

CITY OF BURNABY

COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

B

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: HERITAGE BUILDING CONSERVATION STUDY
W.J. Mathers House "Altnadene" 6450 Deer Lake Avenue
(Shadbolt Centre for the Arts)**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Council authorize an expenditure not to exceed \$8,000 (inclusive of net GST) for the scope of works outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** Council forward this report to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission for their information.

REPORT

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting held on 2004 April 01, received and adopted the attached report providing background on the current condition of the Mathers House and seeking authorization for expenditure of funds for a consultant study to prepare a heritage conservation plan for the building, including an exterior envelope study and gate relocation.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor Celest Redman
Chair

Councillor Sav Dhaliwal
Vice Chair

COPY: CITY MANAGER DIRECTOR FINANCE DIRECTOR ENGINEERING DIRECTOR PARKS, RECR.&CULT. SERVICES ASSIST. CHIEF BUILDING INSPECTOR, PROJECT MANAGEMENT

TO: COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION 2004 March 24
FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING OUR FILE: 77000 20
SUBJECT: HERITAGE BUILDING CONSERVATION STUDY
W.J. Mathers House "Altnadene" 6450 Deer Lake Avenue
(Shadbolt Centre for the Arts)

PURPOSE: To provide background on the current condition of the Mathers House and seek authorization for expenditure of funds for a consultant study to prepare a heritage conservation plan for the building, including an exterior envelope study and gate relocation.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** with the concurrence of the Commission, Council authorization will be sought for an expenditure not to exceed \$8,000 (inclusive of net GST) for the scope of works outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** the Community Heritage Commission request Council to forward this report to the Parks, Recreation & Culture Commission for their information.

R E P O R T

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Mathers House was acquired by the City of Burnaby in 1971 for incorporation into the Burnaby Arts Centre complex. In 1992 this significant 1912 mansion was designated as a city heritage site to protect its unique character as part of the Deer Lake Park heritage precinct. Although the building was initially renovated and upgraded for public and staff office uses in 1971, this important public facility requires capital works to ensure the long-term conservation of its heritage features. A recent staff assessment of these facilities have found a number of heritage conservation issues associated with the building that would warrant further investigation through a consultant study. The proposed works include improvement of the building's foundation, an exterior envelope study and gate relocation. This report outlines the need and advantages of undertaking a heritage building conservation study at this time.

**2.0 W.J. MATHERS HOUSE "ALTNADENE":
History of Construction and Renovations**

William & Mary Mathers purchased the two lots of the Deer Lake Crescent subdivision located on the most prominent and highest corner of the property in 1911. The British Columbian newspaper

reported in 1912 that foundations were beginning for a "magnificent new home" and the reported cost would be about \$13,000.00. In 1913 the Mathers and their three children moved into the completed home which they named "Altnadene".

"Altnadene" was designed by English born and trained architect and Burnaby resident, F.W. Macey, who had also designed F.J. Hart's Deer Lake home "Avalon". Both homes are examples of the unusual Romanesque Revival Style, rarely executed locally in large residential homes. "Altnadene" is an excellent and rare example of a unique form of this style incorporating in its original design scheme a pyramid roof, a tower with battlements and a series of arched windows. Typical of grand Edwardian country homes, the interior boasted nine bedrooms, nine fireplaces and six principal main floor rooms designed for entertaining guests (see attachment#1).

During World War I the large size of "Altnadene" allowed it to be used, in part, as a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers. The Mathers family left the house after the death of William J. Mathers in 1929. After being rented for several years it was finally sold in 1939 to the Vancouver Catholic Archdiocese for use as a Junior Seminary known as the Seminary of Christ the King, to be operated by the Benedictines of Westminster Priory located on the adjacent property (Ceperley House). The mansion was converted to house "the seminary chapel, administration offices, classrooms, study halls and infirmary". A large three storey addition was added to the rear of the building in a sympathetic architectural style to house a dormitory for students.

In 1954 the building was acquired by the Universal Life Foundation that continued to use the building for both educational and residential purposes. During their occupancy, the home's unique tower entrance was altered to serve as a base for a silo-like church steeple addition, built to house a spiral staircase and illuminated exterior cross sign. This addition destroyed the home's handsome original front entrance and tower (see attachment #2).

In 1971 the building was acquired by the City of Burnaby for use as a part of the Burnaby Arts Centre, which had been established on the adjoining property in 1966. In 1992 during Burnaby's Centennial, the W.J. Mathers House "Altnadene" was designated by Council as a city heritage site in recognition of its history, architecture and landmark status as part of the Deer Lake Park heritage precinct.

3.0 BUILDING SPACE ALLOCATION AND USE

The Mathers House is a four-storey structure with approximately 11,000 square feet of space. The building serves an important function as part of the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts and its visual art program. Currently the house is allocated for the following uses:

Main Floor (3,904 sq. ft.):

This floor is exclusively used for visual arts programming space with pottery studios being the primary use. Other uses include an art supply room ("Studio K") and the main public restrooms.

Second Floor (3,665 sq. ft.):

The second floor is primarily used for visual arts & music programming with a small dance studio. The balance of the space is occupied by staff offices and restrooms.

Third Floor (2,496 sq. ft.):

The third floor of the building was closed for public occupancy in 1971 due to the lack of a modern fire sprinkler system and poor fire exiting and is currently used for storage.

Basement: (1,825 sq. ft.)

The building's cellar has evolved to be used as a clay damp room as part of the pottery program of the arts centre. This has resulted in a low level public program storage use being adapted for this space which also primarily accommodates the building's mechanical services.

4.0 HERITAGE CONSERVATION ISSUES

The Mathers House is a prominent heritage landmark of Deer Lake Park at a main gateway fronting onto Canada Way and the Kensington Avenue Interchange of the Trans-Canada Highway. In 2002 an electronic sign for the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts was added to the front lawn of the Mathers House. As part of this work overgrown shrubbery from the perimeter of the building was removed to improve the long-term conservation of the foundation walls. Unfortunately, the unattractive alterations of the front facade of the Mathers House now form the 'backdrop' to the electronic sign.

The Mathers House has never been the subject of an architectural study to determine a plan for the building's conservation. The Deer Lake Park Master Plan outlined that the Mather House and its landscape required further study to improve this gateway feature. It is proposed that a consultant be engaged to undertake a review of three priority projects that have been identified by civic staff. These projects will ensure that the structural integrity of the building is maintained and that the conservation of the property's heritage character is enhanced for the benefit of the arts precinct in Deer Lake Park.

4.1 PROJECT ONE: Mathers House Foundation & Basement

The Mathers House basement and foundation walls require some immediate attention to improve their overall condition. The floor is rough unfinished concrete in one section, while

another space is unlevelled dirt and stone. The cellar is subject to flooding during storm events without the aid of a sump pump. Many areas are poorly lit and there are many height clearance problems due to ducts, pipes and beams. This space requires improvement in order to ensure the structural integrity of the building is maintained and to improve its utility for the storage use currently associated with the public arts programs. The basement/crawlspace of Mather House also requires a number of upgrades to ensure that it can continue to serve its function as the building's main mechanical service space.

The consultant will review the current conditions and make recommendations for the upgrade of the roof and perimeter drainage and building's connection to the storm and sewer systems. Additionally, the structural condition of the masonry and concrete foundations will be reviewed and recommendations made regarding proposed upgrades and cost estimates provided.

4.2 PROJECT TWO: Mathers House Exterior Envelope Study

The exterior of the Mathers House has suffered from a number of changes over the years which have contributed to the building's poor design integrity. In 1971 the adaptive re-use of the structure required the removal of the badly deteriorated front verandah, port cochere and 1960's tower addition. A new verandah, constructed as a replacement, did not replicate original design details or the original port cochere. The tower, disfigured by the later addition, was reduced in height, but retained the cone-shaped roof.

An envelope study of the building's overall exterior condition is required in order to identify key conservation issues and potential restoration options (short and long term) and the associated costs. This assessment is necessary prior to undertaking some required maintenance work including repainting (see attachment #3).

4.3 PROJECT THREE: Mathers House Gates

The Mathers House property includes a granite wall and decorative iron gates designed and constructed by Westminster Iron Works in 1912. The gates are one of the best examples of their kind in the city and form an important part of the heritage fabric of the estate. Past road construction projects have encroached onto the property and the gates are now located within the road right-of-way of Canada Way. The landmark iron gates and the carved granite post with the estate's name "Altnadene" are currently buried by approximately four feet of fill between the road curbs and public sidewalk. The gates are in a vulnerable location and could be damaged by traffic collisions. The ironwork will continue to deteriorate in this location unless they are moved and conserved at an alternate location.

It is proposed that the consultant review the current condition and cost of relocating the Mathers Estate Gates to a new location on Deer Lake Drive more closely associated with the house to ensure their long term conservation as a key component of the site's heritage landscape (see attachment #4).

5.0 FUNDING

The cost of the consultant study to review the conservation issues, and to estimate costs associated with the foundation upgrades, exterior envelope study and gate relocation is estimated at \$8,000. Sufficient Land Assembly Reserves are available and this expenditure is provided for within the Land Assembly and Development component of the 2004 - 2008 Provisional Capital Program.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Mather House forms a significant civic arts facility and heritage site for the City of Burnaby. For the first time since its acquisition in 1971 and designation as a heritage site in 1992, a report outlining the key conservation issues associated with the building's foundation, an exterior envelope and landscape features are proposed.

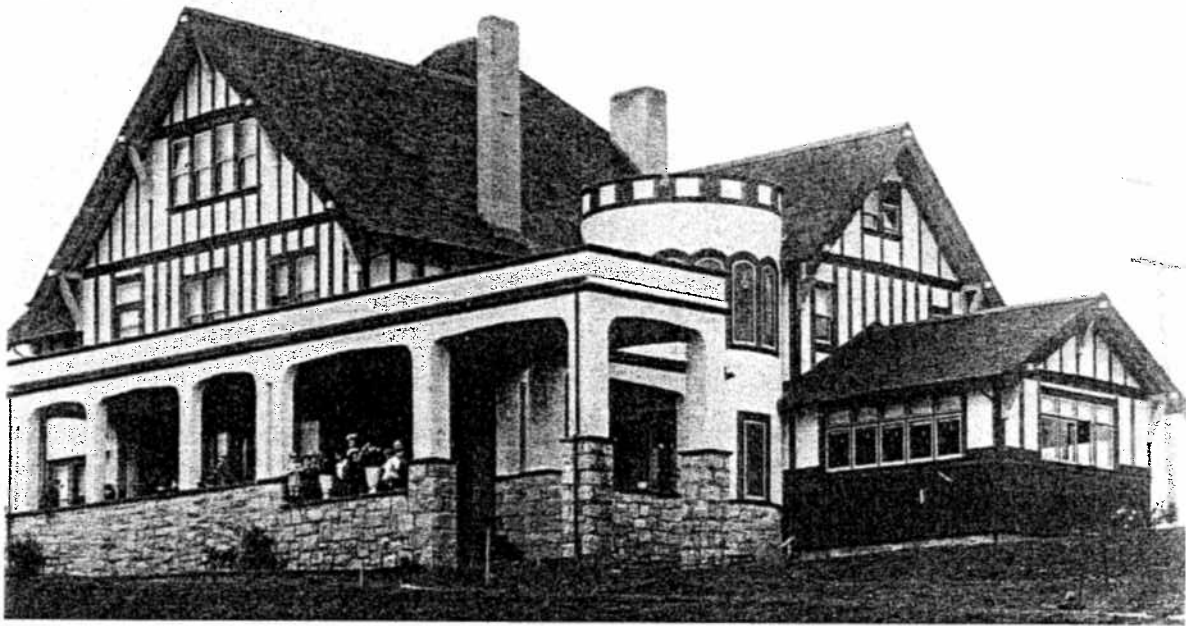
This report will guide a future work program for the consideration of the Heritage Commission and Council with the intent of conserving this landmark civic heritage building.


for J.S. Belhouse, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

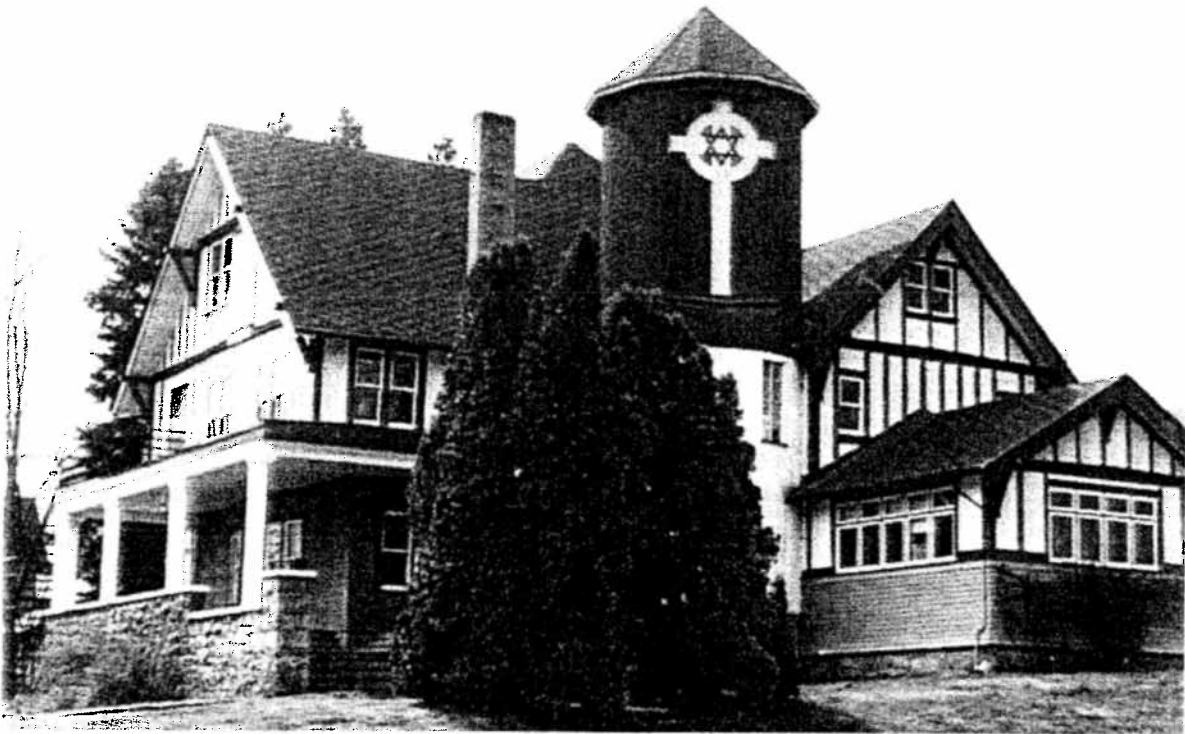
JW:tn

Attachments (4)

cc: City Clerk
City Manager
Director Finance
Director Engineering
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Assist. Chief Building Inspector, Project Management



Attachment 1:
W.J. Mathers House, 1913.



Attachment 2:
Mathers House, 1971.



Attachment 3:
Mathers House - Front View, 2004.



Attachment 4:
Mathers House "Altnadene", Buried Entrance Gates