

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 30, 2018

Item 2, Report No. 4, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on January 30, 2018.

2 SIGN BY-LAW REVIEW – PHASE ONE

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager, Community Services, dated January 24, 2018, be approved;**
- 2) That the deputation of Ms. Kathryn Angus, President, Kleinburg & Area Ratepayers' Association, P.O. Box 202, Kleinburg and Communication C3, dated January 23, 2018, be received; and**
- 3) That Communication C2, presentation material entitled "*Sign By-law Review – Phase One*", be received.**

Purpose

Staff have undertaken a review of the City's by-laws that regulate signs, in accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy. As part of this review, the three existing municipal by-laws, which govern signage on public and private property, as well as the Sign Variance Committee, will be consolidated into a comprehensive Sign By-law. In addition, the other goals of the review are to produce regulations that will:

- optimally protect, preserve and promote the safety of Vaughan residents
- support community standards and the attractiveness and liveability of the City
- serve the needs of businesses and the community
- be user friendly, and easy to understand and comply with
- provide value to taxpayers through efficient and effective processes, and the optimal use of technology

To address the complexity of sign regulation in the City, while also moving forward quickly on long-needed changes, the review is being conducted in two phases, as detailed in the Background section.

Recommendations

- 1. That Council adopt the recommendations provided in Attachment 1 of this report; and**
- 2. That Council authorize staff to undertake any other actions required to implement the recommendations of this report, including any consequential amendments to other by-laws.**

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Report Highlights

- Development of one by-law to govern sign regulation, to be referred to as the “Sign By-law” to repeal the existing three by-laws, as amended, pertaining to sign regulation.
- Permission for certain licensed and certified businesses to use lawn signs on private property during the course of their work and requirements for real estate open-house or similar signs to include the address of the corresponding property.
- Elimination of design restrictions on mobile signs and size restrictions on window signs in businesses outside of Heritage Conservation Districts.
- Introduction of provisions for third party elections signage, in line with the Municipal Elections Act, including the introduction of a \$100 fee per registrant.
- Strengthening of the City’s ability to enforce the Sign By-law, through measures that include presumptive offences, broader authority to recover costs, and greater latitude for removal and disposal.
- Provision to exempt the City and the Regional Municipality of York from the requirements of the by-law.

Background

The City of Vaughan is a thriving metropolis in the midst of a period of rapid expansion. In this environment of growing choices and options, signage continues to be a valued opportunity by which Vaughan’s diverse business community and other organizations strive to engage members of the public.

In accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) has been conducting a review of its by-laws, including the City’s various by-laws that regulate signs in order to address the range of advertising needs.

Stakeholders and research

With a view to developing a comprehensive set of regulatory opportunities, BCLPS staff engaged and will continue to engage a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Consultation thus far have generated a broad range of feedback from stakeholder groups, including the general public, the sign industry, the business community, special event organizers, Community Service Organizations, other public agencies, such as the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), York Region (the Region) and York Regional Police (YRP), neighbouring municipalities, and City staff throughout the organization.

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Phases

Due to the review's complexity, this review is being conducted in two phases, in order to fulsomely engage stakeholders and consider the implications of different options.

Phase 1: January 2018 report

Recommendations in this report will address opportunities which can be implemented in the near future, such as by-law consolidation, providing regulatory relief to the sign industry and businesses that use signs, developing third-party elections regulations, allowing licensed contractors to use signage in the course of their work, and strengthening the City's ability to enforce violations and recover costs.

Phase 2: Spring 2018 report

These recommendations will address longer-term opportunities and emerging issues. Staff will provide advice to Council on expanding opportunities for advertising using permanent signage and on developing guidelines to support consistent decision-making. Specific areas to be considered will include:

- establishing legislation for digital signage, which addresses community standards and safety
- permitting first-party pedestal signs with a digital component
- developing new legislation for billboards, (also called "poster panels"), including the deletion of the provision that requires two billboards be taken down for every one that is put up
- aligning by-law regulations pertaining to developments with more recent decisions made by the Sign Variance Committee
- expanding sign provisions that apply in Heritage Conservation Districts
- exploring the possibility of gateway signage at major entrances to the City, in order to advertise City-sanctioned events and diffuse public messages allowing feather banners on private property

Stakeholder engagement

To engage stakeholders, staff have established a review web page, communicated through established business community newsletters, conducted internal and external public consultations, held meetings, examined complaints data, conducted an Access Vaughan telephone survey, and engaged individuals through email and telephone. A detailed description of these activities is provided in Schedule B of this report.

Previous Reports/Authority

This review is being conducted in line with the Council approved [City of Vaughan By-law Strategy](#), adopted by Council on June 24, 2014.

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More information about the review is available online at www.vaughan.ca/bylaw on the [Sign By-law Review](#) webpage.

Analysis and Options

Staff identified both regulatory and operational opportunities in relation to the objectives of the review. These are discussed below with respect to the review's objectives and in support of the specific recommendations outlined in Schedule A.

Objective 1 – Develop clear, accessible, relevant rules

BCLPS identified that most internal and external stakeholders had some level of confusion about existing sign legislation, including how it applies to the public, City staff, and other public agencies.

Signage approval in the City can occur through several channels:

- Building Standards permits, which permits signage compliant with Vaughan by-laws
- the Sign Variance Committee, for consideration of signs which are not compliant with the by-law
- the Site Plan Review process, in which an entire development plan, including its signage, is reviewed
- special projects managed by the City, in which signage is a component of the project
- signs posted by the Regional Municipality of York ("the Region")

Signs approved through any of these channels undergo significant staff scrutiny and, as a result very rarely receive any complaints from public; for these reasons, and to ensure the City and Region have the flexibility to post the required signage, staff recommended that the City and Region be exempt from the provisions of the By-law.

With that said, to support consistent decision-making, staff recommend amending current regulations to consider signage decisions which have been made throughout these channels, such as allowing larger signage, or more signage.

To meet this objective, staff propose to:

- consolidate the three existing Sign By-laws into one, which provides clear rules for all stakeholders
- exempt the City and the Region from the requirements of the By-law
- develop legislation to address new and emerging types of signage, as described in Objective 2

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- expand upon existing media for the dissemination of information, including the City's customer service channels, such as Access Vaughan, service counters throughout the City, and in the course of enforcement activities

Objective 2 – Provide signage opportunities that protect community safety and uphold standards

Staff considered a diverse range of input in order to recommend changes to existing legislation and to develop additional opportunities to meet the advertising needs of Vaughan businesses and community organizations, while balancing priorities of protecting community safety and standards.

Prohibited signs

With respect to signage and promotional materials, the majority of complaints received by BCLPS from the public are about illegal signage, such as posters, stickers, placards and lawn signs. This concern was confirmed by an Access Vaughan survey of over 271 residents, who complained that the proliferation of illegal signage was causing safety and nuisance issues, such as impeding line of sight for motorists, and creating litter, which detracts from the beauty of the City and litters the streets.

Businesses

Businesses are continuing to seek opportunities to advertise through signage, with some advising that more opportunities are needed. In particular, stakeholders with the greatest need include small- and medium-sized businesses who are conscious of the cost of advertising, as well as businesses which are located in the backs of plazas and/or are setback far from the street.

Feather banners

Staff note that many businesses have opted to use "feather banners", which are a type of sign now also being permitted in Aurora, Brampton, Ottawa, Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and several other municipalities; they are sometimes restricted to particular types of businesses, such as car dealerships and new home sales centres.

Examples of restrictions include that they not be on residential property, that there be a limit of two per property, or that they be displayed for a maximum of 8 weeks and have a height restriction of 2.4 m. Few complaints have been received about this type of signage in Vaughan.

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Mobile signs

The sign industry expressed support for a reduction on use and design restrictions on mobile signs, such as requiring that all characters must be white with letters of a certain size. Both the sign industry and staff indicated that there is considerable demand for opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses to advertise, with the sign industry suggesting that more mobile signs might be a good deterrent of the use of illegal signs. Conversely, many Vaughan residents did not indicate a desire to see more temporary signage.

Digital and billboard signs

Survey respondents, as well as the sign industry and staff, also suggested making use of digital/ electronic technology to satisfy the City's advertising needs. Other municipalities, such as London, Ottawa and Toronto, currently allow digital signage, subject to provisions that address community safety and standards, including restrictions on location, distancing from residential areas, the use of animated or variable, and illumination.

In addition, the City has several billboards, including digital billboard signs, which have been implemented through various special projects. Both the Sign industry and staff believe that consistent rules across the City with respect to these types of signage will benefit both businesses and residents.

Window signs

At present, window signage in Vaughan is prohibited from covering more than 20% of a premise's window to a maximum of 0.5 square metres. In reviewing this provision, staff considered Heritage and community standards, legislation in other municipalities and the benefits of window signage.

Staff noted that a number of businesses view window signage as an important form of advertising, with many opting to use signage which covers more than 20%.

Staff also noted that other types of window coverings are not regulated or restricted; as such, nothing prevents businesses from painting their windows a solid colour, using a tinted or reflective coating, putting up interior blinds or taking other privacy measures, which many choose to do.

A review of various Canadian municipalities revealed that cities have a variety of approaches on the proportion of a window that can be covered with signage, ranging from no restriction up to a restriction of 50%, with some requiring additional approvals for areas of cultural and historical significance.

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In consultation with the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayer's Association (KARA), the Kleinburg Business Improvement Association and other Heritage Conservation District stakeholders, staff heard that it was important that the character of these areas be upheld, and that illegal and poorly suited signage was a common problem which requires greater attention from the City.

To address this range of interests, staff propose the following for business premises:

- continuing to require current window signage size restrictions within Heritage Conservation Districts, in order to continue to support the specific character of those areas
- removing the restriction for premises outside of Heritage Conservation Districts, supporting the preference of businesses to use the size of window signage they see fit

Third-party election signs

In line with Municipal Elections Act, the municipality will now allow third-party elections signs, subject to the same placement and size restrictions as other election signs. Third parties will be required to register with the municipality and may produce signage in support or opposition of either a certified candidate or a “yes” or “no” balloted question, as defined in the Act.

Development signs

At present, a development sign can be erected to advertise a development that has not yet been approved by the City, because our municipal by-law does not regulate the content of the sign. Over the last year, staff received a handful of complaints about this, with residents stating that they believed that developments should be approved before a sign can be erected.

To understand the perspective of developers, staff reached out to several developers, as well as consulted with the Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Association on the matter. BILD is an association that includes over 1,400 builders, land developers, and renovators from across the Greater Toronto Area.

BILD explained that many of these signs advertise developments as “coming soon”, with their purpose being to generate interest and to contribute to securing funding for these projects. If development signs were prohibited until approval for the development were received, BILD expressed that this could potentially lead to significant delays in securing important funding.

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As a responsible partner and steadfast promoter of professional best practices, BILD expressed that they would be open to exploring a voluntary solution, facilitating communications between the City and developers to encourage them to voluntarily provide project approval statuses on their development advertising, as a way to support transparency and contribute to consumer confidence.

No instances of harm or fraud to consumers were reported to BCLPS as a result of developers' advertising prior to approval. In addition, staff noted that the defrauding of consumers by developers was not listed as an issue on the Province's Consumer Protection Ontario site.

Staff also noted a mixed regulatory approach to this issue, with some cities opting not to impose any restrictions, such as Toronto and Vancouver, and others requiring various municipal approvals prior to posting signage, such as Markham, London, Newmarket, King, Richmond Hill, and Hamilton.

Given the above considerations, staff considered development signage both from the consumer protection perspective and from supporting the developments that will serve the City's rapidly growing population. For these reasons:

- staff recommend engaging developers to voluntarily advertise the approval statuses of their projects; and
- staff will continue to monitor for any consumer concerns arising from development signage.

Developing signage opportunities that protect community safety and uphold standards

To address the opportunities identified under this objective, staff propose developing the recommendations that consider the following areas for the Phase 2 Spring 2018 report:

- Consideration of more permanent signage opportunities, such as:
 - Allowing digital signage with first-party advertising, as well as permanent signage such as plaza pedestal signs with digital components
 - Allowing greater use of billboards, both traditional and digital usage
 - Exploring whether more permanent signage or larger permanent signs can be permitted within plazas, considering their characteristics and past decisions through the Sign Variance process
- Relaxation of design restrictions on mobile signage to allow use of colour, graphics and different fonts.

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- Allowance of some temporary types of signage with clear regulations and accountability, such as:
 - Allowing licensed contractors to use lawn signs on private property during their work
 - Allowing businesses to use first-party feather banners subject to conditions
- Requiring real estate open house signs to display the address being advertised
- Engagement of other public agencies to discuss the impacts of permanent signage.

To develop permanent signage, the City will continue to engage key stakeholders to ensure an appropriate range of interests are represented.

Objective 3 – Allow greater cost recovery for infractions and stronger penalties for offenders

The public indicated that there should be harsher penalties for those who create clutter within the City through use of prohibited signage and promotional materials.

To provide stronger deterrents, staff propose the following:

- Strengthen fine provisions to account for multiple and ongoing offences
- Allow fees for the recovery of costs relating to the removal, storage, recycling and disposal of signage
- Extend accountability for violations to those who produce, distribute, allow and benefit from signage
- Where costs of remedial work cannot be recovered, the City is to collect fines in a manner like taxes. This shall extend to offenders that hold property and outside, as well as within, Vaughan

Objective 4 – Modernization of Sign Permit services

Sign industry stakeholders have recommended that the City look at allowing online and email applications for sign permits.

To address this, Building Standards and BCLPS will consult with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to explore how departments can processes electronic permit applications and accept the electronic submissions. This is a priority within the Corporation's Digital Strategy, and address two key focus areas:

- Focus 2: Citizens Can Do Business with The City Through Digital Channels; and
- Focus 4: Internal Digital Transformation.

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The implementation of future e-services will provide efficiencies and cost-savings for submitting sign permit applications, as well as increase the level of service delivery.

Objective 5 – Leverage knowledge and resources to provide collaborative, efficient enforcement

Public agency collaboration

At present, BCLPS, Public Works and York Region all share enforcement responsibilities for signage and promotional materials. York Region provides regulatory oversight of Regional roads, and City staff provide oversight on City roads, with the exception of 400-series highways, which is the purview of the MTO.

In the 2014 elections, BCLPS worked with York Region to provide education and enforcement related to election sign placement. As a result, the 2014 elections had many fewer complaints than in previous years.

Open house real estate signs

Overcrowding of Open House real estate signs on weekends is also an issue of concern. At present, real estate agents are restricted to displaying three signs per open house. In instances where agents are showing several properties in one area, it may appear that they are using more signs than permitted. To clearly identify instances where a prohibited number of signs is being used, staff and real estate stakeholders both suggested including the name of the property on the signage.

To continue to build upon these collaborative relationships, staff propose to:

- review enforcement practices for opportunities to better share information to address and respond to concerns, such as the proliferation of prohibited signs, which are the community's largest concerns
- require open-house signs to display the name of the property
- leverage partnerships with the Region to make the best use of shared and combined resources, such as providing public education and collaborative enforcement for elections
- engage other internal and external stakeholders when developing recommendations for the Spring 2018 report, ensuring that different priorities are optimally addressed

Objective 6 - Environmental sustainability

As an industry that produces many disposable products, staff suggested that the City should explore opportunities to support companies which demonstrate more sustainable

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business practices.

To address this, staff propose to:

- explore opportunities to build environmental sustainability into future procurement practices for sign vendors which work with the City

Objective 7 - Legislative sustainability

In line with the Council-approved By-law Strategy to ensure the by-law continues to be relevant, staff propose to:

- consolidate the three by-laws governing into one
- develop protocols to monitor and identify trends, issues and needs
- support future information-based decision-making

Financial Impact

There is no anticipated financial impact as a result of these recommendations.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

As a result of the review, staff have already begun examining best approaches to collaborate with other agencies, such as discussion of:

- the development of third-party election sign legislation with the Region
- MTO involvement in permit approvals for large signage within 400 metres of 400-series highways

As well, BCLPS will consult with the Region, MTO and YRP for development of permanent signage for the Spring 2018 report.

Conclusion

This report's recommendations propose to address the City's urgent needs to strengthen staff's ability to enforce legislation, address provincially mandated signage and current processes, and establish regulations to address common sign types. The Spring 2018 recommendations will address the City's longer-term signage needs, endeavouring to provide signage opportunities that will protect community safety, uphold standards and meet our community's signage needs.

Due to the widespread use, impact and complexity of signage throughout the City, BCLPS has consulted and will continue to do so with residents, members of the sign industry and business community, and the following staff groups and public agencies:

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- Access Vaughan
- Accessibility Office
- Building Standards
- City Clerk
- City Planning
- Corporate Communications
- Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning
- Economic Development and Culture Services
- Environmental Services
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Legal Services
- Ministry of Transportation Ontario
- Municipal Partnerships
- Parks Development
- Recreation Services
- Sign Variance Committee
- Toronto Public Library
- Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations
- York Region
- York Regional Police

This report's recommendations, which incorporate feedback from the aforementioned groups, aim to create regulation that is enforceable, relevant and addresses the needs of the City's diverse stakeholders.

For more information, please contact:

Gus Michaels, Director, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services Department, ext. 8735.

Attachments

1. Schedule A – Sign By-law review recommendations
2. Schedule B – Sign By-law review summary of stakeholder engagement and research

Prepared by

Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst, ext. 8783

Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Manager of Policy and Business Planning, ext. 8782

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)



C2

COMMUNICATION

CW (WS) - January 24, 2018

ITEM - 2

Sign By-law Review – Phase One

Committee of the Whole (WS) Presentation | January 24, 2018

Gus Michaels, Director, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services



The Sign By-law Review

By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) staff are reviewing the **City's three sign by-laws that regulate:**

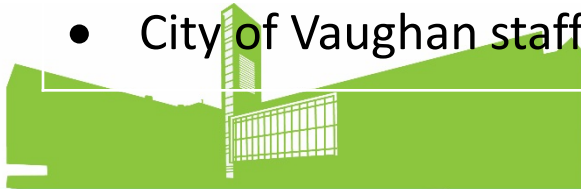
- signs on public
- signs on private property
- the Sign Variance Committee

The review is in accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy.



Stakeholder engagement

- The general public
- The sign industry
- Various religious and community organizations
- Various advocacy groups, such as Toronto Real Estate Board, Sign Association of Canada, BILD and Vaughan Chamber of Commerce
- Public agencies, such as the Regional Municipality of York, Ministry of Transportation Ontario, York Regional Police
- Other municipalities
- City of Vaughan staff from across the City



What we've heard from stakeholders

- **The public** is most concerned about illegal or unsafely placed temporary signage, such as posters, stickers and placards.
- The City should have **tougher enforcement and stricter penalties** for offenders.
- **Businesses and community agencies** need opportunities to advertise in a compliant and effective manner.
- The City should provide **clear, accessible information and permitting**.
- There is increasing interest in **billboard and digital signage**.



Objectives of the review

1. Develop **clear, accessible, relevant** rules.
2. Provide **signage opportunities that protect community safety and uphold standards.**
3. Allow **greater cost recovery for infractions and stronger penalties for offenders.**
4. **Modernize** Sign Permit services.
5. Leverage knowledge and resources to provide **collaborative, efficient enforcement.**
6. Support **environmental sustainability.**
7. Support **legislative sustainability.**

Phases of the review

Phase	Areas to be addressed
Phase One: <u>Near future</u> <u>opportunities</u> <i>January 2018 report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• by-law consolidation• regulatory relief to the sign industry and businesses• third-party elections signs• use of signage by licensed contractors• strengthening the City's enforcement and cost recovery
Phase Two: <u>Longer term</u> <u>opportunities</u> <i>Spring 2018 report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• digital, billboard and pedestal signs• Heritage Conservation Districts• Sign Variance Committee• gateway signage• feather banners

Phase One Recommendations

No.	Recommendations
1	Development of one by-law to govern sign regulation.
2	Allow licensed Renovators, Fence Installers, Pavers, Landscapers, Pool Installers and provincially certified trades to use lawn signs on private property with the property owner's permission during the course of their work.
3	Eliminate design restrictions on mobile sign graphics and lettering .
4	Allow City of Vaughan staff and the Regional Municipality of York to be exempt from the requirements of the City's Sign By-law.
5 – 7	Introduce third party elections signage including a \$100 fee per registrant.

Phase One Recommendations (continued)

No.	Recommendations
8 - 10	<p>Strengthen the City's ability to enforce the by-law by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• expanding accountability for infractions to anyone who causes, permits or contributes to a contravention of the by-law;• better recovering costs for sign removal, storage and disposal; and• collecting remedial work costs in a manner similar to taxes, where appropriate.
11	<p>Disposing of certain types of prohibited signage on public property without notice to the owner, such as posters, stickers and placards.</p>



Phase One Recommendations (continued)

No.	Recommendations
12	Remove the restriction on window signs with respect to the percentage of window area they can occupy, except in Heritage Conservation Districts.
13	Require real estate open-house or similar signs to be required to include the address of the corresponding property
14	Update the Special Sign District maps be updated in accordance with the Heritage Conservation Districts established by the Development Planning



Next steps

- Staff will implement Council-approved changes.
- The Phase Two Working Group will begin developing recommendations.
- BCLPS will report to Council with Phase Two recommendations in Spring 2018.



Thank you for reviewing our presentation

For more information, please visit www.vaughan.ca/bylaw or contact BCLPS staff:

Gus Michaels, Director

Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Manager of Policy and Business Planning

Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst



Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association

P.O. Box 202, Kleinburg, Ontario, L0J 1C0
Email: kara@kara-inc.ca Website: www.kara-inc.ca

January 23, 2018

To: Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst
City of Vaughan | By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services

c.c. Mayor, Regional Councillors, Local Councillors
Office of the City Clerk

C 3
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ITEM - 2

Signage in the Kleinburg Heritage Conservation District

KARA strongly encourages the strict enforcement of the signage restrictions currently in place with particular attention to the proliferation of small signs.

Neon (and imitation neon) signs and backlit signs, especially animated signs (ones where the content keeps changing) are wholly inappropriate in a Heritage Conservation District. The lit signs saying 'open' can be replaced with a card, which is how it has been done previously.

Mobile signs should not be permitted in a HCD.

Specific Examples in the Kleinburg area:

Signs on the boulevard or in front of shops like those of Hawthorne House, Chartreuse, Avlyn or Sugar Plum are quite acceptable in an HCD. The much larger ones such as the Remax signs and the condo sign on Stegman's Mill, are not. Nor are the Remax banners on the fence at Stegman's/Islington or the music studio on Stegman's.

There is the growing proliferation of movable sandwich boards or A-frame boards, especially outside Canadiana Square, but in other places as well. This is inappropriate in a HCD.

While they may be legal, the towering fluorescent signs in front of Kleinburg Public School and Elementary School La Fontaine are totally out of scale and character to the schools and the village, making an unsightly entrance to the Village. Reduced scale, at a minimum, would be of some help. Historical character would be best.

KARA Board is wondering what could be done to tone down some of the signage. Ones that are definitely non-heritage and inappropriate are the red-and-white sign for the spa in Greco's latest development, the plastic sign for cosmetic surgery on the side of the log house on Kellam and the RE/MAX signs near Stegman's. There is a small southern Ontario municipality that requires street front signage to be gold on brown and front lit, similar to the Kleinburg Dentistry sign just north of Stegman's. This municipality seems to be able to enforce it, although they did permit grandfathering on the existing signage.

Comments on some of the points from the link:

2. Permission, for certain licensed and certified businesses, to use lawn signs on private property during the course of their work.-

Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association

P.O. Box 202, Kleinburg, Ontario, L0J 1C0

Email: kara@kara-inc.ca Website: www.kara-inc.ca

I think the word "certain" in reference to businesses is very ambiguous language. It would make sense to properly identify what businesses are permitted to do so.

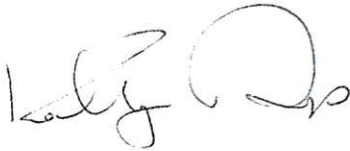
3. Elimination of design restrictions on mobile signs.

Eliminating design restrictions on mobile signs could become an issue.

4. Elimination of size restrictions on window signs in areas other than Heritage Conservation Districts. This is a positive point I think it important they continue to enforce special designation for our Heritage District.

KARA understands the need for businesses to attract patrons, but unfortunately the adverse effect occurs when there are too many. Also the 'consistency' look of the signs is imperative as it can either take away or enhance the heritage atmosphere which in turn affects the tourism draw to the town, which of course ultimately affects the local businesses to a far greater degree. A proper signage plan will be instrumental in sustaining the vibrancy of the town and the business it brings in.

Regards,



Kathryn Angus

President – Kleinburg & Area Ratepayers' Association, on behalf of the KARA Board

Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association

P.O. Box 202, Kleinburg, Ontario, L0J 1C0

Email: kara@kara-inc.ca Website: www.kara-inc.ca



Kleinburg and Area Ratepayers' Association

P.O. Box 202, Kleinburg, Ontario, L0J 1C0

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Item:



Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report

DATE: Wednesday, January 24, 2018

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: SIGN BY-LAW REVIEW – PHASE ONE

FROM:

Mary Realì, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

Staff have undertaken a review of the City's by-laws that regulate signs, in accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy. As part of this review, the three existing municipal by-laws, which govern signage on public and private property, as well as the Sign Variance Committee, will be consolidated into a comprehensive Sign By-law. In addition, the other goals of the review are to produce regulations that will:

- optimally protect, preserve and promote the safety of Vaughan residents
- support community standards and the attractiveness and liveability of the City
- serve the needs of businesses and the community
- be user friendly, and easy to understand and comply with
- provide value to taxpayers through efficient and effective processes, and the optimal use of technology

To address the complexity of sign regulation in the City, while also moving forward quickly on long-needed changes, the review is being conducted in two phases, as detailed in the Background section.

Recommendations

1. That Council adopt the recommendations provided in Attachment 1 of this report; and
2. That Council authorize staff to undertake any other actions required to implement the recommendations of this report, including any consequential amendments to other by-laws.

Report Highlights

- Development of one by-law to govern sign regulation, to be referred to as the “Sign By-law” to repeal the existing three by-laws, as amended, pertaining to sign regulation.
- Permission for certain licensed and certified businesses to use lawn signs on private property during the course of their work and requirements for real estate open-house or similar signs to include the address of the corresponding property.
- Elimination of design restrictions on mobile signs and size restrictions on window signs in businesses outside of Heritage Conservation Districts.
- Introduction of provisions for third party elections signage, in line with the Municipal Elections Act, including the introduction of a \$100 fee per registrant.
- Strengthening of the City’s ability to enforce the Sign By-law, through measures that include presumptive offences, broader authority to recover costs, and greater latitude for removal and disposal.
- Provision to exempt the City and the Regional Municipality of York from the requirements of the by-law.

Background

The City of Vaughan is a thriving metropolis in the midst of a period of rapid expansion. In this environment of growing choices and options, signage continues to be a valued opportunity by which Vaughan’s diverse business community and other organizations strive to engage members of the public.

In accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) has been conducting a review of its by-laws, including the City’s various by-laws that regulate signs in order to address the range of advertising needs.

Stakeholders and research

With a view to developing a comprehensive set of regulatory opportunities, BCLPS staff engaged and will continue to engage a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Consultation thus far have generated a broad range of feedback from stakeholder groups, including the general public, the sign industry, the business community, special

event organizers, Community Service Organizations, other public agencies, such as the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), York Region (the Region) and York Regional Police (YRP), neighbouring municipalities, and City staff throughout the organization.

Phases

Due to the review's complexity, this review is being conducted in two phases, in order to fulsomely engage stakeholders and consider the implications of different options.

Phase 1: January 2018 report

Recommendations in this report will address opportunities which can be implemented in the near future, such as by-law consolidation, providing regulatory relief to the sign industry and businesses that use signs, developing third-party elections regulations, allowing licensed contractors to use signage in the course of their work, and strengthening the City's ability to enforce violations and recover costs.

Phase 2: Spring 2018 report

These recommendations will address longer-term opportunities and emerging issues. Staff will provide advice to Council on expanding opportunities for advertising using permanent signage and on developing guidelines to support consistent decision-making. Specific areas to be considered will include:

- establishing legislation for digital signage, which addresses community standards and safety
- permitting first-party pedestal signs with a digital component
- developing new legislation for billboards, (also called "poster panels"), including the deletion of the provision that requires two billboards be taken down for every one that is put up
- aligning by-law regulations pertaining to developments with more recent decisions made by the Sign Variance Committee
- expanding sign provisions that apply in Heritage Conservation Districts
- exploring the possibility of gateway signage at major entrances to the City, in order to advertise City-sanctioned events and diffuse public messages allowing feather banners on private property

Stakeholder engagement

To engage stakeholders, staff have established a review web page, communicated through established business community newsletters, conducted internal and external public consultations, held meetings, examined complaints data, conducted an Access Vaughan telephone survey, and engaged individuals through email and telephone. A detailed description of these activities is provided in Schedule B of this report.

Previous Reports/Authority

This review is being conducted in line with the Council approved [City of Vaughan By-law Strategy](#), adopted by Council on June 24, 2014.

More information about the review is available online at www.vaughan.ca/bylaw on the [Sign By-law Review](#) webpage.

Analysis and Options

Staff identified both regulatory and operational opportunities in relation to the objectives of the review. These are discussed below with respect to the review's objectives and in support of the specific recommendations outlined in Schedule A.

Objective 1 – Develop clear, accessible, relevant rules

BCLPS identified that most internal and external stakeholders had some level of confusion about existing sign legislation, including how it applies to the public, City staff, and other public agencies.

Signage approval in the City can occur through several channels:

- Building Standards permits, which permits signage compliant with Vaughan by-laws
- the Sign Variance Committee, for consideration of signs which are not compliant with the by-law
- the Site Plan Review process, in which an entire development plan, including its signage, is reviewed
- special projects managed by the City, in which signage is a component of the project
- signs posted by the Regional Municipality of York ("the Region")

Signs approved through any of these channels undergo significant staff scrutiny and, as a result very rarely receive any complaints from public; for these reasons, and to ensure the City and Region have the flexibility to post the required signage, staff recommended that the City and Region be exempt from the provisions of the By-law.

With that said, to support consistent decision-making, staff recommend amending current regulations to consider signage decisions which have been made throughout these channels, such as allowing larger signage, or more signage.

To meet this objective, staff propose to:

- consolidate the three existing Sign By-laws into one, which provides clear rules for all stakeholders
- exempt the City and the Region from the requirements of the By-law
- develop legislation to address new and emerging types of signage, as described in Objective 2

- expand upon existing media for the dissemination of information, including the City's customer service channels, such as Access Vaughan, service counters throughout the City, and in the course of enforcement activities

Objective 2 – Provide signage opportunities that protect community safety and uphold standards

Staff considered a diverse range of input in order to recommend changes to existing legislation and to develop additional opportunities to meet the advertising needs of Vaughan businesses and community organizations, while balancing priorities of protecting community safety and standards.

Prohibited signs

With respect to signage and promotional materials, the majority of complaints received by BCLPS from the public are about illegal signage, such as posters, stickers, placards and lawn signs. This concern was confirmed by an Access Vaughan survey of over 271 residents, who complained that the proliferation of illegal signage was causing safety and nuisance issues, such as impeding line of sight for motorists, and creating litter, which detracts from the beauty of the City and litters the streets.

Businesses

Businesses are continuing to seek opportunities to advertise through signage, with some advising that more opportunities are needed. In particular, stakeholders with the greatest need include small- and medium-sized businesses who are conscious of the cost of advertising, as well as businesses which are located in the backs of plazas and/or are setback far from the street.

Feather banners

Staff note that many businesses have opted to use “feather banners”, which are a type of sign now also being permitted in Aurora, Brampton, Ottawa, Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, and several other municipalities; they are sometimes restricted to particular types of businesses, such as car dealerships and new home sales centres.

Examples of restrictions include that they not be on residential property, that there be a limit of two per property, or that they be displayed for a maximum of 8 weeks and have a height restriction of 2.4 m. Few complaints have been received about this type of signage in Vaughan.

Mobile signs

The sign industry expressed support for a reduction on use and design restrictions on mobile signs, such as requiring that all characters must be white with letters of a certain size. Both the sign industry and staff indicated that there is considerable demand for opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses to advertise, with the sign

industry suggesting that more mobile signs might be a good deterrent of the use of illegal signs. Conversely, many Vaughan residents did not indicate a desire to see more temporary signage.

Digital and billboard signs

Survey respondents, as well as the sign industry and staff, also suggested making use of digital/ electronic technology to satisfy the City's advertising needs. Other municipalities, such as London, Ottawa and Toronto, currently allow digital signage, subject to provisions that address community safety and standards, including restrictions on location, distancing from residential areas, the use of animated or variable, and illumination.

In addition, the City has several billboards, including digital billboard signs, which have been implemented through various special projects. Both the Sign industry and staff believe that consistent rules across the City with respect to these types of signage will benefit both businesses and residents.

Window signs

At present, window signage in Vaughan is prohibited from covering more than 20% of a premise's window to a maximum of 0.5 square metres. In reviewing this provision, staff considered Heritage and community standards, legislation in other municipalities and the benefits of window signage.

Staff noted that a number of businesses view window signage as an important form of advertising, with many opting to use signage which covers more than 20%.

Staff also noted that other types of window coverings are not regulated or restricted; as such, nothing prevents businesses from painting their windows a solid colour, using a tinted or reflective coating, putting up interior blinds or taking other privacy measures, which many choose to do.

A review of various Canadian municipalities revealed that cities have a variety of approaches on the proportion of a window that can be covered with signage, ranging from no restriction up to a restriction of 50%, with some requiring additional approvals for areas of cultural and historical significance.

In consultation with the Kleinburg and Area Ratepayer's Association (KARA), the Kleinburg Business Improvement Association and other Heritage Conservation District stakeholders, staff heard that it was important that the character of these areas be upheld, and that illegal and poorly suited signage was a common problem which requires greater attention from the City.

To address this range of interests, staff propose the following for business premises:

- continuing to require current window signage size restrictions within Heritage Conservation Districts, in order to continue to support the specific character of those areas
- removing the restriction for premises outside of Heritage Conservation Districts, supporting the preference of businesses to use the size of window signage they see fit

Third-party election signs

In line with Municipal Elections Act, the municipality will now allow third-party elections signs, subject to the same placement and size restrictions as other election signs. Third parties will be required to register with the municipality and may produce signage in support or opposition of either a certified candidate or a “yes” or “no” balloted question, as defined in the Act.

Development signs

At present, a development sign can be erected to advertise a development that has not yet been approved by the City, because our municipal by-law does not regulate the content of the sign. Over the last year, staff received a handful of complaints about this, with residents stating that they believed that developments should be approved before a sign can be erected.

To understand the perspective of developers, staff reached out to several developers, as well as consulted with the Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Association on the matter. BILD is an association that includes over 1,400 builders, land developers, and renovators from across the Greater Toronto Area.

BILD explained that many of these signs advertise developments as “coming soon”, with their purpose being to generate interest and to contribute to securing funding for these projects. If development signs were prohibited until approval for the development were received, BILD expressed that this could potentially lead to significant delays in securing important funding.

As a responsible partner and steadfast promoter of professional best practices, BILD expressed that they would be open to exploring a voluntary solution, facilitating communications between the City and developers to encourage them to voluntarily provide project approval statuses on their development advertising, as a way to support transparency and contribute to consumer confidence.

No instances of harm or fraud to consumers were reported to BCLPS as a result of developers’ advertising prior to approval. In addition, staff noted that the defrauding of consumers by developers was not listed as an issue on the Province’s Consumer Protection Ontario site.

Staff also noted a mixed regulatory approach to this issue, with some cities opting not to impose any restrictions, such as Toronto and Vancouver, and others requiring various municipal approvals prior to posting signage, such as Markham, London, Newmarket, King, Richmond Hill, and Hamilton.

Given the above considerations, staff considered development signage both from the consumer protection perspective and from supporting the developments that will serve the City's rapidly growing population. For these reasons:

- staff recommend engaging developers to voluntarily advertise the approval statuses of their projects; and
- staff will continue to monitor for any consumer concerns arising from development signage.

Developing signage opportunities that protect community safety and uphold standards

To address the opportunities identified under this objective, staff propose developing the recommendations that consider the following areas for the Phase 2 Spring 2018 report:

- Consideration of more permanent signage opportunities, such as:
 - Allowing digital signage with first-party advertising, as well as permanent signage such as plaza pedestal signs with digital components
 - Allowing greater use of billboards, both traditional and digital usage
 - Exploring whether more permanent signage or larger permanent signs can be permitted within plazas, considering their characteristics and past decisions through the Sign Variance process
- Relaxation of design restrictions on mobile signage to allow use of colour, graphics and different fonts.
- Allowance of some temporary types of signage with clear regulations and accountability, such as:
 - Allowing licensed contractors to use lawn signs on private property during their work
 - Allowing businesses to use first-party feather banners subject to conditions
- Requiring real estate open house signs to display the address being advertised
- Engagement of other public agencies to discuss the impacts of permanent signage.

To develop permanent signage, the City will continue to engage key stakeholders to ensure an appropriate range of interests are represented.

Objective 3 – Allow greater cost recovery for infractions and stronger penalties for offenders

The public indicated that there should be harsher penalties for those who create clutter within the City through use of prohibited signage and promotional materials.

To provide stronger deterrents, staff propose the following:

- Strengthen fine provisions to account for multiple and ongoing offences
- Allow fees for the recovery of costs relating to the removal, storage, recycling and disposal of signage
- Extend accountability for violations to those who produce, distribute, allow and benefit from signage
- Where costs of remedial work cannot be recovered, the City is to collect fines in a manner like taxes. This shall extend to offenders that hold property and outside, as well as within, Vaughan

Objective 4 – Modernization of Sign Permit services

Sign industry stakeholders have recommended that the City look at allowing online and email applications for sign permits.

To address this, Building Standards and BCLPS will consult with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to explore how departments can process electronic permit applications and accept the electronic submissions. This is a priority within the Corporation's Digital Strategy, and address two key focus areas:

- Focus 2: Citizens Can Do Business with The City Through Digital Channels; and
- Focus 4: Internal Digital Transformation.

The implementation of future e-services will provide efficiencies and cost-savings for submitting sign permit applications, as well as increase the level of service delivery.

Objective 5 – Leverage knowledge and resources to provide collaborative, efficient enforcement

Public agency collaboration

At present, BCLPS, Public Works and York Region all share enforcement responsibilities for signage and promotional materials. York Region provides regulatory oversight of Regional roads, and City staff provide oversight on City roads, with the exception of 400-series highways, which is the purview of the MTO.

In the 2014 elections, BCLPS worked with York Region to provide education and enforcement related to election sign placement. As a result, the 2014 elections had many fewer complaints than in previous years.

Open house real estate signs

Overcrowding of Open House real estate signs on weekends is also an issue of concern. At present, real estate agents are restricted to displaying three signs per open house. In instances where agents are showing several properties in one area, it may appear that they are using more signs than permitted. To clearly identify instances

where a prohibited number of signs is being used, staff and real estate stakeholders both suggested including the name of the property on the signage.

To continue to build upon these collaborative relationships, staff propose to:

- review enforcement practices for opportunities to better share information to address and respond to concerns, such as the proliferation of prohibited signs, which are the community's largest concerns
- require open-house signs to display the name of the property
- leverage partnerships with the Region to make the best use of shared and combined resources, such as providing public education and collaborative enforcement for elections
- engage other internal and external stakeholders when developing recommendations for the Spring 2018 report, ensuring that different priorities are optimally addressed

Objective 6 - Environmental sustainability

As an industry that produces many disposable products, staff suggested that the City should explore opportunities to support companies which demonstrate more sustainable business practices.

To address this, staff propose to:

- explore opportunities to build environmental sustainability into future procurement practices for sign vendors which work with the City

Objective 7 - Legislative sustainability

In line with the Council-approved By-law Strategy to ensure the by-law continues to be relevant, staff propose to:

- consolidate the three by-laws governing into one
- develop protocols to monitor and identify trends, issues and needs
- support future information-based decision-making

Financial Impact

There is no anticipated financial impact as a result of these recommendations.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

As a result of the review, staff have already begun examining best approaches to collaborate with other agencies, such as discussion of:

- the development of third-party election sign legislation with the Region
- MTO involvement in permit approvals for large signage within 400 metres of 400-series highways

As well, BCLPS will consult with the Region, MTO and YRP for development of permanent signage for the Spring 2018 report.

Conclusion

This report's recommendations propose to address the City's urgent needs to strengthen staff's ability to enforce legislation, address provincially mandated signage and current processes, and establish regulations to address common sign types. The Spring 2018 recommendations will address the City's longer-term signage needs, endeavouring to provide signage opportunities that will protect community safety, uphold standards and meet our community's signage needs.

Due to the widespread use, impact and complexity of signage throughout the City, BCLPS has consulted and will continue to do so with residents, members of the sign industry and business community, and the following staff groups and public agencies:

- Access Vaughan
- Accessibility Office
- Building Standards
- City Clerk
- City Planning
- Corporate Communications
- Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning
- Economic Development and Culture Services
- Environmental Services
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Legal Services
- Ministry of Transportation Ontario
- Municipal Partnerships
- Parks Development
- Recreation Services
- Sign Variance Committee
- Toronto Public Library
- Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations
- York Region
- York Regional Police

This report's recommendations, which incorporate feedback from the aforementioned groups, aim to create regulation that is enforceable, relevant and addresses the needs of the City's diverse stakeholders.

For more information, please contact:

Gus Michaels, Director, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services Department, ext. 8735.

Attachments

1. Schedule A – Sign By-law review recommendations
2. Schedule B – Sign By-law review summary of stakeholder engagement and research

Prepared by

Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst, ext. 8783

Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Manager of Policy and Business Planning, ext. 8782

SCHEDULE A – SIGN BY-LAW REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT the current by-laws governing signage in the City (By-laws 203-92, 178-2003 and 286-91 and their respective amendments) be repealed, and their contents be consolidated into the new City's Sign By-law.
2. THAT licensed Renovators, Fence Installers, Pavers, Landscapers, Pool Installers and trades which are licensed or otherwise certified by provincial legislation, be permitted to use lawn signs subject to the following:
 - a. the signs may only be displayed with the permission of the property owner
 - b. the sign may not exceed 0.6 square metres
 - c. the sign displays the business' municipal licence number
 - d. the sign is removed within five business days of the date of completion of the work performed
3. THAT restrictions on mobile signs with respect to the use of graphics and lettering be eliminated
4. THAT the City of Vaughan and Regional Municipality of York (Region) be exempt from the requirements of the City's Sign By-law, which extends to signage developed by the City or Region for the purpose of distribution by other parties, subject to prescribed conditions
5. THAT the Fees and Charges By-law 171-2013, be amended to include a non-refundable permit registration fee of \$100 for third-party Elections signage, in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act
6. THAT third-parties registered in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, be permitted to erect an election sign only after the required non-refundable fee is paid to the City
7. THAT the area of third party election signs not exceed 1.49 square metres
8. THAT the presumption clause be expanded to ensure that any party causing, permitting, or contributing to a contravention of the City's Sign By-law, or being advertised in contravention of the City's Sign By-law, may be held responsible for such contravention and be subject to a fine under the by-law
9. THAT the enforcement provisions be strengthened to recover any costs incurred by the City for the removal, storage and disposal related to such activities, pursuant to the Municipal Act
10. THAT, in the appropriate circumstances, costs of remedial work may be collected in a manner like taxes
11. THAT certain prohibited signage on public property, such as posters, stickers, and placards, can be disposed of without notice to the owner
12. THAT restrictions on window signs with respect to the percentage of window area they can occupy be removed, except in Heritage Conservation Districts (referenced as "Special Sign Districts" in the Sign By-law)
13. THAT all real estate open-house or similar signs be required to include the address of the corresponding property

14. THAT Special Sign District maps be updated in accordance with the Heritage Conservation Districts established by the Development Planning department pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act.

SCHEDULE B – SIGN BY-LAW REVIEW SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH



Sign By-law review document: Stakeholder engagement, input and research



Photo: Plaza with pedestal and A-frame signs.

Gus Michaels, Director
By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services Department
November 2017



Sign By-law review discussion document
Stakeholder input, research and questions

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Sign By-law review discussion document

Stakeholder input, research and questions

Overview

In accordance with the Council-approved By-law Strategy, the By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services department (BCLPS) is conducting the Sign By-law review, which will review the three existing City of Vaughan sign by-laws, which regulate signs on both public and private property. More information about the review is provided at www.vaughan.ca/bylaw.

The goals of this review are to identify and implement changes which will:

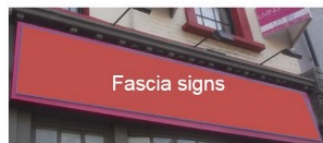
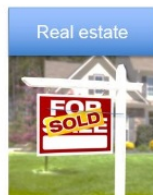
- optimally protects, preserves and promotes the safety of residents
- supports community standards, attractiveness and livability of the City
- serve the needs of businesses and the community
- develop legislation and rules which are user friendly, easy to understand and comply with
- provide value to taxpayers through efficient and effective processes, and optimal use of technology

This document provides a summary of stakeholder input and research gathered as part of the Sign By-law review, with the aim of developing a comprehensive understanding of concerns, suggestions and options.

Signage types

The images below provide a reminder of common signage types.

Common signs which are regulated





Sign By-law review discussion document

Stakeholder input, research and questions

Prohibited signs



Stakeholder engagement

Who we have heard from

City of Vaughan

Access Vaughan	Environmental Services	Transportation Services, Parks and Forestry Operations
Accessibility Office	Fire and Rescue Service	
Building Standards	Legal Services	Urban Design
City Clerk	Ministry of Transportation Ontario	
City Planning	Municipal Partnerships	
Corporate Communications	Parks Development	
Development Engineering and Infrastructure Planning	Recreation Services	
Economic Development and Culture Services	Sign Variance Committee	
	Toronto Public Library	

Other public agencies

- Ministry of Transportation Ontario
- York Region
- York Regional Police

Other sign industry stakeholders

- The general public
- The sign industry - temporary sign producers
- The sign industry - billboard producers
- Toronto Real Estate Board
- The Sign Association of Canada
- Vaughan Chamber of Commerce

Other municipalities considered

- Brampton
- King City
- London
- Markham
- Mississauga
- Montreal
- Niagara
- Ottawa
- Richmond Hill
- Toronto

Summary of input and research

This section provides a summary of input and research, grouping them into the following topics for ease of review:

1. City operations - coordination, collaboration and centralization
2. A comprehensive, coordinated and consistent design framework for the entire City
3. Removal and storage of signage
4. Temporary signs
5. Permanent signs
6. Addressing sign variances within the bylaw
7. Signage in windows
8. Digital signage
9. Rules for staff, public figures and the public
10. Working with the other Public Agencies

11. Elections and political message signs
12. Licensing, permitting and fees
13. Enforcement of compliance
14. Community Service Organizations and special events
15. Real estate and developer signage
16. Environmental sustainability
17. Cost recovery and funding

City operations - coordination, collaboration and centralization

Consultation revealed that many staff divisions and groups who use and/or develop signage, such as the following:

- **Access Vaughan**, who receive complaints from the public about signage.
- **Building Standards**, who issue sign permits and accept Sign Variance applications.
- **By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services**, who perform sign inspections, receive and investigate sign complaints, and enforce sign regulations through education, confiscation, fines and/or prosecution.
- **City Council**, who often use mobile signage to advertise public events.
- **Corporate Communications**, who assist in the design of signage, as well as manage digital sign messaging.
- **Development Engineering**, who advise on directional signage, providing direction for signage on public properties and provide recommendations for signage on private properties.
- **Economic Development and Municipal Partnerships**, developing billboard signage agreements with private companies, such as RCC Media, as well as developing signage for Sister Cities and providing input, guidance and/or funding to signage related to City branding, such as logos on private signs or placing banners within Heritage district.
- **Municipal Partnerships**, developing building naming opportunities for private companies which involve development of signage.
- **Development Planning**, who manage the site development process for new development projects, as well as overseeing certain changes to Heritage Preservation Districts, reviewing structural specifications, who can make recommendations that are not in line with City by-laws.



Sign By-law review discussion document

Stakeholder input, research and questions

- **Parks**, involved in developing in-park signage such as “911” informational and animal-related signs, as well as working with contracted architectural and landscaping firms for major park design, including signage.
- **Public Works**, who confiscate various types of illegal signage/advertising on their neighbourhood patrols, such as bag signs, placard signs, posters and stickers, and who have the equipment needed to remove other types of signs.
- **Recreation Services**, who use digital and mobile signage, as well as manage mobile signage space for Community Service Organizations.
- **The Sign Variance Committee**, an interdepartmental panel who review sign applications which are prohibited by the sign by-laws, providing a recommendation that would in the past be reviewed by Council for decision, but which will now be reviewed by the Building Standards and/or BCLPS director, to be directed to Council only if both directors do not approve the signage.
- **Various other departments**, who use signage to advertise their events, working with Corporate Communications to develop messaging, put messaging on digital and private companies to develop signage, such as Vaughan Public Library.

City staff almost unanimously expressed that it is often unclear about signage in the City, raising the following issues:

- **Regulations:** Staff have reported that regulations are often unclear on their applicability to different scenarios, advising that it can be challenging to review the unconsolidated regulations, which involved the three sign by-laws which currently exist which are comprised of 18 by-law documents.
- **Permitting, maintenance and enforcement:** Some staff have expressed that the by-law is unclear about whether they require a sign permit for the signage used for their projects, who to go to report issues or incorrect information and who to contact to investigate issues.
- **Signage development:** Most staff who use signage work with Corporate Communications, but staff working on major projects may also work with contracted architects and landscape architects; in both instances staff are sometime unclear if their work is in line with municipal legislation, and who to consult to ensure compliance.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Similarly, staff are unclear about which regulations apply to public-private partnerships, such as how a corporation should be allowed to display its name if it provides sponsorship to City Buildings. In the City of London, facial signs are permitted that relate to an entire building and which display the unique building name and which may include a corporate logo.



Sign By-law review discussion document Stakeholder input, research and questions

- **Information silos:** Staff advised that signage information is stored in different unconnected silos, such as versions 4 of the Amanda database for BCLPS, a later version for Building Standards and in site plans, stored on paper plans.

A comprehensive, coordinated and consistent design framework for the entire City

As per above, signage approval for the public can go through processes below governed by different rules:

- **Building Standards permits:** Persons can apply for sign permits through Building Standards, who will approve signage if compliant with Vaughan by-laws.
- **Sign Variance Committee:** For signs which are not compliant with the by-law, persons can apply to the Sign Variance committee. The committee makes decisions using various factors, such as distance from the roadway, other similar decisions made, other signage in the area and other factors such as community standards.
- **Site Plan Review:** Developers submit their developer plans to Development Planning on their project, who consult signage bylaws however can make recommendations which are not compliant with the by-law.
- **Special projects:** Special projects are managed by different departments within the organization, of which signage is a component and which may or may not be designed with input from City staff, and which often involve contracted architects and designers. Examples include major parks redesign and banners in Kleinburg.
- **Building naming:** Municipal Partnerships are just beginning to negotiate building naming opportunities with private companies, which will involve creation of signage.

Staff were concerned that decisions were being made without a comprehensive understanding of the legislation, without coordination with the relevant departments and in some cases, that legislation doesn't address the type of sign or advertising in questions, and that was inconsistent use of decision-making tools or guides. In particular, the following opportunities were identified:

- **Planning:** While Planning explained that existing processes provide them with the flexibility to make the needed design decisions for their project, that it would be useful to have a framework or standardized way to approach these decisions.
- **Sign Variance:** Similarly, some members of the Sign Variance explained that individual members draw on different resources to inform their decisions, such as the United States Sign Council's Sign Legibility Rules of Thumb guide. As such, it would be useful to have a protocol for all members to follow, drawing on the same resources.

To move forward in a coordinated, collaborative, consistent manner, staff suggested development and maintenance of “rules” which are mandatory, in an easily accessible format that that will be maintained regularly to ensure they remain relevant; the suggestion is to discuss whether this should be a by-law. It should address all development within the City, of which signage is one component, and should have clear specifications on structure and content, as well as prescribe required steps needed to make decisions that about situations which fall outside of the by-law.

Removal and storage of signage

Some staff expressed that existing staff resources are insufficient to remove all signage/advertising in a timely manner, such as signage placed in prohibited spaces (such as the sight triangle or public property) or illegal signage, such as banners, bag signs, poster, placards and stickers. They expressed the following issues:

- **Volume:** One issue is the high volume of inexpensive signage, such as lawn signs, which when confiscated, is not picked up by the sign companies or the persons/companies they represent, as it is less expensive to produce more signage than pay reclamations fees.
- **Equipment and access:** BCLPS staff advise they do not always have the adequate equipment to reach or remove signage. For example, staff have noted that sign companies sometimes place illegal signs in high places they cannot easily reach or use stickers which are not easily removed, or are large and require use of Public Works equipment for removal. As well, BCLPS staff noted that signs are often placed on intersection light posts, which require the area to be blocked off by City vehicles and pylons to create a safe environment. BCLPS staff noted that they believe Public Works may have better equipment to perform removals.
- **Interdepartmental and inter-agency coordination:** In the City of Vaughan, signage may be removed by City BCLPS or Public Works staff, or by York Region. Public Works staff are mainly involved in removal of illegal signage and discover signage during their regular patrols of the street or receive complaints through Access Vaughan. BCLPS staff are involved in other signage removal, with York Region staff involved with signage removal on York Regional Roads. The three groups advised that there is opportunity for better communication amongst them, such as to have BCLPS to report illegal signs to Public Works, or for York Region to share which signs they have permitted with BCLPS staff.
- **Public and volunteer involvement in sign removal:** The suggestion was made to enable members of the public, such as volunteers or school groups, in sign removal. Mississauga attempted to establish a volunteer program, but this reportedly had very few volunteers. In addition, another concern would be safety if there was a conflict between someone putting up a sign and removing it.
- **Illegal signage as waste:** It was noted that large volumes of illegal signage can be picked up, which are stored at the Joint Operations Centre. Staff noted that the bylaw advises that all signage will be stored for 30 days, however some believe that this should not apply to illegal signage. One suggestion would



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be to treat signage as waste, removing and disposing of it immediately; a counter argument to that approach would be that signage needs to be catalogued and retained in case charges are laid against the sign company or who they are advertising.

- **Sticker removal:** Staff explained that stickers can be difficult to remove. Staff advised that in the past, a non-stick spray was applied to some signage where stickers are often placed, however the spray had to be applied regularly in order to be effective; for this reason, it is no longer used. At present, Public Works staff use scrapers, which gets the job done.
- **Costs of removal and storage:** There was concern expressed over the cost of removal and storage, and recouping costs. Legal Services advised we can Provincial legislation to enable greater cost recovery, but that may require greater administrative burden in terms of recording signage and requirements to contact owner, with the possible consequence that high retrieval costs may cause the sign industry to not reclaim signs.
- **How other municipalities are recovering costs:** London uses the Repair and Storage Liens Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. R.24, as amended, to recover removal and storage costs through collection through municipal taxes, however also advising costs can be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction. Toronto also enables its cost recovery through passing costs for unclaimed signs onto future permits and onto property taxes. In addition, Toronto has a “third party signage” annual tax for signs larger than one square meter, intended to provide stable funding for their Sign By-law unit.

Temporary signs

Public complaints

The majority of sign related complaints which BCLPS receives are related to temporary signage and advertising, including lawn signs, placards and stickers.

The Access Vaughan Survey

To better understand public sentiment, Access Vaughan staff asked 734 callers whether they would like to share their views in a survey about signage, which led to completion of 271 surveys; of this group, 246 persons live in Vaughan, 95 do business in Vaughan, and three work in the Sign industry. When asked whether certain signs posted a safety issues or health and safety concern, they responded as outlined in the table:



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Table 2 - Response to Access Vaughan survey about signage

Signage	These signs are <u>not</u> a problem.	These signs are a problem.
A-frames	71%	29%
Mobile signs	74%	26%
Bag, lawn and placard signs	52%	47%
Posters	33%	67%
Stickers	32%	68%
Banners	85%	15%

From the above results, we see that:

- most respondents did not think that A-frame signs, mobile signs and banners signs were an issue
- half of respondents thought that lawn signs were an issue
- most people believed that posters and stickers were an issue

Respondents also made the comments:

- updates from the City on signage are important and provide an important avenue for free speech
- social media should be used in a greater way to advertise news within the City
- temporary signage can be dangerous because it sometimes blocks the sight of motorists and blows into the streets during poor, impeding traffic, and that signage should be set back from view.
- signage blocking views of drivers can be very dangerous
- temporary signage can cause Vaughan streets to look “tacky” and “cluttered” and that companies that put them up should be fined heavily
- the City should consider digital signage and LED lit signs rather than mobile and lawn signs that detract from the beauty of the City
- removal of temporary signage is sometimes a problem and should be a priority
- signage should be removed promptly after an event is over

- to create signs to keep residential streets quiet so children can study
- digital signs overhead can be dangerous if they fall

Comments about specific signs included the following:

Small businesses

Staff and the sign industry advised that businesses, especially small businesses were interested in more signage and would welcome the opportunity to use temporary signage more. Staff noted that small businesses were often unaware of sign regulation and suggestions were made to provide more education at the time of business licensing and permitting.

A-frames

Staff expressed that businesses view A-frame signs as important means of advertising, however reported concerns that these signs were sometimes placed in the public right-of-way and in prohibited areas to attract more attention, which can be problematic in impeding the view of traffic. Some staff noted that it may be a good idea to allow larger signs to ensure they are easily visible from the road, preventing motorists from squinting in order to see them. The sign industry also believed the City should move away from issuing stickers for permitted signs.

Mobile signs

The sign industry expressed that restrictions on mobile signs should be reduced. This includes:

- allowing more mobile signs in a given space
- reducing the moratorium
- allowing additional colours and images
- eliminating or allowing greater flexibility in the number of times a business should be able to advertise, particularly in places where there are only one or two tenants.

Both the sign industry and staff believe there is a great demand for businesses, especially small businesses in large plazas, to use mobile signs, especially for those who cannot afford digital. The industry believes that this would be good alternative to illegal signs



Feather signs and banners

Although prohibited, the City uses these feather signs, including at City Hall. Staff expressed concerns about the safety of signs in they are not properly anchored, however staff suggested that if they are permitted, than to limit them to three per property, similar to flags. Another suggestion was to allow businesses to choose between using different types of temporary signs to advertise, thus limiting volume of signs.

The public advised that they didn't see banners as an issues and special events planners would like to use them. Staff expressed concerns that they can cause issues if not improperly anchored, and if allowed, should be taken down when they show signs of wear and tear.

Various other municipalities are permitting feather signage and banners, such as to be used:

- for special events in Montreal and Richmond Hill
- when a new business has opened and is awaiting permanent signage in Richmond Hill
- in certain districts, such as downtown areas, such as in Brampton
- for new development sale centres in Brampton
- for car dealerships in Brampton.

The various regulation limited the number of and time period in which they can be displayed.

Building and vehicle wraps

Staff commented that they can significantly impact community aesthetic, but can be difficult to regulate. Staff noted instances of wrapped vehicles which would drive somewhere and park, serving as a temporary sign. In the City of London, to prevent vehicles from being used as signage, they require vehicles to be involved in the "weekly operation" of businesses.

Placards, posters and stickers

Members of the public showed their opposition to these signs in the survey mentioned above.

Other advertising and promotional materials

Staff suggested that the type of advertising is changing quickly, and the bylaw should be flexible enough to address these one-offs or changes. Examples included blow up gorilla, dancing flailing man signs, or other signage.

Lawn signs

Transportation Services is hoping to have Council approval to implement the “Slow Down” yellow-lawn-sign campaign used in other municipalities, aiming to have the public pick up and distribute these signs, but to ensure effective date removal if the signs become damaged or worn. The survey shows that about half of survey respondents are opposed to these signs.

Another staff suggestion received was to allow contractor to place lawn signs on properties where they are actively working.

A number of enforcement staff advised that clusters of lawn signs often appear, such as to advertise for independent contractors and businesses, or which misuse the term “Open House” used by realtors to bring attention to homes for lease or finished basements. One concern is that the sign owners

Permitting

Some staff suggested also allowing sign permits to be for longer periods, to decrease the number of re-inspections of the same signs, to allow more time to address by-law violations; one suggestion for how to do this is to tie temporary sign permitting to the business licensing and renewal process annually.

Other municipalities

Permitted types of sign vary by municipality; while most neighbouring municipalities allow A-frames and mobile signs, others are also permit a variety of temporary signage and advertising if they are posted for specific periods and do not impede traffic or cause safety concerns. For example, Montreal by-law advises it only allows temporary signage when new businesses open or for special events.

Permanent signs

Billboards

The City currently works with a few large billboard companies, who estimate that they are approximately 50 billboards in Vaughan. The bylaw allows approximately 100 billboards in Vaughan, however requires that two are taken down for one to go up, which they believe should be eliminated. They express that digital billboards may be good media to advertise for many stakeholders, more tastefully.

Other municipalities and billboards

Several other municipalities are allowing billboards with some of the following regulations. For example, in the City of London third-party billboard signs are permitted in commercial and industrial areas, however must be at least 30 m from a residential zone, and are subject to the following conditions:



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- Billboards which are viewable from more than one direction must have signage on both sides, or cover on the blank side.
- They may be a maximum area of 33 m² and maximum height of 8 m.
- They may not be less than 3.0m from any property line or be less than 100.0m from another third-party billboard sign.
- If there is a residential zone is on the opposite side of a street, the sign project more than 0.6m from the face of the wall to which it is attached, if it is a facial sign;
- It must not be within a sight triangle or be within 30 m a permanent ground sign on the same lot.

In Ottawa, digital billboards are permitted in various commercial and industrial zones, provided that they are 150 m from the nearest other static billboards and 300 m from another digital billboard. They are also permitted in some mixed used residential, provided that they are 1,000 m from any other billboards.

Pylon/ pedestal signs

There was a staff suggestion that allowing more pylon signs and/or pylon signs with a digital component, would allow business with a greater ability to advertise, a benefit to businesses and reducing potential use of prohibited signs.

Addressing sign variances within the bylaw

In 2016, there were 11 sign variance applications submitted by the public, with only four submitted in 2017 as of August. Staff who manage the process advise that the number of applications appear to be decreasing, though are unclear why, however suggest it may be that more signage is considered as part of the site plan review process. Staff suggested that the sign by-law be updated to include provisions which address the most common applications reasons, including:

- allowance of larger signage based on the sign's distance from the road
- allowance of a greater number or size of signs based on the size or characteristics of a development.

400 series highways

- The Ministry of Transportation has asked that the City circulate any applications for signs which are visible to a Provincial Highway.

Digital and illuminated signage

Both staff and the sign industry agree that there is a demand for digital signage, that it continues to be present in growing numbers, and also that there are serious concerns which need to be addressed. Another point to consider is that much of the large digital signage currently exists in Vaughan, mainly developed by RCC media, with only a few companies in the industry, which could potentially make regulation easier.

The following points arose in the discussion:

- **Brightness at night:** Residents are concerned about the brightness of signage at night, which suggests that if it is allowed, should be required to be turned off when a business is closed or dimmed greatly. These practices are in place for at least some of Vaughan's signs.
- **Distraction when driving:** There has been considerable debate about the extent of distraction caused by digital signs, such as due to rate of change of messages, changes in colour contrasts, poor visibility of messages, movement in messages; following from that is the debate on whether any such distractions would result in any accident. It appears there are many studies which support and oppose the premise that they are unsafe. One stakeholder advised that the City should conduct its own study, such as a pilot to test the impact of signs; others expressed that this type of study could potentially pose too great a risk to drivers' safety.
- **Interactive signs:** The sign industry advised that some signage interacts with persons' devices; for example, there are digital signs that interact with a person's smart phone to determine basic demographics, showing them a product they believe will be desirable, such as a bag of chips to a young teenage male.
- **Variations among digital signage:** The sign industry cautions that digital signage will vary immensely, such as with respect to size, quality of image, cost, ability to be controlled, and that this difference must be addressed in the by-law if permitted.
- **Digital as an alternative to temporary signs:** The comment was made that digital signage could be a welcome alternative to the types of temporary signage that the City often receives complaints about, providing an alternative to Vaughan businesses that is more inline with community standards.
- **Digital signs pilot:** A member of the sign industry suggested that each City is unique, so should conduct its own pilot to evaluate whether digital signage would be a good fit for the municipality. He suggested involving Traffic, Emergency Services and other departments and agencies to conduct a pilot safety.

How other municipalities are addressing digital/electronic/illuminated signage:

Toronto, Brampton, London and Ottawa have similar approaches to regulating digital/electronic/illuminated signage, though the particulars of this signage vary; examples of this regulation include:

- **Distance from residential areas:** Prohibiting the use of digital signs in or within a certain distance of residential zones, with the amount varying depending on the zone and the size of the sign. For example, Brampton also allows illuminated wall signs provided that they are 36 m or more from a



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residential area, or if closer than that should be indirectly illuminated, “fully shielded” and facing downward.

- **Categories of signage with different regulations:** Toronto allows digital and electronic signage, recognizing the categories of (1) digital signs, (2) electronic radiograph signs, and (3) gas station electronic signs, whereas as Ottawa has Digital Billboards.
- **Times of operation:** All cities restrict the times at which signs can operate which vary, such as no illumination during smog alerts or in residential zones 9 pm and 7 am, and in other zones between 11 pm and 7am, except for businesses operating during that time.
- **Message format and changes:** All municipalities generally limited the message copy, requiring the message display for no less than 10 to 20 seconds, requiring an “instantaneous” or less than one second transition, to not display sequential messages and prohibiting dissolving, blinking, flashing, or other animations. An exception that Ottawa allows animated messages in its Palladium area, which has a large stadium used for sporting events and concerts.
- **Light levels:** Other regulation limited the differences in light levels between subsequent sign messages to 25 %, as well as limitations on light levels when operating, and the requirements to not exceed certain thresholds, such as “a luminance of 5,000 cd/m² between sunrise and sunset, and 220 cd/m² between sunset and sunrise” or “lightshed setback that extends 300 m at a 140 degree angle from each vertical edge” in Ottawa.
- **Electronic gas station pump signs:** Toronto advises that electronic gas station signs may not face the street unless setback a 12 m certain distance, must be on top of fuel pump, less than 0.2 square meter face, have one signs face and that the total number of electronic signs cannot exceed 50% of the total number of fuel pumps, i.e., if there are 50 fuel pumps, there can 25 electronic signs or less. As well messaging can either be static or moving, not both. Other municipalities advise these signs must be perpendicular to the road.
- **Electrical requirements:** In Ottawa, Signs requiring electricity are required to visibly identify the sign installer or manufacturer’s identification, as well as display approval tags from the Canadian Standards Association and Electrical Safety Authority. In addition, they required that electrical wiring carrying the power supply is underground.

Signage in windows

Varying opinions were received on the current regulation to allow signage in windows to cover only 20% of the window. Suggestions were made that sign window coverage should be at the discretion of businesses, as it is an important media by which to attract clients. Staff have noted that some window signs are now transparent, enabling visibility into the building, and that transparency could be a suitable requirement for larger window

signs. Several Fire Services advised that they did not see window coverage as issue, as long as the business is compliant with Building Code regulations.

Other staff expressed that restriction on window signage allows the public to see inside of a business, promoting a more open environment, while also creating a more open, appealing aesthetic. The comment is made that the City greatly invests in the aesthetics of buildings, and this rule contributes to that.

It has been noted that many businesses have chosen to post “lifestyle” images, images depicting often happy people, which do not relate to the products of services being offered. It has been noted that often these images cover more than 20% and are sometimes not well maintained, detracting from the business’s aesthetic. An opposing opinion is that the City should not regulate signage to this extent, as it may hinder freedom of speech.

Some staff also suggested that, to minimize clutter, businesses could be required to choose between large window signs and other temporary signs, such as A-frames or mobile signs.

Rules for staff, public figures and the public

Staff have received many complaints from the public advising that City staff and Council do not always comply with its own legislation. Consultations with various staff reveal that some staff are confused about the extent to which municipal legislation applies to staff. Examples of areas which have received complaints are:

- the usage of feather signs, such as at City Hall, promoting the City of Vaughan
- the use of digital signage at various locations throughout the City
- Councilor usage of mobile signs to promote events, which may not go through the proper permitting process.

Staff believe there should be one set of rules, or clear instances where different rules apply, such as that:

- messages that benefit the community, whether originating at the City or a non-profit community agency, should be allowed to take greater precedence in signage and potentially be allowed in more places
- when providing competing services with the public, the same signage usage should be permitted.

Working with the other public agencies

In consultations with York Region, York Regional Police and the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO), they were generally satisfied with their working relationships with the City of Vaughan. York Region and the MTO identified opportunities to better share information, such as:

- for York Region to share a list of permitted signs so that BCLPS staff can field public inquiries

for the City to consult with the MTO Central Region Highway Corridor Management for signs in view of Provincial highways.

Elections and political message signs

Several staff noted that Elections period have often been periods of time when Election signs for candidates have been placed in prohibited areas which detract from clear lines of sight and result in overcrowding, which has often led to great tension between the City, candidates and the public. Staff expressed that it was reported that some candidates' representatives would even put other candidate's signs in prohibited areas, to cause them to be removed.

In the previous election, it was noted that there were much fewer concerns than previous years, which BCLPS staff and York Regional staff expressed was likely due to an intensive education campaign to all candidates, and distribution of clear materials advertising where signs could be placed. Questions raised by staff about election signs:



- **Candidate education:** Staff believe this is a crucial component of obtaining compliance, however express that it is very resource intensive; they suggested continuation of education, including a mandatory information session for all candidate's staff involved in signage placement.
- **Managing costs:** Staff expressed that, for those persons who were not compliance with legislation, it can be difficult to obtain fine payment after election. One selection to do this was to require candidates to pay a large deposit at the start of elections, from which fines would be deducted during the campaign. Thereafter, the remaining amount would be returned to candidates.
- **Volunteers:** Because of the greater resources needed to address the greater volume of signage, staff raised the questions of whether student volunteers could be used to identify, but not remove, improperly placed signs.



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With regardless to signage with political messaging of which expressed views about governments or public projects, other input was as follows:

- **Municipal Elections Act:** Staff explained that the Act now addresses third party advertising, defined as an advertisement in any broadcast, print, electronic or other medium that is designed to promote, which is in support or opposition to candidate or a “yes” or “no” vote on a question on the ballot. Staff will need to work with City Clerks to create bylaw provisions related to these areas.
- **Other political messaging:** Staff noted that they have received complaints about signage which residents have used to express their opinion on government agencies and developments, such as person who posted a “community bulletin” on her front lawn, a staked sign with various notices about the safety of the soil in a neighbouring commercial lot. Staff suggested that the bylaw prohibit this type of signage, while other staff expressed that the by-law prohibits this type of signage on residential properties, so that this could be addressed this way.

Licensing, permitting and fees

Licensing and permitting processes

The sign industry, including the Sign Association of Canada, provided consistent feedback that the City could significantly improve its permitting processes, suggesting that:

- applications should be able to be submitted by email and/or online, in particular for parties which obtain permits from the City regularly
- payment should be made available online
- there should be clear, consistent timeframes for turnaround
- sign regulations should be made for clear, such as by creating maps which show where signs can and cannot be placed, and who to go to for permits
- service should be consistent regards of which staff were involved.

Other municipalities have varying application processes which may be good examples, such as Brampton’s online parking permit application for mobile signs, or Toronto’s requirement for all files to be submitted electronically, either by email or on a CD.

Fees

Fees did not receive a great deal of feedback, though a few different comments were received about fees, including that:



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- the City should maintain the existing fees and not increase them as much as possible
- fees should be structured for cost recovery, keeping in mind that fees for permitted signs are used to offset the costs for enforcement on prohibited signs.

Enforcement of compliance

Staff expressed the following challenges related to infractions, prosecutions and inspections for those who are not compliant:

- **Tracking down illegal signage:** Staff expressed that it can be difficult to successfully prosecute those who produce inexpensive illegal signage, such as placards and lawn signs, as the signs often do not include the sign producer's name, and the persons who uses them often use a non-business number or an answering service. These factors can mean that a lot of time is needed to track these parties down and prosecute them effectively, as these signs are not picked up when confiscated. One suggestion to address this would be require all signage producers to be licensed and to provide a list of all signs produced.
- **Prosecutions and fines:** Staff expressed that often when incidents are prosecuted in court, convictions usually include greatly reduced fines, which do not serve as an effective deterrent for those who have committed the infractions.
- **Access to information in the field:** Staff expressed a great desire to easily access information when in the field so they could spend less time calling or coming back to the office to perform searches for permit information, review policies and other information needed for investigations. Challenges mentioned include:
 - mobile technology that can be very slow or have intermittent connections, sometimes taking 20 minutes to connect
 - "dead zones" in the City with connectivity
 - delays in receiving information from Licensing staff, who are often busy serving clients, leading to a delay in response
 - that outside of hours when the Licensing office is open, officers contact Access Vaughan staff, who do not have access to the same information sources as Licensing staff, which can be problematic
 - only one BCLPS staff member has access to the MTO database to look up licence plate information, who is not always readily available to look up information.



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- **Permanent sign inspections:** A big challenge noted by staff is that they are often not notified by builders when signs have been installed and is ready for inspection, which may require staff to visit a site multiple times. BCLPS and Building Standards are currently discussing this process.

Community Service Organizations and special events

On May 27, 2014, City Council adopted recommendations of the Task Force on the City's Role in Festivals and Community Events, which included input from Community Service Organizations, (CSOs), event organizers, various City departments, and others involved in the event planning and approvals. As advised in their report, their recommendations for signage are being considered as part of the Sign By-law review.

More signage

Recommendations included to:

- investigate the feasibility of establishing permanent gateway signs for the entrance points of Vaughan, which could be used to advertise special events
- to allow banners with restrictions.

York Region

The Task Force also wanted some suggestions to be made to the York Region to amend the Community Events Signage bylaw:

- with regards to permissible mobile signs, allowing one mobile sign to be placed in the Special Sign Districts on York Regional roads to advertise events
- to permit staked signs on Regional boulevards
- to allow 48 hours for sign removal following an event.

Parking and stopping signage

City staff advised that it would be important to clarify what type of temporary signage can be used to manage the safety of these events, such as no parking or no stopping, and to clarify who should be able to authorize this.

Real estate and developer signage

Real estate A-frame signage

The Toronto Real Estate Board which represents agents who operate in the City of Vaughan. They indicate that real estate agents are generally happy with sign legislation, and that they would also be okay with a requirement to have A-frame signs display the name of the property being shown. They believe that most real

estate agents are compliant with timeframes to display their signs, and see the importance of regulation. One request is that there continue to be no permit fees for these signs.

Staff report that there can be issues with overcrowding of Open House signs on weekends, and the “Open House” term is sometimes being misused to advertise other instances, such as houses for lease or examples of renovations, or on prohibited lawn signs.

Developer advertising

Several complaints from the public have been received through Councillor Lafrate’s office concerning developers that have posted signs for developments prior to site plan approval by the City. These signs have messages that indicate that the development will be coming soon or something similar, but do not specify that the development has City approval. A discussion around complaints is whether the complaints are about the concern for false advertising, or whether they are from residents who are unhappy about the potential development in their area.

The Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Association, an association that includes over 1,400 builders, land developers, and renovators from across the Greater Toronto Area, explained that many of these signs advertise developments as “coming soon”, with their purpose being to generate interest and to contribute to securing funding for these projects. If development signs were prohibited until approval for the development were received, BILD expressed that this could potentially lead to significant delays in securing important funding.

BILD expressed that they would be open to exploring a voluntary solution, facilitating communications between the City and developers to encourage them to voluntarily provide project approval statuses on their development advertising, as a way to support transparency and contribute to consumer confidence.

No instances of harm or fraud to consumers were reported to BCLPS as a result of developers’ advertising prior to approval. In addition, staff noted that the defrauding of consumers by developers was not listed as an issue on the Province’s Consumer Protection Ontario site.

Staff also found a mixed regulatory approach to this issue, with some cities opting not to impose any restrictions, such as Toronto and Vancouver, and others requiring various municipal approvals prior to posting signage, such as Markham, London, Newmarket, King, Richmond Hill, and Hamilton.

Developer hoarding

Developer projects require use of hoarding around construction sites which are staff report are frequently used as signage, which is tastefully done. Hoarding presents a temporary opportunity to advertise on media which is often larger than permitted signs. As such, staff has discussed whether this should be treated as signage, in

which the content should be regulated, or whether it could be leveraged to include public messages or public art.

Other municipalities

Other municipalities have taken various approaches to developer hoarding. For example, in Toronto, a permit is required for hoarding, and the bylaw restricts hoarding to first party advertising, not digital advertising and some safety standards.

Environmental sustainability

Staff suggested considering providing incentives to sign manufacturers who use more environmentally sustainable practices around recycling and waste disposal, source locally for materials, create more energy efficient signage, or other desirable practices. Examples of incentives could be:

- developing a preferred vendor list for the City which requires that business demonstrate their environmentally sustainability practices, or
- providing a discount on the licensing and/or permitting fees for this vendor.

An example of this approach is that York Region has a water program to reward businesses which demonstrate more conservative use of water.

Cost recovery and funding

Staff and other municipalities provided various approaches to funding, such as:

- **Clearer accountability:** Strengthening the by-law to make both the sign manufacturer and the person/party who benefits from the sign, i.e., the party being advertised, responsible for any fines for contraventions of the by-law.
- **Property taxes and future permits:** London uses the Repair and Storage Liens Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. R.24, as amended, to recover removal and storage costs through collection through municipal taxes, however also advising costs can be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction. Toronto also enables its cost recovery through passing costs for unclaimed signs onto future permits and onto property taxes.
- **Third-party signage annual fee:** In addition, Toronto has a “third party signage” annual tax for signs larger than one square meter, intended to provide stable funding for their Sign By-law unit.
- **Increased permit costs as a penalty:** In Ottawa, if a sign is erected without a permit, a surcharge of 50% of the permit fee is charged prior to permit issuance.



Stakeholder views

The following table provides a high-level overview of the views held by various stakeholders, which have implications on both legislation and business processes and operations.

Table 3 - Stakeholders' positions on signage in the City of Vaughan

Stakeholder	Position
The general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posters and stickers are issues and can detract from the City's beauty and safety, such as by making the City look tacky or by impeding the line of sight or pathway of motorists and pedestrians. Illegal or unsafely placed signage should be removed more promptly, and companies which produce and place them should be fined heavily. Some persons are concerned about the impact of digital signage, in terms of brightness and distraction to motorists. Some persons think the greater usage of digital/electronic signage will contribute to the aesthetic of the City, provide useful information, and reduce the use of illegal signage. Several persons expressed that developers should not be allowed to advertise developments which have not yet been approved through the site plan process, while the counter view was expressed that this would prohibit developers from raising interest and funds needed to secure financing.
The sign industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City can improve its permitting processes, such as by allowing email/online permit applications, providing clearer information about which signage rules, and providing a consistent turnaround time. The mobile sign industry would like to rules changed to allow greater signage use, such as reduction the moratorium and restrictions on the number of times a business can use mobile signage in a year, as well as more design freedom, allowing usage of colour and graphics on signage. The industry would like legislation to be developed which addresses new type of signage which are becoming more common or are permitted in other cities, such as digital signage and billboards.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important for businesses to be able to advertise their products and services, such as through allowance of additional/increase signage usage, particularly those in large plazas or those which are fairly setback from the street.



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Stakeholder	Position
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important for to have clear information on signage rules and how to obtain the required permits. Many businesses, including small businesses, are unclear about the rules and regulations.
Special event planners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City should have gateway signage which advertises special events. Banners should be allowed. York Region should allow event advertising in special sign districts and allow more time for sign removal.
Other agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> York Region, the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) and York Regional Police advise they have a good working relationship with the City, however have proposed greater information sharing in some areas, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that the MTO is consulted prior to the approval of large signs 400 m from 400-series highways sharing lists of approved permits to enable City staff to field public inquiries about staffing.
City of Vaughan staff	<p>The City should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a clear map of sign-related activities performed by each department, including who to contact to discuss compliance requirements or to report an issue develop legislation which addresses a wider range of signage, such as digital, billboard and electronic messages on signage, or usage of logos incorporate common approved sign variances into the by-law, such as the request for more or larger signs based on development characteristics develop internal frameworks and resources to ensure decisions are made in a consistent manner by those staff who can approve signage that is not in compliance with the by-law develop clear expectations about which rules apply to staff, public figures and the public, and whether they should be uniform or different based on purpose of signage better coordinate the enforcement and removal of signage across BCLPS, Public Works and York Region



Sign By-law review discussion document
Stakeholder input, research and questions

Stakeholder	Position
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• continue to collaborate with York Region to provide information, such as to candidates during Elections information• strengthen the City's abilities to recover costs for signage removal and storage, as well as to convict those who produce/own illegal signs, as well as those who benefit from them• develop a broad design framework for the City which addresses signage, wayfinding, artwork, street furniture and other factors• centralize knowledge about signage, such as in a Sign By-law unit• revise elections to include third-party signs, as per changes to the Municipal Elections Act.