

CURRENT SIGNAGE REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

Issue

An evaluation, approach and recommendations for amendments to the Town's current signage policy is presented for Council's consideration.

Motion Proposed by Administration

That the amended Pageantry Features for New Neighbourhoods Policy be approved in principle; and

That direction be provided to Administration to bring forward amendments to Land Use Bylaw 40-98 that would accommodate all the signage that was originally proposed on-site for The Parkhouses; and

That direction be provided to Administration to address any proposed changes to New Neighbourhood signage through the comprehensive review of the Municipal Development Plan and the Land Use Bylaw.

Report, Analysis and Financial Implications

On September 25, 2017 Council passed a notice of motion directing Administration to develop a Public Participation Strategy to engage with impacted stakeholders and members of the community that would outline the changes needed to the current signage regulations.

Administration supports exploring a proposal to changes to signage regulations specific to small scale developments such as The Parkhouses, a "pocket neighbourhood", by Lifestyle Homes.

Focusing on the The Parkhouses allows Administration to test the idea that pocket neighbourhoods align with the innovative housing envisioned in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and other more recent master plans. Supporting development industry marketing efforts (with due regard for other planning objectives) aligns with Council's broad economic, social and environmental policy objectives.

The MDP and Land Use Bylaw (LUB) reviews scheduled to begin in 2018 present an opportunity to evaluate existing regulations and conduct in-depth public consultation. This proposed pilot offers a chance for the proponent to test a specific market segment, for which enabling amendments can be completed within an expedited 10 week timeframe.

Governing Policies/Bylaws/Legislation or Agreements

In 2017, Lifestyle Homes proposed to expand signage options to permit a combination of on-site marketing signage and installation of off-site pageantry-type signage on adjacent public road boulevards and traffic medians. The proposal has direct implications on the following Town bylaws/policies:

Land Use Bylaw - regulates all signs on private property. The type of signage permitted depends on the district, for example more signage is allowed as the non-residential uses become more intense. On-site signage is not allowed on a permanent basis in residential districts with the exception of small signs for home based businesses. The LUB also regulates all temporary signs on private lands.

Open Spaces and Recreation Facilities Bylaw - regulates signs on boulevards and parks. This Bylaw is generally quite restrictive due to the safety concerns (wind, visibility) that many temporary signs create, as well as the administrative requirements around them.

Traffic Bylaw - regulates vehicles, pedestrians and other activities on highways and roadways within the Town. Unless specifically provided for under the pageantry features policy, and minor exceptions for garage sale signs, only traffic signs are allowed in the roadways.

Pageantry Features for New Neighbourhoods Policy - In 2012 Council adopted this Policy in consultation with the development industry to establish uniform provisions and standards to support advertising and marketing of housing options in new developing areas of Town. A key piece of this policy was limiting this type of signage to 'neighbourhoods' as defined by the policy. The signage strategy was intended to draw attention to the newly developing neighbourhood at large, as opposed to individual sites or lots.

Single lot developments, whether single detached dwellings or multi-unit sites like apartment buildings, townhouses, or developments such as The Parkhouses, are not eligible for pageantry signs. These developments are only permitted to have limited on-site signage in accordance with the LUB. Development Permit applicants can apply for a variance from the LUB through the appeal process. Administration is not aware of any other single site builders who have had issues with the sign guidelines and regulations since they were adopted in 2012.

New Neighbourhood Signage Policy - This policy ensures that residents, visitors, and potential residential home purchasers can locate new neighbourhoods from major streets. These signs are intended to identify new neighbourhoods only, not single phases of development within a neighbourhood.

Strategic Plan Goals

<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage Community Growth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Provide Strong Governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide Quality Community Infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Healthy and Safe Community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain Organizational Excellence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Foster Economic Vitality
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Promote Environmental Stewardship

Public Engagement/Communication Strategy

Engagement with the local residential development industry, adjacent property owners, and the public at large would be conducted for further amendments to sign-related bylaws and policies.

Alternatives for Consideration

Administration has prepared an amended Pageantry Features for New Neighbourhoods Policy to enable a wider interpretation of what constitutes a neighbourhood, which could allow developments such as The Parkhouses to use additional off-site signage; that is, pageantry features, comparable to the features eligible for full-size neighbourhoods.

As this is an innovative approach to support the local development industry and economic growth, it poses some risks relative to other Okotoks Community Vision Goals. Administration would recommend these new provisions be confined to the specific proposal for the subject location, for a limited period of time, and communicated to local industry stakeholders and the general public as a test case. In this context, the concept will be monitored and evaluated over the next year and then included within and subject to the broader consultation process for the MDP and LUB in 2018/2019.

Finally, as a late submission to this file, Lifestyle Homes has also made a new request that the Parkhouses project be included in wayfinding signs under the "Signage for New Neighbourhoods Policy". Council could direct that this be done now, however, in Administrations' assessment, the idea warrants a better understanding of the potential impacts on and implications for wayfinding signs and public and industry consultation.

In summary, Administration has identified the following alternatives for Council consideration:

1. Approve the amended Pageantry Features for New Neighbourhoods Policy, in principle, which would allow as a test case, exclusively Lifestyle Homes to apply for off-site signage in the boulevard and median as a "Pocket Neighbourhood" subclass to be brought back to Council in January 2018, subject to industry feedback and appropriate community notification;
2. Direct staff to bring forward amendments to Land Use Bylaw 40-98 that would accommodate all the signage that was originally proposed on site for the Parkhouses project (as documented in the Nov 15, 2017 SDAB decision). These amendments would be drafted as site-specific amendments only, and would be brought forward to a Council meeting in January 2018, for first reading. The amendments would be subject to a Public Hearing before adoption; and
3. With respect to the late submission from Lifestyle Homes to amend the Wayfinding signage for New Neighbourhoods Policy, to:
 - A) Direct staff to draft amendments to add the "Pocket Neighbourhood" subclass- to existing signs under the "Signage for New Developments Policy" now as in early 2018 (subject to Developer assuming costs and earliest availability of signs), or

- B) Bring forward at a later date, subject to a more comprehensive and inclusive review and stakeholder consultation of all Town signage provisions and policies in 2018/2019.

CAO Comments

Signage is always a complex issue. With the variety of governing documents that are providing direction it is easy to understand how difficult this is to navigate. I support the approach of getting to resolution quickly on the immediate issue rather than building a comprehensive public participation strategy that will compete with the public participation strategy for the MDP and the LUB. I recommend the approval of the revised pageantry policy and the proposed LUB amendments. This will allow for these to come forward in January, and after the public hearing be approved within a month.

Attachment(s)

1. Amended Pageantry Features for New Neighbourhoods Policy (revisions in red)

Prepared by:
Planning Team
December 07, 2017