

TO: CITY MANAGER

2001 March 07

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

SUBJECT: **ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CHURCH**
3861 - 3891 Kingsway
Metrotown Area 11

PURPOSE: To advise Council of a verbal request for a permit to demolish St. John the Divine Church.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to the Community Heritage Commission

REPORT

1.0 Background:

In 1998 the St. John the Divine Church on Kingsway opposite Central Park was closed and the congregation merged with the one at St. Andrew's Church on Smith Avenue. Since 1999, the church has been rented by the owners, the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster, to a small religious group and at the beginning of this year the owners listed the 1.27 acre property for sale for a price of \$2.5 million (approx. \$45 per square foot). The main church site is zoned P1 (Neighbourhood Institutional District) and the church also owns a vacant residential lot zoned R5 at the rear on Sandell Street. The Church building sits at the front (Kingsway) corner of the site and there is a hall behind the church building (refer *attached* sketches).

While no formal application for a demolition permit has yet been made, the agents for the owners have indicated that the best financial return to the Diocese would be produced if the Church were to be demolished prior to or as a condition of sale to a new religious group who would then proceed to build a new facility under the existing zoning on the lands.

This issue has been considered in 1997 and 1998 by the Community Heritage Commission and meetings were held between the then Chair of the Commission, staff and representatives of the Diocese. No solution was reached at that time although the Church indicated that there would be further discussions prior to the building being marketed for sale.

2.0 Historic Significance of the Building

St. John the Divine Anglican Church was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Joseph Bowman, a prominent local architect who was a member of the congregation, and constructed in 1905. Elements of the style are still evident in the tall narrow bell tower and spire, the pointed lancet windows and vertical emphasis of the steeply pitched roof. It was altered in 1914 and in 1949 the building was rotated on the site. The exterior was covered with stucco in the 1950's. It remains the oldest and one of the most prominent churches in the City (refer attached detailed history). The heritage significance of the site was identified in the Metrotown Development Plan adopted by Council in 1978.

3.0 Current Situation:

The Diocese has engaged realty agents who are primarily marketing the site with the existing P1 zoning. They have met with staff several times to hold discussions about the future use of the site. Staff have advised the agents and several potential purchasers that the City would expect to see the building preserved as a heritage building on the site, even if a new larger sanctuary, hall or other buildings were to be constructed on the balance of the site. The location of the building near the front corner of the site would appear to make this feasible. In the past approximate two months, the agents have advised that it has not been possible to find a purchaser who is interested in the building and site as it stands if the heritage building is to be preserved.

The agents now advised verbally that they now have an accepted offer from a religious group who wish to purchase the site in order to construct a new place of worship. Rezoning is not required for the main lot and they do not wish to retain the heritage building. To date, no application for a demolition permit has been made, however the agents advised in a meeting on March 02 that the current owners or the purchaser will be doing so in order to remove the subjects to the offer by 2001 March 15.

4.0 Options Available to the City to Preserve St. John the Divine

4.1 Incentives:

a) Mixed-use redevelopment approach:

One of the most obvious methods to preserve a landmark building of this type in a Town Centre area is to provide a density bonus for the redevelopment of the site. This site, while proposed for institutional use in the Metrotown Area 11 Plan, could also be considered as a site for medium density housing, a use that would be in keeping with the adjacent uses. The siting of the Church at the front of the site, very near the property line does leave the balance of the site for development. While parking for the Church should be provided, there is provision in the Local Government Act to vary zoning standards for

protected heritage buildings. This option would see the Church remain and be restored in exchange for the granting of a density bonus for the residential portion of the site. Vancouver has permitted density transfers to other properties, such as was done with Christ Church Cathedral and the Stanley Theatre which may be attractive in some situations. The use of the Comprehensive Development District (CD) could accommodate such an approach.

b) Heritage Revitalization Agreements:

A landowner and the City may enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement to allow for variations to the Zoning Bylaw for legally protected heritage buildings. Exemptions from setbacks or parking requirements, additional buildings or uses may be permitted and other incentives to conservation are permitted. A Public Hearing is required. In this case, there have not been any requests from potential purchasers interested in this type of arrangement to date and the current owners are not in the development business.

4.2 Controls:

a) Heritage Designation:

Designation of the site without the agreement of the owners would leave the City potentially open to a claim for damages if it can be demonstrated that the value of the land was reduced as a result of designation. This option is not considered feasible at this time.

b) Temporary Heritage Protection:

The City may, upon receipt of an application for demolition of a property, issue an order preventing demolition for up to 60 days under the terms of the Local Government Act. The property cannot be altered or demolished during this time. This time may be used to take further protection measures such as designating a neighbourhood conservation area. This option may be worthy of consideration in this case in order to allow all potential alternatives to demolition to be exhausted. If a demolition permit is applied for staff will report to Council to obtain Council's view regarding this option.

4.3 Relocation:

The relocation of heritage buildings reduces their historic value as the story of what the context of the building looked like is lost. In this case the relocation of St. John the Divine is not considered feasible as there are no nearby sites suitable for relocation and the height of the bell tower and the additions to the building may make the option technically difficult, particularly for longer moves.

4.4 Evaluation of Options:

The best option would appear to be to allow a mixed use development that would retain the church as a part, or on a separate subdivided lot from the balance of the site with the housing being added to the Church site. The Church could then be sold as a place of worship.


In order to allow time for the exploration of every possible option, temporary heritage protection of the building is considered appropriate.

5.0 Conclusions:

St. John the Divine represents not only Burnaby's oldest church but also represents a symbol of the tradition of the early British residents who were instrumental in the formation of the City. All options possible should be pursued to try to work with the owners or the new owners to try to find an approach to the development of this relatively large site while still retaining St. John the Divine along the Kingsway frontage of the site. A good solution would be one that would permit it to be restored in order to continue to contribute to religious and cultural life in Burnaby as it has done for over 95 years.

Upon receipt of an application for demolition, it may be necessary for Council to issue an order for the temporary protection of the building to ensure every possible opportunity for a negotiated solution to the redevelopment of the site that incorporates this important building can be pursued. Staff will continue to closely monitor the situation and will report to Council regarding any needed action by the City to foster preservation of this important heritage building.

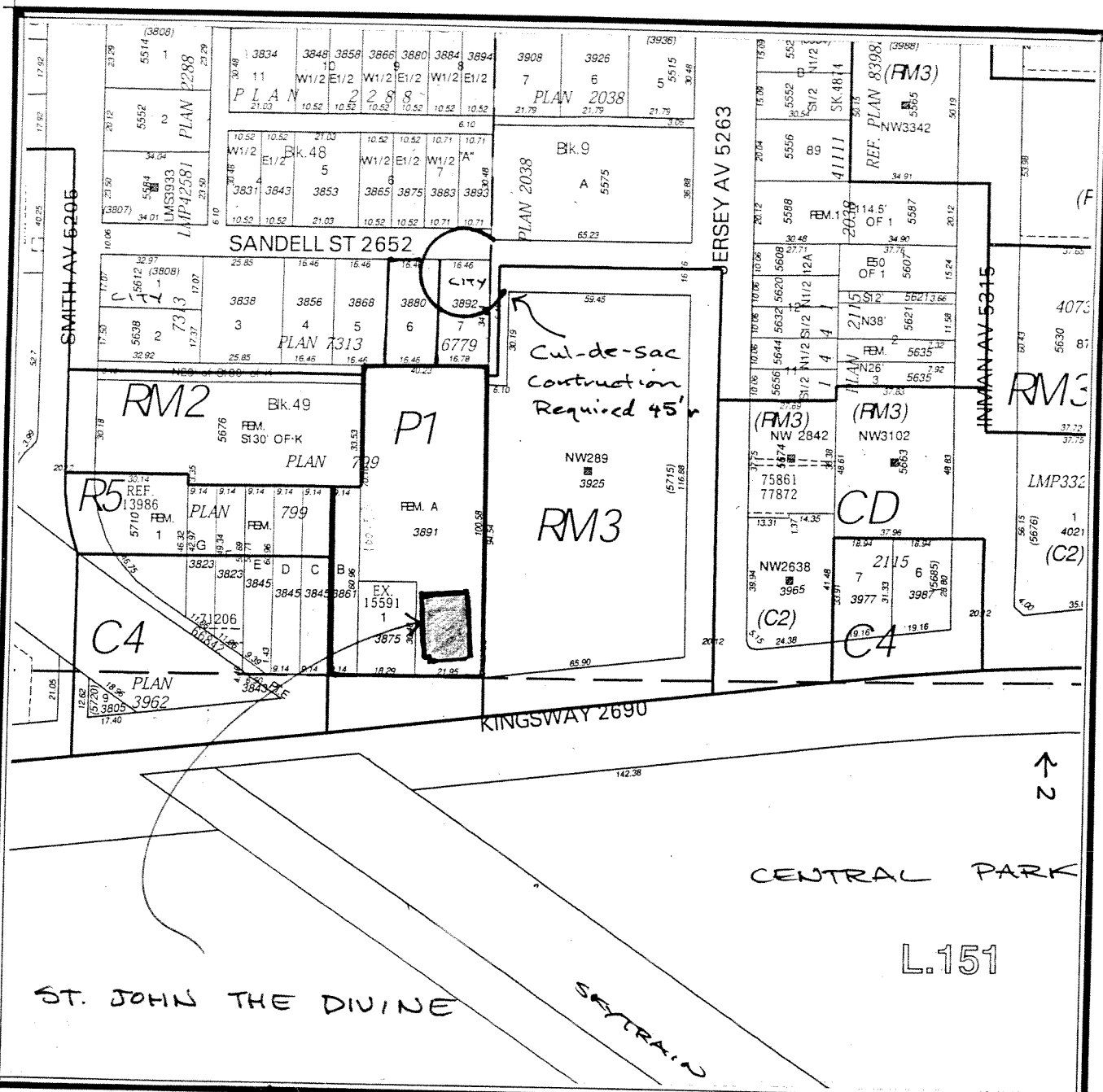
This is for the information of Council.



D. G. Stenson
Director Planning and Building

BR:hr
Atts.

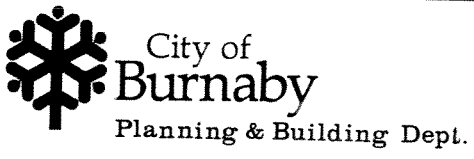
cc: Chief Building Inspector
Director Finance
City Solicitor
Secretary, Community Heritage Commission



Date:
2001 MARCH

Scale:
1:2000

Drawn By:



ST. JOHN THE DIVINE (3861-3891 KINGSWAY)
Anglican Church.

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
 ANGLICAN CHURCH
 (PROPOSED PI (INSTITUTIONAL USE))

This sketch is for discussion purposes ONLY and is subject to continuous change.

Metrotown

City of Burnaby

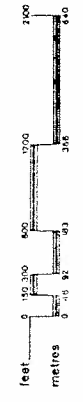
Composite Sketch of Development Guidelines

- Legend, Completed in accordance with Development Guidelines
- 1 - CD (RM 1)
 - 2 - CD (RM 2)
 - 3 - CD (RM 3)
 - 4 - CD (RM 4) *
 - 5 - CD (RM 5) *
 - 6 - CD (RM 5/C3) *
 - 7 - CD (C3 use guideline) *
 - 8 - CD (RM 3/C1) *
 - 9 - CD (RM 3/C2) *
 - 10 - Civic Facilities *
 - 11 - Public Assembly Precinct *
 - 12 - CD (RM 3/Inst)
 - 13 - RM 2
 - 14 - RM 3
 - 15 - RM 4
 - 16 - RG
- * Particular clarification of guidelines is required with Current Planners for any serious development inquiries utilizing these designated guidelines.
- ③ - Projects identified by a "square" are rezoned but as yet unconstructed.

CD (RM 6) - Succession Precinct

Planning and Building Department

Updated to April 2000



Re: St. John the Divine Anglican Church, 3895 Kingsway

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Through reviewing the history and architectural features of St. John the Divine Anglican Church it can be determined that the building has considerable heritage value to Burnaby. The Church was established in 1899 and remains as the oldest community organization in the Municipality. The building which was constructed in 1905 is the oldest church in Burnaby and an excellent example of its architectural type. Although the Church has been altered and enlarged it could be restored back to its original form and serve a useful function to the community.

CURRENT STATUS

St. John the Divine Church has long been recognized as one of Burnaby's most important heritage buildings. In the Burnaby Planning Department's development plan for Metrotown [June, 1977] this Church and the Andy Johnson House were recognized as "invaluable" heritage buildings. It was recommended that "support should be given for their retention or incorporation within a redevelopment project." The Burnaby Historical Society's inventories: Windows to Burnaby's Past [1985] and the Metrotown Heritage Resource Inventory [1986] identified St. John the Divine Church as one of Burnaby's significant heritage buildings. However, this building is not protected by Heritage Designation under the Heritage Conservation Act.

HISTORY

St. John the Divine Church was established to serve the residents of the Central Park District in 1899. A group of residents formed the St. John's Church Building Company and purchased the property on Kingsway from Ed Mahon for \$100.00 and a church building was constructed. However, it remained in an unfinished state and was destroyed by fire in 1904. In 1905 the original portion of the present Church was constructed on the same site. The building was designed by Joseph Bowman, a well respected British Columbia architect, and a member of the congregation. The Church was for many years the center of many social events and sporting activities held in the church hall and gymnasium.

ARCHITECTURE

The design chosen by Joseph Bowman for the Church was based on the traditional gothic revival style used throughout British Columbia. Elements of this style evident in St. John the Divine are the tall narrow bell tower, pointed lancet windows and vents, and the vertical emphasis of the steeply pitched roof. It appears that the architect was also very much influenced by Christ Church in Surrey [16603 Old McLelland Road]. Rev. William Bell, the first incumbent of St. John the Divine, was formerly at Christ Church, which had been built in 1885. It appears likely that Reverend Bell introduced this design to the architect. [See Figure 1]

The original design of St. John has been significantly altered by additions to the original structure. Fortunately, the original portion has not been destroyed through the renovations. In 1914 the original nave was enlarged and a vestry added on the north side of the building. Some beautiful stained glass windows were installed on the north elevation which remain today. During renovations in 1949 the chancel was enlarged, the exterior stuccoed and a basement was added. During the 1950's the most extensive alterations were made. The original section was detached from the bell tower and turned on its foundation. The chancel which had been the east elevation was turned to face north. The nave was extended on the east side and a new entrance was built to face Kingsway and replace the old bell tower entrance. [See Figure 2]

SUMMMARY

St. John the Divine Church is one of Burnaby's most important heritage buildings despite the additions made to the original structure. The building's historical associations and unique architectural qualities are of considerable significance. The prominent siting of the Church on Kingsway across from Central Park and close to SkyTrain, have made this structure a prominent landmark in South Burnaby. As the building is also located at the "gateway" to Metrotown, a restored church will add an element of heritage to the urban core of Burnaby. Funding for religious building restoration is available from the British Columbia Heritage Trust. Given these considerations, the preservation of St. John the Divine Church is expected to be a priority for Burnaby's Heritage Advisory Committee.

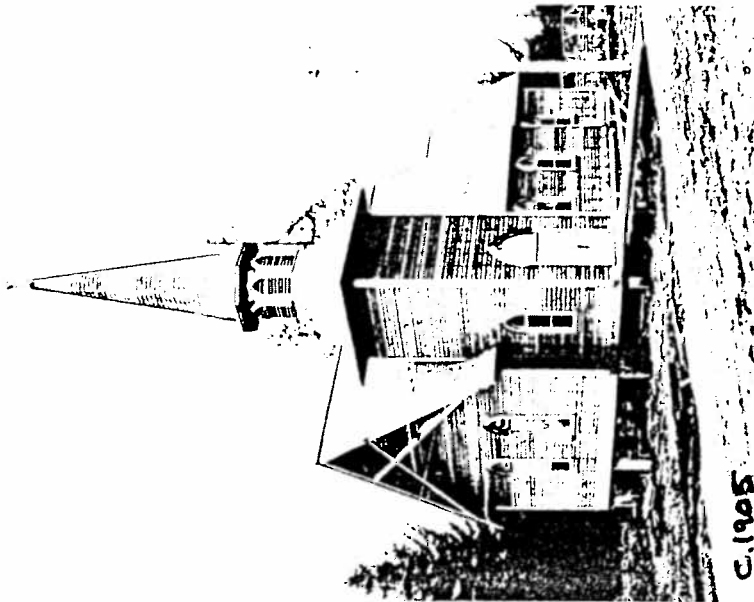
2.2.5 Heritage Buildings

While the area is not considered old in historical terms, it does contain structures that have significance in the history of this Municipality. The Curator of Heritage Village has been consulted and has indicated that two structures are invaluable from an historical point of view, the Royal Oak Funeral Chapel at 5152 Kingsway and St. John the Divine Church at 3895 Kingsway, Burnaby's oldest standing church. For these particular structures, support should be given for their retention or incorporation within a redevelopment project. The Curator has also noted several single family dwellings that may be worthy of preservation. However, this

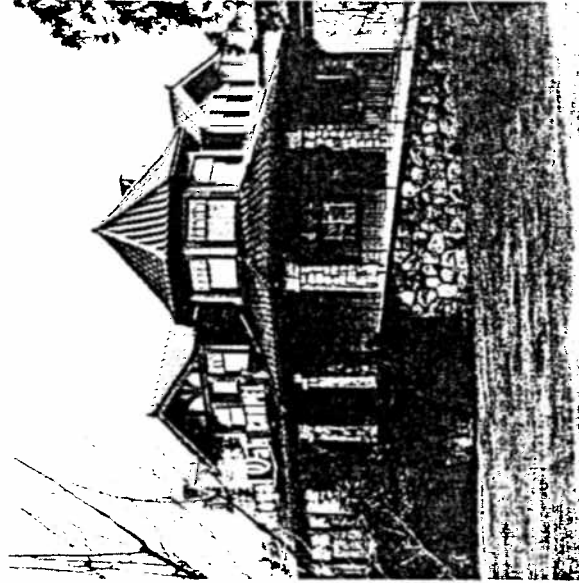
department does not consider it practical to prohibit redevelopment of these structures for the following reasons:

- structures of similar historical value and architectural merit exist in other locations of the municipality and region
- the feasibility of an alternative use of the dwellings might be minimal because of their location, physical characteristics, function, structure, etc.

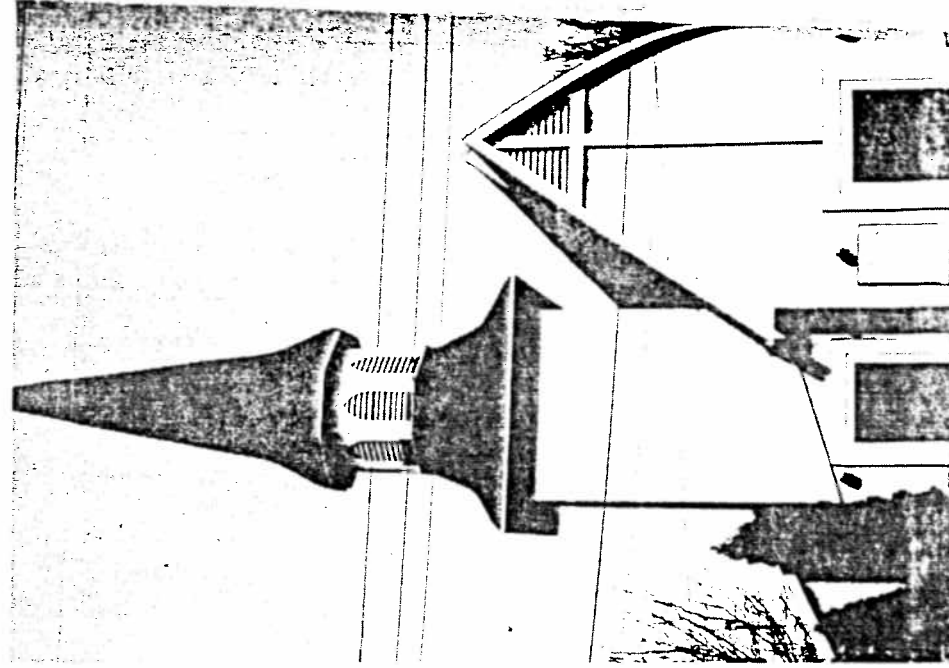
The Curator has suggested that where buildings themselves cannot be retained, the continuation of historical names in new streets and developments can help to provide a connection with the past



c.1905



Royal Oak Funeral Chapel (PROTECTED BY COVENANT 1981)



St. John the Divine Church

