

REPORT

Engineering Services

To: Community Heritage Commission **Date:** October 6, 2021

From: Karen Campbell,
Project Manager, Civic Buildings &
Properties with
Rob McCullough, Manager, Museums &
Heritage Services **File:** 1925482

Item #: 2021-402

Subject: Feasibility Study for 302 Royal Avenue (Museum & Archives Annex Building)

PURPOSE

To inform on a potential future redevelopment of the City-owned building adjacent to the Irving House, a protected heritage property.

SUMMARY

This memo provides information to the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) on a Feasibility Study for the site at 302 Royal Avenue, which is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2021. 302 Royal Avenue currently includes the City's Museum & Archives Annex Building (Annex) that was built in 1964 along with Irving House, one of the oldest surviving buildings in the province (built 1865). Irving House is protected by a Heritage Designation Bylaw and is listed on the City's Heritage Register.

The Annex Building no longer serves a functional purpose for the City, as most of the City's museum collections have been, or are in the process of being, removed from the building. Most of the City's museum collections are now located within the City's Anvil Centre. The Annex Building is not considered to have heritage value and is in poor condition with failing components that require costly repairs. The Feasibility Study would explore opportunities and identify a recommended approach for the future of the Annex Building.

This memo is for information only and a recommendation from the Community Heritage Commission is not required at this time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Characteristics

302 Royal Avenue is a sloping corner site downtown. The property is double fronting with Royal Avenue at the front and Cunningham Street at the rear. The slope is down towards Cunningham. These two streets intersect with Merivale Street on the side of the property, across which is Qayqayt Elementary School. There are two buildings on site, both described below. Also on the site are gardens and a small collection of significant trees. A site context map is included as Appendix A.

Museum & Archives Annex Building

The Annex Building is two storeys (upper floor and basement) with a flat roof, and is at the rear of the property along Cunningham Street. The main entrance is located at grade level facing towards Royal Avenue (north/west). Due to the slope, the basement is at grade level at Cunningham Street (south/east). The building is approximately 474 square metres (5, 100 square feet) with a foot print of approximately 246 square meters (2, 650 square feet).

The building's structure is primarily composed of concrete block construction and the building was erected in 1964. It is not considered to have heritage value and is in poor condition with failing components that require costly repairs and annual maintenance. Current photographs of the building are in Appendix A.

Irving House Heritage Value

Irving House was built in 1865 and is one of the oldest buildings in the province. Irving House has a direct link to the earliest pioneer development of New Westminster, and has been evaluated as having very high heritage value for the city and region. For further details on its historic value and photographs, see the site's Statement of Significance in Appendix B.

The house faces Royal Avenue though is very close, but not attached, to the Annex at the rear. This project does not contemplate any interventions to Irving House itself.

Heritage Protection

The property is protected by a Heritage Designation Bylaw, and the Irving House is listed on the City and Canadian Heritage Registers. As such, changes to the property, if any, would require a Heritage Alteration Permit (HAP) issued by Council or the Director of Development Services. Through the HAP process, any changes proposed would be evaluated against the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* which Council endorsed for these application types in 2008. The HAP process does not typically include public consultation or review by the Community Heritage Commission, unless the Director or Council provide this instruction.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Most of the City's museum collections have been, or are in the process of being, removed from the Annex Building. Primarily, the City's museum collections are now located within the City's Anvil Centre. Given that the Annex Building is no longer being used in its intended manner and that the annual maintenance requirements are costly, the City is engaging in a Feasibility Study to explore opportunities for the future of the site. Specifically, the Study would recommend an approach on redevelopment, which could include renovation, demolition, new construction, or a combination thereof.

Maintaining the integrity of Irving House will be a key consideration through the Feasibility Study. The Statement of Significance and the list of the Character Defining Elements (CDEs) for the site will be continually referenced and considered through the process. The Feasibility Study will also use a reconciliation or decolonizing lens, as per Council's Strategic Priorities (#5 of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan).

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMISSION

The purpose of this memo is to notify the members of the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) that a Feasibility Study of the site is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2021. This memo is for information only and a recommendation from the CHC is not required at this time.

The CHC will be engaged on the progress of this work at a later date, as appropriate or as directed by Council and City management.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Site Context Map and Photographs

Appendix B: Statement of Significance (SOS) – 302 Royal Avenue

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Karen Campbell, Project Manager, Civic Buildings & Properties

This report was reviewed by:

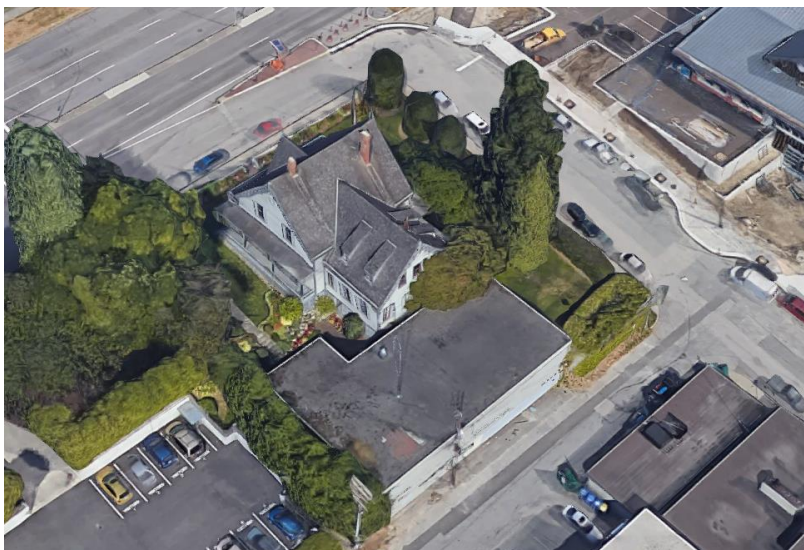
Rob McCullough, Manager, Museums & Heritage Services, and

Britney Dack, Senior Heritage Planner



Attachment A
Site Context Map and Photographs





Images:

- (Top) Irving House [from Google Street view]
- (Middle) Museum & Archives Annex Building
- (Bottom) Aerial view of the site [from Google 3D view]

Attachment *B*
Statement of Significance



Canada's
Historic Places

Lieux patrimoniaux
du Canada

1.0 Irving House

302 Royal Avenue, New Westminster, British Columbia

2.0 Image(s)



Front elevation



Oblique view

3.0 Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

Irving House is a large, one and one-half storey plus basement wood-frame residence, designed in the Gothic Revival style, located on its original site at the corner of Royal Avenue and Merivale Street in the New Westminster neighbourhood of Albert Crescent. Irving House is remarkable for the extent to which its original exterior and interior elements have survived. Operated as an historic house museum, it also includes a collection of many original furnishings from the Irving family.

Heritage Value

Irving House is a direct link to the earliest pioneer development of New Westminster. The city was founded by the Royal Engineers as the colonial capital of the Mainland colony of British Columbia in 1859. After the Royal Engineers were disbanded in 1863, many of them stayed to help build New Westminster as a center of trade and commerce. Irving House dates from the time of the first development of civilian structures in the new community. Completed in April, 1865, it is one of the oldest extant buildings in the province.

Irving House is valued for its association with Captain William and Elizabeth Jane Irving and their family. Captain Irving arrived in New Westminster in 1859 and established a successful riverboat trading business on the Lower Fraser River where he became known as "King of the River." Irving invested in the B.C. and Victoria Steam Navigation Company, which later became the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company, and was a leading citizen in New Westminster, a Mason, a founding member of the St. Andrew's Society, an honorary member of the Hyack Fire Company, a member of the committee to study the terms of B.C.'s union with the Dominion of Canada, and a city councillor. Ownership passed through three generations of the Irving family before the house was acquired by the City of New Westminster in 1950.

This house is of architectural importance as a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture and as an example of Mid-Victorian era domestic taste, and reflects the status attained by the Irvings in the early days of the city. It is a testament to the skill of architect James Syme (1832-1881), who appears to have adapted the design from a pattern book, and the abilities of its builder, Thomas W. Graham. The interior retains many original features, including wallpaper, plasterwork, furnishings and carpets, that are important as a demonstration of the high degree of design and craftsmanship that was available in New Westminster in the 1860s.

The heritage value of this house also lies in its interpretive value, as the oldest historic house museum in B.C. The museum was established in 1950 and is an important cultural feature for the interpretation of New Westminster's heritage to the public. On display in the house is a collection of period furniture, including a number of original pieces from the Irving family. The City of New Westminster continues to own the house and operates it as part of the civic museum and archives. It represents an important period in the growth of the City and demonstrates to visitors the lifestyle, possessions, and aspirations of the pioneers who helped to establish the City of New Westminster.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Irving House include its:

- location on Royal Avenue at the corner of Merivale Street, on a site sloping towards the Fraser River, with the basement exposed at the rear
- form and scale as expressed in the rectangular plan, one and one-half storey plus basement height and symmetrical massing
- side gable roof with a front gable wall dormer over the central door to the second floor balcony
- wooden construction, including wooden framing, wide lapped redwood weatherboard siding and wooden trim
- elements of the Gothic Revival style including extensive carpenter ornamentation, decorative scroll-cut bargeboards and balustrades, lathe-turned finials at the roof edges, and trefoil attic windows
- wraparound verandah, incorporating the original full open front verandah with later additions around the sides of the house, including square chamfered columns with brackets

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- Palladian window and door assembly on the second-floor front facade
 - fenestration, including: 2-over-2 double-hung wooden-sash windows with external shutters; ground floor French doors that open onto the verandah from the two front rooms; and stained glass insets in the side door on the north facade
 - original front door with glass sidelights and transoms
 - internal brick chimneys with corbelled tops
 - brick foundation walls
 - interior features that date to the time of construction, including original plasterwork (such as ceiling medallions, cornices and rope mouldings), wallpaper (such as the foil wallpaper in the front two rooms that dates from 1865), woodwork (such as doors, floors and trim), fireplaces, staircases and gas lighting fixtures
 - other interior features as adapted or added by the Irving family, such as the bronze newel post statue and electric lighting fixtures
 - collection of period furniture, including a number of original pieces from the Irving family
 - setting within a manicured garden with mature holly and cedar trees and a replicated wooden