



**MEMORANDUM**

**Diane Nichols Tradd**  
*Assistant City Manager/DPD Director*

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*  
FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director  
DATE: March 24, 2020

*Craig Thomas*  
*Deputy Director*

SUBJECT: **COUNCIL MOTION OF 1/28/20 BY COUNCILOR CHAU**  
REQUEST CITY MANAGER PROVIDE AN UPDATE REGARDING THE STATUS OF SIGNAGE FOR THE AREA DESIGNATED AS CAMBODIAN TOWN  
**COUNCIL MOTION OF 2/25/20 BY COUNCILOR ELLIOTT**  
REQUEST CITY MANAGER PROVIDE UPDATED REPORT REGARDING PRIOR MOTION TO REMOVE ABANDONED SIGN STRUCTURES ON CITY PROPERTY ON MIDDLESEX STREET

Per Councilor Chau's recommendation Planning Staff researched the possibility of installing a prominent gateway sign at the entrance of Cambodia Town via Middlesex Street. Per the Councilor's suggestion planning staff used the Chinatown Gate in Boston and the Dragon Gate in San Francisco's Chinatown as examples for this research. The idea of building a large entry gate to the neighborhood would create a very dramatic entrance to the area and would likely result in increased interest and visitation to Cambodia Town. Assuming the base at each end of the gate would be entirely in the right-of-way, the City would likely need to expand the size of the sidewalk on both sides to create an accessible sidewalk. Additionally, the gate would need to stand at least 13ft tall if located along Middlesex, Branch or School Streets, as all of these streets do not have any commercial vehicle restrictions and trucks would need to be able to travel under the gate. These grand entry gates are very expensive, the Chinatown gate in Boston was a gift to the City from China, and is estimated to have cost around \$500,000 in the 1970's. The City of Boston spent many years raising funds to cover costs associated with installation of the gate. Planning staff is also researching alternatives to a large arch, including additions to light poles that may create the illusion of an overhead entry way into the neighborhood.

Based on discussion during the City Council meeting, the Planning and Public Works staff investigated two existing pylon signs along the entryway of the neighborhood. Originally the intention was to have one of these signs hold a new Cambodia Town sign. After an assessment of the existing poles, they will both be removed due to their deteriorated condition. The signage planned for this location was designed through an extensive community process, and if there is still an interest in seeing a large pylon sign go up in the future, DPD has the designs ready for fabrication when funding becomes available.

There are several things City staff can do in the short term for very little funding:

1. Reprint large banners, order new brackets and hardware as needed and hang signs on City owned poles throughout the neighborhood. The City could also execute a new agreement with National Grid regarding the use of their poles to hang signs as we did in 2014. Costs for hardware, and new banners are roughly \$5,000 based on printing similar banner prints commissioned by the Special Events office.
2. Repaint the Middlesex Bridge rails in the bright poppy color to match the banners.
3. Assess the condition of the existing benches and trash receptacles in the neighborhood and replace site furniture as needed.
4. Revisit the existing boundary for the Cambodia Town area and discuss the possibility of expanding/changing the existing boundaries.
5. Convene a meeting with stakeholders including the Cambodia Town Committee, business and property owners, and neighborhood residents to discuss ways to reinvigorate the Cambodia Town neighborhood and plan ahead for future projects.

There were many ideas for projects when the Cambodia Town idea was initially discussed, DPD staff can work with community residents to identify priorities for the area in the future, determine costs and fundraising goals to achieve the desired outcomes.

DNT/ns

cc: Yovani Baez-Rose, Design Planner