



Staff Report

Administration – Communications

Report To: COW_Finance_Admin_Fire_Community_Services
Meeting Date: October 28, 2024
Report Number: FAF.24.116
Title: Gateway and Wayfinding Project Introduction
Prepared by: Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.24.116, entitled “Gateway and Wayfinding Project Introduction” for information purposes.

B. Overview

This report provides Council with an overview of the proposed work plan to support the Gateway and Wayfinding Signage project.

C. Background

The refresh and update of the Town’s welcome signs and community entrance signs have been identified as a priority for many years. Several existing welcome and entrance signs are weathered, damaged or missing and scheduled for replacement.

Rather than replacing the signs like-for-like, staff have recommended a refresh/redesign to elevate them to current brand standards and help solidify and strengthen the Town’s presence so that when visitors arrive, it’s clear that they are in the Town of The Blue Mountains. The Economic Development Advisory Committee previously endorsed the approach to updating the design of the signs.

Funding was initially approved through a request of the Economic Development Advisory Committee in 2020/2021. Unfortunately, due to shifting priorities through COVID-19, the redesign work was not started. The funds remained in the Economic Development reserve account until the 2024 Budget when Council approved that the funds be transferred and allocated to support the Gateway and Wayfinding Signage project. The total budget identified in the 2024 Approved Budget is \$45,000.

The goal of this project is to design a uniform sign program that will instill a strong sense of character and identity throughout the Town of The Blue Mountains, establish a clear and identifiable hierarchy of signs, and reduce gaps and omissions in existing Town signage.

D. Analysis

Through the approval of the 2024 Budget, staff issued and awarded a Request-For-Proposal (RFP) 2024-02-P-ADM for the design of Town gateway and various types of community signs. The RFP received three bids that were reviewed by the evaluation team. The RFP was awarded to Fathom Studios as the highest-scoring compliant bidder in accordance with the Town's Purchasing Policy.

Fathom Studios is an award-winning and leading design firm with robust experience working with municipalities throughout Canada. Locally, Fathom Studios has experience working with the RTO7 (Regional Tourism Organization 7) system of wayfinding signs, which is heavily used throughout Bruce, Simcoe, and Grey Counties. They have also designed signs for many neighbouring municipalities, including Collingwood, Owen Sound, Oro-Medonte, Innisfil, and Huron County, and have led projects including the Town of Whitby, Prince Edward County, Chatham-Kent, Peterborough and the Kawarthas, Town of Inuvik, Town of Lunenburg, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Municipality of the District of Guysborough and the Town of Yarmouth.

The RFP included the creation and detailed concept designs for various sign types as described below:

- **Type A: Gateway Signs** - The Gateway Signs will be substantial markers that welcome visitors and residents into the municipal boundary of the Town of The Blue Mountains. These signs will be sited strategically along the Town's boundaries and will be clearly visible/legible for vehicles travelling on higher-speed roads. The Gateway Signs should include options for solar-powered illumination and/or lighting.
- **Type B: Community Entrance Signs** - The Community Entrance Signs will be important markers that welcome visitors and residents into the Town's primary settlement areas of Thornbury, Clarksburg, and Craigeith. These signs will align with the design of the Gateway Signs but will have the flexibility to showcase each community's unique characteristics through complementary design elements. The Community Entrance Signs should include options for solar-powered illumination and/or lighting.
- **Type C: Village/Hamlet Identification Signs** - The Village/Hamlet Identification Signs will welcome visitors and residents into the Town's secondary settlement areas, including, but not limited to, Heathcote, Ravenna, Lora Bay, and Swiss Meadows. Although smaller, these signs will complement the design of the Gateway and Community Entrance signs.
- **Type D: Park Signs** - The Park Signs will identify Town Parks and Beaches and will include the following:
 - D.1 - Park/Beach ID Sign (to be placed at large to medium-sized community parks and/or beaches)
 - D.2 - Parkette Sign (to be placed at small community parkettes)

- **Type E: Trail Signs** - The Trail signs will identify key trail systems throughout the Town and will include the following:
 - E.1 Trailhead Kiosk (to be placed at the head of main trail systems and will include a Trail Map)
 - E.2 Trailhead Markers (to be placed at all trailheads)
 - E.3 Trail Wayfinding / Directional Markers

- **Type F: Community Events / Service Club Recognition Sign** - The Community Events/Service Club Recognition sign will provide recognition for local service clubs using organization logos and will highlight upcoming community events using interchangeable sign panels.

Work Plan

It's important to note that the work awarded as part of the RFP is only for the design of the signs. The fabrication and installation costs will be determined through a future sign location project. In addition, the signs will be created to reflect the Town's unique sense of place and history, to be consistent with the Town's Brand Guidelines (www.thebluemountains.ca/brandguidelines) and will consider both Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ministry of Transportation roadway signage requirements.

Through budget approval, staff time was allocated in Q4 2024 for the Town's Communications Division to lead the project. The anticipated staff time required to complete this project is estimated between 25 – 30 hours.

The work plan includes Fathom Studios collaborating with the Town to host two stakeholder design concept meetings. These meetings will be conducted virtually and will be open to interested residents and stakeholders. Council members will also be interviewed and asked to provide their perspectives on design preferences. Communications staff also plan to attend Committee of Council meetings if there is interest from the Committee to provide input on the designs. Lastly, Communications staff will be meeting with various community groups, business associations and non-for-profit organizations to receive their perspectives. A table with a short design questionnaire will also be placed in the atrium of Town Hall. These meetings and discussions will gather insight into design preferences and inspire and help inform the concept designs.

After the design concept meetings, Fathom Studios will create and present a series of concept designs to Committee of the Whole for feedback and consideration. Two design options for Type A and Type B signs and one option for Types C, D, E and F will be presented. Following feedback from Committee of the Whole, the Consultant will complete design revisions and/or adjustments to the preferred design, which will then be formally presented to Council for approval.

Staff have already created an inventory of existing signs and has prepared an overview of sign types, which is included as Attachment 1 to this report.

As this project progresses, staff will develop a multi-phase fabrication and implementation plan. The implementation plan will be informed by the ongoing work related to the Town's Tourism Strategy and the Parks and Trails Master Plan that is scheduled for 2025.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders.

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

No environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

G. Financial Impacts

Costs associated with the project's design phase were approved in the 2024 Town Budget as funded through the Economic Development Reserve.

The fabrication and installation of signs may be funded through various sources including taxation, the Town's portion of Municipal Accommodation Tax or department-specific reserves, such as Parks and Trails. Future costs associated with sign fabrication and installation will be presented to Council through the annual budget process.

H. In Consultation With

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

Monica Quinlan, Director of Corporate and Financial Services/Treasurer

Senior Management Team

Service Area Managers

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications & Economic Development communications@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. Preliminary Sign Inventory Map and Sign Types

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Hendry
Manager of Communications & Economic Development

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FAF.24.116 Gateway and Wayfinding Project Introduction.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-Preliminary-Sign-Inventory-Map-and-Sign-Types.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 9, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tim Hendry - Oct 8, 2024 - 9:15 PM

Shawn Everitt - Oct 9, 2024 - 7:10 AM