

TO: CITY MANAGER 2001 MARCH 20

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING Our File: 02.250.8/9

SUBJECT: BURNABY SIGN BYLAW 1972
ILLUMINATED CHANGING MESSAGE SIGN
MAJOR PARK LOCATIONS

Purpose: To report on the feasibility and advisability of amending the Burnaby Sign Bylaw to permit illuminated changing message signs on major park sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the City Solicitor be authorized to prepare a bylaw amending the Burnaby Sign Bylaw 1972 in line with Section 3.2 of this report.
2. THAT a copy of this report be sent to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission.

R E P O R T

1.0 BACKGROUND

Council, at its meeting of 2000 September 18, adopted a motion requesting staff to investigate and report on the feasibility and advisability of amending the Burnaby Sign Bylaw to permit the possible installation of moving message signs on major park sites. For the purposes of this report and in line with the current wording of the Sign Bylaw such electronic message signs are referred to in this report as illuminated changing message signs. There has been a lengthy, on-going study being conducted by Parks staff with Planning input of options for a permanent replacement for the temporary sign on the lawn of the Mather House in Deer Lake Park facing Canada Way, which has been used to identify the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts and to advertise special events and offerings at the Shadbolt Centre including the James Cowan Theatre, the Studio Theatre and the Deer Lake festival lawn.

The options studied to date range from a permanent stone fence replication of the current plywood format to an illuminated changing message sign. The freestanding illuminated changing message sign proposal included an illuminated “message centre” portion of the sign which would be static but allow the text of the message to change on a timed regular basis.

Approval of such an electronic sign would have been pursued by means of a Comprehensive Development (CD) rezoning application utilizing the P2 District as a guideline. This is the same procedural and application model utilized to permit the now constructed freestanding illuminated changing message sign for the Michael J. Fox Theatre and Burnaby South Secondary School complex through Rezoning #98-11. This existing electronic sign with its changeable but static message centre was designed, located and oriented on the Rumble Street frontage of the school site to be readily visible by passing motorists on Rumble Street while minimizing visual impact on the residential neighbourhood south of Rumble Street.

Within the context of the Burnaby Sign Bylaw, an illuminated changing message sign is a permitted fascia sign in C3, C4 and P2 Districts, and a permitted freestanding sign for a major shopping centre in a C3 District. Such a sign is not currently permitted in the P3 Park and Public Use District.

Historically, such illuminated changing message signs were considered neither desirable nor needed within the context of natural park environments. However, over the years major public recreation, sports and cultural facilities especially in suburban municipalities have not necessarily been located in non-park, institutionally-related urban locations but within major facilities complexes within major parks areas with associated natural environments. While these major facilities are provided to serve Burnaby residents, the use and attendance of these facilities and consequent revenues need to be encouraged as much as possible to justify the high-capital costs and defray the high operational costs of such facilities. Outdoor sign advertising is considered one of the more effective ways of increasing attendance and participation rates. The greater complexity of some of these grouped facilities also suggests the need for additional wayfinding information.

Existing and/or proposed illuminated changing message signs in Burnaby in addition to the electronic sign at Burnaby South Secondary School are freestanding signs for each of the three major Metrotown core shopping centres, a total of six signs, and a fascia sign for the major 8-Rinks ice skating complex. There are also non-electronic “read-o-graph” changeable lettering signs in line with the Sign Bylaw provided in front of many of our recreation buildings as well as many secondary schools, all zoned P3 Park and Public Use District.

As this report indicates, an illuminated changing message sign is a powerful signage instrument. It has usually been related to high-intensity commercial locations and selective commercial uses primarily, major shopping centres and hotels. The Sign Bylaw controls one aspect of the City’s physical built environment and together with other bylaws and regulations has ensured the development of a quality and generally pleasing visual environment which also assists in assuring the long term economic health of the city. While this report outlines a proposal to permit the use of such

a sign in a major park, it is considered important to keep in mind differences of a major park site (including major public facilities) from a major commercial site, the need for special care in assuring compatibility with adjacent uses, and the exercise of fairness and reasonable equity for such signs vis-a-vis the private and public realms.

This report has been coordinated with the Parks, Legal and Engineering Departments and provides a review of illuminated changing message signs including current examples. Appropriate criteria for the location of such signs are outlined. Possible locations for such signs on major park sites in Burnaby are discussed. Finally, the options for providing such signs through either CD zoning or a text amendment to the Sign Bylaw are outlined for Council's consideration.

2.0 ILLUMINATED CHANGEABLE MESSAGE SIGNS

2.1 Definition and Current Technology

The Burnaby Sign Bylaw has the following definition:

“Sign, Illuminated Changing Message System” means an illuminated sign, excluding manually operated signs and multi-panel copy changers, which is capable of displaying changing or moving messages, effected through the automatic switching of lamps, but which is not used to exhibit rapid repetition of changes in light intensity.”

Flashing or moving animated messages are not permitted.

The basic technology for such illuminated signs has not changed over the years although there is a continued refinement trend. The two related technologies are LED (lighting emitting diode) and LID (low-energy incandescent) displays.

Conventional LED displays use small lamps or pixels, while LID systems use small, low-voltage lamps with special reflectors. LID systems can convey more complex almost shaded images and text. The display can be programmed in a variety of ways from moving images and letters to static complete messages instantly changeable on a timed basis. Such electronic signs may be purchased or rented with approximately 60% of such signs being leased primarily for reasons of cash flow, deductible expenses, liability insurance, equipment maintenance, and periodic sign changes.

A 3 ft. by 13 ft. (39 sq. ft.) changing message sign component can accommodate, say, 3 lines of 10.5 inch high lettering which is visible to and can be registered by passing motorists at a distance of approximately 350 feet. Larger lettering can also be accommodated depending on the text layout. This assertion has been field tested using a portable sign and is in line with existing cited examples.

It is important to note that a changing message sign is usually a component of a larger sign framework including permanent lettered titles, with the overall sign aggregation required to also conform to the Sign Bylaw.

2.2 Current Examples

The following is a listing of existing or proposed illuminated changing message signs in Burnaby as well as the results of a survey of other lower mainland municipalities for such signs for public park or cultural facilities.

In Burnaby, there are eight (8) such existing or proposed electronic signs - six (6) of them for the Metrotown super-regional shopping complex composed of three linked shopping centres - a small number which is reflective of the high cost and the careful deliberations needed for the economic benefits of such advertising to be evident. These signs provide for moving electronic text except for the Burnaby South Secondary School sign which has static but regularly changeable text.

The location and size of these Burnaby message centres, bearing in mind that the overall sign size is larger, are:

- a) Metrotown Centre (not yet installed)
3.83 ft. by 8.17 ft. (31.29 sq.ft.)
Two (2) signs, each double-sided.
- b) Metropolis at Metrotown
2. ft. x 16 ft. (32 sq.ft.)
Two (2) signs, each double-sided.
- c) Station Square at Metrotown
3 ft. x 8 ft. (24 sq.ft.)
Two (2) signs, each doubled-sided.
- d) 8 Rinks Ice Complex
2.5 ft. x 18.67 ft. (46.67 sq.ft.), single-sided.
- e) Burnaby South Secondary School/Michael J. Fox Theatre
2 ft. x 10.67 ft. (21.34 sq.ft.), double-sided.

Other Lower Mainland municipalities were surveyed regarding illuminated changing message signs for public park or cultural facilities. Such signs are not common and are usually pursued only on a special project basis. The following examples were indicated in the survey:

- i) Richmond
Gateway Theatre in Minoru Park recreation, sports and cultural complex.
Approx. 2.75 ft. x 9.5 ft. (26 sq.ft.)
- ii) Coquitlam
Pinetree Recreation Centre
Approx. 3 ft. x 8 ft. (24 sq.ft.)
- iii) Langley City
Douglas Recreation Centre (sponsored sign).
Approx. 2 ft. x 8 ft. (16 sq.ft.)

One notable changing message sign was in Surrey at the Bear Creek Park/Surrey Arts Centre complex facing King George Highway but the sign lease was not renewed and has been removed. A replacement is not being pursued.

Two secondary schools in Coquitlam and Langley City were cited as having such signs. Private or major regional recreational/sports facilities cited as having such signs, particularly in downtown Vancouver, include Planet Ice, GM Place, B.C. Place, Queen Elizabeth Theatre Complex, Ford Theatre and the PNE. The City of Vancouver did not indicate having such signs for any other park/cultural facilities. Many municipalities including Burnaby have illuminated non-electronic changeable lettering read-o-graph signs.

2.3 Criteria for Location of Illuminated Changing Message Signs

There are a number of relevant issues which bear on the appropriateness of illuminated changing message signs on major park sites. In Burnaby, the use of an illuminated changing message sign on major park sites could be considered appropriate in a location or orientation that meets the following criteria:

- a) That accommodate a message centre that conveys static electronic messages instantly changeable on a timed basis. These could be timed very tightly as long as they did not flash. This approach of changeable rather than moving messages is considered appropriate for the contemplated non-commercial park settings and for traffic safety reasons.
- b) That can be seen by large numbers of people during extended hours, both day and night, mainly by motorists and secondarily by pedestrians.
- c) That is sufficiently proximate so that the message is clearly legible by motorists and yet not so close that the entire message cannot be registered at a quick look.

- d) That is considered a relatively busy and urban location. Conversely, such signs may be inappropriate in generally unlit, natural conservation-related locations.
- e) That is not a distraction or nuisance to passing traffic so as to constitute a safety hazard or concern.

It is noted that the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Highways (M.O.T.H.) has jurisdiction over certain roads and intersections such as the Canada Way/Kensington Avenue and the Sprout Street/Kensington Avenue intersections.

- f) That is not obtrusive, distracting or objectionable vis-a-vis other proximate land uses, particularly residential uses.
- g) That accommodates a major parks cultural/sports/recreational facility or complex not only of importance to the City as a whole but also of some regional significance. Major streets particularly arterials in Burnaby cater to high proportions of motorists (commuter or visitors), living outside Burnaby. It is desirable that many of the events advertised attract a larger regional audience.
- h) That fulfills a need to advertise events, offerings, exhibitions, major registration drives and tourist attractions at that location sufficient in number and importance to warrant year round messages and where other signage or avenues of community advertising are not as effective. The electronic format allows for sequential advertising of events, etc. which are on the same date or overlap in time.

2.4 Possible Locations in Burnaby

In line with the outlined criteria for assessing appropriate major park locations for illuminated changing message signs, there is one primary location readily identified, namely the Shadbolt Centre/Deer Lake Park cultural complex on the Canada Way frontage. Two other locations have merit, the Burnaby Lake Sports Complex on the Kensington Avenue frontage and Swangard Stadium on the Kingsway frontage.

As noted, signage such as an illuminated changing message sign is considered needed in certain major park situations to encourage greater public use and consequent greater and appropriate return on the significant public investment (including defraying considerable operational costs) that has been made on major recreational, sports and cultural facilities where significant revenue-generation is needed for their continued support and justification. It is considered that these facilities should be accorded some of the same advertising opportunities available to the private sector.

These locations are discussed as follows:

**A) Shadbolt Centre/Deer Lake Park Cultural Complex
(Canada Way frontage)**

The Deer Lake Park Cultural Complex of which the Shadbolt Centre is the prime event-related component is a primary attraction of both city-wide and regional significance. It is also closely associated with the City's administrative centre. It has a frontage on Canada Way, a designated arterial road with one of the highest traffic volumes in the city as well as being proximate to the Kensington interchange of the Trans Canada Highway.

Specific venues include:

- a) Shadbolt Centre for the Arts
 - performing and visual art program spaces
 - James Cowan Theatre/Studio Theatre
 - ceramic facilities
 - meeting and conference rental spaces
- b) Deer Lake Festival Lawn
- c) Burnaby Village Museum
 - Vintage Carousel/gift shop
- d) Gallery at Ceperley House
- e) Burnaby Arts Council and gallery
- f) Hart House Restaurant
- g) Deer Lake Beach
- h) Grouping of Heritage Homes
- i) Deer Lake Park
- j) Administrative Centre
 - City Hall
 - R.C.M.P.

Some of the sites, events, and activities needing promotion are:

- i) Drama, dance and music performances
- ii) Visual, performing and literary art classes
- iii) Visual art exhibitions
- iv) Lectures and demonstrations
- v) Fairs, festivals and special events such as:
 - Craft fairs
 - Discovery Days
 - Rhododendron Festival
 - Environment Week/River's Day
 - Symphony in the Park
 - Canada Day

- Coquitlam Music Festival
- vi) Major outdoor music festival(s) and performances
- vii) Burnaby Village Museum season and special events
- viii) Vintage Carousel
- ix) Heritage tours
- x) Century Gardens
- xi) City Hall events and special notices

In general, this location would conform with the criteria outlined in Section 2.3 of this report to merit consideration.

The Mather House lawn facing Canada Way has been the initially proposed site sign location. An electronic sign can be easily registered by motorists passing this Canada Way/Kensington Avenue intersection from this lawn location. This general location also needs to take into consideration the traffic safety ramifications of being at an atypical, very busy intersection linking three major roads including the Trans Canada Highway. An electronic sign with changeable but static messages is particularly important at this location.

B) Burnaby Lake Sports Complex (Kensington Avenue frontage)

The Burnaby Lake Sports Complex is also a primary attraction of both city-wide and regional significance. Although most activities are participatory, an electronic sign can provide information and site identification for the many sports and recreational facilities and field venues in the area. This location has a frontage on Kensington Avenue, a designated arterial road which is reasonably busy especially during rush hours. It is noted that the major private 8 Rinks facility with its moving message sign is also located in this area facing the Trans-Canada Highway and Sprout Street.

Specific venues include:

- Burnaby Lake Sports Complex
 - West artificial fields
 - East fields
- C.G. Brown Pool
- Bill Copeland Sports Centre
 - two rinks
- Tennis courts and club
- Archery range
- Rowing Pavilion

The main venue for which sign advertising would be particularly useful is the Bill Copeland Sports Centre for attractions such as the Burnaby Bulldogs. It is also noted that three major illuminated free-standing park signs with read-o-graph changeable lettering components are currently located along a one block stretch of Kensington Avenue in this area. The read-o-graph component ranges in area from 19 to 32 sq. ft. One option is to incorporate an electronic message centre in place of the read-o-graph portion of such an existing sign.

**C) Swangard Stadium
(Kingsway frontage)**

Swangard Stadium within Central Park is a primary attraction of both city-wide and regional significance. This location is near the intersection of Kingsway and Boundary Road, both designated arterials. The primary frontage is on Kingsway, one of the busiest roads in the City. Boundary Road is considered a secondary frontage due to the single-family dwelling neighbourhood to the west.

The main need for advertising via a site sign are the games of professional sporting teams, primarily soccer, and events such as the Harry Jerome Track and Field Meet and the 24-Hour Relay events. This location does not have the range and number of facilities and event venues of either the Shadbolt Centre/Deer Lake Park Cultural Complex or the Burnaby Lake Sports Complex. However, this location is a main gateway into Burnaby and the use of this sign for city-related and visitor information may be warranted at this location. A landscaped welcome to Burnaby sign and a read-o-graph sign are currently located at this intersection on the Kingsway frontage.

3.0 POSSIBLE OPTIONS

In light of the preceding discussion, there is merit in accommodating a changing message sign in a major City park for those special instances where they are warranted due to the high concentration and volume of attractions, facilities, events and activities.

All park areas in Burnaby whether regional, city-wide, district, neighbourhood or conservation designated are zoned to the P3 Park and Public Use District. Special cultural precincts such as the Metrotown civic square, public parking, library and future facilities complex or specific cultural facilities such as the new McGill Library can also use the P2 Administration and Assembly District usually in conjunction with the CD Comprehensive Development District. As indicated, an illuminated changing message sign is a sign type permitted in C3, C4, and P2 Districts but not in the P3 District.

3.1 CD Zoning Option

One option is the use of the Comprehensive Development (CD) zoning district. This is the approach utilized for the electronic changing message sign for the Burnaby South Secondary School/Michael J. Fox Theatre complex where the theatre component qualified it for use of CD zoning based on the Administrative and Assembly District (P2) as the guideline district.

In the case of the Deer Lake Park/cultural centre area, the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts, a major cultural facility which includes theatres, also offers the use of CD zoning based on P2 as the guideline district. It is noted that any rezoning application within a half-mile of a controlled access to the Trans-Canada Highway requires M.O.T.H. approval. A variant of this approach would be a text amendment to the Sign Bylaw permitting such an electronic sign within the P3 zoning district subject to its inclusion in a site specific Comprehensive Development (CD) rezoning application.

3.2 Text Amendment Option

Because, the CD Zoning approach can be considered complex, the option of considering a text amendment to the Burnaby Sign Bylaw to permit an electronic changing message sign for a major city park in the P3 Park and Public Use District as an outright use has merit.

The text amendment approach would allow for an administratively simpler procedure including a shorter time duration to permit and achieve approval of such a sign. Although regulations including traffic safety considerations would apply to such a sign in a major city park, this approach would allow greater discretion in the location and design of such a sign by the City but would not entail public input on any specific proposal. Under this procedure, the operational department, in this case the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department would make a sign application and work with the Planning and Building Department towards a suitable proposal with respect to the release of Preliminary Plan Approval and Building Permit.

However, utilizing this administrative approach, it would be incumbent on staff to assure that any issues and concerns regarding such a sign for a specific site be appropriately considered and resolved.

The criteria for the location of illuminated changing message signs outlined in Section 2.3 would apply. In line with these criteria, the following would be included in the text amendments.

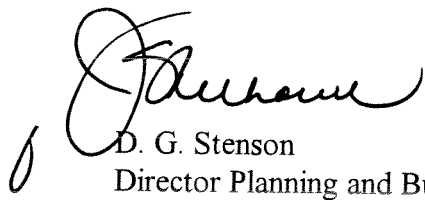
- a) Permitted in a P3 District within a major park of city-wide significance and fronting an arterial road.


- b) Shall be included as part of a Comprehensive Sign Plan with the electronic message centre component restricted to event information and public service messages which are static but capable of instantaneous change and a maximum sign area of 40 sq. ft. per side and a maximum of two sides. The maximum overall size of signs of which an electronic message centre is a component would continue to be governed by the Sign Bylaw.

The changed wording of such a text amendment to the Burnaby Sign Bylaw 1972 is attached.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This report is in response to Council's request that staff investigate and report on the feasibility and advisability of amending the Burnaby Sign Bylaw to permit the possible installation of changing message signs on major park sites. The use of a Comprehensive Development (CD) rezoning approach remains for the establishment of such signs where a theatre or other use that is listed in the P2 District is present and would justify the use of CD at least in part. The use of the P2 District itself without CD would also be an option. However, introduction of a text amendment to the Burnaby Sign Bylaw to accommodate such signs in the P3 District also has merit. An illuminated changing message sign is a powerful signage instrument and can have some side effects of concern. However, properly considered and located, such a sign can be of benefit in advertising special events, theatrical productions and other community celebrations of benefit to the City, especially where other forms of advertising information and site identification are not as effective. Properly considered, such a sign should not detract from the quality urban design and urban environment which Burnaby strives to maintain. It is therefore proposed that the City Solicitor be authorized to prepare a bylaw amending the Burnaby Sign Bylaw 1972 in line with Section 3.2 of this report.


D. G. Stenson
Director Planning and Building


Attachment
KI:lf

cc: Director Engineering
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
City Solicitor
Chief Building Inspector
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ATTACHMENT

FREESTANDING ILLUMINATED CHANGING MESSAGE SIGN

As a Permitted Sign
For a Major Park Complex
BURNABY SIGN BYLAW 1972

1.0 SCHEDULE NO. III

1. Permitted Signs:

added: (5) In a P3 District corresponding to a major park complex of city-wide significance and fronting an arterial road, a permitted freestanding sign may be an illuminated changing message system sign.

2. Requirements:

added: (5) An illuminated changing message system component in a freestanding sign in a P3 District:

- a) shall be part of a Comprehensive Sign Plan,
- b) shall be restricted to event and facility information and public service messages,
- c) shall have static messages capable of instantaneous change from one message to another,
- d) shall not exceed a maximum changing message component area of 40 sq.ft. per side and a maximum of two sides.

2.0 SCHEDULE NO. VI

Addendum to (2A) related to:

A comprehensive sign plan may be provided ... (add at end) and for a major public park complex.