

# Kelly Ramsay Building

(B. Henderson)

## Recommendation:

That the November 1, 2009, Planning and Development Department report 2009PPP042 be received for information.

## Report Summary

**This report provides a response to a Councillor Inquiry regarding the Kelly Ramsay Building.**

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the September 30, 2009, City Council meeting, Councillor B. Henderson made the following inquiry:

The recent fire at the historic Kelly Ramsey Building has raised some significant concerns both around the preservation of the historic resource and the future of Rice Howard Way. I also understand that the building is being offered for judicial sale on October 24. I would like Administration to report back to Executive Committee on the following:

1. Provide a statement of significance for the Kelly Ramsay building, which establishes whether or not the buildings merit protection.
2. What is the process and what are the merits and the anticipated costs to the City of establishing these properties as designated or protected by a City Bylaw as Municipal Historic Resources.
3. Identify what resources may be made available to assist in any restoration work from the Historic

Resources Management Program.

4. Identify the ownership status of the Kelly Ramsay building after the expiry of the judicial sale on October 24, 2009, and the implications of that ownership towards protecting it as an historic resource.
5. If a judicial sale does not occur prior to October 24, 2009, what are the merits of the City acquiring this property, taking into consideration possible civic uses of the property, financial and historic resource factors, as well as planning factors for downtown and Rice Howard Way.

## Report

This report was scheduled for the January 13, 2010, Executive Committee meeting. The Judicial Sale of the Kelly Ramsay Building expired on October 24, 2009, without being sold. To keep Executive Committee up to date on the circumstances of the building, Administration has advanced this report to the November 18, 2010, Executive Committee meeting. To achieve this timeline, the report was unavailable for agenda printing.

### Response to #1:

- The Kelly Ramsay Buildings are viewed as very significant historical resources. A Statement of Significance is provided in Attachment 1.

### Response to #2:

- The City has two options if it wishes to designate the Kelly Ramsay Buildings as Municipal Historic Resources (see attachment 2 and 3). Both require a Notice of Intention to

designate to be issued by City Council and then a follow up Designating Bylaw.

- Costs will vary depending upon whether an owner is willing to designate or not. A willing owner will benefit from incentives that could be offered that could enable the resource to be restored and rehabilitated.
- Where the owner is unwilling, the financial implications are likely to be significantly greater. The Historical Resources Act requires compensation to be paid to an owner if there is a decrease in economic value. Potentially this could be the case, if argued on lost future long term redevelopment potential. There still would be the matter of enforcing an unwilling owner to carry out the necessary repairs and restoration.
- As the restoration costs and future uses are unknown at the moment, due to limited access to the buildings, costs are not available. Based on recent restoration costs for larger projects, a heritage incentive could be over the \$500,000 range.

### Merits

- As the Kelly Ramsay Buildings are considered to be extremely significant and are two of the few remaining structures of this period and style that survive intact and unaltered (excluding the ground floor), their architectural detail is unlikely to be replicated or bettered if lost. Therefore, they provide a rich contribution to the City's downtown urban form, civic pride and character.
- They are also key anchor buildings within the Rice Howard Way

pedestrian area, which has suffered notably since the buildings closed.

- They represent a period of growth in the City when many buildings built were a showcase to the prosperity of its proprietor and importantly to outside visitors and investors. A significant proportion of these have already been lost.
- In comparison to leaving the sites in their present state, having the building fully restored and upgraded would more likely increase the overall tax base (if not owned by the City). Well kept heritage resources tend to be fully occupied.
- Renovation/restoration will support short term job creation in a specialized area and bring more economic activity into the downtown.

### Response to #3:

- The City's Historic Resources Management Program would be able to provide financial incentives. The Planning and Development Department could also explore various planning incentives or variances to assist in making redevelopment attractive. As previously mentioned, heritage incentive could be over the \$500,000 range.
- Consideration could also be given to exploring other Provincial and/or Municipal sources of funding, such as low income housing grants or Arts Habitat that may be used towards internal upgrades and its overall redevelopment.

### Response to #4:

- Worthington Properties still retains legal title and ownership as the Judicial Listing (at \$10 million)

expired (October 24, 2009) without the property being sold.

- Bancorp Financial Services (the first mortgagee) obtained an Order for Judicial Listing on October 22, 2009, from the Court of Queens Bench Judicial District of Calgary. The property is now listed at \$3 million for 90 days from October 22, 2009 onwards.
- The future ownership does have implications on how the heritage resource could be protected. Willing owners will likely enable the resource to be protected and developed in a positive manner.
- An owner who is unwilling to designate may also chose to restore the building or redevelop it in a positive manner that does not involve legally protecting the resource.
- An owner who is unwilling to designate and chooses demolition or development options that significantly alter or destroy the character defining elements, would require City Council to consider the option of designation against an owners wishes.
- The Historic Resource Management Program will explore all options with any future owners to encourage them to restore the resource prior to issuing any report to Council to request designation.

### Response to #5:

- From the Historic Resource Management Program's perspective, having the City purchase the properties would ensure that the resources are protected and restored, while demonstrating good stewardship of the City's key historical assets. Two of the City's

more detailed architectural gems would be retained.

- Rice Howard Way was developed as a key pedestrian and destination area within the downtown core, part of the larger planning vision of creating a vibrant and attractive downtown. The anchor historic resources in the area add significant character to the downtown's overall appearance and offer greater opportunities for adaptive reuse.
- The Kelly Ramsay Buildings formerly housed restaurants, small scale businesses and uses that contributed to the vitality of Rice Howard Way. Restoration would encourage some of these uses back. Redevelopment of the site is unlikely in the short term due to current market conditions.
- There is currently little demand for new office development in the downtown and a vacant lot, if the buildings were to be demolished, would have considerable negative impact on Rice Howard Way's economic future.
- Possible uses of the site, if the City were to purchase it, were briefly considered to include; main floor commercial space (restaurants, art galleries, etc.), upper floor uses for not for profits or possible civic uses. Regarding using these buildings for not for profits, additional work would be necessary. To date these buildings have not been considered for civic accommodation.
- Other possible civic uses could be low income housing, a museum or an Artifacts centre.
- Having these buildings renovated and fully lease/utilized would ensure that the downtown retains a healthy variety of users and visitors.

- Restoration falls in line with sustainable development principles.
- Having the City purchase the building would require commitment to redevelop the site and determine its end use and final commitment to the structure in terms of ownership. The options of selling, leasing or continual ownership and management need to be addressed further.
- Significant resources are likely to be required to restore and redevelop the buildings. Costs will vary depending upon the end uses that it would accommodate if the City were to develop it completely.
- To prevent further deterioration to the buildings, Administration is (at the time of writing) examining ways and means to have the upper windows boarded up. Administration will report further on this at the time Committee considers this report.

### **Policy**

Protecting and pursuing the designation of the Kelly Ramsay Buildings as Municipal Historic Resources complies with the goals of the Historic Resource Management Plan and City Policy C450B – “A Policy to Encourage the Designation of Municipal Historic Resources in Edmonton”.

### **Focus Area**

Improve Edmonton’s livability.

### **Attachments**

1. Statement of Significance for the Kelly Ramsey Buildings
2. Process to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource Where an Owner Wishes to have a Resource Designated

3. Process to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource Where an Owner Does Not Wish to Have a Resource Designated

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- L. Rosen, General Manager, Asset Management and Public Works Department

## Statement of Significance for the Kelly Ramsey Buildings

### **Kelly-Ramsey Building, 10040-48 101A Avenue NW**

Built: Kelly Building: 1914-15

Ramsay Block: 1927

### **History**

Although John Kelly began his career in Edmonton as a blacksmith, he went on to become the president of Owner's Realty. Perhaps it was through these business ventures that he gained the capital to build the Kelly Building in 1914. Although little is known about him, he was likely the Jack Kelly who, with another blacksmith, marked the end of the South African war in 1902 with a twenty-one gun salute. They managed this by detonating gun powder between two anvils at the top of the cliff across Jasper Avenue. Kelly left Edmonton for California in the early 1920's.

The architect for the Kelly Building was William D. Van Sicklen. The 1914 drawings for the building give his office address as 314 – 15 Alexandra Block, Edmonton. The builder was the contracting firm of Reid, MacDonald, Brewster.

James Ramsey (1864 – 1937) was born in Michigan, but grew up in Plattsville, Ontario. He began his career in merchandising there and business took him to Toronto, Montreal and New York. He came to Edmonton in 1910 from Guelph, Ontario, where he had been operating a successful business. He leased space in the yet unbuilt Tegler Building after discussing its construction with Robert Tegler, and from the opening of the James Ramsey Limited Department Store in 1911 was engaged in almost continuous expansion up until the war. The collapse of the local economy just before the outbreak of war seems not to have affected Ramsey's department store, as the business occupied the Kelly Building immediately upon its completion in 1915. Growth resumed after the war – additional space was acquired in the Tegler Building – and in 1927 Ramsey built the Ramsey Block adjacent to the Kelly Building, which he had bought outright in 1926.

The Ramsey Building was designed by the well-established Edmonton architectural partnership of Magoon and MacDonald, and built by H.O. MacDonald. Herbert Alton Magoon (1863 – 1941) was born and educated in Quebec, but received his architectural training in Chicago. He practiced in Iowa and Nova Scotia, as well as in Chicago. George Heath MacDonald (1883 – 1961) was born in Prince Edward Island. He began his career in architecture working first in the offices of Percy Erskine Nobbs and Edward and W.S. Maxwell in Montreal, and then with his uncles as a contractor. The two men met while working at the Dominion Iron and Steel Company in Sydney, N.S., where Magoon was employed as an architect and MacDonald as a draftsman. They moved to Edmonton in 1904 and set up practice with MacDonald as Magoon's assistant. MacDonald returned to Eastern Canada to finish his education, and in 1911 graduated

from McGill University with a Bachelor's degree in Architecture. They became partners and practiced architecture together from 1912 until Magoon's death in 1941.

Among their many quality designs were the Tegler Building (1911; demolished 1982), the T. Eaton Company Mail Order Building (1929; demolished 1983), McDougall Methodist Church (1909 – 1910), the Salvation Army Citadel (1925), the Public Library (1923, demolished 1968), and the Old St. Stephen's College (1911). MacDonald continued the practice after Magoon's death, and was one of the first people to show an interest in reconstructing Fort Edmonton, about which he wrote a book.

In 1928, Ramsey entered his career as a retailer by selling the stock and goodwill of James Ramsey Limited to the T. Eaton Company, though he retained ownership of the company's real estate. The T. Eaton Company took over the business in the Ramsey Building. (This marked the start of the department store's association with the City). In 1929, Ramsey formed a new company, Ramsey Hunt and Ramsey Limited, to engage in finance and investment, but a year later he retired from his business activities. He died at his Bahamas home in 1939, aged seventy-five.

Ramsey was active in the public life of both the city and the province; he served as an alderman in 1915 and 1916, and sat in the provincial legislature as a Conservative from 1917 to 1921. He was highly regarded for his contributions to the city and province, and was known as Edmonton's "Merchant Prince".

In 1939 the T. Eaton Company built a new store and the Alberta government bought both the Kelly and the Ramsey buildings, and located the Workman's Compensation Board in the offices. The Allarco Group Ltd. owned the property from 1971 until 1988. The Bank of Nova Scotia then purchased the property and held it until 1990. Until the fire on March 24, 2009, it housed several restaurants, an art gallery, a dance studio and other businesses.

## **Architecture**

Although they are immediately adjacent, with continuous facades, and internally linked at each storey through the party wall, the two component buildings of the Kelly-Ramsey Building are visually distinct. Although each building is four storeys high, stairs are required above the first storey to connect the floors because of the Ramsey Building's greater floor to floor dimension. The narrower, but higher Ramsey Building, is faced in stone which further distinguishes it from the brick faced Kelly Building. The latter, occupying the north-west corner of what were then Howard Avenue and Rice Street (now 101A Avenue and Rice-Howard Way), commands the intersection, particularly now that the other three corners are occupied by recent buildings of very different character.

The Kelly Building features a large number of windows with elevations of two (on the east) or three (on the south) narrow brick piers set between heavier and more elaborately detailed piers which mark the structural bays. The piers and the spandrels, which close the spaces not filled by window, are executed in brown brick with raked

joints. The textured surface created by this treatment is further enlivened by materials of contrasting colour inset in the brick. Light coloured strips outline tall rectangles on the surface of the major piers, and the rectangular panels outlined on the spandrels by flush joints in the light coloured mortar combine blue corner tiles with green brick to frame the stack-bonded headers of the brown brick. Square-headed double-hung wood sash windows fill the openings in a rhythmic arrangement of major and minor piers which is varied at the centre of the long (east) elevation. The piers rise from simple white rectangular bases.

Further enrichment of the facades, and a simplified reference to the classical orders, is provided by a capital-like feature which crowns the major piers. Two grooved brackets rise past a quarter round moulding to support a rectangular capital studded with nailhead projections. Further details suggest the Doric Order, but the white stone entablature above is capped by a row of dentils supporting a rectangular cornice with a decorative face in relief, which makes no classical reference. The detailing appears to have been constructed of pressed metal, painted a warm white. Above the cornice in the plane of the wall, a low unornamented parapet wall rises, advancing at the major piers, and is covered by a rectangular precast concrete cap.

Divided from the upper storeys by a pressed metal cornice on rectangular brackets, the ground level façade consists of plate glass shop fronts, some of more recent date than the building.

The Ramsey Building, though also four storeys, is slightly higher than the Kelly Building because of the higher floor-to-floor dimensions. Its street (south) façade is clad in limestone, while the side and rear elevations are in red brick. The street façade rises to a stone cornice which is topped by a stone parapet. This is divided into two bays reflecting the major divisions of the façade, each opening into a balustrade in its central section above the central openings of the bays below. Above the first storey of the Ramsey Building the sheet metal cornice of the Kelly Building is continued to make the one visual connection between the two. The first storey facades of both buildings open out into standard shop fronts.

The style of both buildings is of the generalized type developed for ordinary commercial structures; designed to open the street facades for generous provisions of windows, to follow closely the lines of structural support, and to provide internal flexibility. The visual effect combines economical use of durable materials with sufficient variety of form and richness of detail and colour to give the buildings and their functions dignity and interest. The pilasters of the Kelly Building are classical elements that were common in the architecture of the period. In the absence of more specific stylistic features the designation Edwardian Commercial Style is appropriate.

The interiors appear to have been simple and utilitarian, and have been sub-divided and altered in other ways since original construction, although some areas of earlier treatment remain. Some of the ground floor shop fronts have in part been altered to suit changing occupancies. Structural supports have been added in the section of the Kelly Building basement that extends beyond the building façade above.

The architecturally important parts of the building, the street facades, remain largely unaltered from their original state except for the action of time and weather. Alterations that have been made to the ground floor shop fronts have not affected the architectural significance of the building.

### **Urban Context**

Because the Kelly-Ramsey Building is lower than its neighbours it is not visible beyond the immediate vicinity, nor is it a building of particularly distinctive form. It is not, therefore, an obvious landmark. Its contrast in height and style with its neighbours does, however, give it a distinction almost as significant. This is reinforced by its association with Rice-Howard Way, established as a commemorative historic feature within the redeveloping heart of the downtown.

The extensive street frontage and the corner location of the Kelly-Ramsey Building give it great local prominence, particularly now that its immediate recent neighbours do little to address the street level. The building's traditional penetrability and variety at the street level is enhanced by and enhances the conditions created by the special treatment of the Rice-Howard Way as a partially pedestrian street, with attractive paving and furnishing.

In light of the loss of many important structures of similar age and even greater significance such as the Tegler Building, despite the damage from a recent fire, the Kelly-Ramsey Building has become increasingly important to the urban design of the area and worthy of designation as Municipal Historic Resource.

## Process to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource Where an Owner Wishes to Have a Resource Designated

The steps below outline the process to designate a building as a Municipal Historic Resource:

**Step 1:** An owner submits a proposal to have a building designated as a Municipal Historic Resource to the Heritage Officer of Planning and Development.

**Step 2:** The Heritage Officer determines if the building meets the criteria for designation as a Municipal Historic Resource, i.e. is the building on the *Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton*? If the building is not on the Inventory, the applicant is notified to apply for inclusion on to the Inventory through the Historic Resources Review Panel of the Edmonton Historical Board.

**Step 3:** If the historic resource does not merit designation, the applicant is notified.

**Step 4:** If the building meets the criteria for designation, the City Administration prepares the necessary documents (as per City policy) and recommends that Council issue a “Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource”.

**Step 5:** Council will consider the application for designation.

**Step 6:** If Council agrees to designate the resource, the “Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource” is issued and a designating Bylaw is passed after a 60 day period has lapsed.

**Step 7:** If Council does not agree to designate the building, the “Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource” is not issued and the applicant is notified. The process may be amended from time to time.

## Process to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource Where an Owner Does Not Wish to Have a Resource Designated

**Step 1:** A building owner or their representative applies to a Development Officer for a development permit to demolish a building on the Inventory or within a heritage DC1.

**Step 2:** The Heritage Officer reviews all Development Permit Applications before demolition permits are issued. The Heritage Officer evaluates the architectural and/or historical significance of the structure and recommends approval or refusal of the application for demolition.

**Step 3:** If the structure is deemed not to warrant designation, a development permit for demolition is issued.

**Step 4:** If the building is significant, the Heritage Officer requests that the Development Officer not grant a permit. The Heritage Officer will approach the owner to determine what options are available to save the resource.

**Step 5:** If the applicant and the Heritage Officer can agree on a process or course of action that saves the building and/or designates it, see the process to designate a Municipal Historic Resource. If there is no agreement with the owner proceed to step 6.

**Step 6:** The Heritage Officer prepares a Notice of Intention to Designate for Council consideration. (This report must be brought forward to Council within 40 days of the permit application. Under the Municipal Government Act, after 40 days the demolition permit is deemed to have been refused and the owner may appeal this decision to the SDAB – see Step 10).

**Step 7:** If Council does not approve the issuance, the Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource is not issued and the applicant is notified that the City will allow a demolition permit to be approved. The Development Officer issues the demolition permit.

**Step 8:** If Council approves the issuance, the Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource is issued. In order to protect the resource, a designating bylaw must be passed within 120 days of the issuance of the Notice of Intention to designate.

**Step 9:** The Designating Bylaw identifies the details of the compensation to be made to the owner of the property. If compensation is not agreed to, the owner may apply to the Land Compensation Board, which will determine the amount of compensation.

**Step 10:** If 40 days from the time of application for a demolition permit elapses prior to a report to Council, the applicant may appeal to the SDAB, which may grant the permit.

If the permit is granted, the building may be demolished, unless a Notice of Intention to Designate is issued prior to demolition.

**Step 11:** If the SDAB upholds Planning and Development's position that the building cannot be demolished, then Planning and Development will negotiate with the property owner in accordance with City Policy C450B. A report is prepared for Council's consideration recommending designation.