

Clause embodied in Report No. 16 of the Toronto Community Council, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on December 16 and 17, 1998.

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Signage Program - Exhibition Place (Trinity-Niagara)

(City Council on December 16 and 17, 1998, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Toronto Community council recommends that:

- (1) the issue of billboard signage on Lake Shore Boulevard be deferred until a final proposal is submitted by Exhibition Place; and**
- (2) the following report (December 9, 1998) from the Commissioner of Urban Planning and Development Services, as amended by Recommendation No. (1) be adopted:**

Purpose

To inform Council about a new signage program for Exhibition Place and to seek Council's support in principle for the approach described in this report.

Source of Funds

Not applicable.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- (1) Council adopt in principle the approach to a signage system for Exhibition Place set out in this report with the exception of billboard signage on Lake Shore Boulevard.**
- (2) The Commissioner of Urban Planning and Development Services continue to refine that system and assist Exhibition Place with their request for proposals to the signage industry, and that a detailed review of all signs related to their height, size, number, extent of third party advertising, signage orientation and placement occur at the time of the submission of a final proposal by Exhibition Place.**

Comments:

1. Background

At its meeting of August 13 and 14, 1997, the former Metro Council approved a report from the Acting Commissioner of Metro Planning to amend Metro By-law No. 211-79 to permit the erection of a sign overlooking the Gardiner Expressway identifying the location of the National Trade Centre and Exhibition Place and displaying event information and third party advertising. This sign has been contracted for and will be complete this year. The report seeking Metro Council's approval for this free-standing sign also identified the need for a complete review of signage on Exhibition Place grounds.

There are a number of reasons for embarking on such a review. To date, with the exception of the signage system developed for the National Trade Centre, and architectural signs that are integrated with buildings on the site, signage has been provided on an ad hoc and insufficient basis. Increased use of this 260 acre site for trade shows and other events has made wayfinding and identification of various buildings and parking facilities more critical than ever. Appropriate signage could also assist in the marketing of the site.

The Exhibition Place lands are zoned "G" for parks purposes. Chapter 297 of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code respecting signage has very restrictive provisions for Parks districts befitting their primary function as places for use by the public for recreational purposes. There is no third party advertising permitted in a "G" zone. However, this categorization does not address the unique character and activities that occur at Exhibition Place and the corresponding need for signage of another order outside of what would normally be permitted in a "G" zone.

Any sign program implemented by Exhibition Place needs to be financially self-supporting and the proposed sign program considers some opportunity for advertising and sponsorship by companies who support Exhibition Place. Variances for similar third party signage have previously been sought and achieved during the construction of the National Trade Centre in 1997.

2. The Entro Study

Exhibition Place contracted with Entro Communications, a firm that has extensive experience with signage programs on such projects as the Air Canada Centre, York University, University of Toronto, Pearson Airport, the International Centre, Skydome, as well as many parks and heritage sites. The consulting budget was \$10,000 and the time schedule was about two months, commencing in August 1998.

The objectives of the study were to achieve the following:

- * help to promote Exhibition Place as an entity by utilizing the established corporate image;
- * help reinforce the prominence of the site;
- * work within the historical context while creating a look appropriate for trade/consumer shows, sports and entertainment venues;
- * provide a coordinated look between old and new;

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- * be suitable for a range of messaging technologies;
 - * be able to accommodate a range of users to find destinations in and around the site;
 - * be suitable for a range of building types;
 - * be cost effective and durable;
 - * provide Exhibition Place with a consistent look; and
 - * provide revenues to be self-funding.

The study process included a review of the site, an analysis of traffic patterns and visual encumbrances, an assessment of the current inventory of signage products and discussions with Exhibition Place and Urban Planning and Development staff and various site users including the National Trade Centre and the CNE. The consultant was given the opportunity to develop a system that would address the site conditions and deal with third party signage in an aesthetically acceptable manner.

The Board of Governors of Exhibition Place was presented with the proposal at its meeting of October 30, 1998, and approved it in principle at that time.

It is expected that a request for proposals (RFP) to identify a proponent who will fabricate, install, maintain the signage at no cost to Exhibition Place will be sent out in the new year.

3. Description of the System

The proposal as outlined by Entro is comprised of a family of sign types in the categories of identification, wayfinding and advertising. I will discuss advertising signs below in Section 6. I have attached samples of the proposed identification and wayfinding signage as Appendix A.

3.1 Identification Signs include Gate Identification, Building Identification and Parking Identification

Gate identification signs are to be located at major entrances into Exhibition Place including the Princes', Dufferin and Dominion Gates, Ontario Drive, Newfoundland Drive and the entrance to the National Trade Centre. Building identification signs are intended to identify all buildings and may be one of two types - either a free-standing pylon or a wall-mounted plaque. Building signage that is architecturally integrated with the existing buildings will of course remain untouched. Parking identification signs will utilize the commonly understood "P" to designate parking lots.

3.2 Wayfinding signs includes pedestrian signage, vehicular signage and maps

Wayfinding signs are intended to help people find their way through the site and to their desired destination. Pedestrian and vehicle-oriented maps of Exhibition Place are located at entrances to the site, in order to provide overall orientation.

Pedestrian wayfinding signs are located at all pedestrian decision points and vehicle wayfinding signs are located at vehicle decision points. Vehicle wayfinding signs are intended to provide directions for pedestrians as well as for vehicles. These signs carry text which directs people through the site to their desired destination.

3.3 The Design of the Signage

The system that has been developed makes all signs look like they belong to a product family specifically designed for Exhibition Place. Such a strong distinctive look, with a consistent colour theme is intended to create a strong sense of place. Since the most recognizable element of the grounds is the Princes' Gates, it is being used as an icon at the top of all the signage. This is being represented in three different ways - as a cut-out at the top of the signage, incorporated into the signage and, in the case of the wayfinding signs, the utilization of the "Winged Victory Figure", the centrepiece of the Princes' Gates. These tops are critical to achieving the desired image and are an integral part of this system. They should not be sacrificed for budgetary reasons.

A typical sign would contain the corporate Princes' Gates logo at the top, either a white or blue sign face with the reverse colour letter and then a box below for advertising, corporate sponsorship, directional information or to be left blank.

Exhibition Place has established the directive that the sign program be self-financing. Therefore, up to one third of the bottom of the sign contains the opportunity for third party advertising in the form of static or electronic advertising or corporate sponsorship.

One of the characteristics of the system is that the signs are high, in order to give them prominence and to allow them to be read by crowds and not to be the subject of theft. A single pole structure is generally used, based on the pole system used at the National Trade Centre to facilitate pedestrian flow and also to allow for signage to be taken down when necessary for temporary events. Existing signs that are duplicated or inconsistent with the signage system being proposed will be removed. New temporary signage will be designed to be consistent with this program.

3.4 Locations of Signage

As part of their study, Entro included a site plan proposal locating the range of signs they have proposed. However, because of the limitations of the study, it was not the mandate of Entro to consider all the matters necessary to establish the precise location and orientation of any particular sign, its relationship to buildings, intersections, the streets and sidewalks. I believe that the site plan proposal forms a strong base for the next stage of the work, with certain exceptions which I will discuss below.

4. Comments on the System

Planning, Urban Design and Heritage Toronto staff have reviewed the signage program, and will be helping to refine the system in the context of the following:

- * that the signage system support the "Structure Plan" prepared by staff of Urban Planning and Development Services and Exhibition Place and O&Y-SMG Canada, which was adopted by the Board of Governors of Exhibition Place in 1998. This work provides an overall development framework for Exhibition Place;

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- * that the ultimate location of all signage be sensitive to the views identified in the Structure Plan. Areas of particular concern are the Fire Hall, Music Building, Bandshell, Princess Margaret Fountain and the National Trade Centre from Newfoundland Road;
 - * that views of historical facades be preserved by keeping building identification signs away from the main facades and conforming with Heritage Toronto's Signage Design guidelines;
 - * that the overall image of signage on the visual aesthetic of the grounds, including heritage buildings and structure view corridors and termini, must be positive;
 - * that signage be tested to ensure that it is not obtrusive and does not block views;
 - * that wherever possible vehicular and pedestrian signs be consolidated, and any other opportunities be taken to consolidate signs to reduce the potential for visual overload on the site;
 - * that signage will be examined within the context of both individual buildings including the twenty-six listed or designated historic buildings and structures;
 - * that signage proposed at three historic gateways and other primary entrances be carefully considered in terms of scale and type especially in front of the Princes' Gates, in order to determine the appropriateness of signage in these locations;
 - * that map directories located at most of the gateways and entrances be appropriately integrated into the grounds with space for cars or pedestrians to view them and that they be provided at the correct scale;
 - * that efforts be made to reinforce the pedestrian nature rather than the vehicle-oriented uses of the grounds. In particular, vehicular directional signs should be in keeping with the lower speed limits at Exhibition Place;
 - * that the precise location of bus, taxi signs, banner and street signage be assessed within an overall landscaping review of the site; and
 - * that any signage within 45 metres of the Gardiner Expressway be reviewed within the context of By-law 211-79.

5. Graphic Testing

Through the use of computer technology, I have been testing the impact of the selected signs in order to determine the appropriateness of their size, height, location and impact. Two systems have been utilized - a photographic model and a computer model.

At the time that a final system is proposed, my report will include drawings showing the impact of the signs within their context. I am proposing to continue this graphic testing and to work with staff of Exhibition Place in developing their request for proposals to the sign industry. Planning staff will then continue to work with the selected proponent to achieve a desirable product.

6. Billboard Advertising on Lake Shore Boulevard

My computer testing of the proposed billboard signage along Lake Shore Boulevard confirms my opinion that this is not supportable. At this time there are no billboards along Lake Shore Boulevard, which remains a relatively pristine waterfront boulevard. Not only would billboards impact the aesthetic experience of Lake Shore Boulevard, but also the public face of Exhibition Place as viewed from the lake shore. I also believe that it could compromise the quality of the public promenade envisioned along the north side of Lake Shore, including views to the waterfront. Staff of Heritage Toronto support my view that billboard signage should not be introduced onto Lake Shore Boulevard. This is the one part of the program that I cannot endorse as currently proposed. There may be other opportunities to achieve some of the Exhibition Place objectives for corporate sponsorship or self-financing on appropriately scaled and sited entrance signage.

7. Next Steps

Exhibition Place would like to send out a request for proposals to the sign industry in early 1999. I am proposing to continue my own in-house graphic testing in order to help refine the system, and then to provide input to help Exhibition Place structure their request for proposals. I would then assist Exhibition Place in the selection of a signage company to implement the proposal. Ultimately I will have comments on the final proposal within the context of any variance proposed to the sign provisions of the Municipal Code for the implementation of the system.

Conclusion

I am recommending that Council support in principle the signage program for Exhibition Place as described in this report with the exception of billboard signage on Lake Shore Boulevard and subject to the concerns I have expressed and comments listed in Section 4.

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