Minute No. 471
Report - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development - June 8, 2004

Item No. 1 **Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property) - 775 Sherbrook Street - Request to Remove from Buildings Conservation List**
File G-3.1.1

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and adopted the following:

1. That the Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property) at 775 Sherbrook Street be de-listed as a Grade III structure on the Buildings Conservation List under The Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77.

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

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development - June 8, 2004

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Pagtakhan,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development be adopted by consent.

Carried

Councillors Gerbasi and Thomas were recorded as having voted against this item.

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 16, 2004, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 8, 2004, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development did not concur in the recommendation of the Historical Buildings Committee that the Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property) at 775 Sherbrook Street not be removed from the Buildings Conservation List, and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

On April 27, 2004, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development laid over consideration of the request from Royal LePage Stevenson Advisors, for removal of the Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property), 755 Sherbrook Street, from the Buildings Conservation List to the meeting of the Committee to be held on June 7, 2004.

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 5, 2004, the Historical Buildings Committee recommended that Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property), 775 Sherbrook Street, not be removed from the Buildings Conservation List.

Doug Kalcsics, Senior Consultant, Royal LePage Stevenson Advisors, on behalf of ACI Properties Ltd., submitted a communication dated April 8, 2004, requesting favourable consideration be given to removing the Sacre-Coeur No. 2 School (currently Somerset School Property), 755 Sherbrook Street, from the Buildings Conservation List.

April 20, 2004

CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS
STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON
PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

RE: THE FORMER J.B. SOMERSET SCHOOL
(SACRE-COEUR SCHOOL NO. 2)
775 SHERBROOK STREET

The Historical Buildings Committee, at its meeting on April 15, 2004, reviewed a request from Royal LePage Stevenson Advisors representing ACI Properties to remove the former Somerset School from the Buildings Conservation List in order that the building could be demolished to allow redevelopment of the site for commercial purposes.

The Committee reviewed the condition of the building since its initial evaluation in 1991 and advises that there have not been any heritage changes to the building since its initial listing.

The Committee supports its recommendation of February 14, 1991 that this is still a Grade III building because it is the second oldest school building still standing in the City of Winnipeg and is the second remaining example of a "square plan" school. The building has suffered very little alteration, and retains most of its original materials and design features. This school with its distinctive tower is an important neighbourhood landmark.

In summary, the Historical Buildings Committee does not recommend the delisting of this building.

Councillor Jenny Gerbasi
Chairperson
Historical Buildings Committee

cc: Giles Bugailiskis

J.B. SOMERSET SCHOOL
(SACRE-COEUR NO. 2)
775 Sherbrook Street

Somerset School is one of only two remaining Winnipeg schools built on the square plan during the city's turn-of-the-century development boom.

This plan, commonly used by local education authorities until 1907, produced square, three-storey buildings divided into two interior halves by a central corridor. Concerns about fire safety led James Bertram Mitchell, commissioner of buildings for the Winnipeg School Division, to subsequently develop a different model based on two-storey rectangles providing fewer stairs and shorter distances to exits.

At Somerset School, the square plan was cloaked in the then popular Queen Anne architectural style characterized by an eclectic application of design elements and building materials. Mitchell was the architect for the 1901 project; D.W. Bellhouse assisted in drafting the plans.

The facility was erected for about $31,000 on the east side of Sherbrook Street between Notre Dame and McDermot Avenues in a rapidly growing residential area with a large Icelandic population. D.D. Wood was the main contractor.

Mitchell, born to a Scottish-Ontarian family, studied architecture in Montreal. He came west with the 1870 Wolseley Expedition and later with the first detachment of the North-West Mounted Police. He was employed by the Winnipeg School Division from the early 1890s to 1928, designing some 48 schools and directing the work of other architects.

Somerset is a sold brick building with a raised stone foundation. Central gables appear on the side and rear elevation, while the symmetrical front (west) façade features a projecting, four-storey central tower. This element is completed at the top by brick battlements and corner buttresses capped with smooth-stone domes. Stone columns adorn the recessed entrance. Above are pairs of rectangular and round-headed openings, various geometric designs in the brick and stone work, and the school's name prominently inscribed on a stone band.

Brick pilasters separate bays of large, paired, double-hung windows with plain wooden surrounds, continuous rough stone lintels and stills, and leaded glass transoms. Above the centre pilasters are two wooden dormers, each with a pair of windows. Wooden brackets appear along the eaves.

The school originally held 10 classrooms plus an assembly hall on the third floor. It was the first in Winnipeg to use electrical lighting rather than coal oil lamps. Large rooms, high ceilings and large window openings made for the airy, bright atmosphere desired by the division's trustees. Greek and Roman art collected by the first principal, Major R.R.J. Brown, initially lined the walls.

The school was named after the Irish-born John Beaufort Somerset (1843-1901) who was a teacher and public school inspector in Ontario before moving to Winnipeg in 1882. He became superintendent of education for Manitoba's Protestant schools, then joined the Manitoba Free Press as secretary-treasurer after the province abolished separate schools in 1891.

As the community around Somerset School evolved, the student population became more ethnically mixed. The area also has been transformed by commercial development and expansion of adjacent medical and university facilities.

While some renovations and additions have been made, Somerset's original design is intact and the building is in good structural condition. A new mandate arose in the 1970s when the Winnipeg School Division selected this and a second nearby facility for its elementary French immersion program. Renamed Sacre-Coeur School No. 2, now houses some 207 students in Grades 3 to 6.

Report of the Committee on Planning and Community Services, dated April 22nd, 1991.

Listing of the J. B. Somerset School (Sacre-Coeur No. 2), 775 Sherbrook Street, on the Historical Buildings Conservation List.
File No. G-3.l.l.

3. Your Committee on Planning and Community Services has been advised that the Historical Buildings Committee visited and evaluated the J. B. Somerset School (Sacre-Coeur No. 2) located at 775 Sherbrook Street in April, 1989, at the request of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, who wished to be advised of its heritage potential. A recommendation to list the building was not made since the School Division requested advice on the historic nature of the building, not an immediate demolition.

Recently the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 informed the Historical Buildings Committee that they wished to proceed with the demolition of the school building and build a new structure since they believe it is not feasible to enlarge the existing school building.

The Historical Buildings Committee, at its meeting held on February 14th, 1991, reviewed their Grade III evaluation of the building and recommended that the Building be listed as a Grade III Building on the Historical Buildings Conservation List for the following reasons:-

1. Somerset School is the second oldest school building still standing in the City of Winnipeg and is the second remaining example of a "square plan" school.

2. The building has suffered very little alteration, and retains most of its original materials and design features.

3. This school with its distinctive tower is an important neighbourhood landmark. The Historical Buildings Committee believes that the local Community should have some input into the fate of the building.

The City Centre-Fort Rouge Community Committee on March 5th, 1991 concurred in the recommendation of the Historical Buildings Committee that the J. B. Somerset School Building, be listed as a Grade III Building on the Historical Buildings Conservation List.

On April 22nd, 1991, your Committee on Planning and Community Services reviewed the above recommendation by the Historical Buildings Committee and the City Centre-Fort Rouge Community Committee. The Committee received representations from the following persons in opposition to the listing of the J. B. Somerset School on the Historical Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III Building, namely:-

Gail Mucha, Chairperson of the Sacre-Coeur Parents Committee, presented a brief indicating that the major reason for opposition to the listing was the financial burden that would be put on the Community as the money available to renovate a building is not equal to the money for new construction. She also indicated that the lease on the property only extends until June, 1992 and presented signed petitions in opposition to the listing.

2. Mr. C. L. Chappell, Solicitor, Aikins, MacAulay & Thorvaldson on behalf of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, accompanied by Ms Jan Schubert, Superintendent of Schools-Central, Mr. Brian Scott, Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. Gunter Rozitis, Architect and Trustee Mihychuk, presented a brief in opposition to the listing of the School Building. Trustee Mihychuk indicated that the building no longer is consistent with the Building Code requirements and a total demolition of the floor and roof are needed and that an addition to the existing building is not a viable option. This building no longer meets the needs of the students.

3. Denise Gillies, Secretary, Sacre-Coeur Parents Committee, presented a brief in opposition to the listing of the school and indicated that there is a real need for a new facility for the students and the major responsibility is to ensure that the children receive the best education in the best facility that tax dollars can provide.

Report of the Committee on Planning and Community Services, dated April 22nd, 1991.

The following persons appeared in support of the listing:-

1. Mr. Brian Rodeck submitted a brief on behalf of the Manitoba Clinic in support of the listing of the J. B. Somerset School on the Historical Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III Building, indicating that the possible demolition of the school could bring about the expropriation of land from the Manitoba Clinic which is one of the largest providers of health care in the Province.

2. Mr. Ken Kelly on behalf of Heritage Canada, appeared in support of the listing of the Somerset School on the Historical Buildings Conservation List. He referred to a recycling statement published by the Province of Manitoba supporting the recycling of older buildings by renovations to existing older structures.

3. Mr. George Siamandas and Mrs. Christine Singh, on behalf of Heritage Winnipeg also spoke in support of the listing of the Somerset School Building, indicating that the exterior of the building is in good condition and that the school is a landmark for the Community. They pointed out that many things can be done to address the construction problems that exist to upgrade the building and indicated that there are other options available to the School Division, such as using other presently unused school sites, if in fact a newer school building is required.

Your Committee on Planning and Community Services concurs in the recommendation of the Historical Buildings Committee and recommends that, pursuant to the provisions of the Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 and amendments thereto, the J. B. Somerset School (Sacre-Coeur No. 2) Building located at 775 Sherbrook Street, be listed as a Grade III Building on the Historical Buildings Conservation List.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL MAY 8 1991