

COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: CIVIC ACQUISITION OF THE "ARROW NEON SIGN"
7741 EDMONDS STREET (LOST IN THE 50'S DRIVE-IN)**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council approve the proposed acquisition of the "Arrow Neon Sign" for \$2,000 to secure this heritage asset on the subject City-owned leased property, as outlined in this report.
2. THAT Council approve the expenditure of Gaming funds to finance up to \$9,000 (inclusive of 12% HST) of the project cost to acquire and restore the "Arrow Neon Sign", as outlined in this report.

REPORT

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting held on 2013 March 07, received and adopted the *attached* report outlining a proposal for the civic acquisition of the "Arrow Neon Sign" at 7741 Edmonds Street. This sign remains as a rare surviving example of neon sign art in the City and is the only historic neon sign remaining in South Burnaby. The preservation of the sign would secure it for retention as a local neon landmark to serve as part of the City's on-going commercial lease of this unique drive-in restaurant.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan
Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Vice Chair

Councillor R. Chang
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Director Planning & Building Director Finance Acting Director Engineering Director Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services City Solicitor Purchasing Manager Acting City Clerk
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

DATE: 2013 February 28

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 77000 05

**SUBJECT: CIVIC ACQUISITION OF THE “ARROW NEON SIGN”
7741 EDMONDS STREET (LOST IN THE 50’S DRIVE-IN)**

PURPOSE: To outline a proposal for the civic acquisition of the “Arrow Neon Sign”.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Commission request Council approval of the proposed acquisition of the “Arrow Neon Sign” for \$2,000 to secure this heritage asset on the subject City-owned leased property, as outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** the Commission request Council approve the expenditure of Gaming funds to finance up to \$9,000 (inclusive of 12% HST) of the project cost to acquire and restore the “Arrow Neon Sign”, as outlined in this report.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 1975, the City acquired the property at 7741 Edmonds Street under the Land Assembly and Development Program. At that time, the property had been leased to restaurant operators who had maintained an ongoing lease arrangement for the “Arrow Neon Sign” from its owner – Neon Sign Crafters – to serve as the business sign for the property (see *Attachment 1*). In recent years, the previous business owners of the restaurant have not maintained their obligations under the lease agreement with the sign’s owner to maintain the sign in full operating condition. As a result, the sign’s lease agreement has expired with the owner of the sign, Neon Sign Crafters.

At its Closed meeting on 2012 May 14, Council reviewed and approved a new five-year lease agreement for the restaurant with a new operator. In consideration of this lease renewal, Council was advised of the potential option for the City to renegotiate the lease for the restoration and continued use of the neon sign as part of the business operation with the restaurant operator being responsible for the monthly maintenance costs. City staff have now concluded its discussion with the sign owner, Neon Sign Crafters, to determine the options available regarding the “Arrow Neon Sign”. This report outlines a proposal for the civic purchase and restoration of the “Arrow Neon Sign”, to secure this heritage asset on the subject City-owned and leased property.

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2.0 HISTORY & HERITAGE VALUE

The "Arrow Neon Sign" is located on the City-owned property at 7741 Edmonds Street which is sited on the north side of the commercial strip near Canada Way. The "Arrow Neon Sign" was built in 1961 by the Neonette Sign Company of New Westminster when this property was opened as the "Tomahawk Drive-In" Restaurant. The restaurant was later known as "Lindy's Burger" and in 1990, the business was renamed "Lost in the 50's Drive-In".

The 20-foot tall sign is composed of a large double-sided hollow steel panel serpentine arrow mounted on a pole supporting a lexan sign panel measuring approximately 8 feet wide by 4 feet tall. The sign was designed with three illuminated features: a round lamp at the top of the pole, a double-sided rectangular fluorescent sign panel box, and two double-sided rows of orange neon arrows that follow the large serpentine arrow.

The sign's metal work and pole have been regularly maintained by the current sign owner, Neon Sign Crafters, and are generally in good condition. However, the sign's glass neon light tubing has been temporarily removed from the sign by the owner and would require reconstruction and replacement as part of any future restoration project. The transformer and other electrical parts remain intact and are in working condition. The sheet panel of the body of the sign is in good condition. The lexan panel with the words "Lost in the 50's Drive-In" is in fair condition. The replacement and/or repair costs of this lexan business name component of the sign would remain the responsibility of the business owner.

The "Arrow Neon Sign" remains as a rare surviving example of neon sign art in the city and is the only historic neon sign remaining in South Burnaby. The sign has gained prominence over the years as it has been associated with this small iconic drive-in which has also been utilized as a set for film production. Additionally, the drive-in has played a prominent role in the Edmonds community as a popular setting for recent "Show and Shine" participants to park their classic cars.

Given the unique history of the "Arrow Neon Sign", combined with its iconic design, good condition and preservation potential, the heritage value of this neon sign is considered moderate within its neighbourhood context, but reasonably significant when compared with the few remaining neon signs in the city and wider region. The civic acquisition and restoration of this important neon sign artifact would provide an opportunity to further advance the City's objectives for recognition of our past. It would also serve the City's current objectives to lease the site for the current restaurant use, and supports the continued revitalization of the Edmonds Street commercial district.

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3.0 PROPOSED ACQUISITION AND USE

The "Arrow Neon Sign" is currently owned by Neon Sign Crafters, which acquired the assets of Neonette Sign Company, the sign's original builder. Although Neon Sign Crafters previously leased the sign to the drive-in restaurant's business owners, the current lease has expired. As part of the review of the future use of the sign and its disposition, City staff have considered three potential options with Neon Sign Crafters, including:

- to restore the sign as part of a renewed sign lease,
- to complete an agreement to acquire the sign, or
- to have the sign removed from the property.

Staff have concluded that the option to restore the sign as part of a continued lease is not available with the present sign owner, as the company is currently working to downsize its existing inventory of lease agreements for older neon signs, and would not be in a position to restore the sign under a new lease agreement. The sign's owner has, however, agreed to work with the City to negotiate its sale to the City. Alternatively, should Council decide not to acquire the sign, Neon Sign Crafters would remove the sign from the City's property for private sale or disposal.

After consideration of the options available, it is proposed that the "Arrow Neon Sign" be acquired by the City and retained at its current location at 7741 Edmonds Street as part of the current five-year lease agreement for the drive-in restaurant. The sign's iconic design lends itself to be part of the current business operation and would add significant value for the current lease and use of the City-owned property as a drive-in restaurant. The "Arrow Neon Sign" conforms to the City's Sign Bylaw, including height and sign area.

Civic acquisition of the sign will provide the opportunity for staff to fully develop an appropriate restoration plan for future implementation within the proposed \$9,000 in approved funding. It is proposed that, as indicated in a previous report to Council, the City will be responsible for the restoration and maintenance of the sign, including capital costs and any costs associated with retaining a sign contractor on an annual basis. These costs would be part of the City's on-going expense requirements for the lease of this commercial property. The current business operator of the drive-in restaurant will be responsible for the operating costs associated with the sign (electrical billing) and the cost of maintenance, repair or replacement related to the lexan sign panels advertising the current business.

The future long term use of the sign would be based on the City's on-going commercial lease for this unique restaurant property. Should the property be advanced for redevelopment in the future, other options for the sign's future use may be considered. At that time, Council could consider options for the sign's retention as a civic heritage landmark on the current site, relocation and reuse in the Edmonds commercial precinct, or its lease sale and/or disposition to another property owner.

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The proposed conservation of the "Arrow Neon Sign" conforms to a number of Burnaby's Official Community Plan goals, including civic acquisition and stewardship of heritage resources, and maintaining and enhancing the character of the Edmonds Street commercial district. The conservation and use of the "Arrow Neon Sign" as a landmark would contribute to the expressed goals and vision for improvements to the Edmonds streetscape as a unique place which is also articulated in the Social Sustainability and Economic Sustainability Strategies.

4.0 FUNDING

Neon Sign Crafters has offered the City the opportunity to purchase the "Arrow Neon Sign" in the interest of preserving this landmark neon sign and retaining it in its historic business location. A purchase price has been established by the sign company that is considered fair market value for neon signs/artifacts of this type. The agreed purchase price of \$2,000 would include the neon tubing which was removed from the sign and placed in storage. The sign will remain at its current location on the City-owned property at 7741 Edmonds Street. Costs to restore the "Arrow Neon Sign", including repainting and the installation and/or replacement of the neon tubing, are estimated to be in the order of \$7,000, subject to tender.

Council approval is sought for the use of Gaming funds to provide for the acquisition and restoration of this neon sign not to exceed \$9,000 (inclusive of 12% HST). A capital allocation is available under the Heritage section of the Land Assembly and Development component of the 2012-2016 Capital Program. The use of Gaming funds for this project is consistent with Council guidelines to support heritage, cultural and environmental projects.

5.0 MAINTENANCE COSTS

The ongoing care and maintenance costs for this project are proposed to be managed by the City. The monthly maintenance cost of the "Arrow Neon Sign" after restoration has been estimated to be \$150 per month or \$1,800 per year, which includes the fascia lamps, ballast and transformers for the neon. A contract to undertake this specialized work would be tendered and based on established civic purchasing practices. The cost of maintenance of this asset would be part of the City's expense requirements for the lease of the property for the operation of the current or future businesses at this location. The property lessee would be responsible for the electrical billing to operate the sign and the cost of maintenance, repair or replacement related to the lexan sign panels.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

The "Arrow Neon Sign" has been a much-loved community landmark on Edmonds Street for over 50 years. As outlined, the preservation of the "Arrow Neon Sign" would secure it for retention as a local neon landmark to serve as part of the City's on-going commercial lease of this unique drive-in restaurant. In recent years, neon signs have become widely recognized for their important design aesthetic and contribution to creating lively public streetscapes. With the

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concurrence of the Community Heritage Commission and Council, staff will pursue conclusion of an agreement for the civic acquisition and restoration of the sign as outlined in this report. This project would retain this sign as an asset associated with this commercial lease property as part of the City's ongoing management of the site.


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JW/hl:jc:sa
Attachment

Copied to: City Manager
Director of Finance
Acting Director of Engineering
Director of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
City Solicitor
Purchasing Manager
Acting City Clerk

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Attachment 1

"Arrow Neon Sign"

7741 Edmonds Street



PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT
2013 02 26

