

ST. JOHN'S

Report of the Built Heritage Experts Panel

April 20, 2022

12:00 p.m.

Virtual

Present: Dawn Boutilier, Planner
Rachael Fitkowski, Landscape Architect
Katherine Hann, Historian/Archival Expert/ Historic Preservation
Nicholas Lynch, Chair, Other Category
Mitchell O'Reilly, Contractor
Michelle Sullivan, Other Category

Regrets: John Hancock, Architecture

Staff: Ken O'Brien, Chief Municipal Planner
Ann Marie Cashin, Heritage and Urban Planner
Rob Schamper, Technical Advisor

Others: Craig Flynn, Owner, O'Reilly's
Shaun Keefe, Applicant, George Street United Church
Reverend John Maich, George Street United Church
Breannah Flynn, First Light
Chris Woodford, Woodford Architecture

1. 716 Water Street, Renovations and Extension

Chris Woodford of Woodford Architecture and Breannah Flynn of First Light were in attendance to provide background information on their proposal for adaptive reuse and associated renovations at 716 Water Street. The property is a non-designated building located in Heritage Area 3.

Ms. Flynn informed the Panel that First Light had been working with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for funding to

support the proposed project. CMHC have launched an initiative to support transitional housing units for Indigenous organizations. The current proposal would see the creation of 10 transitional housing units, as well as programming and transitional spaces at 716 Water Street. First Light's proposal is one of the only shovel-ready applications for the initiative and would result in a sustainable model of housing that falls in line with the needs of the Indigenous community.

Mr. Woodford reviewed the concept design report with the Panel, noting that the building would be fully accessible and welcoming, retaining elements of the original building where possible while updating the current façade to represent the organization. In its current iteration, the front and back pieces of the property are separate, and a new elevator core will be added to connect the two buildings. The upgrades include a large deck at the front of the building off the programming area, and each of the 10 units will have an outdoor space. The units will contain a small lounge and eating area, fully accessible washroom, and bedroom. The garage at the rear of the building is in the process of being reconfigured and will act as an informal meeting space for community members.

Panel Members questioned the proposed grade of the parking lot, and whether retaining walls would be required, as this would impact the current landscaping of the property. The proponent noted that the trees surrounding the building lay outside of the proposed changes, and as such a retaining wall was not anticipated. Mr. Woodford stated that there was no intent of removing the existing trees unless necessary. Questions were then asked concerning the structure of the front corner and the materials for the façade of the building. The large grey panel is a pillar at the front of the building that will cover a portion of the walkway as people navigate towards the rear of the building. While the exact materials for the building have not been selected, it is intended to be covered in wood, with a variety of treatments and grey shake, reflecting the aesthetic choices of First Light. The wood would then weather and age in place. Mr. Woodford noted that the dormer windows were a modern take on the heritage aspects of St. John's. The roof would be constructed of metal as it would reduce operational cost due to the longevity of the materials. Mr. Woodford and Ms. Flynn retired from the meeting at this point and continued their discussion of the application. Ms. Fitkowski notified the Panel that she would be working on another project with First Light, and she abstained from the discussion as it would be a possible conflict of interest.

Panel members noted that the development would be located in a community that is surrounded by properties with various ages of architectural detail, and would be flanked by two Queen Anne style properties, including Horwood House. The surrounding properties have strong architectural features, and homeowners have invested in including these elements into their buildings. Elements of the renovated building would be visible to the homes at the rear of the building and on Leslie Street due to the incline and there would be an impact on the streetscape. Members were appreciative of the thoughtful design of the building, but felt the application was out of context, and did not fit in with the heritage guidelines for Heritage Area 3. It was asked if Public Consultation would be required for the application, and Staff informed the Panel that consultation would not be required for this particular application but could be recommended for Council's consideration and direction. Staff advised the Panel that should Council approve the design it would be an exception to the Heritage Standards and cautioned that as the project is coming to the Panel late in the CMHC design process it may be approved as proposed. The BHEP noted that it was unfortunate that the project was coming to the panel so far along in the process without proper consideration to the context of the building and the heritage guidelines.

It was questioned if a change in building materials would make the design more compatible with the area. Members felt that requiring changes in the structure to adhere with the guidelines at this stage of the project would be a detriment to the overall design and purpose of the building. The renovations would maintain the footprint, placement, and roofline of the original building, but would not adhere to the guidelines. Public Consultation was again suggested by the Panel, as if the surrounding neighbourhood, who have invested in heritage, were in support of the project despite the contravention of the regulations, then it could be supported.

The following recommendation was brought forward by the panel:

The Built Heritage Experts Panel while recognizing that the proposed design of 716 Water Street is not aligned with Heritage Area 3 standards and guidelines and appreciating and recognizing the degree of design, recommends Public Consultation be directed by Council as per Section 11.1 (f) of the [Heritage By-Law](#).

The Panel further recommended that all future applicants consult with the Built Heritage Experts Panel early in the design process when working in Heritage Areas.

Recommendation

Moved By Katherine Hann

Seconded By Michelle Sullivan

The Built Heritage Experts Panel, while recognizing that the proposed design of 716 Water Street is not aligned with Heritage Area 3 standards and guidelines, and while appreciating and recognizing the degree of design, recommends Public Consultation be directed by Council as per Section 11.1 (f) of the Heritage By-Law.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NICK LYNCH, CHAIR