

Report to Council



Date: November 23, 2020
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: City Entry Sign Public Art
Department: Parks & Buildings Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the Report from Parks & Buildings Planning, dated November 23, 2020, regarding additional information pertaining to a public art opportunity for a new gateway entrance sign located at the City's northern limits;

AND THAT, Council directs staff to enter into a Public Art Agreement with Ted Fullerton's (the Artist) for the proposed City Entry Sign.

Purpose:

To provide Council with information on the design of new public art at the City's northern boundary on Highway 97 and to seek Council approval of the proposed design for Staff to enter into an agreement for detailed design, fabrication and installation.

Background:

On April 29, 2019, staff brought forward to Council a report on recent updates to the City's Public Art Program. This included information for a proposed public art piece that will be located at the City's northern boundary limits. Council had requested that Staff respond to some questions raised during the discussion and return with additional information to help Council better consider this public art opportunity.

Discussion:

Several points were raised by Council when the proposed City Entry Sign was first presented in a workshop session. The following highlights what Staff heard from Council and the actions taken to the issues:

1. The artist and proposed artwork had not undergone the same jury selection process that other public art commissions are typically subjected to:

A typical jury for a new public art commission consists of five jury members, however in this instance to gain a broader response staff reached out to all members of the Public Art Roster. They were invited to participate in a presentation by the artist Ted Fullerton on the design and concept for the new city sign - titled 'Imagine'. Of the 24 members on the roster, ten attended the June 5 presentation. Staff provided a questionnaire for participants to complete at the end of the presentation. A summary of the questionnaire's result is as follows:

- 89% agreed, or strongly agreed, that Ted Fullerton's proposed art piece 'Imagine' added to the quality and diversity of the City's public art collection.
- 55% agreed, or strongly agreed, that Ted Fullerton's proposed art piece 'Imagine' achieved the goals of reflecting the qualities and aspirations that are unique to Kelowna.
- 100% agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Artists has the experience and ability to successfully implement the proposed artwork.

From the questionnaire responses there was strong consensus among the group on the quality of artwork and abilities of the artist. Although, there were varying opinions in the effectiveness of the artwork to convey Kelowna's uniqueness as a community.

The following excerpts from email correspondence capture the tone of the discussion of the group regarding the effectiveness of the artwork:

"After having time to reflect on the presentation and discussion, I feel that the brief comments I made are too negative. To me, there's something quite sophisticated and fascinating in this proposal about the relationship that's created by the viewers' movement. The figures will seem to move towards each other and away, even circling, creating different relationships. This makes up for what, to me, is a kind of generic, sort of cliched symbolism. Motion makes the piece work. With that in mind, there's a kind of oddness about the site that's appealing. These figures rapidly appear in the viewer's visual field, gradually evolving and revolving, linked by the "Kelowna" sign. It's appearing in the middle of nowhere in particular. Just a field on the outskirts. No clutter. Most cities don't have quite that introduction. I'm impressed, never mind the connection to the vision/values exercise around what Kelowna means, or is."

"This is exactly what public art is about! I am excited to see the real thing. Yes, we will get the negative comments but that happens with everything and people get adjusted, it is usually because of a lack understanding of the abstract."

"I loved Michael's email describing the 'motion' of the viewers from their cars and the resulting 'motion' from the art. Thank you for that, Michael! I would like to see a 'black' base, not white or grey base. Black disappears, allowing the 'Kelowna' and sculpted figure art to stand out [and] left with only the important art pieces - a 'Community of People and Kelowna'."

The abstract quality of the artwork and how these figures relate to Kelowna, became a key topic of further discussion among the group after the presentation. The figures should be representational enough to be legible from a distance, but abstract enough for multiple interpretations to avoid the staleness often associated with passing the same object numerous times. The Artist's work is meant to allow the viewer to project their own persona onto the artwork.

2. Sole sourcing the artist.

Due to the unique nature of each public art commission the design, selection, commissioning and development process always includes an element of experimentation to some degree, and with the design control held by the artist. The City entry sign however is a high-profile location for which the City needs to have greater confidence and surety in the outcome. As both an entrance sign and a public art piece, staff would also require a greater level of control than a more typical commission might allow. Under both the City's purchasing policy and the public art policy, works of art are exempt from trade agreements and can be directly awarded for instances such as this.

Ted Fullerton had submitted previously on public art calls for both the Kelowna Police Services Building and Interior Health and was highly rated both times by different juries. His art aligned closely with the goals for this location, and the vision of Imagine Kelowna. Just as importantly, he is well recognized as an artist, and very experienced with both the design and fabrication techniques of similar pieces. Furthermore, unlike some art in other mediums, his art is of a scale appropriate for this location. The jury members surveyed were unanimous in their support that he had both the experience and ability to successfully implement the proposed artwork.

This City entry sign offers a desirable and high-profile opportunity for any artist, and the proposed fee submitted is reflective of this. Considering the scale and number of pieces (10) associated with the City entry sign, Staff enquiries show that Ted Fullerton's fee is fair and reasonable and is in-line with what would be expected for a major public art commission.

3. As with other pieces in the collection, the public's comprehension of this piece does not benefit from the Artist's concept statement as presented to Council.

Staff understands the need to better communicate to the public the ideas and concept behind an Artist's work. Staff is planning a series of public art videos with artists for select pieces in the City's public art collection, which will be posted to the City's YouTube channel and shared as part of promoting the installation to media. The intent of these is to enhance public appreciation for and understanding of City public art. Pending Council approval, the City Entry Sign will be included in this new video series.

4. Scale of the artwork is too small and it will become visually lost within the tall grass vegetation and broader landscape.

Staff re-visited the site to take accurate field measurements, including vertical and horizontal dimensions, based on three size options for the sign's lettering (1.2m, 1.5m, and 1.8m high). The current budget is based on the artwork scaled to a 1.2m maximum letter height. The cost of the artwork will be proportionally affected by any increase in size: approximately \$50,000

increase with each size increment. Additional funding from the Public Art Reserve would be necessary for the larger sizes. It should also be noted, each element of the artwork will be raised on concrete bases 0.45m to 0.60m (1.5ft. to 2ft.) high to ensure they are not concealed in the vegetation. Photomontages for three sign scale options are provided to Council to better illustrate the visual impact (see Attachment A). Staff is proposing to proceed with Option A, 1.2m (4ft.) maximum height letters with figures based on 20% larger than life sized, approximately 2.1m (7ft.), to remain within the existing budget.

5. The public will want access. How will pedestrian access off Hwy 97 be achieved safely for those who will want to get close to take photographs?

Staff has considered access to the City Sign as one of the major criteria in selecting the site. The location provides public access to the sign from Dry Valley Road and has an enlarged road ROW allowance that can accommodate public parking for visitors. Staff has been in discussions with MoTI on the intent to locate the City's northern gateway entry and public art sign feature at this location. MoTI has indicated acceptance of the sign's placement as proposed. Final MoTI approval will be subject to a future submission of more detailed plans delineating public parking and pedestrian access to the sign to ensure there are no issues with roadside stopping. Pending Council approval, Staff will prepare these plans and submit necessary permit applications for MoTI's final approval. A schematic layout plan illustrating the feasibility of public parking and access to the sign is provided for Council's general information (see Attachment B).

Conclusion:

Staff has responded to the questions raised by Council by providing additional information in the form of this Report and Attachments. Staff proposes Option A (1.2m high letters) be adopted and that the commission stays within the existing budget. Staff seeks Council's direction to proceed with the new City Entry Sign to replace the old north entry sign that was removed in 2018; and to enter into an Agreement with Ted Fullerton (the Artist) for the fabrication and installation of the public artwork.

Internal Circulation:

Building Services
Infrastructure Delivery
Parks Services
Cultural Services
Purchasing
Finance
Communications
Office of the City Clerk

Considerations applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

At Council Regular Meeting on Monday April 29, 2019 staff were directed to report back prior to the Public Art Entry Sign project proceeding.

Existing Policy:

The information in this report is submitted pursuant to Cultural Policy 274, the City of Kelowna Cultural Plan (2011), Chapter 9 of the Official Community Plan, principles and goals of Imagine Kelowna (2018).

Personnel Implications:

Staff responsibility for the City Entry Sign artwork rests within Parks & Buildings Planning. Staff responsibility for site works associated with the City Entry Sign rests with Infrastructure and Delivery.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by: D. James, Planner Specialist, Parks & Building Planning.

Approved for inclusion: Derek Edstrom, Divisional Director, Strategic Investments

Attachments: 1. A – Sign Options
2. B – Site Plan