

Staff Report



To City Council
Service Area Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date Wednesday, October 15, 2025
Subject **Sign By-law Variances for 705 Southgate Drive – 2025-446**

Recommendation

1. That the request for variance from Section 18.1.3 L) to permit a minimum separation distance of approximately 80 metres as shown on the site plan between two ground signs on the same property be approved; and
2. That the request for variance from Section 18.1.3 G) to permit ground sign 1A setback 3 metres from the street line, a maximum height of 7.5 metres above the adjacent roadway and a maximum sign face area of 12.78 metres squared be refused; and
3. That the request for variance from Section 18.1.3 G) to permit ground sign 1B setback 1 metre from the street line, a maximum height of 7.5 metres above the adjacent roadway and a maximum sign face area of 12.78 metres squared be refused.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report is being presented to Council for decision of three Sign By-law variance requests for two ground signs located at 705 Southgate Drive (see Attachments-1 and 2 for location and sign variance drawings).

Key Findings

The applicant is proposing two ground signs on the subject lands that exceed the regulations of Sign By-law (2021)-20621 in height, sign face area and minimum distance between two ground signs on one property.

The property is in a Service Commercial zone which permits commercial uses. The 0.64 hectare (1.58 acre) property with frontage on three streets (Laird Road, Southgate Drive, and Corporate Court) was granted Site Plan Approval September 12, 2024, and contains a car wash, gas station with convenience store, a future proposed drive-through restaurant and a vacant commercial unit. Sign comments prepared during Site Plan Approval noted a sign variance to permit a reduced separation distance between two ground signs on one property would be supportable by staff.

The request for variances to increase the height and sign face area for the two ground signs is recommended for refusal for the following reasons:

- It does not meet the intent of the Official Plan policy under section 8.14 or the Commercial Built Form Standards that states display areas and lighting should be compatible in scale and intensity to the proposed activity and tailored to the size, type and character of a development. The Council approved Sign By-law contains the regulations for ground signs which are compatible in scale and intensity with the corresponding zoning of property, and staff supporting two ground signs;
- Supporting the variance request for a second ground sign on the property that does not meet the minimum separation distance of 120 metres increases the total sign face area of ground signs on the property; and
- In addition to the proposed ground signs, the property contains gas canopy signage, fascia signs on the buildings (see Attachment-3) and future drive-through signage and fascia signage on the future drive-through restaurant, giving all businesses on the property visibility to passing traffic and the surrounding area.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This proposal aligns with Strategic Plan theme Foundations as it supports good governance. Sign By-law (2021) – 20621 has the purpose to regulate 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. The Sign By-law was updated with public and business consultation, a public open house and ultimately Council approval.

Future Guelph Theme

Foundations

Future Guelph Objectives

Foundations: Advocate for our city

Financial Implications

None.

Report

This report is being presented to Council for decision as staff does not support approval of the sign variance by delegated authority under Section 7 of Sign-law (2021) – 20621. Council has the authority to grant or refuse the variance in whole or in part and the decision of Council is final.

Ground signs in Service Commercial zones have the following regulations as per Section 18.1 in the Sign By-law:

- A ground sign set back a minimum 1 m from a street line allows a maximum height of 6 m above the adjacent roadway and a maximum sign face area of 0.3 m² for every 1 m of frontage to a maximum of 8 m²;
- A ground sign set back 6 m from the street line allows a maximum height of 7 m above an adjacent Roadway and a maximum sign face of area of 0.3 m² for every 1 m of frontage to a maximum of 17 m²;

- All ground signs must be located a minimum distance of 3 m from an adjacent property;
- Every illuminated ground sign shall be a minimum of 15 m from any residential zone, as identified by the Zoning By-law; and
- Ground signs shall have a minimum separation distance of 120 m from another ground sign on the same property and a minimum separation distance of 30 m from a ground sign on an adjacent property.

Ground sign 1A is proposed to be setback 3 m from the street line with a maximum height of 7.5 m above the adjacent roadway and a maximum sign face area of 12.78 m². This is an increase of 1.5 m in height and 4.78 m² in sign face area.

Ground sign 1B is proposed to be setback 1 metre from the street line, a maximum height of 7.5 metres above the adjacent roadway and a maximum sign face area of 12.78 m². This is an increase of 1.5 metres in height and 4.78 m² in sign face area.

The two proposed ground signs have a separation distance of approximately 80 m on the same property, 40 m less than what is permitted.

Additional signs issued to date on the property include the existing signs on the car wash structure, 4 fascia signs on the convenience store building associated with the gas station and the Petro-Canada signage together with the red illumination on the gas canopy. Staff expect more sign permits to be submitted when the drive-through restaurant is constructed, including fascia signage on the building and drive-through menu and ordering signage.

Staff believe that the applicant/property owner has sufficient signage for the property that will include the two ground signs in compliance with the height and sign face area requirements, gas canopy signage and multiple fascia signs on each of the buildings, therefore additional height and sign face area that exceeds the regulations of the Sign By-law for the two proposed ground signs is not supportable.

Financial Implications

Not applicable.

Consultations and Engagement

Internal consultation with Planning Services staff who also do not support the additional height and sign face area of the proposed ground signs. External communication with the applicant. A public notice was placed in Guelph Today and on the City website.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Location Map with Aerial Photo

Attachment-2 Sign Variance Drawings

Attachment-3 Existing Signs

Departmental Approval

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