



CITY OF VANCOUVER

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POLICY REPORT URBAN STRUCTURE

Report Date: December 1, 2009
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Meeting Date: January 19, 2010

TO: City Council
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Southeast False Creek: Area 2A - Wayfinding Signage

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the commercial content in the public realm signage proposed for installation on City streets, as outlined in the wayfinding signage application package submitted by Letterbox Design Group on behalf of Millennium Southeast False Creek Properties Ltd. ("Millennium"), be approved for a five year period; and

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be authorized to prepare, execute and deliver on behalf of the City the agreements, including any modifications to agreements, and all other legal documents required to implement the foregoing and that all such legal documentation be on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager of Engineering Services and the Director of Legal Services; and

FURTHER THAT no legal rights or obligations be created or arise unless and until the legal agreements have been executed and delivered by the Director of Legal Services.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Engineering Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

COUNCIL POLICY

Under the Vancouver Charter, the City owns and controls all street allowance and can permit the installation of signs on streets.

The use of streets for the purpose of advertising is not permitted, except with approval from the City Engineer, as referenced by the Street and Traffic Bylaw section 83(2). Council policy requires that Council also approve such advertising.

On July 19, 2005 Council enacted the Southeast False Creek ("SEFC") Official Development Plan and last amended it on September 30, 2008.

PURPOSE

This report recommends the approval of a public realm signage package proposing up to nine wayfinding signs containing commercial content. This signage would be located in the SEFC ODP Area (Figure 1) and would be installed after the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games ("the Games").

BACKGROUND

SEFC was envisioned as a complete community with goods and services to be provided within walking distance of most residents. The SEFC Official Development Plan (ODP) seeks to create a vibrant commercial core and calls for the major portion of the commercial area of the 32.4 ha (80 ac.) mixed-use neighbourhood to be located in Area 2A (Figure 1). This commercial shopping area is an integral part of the SEFC neighbourhood and will include shops and services such as a drug store and liquor store, as well as other retail and service uses located at grade level in buildings fronting Manitoba Street and Salt Street. In addition, the ODP requires that SEFC Area 2A include a grocery store with a minimum floor area of 1,858 m² (20,000 sq. ft.).

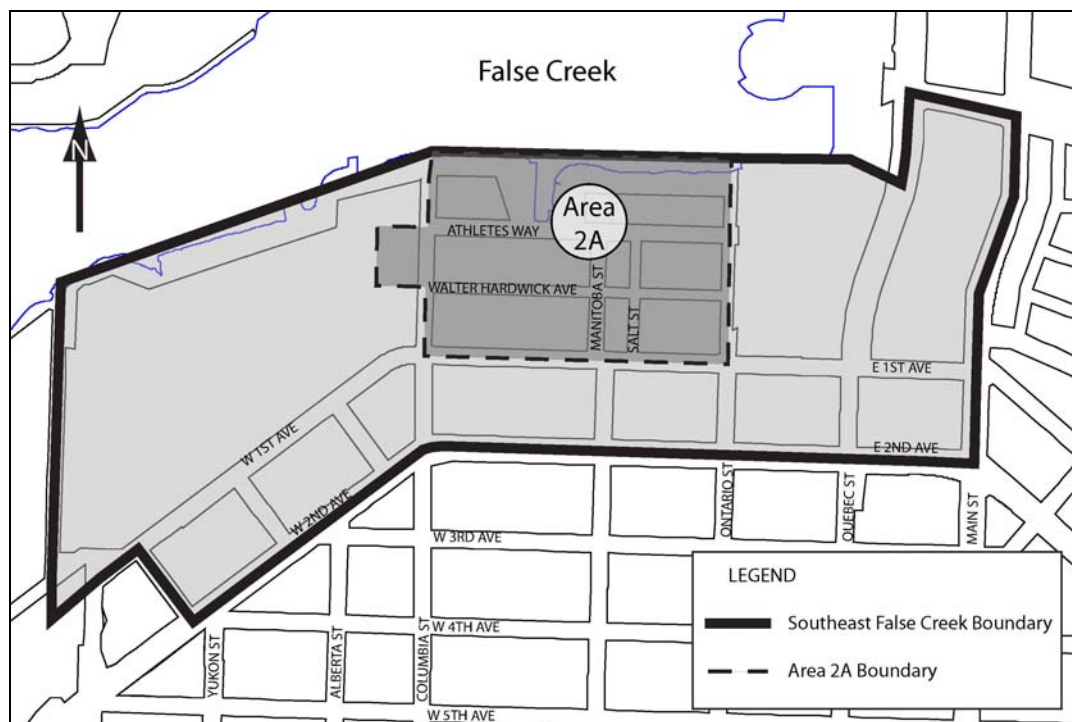


Figure 1 - SEFC ODP Boundary and Area 2A

In March 2006, Millennium was chosen to design and build all the residential and commercial space in SEFC Area 2A in accordance with the ODP. This development is to serve as the Athletes' Village during the Games. After the Games, the neighbourhood shopping area, including the large anchor tenants (grocery store, drug store), will serve the SEFC community of about 12,000 people at build-out.

Although it was always anticipated that the area would develop gradually over many years, the current economic downturn has further delayed the construction of other private developments in SEFC, and only two of the approximately 20 SEFC private lands sites will be developed and occupied by mid-2010. As a result, SEFC will have a smaller-than-expected population base by the time the commercial shopping area opens for business.

Typically, large format grocery and drug stores rely on the neighbouring community for their sales. However, as this area is former industrial land and largely unpopulated, the anchor stores will be in place well before the local population has reached the level needed to sustain a viable commercial core. Therefore, the local shopping area will initially rely heavily on pass-by or visitor shoppers to this area. Furthermore, the commercial centre is internal to the site and not easily visible from the main streets surrounding the development.

To ensure the viability of the commercial core prior to a more complete buildout of the SEFC neighbourhood, Millennium has requested that they be permitted to install wayfinding signs on City streets to direct people to the shopping area and specifically to the two commercial anchors.

The General Manager of Engineering Services has previously approved the installation of wayfinding signs in the public realm that point to major points of civic interest such as the seawall walkway, museums and community centres, as these are acceptable under City policy. Signs indicating “Shopping Area” or “Neighbourhood Centre” would also be acceptable under City policy; however, signage that promotes specific businesses is considered advertising and requires Council approval.

DISCUSSION

1. Overview of the SEFC Signage Proposals

Millennium has requested up to nine public wayfinding signs in the public realm (Figure 2). The public realm in SEFC consists of dedicated streets as well as statutory right of way (SRW) areas on private property where the City has full access rights and can enforce any bylaw as if the SRW areas were dedicated streets. Six of the proposed signs are to be located on dedicated streets and three signs are proposed in SRW areas on the north side of 1st Avenue.

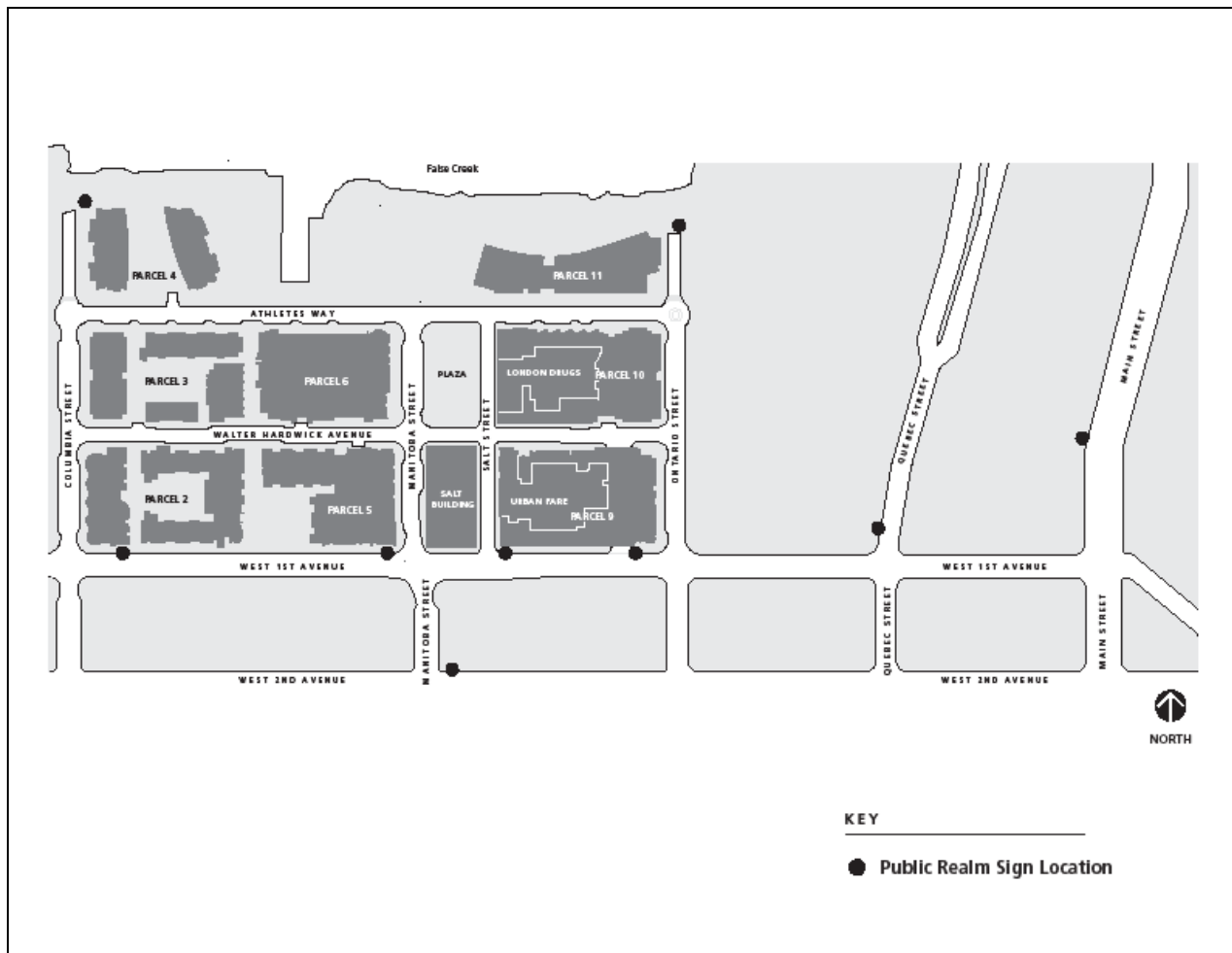


Figure 2

The signs will name the two anchor tenants (anticipated to be Urban Fare and London Drugs), and will direct people to these commercial uses (see graphic in Appendix ‘A’). The signs will also include wayfinding to the general commercial area, and other points of community interest (i.e., the seawall and plaza).

The signs will be solar powered and have internally illuminated letters with LED lights. The signs will have the following proposed approximate dimensions:

- 3.2 m (10.4 ft.) in height;
- 0.8 m (2.5 ft.) in width (at the widest point); and
- 2.4 m² (26 sq. ft.) in area.

2. Rationale for the Signage

Commercial wayfinding signage on streets will attract pass-by vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and will help establish the retail area in this unique situation as follows:

- The commercial centre is an intrinsic part of a comprehensive major mixed-use development project and is necessary to its future sustainability; this centre, including the grocery store is required in the approved ODP. Major tenancies (i.e., the grocery and drug stores) anchor the smaller retail/service uses which are also integral to the commercial area's success;
- The community serving shops will rely on customers from the SEFC community of up to 12,000 people at build-out; however, build-out will occur over an extended time period, and for this reason, the shopping area will initially rely heavily on pass-by or visitor shoppers; and
- The commercial centre is primarily internal to the site around a central plaza. This "hidden commercial area" is a departure from a more typical urban structure with shops located primarily along major arterials.

Although staff recommends the installation of wayfinding signage in the public realm with commercial content in this circumstance, the commercial content should be time limited, as this neighbourhood commercial centre is not intended to be destination retail in the long term. The signage is only to help during the transition of this commercial area to a neighbourhood serving centre once an adequate local retail serving population has been achieved.

Staff does not envisage requests leading to the proliferation of these types of signs throughout the City because the rationale for this proposal is site specific.

Conditions of approval

If Council approves the inclusion of commercial content in the wayfinding signs in the public realm, staff recommends the following terms and conditions, to be secured through a legal agreement(s):

- the commercial content on these signs will be limited to a five year term. At the end of this term, the City will review whether or not there is adequate "build-out" to sustain the commercial precinct and will either renew the term for up to a further five years, or the signs will become the property of the City and the City will have no obligation to either maintain them in place or to continue to allow commercial content;
- up to nine wayfinding signs will be installed, subject to review and approval of specific locations and sign designs by the General Manager of Engineering Services;

- all costs associated with the design and installation of all aspects of the signage, including changes to and the restoration of the public realm are to be borne by Millennium;
- all sign maintenance, including replacement, during the period that the signs contain commercial content is to be undertaken by Millennium;
- Millennium shall bear all risk and liability associated with the signage during the period that the signs contain commercial content; and
- any other terms and conditions to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services and the General Manager of Engineering Services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications to the City if Council approves the installation of wayfinding signs containing commercial content in the public realm as outlined in this report, as all costs related to sign design, manufacturing, installation and maintenance during the period that these signs contain commercial content will be Millennium's responsibility.

In the future, if the City chooses to retain these signs as part of our permanent wayfinding system, staff will at that time request that the appropriate Engineering Services' operating budget be increased to cover ongoing sign maintenance, currently estimated at about \$3,600 a year for nine signs.

CONCLUSION

The SEFC commercial centre is a vital part of the SEFC neighbourhood which will be built out over an extended time period. Although the residential and commercial parcels in SEFC Area 2A will be ready for occupancy shortly after the Games, the balance of the precinct will at that time still be largely undeveloped with a limited population base to support the anchor tenants on the site. Although in the long-term, the commercial centre is to be local serving, during build-out, the commercial uses will rely on pass-by and visitor shoppers, and the proposed signage will help ensure the viability of the SEFC commercial centre in the interim.

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Appendix A

