

Operational Services Report to
Community Development Committee
2024 June 26

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
CD2024-0522

Community Entrance Sign Maintenance and Repair

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the number of community entrance signs on public lands and their condition. It also provides an overview of the current approval processes for these types of installations, and how the responsibility for maintenance of entrance signage does change over time.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION

On 01 June 2023, Council approved the Notice of Motion on Community Sign Repair (EC2023-0643). Concerns were raised about the condition of many community name signs throughout the city. Administration was directed to determine the number of existing signs and complete a review of their condition. An estimate of the costs to both repair those signs and provide ongoing maintenance to all existing entrance signs on public property was requested. Administration was also directed to assess the current rules and approval processes governing the placement community entrance signs (Attachment 1).

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Community Development Committee recommend that Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

GM Doug Morgan concurs with the content of this report.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Community or neighbourhood entrance signs are not installed by The City of Calgary, however more than half of all city communities do have one. Most were created by the property developer at the time the subdivision was built.
- 90% of more than five hundred community entrance signs on public property are currently in excellent to fair condition, with 10% of the signs being in poor or very poor condition.
- When community entrance signs or features on public property become neglected or damaged, The City will remove the sign and repair the surface it was on. The City does not provide a repair or maintenance service for these signs and features.

DISCUSSION

Why do we have Community Entrance Signs?

These entrance or 'gateway' signs are typically placed near the roadway entrance to a residential community and are usually installed at the development stage of new subdivisions. For property developers, the entrance feature is often the first thing people notice, making it an essential piece in creating an inviting and positive first impression of their brand and vision. In competitive real estate markets, distinguishing one's development from others is crucial.

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Many of these entrance features are placed on private property at the time of the subdivision development, and therefore are the responsibility of those owners to maintain. There are approximately 180 locations with such signs. However, going back to the mid-1970's, hundreds of these features have been placed on Calgary's road rights-of-way or park spaces as the city began its major residential expansions.

Some established communities have also installed community entrance signs to identify a historical district, to celebrate a community's character, or to inform and welcome visitors. The cost of such signs is often managed through grant applications and local fundraising. They have been installed on Community Association leased-lands, park spaces and road right-of-way.

Number of Community Entrance Signs

Administration conducted a physical count of the number of features or structures that could be described as a "community entrance sign" on public lands. 511 entrance signs were documented. There are also hundreds of other decorative community features that are installed on public property as well, ranging from planters to concrete obelisks to metal sculptures. Administration has produced a map showing the city-wide distribution of the signs that were inspected, which were in 115 communities out of the city's total of 206 (Attachment 2).

Condition

Administration inspected all entrance signs on public property and assigned them a rating based upon their physical condition. There was a wide variety of materials used in the construction of these signs, including lumber, plastic, concrete, brick, natural stone, and metals (Attachment 3). Signs with condition ratings of excellent (1) and good (2) may have exhibited some general wear-and-tear due to exposure but appeared to be structurally sound. Signs with ratings of fair (3) may have faded lettering, paint finishes that have cracked and peeled away, or minor damage including graffiti. Signs with poor (4) or very poor (5) ratings had missing letters, visible structural damage, and the lack of maintenance noted would have impacted both the readability of the sign and the aesthetics. Most of the inspected signs were found to be in good or excellent condition (80%), while another 10% were rated as fair. However, fifty-one entrance signs on public property were given condition ratings of poor to very poor (4-5), which is approximately 10% of the total number of signs.

Responsibility

Any structures or amenities, like community entrance signs, built with permission upon public lands are viewed as belonging to The City. The entity responsible for the maintenance and repair of these amenities can change over time (Attachment 1). The two types of legal agreements The City uses to approve the installation and maintenance of non-standard structures on public land are the Optional Amenities Agreement (OAA) and the License of Occupation (LOC).

An OAA is only used where park land is part of the installation plan. For subdivision construction, the OAA confirms a five-year commitment by the Developer to maintain the amenity after the Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC) for the development is released. The current OAA agreement does require the Developer to maintain the structure and to provide The City with one-time funds to cover costs for the eventual removal of the structure and rehabilitation of the surface of the land used. These funds are kept separate from any other

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administrative use. Of the over 500 signs on public land only 18 (less than 4%) have or had an Optional Amenity Agreement.

A License of Occupation (LOC) is used for structures or signage to be placed on other public lands, like city road right-of-way. This includes community entrance signs for Community Associations, Resident Associations, and societies. The LOC is managed by Calgary Partnerships, though some reside with Calgary Mobility or Calgary Real Estate and Development Services. Currently, there are fifteen Community Associations with an OAA or LOC agreement in place. However, most of the community signs do not have an agreement at all, as they were installed prior to the licensing requirement.

Current Sign Management Practices

For community or neighbourhood entrance signs or features on public lands that do not have an active agreement in place, the responsibility for them falls to The City. This scenario represents most of the signs installed prior to 2015. When these signs deteriorate over time, or become damaged, the current practice of Administration is to remove the sign and repair the surface of the public land. Administration will use existing operating budget when there is no specific OAA with funding identified for the sign. The City does not currently perform preventative maintenance on community entrance signs, nor replace them once they have been removed.

Administration received cost repair estimates for several signs in poor condition, and the average repair and restoration cost was \$12,495 per sign. This figure does not include the required permitting and mobility accommodation expenditures for a contractor to conduct the work safely near the roadway. The estimated costs to restore the 51 signs in poor or very poor conditions would be \$830,000 to \$945,000 (Attachment 2).

There have been recent studies from the City of Edmonton, AB (2021) and City of Markham, ON (2020) on the issue of maintaining subdivision entrance signs and features. Edmonton estimates they are responsible for about 100 signs on public property. These signs were likely placed prior to 2000, when Edmonton still allowed entrance features on city road right-of-way or other public lands. Currently, all entrance feature signs in developing communities in Edmonton must be placed entirely on private property. The City of Markham estimates they are responsible for about 144 entrance signs. They had a consultant determine the replacement value of these signs and features, having a wide variety of material types and sizes. The average replacement value per location was \$30,765 with the total replacement costs estimated to be \$4.4 million. Like Calgary, Markham removes damaged or hazardous entrance features on public property and does not replace them (Attachment 1).

Next Steps

Through this current-state review, Administration has identified opportunities to streamline and better communicate the approval process for new signs or amenities that are initiated by community associations, societies, or groups. Existing records and agreements will also be consolidated and the mapping of these amenities and features will be updated to improve accessibility to the information. Administration will undertake this work and will share information about the improvements when the Council Policy on Enhanced Maintenance Agreements and Infrastructure Agreements (CSPS007) update and the related bylaw amendments are presented in 2025.

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EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public engagement was undertaken | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> Public communication or engagement was not required |

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Community identification signs may foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents. These signs do serve as symbols of local identity and history, reinforcing community cohesion. Neglected or damaged signs can impact this sense of comfort and 'welcome' to the area.

Environmental

None

Economic

Clear and well-maintained community identification signs can enhance the city's attractiveness to newcomers and investors.

Service and Financial Implications

Existing operating funding - base

Currently, there is no base budget to specifically provide repair or removal services for community entrance signs and amenities that are not included in a specific agreement. The average repair estimates provided by contractors was \$12,450 per sign. Administration will utilize existing operating funding to remove signs that are in a very poor condition to ensure any risks to public safety are addressed. The information gathered on removal costs will be tracked and reviewed so Administration can determine if operational budget adjustments would be necessary to maintain this level of service in the future.

RISK

There are no risks or impacts to priorities, service delivery or policies identified with the recommendation of this report.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Community Entrance Sign Locations and Estimated Repair Costs
3. Examples of Community Entrance Sign Materials
4. Presentation

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Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan, GM	Operational Services	Approve
Deborah Hamilton, GM	Planning & Development Services	Consult
Troy McLeod, Director	Operational Services	Approve
Campbell Berry, Director	Infrastructure Services	Inform
Kyle Ripley, Director	Operational Services	Inform
Jeff Chase, Director	Partnerships	Inform

Author: Andrew Bissett, Mobility, Operational Services