



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. 000207 565 Fisgard Street

RECOMMENDATION

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve the Heritage Designation Application No.000207 for 565 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 of the heritage registered property located at 565 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* (OCP), with Section 7, "Heritage" of the *Downtown Core Area Plan* (DCAP), and with the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework*.

BACKGROUND

Project Details

565 Fisgard - Current Owner:	The Lee Block Victoria Chee Kung Tong / The Chinese Freemasons Society
Original Owners:	Lee Woy, Lee Yan and Lee Chong
Applicant/Architect:	Hooper & Watkins
Builder	Thomas Brydon
Development Permit Area:	DPA 1 (HC)
Heritage Status:	Registered



Description of Proposal

The property located at 565 Fisgard, also known as the Lee Block is a prominent building located at the corner of Fisgard and Government Streets in the heart of Victoria's Chinatown. The building displays the influence of the Classical Revival style, prevalent during the Edwardian era for commercial buildings. Divided into symmetrical structural bays, with regular fenestration, the Lee Block contains storefronts on the main floor and tenements and space for volunteer associations on the second and third storeys.

The Lee Block is valued as part of a grouping of early buildings that contribute to the historic character and urban pattern of Victoria's Chinatown, the oldest and most intact Chinatown in Canada. This building is also representative of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown. The Lee Block was a product of the second wave of merchants who immigrated to Victoria's Chinatown in the 1890's to 1910's. Lot 442 was purchased by Lee Woy, Lee Yan and Lee Cheong, who owned Lee Woy & Company, in 1910, and the building was constructed as 'stores and rooms' the same year. The Lees also owned the Lee Woy & Company Building, 557-571 Fisgard Street. In 1954, the Lee Block was sold to the Dart Coon Club.

The Lee Block is also expressive of a degree of duality in its architecture. With its main frontage on Government Street, the Lee Block presents an almost totally western appearance. Designed in a symmetrical fashion and divided into distinct bays, it displays the tripartite articulation that reflects the influence of the Chicago School. The exterior evidence of its Chinese ownership and use is limited to the multiple doorways to the upper floor, which indicate the presence of tenements and meeting rooms for volunteer association on the upper floors.

For a complete description of the heritage value and character-defining elements please refer to Attachment D for the Statement of Significance.



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 property is in good to fair condition, and needs deferred maintenance and seismic upgrading.

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

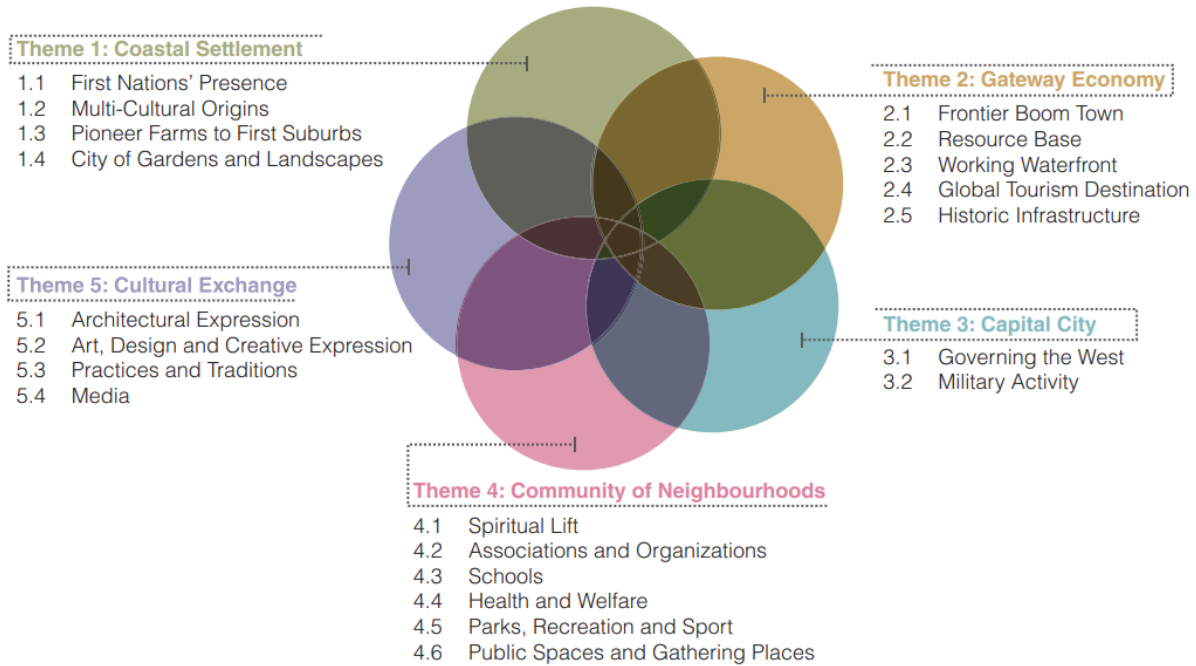
- 7.3. *Conserve heritage values of the Downtown Core Area and its character-defining elements, such as individual buildings, collections of buildings, streetscapes, structures and features.*

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 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 of the heritage building.

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the property located at 565 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is an excellent example of Victoria’s Chinatown commercial and institutional development from the Edwardian era and is part of an intact grouping of late nineteenth and early twentieth century historic masonry buildings. Staff therefore recommend that the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve Heritage Designation Application No. 000205 for 565 Fisgard.

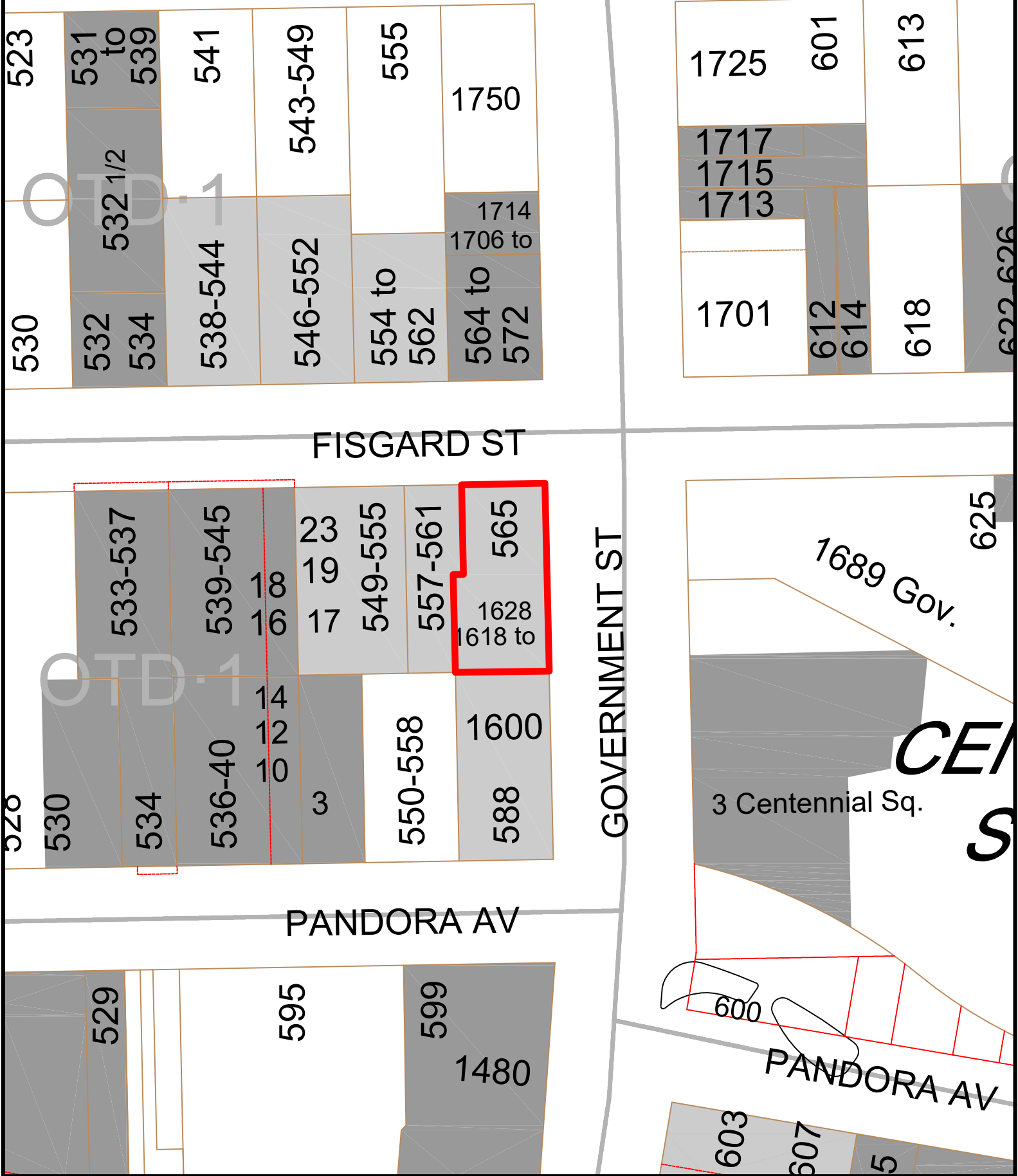
ALTERNATE MOTION

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000205 for the property located at 565 Fisgard.

ATTACHMENTS

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

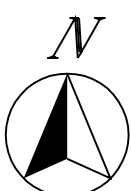
cc: Nora Butz, Applicant
Theresa Chen, President, Dart Coon Club



565 Fisgard Street

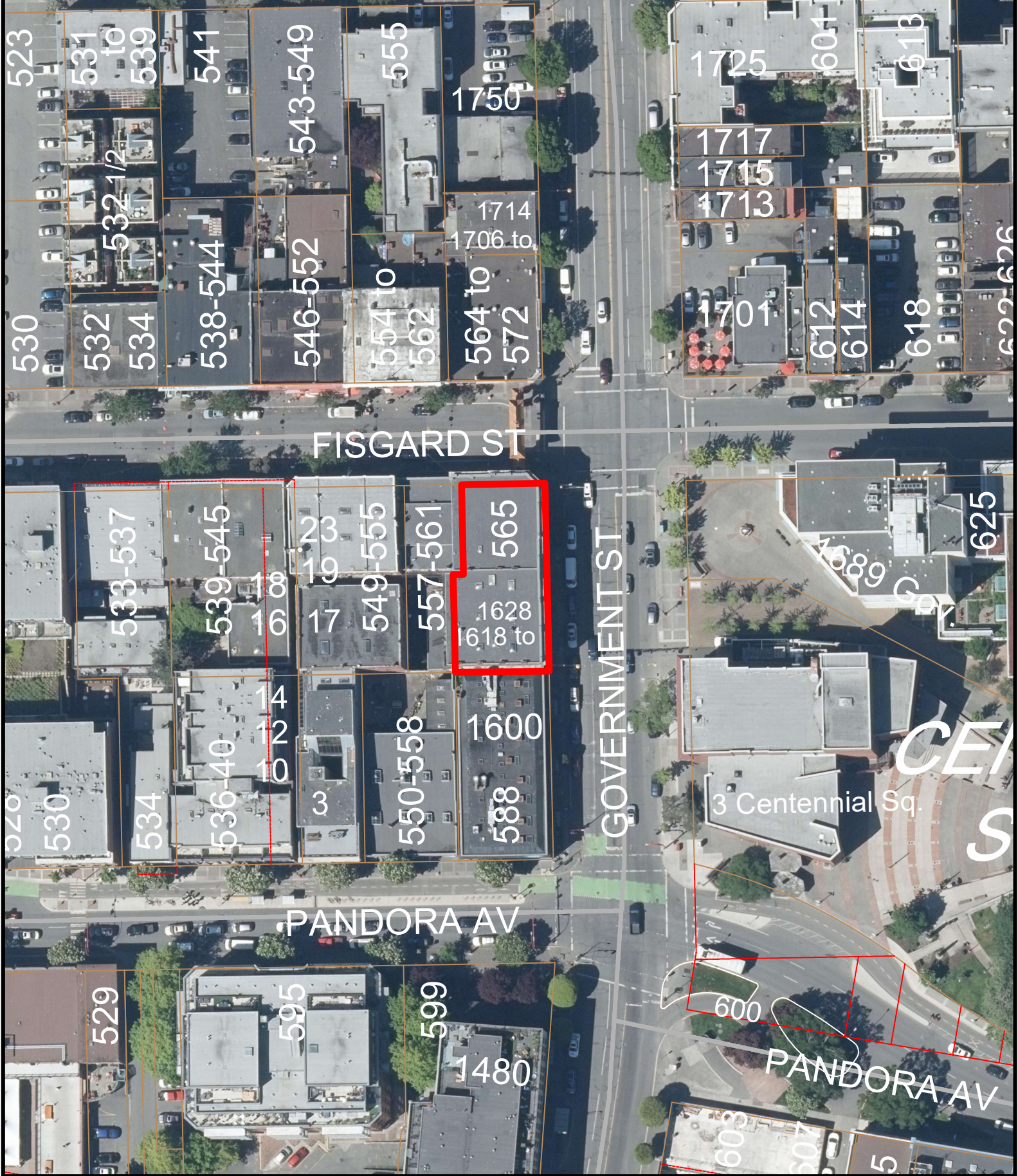
ATTACHMENT A

Heritage Designation #000207



Designated
 Registered

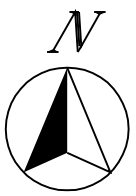




565 Fisgard Street

ATTACHMENT B

Heritage Designation #000207



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LEE BLOCK 565 FISGARD STREET

Updated October 2023, City of Victoria

Civic Address: 565 Fisgard Street, Victoria, BC

Original Owners: Lee Woy, Lee Yan and Lee Chong

Architects: Hooper & Watkins

Builder: Thomas Brydon

Date: 1910 – TBC as this building is shown on the 1903 Insurance Plan/Map



DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Lee Block is a prominent building located at the corner of Fisgard and Government Streets in the heart of Victoria's Chinatown. The building displays the influence of the Classical Revival style, prevalent during the Edwardian era for commercial buildings. Divided into symmetrical structural bays, with regular fenestration, the Lee Block contains storefronts on the main floor and tenements and space for volunteer associations on the second and third storeys.

HERITAGE VALUE

The Lee Block is valued as part of a grouping of early buildings that contribute to the historic character and urban pattern of Victoria's Chinatown, the oldest and most intact Chinatown in Canada. In the 1850s, exacerbated by political and social turmoil in China, thousands of Chinese migrated from a small region in the southern province of Guangdong to frontier gold rush sites in California, setting up a permanent base in San Francisco. In 1858, the Fraser Gold Rush spurred the growth of Victoria as a significant port town, and prompted the movement of many Chinese into the province. Victoria was the primary point of entry for Chinese into Canada until the early twentieth century.

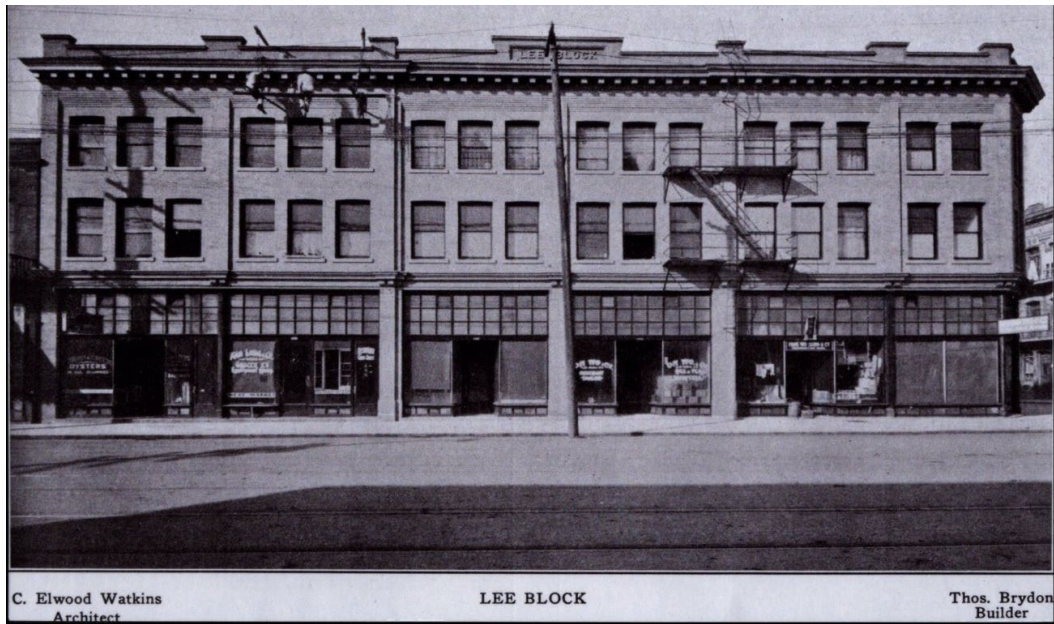
The buildings are also representative of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown. Chinese merchants, already established in San Francisco, moved to Victoria and purchased lots as early as 1858, opening stores backed by funding from San Francisco headquarters. The Lee Block was a product of the second wave of merchants who immigrated to Victoria's Chinatown in the 1890s to 1910s. Lot 442 was purchased by Lee Woy, Lee Yan and Lee Cheong, who owned Lee Woy & Company, in 1910, and the building was constructed as 'stores and rooms' the same year. The Lees also owned the Lee Woy & Company Building, 557-571 Fisgard Street. In 1954, the Lee Block was sold to the Dart Coon Club.

The Lee Block is also expressive of a degree of duality in its architecture. With its main frontage on Government Street, the Lee Block presents an almost totally Western appearance. Designed in a symmetrical fashion and divided into distinct bays, it displays the tripartite articulation that reflects the influence of the Chicago School. The exterior evidence of its Chinese ownership and use is limited to the multiple doorways to the upper floor, which indicate the presence of tenements and meeting rooms for volunteer association on the upper floors. Western architects were hired to design buildings throughout Chinatown, as the Chinese were shunned as professionals in the building trades. Charles Elwood Watkins (1875-1942), a prolific Victoria architect, designed the Lee Block. In addition to his many commercial, institutional and residential projects, Watkins had a number of clients in the Chinese community.

I have found out info on the Builder:

Contractor Thomas Anderson Brydon (b. Selkirk, SCT, 1855-1920) was prominent both professionally and politically. He apprenticed in Edinburgh as a carpenter and joiner. He married his wife Mary Ann there in 1884. They came to Victoria in 1885 and by 1889 Brydon was Clerk of Works for the construction of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (924 Douglas St, Downtown). He constructed many buildings, including the family home at 1264 Denman St, the Janion Block and the Chinese School (636 Fisgard St, Downtown). Brydon served on Victoria City Council from 1899-1901. About 1900 Thomas and Mary Ann moved to Glanford Av, where they established an orchard, and in 1906 Thomas became the first Reeve of the newly formed Saanich Municipality.

- Any other info regarding use that speaks to the history of the place, such as the Kung Fu Club?
- Any info that is missing or needs to be correct?



CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Lee Block include its:

- location on Government Street, at the corner of Fisgard Street, part of a grouping of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century historic masonry buildings in Victoria's Chinatown
- continuous commercial, residential tenement and institutional use
- siting on the front and side property lines, with no setbacks
- commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its three-storey height, with 'cheater' mezzanine, bevelled corner with storefront entry; rectangular plan, flat roof, series of doorways leading to the upper floors, and storefronts facing Government Street
- construction materials, including pressed tan-brick cladding with red mortar on the two main facades, common red-brick side and rear walls, and cast-iron storefront columns
- influence of the Chicago School including: tripartite façade articulation; symmetrical structural bays separated by brick pilasters; pressed metal cornices with metal modillions and corbels; and side entry on Fisgard Street with a sheet metal pediment
- multiple doorways leading to the upper storey tenements and meeting rooms
- sidewall chimneys indicating upper floor occupation
- original windows including one-over-one double-hung wooden-sash windows facing Fisgard Street, storefront transoms facing Government Street and multi-paned wooden-sash windows above the side and corner entries
- interior elements, such as the 'cheater' mezzanine

Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework

565 Fisgard fits within a few different themes of Victoria's Heritage Thematic Framework. Firstly, this building represents Theme 1.2 Multi-Cultural Origins and 2.1 Frontier Boom Town as in the 1850s, due to political and social turmoil in China, thousands of Chinese migrated from a small region in the southern province of Guangdong to frontier gold rush sites in California, setting up

a permanent base in San Francisco. In 1858, the Fraser Gold Rush spurred the growth of Victoria as a significant port town and prompted the movement of many Chinese into the province. The building is also representative of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown and the Lee Block was a product of the second wave of merchants who immigrated to Victoria's Chinatown in the 1890s to 1910s. Lastly, the aesthetic value of the building is a good example of a commercial building that shows influence of the Classical Revival style, prevalent during the Edwardian era and an architectural expression that reflects the influence of the Chicago school, so this aligns with theme 5.1 Architectural Expression.





Dart Coon Club of Victoria

557 Fisgard St.

Victoria, B.C.

May 18, 2023

City of Victoria

Mayor, Marianne Alto

Councillors

Dear Mayor Alto and City Councillors:

The Dart Coon Club of Victoria is the parent society for the Chee Kong Tong society and the Victoria chapter of the Chinese Freemasons. We are requesting to have our two buildings at 557 and 565 designated as Heritage for the city. The building at 565 is a landmark for the city and anchors Chinatown next to the Gate of Harmonious Interest. The building adjacent is the home of the Chinese Freemasons, oldest chapter of the Freemasons in Canada. We are very interested in preserving these buildings as it has so much history in Victoria's Chinatown. As our membership is getting older, we want to ensure that the next generation will respect the heritage and preserve what these buildings stand for. Therefore, we respectfully request that our buildings will be granted heritage designation. If you have any question, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Theresa Chen, President, Dart Coon Club.

Btchen1950@gmail.com