



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Bill Robeson, Assistant City Manager/Public Works Director

BY: Shannon Sweeney, City Engineer

SUBJECT: Conceptual Village Wayfinding and Parking Signage Program

DATE: March 12, 2024

SUMMARY OF ACTION:

Provide input on the design theme, directional information, and locations for the Village of Arroyo Grande Wayfinding Sign Program. At this conceptual stage, City staff recommends replacing existing wood signs, updating “Free Parking” and Community Center signs to match the color and shape of existing wood signs shown in figures 1-6. Additionally, replacing the “Welcome to the Village of Arroyo Grande” signs at the Traffic Way intersection and Fireman’s Park with bigger signs that also highlight free parking behind businesses, and adding a wayfinding sign at the former Short Street area.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

Funding needed to improve Village signage depends on the extent to which changes to existing signage are made and if any new signs are added. If all changes are implemented, the total cost of this project is estimated to be \$40,000.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide input on conceptual design for the project.

BACKGROUND:

Over the years, numerous signs have been placed throughout the Village and other locations around the city. A design theme for these signs was used for many of those signs, consisting of a uniform color, font, and style. Such signs can be found in the triangular island at Traffic Way in front of the large redwood tree (Figure 1), at 110 East Branch Street (Figure 2), in front of City Hall (Figure 3), the entrance to the car corral (Figure 4), Centennial Park (Figure 5) and Heritage Park (Figure 6). Attachment 1 contains an inventory of the Village signs.

Figure 1: Traffic Way



Figure 2: 110 East Branch Street



Figure 3: City Hall



Figure 4: Car Corral



Figure 5: Centennial Park



Figure 6: Heritage Square Park



Additional signs have been installed as needed. These signs had different shapes and colors. Staff found nine bright blue “Free Parking” signs on various poles, including:

- Intersection of Mason Street and East Branch Street (northwest traffic signal pole);
- End of Mason Street at Le Point Street (galvanized metal pole);
- East entrance to the Le Point parking lot (both sides of a round metal pole with other parking signs);
- Both sides of the entrance to the car corral off Nevada Street (both sides of the same streetlight pole);
- West entrance to Olohan Alley (both sides of the same black metal pole); and
- In front of 214 East Branch Street (square metal perforated pole, Figure 7)

In addition, other wayfinding signs were found, such as two brown community center signs (Figure 8), which were intended to provide directions to the Woman’s Center.

Figure 7: Free Parking (typical)



Figure 8: Community Center (one of two)



In the recent past, wayfinding has been discussed as a program but due to a host of factors including lack of a Downtown Parking Advisory Board quorum, shifting project priorities, and emergency response to storms, limited progress has been made. In 2023, staff developed the 2023 Village of Arroyo Grande Wayfinding Sign Program, Existing Conditions Report. This report is included as Attachment 2. Most of the signs and issues discussed in Attachment 2 are also summarized in this staff report.

On December 12, 2023, City Council requested that City staff report back to City Council on progress on the City's wayfinding program at a March 2024 meeting.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

The existing signs in the Village are inconsistent stylistically, installed at different heights and in different manners, and are affected by sign clustering. Many of these signs need replacement due to weathering and/or being damaged due to vandalism. While there is signage throughout the Village indicating the availability of free parking, the City has received feedback that more signs are needed at more visible locations. Other requests have been received for additional signage for restrooms, parking, and other City facilities such as City Hall and the Council Chamber.

Staff was given direction to develop a wayfinding program for the Village. Staff considered the following variables:

- Intent/Purpose
- Shape
- Color
- Font
- Verbiage
- Finishing details
- Locations

With these variables, staff is seeking additional input from City Council and further direction. The information points received will be further incorporated and refined into this important component of the unique and historic Village. Each of the seven variables is more thoroughly discussed below.

Intent/Purpose

Given the number of existing signs in the Village, wayfinding has been attempted in the past. Attachment 1 lists the existing sign inventory. This list shows that existing signage focuses on identifying City facilities and parking. Staff recommends that the welcome signs at the Traffic Way intersection and Fireman's Park be replaced with bigger signs that explicitly indicate that there is free parking behind the businesses, that other signs be replaced to stylistically match existing facility signs to make it easier for the traveling public to find the free parking locations, and that the wayfinding sign be added at former Short Street, just to the south of the brick crosswalk adjacent to East Branch Street.

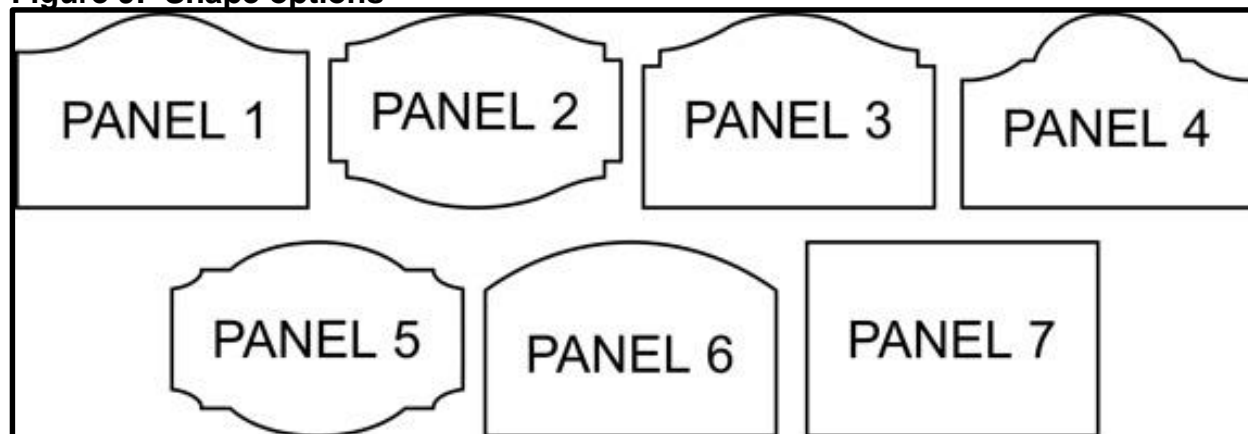
Sign Shape

Different sign shapes have been considered by staff in evaluating wayfinding options (Figure 9).

- Panel 1 most closely resembles the large wooden signs in front of City facilities as in Figures 1-6.
- Panel 3 most closely resembles the bright blue free parking signs as in Figure 7.
- Panel 7 resembles the community center sign in Figure 8.

Sign consistency (shape, color, font, City logo, etc.) enables identification and use of these signs by the traveling public. Staff recommends Panel 1 or Panel 3, as they resemble the City's most expensive signs, have some stylistic features without being overly ornate, and are an efficient use of sign space.

Figure 9: Shape options



Color

Staff observed three separate colors of signs in the Village, blue as in Figures 1-6, bright blue, as in Figure 7, and brown, as in Figure 8. Village, Bridge Street, and historic downtown building color palettes are shown in Figure 10 and were considered. The pale blue color (Figure 12 - Fiji) of the existing City facility signs is recommended, as it is consistent with other City signs, such as in front of Soto Sports Complex (Figure 11) and the Corporation Yard.

Figure 10: Existing City color palettes



Figure 11: Soto Sports Complex



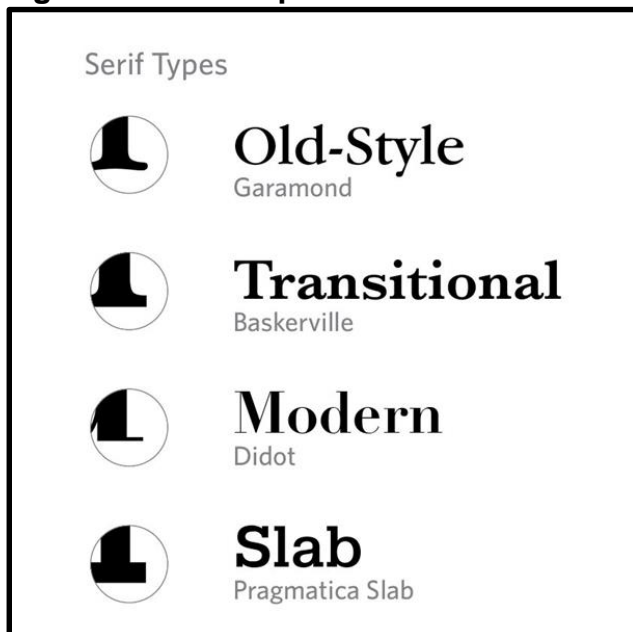
Figure 12: Standard Color Match Options



Font

The font on existing wood signs is proprietary from the sign design company used to make most of the Village signs. A standard font that is similar in nature to the proprietary font is the Old-Style, Garamond style shown in Figure 13. This is the font staff recommends for future signs.

Figure 13: Font Options



Verbiage

Staff does not recommend changes to the wording on most of the signs, with exception of the “Free Parking” signs. Figures 14 and 15 are intended to be both pole and monument signs, as needed and included for conceptual design consideration and for replaced wording. If such a design is desired, staff will refine this design prior to presenting it to the Downtown Parking Advisory Board, Architectural Review Committee, Village Business Association, and City Council.

There is an opportunity for the signs at the Traffic Way intersection and Fireman’s Park to provide more wayfinding information. By increasing the height and width of these signs, additional verbiage can be added below such as “free parking behind the businesses,” “left on Nevada Street,” “right on Bridge Street.” The brick pedestals would also be enlarged.

Figure 14: Existing Free Parking



Figure 15: Recommended Replacement



Finishing Touches

Staff recommends that existing wood signs continue to have side posts with finials and pedestal brickwork below the sign. It should be noted that signs with existing brickwork are too low to be visible. Increasing the height of these signs by expanding the brickwork to a minimum of 3 feet high with a larger brick pedestal would make the signs more visible. Metal signs on posts should be on round black metal posts to the extent possible. Attachment 1 lists the extent to which these changes are needed and an approximated cost totaling \$40,000.

Location

Staff does not recommend any major changes to sign location. Refreshing, updating, and stylistically matching existing signs is expected to facilitate wayfinding in the Village.

NEXT STEPS:

Once staff receives input from the City Council, sign design will be refined and shared with the Downtown Parking Advisory Board, Architectural Review Committee, and Village Business Association, for comprehensive input, prior to bringing the enhanced program back to City Council for final approval and funding authorization.

ALTERNATIVES:

The following alternatives are provided for the Council's consideration:

1. Provide input on conceptual design for the project;
2. Do not provide input on conceptual design for the project; or
3. Provide direction to staff.

ADVANTAGES:

Refreshing and updating existing signage for consistency will improve wayfinding, visibility, driver navigation, business awareness, and location of free parking in the Village. Signage and mounting posts will be uniform in color and style throughout the Village.

DISADVANTAGES:

There will be potential minor traffic inconveniences to the travelling public during construction. Staff will monitor the traffic control to conform to the requirements of the Municipal Uniform Traffic Control Devices manual (MUTCD) to mitigate any negative effects. City inspectors will be at the site during construction to adjust the traffic control for isolated instances (driveway access, etc.).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Updating the wayfinding signage is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") under the Class 1 exemption, which applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features where the project involves negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. (State CEQA Guidelines, § 15301.)

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Sign Inventory
2. Village of Arroyo Grande Wayfinding Program, 2023 Existing Conditions Report