
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 10, 2003

File No.: 6441-20

To: City Manager

From: Director of Planning and Development Services

Subject: KELOWNA DOWNTOWN SIGN PLAN STATUS REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff prepare detailed design/construction drawings for Downtown signs, based on the concepts summarized in the Planning and Development Services Report of February 10, 2003;

AND THAT staff work with the Public Art Committee to carry out a design competition to select “activity-based” images as identified in the Planning and Development Services Report of February 10, 2003;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council with recommendations prior to proceeding with Sign Plan implementation.

BACKGROUND

The *Kelowna Downtown Plan* (endorsed by Council in January 2000) and the *City of Kelowna Cultural District Implementation Strategy and Marketing Plan* (endorsed by Council in August 2000), identified a need for more comprehensive signage within the Downtown Plan and Cultural District areas. To address that need, the City of Kelowna, in March 2002, contracted Cloghesy + Doak Ltd. (now InSites Landscape Architecture Inc.) to prepare a Sign Plan. The study area (identified in Attachment 1) covered a good portion of Kelowna’s central city area and included six sub-areas (identified in Attachment 2).

The goals of the project are to:

- help orient pedestrians¹, bicyclists, and in-line skaters within the study area (directional signage),
- help motorists locate public parking within the study area (directional signage),
- help the above user groups identify sub-areas within the study area (identification signage), and

¹ includes individuals in wheelchairs

- help create a sense of place within the identified sub-areas through the communication of information pertinent to those sub-areas, e.g., history, identification of significant public spaces and buildings, etc. (interpretive and identification signage).

Additionally, the Terms of Reference stated that the Sign Plan must be capable of being extended to Kelowna's other Urban Centres.

PROCESS

The Consultant's approach to the task began with an inventory of existing public information, directional, and interpretive signs within the study area. This stage was followed by an evaluation of the existing signage based on the objectives of the Sign Plan. The Consultant then developed a concept that was presented to stakeholders for review.

On August 12, 2002, a workshop was held with representatives of community stakeholder organizations. The purpose of the workshop was to obtain stakeholder input on the draft concept plan (a list of attendees and their respective organizations is included as Attachment 3). The proposed design concept was generally well-received. The theme for the proposed signs was the only aspect of the concept that did not generate general consensus. The consultant had proposed a theme based on images of cultivated fruits (apples, pears, grapes, etc.) typical of the fruit-growing industry of the region. Some of the workshop attendees suggested exploration of alternative themes. One proposed alternative was a theme based on activities relating to the various sub-areas. In response to this suggestion, staff asked the consultant to develop a concept with an "activity-based" theme.

On August 19, an Open House was held at the Downtown Branch of the Okanagan Regional Library to receive comments from the general public. At this event, three themes were presented. These were themes using images 1) of local commercial fruits, 2) of activities specific to each sub-area, and 3) from the natural landscape of the region, e.g., grasses, pine boughs, etc.

In addition to the library location, presentation panels were set up impromptu, i.e., unadvertised, at the entrance to City Park, near the Sails, in the morning prior to the afternoon session at the library. This location was chosen to get input from tourists who in all likelihood would not have attended the Open House.

Based on written and oral comments from the Open House sessions, staff felt there was a slight preference for an activity-based theme. To have further discussion and to determine more clearly stakeholders' preferences, staff re-convened the attendees from the August 12, 2002 "stakeholder workshop". The "reconvened" session was held on October 9, 2002. The participants were asked to vote on a preferred theme. The outcome of the vote was a clear preference for an activity-based theme.

The needs and concerns of pertinent City departments were also solicited as part of the design process. These departments were Planning & Development Services, Works and Utilities, and Parks and Leisure Services including Civic Properties and the Parks Division. Staff met August 7, 2002 and September 26, 2002, to review input from the Consultant and on January 29, 2003 to review the final version of the sign concept prior to submission of the concept to Council.

The sign concept as developed to date seems to be supported by key stakeholder groups. Details of the sign concept (layout, colour palette, type face etc.) are provided in Appendix 4.

Council has approved the expenditure of \$165,500.00 towards initiating implementation of the Sign Plan in 2003 with the understanding that staff will report back with the complete Sign Plan prior to spending any of the budgeted funds.

Before the Sign Plan can be completed, further work is needed regarding sign layouts, structural elements, image designs etc. Staff are proposing to include information on these components as well as information on suggested sign locations, cost estimates etc. as part of the Sign Plan, completion of which is targeted for early spring 2003.

NEXT STEPS

To allow for the possibility of signs being installed by summer 2003, it will be necessary for staff to immediately pursue the above-noted final design processes. It is suggested that the process outlined below would streamline activities while also acknowledging earlier community input.

Detailed Design

Sign prototypes have been developed by the consultant (see Appendix). However, before any signs can be built, there is a need for more detailed construction drawings. The detailed design stage will need to take into consideration:

- precluding or discouraging vandalism (in particular graffiti and damage from skateboards)
- ensuring safety (proper sightlines, crime prevention etc.)
- choosing materials with an aim towards cost-effectiveness (suggested that preference would be given to production methods and assemblies capable of being carried out by City staff)
- determining layouts for each prototype (based on the generic layout described in the Appendix)
- ensuring text and symbol colours provide appropriate contrast to meet the needs of persons with a range of visual abilities².
- confirming sign sizes
- preparing camera-ready art work

² No provision is made to include information in Braille. The reason is that individuals who are blind are normally accompanied by sighted individuals when walking within the urban landscape and when not so accompanied, would not have any means of finding those locations where information in Braille is provided.

- providing construction details for structure components (e.g. mounting hardware, lighting requirements etc.)
- confirming sign placement locations
- preparing cost estimates for each prototype

Graphic Image

Staff recommend that the images at the top of each sign be based on an activity theme (consistent with stakeholders' preferences). It is recommended that the actual images be chosen through a design competition.

It is proposed that the design competition process be conducted under the auspices of the Public Art Committee. The objective would be to select an image with artistic merit that also reflects the character of the Central Okanagan. The Public Art Committee is experienced with the "Request for Proposal" (RFP) process and it is hoped the Committee will be able to attract a wide and talented cross-section of artists.

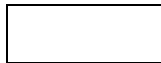
At its meeting on October 23, 2002, the Public Art Committee agreed to oversee preparation of Terms of Reference, and to recommend an artist based on the submissions received. To streamline completion of the Sign Plan, the RFP and the production of the image could run concurrently with the completion of the detailed design phase.

SUMMARY

The timely completion of the Sign Plan can be facilitated by directing staff to proceed as per the recommendations of the Planning and Development Services Report of February 10, 2003.

Signe K. Bagh, MCIP
Long Range Planning Manager

Approved for inclusion



R.L. (Ron) Mattiussi, ACP, MCIP
Director of Planning & Development Services

PM/SB/pjm

Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1: Map of Study Area

ATTACHMENT 2: Map of Sub-Areas

ATTACHMENT 3: List of Workshop Attendees

1. Mr. Bill Eager- Parking Committee
2. Mr. Bob Evans- DKA
3. Mr. Rob Grifone- Tourism Kelowna
4. Ms. Valery Halford- FRACAS
5. Mr. Gordon Hartley- Community Heritage Commission
6. Councillor Robert Hobson
7. Ms. Dale Knowlan- Downtown Plan Committee
8. Mr. Bill Liggins- CNIB
9. Mr. David Lovell- Kelowna South Central Association of Neighbourhoods
10. Mrs. Alice Lundy- Community Heritage Commission
11. Ms. Marie McKeirnan- Parking Committee
12. Mrs. Rita Milne- Downtown Plan Committee
13. Mr. Todd Sanderson- Kelowna Downtown Plan Committee
14. Councillor Sharon Shepherd- Community Heritage Commission
15. Mr. Bill Scutt- DKA
16. Mr. Ralph Wardell- Central Okanagan Access Awareness Team

APPENDIX 4: Design Concept

The design concept for the Sign Plan is to employ visual elements and techniques in a way that portrays Kelowna's Downtown as a festive, vibrant, and exciting city centre, while at the same time impressing upon visitors that Kelowna is a community with a contemporary outlook; a friendly, welcoming community proud of its many amenities. The visual elements intended to achieve this effect are illustrated in the earlier appendices to this report, and are described below.

Layout

The layout shown in the illustrations entitled Graphic Approach and Design Rationale in this Appendix, pertains to directional information aimed at motorists looking for parking within the study area. However, the layout is typical of all signs that would be developed for the Sign Plan with a graphic/visual image on the upper portion and an area immediately below for text, symbols, and any other graphics appropriate to the message conveyed.

The image at the top is a strong visual clue as to the viewer's general location within the study area. Moreover, this image is key to animating the Sign Plan and establishing the desired visual/aesthetic effect.

The concept proposes that there be one image specific to each sub-area, and that each image represent an activity typical of the respective sub-area. The graphic images (five in total) would relate to each other through a common graphic character or artistic style. The use of a series of images, each distinct yet relating to a common theme, is intended to contribute to a sense of identity for each of the sub-areas, while relating each sub-area to the overall study area.

The next level of information below the image presents identification, directional, and or interpretive information based on whatever would be necessary to convey the intended message. As well, the City of Kelowna and the respective sub-area would be identified on the bottom right corner of each sign.

In addition to the use of colour discussed below, the concept for the Sign Plan uses techniques/elements that contribute to a bold yet whimsical effect to portray a vibrant, progressive community and to create a sense of festivity. These techniques/elements are 1) asymmetric arrangements of text and symbols 2) the arching or "cresting" line that divides each sign into an upper and lower portion and 3) placement of directional arrows within a tilted disk/ellipse.

Colour Palette

Colour is another key component of the design concept. The colour palette proposed for the Kelowna Downtown Sign Plan is:

- Central Business District - MacIntosh Red
- City Park - Apple Green

- Cultural District - Purple Grape
- Heritage Conservation Areas- Pale Straw
- Waterfront - Plum Blue

The colours reflect the cultural landscape of the Okanagan, specifically the fruit-growing industry. The choice of this palette is meant to create a subtle association of the subject area with its regional context.

One background colour is used for each sub-area. This approach, in conjunction with the activity-based images specific to each sub-area, helps enhance the identity and sense of place of each of the sub-areas.

Lamp Black is proposed as an accent colour for the directional arrow ellipse and for the cresting line that demarcates the upper and lower portions of each sign.

Typeface

Two typefaces are used throughout the signage system with each typeface using upper and lower case lettering.

The main typeface selected is the *Charcoal* font for its clean, simple, friendly appearance and readability from a distance. Depending upon font size and contrasting background, it is highly legible for individuals with visual impairments.

The secondary typeface is *Sanvito* in keeping with a casual, carefree approach to the Sign Plan. The directional arrows are *Zeal* typeface.

Distances

To create a sense of the time and effort required by pedestrians to reach desired destinations, distances in meters or kilometers could be included in conjunction with directional information where such information can be reasonably presented.

International Symbols

Consistent with the intention to communicate clearly and concisely, international symbols would be used wherever possible.

Detailed Design

The goals of the program are to provide directional, identification, and interpretive information. To do this, it is anticipated that a number of sign prototypes³ will be necessary to fulfil various roles (see attached illustration).

³ The term “prototype” is used to describe any generic sign type that would be used in the study area. The prototype would include the sign panel, i.e., that portion of the sign that contains the message or information, and any custom-designed, freestanding structure required to hold the sign panel in position for viewing.

The contrast between the needs of motorists and pedestrians is just one indication that different signs and sign structures will be required to fulfil the objectives of the Sign Plan. For example, to meet the needs of drivers for visibility and to allow for clearance of tall vehicles, it is anticipated signs intended for motorists would need to be located well above street level. These signs would therefore most likely be attached to light standards along the arterial roads in the study area.

To allow pedestrians to absorb more detailed levels of information, as well as to provide appropriate human scale, signs for pedestrians would be located at heights much lower than signs intended for motorists. It is therefore anticipated that pedestrian signage would be free-standing to provide signs at the appropriate height and to provide the flexibility to provide signs at the appropriate locations.

Signs would provide for the promotion of special events. Options to incorporate materials such as brochures, flyers, posters, and other printed materials would also be explored.

Proposed Sign Locations

Proposed locations for each sign prototype will be identified. These locations, in some instances, might be self-evident although it is anticipated some locations would be determined according to certain criteria, e.g., where significant numbers of pedestrian trips originate, at transition points between sub-areas, etc.