

WITH

DENISE COOK DESIGN
DR. JEAN BARMAN

2400 Motel Statement of Significance

for

The City of Vancouver



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Introduction

This report is the culmination of a research process that included on site reviews of the resource, review of historical records, and public consultations and interviews with individuals identified as having important knowledge of the site, the motel operation, and the culture of Kingsway in the time of the Motel's existence.

Site reviews included a guided tour of some of the interiors of the units, led by Rick Sair, who managed the Motel for the Sair family, the owners of the 2400 from the 1960s through to the 1980s.

Research documents include architectural prints found on site (City staff were able to reproduce those drawings) which hint at the evolution of the site from the earliest bungalows along Kingsway to the slightly later buildings south of them.

Public consultation included interviews with residents (recorded in Appendices D and E), with Dana and Rick Sair (history of the family-run operation from the 1960s to the 1980s), and with John Atkin (history of Kingsway, the motor court culture, and neon signage). On two occasions the history of Kingsway and the importance of the 2400 Motel were discussed with the Norquay Village business and resident community groups, who have been working with Planning staff on the planning of the new Norquay Village area, the stretch of Kingsway that includes the 2400 Motel site, which is owned by the city.

This study begins with the brief Historical Context Statement, which introduces the importance of Kingsway to the history of Vancouver. The Statement is followed by the Statement of Significance, which highlights the ways in which the 2400 Motel embodies the development of Kingsway and the City, making it one of the most significant records of the city's history.

2400 Motel Historic Context Statement

The 2400 Motel speaks to car culture – the love affair with the automobile that swept North America during much of the twentieth century. Car culture was responsible for the 2400 Motel being built in 1946, and car culture accounts for its survival relatively intact to 2006.

The 2400 Motel testifies to the impact of the automobile on Vancouver and, more specifically, on the artery of Kingsway on which it is located. Initially the principal route into Vancouver, Kingsway displayed in abundance the three attributes of car culture – vehicle facilities, food, and accommodation. The emergence of newer alternative routes into Vancouver from the 1950s onward caused most aspects of car culture along Kingsway either to disappear or, as with the 2400 Motel, to have no reason to be updated. The 2400 Motel provides a visual reminder of the critical shifts in transportation that have made Vancouver the city it is today.

Kingsway initiated. The route we know as Kingsway has a long history. The Royal Engineers, who were sent from England to keep order during the gold rush beginning in 1858, feared invasion by the expansionist United States. So they laid out a trail running some 13 miles (20 kilometres) from New Westminster, the capital of the then British colony of British Columbia, northwest to Burrard Inlet. The route most likely followed a pre-contact Aboriginal trail.

British Columbia survived to become a Canadian province in 1871. Westminster Road, as it was then known, expanded into a wagon road following the creation of Vancouver in 1886 as the terminus of the new transcontinental railway. From 1891 an interurban rail line paralleled Westminster Road a few blocks to the north (roughly today's SkyTrain route). A streetcar line was laid out along Westminster Road from Broadway or 9th Avenue to Victoria Drive and 28th Avenue in 1909. The line was extended to Joyce Road, about 40th Avenue, in 1912.

Means of transportation and settlement went hand in hand. The decade and a half prior to the First World War was economically buoyant, and men, women, and families from Britain, Europe, and elsewhere in Canada flocked to British Columbia in large numbers. By 1911 the population of Vancouver,



then extending south only to 16th Avenue, surpassed 100,000. The surrounding area east to Burnaby, south to New Westminster and Richmond, and across Burrard Inlet to North Vancouver contained another 50,000. Newcomers, especially of modest background, were attracted to areas along Kingsway near to interurban and streetcar stops. The neighbourhoods we now know as Mount Pleasant, Kensington-Cedar Cottage, and Renfrew-Collingwood acquired shops and schools.

Kingsway remade. The car transformed Westminster Road. The automobile was one of the great inventions of the twentieth century, but there were drawbacks. Cars demanded smoother, harder surfaces than did horses. The early vehicles were in constant need of maintenance and could not be depended on to go long distances. It was as roads were improved and vehicles became more reliable that automobile ownership took off across North America. Existing routes were transformed as enterprising men and women scurried to provide essential services.

Westminster Road became the auto route heading south once the Fraser River was bridged at New Westminster in 1904. Nine years later Westminster Road was widened and paved with asphalt. Vancouver City Council celebrated by changing the name to Kingsway after a London, England, street. On the improved route's opening in October 1913, some 600 cars paraded four abreast along Kingsway's pockets of settlement amidst farms and empty lots to a celebration at Central Park in Burnaby.

The booming 1920s made it possible for more and more families to afford an automobile and thereby holiday trips no longer dependent on public transportation. Together with gas stations, garages, and cafes, Kingsway acquired its first auto camps. This early form of overnight accommodation consisted of places to park, toilets, and possibly tents or rough cabins. According to city directories Kingsway had two auto camps in 1925, half a dozen by 1930. Four of the six were combined with a service station, two of the four also with a grocery store or café.



CVA 89-2279
LOCATION: 174-A-2 Taken for Duker and Shaw Billboards Ltd. [Kingsway near Clark Drive], [ca. 1926]

Kingsway kept growing in importance. The Pattullo Bridge crossing the Fraser River at New Westminster was completed in 1937. From there the King George Highway ran south to the international border at Blaine, Washington. Kingsway became the northernmost section of a road system linking Vancouver down the American coast to Mexico by what became known as the Pacific Highway.

Determination grew to widen Kingsway to three lanes in each direction. No sooner had the cost of the

1913 improvements been repaid in 1925, the talk began. Some work was completed during the early 1930s, but it took until the end of the Second World War for the project to get underway and until 1950 for it to be completed. By then Kingsway was the main arterial highway not only heading south but also east along the new Trans-Canada Highway.

Kingsway triumphant. Kingsway – or the ‘Pacific Highway’ as it was increasingly called - seemed to have it all. No facility better exemplifies the heady optimism than the 2400 Motel, constructed in 1946 just north of 33rd Avenue between Nanaimo and Slocan. Its original name of 2400 Court signaled the growing sophistication of accommodations. Auto camps were giving way to auto courts, which offered a common open space, or ‘court,’ fronting furnished bungalows with kitchenettes. A large neon sign greeted travelers as they crested the hill to 2400 and viewed Vancouver in the distance. While typical of auto courts across North America, the sign also had a distinctly Vancouver flare, for the city reputedly boasted more neon than anywhere else in the world except for Shanghai, China.

Car culture was at its height, and a future filled with tourists appeared to be assured. The buoyant postwar economy permitted more and more families not only to own cars but to afford the leisure they facilitated. The three essentials of car culture proliferated along Kingsway, which became a classic strip mall, as such routes were termed. Gas stations and garages had long been a prominent Kingsway feature – some two dozen in the mid-1920s – and they continued to be so. Roadside food was becoming popular, and by 1960 Kingsway sported a good half dozen drive-ins, including Wally’s Burgers at 2703 Kingsway and the Rickshaw at 5640 Kingsway specializing in Chinese food.

By then auto courts were being upstaged by motels, a word combining motor with the more luxurious-sounding hotel and usually signaling single structures containing multiple units. Kingsway’s remaining dozen ‘auto courts’ were by 1960 challenged by another dozen ‘motels.’ In accord with the shift, the 2400 Court changed its name in the early 1960s, according to city directories, to the 2400 Court Motel. As for the neon sign, the word ‘Motel’ was simply tacked on the bottom.

Kingsway bypassed. The future so optimistically envisioned for Kingsway was not to be. Across North America, the first generation of roads was mostly bypassed by extensive highway construction beginning in the 1950s. The so-called ‘Pacific Highway’ moved west with the opening of the Granville and Oak Street bridges across the north arm of the Fraser River in 1954 and 1957, and then the George Massey Tunnel under the river’s south arm in 1959. The opening of the Knight Street Bridge across the north arm of the Fraser in 1974 pulled even more traffic away from Kingsway. And strip malls gave way to shopping centres, a phenomenon initiated by Oakridge opening in the late 1950s between the two new routes south out of Vancouver.

Over time the 2400 Court Motel’s fortunes dimmed alongside those of Kingsway. Neon lost its appeal, so that the 2400’s sign no longer captured the attention it once had. Design moved away from individual units (auto courts) to single-roofed multiple units (motels) and then to stacked multi-unit structures (motor hotels). Independent mom-and-pop operations, such as the 2400 Motel was up to 1989 when purchased by the City of Vancouver, gave way to larger and more economically-run motels and motor hotels whose corporate ownership or franchising promised dependable uniformity between locations.

Instead of kitchenettes, newer structures sported coffee shops; instead of grass courtyards, swimming pools. Typical was the two-story Eldorado Motel, later Motor Hotel, opening in about 1960 up the street from the 2400 at 2330 Kingsway.

The growth of immigration into Canada from the 1970s on further changed Kingsway. The area appealed to newcomers from Vietnam, Korea, and China, many of modest backgrounds not unlike their predecessors several generations earlier. Indicative of this shift, Wally's Burgers was purchased early in the present century by a recent immigrant from Korea. The accumulation of changes caused structures like the 2400 Motel not to be updated or replaced as they would have been if located in some other parts of Vancouver, but rather to continue in operation relatively unchanged into the early twenty-first century.



Statement of Significance

2400 Motel
22396-2440 Kingsway
Vancouver, B.C.

Description

Located on a knoll at 2400 Kingsway near its intersection with East 33rd Avenue, the 2400 Motel is a cluster of 18 bungalow-styled buildings grouped around a central office structure sited on a 3-acre parcel of land in Vancouver B.C. The historic place consists of the buildings and the site.

Values

The 2400 Motel is important for its historical, formal, aesthetic and cultural values, most particularly for being a prominent marker of the evolution of Kingsway following the Second World War.



One of the premier motor court addresses following its construction in the years immediately following the Second World War, the 2400 Motel is the sole remaining record of Kingsway assuming the key role in providing up-to-date car-oriented accommodation for North Americans traveling to Vancouver. The 2400 is a marker of the coming-of-age of Kingsway as the northern terminus of the Pacific Highway, which linked Vancouver via the Pattullo Bridge and the King George Highway to the American highway system south to Mexico. The Motel is a local remnant of the continent-wide infrastructure serving the North American romance for the road trip, providing guests with a familiar suburban home-away-from-home.

The 2400 Motel's continued existence and relatively unchanged nature are significant markers of Kingsway's diminished regional role and economic decline following the construction of more modern vehicular routes into the city in the 1960s. The 1960s addition of the word "Motel" to the out-of-date name "2400 Court" is representative of the ad-hoc responsiveness of small family-run operations to the increasing sophistication demanded of tourism accommodations and the general trend towards chain motels and hotels. Enough of the original site remains for the 2400 to be a singular record of the culture of the modest and proud family business, which combined orderliness and continuity in the running of a successful establishment. The site and building design, including the units with original interiors, provide a visual reminder of the typical modest residential accommodation in the several decades following the Second World War.

Because of its relatively intact status, the 2400 Motel is an important example of residential site planning and building practice for the period immediately following WWII: the scale and spacious distribution of the repeated bungalow duplexes set in the expansive lawned landscape are typical of housing schemes and suburban housing of this period, suiting this more residential stretch of Kingsway. The bungalow form, details and materials are all typical of post-War houses and public housing, including war workers' housing and veterans' housing. The formality of the site planning at the 2400 Motel, including the Kingsway vehicular-only entrance, set on an axis with the administration office, the formal flower beds and clipped shrubbery, and the iconic signage along Kingsway, are together a memorable commercial interpretation of Modernist car-oriented suburban site planning and design.

The 2400 Motel's geographical prominence at the point along Kingsway where a broad view of Vancouver is first seen, the Motel's very longevity, and its singular appearance of being from another time, make the 2400 Motel one of the most recognized groupings of buildings in the city, giving the site a city-wide and even regional importance in the cultural landscape. Its neon sign, a carry-over from Vancouver's days as one of the greatest centres of neon signage in the world, cements the iconic stature of the site.

The 2400 Motel is a rare place of shared memories. Not only did the 2400 function as a home-away-from-home for many travelers, with loyal visitors repeatedly returning to stay over many decades, but it has entered Vancouverites' collective imagination as a seemingly immutable part of the city - a whole, miniature world from an earlier simpler time.

Core Character Defining Elements

Character defining elements, embodying core values of the 2400 Motel:

1. The line of bungalows closest to Kingsway

- evolution of Kingsway
- commercial residential strain of post WWII Modernism (modesty, repetition, construction)

2. The "2400 Court Motel" sign

- evolution of Kingsway
- Vancouver's neon past
- history of travelers' accommodation in Vancouver

3. Landscape surrounding the line of bungalows closest to Kingsway: manicured lawns and clipped domestic trees and shrubs; ornamental flower gardens adjacent to units; planted boulevard at entry extensive areas of surface parking

- suburban residential design from the years immediately following WWII
- prominence given to the automobile in the suburban landscape in the post-War years

Character Defining Elements

General

- The name "2400 Motel": at once defining its location, its use, and the historical struggle to maintain market share as a "motel" rather than a "motor court".
- The wholeness of the compound: landscape and building design from a single period

Site, Context and Landscape

- Situation on top of a knoll
- Views northwest to downtown Vancouver
- Wedged site between East 33rd, East 30th, and Kingsway
- Overall site setting among both single family homes and commercial enterprises
- Siting of the individual buildings within the path system and on the open lawns and parking lots
- Location of office in a central area of the buildings, centred on axis with Kingsway vehicular entrance
- Easy vehicular circulation into and through the site
- Formal arrangement of planting material

Architectural Qualities

- Domestic form and scale
- One-storey horizontal modular massing of the units; contrasting 2-storey massing of office
- Function of the buildings/site as tourist accommodation that is expressed in the combination of building design and site layout

Architectural Elements

- Wood frame construction
- Stucco exterior, with later bungalows featuring painted beveled siding base
- Painted concrete and brick sills
- Institutional-looking brick chimney on building with unit 122 (serving boiler)
- Hipped roofs with modest flat-soffited overhangs
- Windows with horizontal divisions between lites
- Other exterior architectural details
 - soffits of T&G wood initially, stucco subsequently
 - plain slab exterior wood doors
- Faux log cabin siding on garage building

Signage

- Neon sign "2400 Court" on Kingsway, with the ad-hoc painted "Motel" sign mounted below

Interior features

- Original or early finishes and fixtures in many units

Landscape Elements

- Douglas Fir trees demarcating adjacent properties
- Internal organization of pedestrian pathway
- Manicured lawns and clipped domestic trees and shrubs
- Ornamental flower gardens adjacent to some units
- Planted boulevard at entry
- Internal road network
- Wheel stops with unit numbers
- Small scale elements including a series of clotheslines, picket fences, pipe fitting handrails

Appendix A

2400 Motel Statement of Significance Public Contact List August 2006

Annette Anderson	Harvey's Stores	604-434-3151
Bobbi Senft	Local resident	604-435-1959
Wesley Joe	City of Vancouver	604-873-7736
Nancy Reynolds	Renfrew Community Centre	604-257-8388
Dorothy Kearney	Local resident	604-435-7504
Carmen Rosen	Local resident	604-255-0355
Bill McMichael	Collingwood Neighbourhood House	604-435-0323
Susan Boissonneault	Heritage Vancouver	sboissonneault2@yahoo.ca
Paul Reid	Resident and journalist	paulreid@shaw.ca
Chris Tanlu	CPC coordinator	chris@collingwoodcpc.com
Brad O'Connell	Norquay Village	brad@beyondthegrave.ca
January Wolodarski	Resident and artist	JWolodarsky@cnh.bc.ca
Michael Turner	Poet and writer	radul@intergate.ca
Trevor Boddy	Writer and historian	trevorboddy@telus.net

Appendix B

2400 Motel Statement of Significance Working Chronology of Cultural Events October 2006

- 1861 Royal Engineers lay out a 13 mile trail from New Westminster to Burrard Inlet.
- 1886 City of Vancouver is created as terminus of new transcontinental railway.
- 1880s Engineers' trail becomes a wagon road named Westminster Road. Settlement begins to occur along the route.
- 1891 The interurban railway line parallels Westminster Road a few blocks to the north. Areas around the interurban stations become pockets of settlement.
- 1904 Fraser River is bridged at New Westminster and Westminster Road becomes the route to the south.
- 1909 Streetcar line is laid out along Westminster Road from Broadway to Victoria Drive/28th Avenue.
- 1910 Pacific Highway Association is launched in Seattle WA to promote the establishment the Pacific Highway along the West Coast from British Columbia to Mexico.
- 1912 Streetcar line is extended to Joyce Road.
- 1913 Norquay School is constructed. Westminster Road is widened, re-paved with asphalt, renamed Kingsway and re-opened on October 21 1913.
- 1920s Automobile ownership and use increases, particularly for holiday and leisure activities. While still rural in character, Kingsway evolves into a route with auto camps and associated services such as gas stations, garages, cafes.
- 1925 City buses begin to run along Kingsway to New Westminster.
- 1937 Pattullo Bridge is completed over the Fraser River at New Westminster.
- 1945 World War II ends.
- 1946 The 2400 Court, including distinctive neon sign, is constructed at Kingsway and 33rd Avenue.
- 1940s-50s Car culture is at its height in North America. Drive in restaurants, take-outs, car dealerships, car washes, and service stations continue the evolution of Kingsway.
- 1950 Kingsway is widened to a paved surface of 56 feet and six driving lanes. Streetcar tracks are paved over.
- 1954 Granville Street Bridge opens.
- 1957 Oak Street Bridge opens across the North Arm of the Fraser connecting Vancouver and Richmond.
- 1959 George Massey Tunnel opens along a new Highway 99 connecting Vancouver to the U.S. Oakridge shopping centre opens.
- 1963 The 2400 Court changes its name to 2400 Court Motel to keep up with changing trends in accommodation.
- 1974 Knight Street Bridge opens.
- 1970s-90s Asian immigration changes demographics along Kingsway. Trend is to larger and more economical motels and motel chains.
- 1989 2400 Motel is purchased by the City of Vancouver.

Appendix C

2400 Motel Statement of Significance Working Documentation List October 2006

“The Pacific Highway’ by Frank M. Fretwell, Man to Man Magazine 1910.
Personal communication with John Atkin, Bobbi Senft, Dorothy Kearney August 2006.
Email correspondence from Michael Turner 21 October 2006.
Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre Program newsletter, City of Vancouver, March 2006.
CityPlan: Renfrew-Collingwood Community Vision, City of Vancouver, March 2004.
Heritage Vancouver “Top Ten Endangered Sites 2006”.
Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel 1910-1945, Warren James Belasco, MIT Press 1979.
Auto courts and resorts in British Columbia, The Bureau, Victoria B.C. 1950, City of Vancouver Archives.
“New Westminster Road or Kingsway, Drawings of Street Intersections”, City Engineering Services, 1913, City of Vancouver Archives.
City of Vancouver directories.
Historical land title searches, 2400 Kingsway.
Plans and drawings of the 2400 Motel site, currently held by the City of Vancouver.
Research files from the Planning Department, City of Vancouver.

Appendix D

2400 Motel Statement of Significance Summary of Telephone Interview with Bobbi Senft August 2006

- The 2400 Motel is a local landmark. People in the neighbourhood know it.
- The site was always well kept up, and has always looked pretty much the same.
- It was mostly families who stayed at the motel.
- Each unit had flowerbeds in front of it.
- The site was memorable for its tidy and manicured style of landscape. The landscape and the sign were subjects of news articles.
- In the 1930s, auto courts had carports, but the 2400 Motel never had them, just parking spaces outside the units. Originally, not a lot of people had cars, so they looked after them by providing carports.
- It is likely that all the units originally had kitchenettes.
- When she drove to Florida, she noticed that a lot of the motels had swimming pools, while the 2400 never did.
- The site was originally planned for veteran's housing, similar to Fairhaven located at Rumble and Sussex Streets.
- Kingsway was originally two lanes planted on either side with chestnut trees. It was widened in the 1960s. 41st Avenue encroached on part of the Carleton School grounds.
- There were a lot of community events, including softball games, a carnival at Central Park, square dancing at Carleton School and a Miss Collingwood pageant.
- Carleton School was an important place for the community.
- Kingsway had better shopping in the past: nice dress shops, art shops, china shops and Carleton Cycle.

Appendix E

2400 Motel Statement of Significance Summary of Telephone Interview with Dorothy Kearney August 2006

- The motel was often rented to families of local residents when they came to visit. For example, Dorothy's brother came from the Yukon and stayed there. They liked the kitchenettes and the convenience of the streetcar to downtown.
- The motel looks very much as it always has.
- Friends Art and Rita Gowans stayed in the motel while their house was being renovated after a fire.
- The area was very rural when she was growing up there. They used to go ice skating on some of the vacant lots. It was all bush on the way to Norquay School.
- The Eldorado Hotel was once a grocery store.
- The Norquay School was built in the 1930s. There was a fire hall on Kingsway at Slocan near Wally's Burgers.
- Norquay Park looks the same now as it did originally.
- There was veteran's housing located near Fraser and Victoria. The 2400 site was never used as veteran's housing.
- People came along the King George Highway from the US and stayed in all the motels along Kingsway. They took the streetcar downtown.
- Stores on Kingsway included Harvey's, Super Value, B&K, and fruit markets. There has been big change in services and demographics; it has gotten a bit junkier. There was a cluster of shops at 22nd and Slocan.

Appendix F



Fig. 1 Main entrance from Kingsway



Fig. 2 Kingsway from main entrance



Fig. 3 Administrative Office building



Fig. 4 First Phase bungalows east of main entrance



Fig. 5 Second Phase bungalows south of main entrance



Fig. 5 First Phase bungalows east of main entrance



Fig. 7 Second Phase bungalows south of administration building



Fig. 8 Second Phase bungalows south of administration building



Fig. 9 Clearing between Second Phase bungalows south of administration building



Fig. 10 Southern edge of Second Phase bungalows looking northeast



Fig. 11 Southern edge of Second Phase bungalows looking northwest



Fig. 12 Southern edge of Second Phase bungalows looking north



Fig. 13 View toward Administration Building from east access road



Fig. 14 Detail on east facade of northeastern-most First Phase bungalow



Fig. 15 Western-most First Phase bungalow



Fig. 16 First Phase bungalow facing Kingsway west of main entrance