

REPORT

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** September 27, 2021

From: Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer **File:**

Item #: 2021-355

Subject: Decommissioning Cosmic Maypole

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council approve the Public Art Advisory Committee's recommendation to remove *Cosmic Maypole* from Friendship Gardens due to safety concerns and initiate a process to decommission the work; and

THAT Council approve the reallocation of Public Art reserve funding from the approved 2021 Capital budget to cover the cost of removal and decommissioning.

PURPOSE

This report is to seek Council's approval of the Public Art Advisory Committee's recommendation to remove *Cosmic Maypole* from Friendship Gardens due to safety concerns and to initiate a process to decommission the work. The report is also seeking Council's approval to reallocate existing approved Public Art Reserve funding from the 2021 Capital budget to cover the cost of removal and decommissioning.

EXISTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The City's Public Art Policy guides the acquisition and management of public art works sited on City property. The Public Art Policy is administered by Art Services staff, working collaboratively and under the advisement of the City's appointed Public Art Advisory Committee. The Public Art Policy includes provisions for decommissioning works in the City's inventory as required.

ANALYSIS

Background

Cosmic Maypole was carved by artist Georganna Malloff and volunteers during the Vancouver United Nations Habitat Forum in 1976 as part of a project funded through Public Works Canada. Following the Habitat Forum, the unfinished work was placed in storage, awaiting recommendation for a permanent siting.

In 1979, a Federal Committee charged with dispersing Habitat assets recommended the placement of the pole in New Westminster. Following approval from Council, the artist was contracted by the City to complete the carving and design and attach a rainbow cap. In 1979, the City signed an Exhibit Agreement with Public Works Canada for Indefinite Loan and assumed full responsibility to all costs including maintenance and ongoing insurance, recognizing the proprietorship of the Crown.

Condition Assessment

An engineering inspection conducted in 2012 noted significant deterioration, including a large vertical crack extending the length of the pole, bacterial growth and insect infestation. In response, the top section was removed. A subsequent engineering inspection conducted in 2017 noted further deterioration and complete removal was recommended.

A conservation assessment commissioned in 2018 outlined a treatment plan at a cost of 70K which would stabilize existing deterioration, but would not address structural concerns previously identified in the engineering reports nor alleviate the need for future and ongoing maintenance.

Cultural Considerations

The work was carved by a non-Indigenous artist incorporating Northwest Coast Indigenous carving traditions and therefore is not aligned with the City's commitment to decolonization, truth and reconciliation. Consultation and engagement will be required to ensure the City proceeds with a decommissioning approach that is respectful and culturally sensitive.

Time Capsule

A time capsule that was housed in the top section of the pole has been recovered and retained.

PAAC Review

Staff brought forward a report to the July 9 closed PAAC meeting recommending the removal of the work, and to seek input regarding the appropriate decommissioning approach.

Following careful consideration and discussion, the PAAC provided the following motion:

THAT the Public Art Advisory Committee recommends that the *Cosmic Maypole* be decommissioned and removed from Tipperary Park for safety reasons and that staff seek counsel from Indigenous communities regarding the decommissioning approach;

THAT the Public Art Advisory Committee supports allocating funding from the Public Art reserve to support the removal of the Cosmic Maypole.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the above motions.

NEXT STEPS

Following Council's approval of the Public Art Advisory Committee's recommendations, staff will:

- Inform Public Services and Procurement Canada (formerly Public Works Canada) and the artist of the intention to remove and decommission the work;
- Review and document the contents of the time capsule;
- Take steps to identify any Indigenous connections to the work and names of Indigenous carvers that may have been involved in its creation;
- Consult with Indigenous communities to establish if protocols for removal and/or decommissioning are required;
- Engage with Public Services and Procurement Canada as owners of the work regarding the decommissioning process;
- Arrange for the removal and interim storage of the work; and,
- Prepare a communications plan and public event as required.

In addition, at Council's request, staff will:

- Prepare a report regarding other carved poles sited on City property in order to address any concerns regarding cultural appropriation; and,
- Review the Public Art Policy to include language that addresses cultural appropriation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Removal costs estimated to be approximately 11K will be funded through a reallocation of Public Art Reserve funding included in the approved 2021 capital budget.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the Public Art Advisory Committee's recommendation to remove *Cosmic Maypole* from Friendship Gardens due to safety concerns and initiate a process to decommission the work;

2. Approve the reallocation of Public Art Reserve funding from the approved 2021 Capital budget to cover the cost of removal and decommissioning;
3. Provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommend Options 1 and 2.

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Todd Ayotte, Manager of Community Arts and Theatre
Quyen Hoang, Public and Community Art Coordinator

This report was reviewed by:
Rob McCullough, Manager of Museums and Heritage Services

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer