

TO: MAYOR & COUNCILLORS
FROM: DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE
SUBJECT: LANDMARK BURNABY SIGN
PURPOSE: To provide Council with an update on the Landmark Burnaby Sign initiative following Council's previous direction.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the staff be authorized to proceed with Option B, as outlined in the report titled "Landmark Burnaby Sign" dated February 24, 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2025, Council directed staff to work with Tourism Burnaby to explore the idea of a landmark "City of Burnaby" sign to celebrate Burnaby's identity, promote tourism, and create a memorable feature for residents and visitors. Since then, Tourism Burnaby has advised that it is unable to financially support the project, and no grants are currently available to fund the project. As a result, staff recommend that the initiative not be advanced at this time, though it can be revisited should future partnership or funding opportunities emerge.

Although a permanent landmark sign is challenging to deliver currently, staff continue to explore approaches to support civic identity. Council may choose to defer the landmark sign until external funding or partnership opportunities arise or proceed with a living City of Burnaby logo planting at the northwest corner of Central Park that can be delivered within the existing horticulture operating budget (recommended). Should Council look to advance the permanent landmark sign the most recent cost estimate is approximately \$600,000. This project was not included in the 2026-2030 Financial Plan and would require reprioritizing initiatives that are currently supported by operating reserves (i.e., Stabilization/Surplus reserve, Gaming Reserve, etc.) or drawing additional funding from these reserves. As these operating reserves are under pressure to maintain minimum balances as required by Council policy and/or are supporting significant recurring programs, staff are recommending a living logo planting as an alternative that can be accommodated within existing operating budgets.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

This initiative aligns with Council-adopted policies and strategies including the *Burnaby Economic Development Strategy (2007)*, *Burnaby Strategic Plan (2022)*, *Benefits-Based Approach (2024)*, and *Official Community Plan (2025)*.

2.0 BACKGROUND

On January 14, 2025, Council considered a Notice of Motion that directed staff to investigate and report back on potential opportunities, locations, and associated costs for installing a landmark “City of Burnaby” sign, with consideration for its impact on tourism, community identity, and public space enhancement. The intent of this motion was to explore how a landmark Burnaby sign could help promote the City’s image, attract visitors, and create a strong sense of place, like landmark signs in other cities such as Nanaimo, Toronto, and Vancouver.

When staff reported back in May 2025, three main delivery options were presented:

- Option 1: Treat the sign as a piece of public art, created by an artist or through rotating designs.
- Option 2 (Recommended): Develop the sign as a tourism-focused feature, in partnership with Tourism Burnaby.
- Option 3: Include the project in a future operating budget request.

Council endorsed Option 2, which reflects one of the most common approaches used by other municipalities. Following that direction, staff began discussions with Tourism Burnaby to identify sign locations and explore a potential project delivery partnership, including the idea that Tourism Burnaby could commission the sign and later gift or sell it to the City at a nominal cost. While Tourism Burnaby expressed early interest, it has since been confirmed that it is unable to fund or advance the project at this time.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Since last report in May, staff have further refined the estimated cost for a landmark Burnaby sign and confirmed a required budget of \$600,000. Because the sign would not qualify as a capital asset, as per Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) standards as a public art feature, it would need to be funded through the City’s operating budget along with additional annual costs for maintenance, lighting, and repairs.

Staff have also assessed several potential locations, mostly in parks, which could accommodate a landmark sign, focusing on sites with good visibility, pedestrian access, and alignment with the City’s tourism goals (Attachment 1).

Following Tourism Burnaby’s clarification about their inability to support the initiative, and with no other grant or external funding currently available, staff are unable to advance the project currently as it is not in the 2026-2030 Financial Plan.

However, Council could consider the following **options** for next steps:

1. **Option A: Defer the project until external funding or a partnership opportunity arises.** This option would allow the City to revisit the initiative in the future without impacting on current operating priorities.

- 2. **Option B: Living logo planting as an alternative (recommended).** Proceed with an alternative planting logo that can be delivered within the existing horticulture operating budget. Staff have identified an opportunity to create a natural Burnaby logo within the existing flower bed at the northwest corner of Central Park, located at the intersection of Boundary Road and Kingsway (see Attachment 2 and 3). This approach would reinforce civic identity in a flexible, scalable, and financially responsible manner. The site also functions as a key gateway into the city, making it a great location to highlight civic pride.

- 3. **Option C: Pursue the permanent landmark sign through reprioritizing operating reserve supported initiatives or draw on additional operating reserve funding.** Should Council wish to advance the project independently of external funding or partnership opportunities, staff would need to consider reprioritizing existing approved items that approved and supported by operating reserves (i.e., Stabilization/Surplus Reserves, Gaming, etc.). These operating reserves are under pressure to maintain minimum balances as required by Council policy and/or are supporting significant recurring programs, including significant civic events. Based on recent community engagement, particularly through the PRC Plan, this initiative has not been noted as a high priority for community users, therefore staff would not recommend reprioritizing other initiatives at this time.

Although the landmark sign project is not recommended to be advanced at this time, staff remain focused on initiatives that strengthen Burnaby’s civic pride, promote tourism, and enhance public spaces in keeping with Council’s strategic direction. Proceeding with the recommended option of a living logo would provide a financially sustainable option to highlight civic pride, while enabling staff to continue monitoring for grant and other partnership options in the future. Staff would report back to Council should funding options change.

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

If Council wishes to revisit the idea of a landmark Burnaby sign, strong communication and community involvement will be key to the project’s success. A thoughtful engagement process would help ensure that the design, location, and message of the sign reflect Burnaby’s diverse community and align with its civic values.

Public engagement could include input from residents, local artists, cultural groups, business organizations, and Burnaby’s host Nations. Their perspectives would help shape a sign that not only promotes tourism but also celebrates community identity and pride.

In the meantime, staff will continue to communicate Burnaby’s brand and civic story through many initiatives, including digital marketing, public art, and community events. These ongoing efforts will help keep the City’s image visible and positive while remaining cost-effective and community focused.

5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The estimated cost for a landmark Burnaby sign remains approximately \$600,000, depending on design, materials, lighting, and site requirements.

As per Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) standards, this sign is not considered to meet the criteria for being a Tangible Capital Asset (TCA) as it is not held for ongoing service delivery, operational capacity, or maintenance of other City TCAs. This landmark sign is developed primarily for aesthetic purposes, and as such more closely resembles a work of art/historical treasure (i.e., public art), which are not recognized as TCAs because a reasonable estimate of their future benefits cannot be made. Accordingly, it would need to be funded through the City’s operating budget/reserves rather than capital reserves funds. Furthermore, additional operating funds would also be required to support annual maintenance, cleaning, power, and repairs. While no funding is currently available to support this project, staff will continue to look for grants and/or partnership opportunities as they arise.

Given the estimated cost of approximately \$600,000 and the absence of external funding or partnership support, staff recommend proceeding with a living logo as described above. Council may alternatively choose to advance the project by reprioritizing existing initiatives/programs supported by operating reserves that have been approved as part of the 2026 – 2030 Financial Plan. Should Council direct staff to proceed under either option, the project would be advance to a design and engagement phase, with additional planning anticipated in 2026 and an overall project timeline of 10 to 18 months to design, engage on, and deliver. A subsequent report to Council would be brought forward to confirm preferred locations, design concepts, and cost implications, informed by input from the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee. As a lower-cost alternative, a living City of Burnaby logo planting could be delivered within the existing horticulture operating budget and implemented in 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Carmen Gonzalez, Deputy General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Preliminary Landmark Sign Potential Locations.
- Attachment 2 – Living City of Burnaby Logo Location.
- Attachment 3 – Living Logo Precedent Images.

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This was prepared by Andre Isakov, Director, PRC Planning; and reviewed by Emmaline Hill, Director, Culture; Brad Domas, Director, Parks; and Ratan Grewal, Deputy General Manager, Finance.