



Heritage Advisory Panel Report For the Meeting of December 12, 2023

To: Heritage Advisory Panel **Date:** November 27, 2023
From: Kristal Stevenot, Senior Heritage Planner, Development Services
Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 000205 557-561 Fisgard Street

RECOMMENDATION

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve the Heritage Designation Application No.000205 for 557-561 Fisgard Street.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the Heritage Advisory Panel with information, analysis and recommendations regarding an owner request to designate the exterior and possibly elements if the interior, of the heritage-registered property located at 557-561 Fisgard Street. The commercial and institutional building was built in 1908 (TBC by applicant) and contributes to the historic character of Victoria’s Chinatown National Historic Site.

The designation of this building is generally consistent with Section 8: “Placemaking (Urban Design and Heritage)” of the *Official Community Plan (2012)*, with Section 7, “Heritage” of the *Downtown Core Area Plan*, and with the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework*.

BACKGROUND

Project Details

558 Fisgard - Current Owner:	Dart Coon Club
561 Fisgard – Current Owner	Victoria Chee Kong Tong / The Chinese Freemasons Society
Original Owners:	Lee Woy, Lee Yan and Lee Chong
Applicant/Architect:	Hooper & Watkins
Development Permit Area:	DPA 1 (HC)
Heritage Status:	Registered



Image circa 1965

Description of Proposal

557-561 Fisgard Street, also referred to as Lee Woy & Company Building is a modest two-storey plus 'cheater' mezzanine brick-clad building, built in the heart of Chinatown in 1908. The exterior façade has minimal ornamentation with a metal balcony at the second-floor level that was added later, and retail storefronts at the ground level. The Dart Coon Club and Chih Kung T'ang occupy the second floor of the building. Some of its character-defining elements include:

- location on the south side of Fisgard Street, part of a grouping of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century historic masonry buildings in Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site
- continuous commercial and institutional use
- siting on the front and side property lines, with no setbacks
- commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its two-storey height with 'cheater' mezzanine, symmetrical plan, flat roof
- retail storefronts facing Fisgard Street and association meeting rooms above
- brick walls, with corbelled detailing and tooled joints
- two second floor doors, leading to metal balconies added later.

The property is also valued as part of a grouping of early buildings that contribute to the historic character and urban pattern of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site, the oldest and most intact Chinatown in Canada.



Regulatory Considerations

The proposed heritage designation of the building is compatible with the *Official Community Plan, 2012* (OCP), and is consistent with the Zoning Regulation Bylaw.

Condition/Economic Viability

The building is in fair to good condition.

ANALYSIS

The following sections provide a summary of the application's consistency with the relevant City policies and guidelines.

Official Community Plan

The designation of this building is consistent with the *Official Community Plan, 2012* (OCP), which in Section 8, "Placemaking (Urban Design and Heritage)", states:

Goals

8 (B) *Victoria's cultural and natural heritage resources are protected and celebrated.*

Broad Objectives

- 8 (j) *That heritage property is conserved as resources with value for present and future generations.*
- 8 (l) *That heritage and cultural values are identified, celebrated, and retained through community engagement.*

City Form

- 8.6 *Conserve and enhance the heritage value, character and special features of areas, districts, streetscapes, cultural landscapes and individual properties throughout the city.*
- 8.11 *Determine the heritage value of areas, districts, streetscapes, cultural landscape and individual properties using the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework as identified in Figure 12.*

Buildings and Sites

- 8.51 *Continue to give consideration to tools available under legislation to protect or conserve heritage property including, but not limited to: heritage designation bylaws; listing on the heritage register; temporary protection; heritage alteration permits; heritage revitalization agreements; design guidelines; and, the protection of views of heritage landmark buildings from public vantage points as identified in Map 8, and to be determined in future local area plans.*
- 8.54 *Continue to work with senior government, community and business partners to identify, protect and conserve property of heritage value.*

Downtown Core Area Plan

The designation of the building is consistent with Section 7: “Heritage” of the *Downtown Core Area Plan* (2011) which states:

Heritage - Objectives

- 1 *Retain, protect and improve real property with aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual value and heritage character as a benefit to the public.*

Areas and Districts - Policies and Actions

- 7.3. *Conserve heritage values of the Downtown Core Area and its character-defining elements, such as individual buildings, collections of buildings, streetscapes, structures and features.*

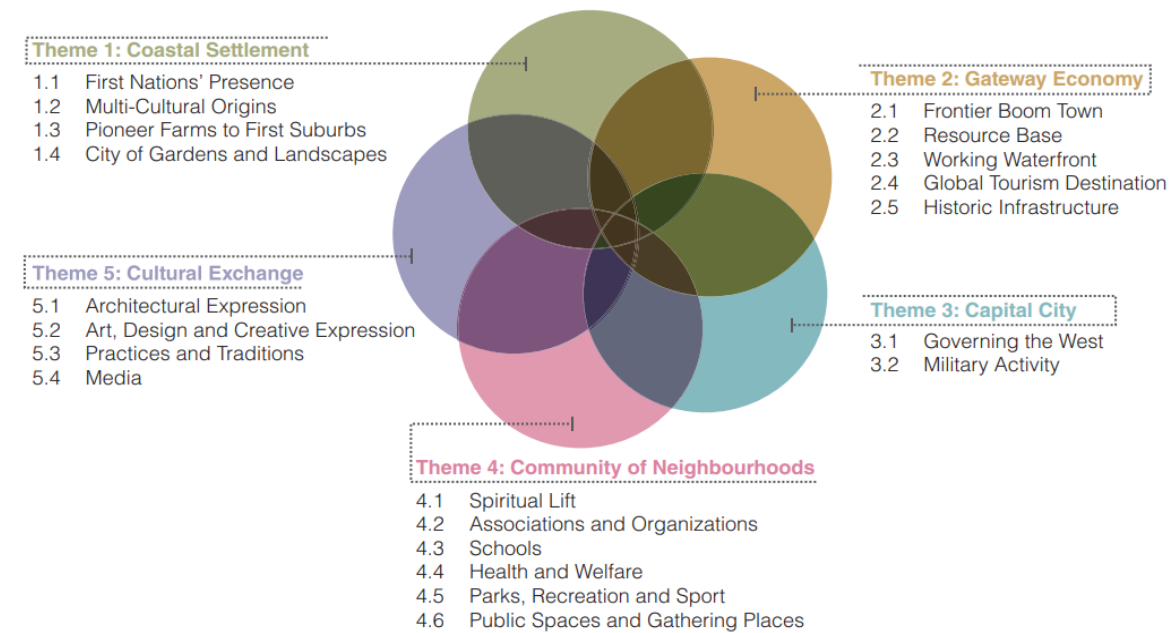
Buildings and Sites - Policies and Actions

- 7.20. *Continue to work with the private sector to identify, protect and conserve property and areas with heritage value in the Downtown Core Area.*
- 7.28. *Produce and update, as required, Statements of Significance for properties listed on the Heritage Register in the Downtown Core Area.*

Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework

A key policy of the OCP includes the determination of heritage value using a values-based approach. In this regard, a City-wide thematic framework (OCP Fig. 12) was developed and incorporated into the OCP to identify the key civic historic themes. The *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework* functions as a means to organize and define historical events, to identify representative historic places, and to place sites, persons and events in an overall context. The thematic framework recognizes a broad range of values under which City-wide themes can be

articulated. A Heritage Value assessment with consideration of the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework* is incorporated into the Statement of Significance.



Victoria's Heritage Thematic Framework, OCP

Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance describing the historic place, its attributes, and history is attached to this report.

Resource Impacts

Heritage Designation will enable the applicant to be eligible for heritage grants and incentives for the ongoing maintenance, and potential seismic upgrading.

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the property located at 557-561 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is a good example of Victoria's commercial and institutional development from the Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The heritage value can also be noted about its continued use as commercial use on the ground level and a more social gathering space for associations on the upper floors. The property is part of an intact grouping of historic masonry buildings in Chinatown. Staff therefore recommend that the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve Heritage Designation Application No. 000205 for 557-561 Fisgard.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000205 for the property located at 557-561 Fisgard Street.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Subject Map
- Attachment B: Aerial Map
- Attachment C: Statement of Significance and photographs (draft)
- Attachment D: Letter from the applicant, date stamped May 18, 2023

cc: Nora Butz, Applicant
Theresa Chen, President, Dart Coon Club