



December 13, 2019

Sree Thirunagari, Building Official
City of Vancouver
PO Box 1995
Vancouver WA 98668

Via email: sree@cityofvancouver.us

Dear Sree:

Please find attached information regarding a request from The Historic Trust to have the Laundry Building and Boiler Building on the grounds of Providence Academy declared to be "unfit" structures.

The evaluation is drawn from contemporary visual observation of existing conditions, as possible due to unsafe circumstances, as well as from findings in the 2012 *Academy Due Diligence Study* compiled by SERA Architects for The Historic Trust (then the Fort Vancouver National Trust). The report was commissioned by the Trust as a precursor to the organization's purchase of the property in 2015. Among the parties contributing to the study were KPFF Consulting Engineers, which prepared the Structural Narrative. Please note that the smokestack appended to the Boiler Building is currently being studied for the possibility of being able to stabilize it enough for the purposes of public safety and thereby retain it on the site.

The Historic Trust is seeking a declaration of "unfit" status from the City of Vancouver for these buildings, hereinafter called "the Structures," out of concern for their unsafe status from extreme deteriorated conditions and the financial infeasibility of rehabilitating them for any purpose. The Structures were extremely deteriorated at the time of the 2012 due diligence study and had not been occupied since c. 1966 when Providence Academy closed as a school. Nonetheless, The Historic Trust determined at the time of the study to consider the possibility of rehabilitation and re-use, and commissioned "light" and "moderate" proposals for renovation at the same time as for the primary Academy building. Despite the unlikelihood of finding new purposes for the Structures given the resulting very high per square foot cost of renovation, the Trust worked with realtors to show the buildings to potential renters and developers in search of workable concepts. No viable opportunities were discovered and the Trust board opted to focus on the immediate and very expensive rehabilitation needs of the Academy.

Since purchase of the property in 2015, the Trust has unremittingly attempted to physically secure The Structures from public entry and has posted no trespassing signs. However, there

has been clear evidence over the years of individuals nonetheless breaking in for the presumed purpose of seeking shelter and out of curiosity. The organization has always been concerned about people getting hurt due to unsafe interior conditions, and about the possibility of them lighting fires and failing to control them and then being unable to exit. Beyond the leaving behind of trash, some of the interior deterioration has been exacerbated by the actions of intruders. The Trust does engage a security service which patrols the site intermittently on changing schedules but people have still attempted to enter and at times succeeded.

Thus, the Trust is seeking at this time a declaration of findings from the city regarding the Structures being unfit, and would subsequently make plans to remove the buildings. Given the historic nature of the Structures, mitigation is absolutely essential to preserve the historical record. This would include appropriate written and photographic documentation (the latter to be obtained as reasonable given safety considerations), and inclusion of information about the Structures in future verbal and written interpretation regarding the site, in exhibits, and on the Trust website, in keeping with the stipulations of the Heritage Overlay.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let us know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Pearson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Pearson
President and CEO

Unfit Building Demolition Request Laundry Building and Boiler Building

Introduction

The Applicant requests that the Laundry and Boiler Buildings on the Providence Academy site at 400 East Evergreen Boulevard (the "Structures") be declared "unfit" buildings in accordance with VMC 17.32.040. These unreinforced masonry buildings were acquired by The Historic Trust in 2015. They have seen decades of structural and general dilapidation that has rendered the Structures unsafe in any capacity.

As will be expanded on in the following information, the findings for declaring the Structures unfit and permitting demolition include:

- widespread deterioration of the interior and exterior of the Structures which has rendered them unsafe and in turn "unfit";
- making the Structures functional and code-compliant for modern-day uses would require substantial reconstruction of the Structures at an extremely high cost per-square-foot which would greatly exceed their value when thus reconstructed; and
- the disparity between the cost to reconstruct and the value of the buildings renders such reconstruction financially infeasible from a financing and return-on-investment standpoint.

Request

In numerous ways the Structures meet the definition of "unfit dwellings, buildings, or structures" per VMC 17.32.040.

Specifically, the Structures meet the defects enumerated in VMC 17.32.040 sections A, B, D, F, I, subsection 1, and M as explained below. Because of these reasons, the City should declare the Structures "unfit" and permit demolition of the Structures. The smokestack is not part of this request as The Historic Trust is working on a plan for seismic stabilization of the smokestack.

17.32.040 A.

Whenever any door, aisle, passageway or other means of exit is not of sufficient width or size or is not so arranged as to provide safe and adequate means of exit in case of fire or panic.

Laundry Building – Because the building is not stable and presents significant danger of the second floor collapsing, all of the exterior doors are locked with padlocks and the first-floor windows and some second floor ones are barricaded to discourage entry. When people force an entry, all other exits are blocked. An interior staircase has many broken treads, is unstable and impassable.

Boiler Building – Because the structure was mostly destroyed in a fire, the interior is not usable, the exterior doors are locked with padlocks and in some cases barricaded, and the windows are barricaded to discourage entry. When people force an entry, all other exits are blocked.



17.32.040 B.

Whenever the walking surface of any aisle, passageway, stairway or others means of exit is so warped, worn, loose, torn or otherwise unsafe as to not provide safe and adequate means of exit in case of fire or panic.

Laundry Building – An interior staircase has many broken treads and is unstable; the floors in general are greatly worn and are warped and impassable in many places.

Boiler Building – Cracks in the concrete floor caused by time and the impact of the roof falling in have created unsafe walking surfaces within the structure.

17.32.040 D.

Whenever any portion thereof has been damaged by fire, earthquake, wind, flood, or by any other case, to such an extent that the structural strength or stability thereof is materially less than it was before such catastrophe and is less than the minimum requirements of the Building Code for new buildings of similar structure, purpose, or location.

Laundry Building – Significant portions of the roof are missing due to wind damage which has resulted in significant water damage to the interior of the structure.

Boiler Building – The roof of the structure caved in as a result of a pre-2012 fire.

17.32.040 F.

Whenever any portion or member or appurtenance thereof is likely to fail, or to become detached is dislodged, or to collapse and thereby injure persons or damage property.

Laundry Building – Many portions of the interior ceilings and walls have fallen down due to



general age and the incursion of moisture, and more are cracked and liable to fall at any time.

The exterior brick at the southeast corner of the building has experienced much loss of mortar and is failing and will continue to fail.

Boiler Building – Cracks in the concrete floor caused by time and the impact of the roof falling in have created unsafe walking surfaces within the structure.

17.32.040 I.

Whenever the dwelling, building or structure, or any portion thereof, is likely to partially or complete collapse because of:

1. dilapidation, deterioration, or decay

Laundry Building – The entire building has experienced dilapidation, deterioration, and decay over 53 years. The building has not been used/occupied in 53 years. The roof, walls, and the entire second floor are at a high risk of collapse.

Boiler Building – The entire structure has experienced dilapidation, deterioration, and decay over 53 years. The building has not been used/occupied in 53 years. The roof has completely collapsed due to fire.

17.32.040 M.

Whenever the dwelling, building, or structure has been so damaged by fire, wind, earthquake or flood, or has become so dilapidated or deteriorated as to become: 1. An attractive nuisance to children; or so as to 2. Enable person to resort thereto for the purpose committing unlawful acts, including but not limited to, trespass or unlawful burning.

Laundry Building – The entire building is dilapidated and deteriorated and has attracted

numerous instances of trespass during Historic Trust ownership, despite stringent efforts to prevent entry.

Boiler Building – The entire structure is dilapidated and deteriorated and has attracted numerous instances of trespass during Historic Trust ownership, despite stringent efforts to prevent entry.



Historic Context

These buildings are located on the seven-acre House of Providence site at 400 East Evergreen Boulevard. The Laundry and Boiler Buildings and Boiler Smokestack are situated to the northeast of the Academy Building.

Begun in 1873, the complex was built to serve as a boarding school, orphanage, and headquarters for the Sisters of Charity of the House of Providence. The main building was designed by and constructed under the direction of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart. It is widely regarded as one of her most outstanding architectural achievements and is one of only three buildings remaining today which bear her design imprint.

The Academy grounds have historically included numerous outbuildings, up to a total of as

many as 14 at a time. The remaining historic outbuildings include the Laundry Building (c. 1884), Boiler Building and Boiler Smokestack (1910), and the Gymnasium (c. 1930).

The Laundry features similar architectural design elements to the primary building. The building historically had a steam engine and housed the laundry and ironing facilities for the complex. The building also served as lodging for the hired male help on the second floor and as a dormitory for students.

The Boiler Building was appended to the east side of the Laundry Building in 1910. The original boiler equipment remains on the interior. The boiler historically heated the main Academy Building, the 1911 St. Joseph's hospital building formerly located to the north across 12th St., the Laundry Building, and a former version of the hospital which remained on the Academy site at the time and was transitioned into being an elder care facility.

Laundry Building and Boiler Building Description & Condition Assessment

LAUNDRY BUILDING

The Laundry Building is a rectangular two-story brick structure with a partial-height attic. It is connected to the Boiler Building by a raised one-story connector. The current roof is a combination of standing-seam metal and composition shingles. The roof and floors are wood framing bearing on unreinforced masonry. The continuous wall opening for a small eastern one-story addition is framed with steel.

This structure has evidence of significant distress. Notably, the roof and gutters failed many years ago, as have the original wood-sash windows. Water is acting on both sides of the wall, resulting in decades of deterioration to the wood and steel structural members. The masonry walls exhibit failing brick and deeply weathered joints. The mortar is soft and easily produces powder when scratched.

The first floor is composed of four large rooms. The interiors are characterized by wall and ceiling areas of failed plaster leaving exposed brick and wood joists. Several pieces of equipment from the laundry operations remain in the two southern rooms. Machinery, tanks, raised concrete equipment pads, open utility trenches, and large diameter piping associated with the building and/or campus utilities are present in the northern two rooms.

There are wooden stairs connecting to the upper levels against the north and south exterior walls. These stairs have failed in sections. The second floor is characterized by smaller tenant rooms in the northern half and two large open rooms in the southern half. Interior finishes include plaster on wood and brick, ranging in condition from poor to failed. The floor finishes include wood strip flooring as well as tile products. Moisture and debris have compromised most of these finishes beyond repair with some floor areas feeling soft and spongy.

There are no usable mechanical, electrical, plumbing/restroom, or fire sprinkler systems in the Laundry Building. Entry into the space is no longer safe due to the risk of structural failures.

BOILER BUILDING

The Boiler Building is a one-story brick structure connected to the east side of the Laundry Building. The building is roughly square in plan and has an unreinforced masonry smokestack sitting on a square base near the center of the south façade. The wood-frame roof has been lost to fire leaving the interior of the building open to the elements. This condition represents a safety hazard. The roof is/was supported by the unreinforced masonry bearing walls at the perimeter. The floor is concrete slab-on-grade.

The dominant feature of the interior space is the historic boiler, which consists of a massive masonry furnace with a cast-iron front. There are no usable mechanical, electrical, plumbing, or fire sprinkler systems in the Boiler Building.



Laundry Building and Boiler Building Renovation Feasibility

The Laundry and Boiler Buildings were designed primarily as utility facilities to support the Academy Building and St. Joseph hospital building formerly located to the north. The Laundry Building is 5,984 sf over two floors and has a long skinny floorplate measuring approximately 118' x 24'. The Boiler Building is 1,830 sf and square in shape. The deteriorated condition of

the buildings, the significant upgrade and modernization that would be required for their reuse, combined with their relatively small amount of rentable square footage and the Laundry's difficult-to-reuse floorplate make these buildings financially infeasible to renovate.

To adaptively reuse the Laundry Building, a change of use to "B" occupancy would be required. This, along with the deteriorated condition of the building, would require a code-level seismic upgrade. Such an upgrade would consist of effectively building a new wood structure inside of the existing masonry walls to support the gravity loads and address the lateral loads. The existing masonry envelope would be tied to the new interior structure. Extensive repointing and replacement of brick would be required at the exterior. The roof, windows, and doors would all have to be replaced. Step-up entries would have to be modified for ADA compliance. New, rated egress stairs and an elevator serving the second level would be necessary. All new mechanical, electrical, plumbing (including ADA-accessible restrooms), fire sprinklers, and telecommunications systems would be needed for this building. The building would also require abatement of hazardous materials.

Like the Laundry, the Boiler Building would also require a change of use to "B" occupancy. A full seismic upgrade would be required, including the smokestack. The roof, windows, and doors would also have to be replaced. All new mechanical, electrical, plumbing (including ADA-accessible restrooms), fire sprinklers, and telecommunications systems would be required for this building. The building would also require abatement of hazardous materials.

Based on a construction cost estimate obtained in 2012 (with an escalation factor applied), the above-described renovation for the Laundry Building would have a rough-order-of-magnitude cost of \$2.5M or \$420/sf for just construction costs alone (not including soft costs). For the Boiler Building and Boiler Smokestack, costs would be around \$1.2M or \$665/sf for just construction costs.

On a per square foot basis, these costs are astronomical and make such a project infeasible. Most financially feasible historic rehabilitation projects are in the range of \$100-200 per square foot. Not only would the return on investment be nil for a renovation of the Structures, but lender financing would be unattainable due to the current condition of the Structures and significant disparity between the cost of the project and the value of the buildings.