



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: July 8, 2025
Contact: Jason Olinek
Contact No.: 604.873.7492
RTS No.: 18078
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: July 22, 2025
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
SUBJECT: Report Back - 897 Granville Street – Sign By-law Amendment

Recommendation

THAT Council refuse an application to amend the Sign By-law as generally outlined in Appendix “A” to authorize a proposed electronic video billboard sign by Astral Out-of-Home Bell Media (“Astral”) on behalf of Granville Smithe Holdings Ltd., the registered owner of a building having a civic address of 897 Granville Street.

Alternative

THAT Council approve, in principle, an application to amend the Sign By-law as generally outlined in Appendix “A” to authorize a proposed electronic video billboard sign by Astral Out-of-Home Bell Media (“Astral”) on behalf of Granville Smithe Holdings Ltd., the registered owner of a building having a civic address of 897 Granville Street subject to the following terms in a written agreement between the City and applicant;

- an annual payment equal to \$48,000 per year with an escalating scale for payments based upon the annual percentage increase in total out of home advertising revenues for the term of the agreement; and
- an allocation of up to twenty percent (20%) of “Airtime” for use by the City, at no additional charge to the City, for the display of Non-Profit Arts Advertising and/ or City Artwork or similar be provided.

That upon execution of the written agreement by the Director of Legal Services, Council instructs the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment a by-law generally in accordance with Appendix “A”.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This is a report back on a proposed Sign By-law amendment for 897 Granville St (RTS 15937), dated September 22, 2023. During the intervening period two informative work programs, the Granville Street Plan and the Sponsorship, Advertising, Naming-rights and Donations (SAND), have advanced. This report update reflects both those programs.

Council is being asked to decide between recommendation A or consideration B, although Council is free to amend or revise either as it considers appropriate.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- *Report to Council and Motion: 897 Granville Street – Sign By-law Amendment (RTS 15937)*
- *Vancouver Charter – Section 571A*
- *Sign By-law No. 11879 (2017)*
- *Granville Street Plan (June 2025)*

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with staff's recommendation.

Context and Background

This amendment was considered by Council on October 3, 2023, and was referred back to staff to work with the applicant per the following motion:

THAT Council refer back to staff the application to amend the Sign By-law as generally set out in Appendix A of the Report dated September 22, 2023, entitled "897 Granville Street – Sign By-law Amendment", to authorize a proposed electronic video billboard sign by Outfront Media on behalf of Granville Smithe Holdings Ltd., the registered owner of a building having a civic address of 897 Granville Street;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to explore with the applicant an increase to the proposed allocated screen time for the City of Vancouver, from 10% up to as much as 25%, as a condition of the application approval and bring the application back to Council by the end of January 2024 for further consideration.

The delay in this process is due to the subsequent sale of Outfront Media to Astral Out-of-Home Bell Media ("Astral") as well as for the work plans for Granville Street and SAND. The applicant's response is provided in Appendix C.

1. Site Context

The site is located at the corner of Granville and Smithe Streets in the Granville Entertainment District. A City-owned Single Room Occupancy (SRO) is located immediately across from the site at 716 Smithe Street. Also located immediately across Granville Street is 800-876 Granville Street, a site that is subject to an active rezoning application under review that proposes two

residential towers. The intersection of Granville and Smithe is signal-controlled in both directions with a two-way bike lane on the north side of Smithe.

For a more detailed description, refer to September 22, 2023 Report to Council and Appendix B – Site Context.

2. Public and Stakeholder Input

Public Notification and response.

Refer to September 22, 2023, Report to Council – RTS 15937.

3. Regulatory/Policy Context

Sign By-law 11879

Section 15 of the Sign By-law allows for relaxations by the Director of Planning under specific circumstances. However, the Sign By-law does not give the Director of Planning authority to allow for this proposed sign. Therefore, this proposal was referred to Council's consideration for a by-law amendment. A summary assessing the non-compliance and recommendation to refuse is set out below under Strategic Analysis.

Refer to September 22, 2023 Report to Council for a more detailed summary.

Granville Street Plan (2025)

On June 4, 2025, Council approved the Granville Street Plan, including the Granville Street Sign District, to expand the animated neon signage area from Nelson Street to Davie Street. The goal is to use the district's historic neon signage as a theme for placemaking in focused areas and to maximize pedestrian activity and visual interest.

Considerations for approval of sign applications in this District should include demonstrating high-quality design and integration with the building façade and architectural features, consistent with the Plan's design guidelines and Granville's historic neon sign tradition.

Sponsorship, Advertising, Naming-rights and Donations (SAND)

Staff are developing a Public Realm Advertising Framework for Council consideration in Q3 2024, to guide the City's approach to third-party advertising visible in the public realm. If endorsed by Council, the framework will guide staff approaches to Public Realm Advertising and inform staff advice and recommendations to Council.

Discussion

Proposal

The physical attributes of the proposed sign remain the same as in the September 2023 Council Report. To summarize, it is a modern curved rectangular LED screen measuring 2.44m (7.5 ft.)

tall by 8.84m (29 ft.) wide with a total sign area of 48m² (517 sq. ft.) located 4.11m (13.5ft) above the roof of an existing one storey commercial retail building. The screen will display static third-party advertisements, mounted in front of a curved architectural feature that serves as a backdrop to the sign. Detail is provided in Appendix D - Drawings.

Sign By-law Analysis Summary

The table below summarizes by-law non-compliance as considered previously by Council.

Table 2 – Sign By-law Analysis

Non-Compliance:	By-law Requirement:	Impact:
Illumination - Impacts on nearby residential units	Electronic sign must be at least 30 m from a dwelling unit facing the sign (<i>Section 5.13(e)</i>)	Electronic sign is within approximately 21 m of both the single room occupancy (SRO) units at 716 Smithe Street.
Sign Location – roof top signage	Roof signs are not permitted in order to limit proliferation of visual clutter in the urban environment. Vancouver's prohibition on roof top signs extends back to the 1970s.	Sign extends 4.11m (13.5 ft) above the roof.
Copy Type – third party advertising	Third party advertising is generally only permitted on a billboard sign (<i>Section 5.17</i>)	Billboards and third-party advertising are not permitted in this configuration and location.
Safety - Location near traffic signal	Must be at least 15 m from a traffic control signal (<i>Section 5.13 (f)</i>)	5 m from a traffic control signal

To address these concerns, the applicant proposes measures to address the impact of the illuminated sign on residential units and traffic, including turning off the sign between 11 pm and 7 am and compliance with other regulations including brightness levels and ambient light sensor requirements for illuminated signs in the Sign By-law.

Considerations for approval might include further mitigating visual distractions at this intersection which may have a negative impact on transportation safety, as well as mitigating the illumination impacts on existing and future residences.

Public Benefits Analysis

In response to Council's motion, Astral proposes to allocate up to twenty percent (20%) of "Airtime" for use by the City for the display of non-profit arts advertising and/or city artwork. Astral also proposes to pay to the City \$48,000 per year under a video sign covenant or agreement. Details of the proposal are provided by the applicant in Appendix C.

While it is Council's decision on the overall balance in their consideration of the application, staff advise that, given the market value of the advertising, the impact on the public realm, sign-by-law considerations, and the potential impact on the market for other public realm advertising, this offer is not proportionate.

Financial Implications

Should Council refuse the application (Recommendation A), there will be no payment to the City. Should Council approve Alternate Consideration B, Astral will make annual payment to the City equal \$48,000 per year for the term of the agreement between the City and Astral.

Legal Implications

If Council approves the Recommendation in this report, Council will refuse the proposed Sign By-law amendment. Council is authorized to regulate signs under the Vancouver Charter. Council is not obligated to amend the Sign By-law. Council can approve the proposed amendment with or without further conditions.

Conclusion

This report offers alternate recommendations for Council decision; the first Recommendation is to refuse the application, and the second Alternative Recommendation is to approve. The refusal is based on the assessment that the proposal does not meet the intent of the Sign By-law, the prohibition on roof top signs, the emerging directions for city revenue expectations, or the Granville St. Entertainment District. The second Alternative Recommendation, if approved, should be based on Council deeming the application to provide a proportionate public benefit. Also, as noted above, Council may impose additional conditions on the approval such as for revenue expectations, further regulating illumination or copy type, or design enhancements.

* * * * *

APPENDIX A**DRAFT SIGN BY-LAW AMENDMENT PROVISIONS****BY-LAW NO. _____****A By-law to amend Sign By-law No. 11879
regarding electronic static image signs at
897 Granville Street**

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, in public meeting, enacts as follows:

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions of the Sign By-law.
2. In Section 12.20, Council adds a new section after 12.20 (a) as follows:

“(b) 897 Granville Street

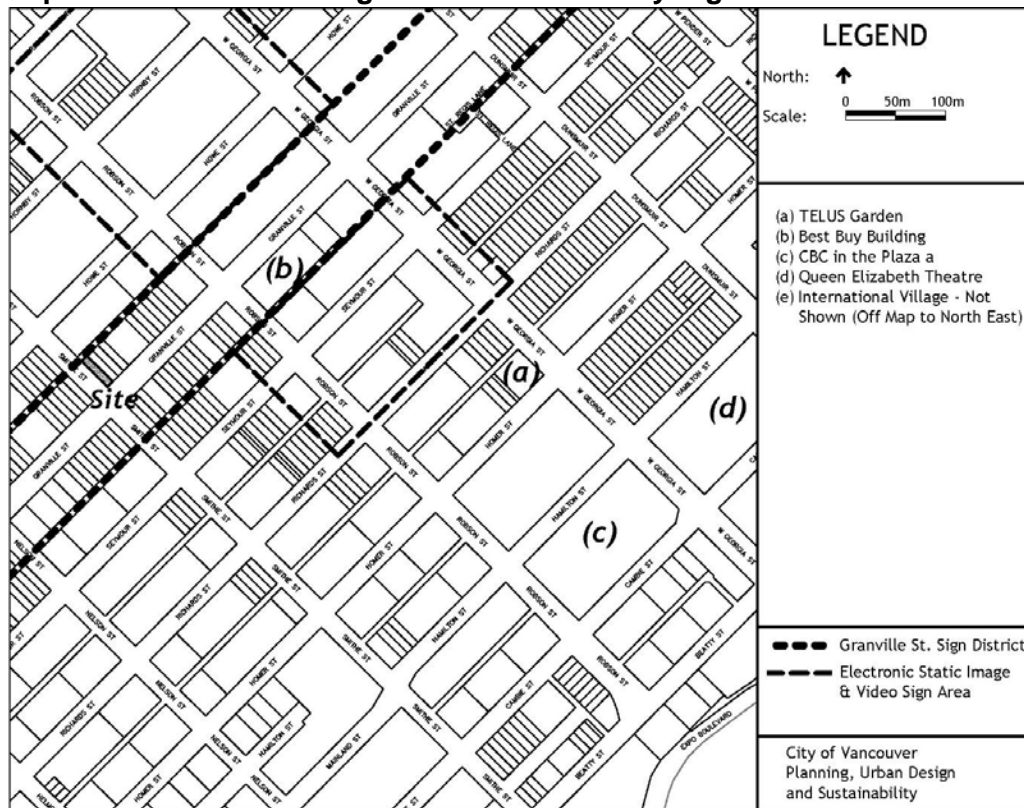
On the site zoned DD one roof mounted electronic static image sign, that:

- (i) is located on the southwest corner of the roof facing both Granville Street and Smithe Street,
- (ii) is located on the roof of the first storey of the building;
- (iii) has a sign area no greater than 48 m² and a copy area of 22 m²
- (iv) has a vertical dimension no greater than 2.5 m;
- (v) may be within 30 m of a dwelling unit and 15 m of a traffic control signal,
- (vi) be turned off between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.;
- (vii) is no brighter than 3000 to 4000 nits during the day and 100-150 nits at nighttime; and
- (viii) may display third party advertising.

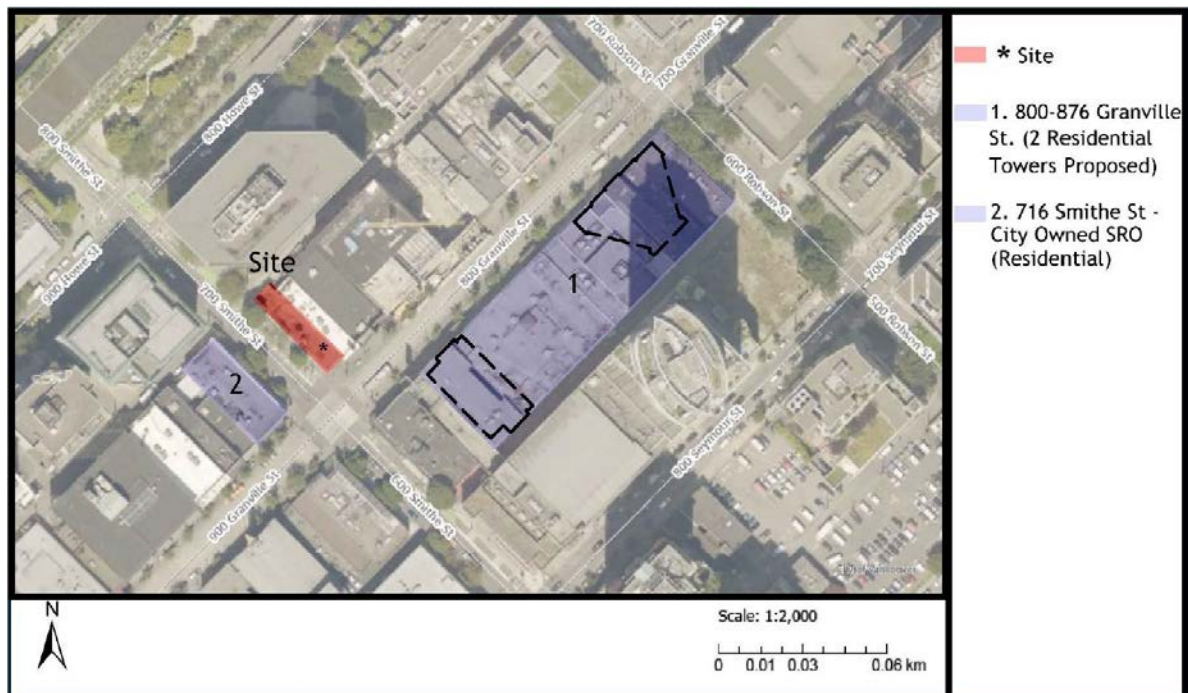
APPENDIX B

Site Context

Map 1: Granville Street Sign District and Nearby Signs



Map 2: Vicinity Map



APPENDIX C

Response to Council Motion

astral

October 21, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL

The City of Vancouver

Development and Building Services Centre
515 W 10th Ave, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 4A8

Attention: *Mehdi Einifar – Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability – City of Vancouver*

Re: *Response to Council in Order from Planning Commission for 897 Granville Street Sign By-law Amendment & acquisition of OUTFRONT Media Canada by Astral - Bell Media.*

Dear, Mehdi Einifar.

Please accept this as notice that Astral - Bell Media has acquired OUTFRONT Media Canada, and all its Canadian assets. Subsequently, Astral Out-of-Home, a division of Bell Media, will assume this application and will provide any further material related to this project.

Further, on behalf of our partners, Granville Smithe Holdings Ltd., Astral is pleased to provide this formal response to council's meeting from September 2023, affirming our desire for approval of this transformative sign project proposed in the heart of the Granville Street Sign District.

In consideration of the city agreeing to amend the Sign By-law to permit the proposed Video Sign, Astral wishes to enter into an agreement with the City of Vancouver, a Video Sign Covenant, allowing approval of such applications, with the following key items to be included in any such agreement:

Advertising Allocation: Subject to Force Majeure, Astral shall allocate up to twenty percent (20%) of "Airtime" for use by the City for the display of Non-Profit Arts Advertising and/ or City Artwork.

City Fee: Astral agrees to pay to the city \$48,000, per year, plus GST for Video Sign Covenant. This amount has been calculated based upon similar agreements we currently have in place with the city.

Finally, enclosed are the stamped designs required for permits, better illustrating fundamental and sound engineering principles for the proposed sign.

Kindly confirm receipt of this material, and if there are any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Best regards,



Brad Chebott

Director, OOH Leasing, Concessions, Business Development and Production
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