



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** James Lopez, Deputy City Manager for External Affairs  
David Wolbrecht, Senior Neighborhood Services Coordinator

**Date:** May 21, 2021

**Subject:** NEIGHBORHOOD AND PARKS SIGNAGE PLANS

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council review options for implementing neighborhood and parks signage plans to replace the current large wooden signs at some City facilities, neighborhoods, gateway points into the City, and parks. Staff seek direction from Council on preferred options so that new signs can be implemented in 2021 and 2022.

## **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council background on Kirkland's current signs and to outline two options for Council consideration. This report is structured as follows:

- I. Brief Background on Kirkland's Neighborhood and Parks Signs
- II. Options for Replacing and Installing Neighborhood and Parks Signs
- III. Next Actions

### **I. Brief Background on Kirkland's Current Neighborhood and Parks Signs**

There are generally four categories of "community location" signs in Kirkland:

Type	Count	Description
Gateway	4	Display "Kirkland" at prominent entry points to the city or to major areas (e.g. downtown)
Park	46	Display the park name at an entrance
Neighborhood	14*	Display the neighborhood or business district name at a major access point, sometimes identified in a neighborhood plan
Facility	4	Display the facility name
TOTAL	68	

\*Two neighborhoods currently do not have signs (Evergreen Hill and Finn Hill), and some neighborhoods have more than one sign.

The current signs all share the same general design: the City's seal and main text of the sign painted with gold-leaf, with green and blue stripes underneath the text, all on a brown-painted wood background. The space in and around the seal, text, and lines are all routed such that those elements are three-dimensional. The current design has been used since at least the late 1990s. All are made of wood except for the Moss Bay Neighborhood sign, which is made of high-density urethane (HDU) that is fabricated to resemble wood without needing the same level of maintenance. The Moss Bay Neighborhood sign is the most recent sign to be fabricated.

The maintenance of the wooden signs by the Public Works and Parks & Community Services staff have significantly extended the effective life of the signs. However, several of the signs have reached the point of being beyond meaningful maintenance and need to be replaced.



The signs vary in size, even within a sign category, which was likely influenced by both site conditions and available budget. For the sake of this report, generally the gateway signs would be considered large, park and facility signs would be considered medium, and neighborhood signs would be considered small. Current rough estimates for HDU using the same design are as follows:

Size	Sign Type (generally)	Dimensions	Estimate
Large	Gateway	15' wide x 3'-1" tall x 4" deep	\$13,000
Medium	Park and Facility	10' wide x 2' tall x 4" deep	\$10,000
Small	Neighborhood	6' wide x 2' tall x 4" deep	\$8,000

Ongoing costs for maintenance have for several years been absorbed into the Public Works or Parks & Community Services Department budgets and are not included in the above estimates.

#### Current Available Funding

\$36,000 was carried forward from the 2017-18 budget to help fund the fabrication of new signs and the replacement of current signs. To help guide staff's process for this, staff presented to the former Public Works, Parks, and Human Services Council Committee on June 20, 2019, and received direction to explore a comprehensive signage plan and to engage the community in the process. Based on this feedback, staff began work on a public process for 2020 that was interrupted and delayed by the reprioritization of staff's work plans due to the onset of the pandemic. The \$36,000 was again carried forward from the 2019-2020 budget, and staff now return to Council for direction on how to proceed.

## **II. Options for Replacing and Installing Neighborhood and Parks Signs**

The main decision staff seek Council direction on is whether to use the existing sign design or to explore a new design. The current wood structure and design are unique and have considerable history and connection with the community. However, the signs are larger, more expensive “monument” type signs than are typically found in municipalities. The current signs also require more frequent maintenance. Converting the current signs to high-density urethane lowers the cost and maintenance requirements over wood somewhat, but the overall cost still remains higher than most other options.

Proceeding with using the current design would likely be more efficient, however, the prior delays in process around the signs have afforded the City an opportunity to explore alternatives to the current design in the context of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. These signs contribute substantially to placemaking and the community’s sense of identity. These signs are prominent “public symbols”, which is one of several items called for in Resolution R-5434 Section 3d-e to be evaluated for whether they are “welcoming to all community members”. It is with this lens that staff recommend approaching the development of a citywide signage plan if Council decides to explore an alternative design. Alternative design options could include a completely new design, or the current design could be updated with a welcoming tagline such as “Kirkland – Where you belong” or “Where everyone belongs”.

For any citywide signage plan option, staff recommend phasing the sign implementation. Phase 1 would be selecting neighborhood and business district signs in 2021 and implementing in 2022. Phase 2 would be the parks signs. The Parks & Community Services Department (P&CS) has on its 2023 work plan a comprehensive signage and wayfinding study intended to yield recommendations and an implementation plan. This study timeline could be accelerated into 2022, with implementation following over the next few years. The parks signage plan will build off the work of the current Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces (PROS) Plan update currently underway. New parks signs should serve the specific needs of park signage to convey additional information, such as amenities, hours of operation, and rules. The need to convey this additional information is not necessary for the neighborhood signs. If Council directs staff to explore new design options, CMO staff would work in collaboration with P&CS staff on the development of any new design to best support the future study and implementation for P&CS.

Depending on Council’s preference for the current or a new design, and based on prior feedback from the former Public Works, Parks, and Human Services Council Committee, staff provide two main options for a process to develop a Phase 1 citywide signage plan to replace and install neighborhood signs.

### **Phase 1: Neighborhood Sign Replacement 2021/2022**

#### **Option 1: New Design**

##### **1. Update Inventory**

Conduct an audit of all gateway, neighborhood, and facility signs to update the inventory of location and dimensions. Include in the inventory all other City-owned signs, such as the reader boards signs at some fire stations and the North Kirkland Community Center.

## **2. Identify Sign Design/Fabrication Firm(s)**

Issue a Request for Qualifications for design/fabrication firms to help develop design options for a comprehensive, coherent, and branded signage system and to estimate costs for fabrication and installation.

## **3. Draft Citywide Signage Plan**

Develop a plan for comprehensive signage that incorporates key elements of placemaking for belonging, geographic wayfinding, economic development, and emergency management. The plan would also explore other potential sign types to be included, such as blade street signs for micro-placemaking, business directory signs, and other electronic information signs (for example those provided by the company, [Soofa<sup>1</sup>](#)). The plan would be based on a gap analysis of the current inventory, estimates from an identified sign design firm, and a civic engagement process to collect community input to help guide and content and/or design of the signage system.

## **4. Implement Plan in 2022**

Option 1 Rough Estimate: \$220,000 for signs, \$55,000 for consultant, plus considerable staff time. This estimate multiplies the number of signs times their HDU estimate. If other materials are selected, the cost may be lower.

### **Option 2: Current Design**

#### **1. Update Inventory**

Conduct an audit of all gateway, neighborhood, and facility signs to update the inventory of location, condition, and dimensions.

#### **2. Identify Sign Fabrication Firm**

Issue a Request for Qualifications for fabrication firms to create and install signs.

#### **3. Draft Citywide Signage Plan**

Based on an analysis of an updated inventory, develop a citywide signage plan that provides a prioritized list of signs that fill geographic gaps and replace signs in poor conditions.

#### **4. Implement Plan in 2021/2022**

Option 2 Rough Estimate: \$220,000 for signs, plus modest staff time, using HDU estimates.

### **Option 3: Other Council Direction**

Staff welcome any other direction regarding the City's Neighborhood signs.

### **Phase 2: Parks Sign Replacement 2022/2023**

#### **1. Accelerate comprehensive wayfinding/signage study in 2022.**

#### **2. Implement new signage implementation in 2023 and beyond.**

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff seek direction from the Council on how to proceed with a citywide signage plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Soofa website. <https://soofadigital.com/soofa-sign>