

Staff Report



To	City Council
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date	Tuesday, May 13, 2025
Subject	Proposed Amendments to Sign By-law (2021) - 20621

Recommendation

1. That Report IDE-2025-62 regarding a City-initiated Sign By-law (2021)-20621 Amendment dated May 13, 2025 be received.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the public with the opportunity to review and provide feedback on draft amendments to the [Sign By-law \(2021\)-20621](#) (herein referred to as the Sign By-law).

Key Findings

Regulations for signage within the Sign By-law are based on zones within the Zoning By-law (1995-14864) (1995 ZBL), which has been repealed and replaced with the approval of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2023)-20790 (2023 CZBL). The Sign By-law is required to be updated to align with the 2023 CZBL zone categories. No new sign regulation charts are proposed and the existing charts have been amended by replacing zone categories.

The 2023 CZBL introduced new mixed-use zones (Commercial Mixed-use Centre (CMUC), Mixed-use Corridor (MUC), Neighbourhood Commercial Centre (NCC) and Service Commercial (SC) zones) that allow for commercial and residential uses on the same property. The proposed Sign By-law amendment establishes regulations for commercial properties without residential uses to recognize existing commercial properties. The existing commercial sign regulations (Section 18.1) will continue to apply to commercial properties without residential uses. Existing regulations for Section 18.7.3, Residential Apartment with Commercial Uses are proposed for mixed-use zones with residential uses.

Sign regulations for the CC zone (previous C.1 zone) are proposed to be removed from the commercial Table under Section 18.1 and added to Table 18.3.1 for the Mixed-office Commercial (MOC) zones (previously the Office Residential (OR) and Commercial Residential (CR) zones), as these zones have close proximity to residential properties, allow for small scale commercial uses and also permit residential dwellings.

A new regulation is proposed for commercial and mixed-use zones within Sections 18.1 and 18.3 to introduce a minimum setback of 15 metres from illuminated fascia

signs adjacent to interior side and rear yard property lines which abut residentially zoned properties. The proposed regulation addresses new parking location regulations of the CZBL that require parking areas in side and rear yards. The proposed regulation is consistent with existing setback regulations for illuminated signs adjacent to residential properties.

A new regulation is proposed for industrial zones to limit fascia signs on a building to a maximum height of 12 metres. Fascia signs on industrial buildings are permitted on the first or second storey of a building. The maximum permitted building height in industrial zones is 20 metres, with the exception of the IRP zone which allows a maximum of 10 storeys. Limiting the fascia sign height to 12 metres prevents a sign located at the top of a one or two storey warehouse built to the maximum permitted 20 metre height. Average storey height is 4 metres.

Additional amendments are proposed to provide clarity in the Sign By-law, including the bolding and minor amendments of definitions. A new sign variance criterion to determine whether the Sign By-law can be met with similar alternative signage is proposed for applicants to justify why the regulations of the Sign By-law are proposed to be varied.

All proposed amendments to the Sign By-law are numbered in the report below. The proposed amendments have been shown in Attachment-1 Proposed Amendments to Sign By-law (2021)-20621. The existing Sign By-law is found on this City webpage: <https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/Sign-Bylaw.pdf>.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This proposal aligns with Strategic Plan theme Foundations as it supports good governance. Sign By-law (2021) – 20621 regulates signage throughout the City, permitting signage in appropriate locations that align with the use of buildings and lands, but also restricting signage types and locations to ensure that the built environment promotes excellence in urban design by respecting the character of the existing distinctive areas and neighbourhoods of the City.

Future Guelph Theme

People and Economy

Future Guelph Objectives

Foundations: Advocate for our city

Financial Implications

None

Report

Sign By-law (2021)- 20621 was passed by Council in July 2021 after a two and a half year project that included internal and external consultations, working group, open house, stakeholder meetings and Council feedback. With the passing of the Comprehensive Zoning By-law (2023)-20790, the Sign By-law needs to be amended to align regulations with new zone categories. Additional minor amendments are proposed to add clarity and improve the readability of the document. The following amendments are proposed in Attachment-1 Proposed Amendments to Sign By-law (2021)-20621.

All proposed changes are listed as follows:

1. Bold defined terms and remove all quotations under Section 5 Definitions and bold defined terms throughout the Sign By-law.
2. Delete "Bag Sign" definition as there is no reference to bag sign within the Sign By-law.
3. Create a new definition for Building Façade to clarify where signage on the top storey of a building is permitted within Service Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Zones:
"Building façade includes all window and wall areas of a building or structure that exist on the same side of such building or structure facing the same direction. A building façade is considered to be a single façade if the interior angle of the wall exceeds 90 degrees".
4. Propose a new definition for Entrance Canopy Sign to combine existing "Canopy, entrance" and "Canopy sign" definitions, as the Sign By-law only refers to "Entrance canopy sign."
"Entrance canopy sign means a single-faced sign located, installed, or displayed on a canopy, which includes a non-retractable roof-like structure, that may be supported from the ground by poles or similar supports that is attached to the exterior wall of a building at entrance(s) and that is mounted parallel to the structural elements of the canopy; and shall not include an awning sign or a projecting sign".
5. Update "Illuminate" definition to "Illuminated" since only "illuminated" is referenced in the Sign By-law.
6. Delete "Manual changeable copy" as it is only referenced in the definition of "Mobile Sign". The definition of "Changeable Copy" includes manual, and manual is defined in the dictionary as "worked or done by hand and not by machine".
7. Delete "Non-Profit Event means an event held or sponsored by a Non-Profit Organization for which all net proceeds are directed to the support of the non-profit organization and/or its objects;" as it is nowhere in the Sign By-law.
8. Under Section 7, Authority, Variances and Appeals: Pursuant to section 23.2 of the Municipal Act, Council hereby delegates to the Sign Administrator the power to grant Sign Variances from any of the provisions of this By-law. The Sign Administrator's Authority is limited in scope and shall not apply to Sign Variances related to:
Delete "a) A Sign prohibited under Section 9 of this By-law" and propose "a) A sign prohibited under Section 8 and Section 9 of this By-law and signs that are not listed within this By-law."
9. Amend Section 7.3 "Any other Sign Variance applications shall be heard by Council" and replace with 7.3 "Sign variances as listed in 7.2 shall be heard by Council".
10. Amend Section 7.7 b) "heritage characteristics" to "heritage attributes" to align with the definition of "heritage attributes".
11. Introduce a new sign variance criterion under Section 7.7 "d) whether the Sign By-law can be met with similar alternative signage".

12. Section 8 p) add the word "message" to read as "message transition time" to align with the "message transition" definition.
13. Section 8 q) correct the distance from a residential zone to dim illumination from 90 metres to 60 metres. 60 metres is found throughout the Sign By-law as the distance to dim illumination between sunset and sunrise to residential zones.
14. Under Section 9 Prohibited Signs, add "r) Any sign not specifically listed in this By-law". This will ensure any sign type that is not listed in the By-law, such as a Bag Sign, will require a sign variance.
15. Amend Section 14 g) to include "written approval of the Ministry of Transportation to be within the MTO Control Area", not just within 400.0 m of the Hanlon Expressway.
16. Delete the text duplication of zone designation names under each regulation section.
17. Section 18.1 replace the 1995 ZBL commercial zones with the 2023 CZBL Commercial mixed-use centre (CMUC), Mixed-use corridor (MUC), Neighbourhood commercial centre (NCC) and Service commercial (SC) zones without residential uses.
18. Section 18.7.3 replace the 1995 ZBL Permanent Signs for Residential Apartment (R.4) Signs with Commercial Uses with Section 18.8, the 2023 CZBL Commercial mixed-use centre (CMUC), Mixed-use corridor (MUC), and Neighbourhood commercial centre (NCC) zones with residential uses.
19. Introduce new additional regulation under Section 18.1.3 p), 18.3.2 I) and 18.8.3 f) "illuminated fascia signs facing an internal lot line abutting a residential zone shall be setback a minimum of 15m from the lot line".
20. Amend additional regulation under Section 18.1.3 m) and 18.4.2 m) to clarify that one sign per building façade is permitted on the top storey when in a service commercial or industrial zone. This is proposed by removing and replacing "premises" with "building façade" and creating a new definition of building facade.
21. Under additional regulations for mobile signs within all zones, text added to specify that window and lifestyle signs do not require sign permits.
22. Section 18.3, replace the 1995 ZBL Office Residential (OR) and Commercial Residential (CR) zones with the 2023 CZBL Convenience Commercial (CC) and Mixed Office/Commercial (MOC) zones.
23. Section 18.4, replace the 1995 ZBL industrial zones with the 2023 CZBL Corporate Business Park (BP), Institutional/Research Park (IRP), Mixed Business (MB), Employment Mixed-use 1 (EMU.1) and Employment Mixed-use 2 (EMU.2) zones.
24. Table 18.4.1 and 18.4.2 d), add a maximum height of 12 metres for any fascia signage located on the external façade of the building in industrial zones.
25. Section 18.5, replace the 1995 ZBL institutional zones with the 2023 CZBL Neighbourhood Institutional (NI), Major Institutional 1-General (I.1) and Major Institutional 2-University of Guelph (I.2) zones.

26. Section 18.6, replace the 1995 ZBL low density residential zones with the 2023 CZBL Low Density Residential 1 (RL.1), Low Density Residential 2 (RL.2), and Low Density Residential 3 (RL.3), Low Density Residential 4 (RL. 4), Medium Density Residential 5 (RM.5) and Medium Density Residential 6 (RM.6) zones for single detached, semi-detached and duplex dwellings, triplexes, fourplexes, lodging houses, supportive housing and all townhouse types.
27. Section 18.8, replace the 1995 ZBL apartment zone with the 2023 CZBL Low Density Residential 4 (RL.4), Medium Density Residential 5 (RM.5), Medium Density Residential 6 (RM.6) and High Density Residential 7 (RH.7) zones for apartments, long term care facilities and retirement residential facilities.
28. Amend Section titles under 18.8 to Permanent Signs for CMUC, MUC & NCC Zones with residential uses.
29. Update additional regulations under Section 20.2.2 f) to add the missing dimension of 7 m maximum height for a ground sign set back 6 m from the street line.
30. Replace "Electronic message board" with "Electronic message centres" where found in some additional regulation sections to align with Section 24 Regulations for Electronic Message Centres.
31. Enter missing street names and directions under Section 18.2.4 in the table for "Location of identified accessible sidewalk routes".

Next Steps

Following the Public Meeting, staff will review comments received and the final Sign By-law will be presented to Council for approval.

Financial Implications

None.

Consultations and Engagement

The existing Sign By-law was updated and approved by Council in 2021 and included public and business consultation, and a public open house.

Staff have consulted Planning Services – Urban Design and Accessibility Services in drafting the amending Sign By-law.

A public notice will be posted on Guelph Today April 24, 2025 and on the City's website April 30, 2025. Notice to sign companies will be emailed April 30, 2025.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Proposed Amendments to Sign By-law (2021)-20621

Attachment-2 Staff Presentation for Public Meeting

Departmental Approval

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