



Heritage Vancouver

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Burrard Bridge heritage refurbishments, lighting event, and background

City of Vancouver invites the public to the NW corner of the bridge,
on Wednesday, October 25, 2017 at 7pm

Heritage Vancouver Society has been very vocal and active since 2001 over the various proposed changes to the bridge, with a few previous proposals causing serious detriment to the bridge's historic designs, and the historic Burrard Bridge occupying a spot on our **annual Top10 Threat list seven times.**

Completed in 1932 to provide a high-level crossing to the western neighbourhoods — the bridge designed by architects Sharp & Thompson — is a triumph of civic architecture and a key gateway structure.

We're extremely happy, being **involved as a key stakeholder** during the bridge's recent upgrades and refurbishment, and also for the City's interest, action, and champion in restoring Vancouver's Art Deco bridge.

Now at 85-years young, the venerable Burrard Bridge is one of Vancouver's true landmarks.

What historic elements have been reintroduced?

HISTORIC LIGHTING

Initially not part of the upgrades, the City eventually decided to move forward restoring back the historic concrete lamp standards, bronze light fixtures, and sconces, replicating the original 1930-32 designs of the roadway lighting, removed in the mid-1960s.

The cement lamp standards are replicas of the original art deco bridge designs, set back in place to their original positions.

The glass globes and bronze lamp housings are based upon an original surviving light fixture, and have been replicated by a BC company. They incorporate tri-light-LEDs, allowing almost any colour of light to display along the bridge.

In addition to the lamp standards, replica scones have been reinstalled along the bridge as well, where the originals once were.

Now that the upgrades have been completed, the visual link between the central bridge massing and the end brazier pylons will finally be restored, enhancing and preserving Vancouver's architectural gem – one of the few Art Deco bridges which exist in the world, and one that serves as a marine and sea gateway to Vancouver.

RE-LIGHTING OF THE BRIDGE

On Wednesday October 25th, the City of Vancouver is inviting members of the public to the bridge for a 7pm light show where they'll demonstrate the new multi-colour capacity of the pedestrian scale lighting.

BRAZIER END PYLONS/LIGHTING

Part of the original bridge's design incorporated two lantern pylons at both ends of the bridge, which serve as WW1 memorials. The decoration of the pylons include a stylized Cross of Lorraine, and the bronze lights were inspired by the braziers used by soldiers in the trenches, a traditional feature of the battlefield.

Initially not part of the bridge's refurbishments, a recent development to restore the internal brazier lighting is now moving forward, for Remembrance Day 2017. They'll once again replicate a flickering fire at both ends of the bridge's entrances, in honour of the soldiers who fought for our freedoms that we enjoy today.

MEANS PREVENTION FENCING/BARRIER

A sudden last minute addition to the upgrades was the incorporation of a barrier. Initial designs were visually heavy, without design reference to the bridge, were reliant upon thick steel beams for reinforcing the fencing run, and without any of the replicated cement lamp standards to visually break up the long fencing runs.

The decision to then restore the period lighting that involves large concrete lamp standards, has allowed a redesign of the fencing to become more thin, and an elegant deco-type of design, much more in keeping with the overall bridge's aesthetic, with the robust cement lamp standards now visually breaking up the segments of fencing.

Also, varying the fencing bar height helps to break up the bars in a more elegant design more in keeping with the bridge's design.

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Notes

Heritage Register:

Categorical listing of A, B or C, with no legal protection but flags properties when applications are applied for, and can trigger incentives for retention (bonusing, etc.) that wouldn't normally be available

Heritage Designation:

Legally protected property on title, demolition is not allowed.

Notes

Burrard Bridge (1932)

Architectural style:

Art Deco

Engineer/Designer:

Major J.R. Grant

Architectural Consultants:

Sharp & Thompson

Sculptor:

Charles Marega

Contractor:

Hodgson, King & Marble

Date of Construction:

Opened July 1, 1932

Heritage Status:

Vancouver Heritage Register (Landscape Resource: Public Works)

Overview

The Burrard Bridge is a massive board-formed concrete and rivetted steel truss bridge spanning False Creek north to south along Burrard Street, connecting the downtown peninsula with the south and west reaches of Vancouver. Six vertical concrete piers, four of which extend above the roadbed, support a central steel Parker Truss and flanking steel Warren Deck Truss Spans.

This iconic Art Deco structure opened on July 1, 1932 and remains one of the most recognizable landmarks in the City of Vancouver. It's valued as one of the most iconic structures in the City of Vancouver, and is significant as one of the primary representations of the city's dramatic growth and development during the 1920s-30s.

It dates from the time of substantial growth of the city to the south and west, and symbolizes the amalgamation of Vancouver, Point Grey and South Vancouver as a single municipality, which occurred on January 1, 1929. A high-level bridge connecting downtown, the growing suburbs of Point Grey and the emerging University of British Columbia was anticipated in the Bartholomew plan of 1929, the city's first comprehensive planning vision, and was one of the tangible results of the Plan.

Marking the entry to False Creek, it was designed to act as a gateway in two directions, providing those passing across the bridge with the impression of entering a gate (the "Road Gate"), with panoramic views through the railings. From a distance, and from the shore, the bridge presents a massive portal at the entry to False Creek (the "Sea Gate"), and is a defining skyline element from both the land and water. The construction of the bridge also transformed Burrard Street from a local access street into a major downtown thoroughfare, and as a result, a number of monumental institutional and commercial projects chose to locate along this corridor.

Along with the Lions Gate Bridge, the Burrard Bridge epitomized Vancouver's growth, expansion and progressive vision for the future during a time of economic adversity. Vancouver is constrained in all directions by water and topography, and the development of a regional road network required substantial investment in bridges, which are one of the city's defining features.

During the Great Depression, make-work programs were initiated to create employment and take advantage of low material and labour costs, the effect of which produced much-needed infrastructure improvements. Throughout the region, roads and highways were constructed to link Vancouver with the Fraser Valley, the American border and the north shore of Burrard Inlet. The Burrard Bridge was Vancouver's first high-level, non-swing span bridge that allowed the uninterrupted flow of marine and vehicular traffic, and was the City's largest make-work project of the era.

The Burrard Bridge is also one of Vancouver's most important examples of the Art Deco style, and one of the world's most recognizable Art Deco bridges. Major J.R. Grant undertook the utilitarian engineering of the bridge, while the architectural elements were designed by G.L. Thornton Sharp of Sharp & Thompson.

The sculptural program was executed by Vancouver's pre-eminent architectural sculptor, Charles Marega. The monumentality of the bridge is emphasized through its overscaled elements and massive embellishments, such as the piers and galleries, which serve a decorative, rather than structural, purpose.

The pylons at each end of the bridge, with their flaming torch light fixtures, were conceived as a memorial to the First World War, inspired by the charcoal braziers used by captured soldiers in German prisoner of war camps. The Burrard Bridge transcends its functional requirements through its carefully designed architectural and sculptural embellishments, and provides a memorable civic gesture at a key downtown location.

Content in Notes, courtesy Donald Luxton & Associates Inc.



Image City of Vancouver Archives

Our previous letters (2005-2015) on issues with the Burrard Bridge

Burrard Bridge Rehabilitation

July 21, 2015

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2015-07-21.pdf

Burrard Bridge Reconfiguration and Structural Rehabilitation

July 6, 2010

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2010-07-06.pdf

Burrard Bridge Sidewalk Capacity Lane Re-allocation Trial

May 4, 2009

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2009-05-04.pdf

Burrard Bridge Motions

December 15, 2005

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2005-12-15.pdf

Burrard Bridge Sidewalk Capacity Improvements for Pedestrians and Cyclists

July 18, 2005

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2005-07-18.pdf

Burrard Bridge Sidewalk Capacity Improvements for Pedestrians and Cyclists

June 27, 2005

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2005-06-27.pdf

Burrard Bridge – Proposed Pedestrian and Cyclist Improvements

April 9, 2005

http://www.heritagevancouver.org/pdf_letters/HVS-letter-burrardbridge-2005-04-09.pdf

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Replicated lamp standards from the original 1932 designs (removed in the 1960s), all-new art deco concrete standards with bronze light fixtures – copied from an original surviving fixture example – now restored into their 74 original positions along the bridge.
Photos Heritage Vancouver Society