

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

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

From: Athena von Hausen,
Development Planner **File:** OCP00033
REZ00916

Item #: [Report Number]

Subject: **Heritage Review (Demolition): 909-915 Twelfth Street**

PURPOSE

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

SUMMARY

A redevelopment application for a five-storey residential building at 909-915 Twelfth Street would result in the demolition of a 1911 house along with three mid-century commercial buildings. The proposed development is consistent with the Official Community Plan and therefore can be considered by Council. However, the house is over 100 years old, and as such it is being reviewed for heritage value by staff and the Community Heritage Commission as part of the redevelopment process. Also as part of the process, it was identified that Croton Studios was located on this site which could be considered intangible heritage.

GUIDING POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Development Policy

Official Community Plan (OCP) Land Use Designation

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is a document that sets out the City's anticipated future land uses to guide development. The subject properties are designated for Residential Multiple Unit Buildings (RM) in the OCP. This designation is intended to provide for a mix of small to moderately sized medium density multi-unit residential buildings with up to six storeys in height. The designation also outlines that the development of multiple unit buildings should be sympathetic to and respectful of

heritage assets. The proposed building is consistent with the land use designation, which means the development application can be considered by Council.

Zoning Bylaw and Development Permit Area

The subject properties are zoned Community Commercial Medium Rise (C2-A). The intent of this zone is to “allow mixed use development consisting of pedestrian oriented commercial businesses and three storeys of residential development above”. The site would need to be rezoned to a Comprehensive Development Zone to permit the proposed use as the development is over three storeys in height and does not incorporate a commercial use at grade. A Development Permit would also be required as part of the application, in order to govern form and character of the new building.

Heritage Policy

Heritage Protection

The buildings are not legally protected by bylaw or listed on the City’s Heritage Register or the City’s Heritage Resource Inventory (1986).

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 may be referred to the Community Heritage Commission (CHC) for comment if it is deemed by the Planning Division to have sufficient heritage significance.

100 Year and Older Heritage Review Policy

In 2020, Council approved a revised heritage review policy, which highlights the City’s interest in retaining New Westminster’s oldest buildings. As such, Demolition Permit applications for buildings that are 100 years and older require a Heritage Assessment (see Attachment A) and review by the Community Heritage Commission.

If a Heritage Assessment identifies a building as having heritage value, legislative tools can be used to encourage the retention, rehabilitation, reuse or restoration of the heritage asset. Through the CHC review process, the Commission can recommend to Council the retention of an asset if the asset is deemed to have heritage value.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Characteristics and Context

The subject site consists of three lots (909, 911/913, and 915 Twelfth Street) and the adjacent City-owned lane. The site is located on the corner of Twelfth and London Streets at the edge of the Moody Park Neighbourhood. There are four existing buildings

on site: a 1911 house, as well as a two-storey and a one-storey commercial building, both built in 1948, and a small building from 1959. The 1911 house is located at the rear of the site against the lane. The commercial buildings are located on the front portion of the property along Twelfth Street.

To the northeast of the site are single detached dwellings, most of which are Arts and Crafts or Craftsman bungalows, constructed between the 1920s and 1940s. Across from Twelfth Street are several mixed-use commercial retail buildings that were all constructed in the 1980s. A site context map and aerial image is provided in Appendix A.

Within a block of the site there are two houses that were both constructed around the same time period as Arkle House (see below) and included on the Heritage Register. These include 1110 Dublin Street (1911) which was the residence of William and Elizabeth Plows and 829 Twelfth Street (1908) which is recognized as the Arthur Hale House. The Plows residence is a modest example of British Arts and Crafts design and the Hale house is an example of an Edwardian-style house. The Hale house has a commercial addition similar to that of Arkle House, added in 1938 which is indicative of the expansion of small-scale neighbourhood commercial uses during this time period.

Project Description

The proposal would see demolition of all four existing buildings in favour of a new mid-rise building with 40 residential units (see drawings in Appendix C). The proposed development is consistent with the Official Community Plan and therefore can be considered by Council through a rezoning application.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Heritage Value

Croton Studio

The three mid-century commercial buildings on site (pictured in Appendix D) are not considered to be strong candidates for retention at this time. Per the Heritage Review policy, due to the buildings' ages, they would not otherwise require further assessment or review.

However, one of the 1948 buildings was home to Croton Studio. Croton was the official municipal photography studio for New Westminster. Their clients also included CKNW Radio and the Vancouver Sun. Croton Studio was established on Twelfth Street by brothers Don F. and Roy M. LeBlanc in 1949. Around 1960, the studio moved to Kingsway in Burnaby. Though, it continued operating locally, including in New Westminster, until 1980. Their fonds are now located in the City Archives, with images at the Vancouver and Provincial archives as well. When the City received the fonds, it included more than 4,000 envelopes of negatives.

Could this site be considered to have intangible heritage value?

If so, would it be appropriate for that value to be represented in the proposed new development? Or is the substantial archival record sufficient documentation of the history?

Arkle House

Due to the age of the house, a heritage assessment was requested from the applicant (Appendix B) per the Heritage Review policy for buildings older than 100 years. The assessment outlines that the house was constructed for Christopher Arkle. The house looks to be a basic four-square style common from about 1905 to 1930. However, photographic evidence shows that it was originally an Edwardian style with a steeply pitched front-facing gable roof, a large front porch, exposed rafter ends, and other typical Edwardian design features.

From 1939-1949 the design and massing were heavily altered. The most significant change was the removal of the front porch and upper deck to allow for a commercial building to be constructed at the front. Based on historic photographs, windows have been removed and also added over time on the other three sides of the building.

Currently, the building has a rectangular floor plan with no decorative elements. It is clad in stucco and has a flat roof with a projecting overhang and narrow cornice. The front (west) elevation is close against the commercial building, blocking it from Twelfth Street. Photographs of the house are available in Appendix B.

The heritage assessment provides the following evaluation:

- The house has historic value for its age but has lost all aesthetic value;
- The original owner/builder did not live in the house, nor was the family of particular importance to the development of New Westminster;
- There are no social, cultural, spiritual, or scientific values identified;
- The house can barely be seen from the street and has been substantially altered over time; and
- The character-defining elements for the house could include the two small diamond windows on the front elevation, which may or may not have the original glass.

Does this building have sufficient heritage value to warrant retention or legal protection as part of a redevelopment?

Heritage Inspired Design Elements

The assessment concluded that the 1911 house has minimal heritage value, though some is present due to its age and the two unusual small diamond windows on the front

elevation (which are the only confirmed original windows on the building). The proposed architectural design of the new mid-rise building incorporates diamond-shaped windows at the corner of Twelfth and London Streets, to reflect this historic element. See an image of the draft design in Appendix C.

Should the diamond windows be considered a character defining element for the house?

If so, and given the heritage value discussion above, is it warranted for this character element to be reflected in the design for the new building?

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMISSION

The Community Heritage Commission is being asked to provide feedback in relation to the heritage value of both the 1911 house and the site’s association with Croton Studio. As such, the following options are offered for the Commission’s consideration:

- 1) That the Community Heritage Commission recommend that Council consider retention of the 1911 Arkle House as part of the proposed redevelopment application at 909-915 Twelfth Street; or
- 2) That the Community Heritage Commission recommend the Director of Development Services issue demolition permits for all existing buildings at 909-915 Twelfth Street; and
- 3) That the Community Heritage Commission recommend the intangible heritage of the site be reflected in the design of the proposed redevelopment at 909-915 Twelfth Street; or
- 4) That the Community Heritage Commission provides an alternative recommendation, based on the elements identified in their discussion.

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Site Context Map
- Appendix B: Heritage Assessment for House
- Appendix C: Architectural Drawings
- Appendix D: Photographs of the Commercial Buildings

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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