

# **REPORT**

## ***Engineering Services and Community Services***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** June 23, 2025

**From:** Lisa Leblanc  
Director, Engineering Services  
Blair Fryer  
Director, Community Services  
**File:** 05.1035.10-2025  
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**Item #:** 2025-183

**Subject: Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project Update**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. *THAT Community Services staff be directed to conduct the research and community consultation required to complete a heritage assessment of the street light standards in the Massey Victory Heights area and share the findings with council and the community.*
  2. *THAT Engineering Services staff be directed to cancel the construction contract for the replacement of Areas 1 and 2 of the Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project and work with the heritage assessment to inform appropriate next steps for the project.*
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### **PURPOSE**

To update Council on the progress of the Massey Victory Heights street lighting replacement project, the associated decision-making process and the proposed next steps for this project.

## **SUMMARY**

This report provides Council with an update on the Massey Victory Heights street lighting structure replacement project. The streetlights in Massey Victory Heights are at least 25 years beyond their useful service life and are in very poor condition. Significant staff effort is required to develop "Frankenstein" solutions for obsolete assets and parts that are no longer available for purchase, which is compounded by the elevated levels of reactive and emergency work required to maintain the aging streetlights in an operational state on an annual basis.

A complete infrastructure replacement is required due to critical safety concerns. Complete replacement of the light standard includes all electrical conduit, streetlight bases, poles, and fixtures. Due to the design, age, and extremely poor condition of this infrastructure, it is impossible to simply repair and retain the existing lamp standards. It is also extremely ill-advised to leave the existing lamp standards in place, as they present a significant risk to the public and expose the City to legal liability should a person or property be implicated in the system's failure.

Considering recent feedback from residents and the historical context of the area, it would be prudent for the City to undertake a formal heritage assessment of the streetlight standards to help determine the next steps for this project.

Staff recommends that the City conduct a heritage assessment of the street light standards in the Massey Victory Heights area, cancel the construction contract for the replacement of Areas 1 and 2 of the Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project and work with the heritage assessment to inform appropriate next steps for the project.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Massey Victory Heights (MVH) neighbourhood was developed mainly during the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of the street lighting infrastructure in the area, including the bases, poles, and direct-bury cables, was installed during this period. It is understood that the original street light post tops were replaced with the current style post top lamp standards over the decades, while the remaining street light infrastructure was largely left unchanged. The street lighting poles, bases and cable assets in this area are thus 65 to 75 years old. According to the City of New Westminster's [Transportation Asset Management Plan](#) completed in 2020, streetlights have an estimated useful life of 30-40 years. Using asset management principles, it can be said that the streetlights in Massey Victory Heights are at least 25 years beyond their useful service lives, which places them in a very poor condition based on the recommended useful life. The poor condition of the street lighting infrastructure is verified through the City of New Westminster's operations and maintenance data, which includes:

1. Routine visual condition assessment reporting highlights, among other things, the corroded nature of the poles and the crumbling concrete bases found throughout the area.

2. The elevated levels of reactive and emergency work required to maintain the aging streetlights in an operational state on an annual basis, and
3. A significant staff effort is required to develop "Frankenstein" solutions for obsolete assets and parts that are no longer available for purchase.

The risks associated with the streetlight infrastructure in the MVH area largely relate to public safety and include:

- The risk of electrocution posed by the shallow, directly buried electrical cables (especially in garden beds and boulevards).
- The risk of electrocution and equipment damage due to the system not being electrically grounded.
- Inadequate street and sidewalk lighting levels, which do not meet the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) and Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) standards. This is confirmed by a 2009 Citywide street lighting study conducted by DMD & Associates.
- The risk of street lights structures falling due to corroded poles and bases, and
- The high operations and maintenance risk associated with frequently maintaining an obsolete system without spare parts, resulting in street lighting failures.

When factoring in all the asset management considerations related to age, condition, risk, safe operations, and maintenance, the Massey Victory Heights street light infrastructure ranks as the highest priority area across the City, which has driven the decision-making process to prioritize this project and area as part of the Street lighting replacement program. The current state, risks, and concerns of the MVH street lights can be visually observed through site photos of the lighting infrastructure in Attachment 1.

The Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project aligns with the principles, practices and decision-making of the [Asset Management and Infrastructure](#) strategic priority area. As a mechanism to improve "staff capabilities across the organization to enhance how we plan, deliver, maintain, and operate our infrastructure to meet the community's needs," staff have standardized the City's street lighting infrastructure to be Davit-style poles with Cobra head fixtures as stipulated in the [Subdivision and development control bylaw no. 7142, 2007](#).

The standardization of the City's residential street lighting infrastructure has improved the City's inventory management, as our operations and maintenance stores now only stock parts and materials that meet city standards. This means that over the past few years, when a street light has failed or required replacement across the City, it has been replaced with the City's standard Davit-style and Cobra head fixture. This principle has been adhered to in the execution of the Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project.

Decorative and ornamental lights are described in the City's [Subdivision and development control bylaw no. 7142, 2007](#), but these can only be used in designated public realm areas of the City such as the Belmont Plaza, esplanade, parks, plazas and open spaces.

## **Massey Victory Heights Neighbourhood Historical Context**

In August 2016, Denise Cook Design, Birmingham & Wood Elana Zysblat Consulting, created the [Massey Victory Heights historical context statement document](#).

The statement aims to identify major themes and factors that have influenced its history. It captures the unique character and heritage values of the area, connecting its past to the present. Massey Victory Heights is primarily a single-family residential subdivision, significant for being the only neighbourhood in New Westminster developed exclusively after World War II, serving as a prime example of modern suburban design from that era.

Its establishment in 1946 as "Victory Heights" was driven by the City Council's plan to provide lower-cost land for returning servicemen and women, showcasing a connection to the City's war effort and patriotism. The neighbourhood retains its 1950s charm, characterized by a mix of mostly modern housing types, complex street layouts (often following slope contours), and significant views due to its elevated location. Residents highly value its aesthetic, community feel, walkability, and amenities, such as schools, parks, and churches. A notable feature of its development was the installation of underground utilities, making it the first neighbourhood in Canada to have such infrastructure. During a 2015 workshop, residents gave specific mention to the historic streetlights in their neighbourhood but no further research was undertaken into them at that time.

## **DISCUSSION**

Discussions on replacing the Massey Victory Heights street lighting have taken place internally within the City and with community members over the past few years, including at a residents' association meeting in 2021. Between 2022 and 2024, Engineering experienced a staff turnover, including the retirement of staff members who were part of the initial discussions on this project. The Street lighting replacement program was formally resourced in 2024, and work on this project began in earnest.

One of the first decisions made during the project scoping was determining the need for public engagement. The following considerations were factored:

- The asset management considerations, including the age, condition, operations and maintenance difficulties, risks and safety concerns.
- Review of the City's heritage inventory, which does not include the Massey Victory Heights light standard and
- The City's standardized street lighting requirements for residential areas, as per the [Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw No. 7142, 2007](#).

Based on the above, staff determined that there was no opportunity for the public to influence decisions on this project, similar to the determination made on engineering assets, such as water, sewer, and road paving projects.

Residents of Massey Victory Heights have recently informed the City that they consider these streetlights to be historical artifacts.

With the engineering and asset management determinations made, the project planning and execution of the project works began as follows:

- A request for proposal (RFP) to retain a design consultant was issued in early 2024, with the design contract being awarded in March 2024.
- The Massey Victory Heights neighbourhood was divided into six areas, with areas 1 and 2 earmarked for design and construction first, as shown in Attachment 2.
- Tender-ready designs and drawings for areas 1 and 2 were completed in March 2025.
- The tender was issued to the market on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025.
- The City project page website was created on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- Information on the tender was shared with the MVH RA president in April 2025.
- Advance construction notices were sent out to Area 1 residents on Mott and Courtney Crescent residents on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- Construction notices for residents in Area 2, including Rickman, Jackson, York, Churchill, Massey, and William Streets, were sent on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- The contract for the construction of areas 1 and 2 was awarded to a contractor in late May 2025.
- The City Engineering Technologist met with residents while delivering notices door-to-door, on the following dates and streets:
  - March 28<sup>th</sup> – Mott Crescent
  - April 1<sup>st</sup> – Courtney Crescent
  - April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Rickman Place, York Street, Massey Street
  - May 9<sup>th</sup> – Parts of Rickman Place, Jackson Crescent, York Street, Churchill Ave, William Street, Chestnut Street, Scott
  - May 23<sup>rd</sup> – Site meeting with the RA president at 816 York St

Staff continue to work with residents who have questions and enquiries regarding the project.

Staff have received a significant amount of resident feedback and concern on this project, primarily around the following:

- Concern about replacing the distinctive post-WWII light poles and lamp standards,
- Concerns about the new trench line for the conduit installation damaging gardens that extend into the city boulevard area and
- The impact of this project on the trees in the area.

There are engineering solutions that staff can and will utilize to minimize the impacts of the new trench lines during the project. Staff have begun working with an arborist to

assess the impact on trees during this project. The remaining concern regarding the heritage value of the streetlights cannot be 'engineered' away and requires additional specialized work from the City's community services team to resolve, which will be described in the heritage assessment process outlined below.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, staff received a petition from Heritage New West, with 153 signatories, with the request to review options to preserve and retain some or all of the lights within MVH due to the distinct design of the current street lights and the role that they play in the historical character and unique charm of the neighbourhood.

Due to the design, age, and extremely poor condition of this infrastructure, it is impossible to simply repair and retain the existing lamp standards. It is also extremely ill-advised to leave the existing lamp standards in place, as they present a significant risk to the public and expose the City to legal liability should a person or property be implicated in the system's failure.

### **Heritage Assessment Process**

To support council regarding the retention or removal of these street lamps, Community Services will undertake a heritage assessment to arrive at a Statement of Significance (SOS) for them. The SOS will provide a comprehensive description of the lamp standard alongside their character-defining elements and heritage values. Character-defining elements are the physical features of the lamps that should be considered in conversations around their disposition. They include features such as materials, maker's marks, design processes, creator or manufacturer, patterns of wear, repair changes, and adaptations. Heritage values are less tangible; they describe the historic, aesthetic, cultural or social importance of the items<sup>1</sup>. These values are established through archival, literary, and comparative research on the lamps. This research is coupled with community consultation aimed at fully understanding the value of streetlights to the City and residents of the Massey/Victory Heights Neighbourhood.

As there is no existing body of information to reference, research into the street lights could take 3 - 4 months to complete. A heritage consultant will be engaged to undertake the work. They will complete a literature review and consult local and regional archives, municipalities and heritage collections to seek information about the manufacture, distribution and use of the lamps. Upon completion of this research, the consultant will meet with the community to present the research findings and consult with them around the values associated with the lamps. This research will be compiled into a heritage assessment report, including the final Statement of Significance for the street lamp

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted from: Preparing and Submitting Records for the BC and Canadian Registers of Historic Places by the British Columbia Heritage Branch

standards. This heritage assessment report will be brought back to City Council for their consideration regarding the next steps related to the street lamp replacement project.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Considering the feedback from residents and the heritage assessment process described above, it would be prudent for the City to pause the project to undertake this research that will guide the next steps of this project. One of two outcomes will occur from the findings of the report:

1. If the report's findings determine that the streetlights do not have significant heritage value to warrant their retention, then the replacement of the streetlights in all six areas of MVH can proceed as currently designed and planned.
2. If the report's findings indicate that the streetlights have significant heritage value, then an alternative solution will be required to replace the streetlights in all six areas of MVH.

The City has entered into a contract agreement with a contractor for the replacement of street lighting in Areas 1 and 2 of MVH. As the City is now in a legal agreement, any changes to the contract's terms, such as changes in scope or delays in the project, will be subject to claims from the contractor. In discussion with our procurement team, the following three options and potentially related impacts are available for the project:

1. **Cancel the construction contract** – The contractor will likely claim a financial loss due to the City's cancellation. This option provides certainty to the City from a financial and risk perspective.
2. **Negotiate a set compensation with the contractor to postpone the project until the conclusion of the report, with the hope of proceeding as currently designed and planned and allowing the contractor the opportunity to update their bid price.** This option is entirely dependent on the contractor. There is significant financial uncertainty for the City as the contractor could rebid a non-competitive price. The project implementation timelines are reduced, allowing work to be undertaken with minimal delays.
3. **Negotiate a set compensation with the contractor to postpone the project until the conclusion of the report and the completion of an alternative solution redesign, and allow the contractor the opportunity to bid on the project.** This option is entirely dependent on the contractor and will require a significant amount of time (more than 1 year). There is even greater financial uncertainty for the City, as the contractor could rebid at a non-competitive price.

Based on the above three options, staff would recommend that the City cancel the construction contract and determine the appropriate next steps following the completion of a heritage assessment.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2025-2029 Capital Plan includes \$5.5 million to complete the planning, design, and construction of the six project sites at Massey Victory Heights. \$1.3 million has been allocated to the project in 2025 to complete the construction of project Areas 1 and 2.

Based on the recommendations of this report, there will be financial implications from either cancelling the construction contract or negotiating with the contractor. The financial impacts of the recommendations will be reported through the quarterly financial reporting reports.

There will be additional financial implications in completing the heritage assessment and developing a statement of significance for the street lamps. The estimated cost for this process is \$15,000, which can be funded from the existing project budget.

## **INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

Interdepartmental liaison has occurred between staff from Engineering, Energy and Climate Action, and Community Services departments. The finance department has reviewed the financial implications section of this report.

## **OPTIONS**

There are three options for Council's consideration; they are:

1. THAT Community Services staff be directed to conduct the research and community consultation required to complete a heritage assessment of the street light standards in the Massey Victory Heights area and share the findings with council and the community.
2. THAT Engineering Services staff be directed to cancel the construction contract for the replacement of Areas 1 and 2 of the Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project and work with the heritage assessment to inform appropriate next steps for the project.
3. THAT staff be provided with alternate directions.

Staff recommend Options #1 and 2.

## **CONCLUSION**

This report provides Council with an update on the Massey Victory Heights street lighting structure replacement project. Due to the design, age, and extremely poor condition of this infrastructure, it is impossible to simply repair and retain the existing lamp standards.



It is also extremely ill-advised to leave the existing lamp standards in place, as they present a significant risk to the public and expose the City to legal liability should a person or property be implicated in the system's failure.

Staff recommends that council cancel the construction contract for the replacement of Areas 1 and 2 of the Massey Victory Heights Street Lighting Replacement Project, conduct a heritage assessment of the street lighting in the Massey Victory Heights area which can be used to determine the appropriate next steps of the lighting replacement project.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - Current State, Risks, and Concerns of the MVH Street Lights (Photos)  
Attachment 2 - Massey Victory Heights Neighbourhood Six Areas Map

### **APPROVALS**

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