



Corporate Report

NO: R162

COUNCIL DATE: July 30, 2008

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: July 30, 2008

FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development FILE: 6520-20 (Grandview Heights)

SUBJECT: Pilot Project for Temporary Directional Real Estate Development Signs in the Grandview Heights Area

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize staff to proceed with all necessary actions to install temporary directional real estate development signs as generally described in this report within public street boulevards in the Grandview Heights area as a pilot project; and
3. Request staff to report back to Council on the results of this pilot project six months after the installation of such signs.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide information to and seek Council authorization on a proposed pilot project related to the installation of several directional real estate development signs at selected locations within the public boulevard in the Grandview Heights area, in order to direct potential buyers to new residential development sites in the neighbourhoods of Morgan Heights and North Grandview.

BACKGROUND

Neighbourhood Concept Plans (NCPs) for the South Surrey neighbourhoods of Morgan Heights, North Grandview, and the Highway 99 Corridor, which includes Grandview Corners, were approved by Council in 2004 and 2005. Since then, these neighbourhoods have been developing with a variety of commercial, residential, and industrial uses in

accordance with the adopted plans. The development of these projects also includes the extension of significant municipal engineering infrastructure including road works and underground utilities.

At present, there are at least 13 residential developments that are under construction, with display homes or show suites having been constructed on most sites as part of the site's marketing plan. There are several other applications for development that are at various stages of approval process, which will proceed to the construction phase in the coming months.

In view of the extent of development activity in this area of the City, various initiatives are being taken by staff to manage the impacts on the community of the development activity. One such issue is the proliferation of off-site real estate development signs at key intersections in the Grandview Heights area and along streets. These signs have been erected to advertise projects under construction and to direct motorists who are interested in viewing the show homes/suites to the development sites. Aesthetics and public safety concerns related to these signs have been expressed by residents in the area.

DISCUSSION

The Surrey Sign By-law, 1999, No. 13656 (the "Sign By-law") regulates signage on private property. The Sign By-law contains regulations pertaining to both on-site and off-site temporary real estate development/construction signs related to advertising to potential customers new development projects on a temporary basis.

The Highway and Traffic By-law regulates the installation of signs on public boulevards or road allowances.

Development Signage in South Surrey

Despite the options available to developers under the Sign By-law, for both on-site and off-site real estate development signs, a large number of development signs that are not compliant with the Sign By-law or the Highway and Traffic By-law have been erected in the Morgan Heights and North Grandview areas. With regard to off-site real estate signs, nearly all of these were installed unlawfully within the City boulevard/road allowance area and others installed on private property exceed the allowable area and height permitted under the Sign By-law.

In addition to the visual clutter and aesthetic impact of these signs, the proliferation of the unlawful on-street real estate signs present concern with public safety and liability in relation to structural integrity of the sign and the restriction on motorist sight lines at driveways and street intersections. Numerous public complaints have been received in relation to these signs, and staff from By-laws and Licensing Services has proceeded with enforcement action on the unlawful signs, including verbal and written notification of violations and physical removal of signs from the public boulevards.

Consultation with the Development Industry

As a result of enforcement efforts, City staff has met with affected developers and with the Development Advisory Committee (DAC) to discuss the issues and consider options. Developer representatives advised that the Sign By-law options for on-site and off-site development advertising signs were ineffective for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- The significant number of development projects in this rapidly-developing area creates confusion for potential buyers;
- The majority of developers sought the same key intersections (24 Avenue/160 Street; 32 Avenue/152 Street) to advertise their projects;
- Existing Sign Bylaw options are not practical, as approval from third party site owners at key intersections is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain;
- Many sites and roads are under construction, therefore way-finding is problematic;
- The lack of practical off-site signage options and the competition from the high number of projects, creates an environment where larger and more prominent off-site signs are sought on key locations within available boulevard areas; and
- The apparent slow-down in the residential market creates a higher urgency to ensure adequate way finding for marketing these new projects.

Following preliminary discussions with developers, it was concluded that it would be appropriate to look at new approaches in responding to the need for temporary directional real estate development signs, while addressing the need to address visual clutter and public safety.

PILOT PROJECT

Temporary Directional Boulevard Signs

A sub-committee of the DAC was established to pursue options to address the need for off-site directional real estate signs located on public boulevards/rights-of-way, as a pilot project in the Grandview Heights area. This approach recognizes the public benefit in coordinating this signage for multiple developers in a way that addresses the aesthetic and technical needs of the City.

A pilot project is being recommended, where the City will coordinate the installation of directional real estate development signs at selected locations on City street boulevards/road allowances to meet the needs of active residential developers in the area. Signage locations would be limited to major roads (Collectors or Arterials) and technical requirements of the design, manufacturing, installation and administration of the use of the signage would be coordinated by the City. Each such sign would have multiple tabs to allow several developments to be advertised at each sign location.

The following steps will be undertaken by City staff in consultation and cooperation with participating developers, to implement this pilot project:

- finalize the desired boulevard locations of the signs, and complete the technical review of these locations, taking into consideration sight lines, aesthetics, and other site specific considerations (Appendix II);
- coordinate and finalize the design, manufacturing, and installation of the boulevard signs (Appendix III);
- enter into license agreements with individual developers to allow them to rent space on the signs on a first-come, first-served basis, based on space availability; and
- manage the on-going administration and implementation of the advertising for development projects on the City boulevard signs.

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

The implementation of this initiative involves staff from the Planning and Development Department and Engineering Department and By-laws and Licensing Services Section. If Council endorses this pilot project, a number of technical and administrative steps are required to be completed to coordinate the next phases of this project. The participating developers propose to assist in the completion of the design and installation of the temporary signs. A preliminary design has been prepared and will be refined over the next few weeks (Appendix III). The objective is to have several of the signs installed and operational, in advance of the busy fall marketing season.

The on-going administration in relation to the use and maintenance of these signs will be undertaken by the Engineering Department (Realty Services Section) under license agreements. In due course, as development in the area is completed and occupied the subject signs will be removed and the boulevards restored.

As the pilot project proceeds and the directional signs become operational, staff in By-laws and Licensing Services will continue their enforcement efforts related to unlawful signage and that developers are aware of the option available under this initiative. City staff will monitor the requests for directional signage to control the number of developers on the signs, length of the advertising period, and potential need for further temporary signage.

Monitoring and Extension to Other NCP areas

Representatives from the development industry, including the DAC and the Greater Vancouver Home Builder's Association (GVHBA) have suggested that advertising on boulevard signs should be made available for residential projects in other neighbourhoods, including East Clayton and Cloverdale, as sign enforcement action is proceeding in these communities as well. Staff has advised that, while this initiative may have potential for future implementation elsewhere, it is only being undertaken in the Grandview Heights area at this time, as a pilot project to evaluate whether this approach is effective in addressing developers' objectives, while minimizing the proliferation of unlawful signs. City staff will monitor this pilot project for six months, and will provide a status report to Council on the results of this pilot project in six months time.

CONCLUSION

Conventional off-site real estate development signage opportunities available under the Sign By-law have not been effective in the rapidly developing areas of Morgan Heights and North Grandview, and have resulted in substantial unlawful signage on City boulevards. To address this situation, a pilot project is proposed where a number of directional signs on public boulevards at key locations in the Grandview Heights area will be installed to advertise and direct motorists to new residential projects. The Engineering Department will administer the design, construction and use of these signs by developers, through license agreements. This project will address the need for temporary directional signage to new residential developments, while addressing the visual impact and public safety needs. This pilot project is being implemented in the Grandview Heights area and once operational, will be monitored for six months to evaluate the potential for expanding the program to other NCP areas.

It is recommended that Council authorize staff to take all necessary actions to implement this pilot project in accordance with this report and to monitor and report back to Council on the results of this pilot project six months after the signs are installed.

Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

RCA:saw

Attachments:

- Appendix I Development Projects in South Surrey
- Appendix II Pilot Project Potential Sign Locations and Participating Developers
- Appendix III Preliminary Directional Sign Schematics

