



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: May 19, 2020

SUBJECT: Subdivision Entrance Features
PREPARED BY: Stephen Dearborn, Technical Coordinator, ext. 4551
REVIEWED BY: Alice Lam, Sr. Manager, Roads, Survey & Utility, ext. 2748

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report titled “Subdivision Entrance Features” be received; and,
2. That the presentation titled “Subdivision Entrance Features” be received; and,
3. That subdivision entrance features that diminish public safety, or are at the end of their service life be removed as outlined in this report; and further,
4. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an inventory of the City of Markham’s existing subdivision entrance features,
- identify condition, operating and life cycle costs, and future servicing impacts of existing subdivision entrance features,
- identify community sentiments regarding entrance features as obtained through “Your Voice Markham” survey of Markham residents, and
- recommend next steps for the future programs.

BACKGROUND

Entrance Features Defined

Entrance features were a popular design element used to differentiate new subdivisions, often used as way-finding markers, or to reflect a developer’s vision. Many were constructed on private lots that were marketed as being upgraded “entrance properties” or “corner lots”. Property owners with entrance features located on their lot are often not aware that they are responsible for the maintenance of these features and any associated costs. Over the past couple years, the Development Services, Urban Design group has discouraged new developments from constructing new entrance features, opting instead for landscaping and natural materials.

Defining communities within Markham

As intensification and development progresses, the need to differentiate individual subdivisions has diminished. Identification of the larger communities that make up the fabric of Markham is considered of greater value. Options are outlined within the Markham Gateway Strategy to achieve this outcome through community gateway features. Gateways create a sense of identity for our community, announce arrival into our City or sometimes highlight special areas and help to develop an overall sense of place.

City of Markham's entrance feature inventory

In 2017, the City of Markham retained a consultant to inventory the known locations of community entrance feature structures at various sites throughout the municipality.

The consultant visited each location and collected the following information:

1. Material type: concrete, brick, stone, wood, metal, other
2. Maximum height, length and width
3. Replacement value
4. Condition assessment

City staff reviewed the consultant's findings and conducted an internal analysis to determine which locations were in need of repair.

Subsequent to the 2017 consultant inventory, the Operations department discovered an additional 46 previously built entrance features within the City that the consultant missed in the inventory study. Condition rating and replacement values have not yet been determined for these 46 features. Of the 331 entrance features identified; 144 are within public (City-owned) property, 170 are on private property and 17 are of uncertain ownership and will require a land survey to determine ownership.

Entrance Features Inventoried in 2017								
Est. Remaining Useful Life (years)	TOTAL		On City-owned Land		On Private Lands		Uncertain	
	No. of Locations	Replacement Value	No. of Locations	Replacement Value	No. of Locations	Replacement Value	No. of Locations	Replacement Value
0	3	\$ 74,200	2	\$ 39,200	1	\$ 35,000	0	\$ 0
1-5	30	\$ 1,071,800	11	\$ 206,200	16	\$ 745,600	3	\$ 120,000
6-10	50	\$ 1,917,500	27	\$ 692,800	22	\$ 1,157,500	1	\$ 67,200
11-15	114	\$ 5,432,800	45	\$ 1,399,400	59	\$ 3,471,400	10	\$ 562,000
16-20	80	\$ 2,860,900	40	\$ 1,382,900	38	\$ 1,416,000	2	\$ 62,000
21-25	8	\$ 332,000	5	\$ 279,000	3	\$ 53,000	0	\$ 0
	285	\$11,689,200	130	\$ 3,999,500	139	\$ 6,878,500	16	\$ 811,200
Entrance Features Discovered after 2017 Inventory Study								
	46	n/a	14	n/a	31	n/a	1	n/a
TOTAL	331		144		170		17	

A map illustrating the locations of all subdivision entrance features is attached as Appendix “A”.

Your Voice Markham Survey

During March and April of 2019, the Operations Department conducted an online survey using the Your Voice Markham platform. Out of 188 visitors to the survey page, 41 participants answered a series of six questions related to the subdivision entrance features. The online survey questions and results are attached as Appendix “B”.

In regards to funding for entrance feature maintenance and replacement, 56% of the respondents would not like to see a property tax increase, 32% would pay \$0 to \$10 tax increase, 7% would pay \$10 to \$20 tax increase and 5% would pay \$20 to \$30 tax increase.

Slightly more than half of the respondents were not aware that their subdivision had an entrance feature. Either they did not have one or it was not something that they noticed or paid much attention to. 51% of respondents felt that an entrance feature is something that their subdivision needs; while 34% feel that their subdivision does not need an entrance feature. 27% of those who participated were satisfied with the visual appearance of their subdivision’s entrance feature, and 37% were dissatisfied with the appearance. 61% would like to see entrance features replaced and 39% would like to see them removed.

At the end of the survey, staff enquired which, from a list of four standardized replacement options, would be their preference. The majority of residents chose removal of the existing feature and replacing the area with surrounding material, or replacing the existing feature with standardized signage.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Recommendation for Existing Features

The wide variety of material types and sizes result in entrance feature replacement values ranging from \$1,000 to \$180,000 with an average of \$30,765 per location. With a projection of 144 public locations requiring replacement in the next 25 years, total replacement costs are estimated to be \$4,430,160 (144 x \$30,765). Entrance features on private property have not been considered for replacement by the City.

Despite the majority of survey respondents stating they would like to see the entrance features replaced, staff are recommending the following two options when existing features have reached the end of their functional life.

A) Repair damaged entrance features

Extend the functional life of entrance features in a state of good repair, through minor scheduled maintenance wherever it is cost effective (e.g., the required repair is less than the cost to remove), as implemented through the Life Cycle Reserve Study.

B) Remove damaged or hazardous entrance features

For entrance features that have been damaged through a collision, or have become a public safety hazard due to deterioration or are obstructing traffic sight lines:

- i. If located within a municipal or regional road allowance, then the City will remove the entrance feature and restore surfaces to match the surrounding area. Or;
- ii. If located on a private residential property, then the City will offer to remove the entrance feature at the City's expense and restore the area with sod. The City would not replace fencing or engage in other property improvements. This offer would not be extended to property types other than residential. Entrance features that are on commercial or condo properties would not be eligible for this option and are the responsibility of the property owner.

See Appendix "C" for photographs of entrance features with their condition ratings and examples of damaged features.

Recommendation for Future Development

The Development Services, Urban Design group has discouraged new developments from constructing entrance features in the past couple years, opting instead for landscaping and natural materials. The future vision for entrance features will be aligned with the City's Gateway Master Plan, with the focus on community identity instead of at the subdivision level.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 2018, the entrance features were added to the City's Life Cycle Reserve Study based on the consultant's report. During 2018 and 2019, the City of Markham has conducted repairs and removals at certain locations through capital and emergency budgets. There is currently \$6.4M in the Life Cycle Reserve Study allocated over the next 25 years for entrance feature rehabilitation and replacement.

The recommended removal and site restoration work is estimated to cost \$2.6M for all 331 public and private/unknown locations over the next 25 years. Removal, rather than repair and replacement of entrance features, will further result in a diminishing asset inventory and subsequently reduce the annual expenditure for lifecycle requirements moving forward. The reduction from \$6.4M to \$2.6M will be updated in the 2020 Life Cycle Reserve Study. There is no incremental operating budget impact.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Subdivision Entrance Feature Program is aligned with our objectives to provide better quality services to the public and is consistent with “Building Markham’s Future Together” strategic plan’s goal of a *Safe, Sustainable and Complete Community, and Stewardship of Money and Resources*.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED

The Finance and Urban Design Departments were consulted and their comments incorporated in this report.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Morgan Jones
Director of Operations

Brenda Librecz
Commissioner, Fire & Community
Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix ‘A’ – City-Wide Entrance Feature Map
Appendix ‘B’ – Your Voice Markham Online Survey Results
Appendix ‘C’ – Entrance Feature Photograph