

Report to Council



Date: June 17, 2024
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: North Entry Monument and City Signature Sign – Project Updates
Department: Parks and Buildings Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Parks & Buildings Planning Department, dated June 17, 2024, regarding the north entry monument and signature sign projects.

AND THAT Council approve the proposed design review processes, recommendations and future Council milestone check-in dates, as outlined in this report.

Purpose:

To provide and update on the north entry monument and City signature sign projects.

Background:

The City of Kelowna’s former northern city sign was removed to accommodate Provincial improvements for a larger intersection. Another site located further north on Highway 97 between Ellison Lake and Old Vernon Road was determined by the City, and agreed to by BC Ministry of Transportation. The new site is appropriately situated at the beginning of the 2040 Official Community Plan’s (OCP) Gateway District as the symbolic northern entry into the City of Kelowna.

In 2020, a public art concept was prepared based on the principles and goals of Imagine Kelowna using allegorical human symbols as the City’s entry feature. The design proposal and selection process were not endorsed by the Council of the day, and it did not proceed.

Discussion:

Both the City signature sign and north entry monument projects will create memorable public places that focus on transforming our City’s outdoor spaces through strengthening people’s connections and experiences within them. This process, known as ‘placemaking’, helps create socially significant, public spaces that improve urban vitality and promote people’s health, happiness and wellbeing.

A city sign and entry monument serve different purposes. A *city sign* includes a city’s specific name, municipal colors, and other recognizable corporate branding or graphic design elements on a single

sign panel to announce arrival into a city. An *entry monument* is a freestanding architectural structure that is a feature to welcome travelers into a city. For Kelowna, the entry is intended as a civic monument that is mainly figurative in nature, but also has a city sign component within it as well as other identified municipal outcomes including:

- a traditional sylix / Okanagan territory welcome,
- promotion of local tourism,
- advancement of economic development and global linkages,
- respectful of environmental quality,
- and outstanding aesthetic expression.

Whereas the *City signature sign* is a higher-profile, 'Kelowna' large letter sign intended to be playful, creative and engaging, yet able to differentiate itself from other similar letter signs in other cities. Signature signs are purposely located in heavily frequented pedestrian environments specifically with photo opportunities in mind.

North Entry Monument

Changes in the landscape character along highways usually occur at prominent focal points called 'landmarks' which people use to orient themselves. The north entry monument will be a key landmark to establish a sense of arrival into our city, enhance the landscape environment along that portion of Highway 97, and be the focal centerpiece to a future hierarchy of other smaller monuments designed to help travelers orient themselves at key points during their journey through Kelowna.

Throughout November and December of 2023, consultants prepared design entries for a new iconic and impactful entry monument with its foremost design prerequisite being to capture Kelowna's unique sense-of-place. Local firms were purposefully invited as their professional staff possessed the best knowledge of Kelowna, yet their teams were also encouraged to collaborate with other renowned designers throughout Canada. After all compulsory submission requirements were met, eight submissions were approved for further peer review through a design committee on 1 March 2024. The review committee consisted of twelve recognized professionals from both private and public backgrounds, whose design acumen focused upon urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, long-range planning, communication and graphic design specialists, as well as the city's artist-in-residence and prominent sylix/Okanagan artists.

A shortlist of the three-top ranking submissions that best demonstrated design excellence, appropriate vision and concept development, and executed all municipal and project parameters, was selected. A second committee meeting was held on 8 March 2024, to evaluate the top-three submissions through additional design critique and group discussion. Ultimately, one entry monument submission was recommended, receiving ninety percent consensus from committee members votes.

Currently, the recommended entry submission is being assessed for constructability and costs, and reviewed for operational and tourism impacts, with all relevant comments and revisions captured prior to presentation to City Council, in August 2024.

City Signature Sign:

The signature sign project was created to cultivate a cultural identity that best reflects our community's special sense of place. The signature sign will be freestanding oversized 'Kelowna' letters that welcomes travelers to Kelowna.

At present, development of a program, design brief and comprehensive scope of work are being confirmed, including site feasibility studies along the waterfront, site servicing and supportive infrastructure costs. Over the summer of 2024, an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the project will be posted for all interested bidders that can highlight compulsory technical expertise, examples of past projects and current references. The five top scoring submissions received through the EOI will be advanced for further peer review, again through a design committee consisting of both private tourism and business advisors as well as staff. The goal of the committee will be to select one recommended City signature sign submission. It is anticipated that by November 2024, the recommended submission will have undergone both internal operations and technical reviews so that all relevant comments are captured prior to the city signature sign's presentation to City Council.

The new north entry monument is intended to become the inspiration for a collection of other monuments of a consistent form, at varying scales at other entry points into the City (ie. Hwy 97 and 33 and other important locations such as the Rail Trail and YLW). Staff will present an overall entry monument strategy to the Council in the future.

Next Steps:

The following Council reports will occur:

- August 2024 – The recommended design for the North Entry Monument will be brought forward to Council. Fabrication would then occur, subject to funding.
- August 2024 – The design brief and location for the City signature sign will be brought to Council.
- November 2024 – The final design for the City signature sign will be brought forward to Council, before proceeding to fabrication.

The public will be informed at each Council report through City of Kelowna communications methods.

Conclusion:

City staff have adhered to a time proven, highly effective and impartial civic monument design process for both projects. The forthcoming north entry monument and City signature sign recommendation to Council will be selected to serve as distinguishing city landmarks and welcoming agents, because of their professional teams of designers have balance popular opinion, historical resonance and invention with their own creativity, expertise, and consideration for the specific sense-of-place.

Internal Circulation:

Parks Operations
Active Living & Culture
Community Communications
Infrastructure
Long Range Policy Planning

Real Estate
Partnerships Office
Active Transportation
Financial Services

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

Imagine Kelowna - identified several visions for the City. Relevant to this report are its principles and goals working together as a system to help the community achieve its vision.

2040 Official Community Plan (OCP) and Amendments – topics covered by the OCP are fundamental to understanding the complex trends and changes that affect long-term planning for Kelowna.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

The City signature sign will be funded through a Council resolution providing funding approval from the Growing Communities Fund and Council Strategic Initiatives dated October 16, 2023. A budget request for the construction of north end monument will be brought forward in the 2025 Budget.

Communications Comments:

The public will be informed about both the north entry monuments and signature sign projects through traditional City of Kelowna communication means and methods as each project advances. For both projects, staff propose the following key milestones as occasions for Council to check-in:

- Pre-Design and Process – including Expression of Interest and confirmation of preferred site location(s).
- Concept – including recommended submission and confirmation of all materiality and built forms, plus identified site, utility and infrastructure costs.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Consultation and Engagement:

Submitted by:

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Approved for inclusion: D. Edstrom, Divisional Director, Partnerships & Investments