

To : Merced City Council

May 1, 2017

From : Michael Belluomini

Ref : Entry Sign Design Process

BACKGROUND: Many cities have welcome/identification signs on Highway 99. Merced does not. Entry signs can be one of the remembered impressions of a city. Placing entry signs in the Cal Trans right of way requires city council approval. On February 6, 2017, the council approved a proposal to establish a subcommittee to work with staff, service clubs, and other community groups to prepare entry sign designs, budget, and funding sources. The council and service clubs consulted in January wanted entry signs on highways 59, and 140 in addition to 99.

SUBCOMMITTEE WORK: The subcommittee met on March 22, April 5, and 18, 2017. Membership included Council members, Belluomini, Blake, and Martinez, Allen Brooks (NAACP) , Mike Carpenter (Boosters), Kathleen Crookham (Rotary/Ragsdale), Steve Carrigan (city staff), Walt Dancey (Breakfast Lions), Ryan Heller (Downtown Neighborhood Association) , William Dacus (American Leagion), Larissa Sherman (Board of Realtors), Rich Miller (Sunrise Rotary), Manuel Alvarado (Merced Chamber of Commerce) , and by phone Simon Andrews (Graphic Solutions Sign Designer). Other service clubs have been or are being invited to participate.

The subcommittee identified the six entry points to the city and ranked them in terms of priority for funding. They are as follows and attached are photos of the locations with very preliminary conceptual sign design.

- 1) Highway 99 at Campus Parkway/Mission
- 2) Highway 99 at 16th St. Off ramp southbound
- 3) A central Merced focal sign/symbol/archway
- 4) Highway 140 near Bradley Overpass
- 5) Highway 59 near Mission Ave
- 6) Highway 140 near Massasso Rd.
- 7) Highway 59 near Bellevue Rd.

The subcommittee is interested in establishing a city symbol/sign somewhere in the downtown area. Use of the Merced Theater Tower sculpture/landmark was discussed near Bob Hart Square without consensus.

SLOGAN/ CITY BRANDING: Additional city slogans were raised as an important opportunity presented by the placing of six entry signs. Some subcommittee members believed the city should use the signs not only to welcome people but to share the citizen's belief that Merced is on the rise and has a story to tell about itself and its character. Themes were stated such as "people who care", "a place to raise the next generation", or "where innovation prospers". Such slogans were given as examples of branding the city for residents and visitors.

HOW TO GET IDEAS ON SIGN DESIGN AND SLOGAN: The subcommittee agreed that we ought to involve the community in welcome sign design and additional slogan ideas. Referencing the annual contest to provide a graphic symbol/sign and slogan for the Merced County Fair, the subcommittee proposes the city conduct such a contest for entry sign designs and additional city slogans. The subcommittee was open to each of the six entry signs being a unique design and to there being more than one slogan for the city. The contest would be open to the public though a special outreach will be made to students of K-12 schools, Merced College, and UC Merced to submit entries. Participants may submit sign or slogan proposals by mail or electronically to the city until June 17, 2017, (See attached draft news release). The council subcommittee will screen the contest entries and submit the better proposals to the full council to select winners. Contest winners will be awarded \$300 and be honored at a council meeting.

FUNDING FOR SIGNS: Members of the subcommittee emphasized that clubs and philanthropist will not donate toward sign construction until they know what they are funding and its total cost. Once winning sign designs are selected through the contest process, then the professional sign designer can prepare a high quality rendering drawing of the signs and a cost estimate to build each. The subcommittee will then seek funding from clubs, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

PROPOSAL: The subcommittee recommends the council approve conducting a community contest to obtain proposals for entry sign designs and city slogans in accordance with the attached press release.