

Developer Installed Neighbourhood Entrance Signs - Installation and Maintenance

Recommendation

That the May 25, 2021, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE00449, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the February 22, 2021, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration prepare a report addressing the installation and maintenance of developer installed neighbourhood entrance feature signs addressing:

1. Design regulations during initial construction
2. Options to restore or remove signs in disrepair

Executive Summary

Developer Installed Neighbourhood Entrance Signs are common pieces of infrastructure that are installed in developing communities. The development industry has used these feature signs to create identity, showcase and give character to the community. The City Plan's intention is for design to foster a sense of place by promoting and celebrating the distinct communities that contribute to Edmonton, its quality of life and unique sense of place.

These entrance feature signs are designed and constructed by the developer typically during the early stages of the overall neighbourhood development and construction requirements noted through a Servicing Agreement. The signs are placed on private property and maintenance/operations (i.e. restore or remove signs) are the responsibility of the developer, owner or homeowners association. The City can utilize the Community Standards bylaw to have private owners repair signs that are creating serious immediate safety issues.

Report

Current Approach (for new signs in developing communities):

During the design review process, the City ensures all entrance feature signs are placed entirely on private property. Each entrance feature sign has a unique identity of its own to represent the community it showcases. Having guidelines on materials or styles can restrict this creative design process by the developer, their engineers and landscape architects. The City performs a review that ensures materials being used are low maintenance with long-term durability in addition to another review to ensure that the feature has responsible engineering oversight so it is safe and structurally sound. The City requires the developer's consultant to provide authentication by a registered structural engineer and landscape architect as to the design of the entrance feature sign.

During construction, the developer's consultant engineer must verify the feature sign is built and constructed to the specified, approved drawings. Upon completion of the feature sign, a final visual inspection takes place with the developer consultants and City inspectors. A Construction Completion Certificate which states the feature has been built to the approved drawings and meets all design standards is submitted to the City.

The feature sign is constructed on private property and therefore not a City asset that the City is required to maintain. The ownership, operation and maintenance of these feature signs on private property belong to individual homeowners, or are assigned to a homeowners association. The sign could be placed on a common property owned by the homeowners association or an easement on the private property allowing the homeowners association access to maintain the feature sign.

Historical Approach (for signs in communities prior to 2000):

There are some historical developer entrance features throughout the City that were approved to exist on City Road Right of Way or other City land prior to 2000. The current practice for operation and maintenance of those features falls into one of the following two categories:

1. Within City land, and fully owned and maintained by City Operations

- a. It is estimated that about 100 signs, or approximately 15 percent of the entrance features in Edmonton are owned, operated and maintained by the City.
- b. The City is responsible for routine maintenance and end of life cycle removal or replacement costs.
- c. The majority of the entrance features the City is responsible for are located on City Road Right of Way.

- d. The majority of the signs the City is responsible for have artistic and original elements so repairs are mainly contracted out to third party specialists. Additionally, repairs are dispatched on an as needed basis.
- 2. Within City land, with maintenance agreement in place for others to maintain the feature**
- a. During developer design and construction, the developer enters into a maintenance agreement to maintain the feature in perpetuity. Developers often assign the maintenance agreement over to a homeowners association which will take over the routine maintenance and repairing of any damage as stipulated in the agreement. Financial security is held by the City (in the amount equal to removal of the asset), should the developer/homeowners association not follow maintenance requirements.
 - b. Currently there are four major enhanced entrance features within City Road Right of Way that have a maintenance agreement in place for others to maintain.

Options for restoring or removing existing signs in disrepair

It is estimated that the majority of the entrance signs within the City are owned, maintained and operated by homeowners, developers and/or homeowner associations and are the responsibility of that owner to maintain, restore or remove (if a safety hazard) the entrance sign.

The remaining entrance feature signs on City land are owned and maintained by the City or managed through maintenance agreements with private organizations. The City maintains the signs owned by the City and responds to issues regarding the condition of entrance signs on notice from citizen inquiries and responds accordingly.

Options to restore or remove signs in disrepair include the following:

- Continue to utilize the Community Standards bylaw for private owners to follow up on restoration or removal for serious safety concerns. This may not address aesthetic concerns.
- The City assumes responsibility for all entrance signs, however further review and analysis would be required to understand the legal and financial risks associated with this approach. This is not recommended.
- Support community league partnerships to assist landowners with maintenance costs.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to require neighbourhood entrance signs to be located on private property with an expectation that the signs are maintained by the owner, homeowner association or developer. Working closely with developers, Administration will ensure there is clarity regarding who is responsible for future restoration of the entrance signs. Administration will also continue to ensure that good engineering practices are being followed during the design and construction phase to ensure designs have long term durability while utilizing methods and materials that help prevent vandalism. Partnerships through community leagues will also be explored to support private owners in maintenance costs if needed.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure	Edmontonians' Assessment: Well-Designed Attractive City (percent of survey respondents who agree/strongly agree)	53 percent (2017)	55 percent (2018) And increasing year after year

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor