



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: General Purposes Committee
From: Marie Fenwick
 Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
Re: Phoenix Net Loft Program

Date: October 18, 2023
File: 06-2052-25-PNET1/Vol 01

Staff Recommendations

- 1) That Option 1 – Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space be endorsed as the future program for the Phoenix Net Loft as detailed in the staff report titled “Phoenix Net Loft Program,” dated October 18, 2023, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services; and
- 2) That staff report back with a detailed program plan, concept design, and proposed capital and operating budget.

CM Fenwick

Marie Fenwick
 Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
 (604-276-4288)

Att. 4

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Facilities Services and Project Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>EJS</i>
Policy Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO
	<i>MB</i>	<i>Gene</i>

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to present options and seek direction on next steps for the primary program for the Phoenix Net Loft in response to the following referrals:

On October 16, 2023 staff received the following referral in response to a delegation by the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society and Linda Barnes:

That staff review the Phoenix Gillnet Loft Project in the context of the existing referral regarding options for the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site.

On November 15, 2021, the following referral was made at the General Purposes Committee:

That the report titled "Phoenix Net Loft - Phase One Public Consultation Results, Guiding Principles, and Next Steps," dated October 12, 2021, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services, be referred back to staff to propose recommendations for further directions and options for general and multi-use flexible programming such as for community needs, arts and artists, First Nation interpretation, farmers and artisans' markets, performance space, and other possibilities.

On February 18, 2020, the following referral was made at the General Purposes Committee:

That the consultation process be referred to staff for additional information on the various program options and the final proposal for the public consultation process, including information on the Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development permit application.

On July 18, 2013, the following referrals were made at the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee:

- (1) Potential use of the Phoenix Gillnet Loft building as an Arts centre and other uses, including a restaurant, with potential funding from the newly established \$4.3 million Statutory Reserve Fund for Arts, Culture and Heritage Capital purposes; and*
- (2) Potential moorage from the Phoenix Net Loft to Phoenix Pond and possibly new deck construction on old piles (shown as deck in Attachment 4), in the adjacent area, outside of any red zone habitat, immediately west of the Phoenix Gillnet Loft to where the Phoenix Cannery once stood. [Attachment 4 – Sketches from Barry Roughton circa 2001]*

Additionally this report addresses the October 11, 2022, resolution:

- (1) That Council approve the naming of the Britannia Shipyard National Historic Site and related historic buildings and waterfront as the "Fisheries Museum of the Pacific at the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site", and applications be made to Federal and Provincial Governments for major funding to complete the site, as recommended in the*

report Steveston National Historic Site: Fisheries Museum of the Pacific, dated September 27, 2022;

(2) That Council approve Part 2 of the report in principal, pending summation of public input and further staff input, so funding applications can be made immediately;

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #1 Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement:

1.1 Continue fostering effective and strategic relationships with other levels of government and Indigenous communities.

1.3 Increase the reach of communication and engagement efforts to connect with Richmond's diverse community.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 Focus Area #6 A Vibrant, Resilient and Active Community:

6.1 Advance a variety of program, services, and community amenities to support diverse needs and interests and activate the community.

6.5 Enhance and preserve arts and heritage assets in the community.

Analysis

Background

Located adjacent to the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site, the Phoenix Net Loft was constructed in 1943 as a facility to dry, mend and store fishing nets. It was part of a collection of historic buildings on the waterfront, constructed to service the fishing and boat building industry in Steveston (Attachments 1 and 2).

The Phoenix Net Loft was an identified heritage building and its character-defining elements included:

- association with the canning and fishing industry in Steveston;
- location on the riverfront adjacent to the Britannia Shipyards buildings;
- scale, massing, and heavy timber construction; and
- details of its construction including board and batten siding, unique gabled roof design and piling foundation.

The Phoenix Net Loft sat over water within a Provincial Waterlot lease which expires in 2047. The City is required to have the consent of the Province of British Columbia before undertaking any activities outside the current lease agreement and Management Plan and this will need to be considered in planning. The current Management Plan associated with this lease permits use for heritage displays, rentals and community events, boat moorage, and recreational use.

The Phoenix Net Loft was located in an area designated for Maritime Mixed Use in the Steveston Area Plan and Park in the Official Community Plan. The intention of the Maritime Mixed Use land use designation is to encourage the development of commercial and industrial uses that support or complement the maritime economy and to accommodate parking to support these uses. Further policies indicate supporting the use of the Phoenix Net Loft for commercial fishing related activities.

The upland portion of the Phoenix Net Loft has two zones: the Steveston Heritage Maritime (ZIS3) zone which provides for the commercial fishing industry and the retention and reuse of an existing structure (the Phoenix Net Loft), and the School and Institutional (SI) zone which provides for a range of educational, recreational, park and community oriented uses.

Following direction on the future use of the Phoenix Net Loft, amendments to the Steveston Area Plan and Zoning Bylaw may be required.

On February 24, 2020, Council approved \$19.44 million for deconstruction, select salvage and reconstruction of a shell building. There remains \$17.7 million in the capital budget for the reconstruction. The Council-approved reconstruction includes basic facility upgrades required for public occupancy on both levels such as lighting, seismic upgrades and fire suppression, raising the building 0.9 meter for flood protection, replacing the piles, and installing a corrugated tin roof. The resulting facility would provide approximately 20,000 square foot of space, 10,000 square foot on each of two floors, suitable for public occupancy but without any amenities or climate control to support year-round use.

The building was deconstructed in 2021 with a portion of the original building materials salvaged and stored for reuse. As detailed in a memo to Mayor and Council dated October 5, 2020, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services and the Director, Facilities and Project Development, through consultation with a Heritage Architect, staff identified a selection of key elements of the existing structure suitable for potential re-use within a reconstructed facility. The elements and quantities salvaged based on heritage value, condition of the materials and the ability to safely reintegrate into a reconstructed facility include:

- second level floor boards;
- 20% of roof trusses, interior columns, and second level beams and joists; and
- two windows and four doors.

The intent is for these materials to be reused in the reconstructed building in a manner that supports heritage interpretation.

Building reconstruction remains on hold until Council has endorsed a program and budget necessary to implement the selected program. Like-for-like reconstruction as initially approved is currently estimated to cost approximately \$33 million with potential program options to be in the range of an additional approximately \$17 – \$26 million for a total project budget of approximately \$50 – \$59 million in 2026 dollars. The high dollar cost per square foot is due to costly heavy timber construction, complex work over water, building in an environmentally sensitive area, and potential project phasing requirements.

2021 Stakeholder Consultation Results

In 2021, in response to Council direction, engagement and planning related to the use of the Phoenix Net Loft as an interpretive centre was completed. Additional information about the consultation process can be found in Attachment 3.

Table 1 outlines the staff recommendations based on feedback from stakeholders that emerged through the 2021 engagement process.

Table 1 – Recommendations for the Phoenix Net Loft Program

Topic	Recommendations
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate good value for taxpayers and community • generate income to sustain operations
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond residents and visitors • all ages, particularly families and youth
Interpretive Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a fun, dynamic environment • highly interactive, hands-on experiences • curriculum-based school programming and teacher training • year-round arts opportunities • serve as a hub to explore the local environment and heritage sites
Interpretative Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local and global environmental issues • First Nations cultural heritage • the fisheries, particularly the experience of being a fisher • culturally diverse communities, but do not repeat what has been done at other sites in Steveston
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer food services and/or shopping opportunities • provide an outlet for local and regional products • provide additional boat moorage and support for recreational boaters
Space and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adaptively reconstruct building for intended use • design for year-round use and seasonal flexibility • celebrate the waterfront location • contribute to Steveston’s sense of place • be part of, or relate to, the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site

The concepts for interpretive and other uses that emerged through discussions with stakeholders included a Fraser River and estuary interpretive centre, a maritime and fishing interpretive centre, a First Nations interpretive centre, public market for local and regional products, and a space for local artists and artisans. Different interpretive and program options and typologies would have different capital and operating impacts that can be further explored in the next phase of planning.

While no single preferred interpretive theme or program use emerged strongly through the stakeholder consultation, there was consensus this is not a suitable location for the new Richmond Museum. Although the location has some alignment with the criteria established for the Richmond Museum in the *Richmond Museum Models Study* presented at the May 21, 2019, General Purposes Committee (e.g., near other cultural amenities), it is not aligned with the vision of the Richmond Museum being in a central location, well-connected to transportation networks. Additionally, the environmental conditions created by the location over the water will create challenges to the display of environmentally sensitive artefacts, and the ability to meet the climate control standards often required to display borrowed artefacts and host travelling exhibitions.

Analysis of Potential Program Options

Based on the existing Council referrals, best practices research, and engagement done to-date, a number of primary program options were considered. The primary program would determine the future facility's principal use. Ancillary uses will be considered as the program is developed. For example, interpretation of the building's heritage would be integrated in all uses and food or retail services could be considered as an ancillary program to many of the options.

Only options that could support reinstating the character-defining elements of the original building, celebrate the waterfront location, and allow for the building to be constructed to meet the needs of the new program were considered. Through this process, an Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space (Recommended), Interpretive Centre, and Arts Centre emerged as the top three potential options.

1) Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space (Recommended)

This option would provide a year-round, mixed-use space that could include a variety of cultural amenities such as interpretation on a variety of themes (permanent and/or temporary), arts uses (studio space, community exhibition space, small performances), and other community uses (markets, events, rentals).

This option would be fully climate-controlled with visitor amenities such as washrooms, back-of-house and storage spaces to service rentals and event use.

Should Council direct staff to pursue this option, staff recommend that the space currently used for rentals and community events in the Seine Net Loft be repurposed as dedicated interpretive space. Displays in both the Phoenix Net Loft and expanded in the Seine Net Loft could speak to interpretive stories identified as gaps in interpretation in the Steveston Heritage Sites Interpretive Framework endorsed by Council on November 14, 2023, including stories of Indigenous Peoples, the significance of the Fraser River, the evolution of West Coast fishing methods and boats, and the history of Cannery Row. The exhibit and program recommendations outlined in the submission titled *Phoenix Gillnet Loft – Living in Harmony* from the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society and the presentation regarding incorporating the arts from Linda Barnes presented at the October 16, 2023 General Purposes Committee Meeting could be accommodated within this option.

This primary use is in alignment with current zoning for the site and the permitted uses of the waterlot lease Management Plan.

The estimated capital cost for this option is approximately \$52 million in 2026 dollars.

2) Interpretive Space

A primary use of the facility for heritage interpretation could range from exhibits and displays similar to what is found in the buildings at Britannia Shipyards, to a high-end destination museum with full visitor service amenities.

Exhibits could speak to interpretive stories identified as gaps in interpretation in the Steveston Heritage Sites Interpretive Framework endorsed by Council on November 14, 2023, including stories of Indigenous Peoples, the significance of the Fraser River, the evolution of West Coast fishing methods and boats, the history of Cannery Row and others.

This option is not recommended as the stakeholder consultation done in 2021 indicated a desire for space that is different to the current offer at Britannia Shipyards. Additionally, as noted above, the Museum Models Study presented to General Purposes Committee on May 21, 2019, does not support this as a preferred location for a new destination museum in Richmond due to its non-central location, its location over the water, and limitations related to parking and transportation.

The estimated capital cost for this option approximately \$59 million in 2026 dollars.

3) Arts Space

A new arts facility could include a mix of artists' studios, community maker space, exhibition space, and/or an artisan market where local artists and artisans could create, show and sell their work.

This option is not recommended as it would offer fewer opportunities for general public to access and engage with the space. Should Council wish to pursue the development of additional spaces exclusively for artists and arts uses, staff recommend that these be considered in the Richmond Arts District (Capstan, Aberdeen and Bridgeport Villages) which the City Centre Area Plan proposes to be a magnet for arts activity and creative services.

The estimated capital cost for this option is approximately \$50 million in 2026 dollars.

4) Additional Options

In addition to the options presented above, the following program uses were explored and are not recommended for further consideration as they did not fit as well with the criteria outlined above and/or for other feasibility constraints listed below:

- Destination Restaurant/Food Hall – Initial work on the feasibility of food service in the Phoenix Net Loft indicates that the addition of a café or restaurant could address the needs of Britannia

Shipyards visitors, enhancing the visitor experience thereby increasing visitation and expanding the average length of visit. However, this program does not fit within the permitted uses of the current zoning or waterlot lease.

- Marina Facility – Should Council wish to pursue the option of moorage from the Phoenix Net Loft to the Phoenix Pond as per the July 18, 2013, referral above, a marina facility use could be explored further. This program would require the construction of additional docks connected to the Phoenix Net Loft.

Next Steps

Should Council endorse the proposed program, staff will:

- contact the Province and inform them of Council's intention for the future use of the Phoenix Net Loft to seek additional information on potential impacts to the lease agreement and for additional information on permitting timelines;
- develop a detailed program plan which would include more extensive public consultation, concept design, and capital and operating budget; and
- report back.

Following endorsement of the detailed program, concept design and capital budget, detailed designs will be required to submit to the Province of British Columbia for permitting. It is anticipated the processing of this permit application could take approximately two years prior to commencing construction.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Based on feedback received through the 2021 consultation process, as well as initial research on a range of program options, staff recommend proceeding with planning for the use of the Phoenix Net Loft as a fully climate controlled Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space. This option would provide a blend of year-round, mixed-use space that could be used for a range of interpretation on a variety of themes, artist uses, and other community uses.



Marie Fenwick
Director, Arts, Culture, and Heritage

- Att. 1: Archival Image of Phoenix Net Loft
2: Aerial Image of Current Site
3: 2021 Stakeholder Consultation Summary
4: Reference Images for Proposed Program - Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space

Archival Image of Phoenix Net Loft



Phoenix Cannery Complex, 1977

Aerial Image of Current Site



2021 Stakeholder Consultation Summary

In 2021, in response to Council direction, engagement and planning related to the use of the Phoenix Net Loft as an interpretive centre was completed. The results of this study were presented to the General Purposes Committee on November 15, 2021, in the report entitled, *Phoenix Net Loft - Phase One Public Consultation Results, Guiding Principles and Next Steps*, dated October 12, 2021, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services. As detailed in this report, part of the standard City approach to program planning for a public facility is a public consultation process to ensure the building program meets the current and future needs of the community. The purposes of a public consultation process are:

- to ensure the building design and programming meet the current and future needs of the general public and stakeholder groups;
- to ensure the development process for the facility is transparent and provides opportunity for input into decision making where appropriate; and
- to ensure the public is informed, engaged, and excited about the benefits to the community of the facility.

Phase One, which was completed, included consultation with key stakeholders to:

- determine target audiences for the facility;
- define key interpretive theme(s); and
- identify amenities and interpretive elements that would be required to support the interpretive themes and attract target audiences.

Consultation with key stakeholders was undertaken between December 2020 and March 2021. Consultation included a variety of engagement methods to better understand the needs, wants and opportunities identified by the community. The following groups were consulted:

1. Britannia Shipyard National Historic Site Society
2. Steveston Historical Society
3. Richmond Museum Society
4. Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society
5. Steveston Merchants Association
6. Richmond Intercultural Advisory Committee
7. Richmond Heritage Commission
8. Richmond Seniors Advisory Committee
9. Steveston Community Society
10. London Heritage Farm Society
11. Tourism Richmond stakeholders
12. Musqueam
13. School District No. 38 teachers

14. Richmond Centre for Disability
15. Richmond youth
16. Individual heritage site volunteers and staff

Phase One Consultation included:

- 1) Workshops with the following groups:
 - Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society Board members;
 - Richmond Museum Society Board members;
 - Heritage Focus Group including representatives from the Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society, Tourism Richmond, and the Steveston Historical Society; and
 - Richmond Museum and Heritage Services youth volunteers and Heritage Fair Alumni.
- 2) Interviews with 11 individual community members representing people in different stages of life with involvement in the fishing industry, business community, education system, and heritage sector. All interviewees are active in the community, share an interest in heritage, and a love of Steveston. Some respondents have deep multigenerational roots in Steveston and most have lived in Richmond for many years. The interviews reflect diverse cultural backgrounds including people of Japanese, Chinese, European, and other descents.
- 3) A survey was circulated to 14 Richmond organizations for distribution to their membership and /or stakeholders. 65 responses were received from individuals who identified as follows:
 - historical or heritage stakeholders;
 - community volunteers;
 - educators;
 - local business persons;
 - tourism sector stakeholders; and
 - others ranging from Steveston residents to business persons to board members of local non-profits.
- 4) Staff had informal discussions with a Musqueam representative who indicated interest in the future use of the Phoenix Net Loft. Of particular interest was the potential connection of this project to the current work they are undertaking with the Fraser River Discovery Centre in New Westminster to create a network of interpretive sites related to the Fraser River.

Reference Images for Proposed Program - Arts, Culture and Heritage Multi-Use Space



Special Event at Performance Works – Vancouver’s Granville Island



Arts Performance at Performance Works – Vancouver’s Granville Island



Winter Market at The Pipe Shop – North Vancouver’s Shipyards District



Chinese Bunkhouse Exhibit at Britannia Shipyards



Indigenous Peoples Exhibit at Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, Whistler



Artisan Market at Quidi Vidi Artisan Studio, St. John's, Newfoundland



Artist Demonstration Studio at Railspur Alley, Granville Island