Report - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development - May 3, 2005

Item No. 14 Historical Buildings By-law No. 1474/77 -
77 Henderson Highway - former Anna Gibson School
File G-3.1.1

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 11, 2005, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendations of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee and submits the following to Council:

1. That the former Anna Gibson School located at 77 Henderson Highway not be placed on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III Historical Building.

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

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development - May 3, 2005

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 11, 2005, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendations of the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development and the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 3, 2005, the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in the recommendation of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee and did not concur in the recommendation of the Historical Buildings Committee and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 5, 2005, the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee did not concur in the recommendation of the Historical Buildings Committee and recommends to the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development that the former Anna Gibson School located at 77 Henderson Highway not be placed on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III Historical Building.

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 24, 2005, the Historical Buildings Committee recommended that the former Anna Gibson School, 77 Henderson Highway, be placed on the Buildings Conservation List as a Grade III Historical Building.

March 30, 2005

TO: CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS
STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON
PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS
EAST KILDONAN-TRANSCONA
COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

RE: HISTORICAL BUILDINGS BY-LAW
NO. 1474/77 AS AMENDED

The Historical Buildings Committee recommends that the following building be placed on the Buildings Conservation List:

Name	Address	Grade Recommendation
Former Anna Gibson School	77 Henderson Highway	Grade III

The above recommendation was made by the Committee at its meeting on February 24, 2005.

HERITAGE PLANNER'S REPORT

The City's Historical Buildings Committee, at its meeting on February 24, 2005, reviewed the history and present condition of the former Anna Gibson School, based on a request from the current owners, the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. They wish to demolish the building to allow the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute to undertake phase one of an expansion program to their campus which would see a new library, a small theatre and a park space built on this site.

The Committee is recommending that this building be designated historic because it is significant in illustrating the history of the city, it is associated with a person of local

significance and an international event, and it is a good illustration of the architectural history of the city.

This school building is one of only three remaining educational one-storey bungalows built between 1918 and 1921 to keep up with the huge demand for school facilities after World War I. Designed by the Winnipeg School Division's architect James B. Mitchell, this simple building is embellished with a large pediment over the main doorway, diamond-shaped stone accents, large windows and a domed cupola.

The building is also named to commemorate a schoolteacher, Anna Gibson, the first to valiantly volunteer to nurse the dying in the deadliest pandemic in recent world history, namely the Spanish Flu. She succumbed to the virus and died on November 23, 1918.

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC RESEARCH

An influx of settlers and their families from Ontario into Manitoba and Winnipeg in the 1870s found a school system that did not meet their needs. It was limited mainly to those who could afford private classes and the public schools that did exist were substandard, dimly lit and cramped, often located in rented rooms with questionable fire protection and sparse furnishings.

It was not until the 1880s that a truly modern educational system was established, beginning in 1883 with the adoption of provincial regulations to ensure properly designed buildings. Subsequently, Daniel McIntyre (1852-1946) was appointed Inspector and Superintendent of the Winnipeg School District in 1885 and James Bertram Mitchell (1852-1945) was appointed Chairman of the Winnipeg School District's Committee on Buildings in 1888. Mitchell, an architect trained in Montreal, would later become the Division's Building and Supply Agent.

The partnership of McIntyre and Mitchell lasted 40 years. The two oversaw construction of more than 50 schools and numerous additions and created what some saw as North America's safest and most elegant collection of school buildings. These include the Anna Gibson School one of a dwindling number of one-storey facilities built by the Division between 1918 and 1921. They were built during a period of economic slowdown in Winnipeg and therefore were not as ornamentally complex as earlier two- and three-storey structures.

The Anna Gibson School is a solid brick structure at 77 Henderson Highway completed in 1920. Concrete piers and beams are used for support throughout the school and the partial basement. The building's rectangular plan included a projecting central section on the front (west) façade. The centrally located main entrance was embellished with a large semi-elliptical pediment supported by large wooden brackets. Diamond-shaped stone accenting is used throughout this and the other three elevations. The windows are large with brick sills and are internally divided into groups of six. They are not the original elements.

The south and north sides are similarly designed, carrying on the accenting and window detailing on the front elevation. The rear includes a covered entrance, located slightly off-centre to the

north and similar accenting and windows. The roof, which contains the most ornamental features, is of truncated hip design. Swept dormers with windows grace the south, north and east slopes and a centrally located domed cupola adds elegance to the overall design.

The school remains on its original site and the exterior has suffered few alterations. The interior of the building contains a wide central corridor running the entire length of the building and flanked on both sides by classrooms. At the south end of the building, the hallway veers east and west to give access to offices.

The school is located in Elmwood, an area of Winnipeg not settled until the late 1870s because of its low, swampy terrain. The area developed quickly after the Canadian Pacific Railway ran its main line through the area and built the Louise Bridge (1881), with factories, banks, hotels, retail shops and hundreds of houses the result. In 1906, the area became Ward 7 of the City of Winnipeg.

The school was named for Anna Gibson, a young teacher at La Verendrye School who volunteered to take basic nursing training during the deadly Spanish Influenza outbreak of 1918-1919. Miss Gibson died while working at the King George Hospital Annex on November 23, 1918 and was buried in the Elmwood Cemetery across the street from the school that bears her name.

Alterations on the building's interior have been severe. Original wood floors have been tiled or otherwise covered, walls and ceilings have been re-clad and original lighting has been replaced. It appears that the classrooms at the building's north end maintain their original layout and the high ceilings, a common feature of the bungalow schools, are present throughout the building.

This building is conspicuous in its neighborhood, given its scale, ornamentation and construction material, but its landmark status derives from its important historic function within the community. The school is located at the base of the northern span of the Disraeli Bridge, set back from Henderson Highway, in the southwest corner of the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute campus. A demolition permit has been applied for as part of an overall $5.8-million plan to expand the campus.

GB:eb
Attach.

cc: Ms. A. Stenning, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. B. Gray, Manager, EPC Secretariat
Mr. H. Finnigan, Director, Planning, Property & Development Department

CITY OF WINNIPEG

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

BUILDING EVALUATION FORM

Location: 77 Henderson Highway

Name: Current - Anna Gibson School
Original -

Owner: Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 5-169 Riverton Avenue, R2L 2E5

Present Use: vacant

Building Grade **I** **II** **III**
I* **II*** **III***

EVALUATION DATE: February 24, 2005

Recommendation: To list as Grade III

