



STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of October 14, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBMITTED BY: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBJECT: Presentation on New City Signage Options

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Receive a presentation on options for potential City signage
2. If the City Council wants to proceed with creating new signage, provide direction for the preferred signage location(s) and design(s) elements, and
3. By minute order, direct staff to develop a scope of work to hire a qualified firm for conceptual signage design development.

BACKGROUND:

During the FY 2024-2025 annual budget process, the City Council allocated \$100,000 within the Capital Budget and requested a staff recommendation for removing, repairing, or replacing the Creekside Shopping Center Clock Tower structure. Due to the blighted condition of the clock tower and its frequent use by unhoused individuals for shelter, it was deemed a public safety concern for the community. As a result, at its meeting on November 12, 2024, the Council directed staff to take the necessary actions to complete the demolition of the tower at a cost not to exceed \$9,000 of the original \$100,000 allocation.

The Council further directed staff to provide sign plan options similar to the city logo and to explore potential sign locations at San Pablo and Sycamore (near Safeway), the current site, and other possible locations. Staff returns this evening to present their findings and seek the Council's guidance on preferences for the location and type of the new signage.

ANALYSIS:

Many cities install monument signs to create a strong sense of identity and enhance the visual appeal of public spaces. These signs serve as welcoming landmarks at key entry points, helping residents and visitors navigate with ease while reinforcing the city's brand and character. The City of Hercules has several monument signs that mark entryways to neighborhoods, shopping centers, and business parks. However, there are opportunities to install City-branded signage at entryways and major road arterials. Durable and architecturally integrated, monument signs promote civic pride and support economic development by signaling a community's investment. Council should consider the information contained in this report and provide direction to staff on the type and location of signs desired.

Location Preference

Choosing the best location for a city monument sign involves striking a balance between visibility, impact, and purpose. The ideal spot is one that naturally draws attention—usually at major entry points, intersections, or gateways where residents and visitors often pass by car, bike, or foot.

Urban planners often consider the surrounding landscape and architecture to make sure the sign matches its environment. Safety is also important: the location shouldn't block sightlines or traffic flow and must provide safe access for installation and maintenance.

Ultimately, the best location is one that enhances the city's image, communicates clearly, and welcomes people with purpose and style. The City has several potential locations with adequate space that could be used for City-branded signage to showcase a unique sense of place. Based on this reasoning, staff evaluated the following four potential areas for consideration:

- Sycamore Ave./Creekside Shopping Center (former clock tower)
- Sycamore Ave./Refugio Valley Road (Current banner program location)
- San Pablo Blvd Mid-block Median (near Peet's Coffee)
- San Pablo Blvd/John Muir Parkway (SW Corner)

Current pictures of these sites are included below. Also see Attachment 1 for a map of the potential locations.

Sycamore Ave./Creekside Shopping Center (former clock tower)



Sycamore Ave. & Refugio Valley Road (Current Banner Program Location)



San Pablo Blvd Mid-block (near Peet's Coffee)



San Pablo Ave. & John Muir Pkwy \ W Corner



Monument Sign Types

Entry identification options include large structures (such as arches and walls), medium-sized monument signs (which may include landscaping features like planting areas or trellises), and smaller elements (such as signs and banners). Selecting the appropriate type requires considering:

- **Cost:** Initial installation and ongoing maintenance expenses.
- **Visual impact/Effectiveness:** How well the sign communicates the desired message and branding.
- **Lighting:** Whether illumination is needed.
- **Space:** Available area for placement.
- **Branding/Messaging:** Alignment with the desired brand image and information to convey.
- **Consistency:** Harmony with existing civic monument themes.

The chart below provides a general description of common sign types and estimated costs.

SIGN TYPES	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COSTS
Small-Scale Wayfinding Signs	Small-scale signs and banners are designed to help people navigate and orient themselves within a physical space. They typically stand about 4-7 feet tall and are visible from a reasonable distance of 100-200 feet , giving drivers or pedestrians enough time to read and respond. These signs are less effective in areas with high traffic or fast-moving vehicles.	(\$) (Less than \$25K/each)
Medium-Scale Monument Signs	Medium-scale freestanding, ground-mounted signs are commonly used for city facilities, businesses, schools, parks, and residential communities to provide clear, permanent identification. Their height varies, and they are clearly visible from a minimum of 200–300 feet , especially in areas with higher speed limits.	(\$\$) (\$25-\$150K/each)
Large-Scale Gateway Monument Signs	Large-scale freestanding signs are placed at the main entrance of the City, a high-profile property, development, or facility to provide a strong visual identity and welcome visitors. These signs are designed to be permanent, highly visible, and architecturally integrated with the surrounding landscape or buildings. Their height varies, and they are clearly visible from a minimum of 300-500 feet , especially in areas with higher speed limits.	(\$\$\$) (\$150K+/each)

Lighting Considerations

Lighting is also an important consideration in selecting the signage type, with options including nonilluminated (unlit), externally illuminated, and internally illuminated signage.

Non-illuminated: This is the no-to-low-cost illumination option. The trade-off is that the sign has substantially restricted visibility at night, absent any existing ambient lighting from streetlights or other nearby sources. If a small-scale street sign is the desired monument option, then reflective vinyl can be used for the sign, allowing it to be visible at night when it is within the range of vehicle headlights. This is how some existing wayfinding signs, as well as all regulatory and non-regulatory traffic signs, are illuminated.

Externally illuminated: External illumination can be wired or wireless, such as solar power, typically installed as uplighting on the ground near the monument. Wired options can be expensive because they require connection to a nearby power source, often involving long conduit and wiring runs, along with ongoing utility costs. Solar options may be more affordable since they avoid connection

and utility expenses; however, their design and brightness options are limited. Additionally, externally illuminated signs might not always be ideal, as the limited placement of lamps may only partially light the sign or create glare that affects traffic from the opposite direction.

Internally illuminated: Internal lighting is usually wired and requires special monument design considerations, making it generally the most expensive lighting option. However, internal illumination can add a unique, sleek, modern touch to the monument design.

The following are examples of sign types used in other communities:

Small-Scale Wayfinding Signs



Medium-Scale Wayfinding Signs





Large-Scale Gateway Monument Signs



Recommendations and Next Steps

It is requested that the City Council consider the information contained in this report and provide direction on the following:

1. What is the preferred location(s) of a future sign?
2. What signage design types should be considered?

3. Are there any other preferences or comments about the signage design elements (such as digital reader board, illumination type, etc.)?
4. If the City Council wants to move forward with creating a sign at a specified location, direct staff to develop a scope of work to hire a qualified firm for conceptual signage design development. After receiving proposals, staff will present an item to the City Council for contract approval and budget authorization.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the presentation of this report. Currently, there is a remaining balance of \$91,800 from the initial allocation designated for the design and installation of new signage.

The cost of installing a monument sign depends on several key factors. Materials play a major role—foamcore with stucco offers a budget-friendly option, while brick, stone, or concrete add durability and prestige at a higher price. Size also influences cost, with larger signs requiring more resources and labor. Design complexity, such as custom graphics, lighting, landscaping, or other architectural features, can significantly increase expenses.

Upon receiving additional guidance, staff will be prepared to generate detailed program cost estimates. Please note that any costs related to future activities will be subject to review and approval by the City Council at a future meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Potential Monument Signage Locations
2. Presentation