

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Community Heritage Commission **Date:** July 6, 2022
From: Amanda Mackaay, Planner **File:** PAR01415
Item #: 2022-516
Subject: Heritage Review: 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue

PURPOSE

To review the heritage value of the buildings and provide a recommendation on demolition.

SUMMARY

A Pre-Application Review (PAR) inquiry has been received for an infill townhouse development on seven properties located from 1501 to 1521 Sixth Avenue. During the PAR process, two buildings from the collection were identified as potentially having heritage value: 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue (constructed in 1939 and 1946 respectively). Neither building is legally protected by bylaw, nor are they currently listed on the City's Heritage Register or Inventory. However, both buildings are over 50 years old and retain elements of their original styles. As such, Heritage Assessments were prepared for the buildings and the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) is being asked to review them to determine if heritage retention is warranted in either case.

GUIDING POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Heritage Policy

50 Years and Older Heritage Review Policy

The City's heritage review policy is that demolition applications for a building or structure older than 50 years is automatically forwarded to the Planning Division for review and sign-off. Demolitions reviewed by staff may be referred to the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) for comment, if they are deemed to have sufficient heritage significance to warrant further consideration by the CHC.

Demolition Permits

Demolition Permits are issued by the Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development. In the case of a rezoning and some other types of development applications, retention or protection of buildings (for example, through a Heritage Designation Bylaw) may be negotiated on behalf of Council, regardless of whether they were previously identified through listing on the Register or Inventory.

Development Policy

The subject sites are currently zoned “Neighbourhood Single Detached Residential Dwelling Districts (NR-2)” which does not allow for townhouses. Therefore, a development application, such as a rezoning or Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA), is required. Council could consider either development application to allow townhouses, as the site is designated for “Infill Townhouses” in the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP). The designation envisions small scale, side-by-side townhouses and rowhouses which are compatible with areas of single detached housing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Characteristics and Context

The subject site is comprised of seven properties located in the West End neighbourhood, which are situated on the north side of Sixth Avenue, between Fourteenth and Sixteenth Streets. The subject properties contain lots with existing single detached dwellings built in the 1940s and 50s.

Located to the east of the subject site at 1423 Sixth Avenue, is a 1907 pioneer cottage house. The houses located directly behind subject site, backing on the shared lane, are single-detached houses built between 1907 and 1992. The houses on the south side of Sixth Avenue are comprised of newer duplexes built within the last 10 to 15 years, as well as a single-detached house built in 1949 (1508 Sixth Ave), and two single-detached homes: 1520 and 1524 Sixth Avenue, built in 1912 and 1909 respectively. A site context map is provided in Appendix A.

Development Proposal

A Pre-Application Review (PAR) inquiry has been received for an infill townhouse development on seven properties located from 1501 to 1521 Sixth Avenue. As all the buildings on this site were older than fifty years, staff reviewed their heritage value during the PAR process. From that review, two buildings from the collection were identified as potentially having greater significance: 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue (constructed in 1939 and 1946 respectively), which are described below. Neither building is legally protected by bylaw, nor are they currently listed on the City’s Heritage Register or Inventory. The remaining five mid-century houses on the site would be demolished.

Description of Houses to be Evaluated

1509 Sixth Avenue (Rowson Residence)

The house at 1509 Sixth Avenue, known as the Rowson Residence, was built in 1939 and is on lot of approximately 712 sq. m. (7,663 sq. ft.) in size. It is one and a half stories and has a density of about 0.33 floor space ratio (FSR).

It is a variation of a Storybook style house, common to the 1930s and 1940s. Accentuating the main entry is a prominent architectural element; a steep gabled roof form that frames the slightly recessed, centrally-set entry. The front of the house also features a stepped terrace leading to the main entry (due to the significant slope of the property from south to north). Photographs of the building in its current condition are available on pages 18 to 23 of its Heritage Assessment in Appendix B.

1513 Sixth Avenue (Ritchie Residence)

Known as the Ritchie Residence, 1513 Sixth Avenue is a post-war bungalow style house built in 1946. Located on a 666 sq.m. (7,159 sq.ft.) lot, it is one-storey with a basement, comprising a density of about 0.35 FSR. The design represents the rapid departure from houses constructed in the 1920s and early 1930s; it features a low-set form and low-pitched roof, no second floor or dormers, a livable basement, and minimal sized porch. Photographs of the building in its current condition are available on pages 29 to 32 of the Heritage Assessment in Appendix B.

Condition of Buildings

Based on current photos and heritage assessments (Appendix B), both the Rowson and Ritchie Residences are in good condition. They both feature a simple, yet well maintained terraced front yard and a well-defined rear yard with mature vegetation.

Demolition of Remaining Houses

Per the City's policy for buildings older than 50 years, staff completed a heritage review for the remaining five houses, all of which represent the vernacular mid-century building style, and have varying degrees of integrity and condition. Their ages are as follows:

Address on Sixth Ave	Building Age	Developer
1501	1947	H. Randall
1505	1945	J.R. Leslie
1515	1945	J.A. Miller
1517	1950	F. Herman
1521	1946	W. Oliver

These houses are considered to have relatively low heritage value and have been approved for demolition. Current photos of the above noted houses can be found in Appendix C.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Heritage Value of the 1939 Rowson Residence (1509 Sixth Avenue)

The Heritage Assessment indicates that the Rowson Residence at 1509 Sixth Avenue has some heritage value, connected to its design, historical development pattern, and neighborhood context.

The building has been evaluated as having architectural significance due to notable design elements including:

- the central-set recessed entry, with the original wood door and small arched window set below the steep-pitched gable,
- protruding bay on the west side,
- rounded soffit edges, and
- glass bottle stucco.

The house is noted as having historical significance as it was built at a time when the West End neighborhood was developing as a result of the economic growth spurred by the war. The heritage professional's assessment deemed the house meets their threshold for a recommendation of retention (where the author encourages buildings with scores of 20 or greater to be retained, and this house scored 21 points).

The house is situated amongst a cluster of six houses of the same era, which lends it heritage value. However, the demolition of the adjacent houses to facilitate a proposed townhouse development would diminish its heritage merit such it may no longer be worthy of retention. The assessment also notes that any upgrades to the exterior that may be required to meet the BC Building Code for strata development, which would likely further diminish its integrity and therefore heritage value.

What might be the impacts of the proposed surrounding demolitions on the house's heritage merit?

Given the information provided in the heritage assessment, does this building have enough heritage value to be considered for a Heritage Designation Bylaw? Would that change following demolition of the surrounding buildings?

Is this site an appropriate candidate for the use of a Heritage Revitalization Agreement? If so, what level of development regulation relaxations or other benefits should be considered in that application process?

Heritage Value of the 1946 Ritchie Residence (1513 Sixth Avenue)

The Heritage Assessment concludes that the Ritchie Residence (1513 Sixth Avenue) does not have adequate heritage merit to be considered worthy of retention. While the house is noted as having some interesting design elements, such as the stone chimney, it is not considered to have any special aesthetic or functional attributes that are of architectural significance. The form of the 1946 house is intact, however there are several alterations, such as the replacement of the front and basement windows with vinyl, which are noticeable and therefore may detract from the heritage character of the house.

Given the information provided in the heritage assessment, does this building have enough heritage value to be considered for a Heritage Designation Bylaw?

Would demolition of this building be a loss of a heritage asset to the community?

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMISSION

The following options are offered for the Commission's consideration:

- 1) That the Community Heritage Commission support further exploration of the **retention of both 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue** as part of any future redevelopment on this site;
- 2) That the Community Heritage Commission support further exploration of the **retention of 1509 Sixth Avenue** as part of any future redevelopment on this site;
- 3) That the Community Heritage Commission recommend that the Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development issue **a Demolition Permit for 1513 Sixth Avenue**;
- 4) That the Community Heritage Commission recommend that the Director of Climate Action, Planning and Development **issue a Demolition Permit for both 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue**; or,
- 5) The Community Heritage Commission provide alternative feedback, based on their discussion.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Site Context Map

Appendix B: Heritage Assessments for 1509 and 1513 Sixth Avenue

Appendix C: Current Photos of 1501,1505,1515,1517,1521 Sixth Avenue

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