



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

From: Jane Fernyhough
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services

Re: **Branscombe Future Uses**

Date: September 2, 2014

File: 11-7000-01/2014-Vol
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Staff Recommendation

That the proposed uses for Branscombe House as outlined in the report titled "Branscombe Future Uses" dated September 2, 2014, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services be accepted for information.

For Jane Fernyhough
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
(604-276-4288)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Facility Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO (fv)

Staff Report

Origin

At the Council meeting on October 15, 2013, the following motion was adopted:

That staff consider the feasibility of an artist in residence upon completion of the Branscombe House and obtain expressions of interest for other possible uses.

This report provides an analysis and a potential process for initiating an artist-in-residence program and provides the outcome of the Request for Expressions of Interest for other possible uses.

The restoration of the 1905 historically significant Branscombe House on the Railway Greenway contributes to Council's Term Goal #9 Arts and Culture:

Continue to support the development of a thriving, resilient and diverse cultural sector and related initiatives in creating a vibrant healthy and sustainable City.

Analysis

As a result of a unique partnership with Penta Builders Group, in July 2012, the City entered into a construction agreement to stabilize and restore the historical Branscombe House.

The rehabilitation of the exterior and the restoration of the interior lower floor including the addition of two washrooms accessible from the interior and one trails washroom accessible from the exterior, were completed earlier this year. The surrounding park land has been landscaped in a manner sympathetic to the heritage aspect of the Edwardian Builder style of the house.

The restoration allows public use on the ground floor to accommodate up to 30 people so the house can be used for catered events such as meetings, workshops and small receptions.

A 2014 capital budget allocation was approved for the restoration of the second floor to become a suite as well as the installation of a catering kitchen on the ground floor. This work is currently in process with completion slated for October 2014.

Current zoning of the property is School and Institutional (SI). This zone provides for a range of educational, recreational, park and community oriented uses. Permitted uses of this zoning include recreation, exhibition and convention facilities, education and entertainment. One residential unit is permitted.

A temporary occupancy permit was granted and the house was open to the public during Doors Open 2014. It proved a very popular destination with many compliments on the quality of the restoration.

In order to obtain expressions of interest for other possible issues, a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) was issued in April of 2014 and posted on the City's website and BC Bid. Individual copies were sent to individuals who had previously indicated interest. There was also an article in the local newspaper regarding the RFEOI. There were no responses to the RFEOI.

Staff did receive an email from a local group requesting use of the house for their programming but was not followed up with a written EOI.

Artist-in-Residence

An artist-in-residence program could take on several forms.

1. Long term residency – the suite could be awarded to an artist to live in for two to three years. There could be a nominal rent plus all occupancy costs such as utilities, phone, insurance, basic maintenance and small repairs, charged to the tenant. In return they would live in the community and provide a presence in the house while they are pursuing their art practice. Conversely, the artist could be asked to pay all occupancy costs but in exchange for rent would provide some services in the community such as workshops, exhibitions or performances while they are pursuing their art practice.

Vancouver currently has three live/work studios available on a three year term. One is rent-free and two have nominal rent. All three pay occupancy costs.

2. Annual Artist-in-Residency program – the suite could be awarded to an artist to live in for 11 months (with one month empty between residencies) rent-free. In exchange, the artist would provide some public programming, activities and/or projects as proposed by the artist through a Call for Proposals selection process. This program would be open to Metro Vancouver artists as well as those from outside the province. Artists would be expected to cover their travel and moving expenses, insurance for personal belongings, telephone and all other living expenses and incidental maintenance and cleaning. The City would cover rent and utilities (heat, gas, internet), as well as cleaning and building maintenance between residencies.
3. Short term residency – these residencies could vary from several months up to a year. An artist could be invited to work with a particular community (such as a community centre) or on a particular project (such as the integrated public art for the Minoru Complex). This program is similar to the current writer-in-residence program but would also include a space to live and work thereby attracting artists from outside the Metro Vancouver region to share their expertise with Richmond artists and the community at-large.

This program could also provide a place to live and create for those artists mounting a future exhibition in Richmond. For instance, a photographer has been contracted to mount a show at the Richmond Art Gallery in the spring of 2015. Greg Girard will create a representative “portrait” of Richmond’s diversity through portraits of Richmond residents. Photographs will include representation from the older established Richmond as well as new immigrants. Branscombe House would be an ideal ‘studio’ for the artist to create this Richmond based exhibition.

Staff recommend that in the short term, the upstairs suite be used as a studio for Mr. Girard to create his exhibition for the Richmond Art Gallery. During the time of his residency staff propose to initiate a Call for Proposals for an annual artist-in-residence program. This program will provide the opportunity for artists to develop innovative strategies for involving and

engaging diverse members of the community in different types of creative practices and activities.

Downstairs

Interest has already been shown in renting the downstairs for meetings and events. A request has been received regarding the use of the house for community art exhibitions. This would be an appropriate and interesting use, opening the house to the public. Upon completion of the upstairs and the catering kitchen, the house will be available for bookings through the department rentals office.

Financial Impact

There is no negative financial impact to either the use of the downstairs for meetings and bookings or the upstairs as an artist-in-residence. Revenues from the use of the house will go back into the maintenance and upkeep of this historic asset. The operating budget was approved in 2012 as part of the City's budget process.

Conclusion

The restoration of the historic Branscombe House provides the opportunity to not only provide an interesting and desirable location for meetings and events in the community but also a program to provide opportunities for artists and the community to engage in creative activity based on the principles of community cultural development. An annual artist-in-residence program will add another exciting dimension to the City's cultural opportunities.



JF Jane Fernyhough
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services
(604-276-4288)