



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

From: Marie Fenwick
Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services

Re: **Program Plan for Japanese Duplex**

Date: January 19, 2022

File: 11-7141-01/2022-Vol
01

Staff Recommendation

That Option 1, Visitor Welcome Centre, Retail and Dock Support Spaces, for the Japanese Duplex at the Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site as detailed in the staff report titled “Program Plan for Japanese Duplex,” dated January 19, 2022, from the Director, Arts, Culture and Heritage Services be endorsed to guide future planning.

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

Att. 3

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Facility Services & Project Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

At the regular Open Council meeting on December 12, 2016, completion of the Britannia Shipyards site and the Phoenix Net Loft was approved as one of Council's five priority projects, along with City Centre Community Centre North, Steveston Community Centre, the Lawn Bowling Green Community Activity Centre and the Richmond Animal Shelter.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #3 One Community Together:

Vibrant and diverse arts and cultural activities and opportunities for community engagement and connection.

3.1 Foster community resiliency, neighbourhood identity, sense of belonging, and intercultural harmony.

3.2 Enhance arts and cultural programs and activities.

3.4 Celebrate Richmond's unique and diverse history and heritage.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #6 Strategic and Well-Planned Growth:

Leadership in effective and sustainable growth that supports Richmond's physical and social needs.

6.4 Recognize Richmond's history and heritage through preservation, protection and interpretation.

Analysis

Background

Britannia Shipyards is a 3.2 hectare historic cannery and shipyard site and public park bounded by the Fraser River to the south, Westwater Drive and residential development to the north and west, and the Steveston Harbour Authority to the east. The site is part of three-kilometre stretch of shoreline known collectively as Cannery Channel, which was once the most prolific salmon canning centre in British Columbia.

Britannia Shipyards consists of a collection of 14 wooden buildings related to early canning, fishing, and boatbuilding operations arranged along a wooden boardwalk, dike and bulkhead. Many buildings are original to the Britannia Shipyard operation and others were relocated to the site for interpretive purposes. The site was declared a National Historic Site in 1992 because its extant boatworks and shipyard are representative of fishing boat construction and repair activities in Canada's Pacific Coast salmon fishery.

Following the restoration and programming of some of the original buildings the site opened to the public as a historic attraction in 1995. Since that time, four additional heritage buildings were

brought to the site and restored with interpretive displays. Of the 10 buildings original to the site, all but the First Nations Bunkhouse and Japanese Duplex are restored and in use. Restoring and programming the Japanese Duplex would add important interpretive elements and visitor amenities and be a significant step towards completing the overall presentation of the Britannia Shipyards site.

In 2008, the *Britannia Shipyards Historic Zone Interpretive Plan* identified the Murchison House No. 1 as a location for a visitors centre for the Britannia Shipyards. When the group of buildings at the east end of the site known as the “Historic Zone” were restored, the Murchison House No. 1 was named the Visitor Centre for the site and fit out with a small gift shop and visitor information materials (Attachment 1). Due to the small size of the building and challenging location at the centre of the site, its use as a visitor centre was not successful. It has not functioned in this capacity for the past four years, leaving the site without adequate visitor service space.

Japanese Duplex

The Japanese Duplex is a 3,000 sq ft simple, wooden, rectangular two-storey building on the Fraser River side of the boardwalk that runs along the original dike (Attachment 2). The location is associated with an early roadway that connected the Duplex and other buildings to the Phoenix Cannery and to Steveston.

Built prior to 1919, the building’s original use was likely to support the operations of the Phoenix Cannery. However, the building is valued for its better-known use as a multi-family dwelling. As Japanese fishermen began to marry, the need for family housing arose and buildings, such as the Duplex, were converted to provide homes for Japanese families. The Duplex was part of a cluster of 16 buildings, which likely formed a Japanese community that provided a labour force for the cannery (Attachment 3). It is significant as being the only surviving dwelling of its type on the Britannia site and as a reminder of the part played by the Japanese in the history of the West Coast fishery.

Key elements that define the heritage character of the building include:

- the form of the building as it relates to the communal lifestyle of these workers, as illustrated by a central walkway which divides the lower floor into two separate living spaces and gives access to the wharf area to the south;
- its location as an integral part of the intact Britannia Shipyard structures; and
- the remaining details and materials such as the cut-iron nails and original horizontal wood plank siding.

Guiding Plans

The potential program options for the Japanese Duplex detailed below for Council’s consideration were developed based on the work of a number of previous plans.

In 1998, the City produced the *Steveston Community Industrial Adjustment Study*, commonly known as the “Cornerstone Report.” This study analyzed the feasibility of the concept of the

Britannia Shipyards as a heritage attraction. In this study, the Japanese Duplex and surrounding area was identified as the preferred location for a “Visitor Centre Complex” offering visitor orientation, retail services and supporting boat moorage at the docks. The plan also recommended a visitor traffic flow through the site with the western end of the site by the Japanese Duplex identified as the site entrance.

In July 2016, Council endorsed the *Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Strategic Development Plan* (the Development Plan). The Development Plan explores ways for the site to continue offering diverse community programming and generate revenue to minimize the cost per visitor and build internal capacity in taking on particular initiatives. To this end, three overarching goals were identified to shape the development of Britannia Shipyards 1) completing heritage restoration and interpretation, 2) enhancing the general quality of the visitor experience, and 3) ensuring adequately trained staff and volunteers are in place.

To support achieving these goals, the Development Plan identified a number of focus areas relevant to proposed options for the Japanese Duplex including:

- increasing paid programming opportunities;
- providing space for retail services; and
- supporting the delivery of site tours, school programs, and rentals.

The *Steveston Heritage Sites 2022-2026 Destination Development Plan* presented to Council on July 12, 2021, in the *Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) Strategic Overview: Five-Year Tourism Plan* outlined a number of key strategies for the Steveston heritage sites including enhancing the offer for tourism markets and identifying opportunities for revenue generation. The plan identifies a number of actions to support the delivery of these of strategies including:

- completing the conservation of the Japanese Duplex building;
- enhancing visitor amenities at Britannia Shipyards;
- developing new fee-based programming; and
- investigating options for retail space.

Lastly, the *Steveston Heritage Interpretive Framework* endorsed by Council on November 8, 2021, identified a number of interpretive themes and stories which are, or could be shared, at the heritage sites in Steveston. Additional interpretation of the Japanese Duplex would support the theme of Cultural Diversity and the story of community life presented in the Interpretive Framework.

Program Options

Both options outlined below would facilitate clearer visitor routing through the site and contribute to the heritage character of the building by reinstating many of the features original to the building including doorways, windows and the boardwalk connection to the Seine Net Loft. Additionally, both options would include a modernized, climate-controlled interior to meet code requirements and support its year-round public use.

Option 1 – Visitor Welcome Centre, Retail and Dock Support Spaces (Recommended)

The building's location at the western end of the Britannia Shipyards site makes it ideal to serve as a Welcome Centre for the site. While retaining the heritage character of the building and with interpretation integrated throughout the building, this Centre could welcome visitors arriving by foot, bicycle, car, bus, boat to the site. The Welcome Centre could provide much-needed amenities and interpretation to the site including:

- Front desk providing welcome and orientation for Britannia Shipyards visitors;
- Retail Space;
- Interpretative displays providing historical context for Britannia Shipyards site and the building's history;
- Laundry and shower facilities to support boat moorage at Britannia Shipyard docks;
- Staff and volunteer space with change rooms, workstations, and kitchenette;
- Prominent welcome signage; and
- Bike parking at exterior with charge point for e-bikes.

These amenities could provide opportunities for additional earned revenue, retail revenue and long-term moorage not found elsewhere at Britannia Shipyards. It would also be an ideal location for ticket sales for current and future programs, including school and group site tours and programs and boat tours.

There is a range of potential operating costs for this option that would increase as programming and visitation expanded. Operating costs for this option may be higher than Option 2 but could be offset by earned revenue.

The Order of Magnitude capital cost estimate for Option 1 is \$6 million for a 2023 construction start date.

This option is recommended as it will add both interpretation of the Japanese-Canadian experience in Richmond and provide space for additional services and amenities that will enhance the visitor experience onsite as identified in previous Council endorse plans.

Option 2 – Interpretative and Dock Support Space (Not recommended)

Alternatively, the Japanese Duplex could be interpreted with exhibits in a style similar to the other buildings at Britannia Shipyards. This would provide an illustration of the living quarters of a Japanese fishing family. Different rooms within the building would support interpretation of the cultural diversity and daily life of Steveston's community.

The upstairs would be used for laundry and shower facilities to support boat moorage at Britannia Shipyard docks and staff and volunteer space with change rooms, workstations, and kitchenette.

There is a range of potential operating costs for this option depending on the level of in person programming offered.

The Order of Magnitude capital cost estimate for Option 2 is \$6.5 million for a 2023 construction start date. This option is not recommended as the exhibits would be similar in presentation to what is offered in the Murakami House and overlap with the stories of fishermen told in the Men's Bunkhouse and Seine Net Loft. In addition it would not provide for services and amenities identified in previous Council-endorsed plans.

Capital costs for both options include design, replacement of the existing foundation to ensure compliance with current seismic codes, preservation and/or restoration of heritage features, and program fit out. Capital budget costing was created through consultation with one of the City's shortlisted Construction Managers. Costing for the approved option will be further refined through program development/design and reported back to Council.

On-going operating costs for the program and building have not been included in current costing. These costs will be developed in conjunction with program development and design and will be reported back to Council with capital costs.

Engagement

The recommended program plan was informed by feedback received about the site during a survey of Britannia Shipyards visitors conducted in 2013. Comments identifying areas for improvement included the need for improved wayfinding and additional site activities as well as better communication about the site's offerings. Recent community engagement related to the Phoenix Net Loft and Steveston Heritage Interpretive Plan reiterated these sentiments and highlighting the need for a more identifiable entrance for Britannia Shipyards and amenities such as retail and boat moorage services.

The Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Society provided input on the program options for the Japanese Duplex and at their board meeting on September 23, 2021, endorsed the recommended option described in this report.

If endorsed by Council, further community engagement will be undertaken as part of the development of more detailed planning.

Next Steps

Should Council approve the recommended program, staff will proceed with design to confirm scope, develop cost estimates, and commence with environmental permits to reduce the lead-time to start construction. Staff will report back with recommended levels of service and a capital submission for consideration as part of a future budget process.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

The recommended programming for the Japanese Duplex will provide visitors a more complete experience of the Britannia Shipyards site by offering a welcoming site entrance, needed amenities and additional interpretation. The facility would also provide new revenue streams

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with the addition of a retail space, and increase revenue from boat moorage and fee-based programs.

This program supports the interpretive themes identified in the *Steveston Heritage Interpretive Framework* and the goals identified in the 2016 *Britannia Shipyards Strategic Development Plan* and *Steveston Heritage Sites 2022-2026 Destination Development Plan*.



Rebecca Clarke
Manager, Museum and Heritage Services
(604-247-8330)

- Att. 1: Photo of Murchison Building No. 1
2: Photo of Japanese Duplex in 2021
3: Photo of housing for Japanese peoples in 1942, Japanese Duplex on right side



Living and Working at Britannia

There were once many skills learned at Britannia. Built close together and along the coast, the buildings were made of the local materials. The red barns, white houses and the other buildings with the shingled roofs were a part of the early 1900s.

These buildings were built in the 1900s. They are called "shingled" buildings. They were built with shingles. The shingles were made of local materials. The shingles were made of local materials. The shingles were made of local materials.

Today, these buildings interpret the stories, histories and living conditions of the many cultures that lived at Britannia.

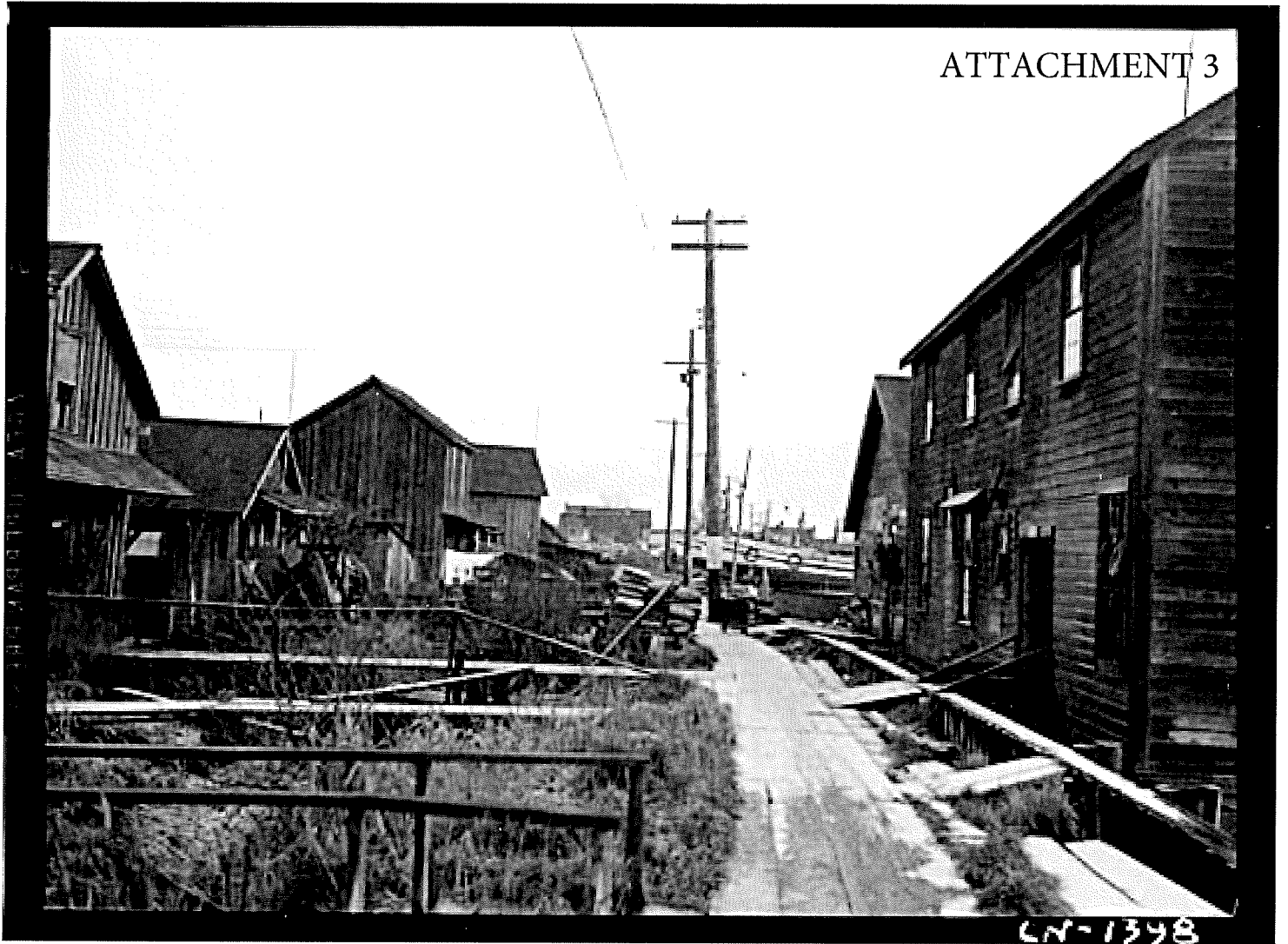


ATTACHMENT 2



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ATTACHMENT 3



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