

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Monday, July 5, 2021
Subject	New Sign By-law and Amendment to By-law Number (2013)-19529

Recommendation

1. That By-law Number (1996)-15245, as amended, short titled the Sign By-law, be repealed and that the new Sign By-law included as Attachment 2 of the Report titled "New Sign By-law and Amendment to By-law Number (2013)-19529", be adopted.
 2. That By-law Number (2013)-19529, as amended, be amended to include Attachment 3 of the Report titled "New Sign By-law and Amendment to By-law Number (2013)-19529", that will delegate the authority for granting minor sign variances to staff.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to repeal By-law Number (1996)-15245, as amended, and replace it with a new Sign By-law that is listed as Attachment 2 of this report. To further amend By-law Number (2013)-19529, as amended, to delegate the authority for granting minor sign variances to staff.

Key Findings

On October 5, 2020, Staff [presented](#) a report titled "[Draft Recommendations for the New Sign By-law](#)". The [recommendations](#) were based on a comprehensive review process that included extensive [engagement](#) with key stakeholders and the public.

In addition to engaging external stakeholders and the public, staff conducted research and held internal meetings with affected departments.

On October 26, 2020, Council directed staff to draft a new Sign By-law based on the [draft recommendations](#) for the new Sign By-law and based on Council feedback (see Attachment 1 – Summary of Council Feedback).

The proposed Sign By-law aligns with both the City's [Official Plan](#), [Downtown Guelph Streetscape Manual](#), and [Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

Financial Implications

The proposed Sign By-law restricts the amount of illumination permitted by electronic message centres. To measure this illumination, the purchase and on-going calibration of a measuring device will be required. The financial implication is a one-time cost of approximately four thousand dollars and an ongoing annual cost

of five hundred dollars. This cost would be funded through the tax supported Building Services budget and was included in the base 2021 operating budget subject to council approval of this policy.

As a result of the proposed increase in separation distance requirements of mobile signs, it is projected that there will be an estimated revenue loss of approximately \$43,000 per year.

Report

Background

The City of Guelph Sign By-law No. (1996)-15245, as amended, has been in effect for over 20 years. Many of the regulations are outdated and do not align with current urban design principles or new technology in the sign industry. This has caused challenges for businesses and for the administration and enforcement of the By-law.

In January of 2018, Council approved the [Sign By-law Project Charter](#) to initiate a comprehensive review of Sign By-law No. (1996)-15245, as amended.

On October 5, 2020, Staff [presented](#) a report titled "[Draft Recommendations for the New Sign By-law](#)". The [recommendations](#) were based on a comprehensive review process that included extensive [engagement](#) with key stakeholders and the public.

In addition to engaging external stakeholders and the public, staff conducted research and held internal meetings with affected departments.

On October 26, 2020, Council directed staff to draft a new Sign By-law based on the [draft recommendations](#) for the new Sign By-law and based on Council feedback (see Attachment 1 – Summary of Council Feedback).

Overview

A new Sign By-law has been drafted based on the draft recommendations and on Council feedback that was received.

The proposed Sign By-law aligns with both the City's [Official Plan](#), [Downtown Guelph Streetscape Manual](#) and [Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

The proposed Sign By-law regulates the display area and lighting of signs to be compatible with the size, type, and character of each development¹. Regulations promote a consistent height on the building facades of commercial buildings and are generally not permitted on the top of buildings or poles².

Overall, a coordinated approach to site signage and wayfinding was taken into consideration while developing the Sign By-law. The proposed Sign By-law attempts to ensure that signage is visible from the public realm and is easy to understand³, while reducing visual clutter and not impeding pedestrian circulation and vehicle sightlines⁴. An example of this is permitting ground signs with a reduced sign face area to have a reduced setback (to ensure visibility of the sign to accommodate

¹ See Section 8.14 (1) of the [City of Guelph Official Plan](#).

² See Section 8.14 (4) of the [City of Guelph Official Plan](#).

³ See Section 3.7.2 of the [City of Guelph Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

⁴ See Section 3.7.5 of [City of Guelph Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

reduced building setbacks), while ensuring that sightlines are maintained. At the same time, regulations relating to mobile signs, banner flags, and portable signs on private property are restricted to reduce visual clutter⁵.

Taking from the Commercial Built Form Standards, vinyl coverings and other window sign treatments, including lifestyle images, are regulated to help facilitate the application of the approved standards⁶ and further reduce visual clutter⁷.

Promoting the heritage characteristics of designated buildings/properties the new Sign By-law regulations require the coordination of a Heritage Permit with a Sign Permit to ensure signage will be compatible with the heritage character of the property, district, or landscape⁸.

The proposed Sign By-law also takes into account the Downtown Secondary Plan land use boundaries⁹ and corresponding zoning designations¹⁰ by creating consistent regulations that promote the incorporation of signage into building facades, while discouraging the use of ground signs, roof, and mobile signs¹¹.

To be responsive to business needs, while taking into account the livability and attractiveness of the City, the proposed Sign By-law includes delegation of authority provisions to allow staff to grant sign variances that are minor in nature.

The proposed Sign By-law sets out the proposed limitations of this authority and includes the criteria required for deciding whether to grant an exception or sign variance. It is proposed that Council will retain the authority to decide on variances not minor in nature, hear appeals, and receive an annual information report on the number and nature of variances granted during the year pursuant to the proposed delegation of authority.

Delegation of this authority will improve customer response times for decisions and increase efficient use of staff and council time. It will help businesses succeed and improve how the City delivers services.¹² The second recommendation of this report also includes amending By-law (2013)-19529, as amended, to reflect the proposed change.

Overall, the proposed Sign By-law will:

- Protect, preserve and promote the safety of residents;
- Require signs to be well maintained to meet community standards;
- Be compatible with sensitive land uses;
- Be user-friendly and easy to understand;
- Make the best use of technology;
- Align with other bylaws and the Official Plan; and

⁵ See Section 3.7.5 of [City of Guelph Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

⁶ See Section 4.2.6 of [City of Guelph Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

⁷ See Section 3.7.5 of [City of Guelph Commercial Built Form Standards](#).

⁸ See Section 8.14 of [City of Guelph Official Plan](#).

⁹ See Section 1.11 of [City of Guelph Official Plan](#).

¹⁰ See [City of Guelph Zoning By-law Map 24](#), [Map 25](#), [Map 36](#), [Map 37](#), and [Map 38](#)

¹¹ See [Performance Standard #20, Section 3](#) of [Downtown Guelph Streetscape Manual, Built Form Standards and St. George's Square Concept](#).

¹² See Page 11 and Page 17, [Strategic Plan: Guelph. Future ready](#).

- Ensure that the number and types of signs allowed serve the needs of businesses and the community, while not adversely affecting the livability and attractiveness of the City of Guelph.

Next Steps

If the proposed Sign By-law is approved, staff will take the necessary action to notify stakeholders, draft and make changes to applicable policies, forms, and other documents that are necessary for the successful implementation of the new Sign By-law. Included in this will be a visual guide that will provide illustrations of different sign types and of sample sightline measurements to assist users in their understanding of the Sign By-law.

Financial Implications

The proposed Sign By-law restricts the amount of illumination permitted by electronic message centres. To measure this illumination, the purchase and on-going calibration of a measuring device will be required. The financial implication is a one-time cost of approximately four thousand dollars and an ongoing annual cost of five hundred dollars. This cost would be funded through the tax supported Building Services budget and was included in the base 2021 operating budget subject to council approval of this policy.

As a result of the proposed increase in separation distance requirements of mobile signs, it is projected that there will be an estimated revenue loss of approximately \$43,000 per year.

Consultations

Internal consultations during the project through email and/or meetings with:

By-law Compliance Security & Licensing
Facilities and Energy Management
Legal Services
Planning Services, including Urban Design
Parks and Recreation
Economic Development and Tourism
Transportation Services

External consultation during the project through email and/or meetings with:

Residents of the City of Guelph
Permanent and temporary sign companies
Sign Association of Canada
Guelph & District Home Builders Association
Members of the Guelph & District Realtors Association
Individual businesses that operate in Guelph
Guelph Chamber of Commerce
University of Guelph
Downtown Guelph Business Association

Strategic Plan Alignment

Powering our future – Helping businesses to succeed and add value to the community.

Working together for our future – Improving how the City communicates and delivers services.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Overview of Sign By-law Regulations based on Council feedback

Attachment-2 New Sign By-law

Attachment-3 Schedule to By-law Number (2013)-19529

Departmental Approval

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