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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: May 1, 2013
Contact: Brian Jackson
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RTS No.: 9939
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: May 15, 2013

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Planning and Development Services
SUBJECT: Heritage Assessment of the Waldorf Hotel - 1489 East Hastings Street

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council receive the heritage assessment prepared by Birmingham and Wood Architects and Planners and dated April 2013 for the Waldorf Hotel at 1489 East Hastings Street.
- B. THAT Council add to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, the commercial building at 1489 East Hastings Street, known as the Waldorf Hotel.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to continue working with the current and any new property owner to explore redevelopment scenarios that incorporate the site's recognized heritage resources.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval to add the Waldorf Hotel at 1489 East Hastings Street to the Vancouver Heritage Register.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Relevant Council policies for this site include:

- On January 15, 2013 Council resolved:

- A. THAT pursuant to Section 589 of the Vancouver Charter, Council orders that the whole of the exterior and the interior of the Waldorf Hotel located at 1489 East Hastings Street, be subject to temporary protection in accordance with the provision of Section 591 of the Vancouver Charter for a period of 120 days from January 16, 2013.
 - B. THAT Council agrees the form of this Order shall be satisfactory to the City's Director of Legal Services and that the Order shall be executed on behalf of Council by the Director of Legal Services.
 - C. THAT Council direct staff to expedite the completion of the heritage assessment, including complete statement of significance and heritage register evaluation, discuss the feasibility of building retention with the owner and purchaser, and report back to Council before May 15, 2013.
- Vancouver Heritage Register (1986).

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Planning and Development Services RECOMMENDS approval of the recommendations of this report.

REPORT

Background/Context

In January 2013, Council approved a 120-day temporary protection order for the interior and exterior of the Waldorf Hotel at 1489 East Hastings Street to allow for the completion of heritage assessment of the site, including a Statement of Significance (SoS) and a Heritage Register Evaluation. These Council actions were in response to considerable concern about the future of the Waldorf Hotel particularly in regard to its recent use and programming as an arts and cultural venue which would no longer be at the hotel. A public "Save the Waldorf" campaign was started which garnered significant media attention and an online petition with almost 19,000 signatures (as of April 18, 2013). The Waldorf Hotel is not listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register and is not, therefore, subject to Zoning and Development By-law requirements to obtain a development permit prior to demolishing the building.

Strategic Analysis

Heritage Assessment

Pursuant to Council's direction, City staff retained James Burton of Birmingham and Wood Architects and Planners to complete a heritage assessment of the Waldorf Hotel. This work entailed preparation of a Statement of Significance which identifies and assesses the key heritage values of a site.

The SoS for the Waldorf Hotel has been completed and it summarizes the heritage values as follows: "The Waldorf Hotel is valued for its location on East Hastings Street in the blocks east of the old downtown, its 1949 and 1950s exterior and interior detailing, its commercial

history as a family-run full-service hotel and drinking establishment, and its persistence as a hospitality venue over six decades since the Second World War.”

The Waldorf Hotel, completed in 1949, is a good example of a Streamline Moderne Style hotel with its flat roofed cubic form and simple horizontal detailing. The building was designed by architects Mercer and Mercer. In 1955, the building was expanded with an addition to the west and a number of interior spaces, including the Tiki Bar lounge and Polynesian Room Restaurant, which introduced Tiki/Polynesian themed spaces in Vancouver. These rooms, containing some original and surviving elements are a rare and authentic record of this interior decoration style in Vancouver.

The Waldorf Hotel is also valued for its social and cultural significance. It has been a family-run commercial operation with strong connections to the local working community and businesses since its inception. The Waldorf is notable as being a location for new and emerging ideas such as its modernism when it was built, the exotic ambiance of its 1955 Polynesian interiors, and through its history as a place where unique social scenes fostered. Most recently it was well-known for its diverse cultural activities and programming (see Appendix A for Statement of Significance).

Based on the SoS, staff completed a Heritage Register Evaluation which indicates the Waldorf Hotel has sufficient heritage value to be listed in the ‘C’ evaluation category. Buildings in the ‘C’ evaluation category contribute to the historic character of an area or streetscape. Being listed on the Heritage Register makes a building/site eligible for incentives to facilitate heritage conservation. The evaluation criteria and methodology were approved in 1986 when Council adopted the Vancouver Heritage Register (then known as the Vancouver Heritage Inventory). It provides a systematic approach and guidance for assessing a property’s heritage value (see Appendix B for the Evaluation).

It should also be noted that shortly after Council approved the temporary protection order and directed staff to complete a heritage assessment, a group of citizens submitted a document containing research and an assessment for the Waldorf Hotel. The submission focused on the most recent cultural activity at the site and is notable for the level of information provided in a short period of time. While the submission is not consistent with standards for the preparation of an SoS, The citizens' assessment also concluded the site has heritage value.

Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

The Statement of Significance Sub-committee of the Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC) reviewed the draft SoS on two occasions and members of the VHC also attended a site visit prior to passing a motion on April 8, 2013 which supported the SoS and the proposed register evaluation which would see the Waldorf Hotel listed in the ‘C’ evaluation category on the Heritage Register.

Grandview Woodland Community Plan

The Waldorf Hotel is located in Grandview Woodland where a local area planning program is currently underway. The Waldorf site is located in the Hastings Street Sub-Area. The Terms of Reference for the Plan identifies the Hastings Street Sub-area as one that could function as a stronger, more vibrant connection between Commercial Drive and Hastings-Sunrise. The sub-

area policy will focus on investigating means to better activate the blocks between Semlin Avenue and Clark Drive and will look at opportunities for residential and commercial development, enhancements to local services, public realm, and streetscape improvements.

This work is presently underway and it is anticipated draft directions will be available in June and the Community Plan will be brought forward for Council consideration before the end of this year.

Feasibility of Building Retention

Should Council approve the addition of the Waldorf Hotel to the Vancouver Heritage Register, the demolition delay provisions of the Zoning and Development By-law would apply, whereby permits for a new development must be issuable before a demolition permit can be granted for a heritage resource. These provisions allow property owners and staff to review options and consider alternatives that may include building retention or not. Should the building be retained, it would involve a Heritage Designation By-law and/or Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) and possibly a rezoning - all of which require Council approval.

At present, there is no rezoning or development permit application or a formal enquiry on this property. The long-time owner of the Waldorf Hotel (Puharich family) has a sale agreement in place with Solterra Development that is scheduled to conclude this autumn. As mentioned above, completion of the Grandview Woodland Plan by the end of 2013 will also provide clarity on future policy directions for the property site. Therefore, building retention discussions at this time are premature and are anticipated to occur in the future when ownership transfer and a clear policy context are in place.

Comments from the Owners

Both the current and prospective owner of the Waldorf Hotel have received copies of the draft SOS and register evaluation documentation and provided comments which have been reviewed and included as appropriate. They have also been given the opportunity to provide comments for inclusion in this report. At the time of writing of this report staff are awaiting comments from the current owners, the Puharich family. When received, those comments will be provided to Council via memo. Solterra Development has provided the following comments - "Solterra has no objection to the Waldorf Hotel being added to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the "C" category and wishes to be consulted on the final wording of the Statement of Significance". The final SoS is included in Appendix A and contains a balance of all the comments received from current and prospective owners.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

Section 582 of the Vancouver Charter permits Council to establish a Heritage Register which includes properties with heritage value or heritage character. Council established a Heritage Register in 1986 and approves additions to it as they come forward. Properties on the Heritage Register are not protected from demolition. This would require Council to approve a heritage designation by-law and compensate an owner for the reduction in market value

(Section 594 and 595, Vancouver Charter) or Council could enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) which can vary or supplement certain by-laws and permit conditions (Section 592, Vancouver Charter). Neither designation nor an HRA are being proposed at this time. However, once a building is on the Heritage Register, the owner must obtain a development permit prior to demolition.

CONCLUSION

Earlier this year Council approved a 120 day temporary protection order for the Waldorf Hotel and directed staff to complete a heritage assessment. That work has now been completed and it is recommended that the Waldorf Hotel be added to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Prepared by Birmingham and Wood Architects & Planners - April 2013

The Waldorf Hotel
1489 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C.
1949, 1955



Description of the Historic Place

The Waldorf Hotel is Mercer and Mercer's 1949 Streamline Moderne hotel building with 1950s Polynesian-themed alterations and additions, situated on the northwest corner of the intersection of East Hastings Street and McLean Avenue in the Hastings Corridor area of Vancouver, B.C.

Heritage Values

The Waldorf Hotel is valued for its location on East Hastings Street in the blocks east of the old downtown, its 1949 and 1950s exterior and interior detailing, its commercial history as a family-run full-service hotel and drinking establishment, and its persistence as a hospitality venue over six decades since the Second World War.

The Streamline Moderne flat-roofed form and simple horizontally-accented detailing of the original Waldorf Hotel make it a good and enduring Vancouver example of this style, which was employed by the premiere Vancouver architectural firms in the 1940s to transform Vancouver's commercial and institutional landscape, including many of the city's new or expanded hospitals (Shaughnessy and St. Vincent's Hospitals by Mercer in the 1940s, Vancouver General expansions by Townley in the 1940s), schools, community centres, and libraries, car showrooms (notably Collier's Motors, 1948, now demolished) and bus terminals (Pacific Coast Bus Line Terminal, 1947, now demolished).

With its Streamline Moderne styling, the Waldorf Hotel is an important early contributor to the physical transformation of the historic East Hastings Street corridor after the Second World War to serve the burgeoning port and the rapidly growing East Vancouver region and eastern suburbs, and featuring novel modernist building forms for car show rooms and services, exhibition grounds, supermarkets, and regional businesses (some housed in Quonset huts developed during the war).

The 1949 hotel interiors and the 1995 West Addition rooms are significant for displaying modern design for Vancouver hotel accommodation immediately following the war, anticipating three well-known motor hotels outside downtown Vancouver: the Admiral in North Burnaby (c. 1960), the Biltmore on Kingsway at 12th Avenue (c. 1963), and the Blue Boy on Southeast Marine Drive (c. 1964).

The 1955 western addition to the Waldorf Hotel, which included the Tiki Bar lounge at street level and the Polynesian Room Restaurant in the basement, is significant for introducing Polynesian-themed spaces to Vancouver - five years before the arrival of the well-known tiki-themed franchise restaurant, Trader Vic's, at the Bayshore Inn. Having outlasted Trader's Vic's in Vancouver, The Waldorf Hotel's tiki-themed rooms in the 1955 addition and basement of the 1949 building are now a rare authentic record of the importation of this interior decoration style to Vancouver.

The Waldorf Hotel is important for its history as a family-run commercial operation with strong connections to local working community and businesses. The original beer parlours and the later range of Polynesian-themed drinking and dining spaces attracted a wide spectrum of clientele, from local blue and white-collar workers to businessmen, managers, property owners, truckers, and football teams playing at Empire Stadium. The history of changes to these social spaces is important in part for reflecting the easing of regulations governing dining and drinking in Vancouver during the 1950s.

The Waldorf Hotel is valued for its history as a setting for novel ideas and enthusiasms. Notable for its modernism at the time of its 1949 opening and its exotic ambiance of its 1955 Polynesian makeover, The Waldorf Hotel continued to inspire clientele as a place to cultivate unique social scenes: it was the home to the Blue Lizard Cocktail Club lounge and music events in the 1990s, a film culture since the 1980s, and more recent diverse cultural activities and programming that gave the hotel regional prominence as an alternate cultural and social environment.

With the demise of that recent programming, the hotel became a symbol for the cultural community's efforts to maintain independent cultural venues in the city, documented in the January 2012 Save the Waldorf campaign.

Character-defining Elements

1. Site

- Prominence on the street corner

2. Use

- Continuous use as a hotel and hospitality venue
- Historic multiple uses over the site throughout the history of the hotel operation

3. Original Hotel Elements (1949)

- 2-storey, cubic, flat-roofed “L-shaped” form
- Board-formed cast-in-place concrete walls and details, including window sills at lobby, horizontal ribbing between second floor windows, and eyebrow roof over street entrances
- Sign structure that extends beyond roofline, including its cable supports
- Linear clay brick facing on street facades
- Original exterior doors and windows, including glass block washroom windows
- Coved ceilings with recessed lighting and air handling diffusers
- Original lobby details, including stair paneling and metal handrail
- Remnants of original hotel room layouts and surviving mosaic floor tiling

4. Elements associated with the 1955 Addition

- 2-storey, cubic, flat-roofed addition at the west end of the building with detailing compatible with original building

5. Original surviving Polynesian-themed Elements (1950s)

- Curvilinear shaped rooms, planters, bars, counters, stairs, railings and coved ceilings
- Painted wall murals
- Faux palms (including 1970s replicas by original manufacturer)
- Mirrored walls
- Indirect lighting, circuitry for neon tubing, and twinkling-star pot lighting
- Slate flooring and facing and stone facing on walls
- Bamboo work: columns, carved columns, column sheathing, paneling; light diffusers
- Woven grass door, wall and ceiling coverings
- Tapa cloth wall and ceiling coverings
- Seashell basins mounted in stone-faced walls
- Decorative swing, sliding and folding doors finished in copper, wood, carved wood, bamboo and coconuts

VANCOUVER HERITAGE REGISTER EVALUATION - Waldorf Hotel

Prepared by staff April 2013

ADDRESS: 1489 East Hastings Street	LOCAL AREA: Grandview Woodland
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ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

1	Style/Type	Good example of streamline Moderne style - exterior and some interior features (i.e. lobby) reflect Moderne aesthetic	E - 35 VG - 18 G - 12 F/P - 0
2	Design	Good for Tiki/Polynesian themed interiors - earliest local example, original fixtures and features remain in some areas;	E - 30 VG - 15 G - 10 F/P - 0
3	Construction	No significance	E - 15 VG - 8 G - 5 F/P - 0
4	Designer/ Builder	Good - Mercer and Mercer Architects of some importance; murals by Hopkinson	E - 15 VG - 8 G - 5 F/P - 0
TOTAL (Maximum 40)			27

CULTURAL HISTORY

1	Historical Association	Considerable importance to local area/and moderate importance to city - social history as hotel, food, beverage and at different times entertainment culture/activity; family run business with local business connections;	E - 35 VG - 18 G - 12 F/P - 0
2	Historical Pattern	Does not contribute to historical pattern of the local area - no clear evidence that building contributed to pattern of local area or civic history	E - 30 VG - 15 G - 10 F/P - 0
TOTAL (Maximum 35)			12

CONTEXT

1	Landscape/ Site	No significant landscape features or building/site relationship	E - 15 VG - 8 G - 5 F/P - 0
2	Neighbourhood	Building is not of part of a group of buildings of similar type, style or age	E - 20 VG - 10 G - 6 F/P - 0
3	Visual/ Symbolic	Building of symbolic value importance to local area and moderate symbolic importance to city -	E - 25 VG - 13 G - 8 F/P - 0
TOTAL (Maximum 25)			13
SUBTOTAL			52

INTEGRITY

- Alterations to interiors some of which has altered/removed heritage features	E - 0 VG - 5
- Some exterior alterations but do not significantly detract from style	G - 8 F/P - 15

TOTAL	47
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EVALUATION DATE	April 11, 2013	CLASSIFICATION GROUP	C
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Evaluation Categories for Commercial Buildings

A = 75 -100

B = 55 - 74

C = 30 - 54