

History of The Albert Community Centre and Marr Residence

Albert Community Centre

Prior to the Albert Centre becoming a community centre, it was known as the Albert School, which was constructed in 1911 and operated as a public school from 1912 to 1978. The school was closed due to declining enrollments. From 1978 to 1982 it was the home of the Saskatoon French School École Française de Saskatoon, which was the first French immersion school in Saskatoon.

In 1979, the property was listed as one of the park development projects to be funded under the Nutana Neighbourhood Improvement Program, which was a federal-provincial grant program. To receive the money and qualify for the Program, the City would need to own the property.

On January 25, 1982, City Council approved the purchase of the property. A subcommittee of Council's Planning and Development Committee was formed to determine possible uses of the new City facility and it was determined that it would be best served as a community centre.

In February of 1982, Council's Planning and Development Committee requested that the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee ("MHAC") consider the designation of the Albert Centre as a Municipal Heritage Property. The Albert Centre received designation as a Municipal Heritage Property on October 11, 1983.

On October 9, 1984, City Council received a report from its Planning and Operations Committee recommending that the new City facility be operated by a Management Committee comprised of five members of the public, two members of City Council, a City employee and a non-voting representative selected by the long-term tenants. City Council passed that recommendation. City Council membership was reduced to one member in 2005. City Council membership was removed completely in 2022.

Marr Residence

In 1885, during the Northwest Rebellion, the house was commandeered by General Middleton's forces to serve as a field hospital. After the rebellion, the Marr family lived in the house until approximately 1889 and the house continued to be used by others as a private residence until the 1970's.

On August 13, 1979, City Council instructed Administration to proceed with purchasing the house. At that same meeting, there was discussion related to a Policy on Preservation of Buildings Designated as Historic or Architecturally Significant, indicating a possible reason for the City to wish to purchase the house.

The Marr Residence was officially designated as a Municipal Heritage Property on January 11, 1982. Between the time of the purchase of the property and its designation as a heritage property, various ideas were considered on what should be done with it. Some of the ideas considered were to make it habitable to rent to a tenant as a private residence, use of office space or as a development into a museum/tourist destination as a homage to historical significance of the Northwest Rebellion.

In 1986, the property was rezoned to M1 to allow for such a use. Between 1983 and 1993, the City and the Meewasin Valley Authority (“MVA”) had an agreement to jointly manage the property. On December 20, 1993, as part of a large reduction in funding, City Council terminated the contract with the MVA resulting in the temporary end of programming provided and raised questions about the future use of the building. Various community organizations at the time asked the City to consider alternative methods of continuing to provide programming at the Marr Residence which resulted in a report from the Director of Planning and Development dated December 19, 1994 submitting various recommendations to City Council regarding the future of the property. After considering that report, City Council instructed the Administration to pursue options to continue to own the property on a cost-recovery basis and to investigate a way for the property to be managed by one agency.

As a result, City Council considered a report from Administration on February 13, 1995 recommending that the Marr Residence continue to be used as a historical interpretive centre providing various programming for the public to enjoy. Initially, the proposed idea was for the property to be managed by the Marr Residence Action Committee, which was made up of representatives from the MVA, the Saskatoon Heritage Society, the Nutana Community Association and the Saskatoon Society for Education through Art. However, Administration proposed the idea of the property being managed by a management board like the Albert Centre. City Council agreed that was the best option and resolved “that a Management Board be established for the Marr Residence and that the Board report to City Council; ...”. On September 11, 1995, five members of the public and one City Councillor were appointed to this new management board. City Council membership was removed in 2022.