

NAVY JACK HOUSE

The Case for Restoration and Preservation



Navvy Jack House as it appeared over 100 years ago – and as it could be restored.

“The house, now a vital piece of West Vancouver history, is the centrepiece around which the community’s public waterfront was built.”

West Vancouver 100 centenary sign
beside Navvy Jack House today.



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Executive Summary

A physical embodiment of history provides a tangible and direct link to the past; such connections are increasingly rare and deserve to be preserved and celebrated.

- Navvy Jack House is the oldest continually occupied building in West Vancouver. New research confirms that the house will be 150 years old in 2022.
- The heritage value of Navvy Jack House is well documented and well understood: its age, its early connection to the community, the contributions of its various owners to the early development of West Vancouver and BC, the shared connections it hosted between the indigenous and settler communities.

The answers to council's six questions are summarized on the following pages, with substantially more detail in the Appendices.

- We have identified and detailed a range of potential uses for this valuable community asset that could provide needed amenities to the community.
- Funding sources and ongoing revenue opportunities have been identified and are listed.
- We propose a relocation plan that satisfies the short term needs of the Streamkeepers Society and the longer term consequences of climate change.

From the extensive research undertaken by our volunteer committee, we can conclude with confidence that, when restored and re-purposed, Navvy Jack House can take its place as the centrepiece of West Vancouver's public waterfront amenities.





1. Can a portion of the house be preserved?

Answering this question requires consideration of a number of issues which are addressed in detail in [Appendix 1](#).

In summary, there is a substantial part of the original house remaining; that house is of enormous value to the community as it “embodies the history of West Vancouver”; heritage is of value as it “provides a strong sense of community identity through connection to the past”; and preservation of the house clearly fits with a variety of municipal policies, from the OCP on down.

Recommendation:

1. **That a portion of the house be preserved.**

2. If so, what portion?

The three external forms of the house (c1872, 1907 and 1930) and the house’s interior have been considered from the points of view of both heritage value and usable space.

Our recommendation that the house be restored to its approximate 1907 configuration, with consideration of retaining the later second floor addition (which is in keeping with the heritage character of the building) will result in an attractive “old style” character building that best balances usable space with aesthetics, while maximizing reuse of the original building.

Recommendations:

1. **That the 1907 exterior form of the house generally be preserved;**
2. **That the interior be developed to accommodate a variety of possible public uses.**

3. Can the preserved portion of the house be used for the public’s benefit?

Yes. The resulting building will offer about 1200 sq ft of usable space on the main floor plus another 950 upstairs. We have suggested examples of a variety of possible applications to demonstrate the viability of a restored Navvy Jack House; a multi-purpose use with a commercial component would ensure economic self-sufficiency and long-term viability.

Recommendation:

1. **That a plan for a “flexible/multi-use” building be pursued initially, with more direction at some later stage if required;**
2. **That an RFP be let to attract options for adaptive reuse.**



4. Where should the preserved portion of the house be located?

Options for the building's location have been considered in the vicinity of the existing house at the "Heritage Plaza" of the Ambleside Waterfront Concept Plan, and at the "Arts Plaza". A variety of timing and technical criteria have been considered in making a recommendation.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the house be moved to the northern aspect of the vacant space to the east of the Lawson Creek culvert.**

5. What would be the estimated cost of reducing the building to its desired form, raising and/or moving it?

A staged approach to the preservation is proposed, with Stage 1 including (but not limited to) the costs of reducing the building towards its desired form, raising and/or moving it. All of these costs should be able to be covered under the Municipality's previously-estimated building demolition and site remediation costs of \$150-200K.

Based on previous work by District Staff and Consultants, the total estimated cost of repurposing the raised/relocated building in its general 1907 form for flexible, public use is approximately \$2.3M.

Recommendations (Capital Costs):

- 1. That a staged approach to Navvy Jack House restoration be considered;**
- 2. That the 2018 capital cost estimate be accepted as a working number;**
- 3. That the previously-estimated building demolition and site remediation costs of \$150-200K be allocated to cover the Stage 1 costs.**

6. What would be the capital costs and annual operating costs for the proposal?

Capital costs are addressed above.

A restored Navvy Jack House would offer a variety of potential uses, with a related variety of budget models ranging from profit-making for the District (if a commercial operation) to break-even (for use by community non-profits) to fully supported by the District. [Appendix 6](#) includes budget costs for each potential application; council will have to make a determination as to the tradeoffs leading to its best use for the community.



Annual operating costs range from expenses of \$135-140K/yr (if operated as an Interpretive Centre; based on estimates previously offered in the Nature House Society Business Case) to positive income of \$50K if rented for a commercial operation.

Recommendation (Annual Operating Costs):

- 1. Plan to update this estimate once the end use and scope of the project are known.**

7. How much of that cost can be fundraised?

The Group has been advised that under the right circumstances, the project would meet eligibility criteria for both Provincial and Federal Granting Agencies.

Applications to public bodies will be most likely to succeed if the project can demonstrate a valued community benefit.

Success in these competitive processes may require that the building be legally protected, and will certainly require that the Municipality is seen to have a significant financial stake in the Project.

Recommendations:

- 1. Investigate a formal designation of the building;**
- 2. Commit to a significant investment in the building, to trigger other fundraising activities.**



In two years' time Navvy Jack House will be 150 years old – a wonderful target for a grand opening of a restored and repurposed heritage asset for the community.



Respectfully submitted by the Navvy Jack House Citizen Group:

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“The history of this community resides in this building.”