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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 8/9/2022 5:16:10 PM
Subject: FW: DRAFT Balmoral Sign M&C Update

Dear Mayor and Council,

This is an update concerning the Balmoral Hotel neon blade street sign removal, from the GM, ACCS. (We have recently received some further questions on this topic from Councillor Fry, which staff will respond to via the Friday Council q&a distribution.)

The Balmoral Hotel Neon Blade Street Sign was designed by Neon Products, manufactured and installed on the building in the 1940s. The Street Sign is considered to be a character-defining element of the building. After conducting structural and hazardous materials assessments it was determined that the Street Sign required immediate removal from the building as it posed risk of injury to the public, which occurred on June 26.

Assessment

- No neon lighting components were found to be in working order and there are many missing and damaged components along with visible evidence of structural welds cracking and advanced metal corrosion.
- While the sign has some historical value, after detailed assessment, the sign was deemed unfit for restoration, storage and sale due to existing hazardous materials content (asbestos, lead, and mercury), as well as advanced corrosion, missing and severely damaged components.
- There is also limited confidence that the restored sign will satisfy a structural engineer who would be required to provide assurance for the purpose of reinstallation. Any such effort is anticipated to cost in the range of approximately \$500K-\$650K (estimated at 4-5 times the approximate cost of replication).
- Future replication would be possible, should that course of action be decided on in consultation with the community. Staff have conducted a detailed assessment, including a LiDAR scan and point cloud, sign audit and report, documentation for dimensions and specifications and a detailed image catalogue including drone footage.

Community Significance and Impact

- Prior to its closure, The Balmoral, was a site of harm and trauma to many former residents and their families, friends, and community. The sign is symbolic of the building and the City is sensitive to further retraumatizing former residents and their families, friends, and community, and started engagement with different groups.
- As a City of Reconciliation, Staff are working to prioritize the interests of Indigenous community members and are consulting on how to best support community healing and commemoration around this building given its history of harm and trauma for the community.
- Staff have also consulted with the Museum of Vancouver curatorial staff and management on the historical value of the sign and their feedback was taken into consideration in our decision. The Museum currently cares for many neon signs in the City's collection (45 historical lights) and is in the process of restoring 22 classic neon signs from the collection for their installation at "the Post", the former Canada Post building in downtown Vancouver in partnership with QuadReal Properties. We are appreciative of their time and expertise.

Next Steps

- Staff have assessed secure storage solutions for the street sign, however they were determined to be cost-prohibitive; furthermore there is an acute risk of exposure to hazardous materials. Accordingly, the sign will be considerably disposed of in the coming days. Staff are in communication with the Landfill Manager to evaluate the disposal requirements of the sign given the hazardous nature of materials found.

Thanks,

Karen

Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager (she/her)

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm/Musqueam, Sḵwx̱wú7mesh/Squamish and səliłwətał/Tsleil-Waututh nations