

HERITAGE

‘Two Dorothies’
find a new home

The twin Tudor homes were Kerrisdale landmarks for more than eight decades.

On Monday morning, they were plucked from their foundations at 2827 and 2837 West 43rd Ave. and moved a couple of blocks north to 2820 West 41st, where they will be part of a new, eight-unit development.

Both homes were slated for demolition last year, when developer Trasolini Chetner purchased them for \$1.95 million apiece and announced plans for two new 4,500-sq.-ft homes.

But there was a public backlash and the houses were on Vancouver’s heritage registry, which offered them some protection. So the developer worked out a deal with the city to move the Two Dorothies to the new site.

“We worked with the city and came up with a project under the Heritage Revitalization Agreement program,” said developer Rob Chetner. “We’re going to put a garden suite down on the lower level. The top two floors we’ll maintain intact as one townhouse unit. In the back and behind the Dorothies we’re going to build two infill homes that will be a side-by-side duplex.”

Neighbour Peter Trant is glad the city stepped up to cut a deal with the developer to save the houses.

“I think it’s a crime the houses that are coming down,” said Trant. “I hope (the accommodation for the Dorothies is) a trend that is going to continue.”

Sun reporter **John Mackie** and photographer **Wayne Leidenfrost** documented the move:

ABOUT THE HOMES

Built in 1931, the 2,400-sq.-ft structures are among the most charming houses in Vancouver. Their steep roofline, arched windows and timber-on-white-stucco facades make them look like something out of a fairy tale.

Adding to their allure was their wonderful nickname, a nod to neighbours Dorothy MacMillan and Dorothy Smith, who lived in the homes for many years.

THE MOVE

The move started at 9:40 a.m. and was over by 11:15 a.m. Dozens of people watched from the street, including Pam Hill, who brought her granddaughters Hannah and Sophie to see the spectacle.

“We used to walk past them all the time,” said Hill. “When we saw the ‘For Sale’ signs go up, we thought ‘Oh, we hope they don’t end up being knocked down.’ So it was nice that someone has decided to save them. “(The demolition of old houses like this) is spoiling the city, really. Some of them are really nice houses that go.”

THE PROCESS

Moving a house is no small undertaking.

“Each house would be around 50 tons, or 100,000 pounds per house,” said Jeremy Nickel of Nickel Brothers, which moved the houses. “We put an engineered steel framework underneath the building, we jack the building up in the air using a hydraulic jacking system, and then we put in our transporter under the building, our wheels and truck.”

“Once we do that, then it’s ready to roll, and we roll it down the road, get it to the site, and do the reverse — jack it back up and pull the transporter out.”

THE COST

Nickel said moving the two homes will probably cost about \$140,000.

“Costs are all relative,” he said. “There’s the moving costs, and the cost of removing all the obstructions, utilities and so forth. I think overall the move was in and around \$70,000 and the utility costs are still yet to be known ... but I think will be somewhere around the same number.”

THE OVERHEAD

Much of the cost of moving a house is the overhead wires that must be taken down in order for a two-storey building to pass down the street.

“One of the challenges we have in the city are the many trolley lines that are only 16 feet above the pavement,” said Nickel. “They’re a major part of the cost, the trolley lines. The Hydro lines are generally up around 21, 22 feet, the Telus lines are around 18 feet. We can move most one-storey buildings underneath 18-foot lines.”

COST SAVINGS

Nickel said the move would have cost much more, but the City of Vancouver really worked to keep the cost down.

“The City of Vancouver gave us permission to move during the daytime,” he explained. “That’s unprecedented; I take my hat off to them. That brought a lot of the costs down for the utilities. At nighttime, everything gets more expensive, and it’s more dangerous.”



PHOTOS BY WAYNE LEIDENFROST/PNG