



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: May 31st, 2010
Contact: James Boldt
Contact No.: 604.873.7449
RTS No.: 08735
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: June 22, 2010

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning in consultation with the Director of Legal Services

SUBJECT: Addition to the Vancouver Heritage Register, Designation, and Heritage Revitalization Agreement - 435 Helmcken Street

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the building located at 435 Helmcken Street be added to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, and that it be designated as protected heritage property.
- B. THAT Council authorize the Director of Legal Services to prepare and sign on the City's behalf a Heritage Revitalization Agreement for the property located at 435 Helmcken Street to:
 - secure the protection and long-term preservation of the proposed heritage building; and
 - grant a density bonus equal to 1,231 square feet of floor area available for transfer off-site, and a zoning variance to allow the building to be converted from residential use to certain commercial uses, and vice versa.
- C. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment a by-law to authorize the Heritage Revitalization Agreement and a by-law to designate the building located at 435 Helmcken Street as protected heritage property.
- D. THAT the Heritage Revitalization Agreement shall be prepared, completed, registered, and given priority, to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services and the Director of Planning.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of A, B, C, and D.

COUNCIL POLICY

- *Transfer of Density Policy*
- *Heritage Policies and Guidelines*

Council's Heritage Policies and Guidelines state that the buildings "*identified on the Vancouver Heritage Register have heritage significance*" and that "*the City's long term goal is to protect through voluntary designation as many resources on the Vancouver Heritage Register as possible.*"

On July 28th, 2009, Council resolved to limit the creation of transferable density to allow the density bank to go through a re-balancing period. At the same time Council supported bringing the three buildings (referred to as "houses") located at 431, 435, and 439 Helmcken Street forward for consideration at a public hearing given previous commitments and the modest amount of proposed transferable density being created (1,231 square feet on each of the three properties for a total of 3,693 square feet).

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report seeks Council's approval to add the house at 435 Helmcken Street to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, to designate it as protected heritage property, and for the City to enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) to secure the long term preservation of the house. The proposed HRA creates 1,231 square feet of transferable density for the site and grants a zoning variance to allow the existing building to be converted from residential uses to certain commercial uses, and vice versa. Staff support the creation of the proposed amount of transferable density and the zoning variance for 435 Helmcken Street as compensation to the owner for the designation and long term preservation of the building. Council previously approved the heritage designation and HRAs for 431 and 439 Helmcken Street. Approval of the designation and HRA for 435 Helmcken Street as recommended in this report will complete a group of five heritage buildings in a representation of an historic end-of-block configuration.

BACKGROUND

The site is located in the Downtown South neighbourhood west of Yaletown in an area zoned 'Downtown District' (see the map on page 1 of Appendix 'A'). The zoning (area 'L1') permits densities up to 5.0 FSR (Floor Space Ratio). However, the property would qualify for at most 3.0 FSR due to its small size. Residential uses and various commercial uses are permitted, with some restrictions on retail and services uses. The house at 435 Helmcken Street is located between the houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street (see the photo in Appendix 'A'). It is adjacent to the approved redevelopment of a large site at 1098 Richards Street which permits construction of a residential building and the relocation of two heritage houses at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street to the corner of Helmcken and Richards Streets to create, along with the three Helmcken Street houses, a representation of an historic residential end-of-block development once common in the area (see the historic map and drawings in Appendix 'A'). On October 28th, 2008, Council approved the addition of the houses located at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street to the Vancouver Heritage Register and designated them as

part of the development application for 1098 Richards Street. On September 8th, 2009, Council approved the addition of the houses located at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street to the Register and their designation and HRAs. At that time, the report to Council clarified that staff were pursuing the designation of all three Helmcken Street houses, but were unable to bring forward 435 Helmcken Street. The owner of 435 Helmcken Street is now prepared to proceed.

Downtown South Houses

The house at 435 Helmcken Street is currently one of seventeen remaining houses reviewed by heritage staff as a part of a study approved by Council in 2005 to assess the value of the remaining pre-second world war houses in the Downtown South area west of Yaletown. Of the seventeen houses, ten are currently listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register and of these nine are designated as protected heritage properties (including 431 and 439 Helmcken Street and the two Richards Street houses). The remaining seven houses (including 435 Helmcken Street) currently have no heritage status. However, the Vancouver Heritage Commission has concluded that all seventeen houses are valued as increasingly rare examples of the downtown south area's early development and that all of the remaining houses are supported for addition to the Vancouver Heritage Register.

DISCUSSION

Heritage Value

The three Helmcken Street houses, were built between 1907 and 1909 and are good examples of modest 1½ storey, middle class, Edwardian-era housing once common in the area. Over time (but particularly after the 1960s) almost all of the housing in the Downtown South neighbourhood was demolished to make way for other development. The remaining houses therefore are valued as rare examples of the area's early residential development, as well as for their sheer endurance in their original form, character, and sometimes even use.

The three Helmcken Street houses also reflect the early development of the original Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) lands including typical "end-of-block" development which involved the construction of small buildings oriented to face the flanking street at the end of a block (see the historic map on page 2 of Appendix 'A'). The Helmcken Street houses are the only surviving set of end-of-block houses in their original locations in the entire Downtown South neighbourhood, and are valued for this. Together the five houses (the two relocated Richards Street houses and the three Helmcken Street houses) will form a striking and rare representation of an historic development pattern, and will also contribute to the diversity of form and character in a neighbourhood which has seen extensive redevelopment in recent years.

Condition of the Property

The house at 435 Helmcken Street is in excellent condition and has been renovated and repaired in the last couple of decades. The Vancouver Heritage Commission and staff conclude that these renovations do not detract from the heritage value of the house, and therefore no changes or improvements are being sought. While the two relocated heritage houses (1062 and 1080 Richards Street) will be rehabilitated to their original character, including historic colours, 435 Helmcken Street and the other two Helmcken Street houses will be maintained in their current condition, which will speak to the theme of adaptability

during different periods of the neighbourhood's evolution. Once designated, a Heritage Alteration Permit would be required to alter the exterior of the house in the future.

Incentive Approach and Zoning Variance

On October 28th, 2008, as part of the approval of the HRAs and designation of the two Richards Street Houses, Council approved an arrangement which provided for two parking spaces for each of the three Helmcken Street houses to be located in the new development at 1098 Richards Street as an incentive to the Helmcken Street houses' owners to agree to the designation and long term protection of their houses. The agreements securing the parking spaces were completed in April, 2009. Financial analysis by Real Estate Services staff indicated that additional incentive is required to sufficiently compensate the Helmcken Street houses' owners. On-site bonus density cannot be accommodated on the small properties, and as no additions or new development are proposed, DCLs are not required and therefore DCL relief is not applicable. Staff conclude that, other than the provision of the parking spaces described above, the creation of transferable density is the only other viable incentive in this case.

On July 28th, 2009, Council resolved to limit the creation of transferable density with a few exceptions, including the Helmcken Street houses. On September 8th, 2009, Council approved the designation and HRAs for 431 and 439 Helmcken Street. The approved HRAs include the creation of 1,231 square feet of transferable density for each property and a zoning variance to permit the houses to be converted from residential use to office, institutional, cultural, and recreational uses (and vice versa). The Downtown District (DD) zoning for the area limits the density for such commercial uses to 1.0 FSR (floor space ratio) whereas the existing floor area of each building is approximately 1.8 FSR (1,960 square feet). The zoning variance permits the uses noted above without the 1.0 FSR limit.

The transferable density and the zoning variance proposed for 435 Helmcken Street are identical to those approved for 431 and 439 Helmcken Street. Staff support the zoning variance and the creation of the very small amount of transferable density (1,231 square feet) for 435 Helmcken Street as compensation to the owner for the designation and long term preservation of the proposed heritage building.

Compatibility with Existing Zoning and Land Use Regulations

The intent of DD zoning is, in part, to *"...improve the general environment of the Downtown District as an attractive place in which to live, work, shop, and visit... to ensure that all buildings and developments in the Downtown District meet the highest standards of design and amenity for the benefit of all users..."* and *"...to create a distinctive public realm and a unique and pleasing streetscape in the Downtown District."*

The streetscape created by the Helmcken Street houses and the two Richards Street houses will enhance the public realm in the neighbourhood, including the existing bike route and future Greenway along Helmcken Street. The HRAs for the Helmcken Street houses allow for residential and commercial uses in the houses which assist in providing jobs and residential uses in the downtown core. The end-of-block configuration created by the five houses and their uses is consistent with the zoning.

Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

On November 19th, 2007, the Vancouver Heritage Commission unanimously supported the addition of the five houses to the Vancouver Heritage Register and on February 25th, 2008, supported the proposed historic end-of-block representation comprising the Helmcken Street houses as part of the review of the development application for 1098 Richards Street.

Financial Proforma Evaluation

The Director of Real Estate Services advises that proposed incentives requested as compensation for the designation and long term preservation of 435 Helmcken Street, are supportable and provide no undue profit.

Public Consultation and Notification

As part of the review of the development application for 1098 Richards Street, which included the proposed streetscape created by the five houses, a site sign was erected and 2,439 letters were sent to surrounding property owners. Seven letters of response were received, none which expressed any heritage concerns.

Greener Buildings Policy

As the HRAs for the Helmcken Street houses were reviewed in advance of the May 13th, 2008 application deadline for the adoption of the City's "Rezoning Policy for Greener Buildings" requirement, staff concluded that the policy will not apply to the Helmcken Street houses. Nonetheless, staff note that all the Helmcken Street houses have been thermally upgraded in recent years and that the overall open green space of the houses' yards (which are extremely small) is adequate.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approval of the report's recommendations will have no financial implications with respect to the City's operating expenditures, fees, or staffing.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends a number of actions which will protect the building at 435 Helmcken Street and complete a representation of an historic end-of-block configuration in the Downtown South neighbourhood. Approval of the creation of 1,231 sq. ft. of transferable density for the property will provide an incentive for the owner to designate and preserve the building. The owner has agreed to the heritage designation of the house and is prepared to waive future demands for compensation. Therefore it is recommended that Council approve the addition of the house at 435 Helmcken Street to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, its designation, and the proposed Heritage Revitalization Agreement.

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DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL AND REPORT CONCURRENCES

General Mgr./Dept. Head:

Report Date: May 31st, 2010

Date:

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Phone No.: 604.873.7449

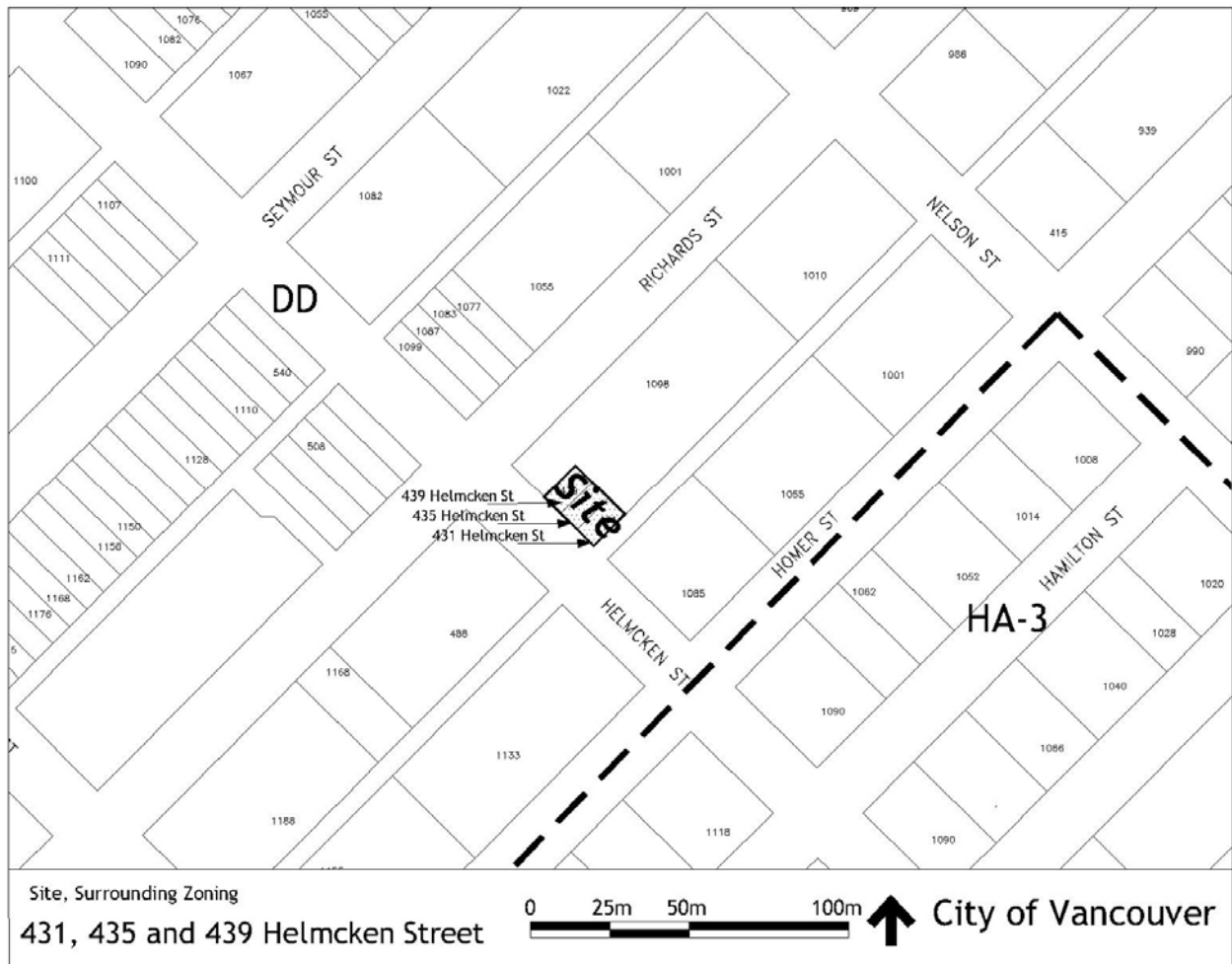
This report has been prepared in consultation with the departments listed to the right, and they concur with its contents.

Concurring Departments:

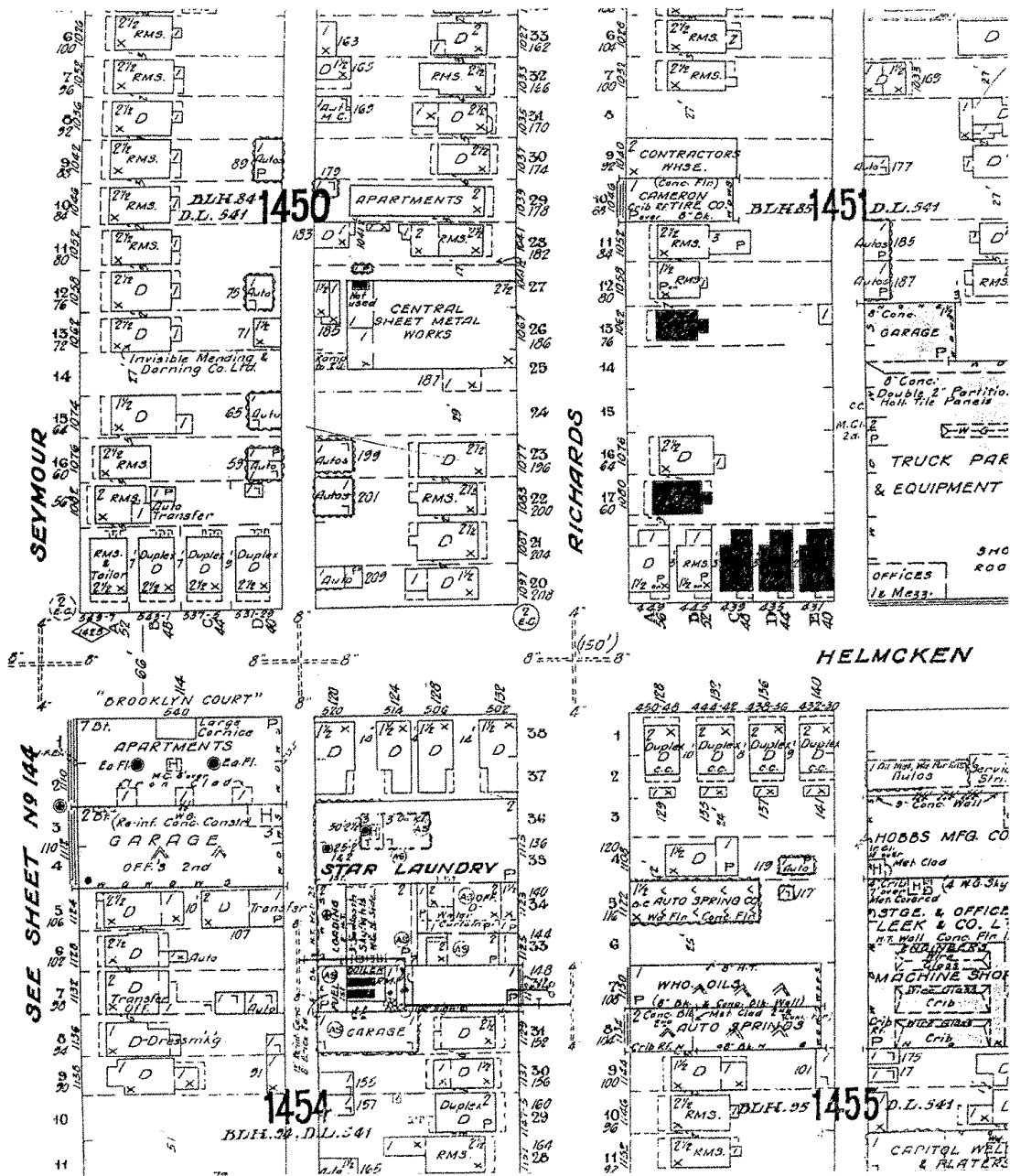
Legal- Frances J. Connell/Yvonne Liljefors

Signature

Real Estate Services- Michael Flanigan



Location Map - 435 Helmcken Street



Early map showing the existing houses at 431, 435, and 439 Helmcken Street (shaded). Also indicated are the designated houses at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street which are to be relocated to the corner of Helmcken Street and Richards Street as part of the approved development of the site at 1098 Richards Street (see Appendix 'B'). None of the other houses shown in this map now exist. Of the hundreds of houses which once occupied the Downtown South neighbourhood, only seventeen have survived.



Photo 1: The Helmcken Street Houses Looking North

439 Helmcken Street is on the left, 435 Helmcken Street is in the middle, and 431 Helmcken Street is on the right.

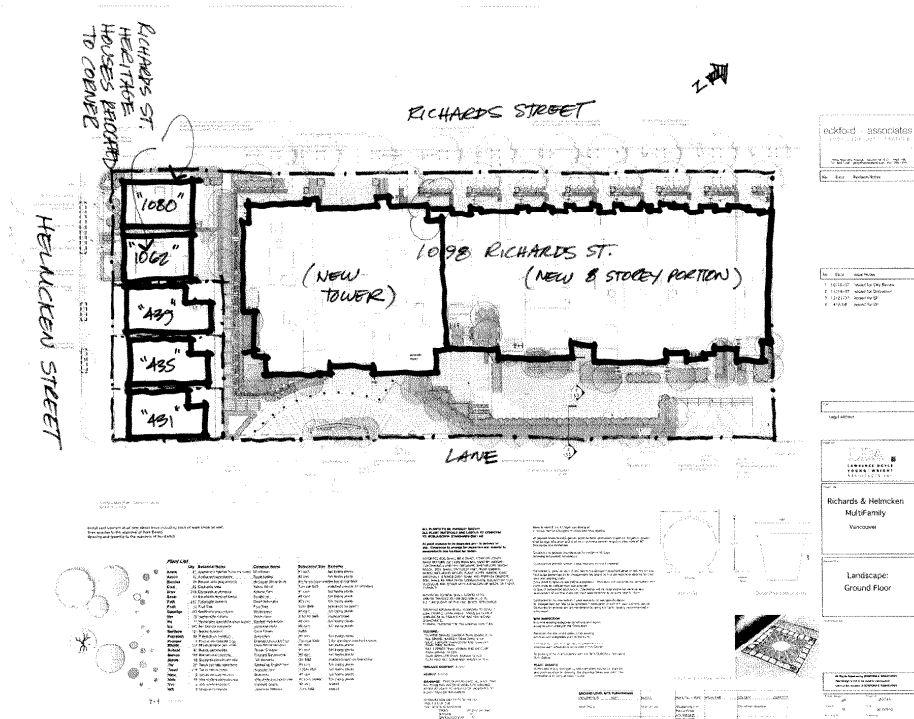
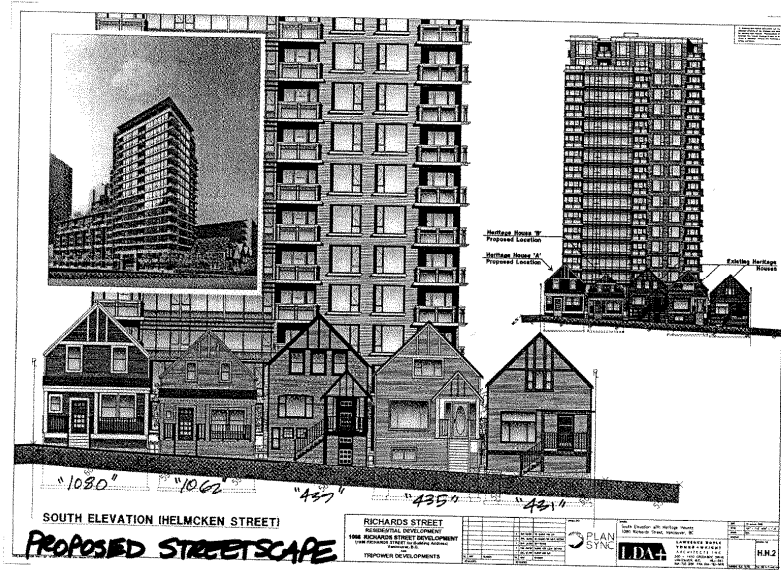


DIAGRAM SHOWING PROPOSED HERITAGE BUILDING LOCATIONS & NEW DEVELOPMENT @ 1098 RICHARDS ST.