

Signage Strategy

2016



Document

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1. Background

Council adopted a Signage Strategy in 2008 following public consultation. The Strategy was initially developed in order to address a lack of consistency in the signage at various community facilities. The Strategy aimed to identify the different purposes for which signs are required and to develop guidelines that would enable Council to present a consistent, professional and recognizable face to the public in parks and public spaces. The Strategy included branding and design guidelines and introduced a signage hierarchy. The hierarchy included Site Identification, Information, Directional, Safety/Warning, and Interpretation signs. The design guidelines for this hierarchy were generic rather than specific to different types of site (such as parks, libraries or swimming pools for example).

The need to review the Signage Strategy was identified during the compilation of the 2015-25 activity management plans for Council's parks and facilities.

The review was proposed in order to respond to:

- technological developments
- increased financial pressure on local authorities and community groups
- increased partnerships between council, community groups and other agencies
- changing sport and recreation trends
- greater cultural awareness and expectations
- significant commemorative events
- practical issues that were either not addressed in the original strategy or that need clarification.

The review presented an opportunity to separate out the strategic approach to signage from the more technical, practical elements discussed in the 2008 strategy into two separate but related documents.

On 2 December 2015, Council resolved to initiate a review of the Signage Strategy. It was decided to separate the strategic and technical elements into a Signage Strategy and a Signage Policy (in the form of a Signage Manual).

A clearer distinction between the strategy and policy elements will make it easier to find and interpret the information. It will also make it easier and faster for minor updates to be made to the technical and practical parts of the policy in response to changing circumstances without the need to go through the lengthier and more formal approval process associated with amending a strategy.

2. Strategic context

2.1 The role of the Signage Strategy

The **Signage Strategy**:

- Describes Council's long term vision for signage at Council's
 - parks and open spaces
 - community facilities and buildings
- Uses objectives and key actions to provide the roadmap for how the vision will be achieved.

The **Signage Manual** is:

- A set of guiding principles and rules used to make decisions
- reflects agreed practices that align with the Signage Strategy
- reflects the strategic direction provided by the Signage Strategy.

The Signage Manual provides detailed, technical and practical guidelines and rules to ensure that signage at Council's parks and facilities align with the Signage Strategy as well as District Plan requirements.

2.2 Scope

The Strategy applies to signage at:

- parks and open spaces; and
- community facilities and buildings

that are managed or operated by Council.

The Strategy does not apply to:

- Road signs that fall within the scope of the Manual of Traffic Signage and Markings (MOTSAM)
- signage that has been allowed by resource consent granted under the Resource Management Act 1991
- existing signage that was installed in accordance with the provisions of the previous Signage Strategy and which is still deemed to be fit-for-purpose.

2.3 Other regulatory documents

The District Plan regulates some aspects of signage. The District Plan includes rules about the types, quantities, and sizes of signs that are allowed within the various zones. It also controls the letter heights of some types of signage. If proposed signage falls outside the rules of the District Plan resource consent may be required or the design may need to be altered.

The Public Safety Bylaw 2014 also contains clauses affecting certain types of signage.

The Signage Manual that supports the implementation of the Signage Strategy is intended to assist staff by providing processes, guidelines and rules that should ensure compliance with the District Plan and Bylaws.

3. Vision

Our vision is a network of signage at our parks and facilities that meets the needs of locals and visitors.

4. Objectives

1. Signage that conveys a consistent, professional and recognisable image
2. Signage that effectively conveys appropriate information
3. Signage that is cost-effective and fit for purpose
4. Signage that reflects the community and its environment
5. Signage that acknowledges significant contributions by community groups and agencies where appropriate
6. Signage that is responsive to new technology and changing community needs

The objectives are discussed in more detail in the Strategy Implementation section. Key actions have also been identified to assist in achieving each of the objectives.

5. Strategy implementation

5.1 A consistent, professional, recognisable, image

Presenting a consistent, professional and recognisable image helps identify sites that are managed by Council and shows that they are part of a larger network. The use of standardized designs, where appropriate and practicable, can also help reduce signage costs.

Key Actions:

- a) A management policy (in the format of a Signage Manual) shall be developed containing rules and guidelines to ensure that signage implemented at Council parks and facilities will comply with the Signage Strategy.
- b) The Signage Manual rules and guidelines shall apply to all new signage from the date that the document is approved by Council's Executive Team.
- c) A standard operating procedure for the design and approval of proposed signage will be developed.
- d) A standard operating procedure will be developed to ensure that signs are maintained to appropriate standards.

5.2 Effectively conveys appropriate information

Signs are generally needed to identify places, provide route guidance, provide information, or regulate activities. Care should be taken to ensure that signs are effective in conveying appropriate information and reflect the purpose of the sign. Unnecessary duplication and proliferation of signage should be avoided through good sign design and implementation.

Key Actions:

- a) The Signage Manual will contain guidelines and/or rules that help to ensure that signage implemented at Council parks and facilities convey the appropriate type and level of information to the public.
- b) Council officers may from time to time conduct audits, surveys, or otherwise seek feedback about the effectiveness of signage at our parks and facilities.
- c) A standard operating procedure for the design and approval of proposed signage will be developed.

5.3 Cost-effective and fit for purpose

The Local Government Act 2002 requires local authorities to provide infrastructure and services in a way that is cost effective for households and businesses.

It is recognised that insisting on best practice can be expensive to ratepayers and is not necessarily always the most suitable or cost-effective option. At the other extreme, the cheapest option in the short term may not necessarily be the most cost-effective option in the long run.

In the past our Signage Strategy specified a very high standard of materials for the manufacture of signs. This meant that the manufacturing cost was high and we could often only afford to install a relatively small number of signs each year. Due to technological advances there are now more materials and methods available. Some of these materials are much cheaper and can be as effective or almost as effective as the more expensive options.

When considering whether signage is cost-effective, the installation required, the longevity and the replacement cost of the signs should be considered as well, not just the initial manufacturing cost.

We manage a diverse portfolio of parks and facilities. Some are maintained to a higher standard than others. premier parks, such as Te Aroha Domain or Firth Tower Reserve, for example, are maintained to a higher standard than amenity parks or linkage parks are. Some parks and facilities also have greater demands placed on them due to higher levels of use. A “one-size-fits-all” approach is therefore not appropriate. We acknowledge that a higher standard of material and manufacture may be appropriate in some locations such as our higher profile premier parks.

The condition of signs should be monitored and the signs maintained to an appropriate standard. Signs should be refurbished or replaced when they are no longer fit-for-purpose.

Key Actions:

- a) The Signage Manual will contain guidelines and/or rules about what materials are considered appropriate for the manufacture of various types of signs.
- b) The Signage Manual will contain guidelines and/or rules about what types of signage are appropriate for different types or categories of parks or facilities.
- c) The Signage Manual will contain guidelines on factors to consider to ensure that signage projects are cost-effective.
- d) The Signage Manual is to be reviewed from time to time to take into account technological developments such as new materials and methods that may offer more cost-effective signage solutions. Feedback may be sought from the signwriting sector.
- e) Council officers may from time to time conduct audits, surveys, or otherwise seek feedback to monitor whether our signage is fit-for-purpose.

- f) Signs should be refurbished or replaced if they are no longer fit-for-purpose due to wear and tear or vandalism.
- g) If there is no longer a need for a particular sign due to changed circumstances it may be removed and need not be replaced.

5.4 Reflecting the community and its environment

Signage should reflect the community that it serves and be appropriate to the environment in which it is located.

Community expectations about signage in general have been incorporated into regulatory documents such as the District Plan and the bylaws following public consultation. In general, these documents favour a minimalist approach to signage in rural and residential areas with more extensive signage allowed in commercial areas. The public was also consulted prior to the adoption of the Signage Strategy 2008 which mainly focused on establishing consistent branding. The revised strategy does not fundamentally depart from the branding style of the 2008 document. Discussions with Te Manuwhenua Forum indicated that the Forum favours bilingual signage (in English and Te Reo Māori) at high profile sites and sites of particular cultural significance to Māori.

Key Actions:

- a) The Signage Manual will include guidelines and/or rules to ensure that signage is appropriate to the type of site. These may incorporate or make reference to site-specific rules contained within reserve management plans approved under the Reserves Act 1977 where appropriate.
- b) The Signage Manual will include rules to ensure that signage meets District Plan and bylaw requirements.
- c) The Signage Manual will include guidelines and/or rules for interpretative signage to convey historical, ecological and cultural information about our places and people.
- d) The Signage Manual will include guidelines and/or rules for bilingual signage at high profile sites and sites of particular cultural significance to Māori.
- e) The Signage Manual will include guidelines and/or rules for multilingual signage at high profile sites frequented by overseas visitors.
- f) We may from time to time conduct audits, surveys, or otherwise seek feedback about signage at our parks and facilities to assess whether our signage adequately reflects the community and the environment.

5.5 Acknowledges significant contributions made by community groups and others where appropriate

We would like to acknowledge volunteer community groups, other agencies, and organisations when they make a substantial, significant or on-going contribution towards the success of a project or programme that aligns with our strategic vision. Provision will be made for dual or multiple branding on signage where appropriate. We also reserve the right not to allow dual or multiple branding where doing so is likely to be impractical, cost-prohibitive or likely to cause confusion.

Increased financial pressures on community groups, such as sports clubs, have increased demand for commercial sponsorships. The previous Signage Strategy did not make provision for sponsorship signage. We are conscious of the need to balance sponsors' expectations of acknowledgement with our community's expectations about signage density and the general appearance of our parks and facilities. We consider that sponsorship signage may be appropriate at sports parks, outdoor adventure parks, event centres and swimming pool complexes subject to some controls. We do not wish to see a proliferation of individual signs at these sites but favour more compact solutions such as dedicated sponsorship boards in appropriate locations.

Key Actions:

- a) The Signage Manual shall include guidelines and/or rules for dual-branded and multiple-branded signage to acknowledge a substantial or significant contribution to a project or programme by a volunteer community group, agency or organisation.
- b) The Signage Manual shall include guidelines and/or rules about sponsorship signage at sports parks, outdoor adventure parks, event centres and swimming pool complexes.
- c) In addition to 5.5 (a) & (b) above, Council may by Resolution choose to acknowledge key sponsorships of major projects through the naming of a facility or part of a facility (for example a new wing of a building). This type of acknowledgement shall generally be reserved for cases where:
 - (i) the sponsor has provided a significant majority of the funding towards a project; or
 - (ii) the sponsor has provided a significantly larger contribution towards the funding a project than any other sponsors of the same project; and
 - (iii) the project is unlikely to have been completed successfully without the funding contributed by the sponsor.

5.6 Responsive to new technology and changing community needs

Our signage needs to be responsive to technological and social changes.

The use of portable electronic devices has increased dramatically over the past decade and along with it expectations about what people can access online. The use of Quick Reference (QR) codes on interpretation and information signage is becoming common. QR codes enable smart phone users to link to websites for more information by simply swiping their phone over the code on the sign. In the future, we may not need quite as much information displayed on some of our signs as we currently do. We also need to remember that not everyone owns a smart device or has the expectation to access everything online. We therefore need to maintain a balance that is appropriate to our community.

The ageing population trend and the decline in traditional team sport membership and participation is likely to increase the demand for informal forms of recreation such as walking and cycling. An older population may have different signage needs to a predominantly younger population.

Sport and recreation trends can affect demand for different types of signage. For example, over the past few years there has been an increase in cycling and mountain biking in our district. This has necessitated the need for signage that specifically meets the needs of different types of cyclists. Our previous strategy did not include any signage specifically for mountain bike tracks or cycleways. We have been working with Te Miro Mountain Bike Club to develop and field test mountain bike track signage and have also been involved in developing signage for the Hauraki Rail Trail. Signage for cycling activities will be provided for in our Signage Manual.

Key Actions:

- a) The Signage Manual will contain guidelines and/or rules about the use of Quick Reference codes and similar features on interpretation and information signage.
- b) The Signage Manual may contain guidelines and/or rules for specific sporting or recreational activities (e.g. mountain biking).
- c) The Signage Manual is to be reviewed from time to time to take into account technological developments and changing community needs.

6. Review

This Strategy will be reviewed at least every six years and from time to time to take into account changing circumstances or new information.