has prepared a firm development proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit.

3. That in the event that the application is not pursued expeditiously within twenty-four (24) months after adoption of the report by Council, the matter shall be deemed to be concluded and shall not be proceeded with unless an extension is subsequently approved by Council.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

All applications to remove a building from the Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended), which the Historical Buildings Committee recommends as having special architectural and historical significance, must be heard by the relevant Standing Policy Committee for a recommendation, Executive Policy Committee and Council. The building will not be permitted to be demolished without a delisting and approval by City Council.

Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, was designated as a Grade III building on the Buildings Conservation List on November 25, 1997. The owner is now requesting that it be delisted.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- The owner of Sir Sam Steele School is requesting to delist this building, which is a Grade III heritage building under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended), to enable redevelopment of the site.
- As a heritage structure, any alterations to the exterior of the building would require design-review and approvals via a Certificate of Suitability (Heritage Permit) under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).
- Habitat for Humanity has purchased the property, and is proposing to demolish Sir Sam Steele School and develop dwellings on the site as well as a green space. They successfully undertook similar construction on an adjacent subdivided parcel within the last 4 years.
- The lot is currently zoned PR2, Parks and Recreation, Active Neighbourhood and Community; therefore a re-zoning application would be necessary to permit residential construction.
- While the subject property has been deemed historically significant as a Grade III heritage site, decision-making committees (vs. advisory committees) have the ability to consider issues in a much broader context, including factors such as economical viability, neighbourhood well-being, etc.

HISTORY

Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, was designated as a Grade III building on the Buildings Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended) on November 25, 1997.

The original owner, Winnipeg School Division Number 1, declared the site surplus in 2007 and sold it to Habitat for Humanity. On July 16, 2008 Council approved DASZ 10/08, a rezoning and subdivision application by Habitat for Humanity for the former open space associated with Sir Sam Steele School to create 14 single family lots along McCalman Avenue and 10, two family lots along Nairn Avenue.

The remaining parcel of land, with the school proper on it, was purchased by the College of Immigrants Inc. This group intended to establish a 5,000 square foot education/training facility in the building, and rent out the remaining 12,000 square feet to a daycare. However, multi-tenant commercial land-uses required the site be rezoned from PR2 Parks and Recreation 2 (Community) District to C2 Commercial Community District. Although the Public Service was in support of this application (DAZ 211/2009), the community and Ward Councillor were in opposition, and the request was denied. The application was withdrawn on December 9, 2009 and the property was subsequently listed for sale.

Presently, the owner wishes to have the school removed from the Buildings Conservation List to allow for its demolition and redevelopment of the site. This would entail Habitat for Humanity constructing dwellings on the site, which will be contiguous with approximately 24 such dwellings recently constructed on adjacent lands.

In response to the request to delist, the Historical Buildings Committee re-evaluated the structure at its July 21, 2011 meeting to determine if any of the factors contributing to its designation had changed. Finding that little had changed in terms of the heritage significance, the Committee recommended that the school not be de-listed, but be retained on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III structure.

The structure has been vacant since 2005 with minimal intervention to remediate ongoing deterioration. It is currently under Order from the Vacant and Derelict Buildings By-law No. 35/2004 for deficiencies including a leaking roof and other substandard elements. Although the building could be rehabilitated and made Code compliant (providing approvals under the Historical Buildings By-law), costs to undertake such work has proven prohibitive.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: August 31, 2011

Project Name:

Application to delist and demolish Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street

COMMENTS:

The recommendations contained in this report are that 1) Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, be removed from the Buildings Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended), 2) that a demolition permit may be issued at such time as the owner has prepared a firm development proposal and has made a formal application for a building permit, and 3) that in the event that the application is not pursued expeditiously within twenty-four (24) months after adoption of the report by Council, the matter shall be deemed to be concluded and shall not be proceeded with unless an extension is subsequently approved by Council.

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:
Historical Buildings Committee

SUBMITTED BY

Department Planning, Property and Development
Division Planning and Land Use
Prepared by: Jennifer Hansell
Date: September 1, 2011
File No. O:\Reports Directive\Planning and Land Use\Heritage\2011 Reports\RIS SIR SAM STEELE SCHOOL 2011.doc

Appendix A Administrative Report
Appendix B History of Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street

APPENDIX A

DATE:	August 25, 2011
FILE:	
RELATED FILES:	DASZ 10/08, DAZ 211/2009
COMMUNITY:	East Kildonan - Transcona Community
NEIGHBOURHOOD #:	4.405
SUBJECT:	**To consider an application to delist and demolish Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, currently listed on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III structure under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).**
LOCATION:	15 Chester Street
LEGAL DESCRIPTION:	Lot 26 Plan 48,173
APPLICANT:	Habitat for Humanity
OWNER:	Habitat for Humanity
RECOMMENDATION:	Approval
REPORT SUMMARY:	The owner / applicant would like to delist Sir Sam Steele School, 15 Chester Street, currently listed on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III structure under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended).

SITE DESCRIPTION:

- The subject property is approximately **1.2 acres** located on the northeast corner of Chester Street and Nairn Avenue in the East Elmwood neighbourhood of the Elmwood – East Kildonan Ward.
- The site is zoned “PR2” Parks and Recreation 2 (Community) District and contains a one-storey brick building (Sir Sam Steele School, a Grade III heritage building).
- Surrounding lands include single family dwellings zoned “R1-M” to the north along McCalman; single family dwellings to the east and west along Nairn & McCalman zoned “R1-S”; and commercial land-uses to the south along Nairn zoned ‘C3’ Commercial.

BACKGROUND:

- Sir Sam Steele School was designated a Grade III heritage building on the Buildings Conservation List under the terms of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 (as amended) on November 25, 1997. It was deemed significant not only for its architectural integrity, but also its connections to a prominent war and judicial figure in Manitoba’s history. (*See Appendix B for a complete history*.)

- Winnipeg School Division Number 1 was the long-time owner of the building and lands, which were in active use until the late 1970s. After this time, the University of Manitoba's Winnipeg Education Centre, which delivered special access programs in education and social work, leased the site until 2005.
- Winnipeg School Division Number 1 declared the land surplus in January 2007, but briefly housed students from Andrew Mynarski V.C. School in February 2007 due to flooding. The site was sold to Habitat for Humanity in June 2007.
- On July 16, 2008 Council approved DASZ 10/08, a rezoning and subdivision application by Habitat for Humanity for the former open space (rear school yard) associated with Sir Sam Steele School to create 14 single family lots along McCalman Avenue and 10, two family lots along Nairn Avenue. This left the School and a front yard on its own parcel.
- The pared down site was purchased by the College of Immigrants Inc. in 2008, although redevelopment plans were unrealized and the site was recently returned to Habitat for Humanity.
- Vacant since 2005 the building has fallen into disrepair and is not only subject to basic maintenance but also Building Code upgrades if re-occupied.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:
Habitat for Humanity is proposing to construct dwellings on the site and a possible public open space. A rezoning would be required for the site to accommodate residential construction.

ANALYSIS:
OUR WINNIPEG COMPLIANCE
As per *Our Winnipeg*, the City of Winnipeg has an important role to play in supporting housing renewal and in both enforcing building codes and property by-laws and educating relevant parties about them. With regards to our housing stock, topical enabling strategies include:

- Maintain a collaborative approach to affordable housing, recognizing that the City can play a role by facilitating and provide incentives to other partners.
- Encourage the development of mixed-income neighbourhoods, as well as mixed-income multiple-unit projects as part of creating complete communities, guided by the urban structure described in *Complete Communities***.**
- Promote increased owner-occupied housing in reinvestment areas when appropriate, recognizing the importance of maintaining a mix of housing tenures to accommodate a range of needs and capacities.

As per *Complete Communities*, the subject property is situated within an 'Area of Stability.' These are defined as residential areas where the majority of Winnipeggers currently live. They will accommodate low to moderate density infill development to support more efficient use of land, infrastructure and services as well as enhance housing choice and affordability. Infill in Areas of Stability will be supported with the intent of creating more complete communities. Topical enabling strategies include:

- Support low to moderate change in low-density neighbourhoods through development and redevelopment that is complementary to the existing scale, character and built form.
- Support Complete Communities by ensuring diverse and high quality housing stock.
- Where intensification/densification of housing occurs, ensure that the types of open space – passive, active, and plazas – respond to community needs.

The proposed redevelopment meets all these criteria.

Our Winnipeg and *Complete Communities* also recommend conserving our Heritage structures in the following enabling strategies:

- Work with community stakeholders to identify unique heritage identities and neighbourhood legacy elements.
- Encourage the sustainable reuse of existing building stock and historic infrastructure.

HERITAGE STATUS

- On November 25, 1997, Sir Sam Steele School was listed on the Buildings Conservation List as 'Grade III'.
- Grade III buildings have been identified as moderately significant heritage examples worthy of listing.
- Suitable exterior alterations and modifications may be permitted.
- There is usually no restriction on interior alterations.
- Except for ordinary maintenance, no permit will be issued for the exterior alteration, repair, demolition, or removal of any building on the Buildings Conservation List, located in the City of Winnipeg outside the Exchange District, without prior issuance of an approval form called a 'Certificate of Suitability'.

The Historical Buildings Committee evaluates structures to determine if they have special architectural and historical significance. Recommendations to designate heritage buildings from this Committee arise purely from this perspective, and are advisory.

While the subject property has been deemed historically significant as a Grade III heritage site, decision-making committees (vs. advisory committees) have the ability to consider issues in a much broader context, including factors such as economical viability, neighbourhood well-being, etc.

ZONING

- The subject property is zoned as *PR2 Parks and Recreation 2 (Community) District*, which is intended for sites that include community recreation facilities and parks that are accessed by a mix of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
    - These sites may provide active programs and activities, including community centres, hockey pens, arenas, indoor soccer, wading pools, spray parks, skateboard parks and athletic fields.
    - Parking facilities ranging from 10 to 100 stalls may be associated with these uses.
    - These parks and facilities typically occur along collector streets.
- It lies between an area of R1-S and R1-M Residential Single-Family District, and the C3 Commercial Corridor along Nairn Avenue.
- A successful re-zoning of the site would be necessary to permit residential construction.

RECOMMENDATION:
The Planning and Land Use Division recommends **approval** for the following reasons:

- As per Our Winnipeg, the City of Winnipeg has an important role to play in supporting housing renewal and in both enforcing building codes and property by-laws. Sir Sam Steele School is vacant and deteriorating.
- The economic viability of Sir Sam Steele School is questionable.
- The proposed redevelopment is compatible and contextually suitable with the area.
- The redevelopment proposal is consistent with the Housing strategies of Our Winnipeg and the Complete Communities Direction Strategy.

This Report Submitted by:
Planning, Property and Development Department
Planning and Land Use Division

Report Prepared by: Jennifer Hansell

APPENDIX B - HISTORY OF SIR SAM STEELE SCHOOL, 15 CHESTER STREET



Sir Sam Steele School, built in 1921, stands as an excellent example of one of only 16 one-storey schools built by the Winnipeg School Division at the end of World War I to meet a pressing demand for modern classroom space. As student enrolment and construction costs increased, budgets decreased. The bungalow-style school could be built more quickly and cheaply than the division's typical multi-storey facilities, yet still provided a safe and comfortable environment.

The school is one of two in Winnipeg named for Samuel Benfield Steele (1849-1919), with General Steele School in Fort Garry being the other. The knighted major-general came to Manitoba in 1870 when troops marched to put down the Red River Rebellion. He later enlisted as one of the first members of the North-West Mounted Police, and was a prominent figure in both the Boer War and WWI.

The first eight Bungalow schools were designed by the division's long-time Building and Supply Agent, James B. Mitchell, as temporary facilities. The next eight were designed by architect John N. Semmens, a Toronto native who studied at Wesley College and the University of Pennsylvania. He moved to Winnipeg in 1910 and became a local associate of the New York firm of McKim, Mead and White, designers of the Bank of Montreal on Main Street. Semmens also ran his own practice into the 1950s, and served two terms as president of the Manitoba Association of Architects. In addition to 16 Winnipeg School Division schools, his portfolio included numerous other schools throughout the province. Sir Sam Steele is one of only five extant bungalow schools, with only Florence Nightingale and Wolseley continuing as active schools.

Semmens's designs differed from Mitchell's in a number of ways. For one, his schools were to be permanent and, as such, had to be visually distinctive, yet also compatible with their neighbourhoods. To achieve this, Semmens used more ornamentation and relied on imported red face brick rather than locally produced yellow or grey sand-lime brick. He also introduced a foundation system of concrete posts and beams.

The original Sir Sam Steele School is a six-room, rectangular building with a concrete foundation, variegated red tapestry brick exterior, flat roof, and parapet with smooth-cut stone coping and finials. The two main entrances, situated at either end of the west façade, have double doors with transoms, flanked by stone-capped buttresses, recessed within pointed arches. Other adornments include crests, decorative pediments, stone lug sills, a belt course, multi-paned windows, and a panel with the school's name and construction date. The rear elevation features similar fenestration; but simpler appointments.

Classrooms, offices and other spaces run off a wide central corridor trimmed with dark wood. Sympathetically designed additions were built at both ends of the school in 1957. The smaller one on the north contains an auditorium, while the larger southern section has four classrooms.

Sir Sam Steele School ceased operation in the late 1970s, but continued to be used in various capacities until 2005. After this time it stood vacant.

City Council added the school to the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III structure on November 25, 1997, based on age, architectural and historical significance.

1

Date: June 28, 2011

The City of Winnipeg
Main Floor, Council Building
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB. R3B 1B9

Dear Madam/Sir [ATTN: City Clerk]

I hereby request that the building located at 15 Chester Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba be removed from the Buildings Conservation List pursuant to the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 for the purpose of demolishing said structure. Thank you.

Sincerely

College of Immigrants Inc
c/o Rabiul Ahasan

Copy to **Jennifer Hansell**, Historical Buildings Officer, Planning, Property and Development Department, Planning and Land Use Division, City of Winnipeg, 15-30 Fort Street, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4X5, T