

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2022**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 9

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION SIGNAGE PROGRAM IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY (DISTRICT: 5)

OVERVIEW

On October 5, 2021 (12), the San Diego County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to develop a community identification signage program for the Fifth District and return to the Board with options for approval.

Decorative community identification signs are typically ground-mounted, or span across a main street and are found in the public right-of-way. These signs identify the name of a community at the primary or gateway entrances and express a community's sense of identity. These decorative signs provide communities an opportunity to build character around residential and commercial development and share the history of the area through symbolic elements. These signs also welcome visitors. To date, there are no ground-mounted or street spanning decorative community identification signs in any of the Fifth District communities, which include three community planning areas (Fallbrook, Rainbow, and Valley Center) and six community sponsor areas (Bonsall, Borrego Springs, Hidden Meadows, Pala/Pauma, Palomar Mountain, and Twin Oaks Valley).

There are currently two established programs for unincorporated communities that may want to display community pride through signage in the public right-of-way along County-maintained roads. The first program, Community Identity Signs (Green Signs), created by the Department of Public Works (DPW) on May 1, 1998, allows communities to request small ground-mounted green signs with white lettering, which include the name of each community, the population, and the elevation. These signs are located within the public right of way, do not require a permit, mark the community boundaries, and are used by motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists as directional guides. These green signs are available at no cost to communities and are maintained and installed by DPW.

The second program, Decorative Community Identification Signage, was approved by the Board on January 29, 2014 (7). This program includes formal guidelines for the installation of larger, decorative street-spanning or ground-mounted community signs and banners along County-maintained roads. The Decorative Community Identification Signage Program is an applicant-driven process, where stakeholders are responsible for all costs related to planning, permitting, design, installation, and maintenance along with all associated County review and enforcement costs. The total cost to the applicant ranges from approximately \$75,000 to \$245,000 per sign, depending on design, width, and structural features.

On October 5, 2021 (12), Supervisor Desmond allocated Neighborhood Reinvestment Funds to DPW and Planning and Development Services (PDS) to fund staff efforts to develop potential alternative options for decorative community identification signs for unincorporated communities in the Fifth District. In response to the direction, staff conducted public outreach efforts in fall 2021 to Community

Planning and Sponsor Groups (CPSGs) in the Fifth District. The CPSGs expressed a desire for an option where the applicants, specifically community groups, would take the lead in developing the architectural concept for a sign. The Board office, alongside County staff, would then facilitate the community's architectural concept through design, construction, and maintenance. Similar to the current applicant-driven process, this alternative option would also require an appropriate funding source(s) identified by the Board, for all costs related to the pre-consultation, preliminary design and engineering, environmental review, construction, and ongoing maintenance activities for each community identification sign project that County staff would facilitate. It is estimated that it would cost the County approximately \$165,000 to \$590,000 per sign to implement the staff facilitated option, not including annual maintenance costs.

Today staff are presenting options for permitting and constructing decorative community identification signs, using the feedback provided by the Fifth District communities, for the Board's consideration and direction: option 3A) maintain the existing applicant-driven Decorative Community Identification Signage Program; option 3B) maintain the existing Decorative Community Identification Signage Program, and direct staff to return to the Board in [180] days to establish the ordinance to implement a Board-approved waiver of all County permit fees to make the existing applicant-driven process more affordable for the community; option 3C) Approve a new County staff facilitated option for decorative community identification signs in which an applicant(s) would work with County staff, the Community Planning or Sponsor Group for the community in which the proposed sign is located, and the Board office to develop an architectural concept and layout and identify project funding.

Although the original Board direction from October 5, 2021, was to only develop options in addition to the existing community identification sign program for the communities of the Fifth District (4A), the Board could direct staff to offer the additional options to all unincorporated communities (4B). If approved, a Board office would need to docket a Board letter requesting approval for use of County General Funds for sign options 3A and 3B as described above. No funding for the permitting or construction of any signs is included with today's action.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Find that the Negative Declaration (ND) for the Community Signs and Banners in the Public Right-of-Way - Zoning Ordinance and County Code Amendments, on file with the Department of Public Works (DPW), dated October 28, 2013, State Clearinghouse No. 2013071003, was adopted in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) on January 29, 2014, and that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information contained therein, prior to approving the project; and:

Find that there are no substantial changes in the project or in the circumstances under which it is undertaken which involve significant new environmental impacts that were not considered in the previously adopted ND, dated October 28, 2013, and that no new information of substantial importance, such as a new significant effect, has become available since the ND was adopted.

2. This recommendation maintains the existing Community Identity Sign (Green Sign) Program with no changes for all unincorporated communities. DPW will continue to fund new sign requests at a cost of approximately \$800 per new sign and will continue to maintain the existing 90 Green signs through DPW's annual Road Fund budget.

3. Select one or more of the following options for the Decorative Community Identification Signage Program:

Option A: No changes to the existing applicant funded Decorative Community Identification Signage Program: the total cost to the applicant per sign is approximately \$75,000-\$245,000.

Option B: Develop a fee waiver for the existing Decorative Community Identification Signage Program, in which the Board of Supervisors (Board) would waive Policy B-29 to allow for an applicant's pre-consultation and permit application fees to be waived, at a cost to the County of approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000 per sign. Direct staff to return to the Board within 180 days to present an ordinance for consideration to implement the fee waiver and establish appropriations to offset the fee waiver.

Option C: Approve a new County of San Diego staff facilitated Decorative Community Identification Signage Program at a cost of approximately \$165,000 to \$590,000 per sign. The cost of each sign will be based on design, width, and structural elements. Funding for each sign would require separate approval by the Board at the point at which a community is ready to move forward to design with a sign concept.

4. If option 3B and/or 3C is selected above, then select a geographic area for which the decorative community identification signage program option(s) applies:

Option A: District 5 unincorporated communities only (as directed by the Board on October 5, 2021).

Option B: All unincorporated communities in San Diego County. This option requires DPW to conduct additional outreach to unincorporated communities located outside District 5 to provide information about the new decorative community signage program option(s) selected by the Board.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Both the Green Signs and Decorative Community Identification Signage Program support community character and promote a sense of identity in the unincorporated area.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Operational Plan in the Department of Public Works (DPW), General Fund, or Planning & Development Services (PDS) Department.

Costs vary per option selected. The cost of each sign will be based on design, width, and structural elements.

Recommendation 2:

Maintain the existing Green Sign Program for all unincorporated communities at no additional costs to the County of San Diego (County). DPW will continue to fund Green Sign requests at a cost of approximately \$800 per new sign and will continue to maintain the existing 90 Green Signs through DPW's annual Road Fund budget. Funds for this option are included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Operational Plan for DPW.

Recommendation 3:

Option 3A: Maintain the existing applicant funded Decorative Community Identification Signage Program for all unincorporated communities. The total cost to the applicant per sign is approximately \$75,000-\$245,000. Funds for this option would be paid by the applicant.

Option 3B: Develop a fee waiver for the existing Decorative Community Identification Signage Program to allow for a waiver of the County pre-consultation and permit application fees for community identification signage. The cost to the County will range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per community sign, depending on the signage design and individual permitting requirements for that location. Funding for the fee waivers would need to be identified and approved by the Board. If directed, DPW and PDS would return to the Board with an ordinance for consideration to implement the fee waiver and to establish appropriations to offset the fee waiver.

Option 3C: Approve a new Decorative Community Identification Signage Program option where County staff facilitate each sign installation project, including maintenance. In order to install a new community identification sign, DPW anticipates three stages in which County staff will be involved in order to implement the program: pre-consultation, preliminary design and engineering, and final design, construction, and maintenance. The total approximate cost per sign is \$165,000 to \$590,000, as the cost of each sign will be based on design, width, and structural elements. Further details are provided in the background section. Funding for each sign will need to be identified and approved by the Board in a separate action. As with all County construction projects, each sign project will adhere to prevailing wage requirements. Regarding long-term sign maintenance costs, DPW anticipates ongoing annual maintenance costs will range from approximately \$500 to \$5,000 per installed sign, outside of any unplanned major repairs due to damage.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

Several unincorporated communities in the Fifth District expressed a desire to the Board of Supervisors to create and place decorative community identification signs in the County of San Diego public right-of-way. These signs identify and distinguish communities to visitors and residents and establish a greater sense of place and character. Without sacrificing road safety, signs could also provide information to visitors about points of interest, commercial districts, and community events. Economic development was at the core of these requests to direct visitors to local shops and businesses.

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Desmond, seconded by Supervisor Vargas, the Board of Supervisors took the following actions:

1. Found that the Negative Declaration (ND) for the Community Signs and Banners in the Public Right-of-Way - Zoning Ordinance and County Code Amendments, on file with the Department of Public Works (DPW), dated October 28, 2013, State Clearinghouse No. 2013071003, was adopted in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) on January 29, 2014, and that the decision-making body has reviewed and considered the information contained therein, prior to approving the project; and:

Found that there are no substantial changes in the project or in the circumstances under which it is undertaken which involve significant new environmental impacts that were not considered in the previously adopted ND, dated October 28, 2013, and that no new information of substantial importance, such as a new significant effect, has become available since the ND was adopted.

2. This recommendation maintains the existing Community Identity Sign (Green Sign) Program with no changes for all unincorporated communities. DPW will continue to fund new sign requests at a cost of approximately \$800 per new sign and will continue to maintain the existing 90 Green signs through DPW's annual Road Fund budget.

3. Selected the following options for the Decorative Community Identification Signage Program:

Option B: Develop a fee waiver for the existing Decorative Community Identification Signage Program, in which the Board of Supervisors (Board) would waive Policy B-29 to allow for an applicant's pre-consultation and permit application fees to be waived, at a cost to the County of approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000 per sign. Direct staff to return to the Board within 180 days to present an ordinance for consideration to implement the fee waiver and establish appropriations to offset the fee waiver.

4. Selected a geographic area for which the Decorative Community Identification Signage Program option(s) applies:

Option B: All unincorporated communities in San Diego County. This option requires DPW to conduct additional outreach to unincorporated communities located outside District 5 to provide information about the new decorative community signage program option(s) selected by the Board.

5. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to engage additional community groups and return to the Board as soon as possible with a series of options on how the Board can structure the County of San Diego staff facilitated Decorative Community Identification Signage Program in a way that is predictable and reliable for the community.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Fletcher, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter

