



Report Date: September 5, 2025  
Contact: Jason Olinek  
Contact No.: 604-873-7492  
RTS No.: 18078  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: September 16, 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

## CONSIDERATIONS

A. 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 to the City equal to \$80,000 (year 1), with a 3% year-over-year escalation for the term of the agreement;
- revenue share paid to the City by the property owner equal to half the net revenue (30% paid to them by Astral); 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;

FURTHER 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”.

B. THAT Council instruct the applicant to work with staff at time of sign permit application to provide design modifications to better enhance the fit in the Granville St. Entertainment District through the provision of the signage structure, materials and details which better reflect the District’s themed traditional historic neon signage.

## ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERATION

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.

## REPORT SUMMARY

This 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 Considerations A and B to approve the Sign By-Law amendment with design improvements or Consideration C to refuse it although Council is free to amend or revise either of the options 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 consideration items.

## REPORT

### Background/Context

This amendment was considered by Council on October 3rd, 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 Council Report dated September 22, 2023 - RTS 15937 and Appendix B – Site Context.

## **2. Public and Stakeholder Input**

### ***Public Notification and response***

Refer to Council Report dated September 22, 2023 – 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 is set out below under Strategic Analysis.

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

## 4. Strategic Analysis

### 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 48m<sup>2</sup> (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 <b>30 m</b> from a dwelling unit facing the sign ( <i>Section 5.13(e)</i> )	Electronic sign is within approximately <b>21 m</b> 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 and aligns with most other Canadian cities.	Roof top 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 <b>15 m</b> from a traffic control signal ( <i>Section 5.13 (f)</i> )	<b>5 m</b> 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.

Additional 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 \$80,000 per year under a video sign covenant or agreement and the property owner has agreed to revenue share equal to half of 30% of net revenues. Details of the proposal are provided by the applicant in Appendix C.

**Financial Implications**

Should Council refuse the application (Consideration C), there will be no payment to the City.

Should Council approve Considerations A and B, Astral will make an annual payment to the City equal to \$80,000 (year 1) with a 3% year-over-year escalation and the owner agrees to provide the City with half of their 30% revenue share for the term of the agreement between the City and Astral.

**Legal Implications**

If Council approves Considerations A and B in this report, Council will approve the proposed Sign By-Law amendment with design considerations. Council will refuse the proposed Sign By-law amendment by approving Consideration C. 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 considerations for Council decision; the first is to approve and the second to refuse it. If approved, it should be based on Council deeming the application to provide a proportionate public benefit but noting some design development to reinforce the historic neon theme of the District should be considered. The refusal would be based on the assessment that the proposal does not meet the intent of the Sign By-law, the long-standing prohibition on roof top signs, or the Granville St. Entertainment District. As noted above, Council may impose additional conditions of approval.

\* \* \* \* \*

**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:

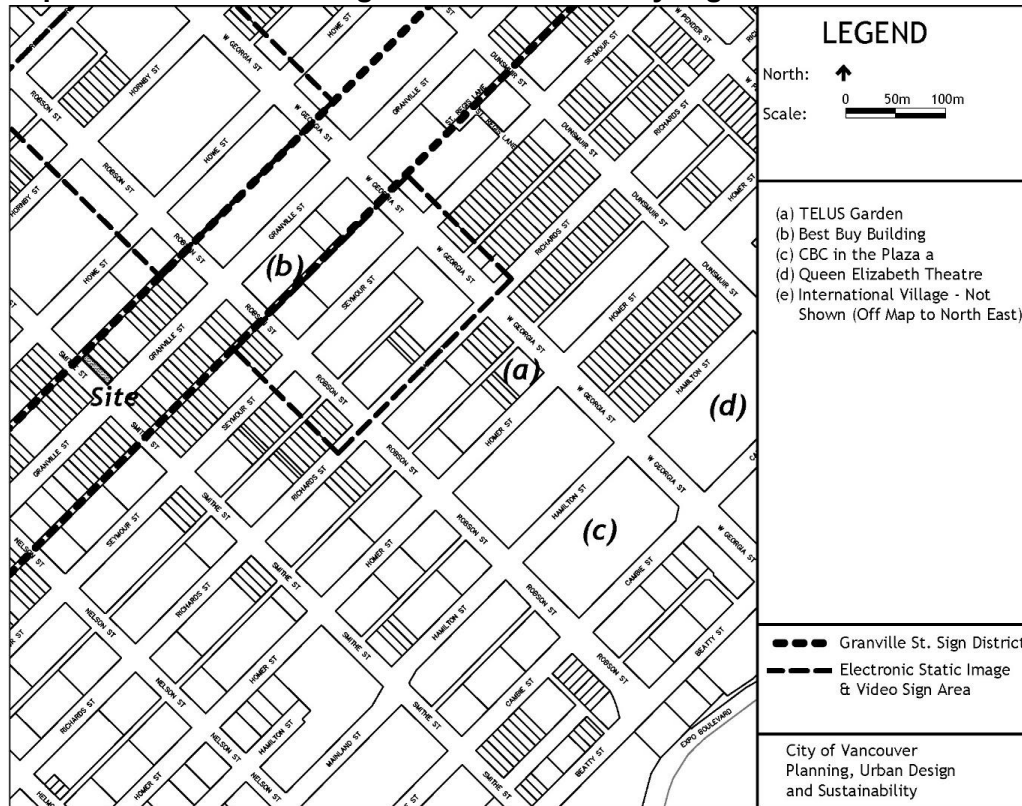
“(b) 897 Granville Street

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

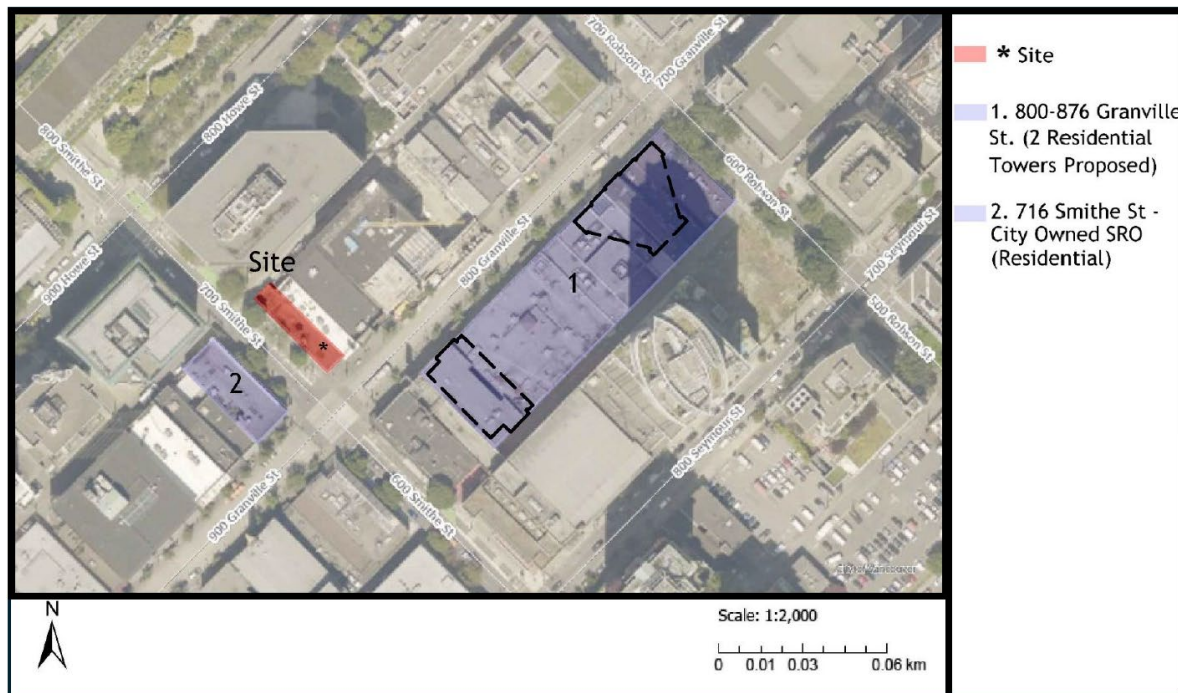
- (i) is located on the southwest corner of the roof facing both Granville Street and Smithe Street,
- (ii) is located on the roof of the first storey of the building;
- (iii) has a sign area no greater than 48 m<sup>2</sup> and a copy area of 22 m<sup>2</sup>
- (iv) has a vertical dimension no greater 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

August 21, 2025

Jason Olinek  
Director of Development Planning  
City of Vancouver  
[jason.olinek@vancouver.ca](mailto:jason.olinek@vancouver.ca)

**Subject: 897 Granville Street – Sign By-law Amendment**

Dear Jason,

We appreciate the City's recent positive response and confirmation that our proposal will be brought forward at the September 17, 2025, Council meeting. I'm looking forward to presenting our offer and meeting you in person.

Thank you as well for the constructive discussions and feedback throughout the City's evaluation of our application to amend the Sign By-law to permit an electronic video billboard on the private property at 897 Granville Street.

Since our initial submission and report to Council in October 2023 when Council referred the matter back to 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", we have significantly enhanced our offer to the City including a direct financial contribution.

Most recently, in July 2025, we again increased our offer to accommodate the City's requests. Given that the sign is located on private property, and following a lease renegotiation with our cooperative property owner, we have revised the business terms of our offer to include:

- **Direct Financial Contribution** – an annual **\$80,000.00 paid to the City with three percent (3%) YoY increases**. The application that was approved by Council in 2023 did not have any financial contribution attached to the approval.
- **Revenue Share (new)** – the property owner has agreed to provide the City with half of their 30% share of net revenue paid to them by Astral.
- **Doubling Public Message Space** – Astral will double the previously proposed FREE digital display time allocated for COV use from 10% to 20%. This space can be used to promote local arts and culture, announce public concerts, festivals, support events in the different BIA's, public messages for community safety, alert the public to emergency events, severe weather, welcome tourists to Downtown and so much more. *(the market value of this time is in the \$150,000 to \$200,000 range)*

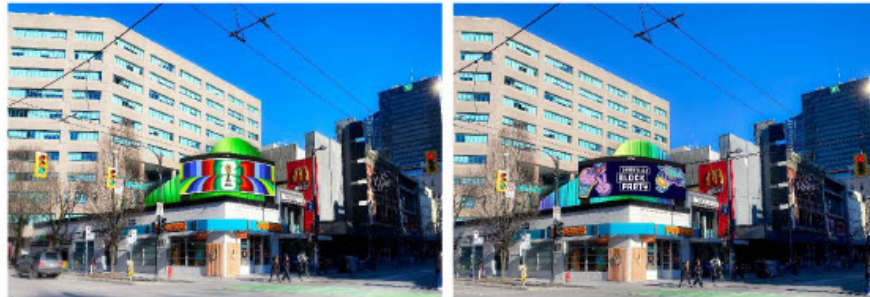


- **Brightness Controls** –Our state-of-the-art signage technology will provide Astral with the opportunity to adjust brightness and light direction during certain times of the day. We recognize the importance of being a good neighbor.

I also wanted to provide additional context to underscore the value the City of Vancouver would secure by approving our digital signage application for 897 Granville Street.

The proposal we've put forward far exceeds what is offered in most other Canadian jurisdictions including the digital signs at Robson and Granville. Most cities in Canada do not receive any revenue from similar signage. In fact, Vancouver is the only city that currently receives a share of revenue. Some municipalities charge a nominal sign permit fee, while the City of Toronto applies a sign tax. For a comparable sign in Toronto, that tax amounts to \$14,716.30 per year.

Beyond the increased financial contribution and increased allocation of screen time, this initiative will deliver meaningful public benefits, including enhanced visibility for City messaging, stronger communication capacity during critical moments, and a landmark presence in one of Vancouver's most recognizable cultural districts. Importantly, the digital sign, as depicted in the renderings, has been carefully designed to fit within the Granville Street Entertainment District and to reflect the district's distinctive tradition of historic neon signage.

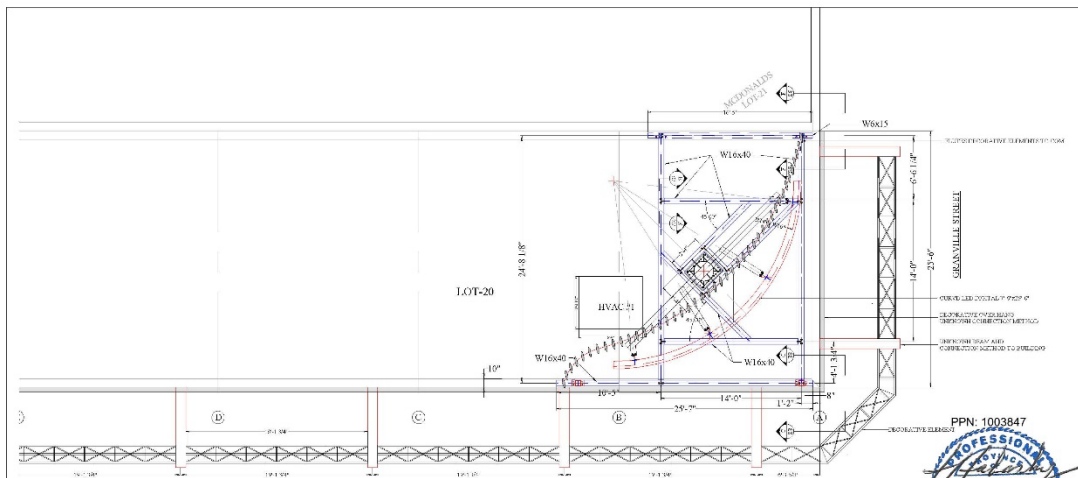
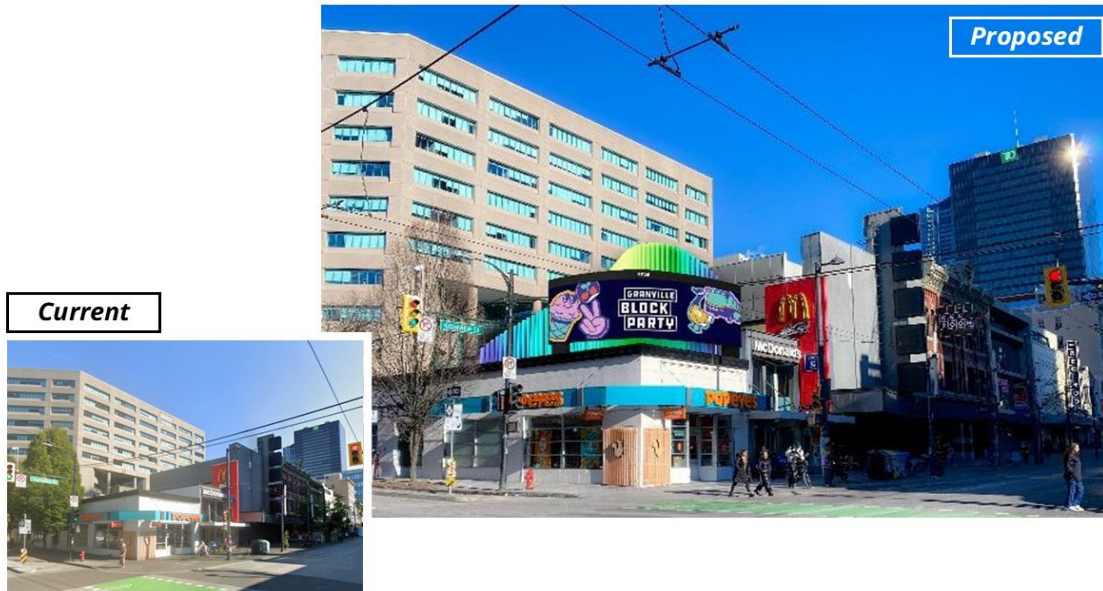


Finally, since this sign application preceded the Granville Plan, it should not impede future opportunities to pursue additional revenue from other sign applications.

We look forward to continuing this collaboration and to the opportunity for Council's consideration in September.

Thank you again for your support throughout this process, and please don't hesitate to identify any other outstanding issues that may need to be addressed prior to the meeting.

### APPENDIX D Drawings



PLAN VIEW  
SMITH STREET  
SCALE 1:61

FOR PERMIT 202410420

PPN: 1003847  
PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER  
K.F. HABASHY  
25688  
BRI TIA  
C O L U M B I A  
ENGINEER


REVISION	DATE	BY	APPROVED

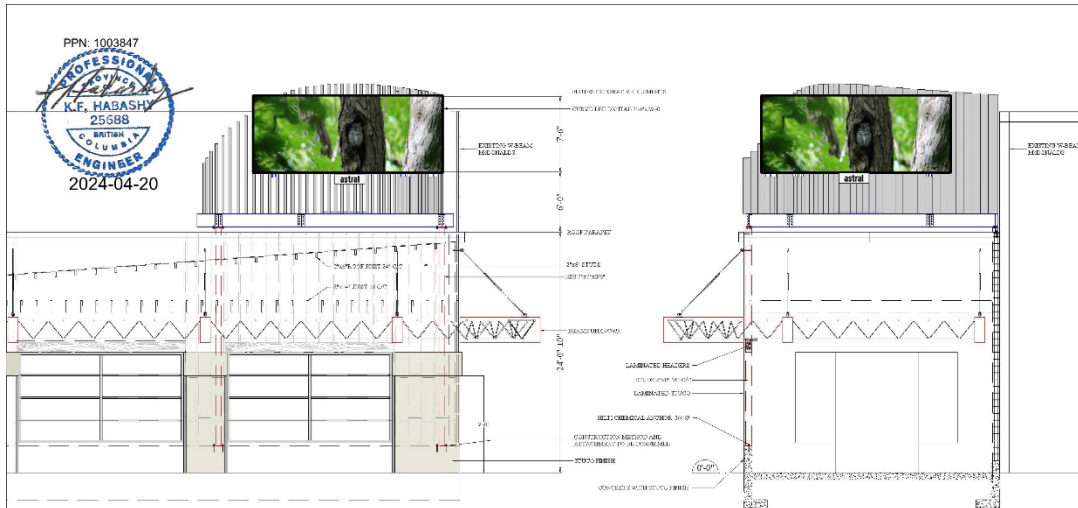
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Project: Curved LED Digital 7'-6" x 29'-0"  
Scale: None  
Date: 19/03/2024  
Designer: Shawn Taylor  
Page: 1 of 8  
Revision:

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**astral**

PPN: 1003847






ELEVATION VIEW SMITH STREET

ELEVATION VIEW GRANVILLE STREET

SCALE 1/96

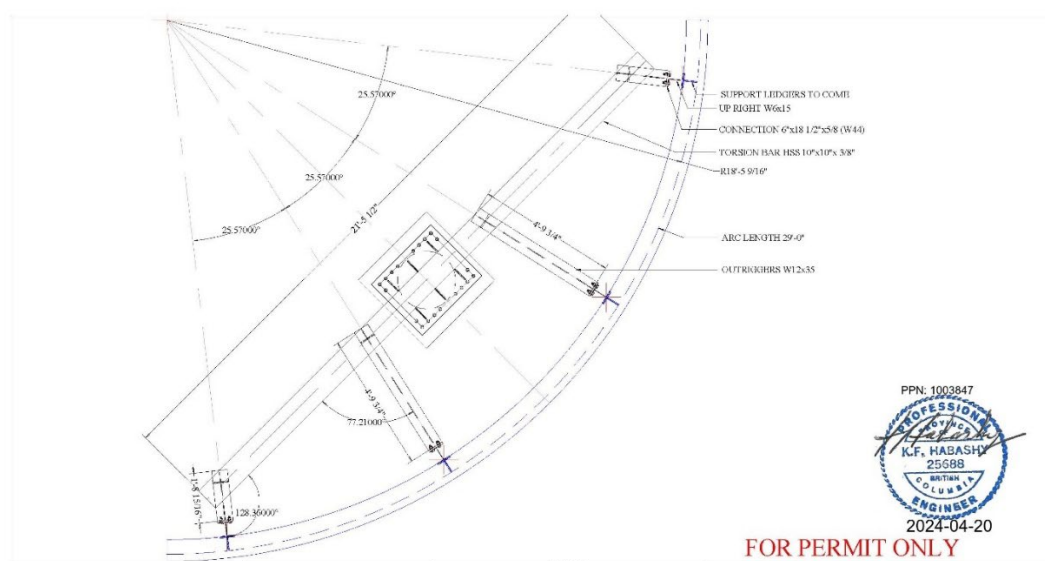
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REV	DATE	REVISION	APPROVED
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Loc: 897 Granville Street and Smith Street Vancouver BC  
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 Page: 3 of 8