
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 4, 2009

File No.: 6130-01

To: City Manager

From: Manager, Park Services

Subject: Highway 97 Medians

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive for information the August 4, 2009 report of the Manager of Park Services;

AND THAT staff submit requests through the 2010 budget process to (1) develop a new highway median design standard with lower maintenance and irrigation requirements, (2) begin to renovate older medians to meet the new standard, and (3) maintain existing landscaping in older medians until renovations can be completed;

AND THAT staff delay development of two new medians scheduled for fall of 2009, until a new design standard is finalized.

BACKGROUND:

The Harvey Avenue / Highway 97 medians have been developed and maintained by the City for a number of years, in an effort to beautify the Highway 97 corridor through Kelowna. The medians have generally been very well received by the local community as well as tourists.

Most of the medians were originally developed in partnership with the Ministry of Highways, but more recently all capital costs for new landscaped medians have been borne by the City of Kelowna, and maintenance costs are covered by the City Park Services Branch.

The City 10-year capital plan includes \$100,000 annually for the upgrading of highway medians, including the current (2009) budget. Two of the existing asphalt medians (Cooper to Dilworth and Spall to Ambrosi) are scheduled for upgrading this autumn.

Until recently the Highway 97 medians were maintained by a single contractor for approximately \$50,000 per year, including all weed and litter control and pruning of plant materials. However, earlier this season the City received notice from WorkSafe BC that the current maintenance practices are no longer considered adequate to protect workers who are maintaining these areas. In order to meet the new requirements of WorkSafe, as well as the requirements of the Ministry of Transportation, it was determined that the landscaped medians now have to be maintained at night with lane closures, lighting and specialized equipment. As a result the contractor cost was expected to be at least three

times higher and Park Services was faced with a major dilemma as to how to fund the extra maintenance costs.

The existing Highway median design also has some additional shortfalls, including:

- Median planting beds are susceptible to the winter buildup of sand and salt, which is unsightly and detrimental to plant health;
- Some plant materials (e.g. roses) tend to catch flying garbage and require the regular removal of litter;
- Planting beds require a high level of maintenance to keep weeds down without pesticide use; and
- Existing irrigation systems use spray heads rather than drip irrigation, which tends to result in overspray, higher water use, and a higher level of maintenance.

Note that most of these issues are not applicable with medians on other City of Kelowna streets, but are specific to the Harvey / Highway 97 medians due to the high speeds, narrow median widths, and Ministry of Transportation requirements on the Highway.

In order to make the highway median program more sustainable, staff recommend that a new design standard is developed through Design and Construction Services, which is attractive but alleviates some of the problems outlined above. Beginning in 2010, some of the older medians would be renovated using the new standard, and any new medians would also follow the new design.

On an interim basis, Park Services has developed a partnership through a Ministry of Housing and Social Development program to maintain the existing medians at night through a Job Creation Program. It may be possible to develop a similar program next year, however, this would be subject to funding availability.

INTERNAL CIRCULATION TO:

Design and Construction Services

FINANCIAL/BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS:

The existing City 10-year plan allocates \$100,000 in capital expenditure per year for the upgrading of Highway medians. It is proposed that these funds be used to renovate older medians prior to development of newer medians, starting in 2010. The existing 2009 budget would still be allocated to the upgrade of older asphalt medians, using the new standard (but their development may be delayed until the standard is finalized).

Until renovations are complete, annual operating budget costs are expected to be approximately \$120,000 higher. Staff will endeavour to offset these costs through outside grant funding.

CONSIDERATIONS THAT WERE NOT APPLICABLE TO THIS REPORT:

LEGAL/STATUTORY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL/STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

EXISTING POLICY:
ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION:
LEGAL/STATUTORY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:
TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:
EXTERNAL AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Submitted by:



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Approved for Inclusion:



John Vos

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