

REPORT TORONTO NEW SIGN BY-LAW PROJECT



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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Toronto's Current Sign By-laws

Since amalgamation in 1998, the City of Toronto has continued to administer the sign by-laws of the six previous local municipalities and Metropolitan Toronto. While some temporary sign regulations were harmonized after amalgamation, sign regulations for permanent signs on private property and buildings – the most visible and common types of signs – continue to differ across the new City of Toronto.

These existing by-laws were passed by the former municipalities at different times. They vary in terms of their approaches to signage and specific standards for signs.

Over the years, numerous amendments to the sign by-law along with approval of variances to their standards have contributed to the current patchwork of regulations for permanent signs across Toronto. The many approvals granting relief from the provisions and standards of the sign by-laws have created a sign landscape in many parts of the City that no longer corresponds with the original intent of the particular sign by-law.

The current sign by-laws have not in all cases kept pace with current signage issues facing the City that generally did not exist when the sign by-laws were passed. An example of this is recent changes in sign display technology such as the use of digital displays in signs.

1.2 New Sign By-law Project

The purpose of the New Sign By-law Project is to prepare a City-wide single sign by-law for permanent signs.

Frustration with current sign by-laws and sign issues in Toronto was repeatedly voiced by a cross section of stakeholders in the consultation meetings and discussions held by the New Sign By-law Project. This shared viewpoint exists in

spite of the differences in the range of opinions on signs held by the individuals and groups who offered their viewpoints. There is support from all sides for improving the current state of permanent sign regulation in Toronto.

The common message heard from the public, sign companies, City staff, and Council was that current sign by-laws are no longer adequate for dealing with the current realities of sign issues in Toronto. Examples given include inconsistent standards, unclear by-law provisions, and sign regulations that new sign display technologies have eclipsed by moving in directions never anticipated. Over time, parts of the current sign by-laws have become out of step with policies and strategies the City has adopted since amalgamation in 1998.

The New Sign By-law Project is an opportunity to address these issues in a manner that is consistent with Council's vision for shaping the City of Toronto and achieving quality in its visual character and the public realm.

1.3 New Sign By-law Project Objectives

The new sign by-law has been prepared to achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure public safety;
- Facilitate aesthetic improvement of the City such that signage should be integrated with the architecture and landscaping, not only to identify and inform, but also to complement and enliven the streetscape;
- Encourage and improve the quality of sign design;
- Provide commercial and industrial enterprises adequate, flexible means to identify themselves and their products or services, recognizing that the primary function of on-premise signage is to identify, rather than advertise;

-
- Recognize and allow for Special Sign Districts where unique regulations will apply;
 - Have regard for the public interest for expressive signage;
 - Demonstrate support for the City's environmental goals of promotion of energy efficiency; and,
 - Provide an easily understood and administered set of regulations for signs.

It is the intent that the new sign by-law be consistent with the City's public realm objectives and the policies of the Official Plan. The sign by-law will address new technology in signs, the City's environmental goals, and the promotion of energy efficiency. Issues related to the processes of sign approvals and by-law enforcement will also be addressed.

2.0 SIGNS AND CITY- BUILDING

2.1 Toronto Official Plan

The Official Plan sets the future vision for a successful Toronto. Its policies are grounded in certain principles of city-building, one of which is achieving a City of Beauty. This principle is fundamental to the Official Plan's vision for future growth in Toronto. Its aim is to create a city with beautiful, comfortable, safe and attractive streets. The Official Plan's vision acknowledges that beauty in the City is essential to building a prosperous, safe, and liveable Toronto.

The Official Plan recognizes that the look and quality of streets, public spaces, and the development that frames and defines them are important to how a great city like Toronto is judged. The nature of the public realm – Toronto's commonly shared resource - is the product of these city elements working together to create the quality and experience of Toronto's streets and spaces. This relationship is core to the approach the City takes to urban design and development in Toronto.

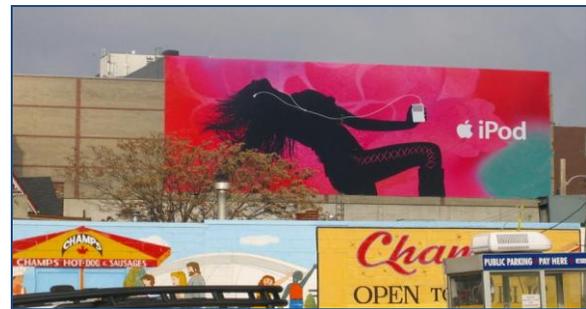
2.2 Signs and the City's Appearance

Signs are part of the buildings and spaces located within and adjacent to Toronto's streets and public realm.



Accordingly, the quality and character of streets and the public realm is in part, determined by the type, number and quality of signs visible along streets and the public realm.

Perhaps more than any other part of the public realm, signs are designed to be noticed and communicate information. This makes signs a major factor setting the visual quality and character of the City's streets and places - our shared public spaces. Toronto's sign regulations and by-laws therefore partly determine the kind of daily experience residents, visitors and tourists have of Toronto's streets, places, and public realm.



The cumulative impact of signs on the appearance of an area and the City is the product of numerous individual decisions businesses and persons make on the types of signs they erect and display.

Signs are successful in enhancing the visual character of an area when the signs:

- Are graphically and otherwise well designed;
- Convey the character of the business or use;
- Enhance or reflect the character of the surrounding context;
- Support and reinforce the design of buildings on which they are erected;
- Communicate the character of the use or business.

Successful signage contributes positively to establishing the visual quality of the City's built environment and public realm. The signs read as appropriate to their surroundings and complement their context. They do not appear out of place.

Signs become a problem when they detract from the appearance of an area. This occurs when signs are:

- Out of scale with their surroundings;
- Insensitive to the design and architecture of buildings on which they are erected;
- Visually and physically dominant because of their location, size or animation;
- Not consistent with the qualities of nearby development;
- Impacting nearby uses with incompatible illumination;
- Blocking other signs, views and sight lines.

Too much signage can detract from the inherent physical and visual character of a building, street, or area. When signage becomes too much it can overwhelm the visual environment and its quality. The visual clutter and pollution created by excessive signage obscures the underlying actual character of an area or street.



A reduction in the quality of the City's visual environment and public realm can create other negative impacts on the quality of life in the City including a degradation of its appearance and

external image. Our memory and impression of a place is very much determined by what we see on streets, in the public realm and its adjacent spaces.

Signs communicate their message by using the medium of the City's built environment and public realm, the shared social spaces of the City.

Unlike other messages, the public cannot directly control or easily ignore the visual information signs deliver to the public realm. Some businesses in fact believe that their self-interest is best served if the public cannot help but notice their sign by virtue of the size, location or other characteristic of the sign.

Accordingly, municipalities use sign by-laws to control signs in order to advance public interest objectives such as regulating structures, protecting public safety, and maintaining quality in the visual and development character of the community.

Toronto relies on its sign by-laws to address and control the impact of signs through the regulations found in the by-laws. The sign by-laws control the type, size, height, location, and other characteristics of the wide variety of signs found in the City. The regulations also deal with the intensity of signage in an area. For example, the kind of signage permitted in a residential area is less intense than the type of signage permitted in a major commercial area. In addition, many sign by-laws contain measures to protect sensitive uses and areas from the visual intrusion of signs.

As visible structures in Toronto's built environment, signs provide people with information on identification and advertising. For example, signs identify a business and this is the prime purpose of most signs in the City. The business uses the sign to identify itself to the public; the public in turn locates and identifies the business through the sign. Advertising alone

is generally not the main purpose the sign a business erects on its property or building.

The purpose of signs is to be noticed and attract attention to communicate its message. Since the City's visual environment consists of all the objects visible in an area or the public realm, signs are a major factor setting the quality and character of the visual environment. Their impacts can range from positive to negative,

depending on how the signage is implemented and how it fits its context. The visual quality of signs in the community matters to its image, overall look and qualities.

City of Toronto policies and sign by-law regulations provide the means for balancing the need for signage with the public interest in achieving quality in the City's appearance and visual environment.

3.0 SCOPE OF THE CITY'S POWERS TO REGULATE SIGNS

The City of Toronto's powers to regulate signs are limited to those conferred on it by statute or which arise by necessary implication from an express power.

3.1 The City of Toronto Act

The enactment of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* (COTA) broadened the City's powers to regulate signage in many respects.

Section 6 of COTA provides that the City's powers should be interpreted broadly so as to confer broad authority on the City to govern its affairs and respond to municipal issues. Section 8(1) also authorizes the City to provide any service or thing the City considers necessary or desirable for the public.

In the context of sign by-laws, section 8(2) of COTA, expressly provides that the City can pass by-laws respecting "structures including fences and signs." It further provides that by-laws passed under section 8 may regulate or prohibit respecting the matter, require persons to do things respecting the matter, and provide for a system of licenses respecting the matter. For example, it is open to the City to establish a licensing regime for sign contractors or companies.

The City could also establish a by-law respecting the variance process. The City may establish the type and range of variances applications; the criteria that will govern a variance application; and the types of changes which will require an amendment to the sign by-law rather than a variance.

COTA prescribes only one specific statutory restriction with which every sign by-law must comply. This is commonly referred to the "legal non-conforming" or "grandfathering" protection for advertising signs. Section 110(1) states:

Advertising devices - A City by-law respecting advertising devices, including signs, does not apply to an advertising device that was lawfully erected or displayed on the day the by-law comes into force if the advertising device is not substantially altered, and the maintenance and repair of the advertising device or a change in the message or contents displayed is deemed not in itself to constitute a substantial alteration.

There is nothing in COTA that purports to curtail or restrict the power of the City to regulate aspects of signs such as colour; the message or image displayed; the material from which the sign is constructed (e.g., metal, plastic or wood); the style of the sign (e.g., "craft" sign v. standard metal can or box sign); and the type of lighting (i.e., internal or external illumination). At the same time, the regulation of these and other aspects of signage such as content by the City are ultimately subject to certain constitutional limits.

A sign regulation will not necessarily be unconstitutional merely because its purpose or effect includes the regulation of content. In each case, a key question will be whether the content restriction is rationally related to a valid objective which the municipality seeks to achieve and whether that restriction is proportional to the objective.

Valid objectives for sign regulations can include the following:

- Maintaining and enhancing aesthetic beauty;
- Preventing urban blight and visual clutter;
- Reducing distractions to motorists that may be an impediment to road safety;
- Preserving scenic views and the unique character of a community;
- Preventing disturbance to natural settings;
- Protecting the public from unsafe signs.

For the regulations to be proportional to the objectives, the City must seek to strike a balance between the objectives and the rights and interests of the business community and the public. As a general matter, the further the City goes in seeking to regulate the permissible form and content of signs, the more difficult a time it will likely have in justifying the sign regulation as a reasonable limit on *Charter* rights.

3.3 Enforcement and Penalties

The City has the authority to provide that persons or corporations who violate its sign by-law are guilty of offences and subject to financial penalty. Section 366 of *COTA* authorizes the City to pass by-laws providing that any person who contravenes a by-law of the City passed under *COTA* is guilty of an offence. Section 366(3) provides that such a by-law may also render an officer or director of a corporation who knowingly concurs in the contravention of a by-law guilty of an offence.

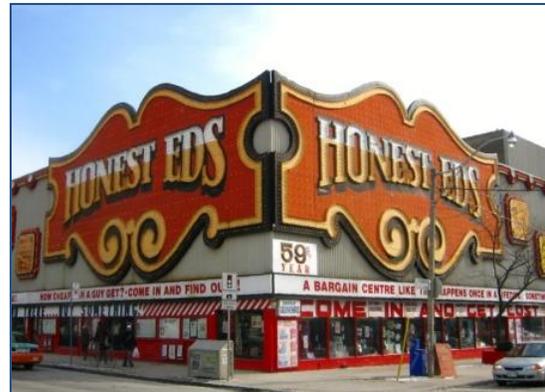


Section 370 gives the City broad powers to establish systems of fines for offences, including the power to: designate offences as continuing offences or multiple offences and provide minimum and maximum fines for each day or occurrence of the offence; establish escalating fines for second and subsequent convictions; and establish special fines to eliminate or reduce

any economic gain from contravening a by-law. Section 370(3) places restrictions on the minimum and maximum fines that may be imposed for any offence, including continuing and multiple offences.

Section 384 empowers the City to order that a violation of a by-law be discontinued, and a by-law passed under Section 366 may make failure to comply with any such order an offence.

Section 8(2) of *COTA*, empowers the City in a by-law passed under section 8 to require “persons to do things respecting the matter”, authorizing the City to enact in its by-law a provision requiring the removal of any unlawfully erected sign.



Section 386 gives the City the power to do the matter it has directed a person to do if it is not done. The City may enter upon land to do the matter and recover its costs.

Sections 110(2) and 110(3) give the City the power to collect the costs of removing, storing and disposing of signs erected or displayed in contravention of a by-law.

The City has the power under section 380 to apply to the Court for an order restraining any by-law contraventions, which would also provide the authority for the City to seek an order requiring removal of any unlawfully erected sign.

4.0 THE KEY ISSUES

This section of the report describes the key sign issues identified by the Sign By-law Project team and raised during the consultation process.

4.1 Public Consultation

Two sets of public consultation meetings were held across Toronto as part of the New Sign By-law Project. In each round of consultation, meetings were held in each of the four District Communities: Toronto and East York, Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke York.

The first round of public consultation meetings took place in September 2008. They introduced the Sign By-law project to the public and provided them with opportunities to identify issues and priorities for the review. Those attending provided comments on what they would like to see in a new sign by-law, along with suggestions for improvements to the current system of regulating signs.

A second round of public consultation meetings took place in January 2009. These meetings reported on the signage issues and priorities raised in the earlier consultation meetings. Proposals for regulating signs as well as organizational and administrative proposals were also presented for comment. Additional meetings on proposals for regulating third party signs were held in March 2009 with the outdoor sign industry and stakeholders.

The Sign By-law Project also received public input and comment in written submissions, emails, and through the Sign Project web site and other channels.

Planning and Growth Management Committee received an update on the Sign By-law Project at its December 2009 meeting and considered a report from staff at its April 2009 meeting. The Committee received public deputations at both meetings.

4.2 The Key Signage Issues

Based on the input and comments received, the key signage issues for the public are summarized as:

- 1) Third party advertising signs;
- 2) Abuse of sign regulations;
- 3) Sign by-law enforcement;
- 4) Sign approval processes;
- 5) Environmental aspects of signs;
- 6) Sign technology and safety;
- 7) Amount, location, type, and size of signs.

The order of these issues corresponds with the number of times these issues were raised by the public and the amount of discussion associated with the matter. This provides an indication of public and stakeholder priorities with respect to signage issues.

The following briefly describes each issue based on the perspective of those making comments.

1) Third Party Advertising Signs

The greatest amount of public comment and interest has focused on aspects of third party advertising signs or billboards. Concerns and comments received about these types of signs have included:

- The number of billboards in Toronto;
- The effect of billboards on the appearance of the City;
- The City's processes for approving these signs, i.e., permits and variances;
- Appropriate standards for regulating billboards in the future.

This report and the new sign by-law contain recommendations and provisions related to the approval of these types of signs and standards.

2) Abuse of Sign Regulations

These comments also primarily focused on third party advertising signs.

Concerns included:

- Billboards erected without sign permits;
- Billboards erected different than the plans submitted and approved for the sign permit;
- Billboards erected not in compliance with sign by-law regulations, e.g., location, type, size.

This report recommends the creation of a dedicated Sign Unit in Toronto Building to achieve better compliance by individuals and sign companies with the City's sign regulations.

3) Sign By-law Enforcement

These comments generally stem from a frustration on the part of the public with the City's enforcement of current sign by-laws and the behaviour of some sign companies who do not adhere to the by-laws. Comments made included:

- The effectiveness and timeliness of the City's sign by-law enforcement;
- A desire for more effective enforcement;
- The increasing incidence of scofflaw related to signs in Toronto, i.e., signs companies that flout the sign by-laws or habitually violate sign regulations.

Creating a dedicated Sign Unit should enhance sign by-law enforcement.

4) Sign Approval Processes

The public and sign companies shared concerns about the current processes by which signs are approved either through sign permits or the approval by Council of variances to sign by-laws.

Matters mentioned included:

- Problem of consistent application and interpretation of sign regulations in sign permit process;
- Division of sign permit review and approval among different staff areas;
- Interpretation issues posed by terms and regulation in current sign by-laws;
- Apparent lack of criteria applied by staff and Council when evaluating applications for sign variances;
- Lack of public notice of sign variance applications considered by Council;
- Request for a better means for the public to know if a third party advertising sign is erected in compliance with sign by-law regulations.
- The appropriate body for considering and approving sign variances.

This report presents alternative models for reviewing and making decisions on sign variance applications. These include options for public notice and criteria for assessing the variance applications.

5) Environmental Aspects of Signs

Comments were made about the energy consumption of illuminated and digital display signs; the negative impact of sign illumination levels on residences, natural areas and wildlife; and the types of materials used in signs.

The new sign by-law contains standards for the illumination of signs and measures for limiting the impact of sign lighting on sensitive uses and areas.

6) Sign Technology and Safety

Concerns were expressed about the growth in electronic and digital display technologies and the associated impacts. This included changes to the visual character of the City and areas as a result of these new types of signs and the impact on public safety including driver distraction.

New sign technology was reviewed with respect to the impact on public safety and the appearance of areas in preparing the new sign by-law.

7) Amount, Location, Type and Size of Signs

Consistent with the predominant focus of public comments on third party advertising signs, most comments on the amount, location, type or size of signs also related to billboards.

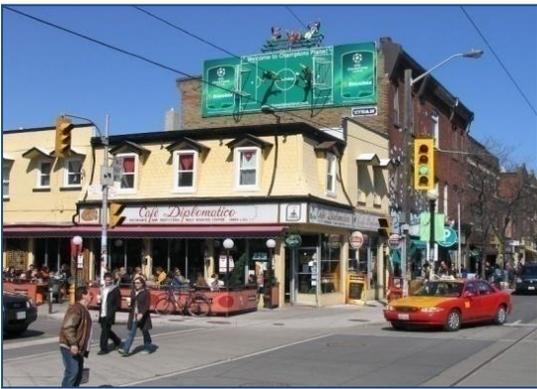
Comments or suggestions pertaining to other types of permanent signs of a first party or identification nature were much fewer with the impact of sign illumination and animation being mentioned most frequently as a concern.

The new sign by-law contains provisions addressing signage issues and appropriate standards for new signs in the City.

5.0 FRAMEWORK FOR THE NEW SIGN BY-LAW

The organizing framework for Toronto's current sign by-laws is generally based on the existing 43 zoning by-laws of the six pre-amalgamation area municipalities. At present, the current regulations for signs generally follow the zoning categories and districts established in the applicable municipality's zoning by-law.

At this time, it is of questionable merit to continue to use or rely on the existing pre-amalgamation zoning by-laws as a framework for organizing the new sign by-law.



Toronto is now in the process of replacing the 43 current zoning by-laws with a new City-wide zoning by-law. This new zoning by-law will conform to the new Toronto Official Plan and its city building vision.

Planning and Growth Management Committee at its April 14, 2009 meeting authorized release of the draft new zoning by-law and the start of public consultation on its provisions.

The most appropriate framework for the new sign by-law at this time is to link its regulations generally to the Toronto Official Plan's vision of future growth and development. This will link the provisions of the new sign by-law to Council's

future growth and development objectives for Toronto.

5.1 Sign Districts

The new sign by-law draws its sign districts from the land use structure and designations of the Official Plan. The limits of the sign districts generally correspond with the zoning districts of the draft new zoning by-law.



Table 1 illustrates how the sign districts of the new sign by-law generally correspond with the designations of the Official Plan and the zones of the draft new Toronto zoning by-law.

Table 1		
Official Plan Designation	Zone	Sign District
Neighbourhood	Residential Zone	Residential District
Apartment Neighbourhood	Residential Apartment Zone	Residential Apartment District
Mixed Use Area	Commercial Zone	Commercial District
	Commercial Residential Zone Commercial Residential Employment Zone	Commercial Residential District
Employment Area	Employment-Industrial Zone Employment Light Industrial Zone Employment Heavy Industrial Zone Employment Industrial-Commercial	Employment District
	Employment-Industrial-Office Zone	Employment-Industrial-Office District
Institutional Area	Institutional Zone Institutional Hospital Zone Institutional Education Zone Institutional School Zone Institutional Place of Worship Zone	Institutional District
Utility Corridor	Utility Zone	Utility District
Parks and Open Space Areas	Open Space Zones Open Space – Natural Zone Open Space – Recreation Zone	Open Space District

5.2 Special Sign Districts

In addition to the general sign districts, the new sign by-law establishes several Special Sign Districts.

These are areas of Toronto where signs are a factor setting the area’s fundamental visual character in a manner that differentiates it from other sign districts with similar uses or development.

Special Sign Districts such as Chinatown are areas where exceptions from the general sign standards are warranted based on a district-wide character related to signs. Sign Districts are also areas of Toronto where businesses and property owners have adopted an overall

signage vision and plan that will to guide future signage in the area.



In one type of Special Sign District the character of the area is created by the types of signs in the area. Examples of such areas include parts of

the Downtown Yonge Street Business Improvement Area particularly in the vicinity of Yonge-Dundas Square.

In other Special Sign Districts, the absence of signs is a key factor defining the area's visual character. To maintain this character and avoid any detrimental visual impact on these areas from sign, greater restriction on signs are required than apply in the general sign districts.

Current sign by-laws contain a number of such areas for this reason. The new sign by-law continues these sign restrictions within the Special Sign Districts aimed at protecting and maintaining their visual character. Examples of such restrictive Special Sign Districts include the area around Nathan Philips Square, portions of University Avenue, and the Fort York Precinct.



In the future, there may be areas of the City where businesses and landowners join together to develop a signage vision for the area. The vision would be a method of creating a distinct visual image for the area in part through the implementation of a coordinated and specific program of permanent signage.

The recently completed Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area is an example of this. It provides a guiding

framework for signage in the area and will serve as a framework for evaluating future sign proposals in this Special Sign District.

Since the signage needs of Special Sign Districts are generally specific to the characteristics of the area, it is generally not possible to establish the appropriate sign standards in the absence of a review and analysis of the area, determination of the signage objectives and design of an appropriate signage implementation scheme.

The current sign regulations in portions of the Downtown Yonge BIA usually include detailed plans outlining where on a building or structure different types of signs are to be erected. This is particularly the case for many of the buildings adjacent to Yonge-Dundas Square and corresponds with the current signage vision for the area.

In 2009 a new signage vision was completed for the Downtown Yonge BIA. It should be implemented by serving as the framework upon which future approvals for signs will be granted.

In a similar manner, it is recommended that the City require preparation of a signage vision for any area that wishes to become a Special Sign District in the future. This will provide a framework for developing and adopting appropriate sign standards for the area. It will also establish the needed longer term direction and coordination for new signage erected in the Special Sign District.

5.3 Signage Master Plan

Other situations that would benefit from the preparation of a coordinated signage plan are large scale developments where signs are intended to be a key part of the design of the buildings and spaces. Examples are large scale mixed use projects with significant commercial

or retail components or other large multi-occupancy developments with particular design objectives with respect to signage programs. Such signage programs will likely require approval of relief from the general requirements of the sign by-law.

These projects usually involve the approval of major planning applications. Such applicants should be encouraged to prepare a Signage Master Plan for the project. This would articulate the signage vision for the project and create the

guiding framework for implementation of a coordinated and appropriate signage program as the development proceeds. This is similar in intent to the Uniformity Plan for signs currently provided for in the Scarborough sign by-law.

The City could approve a Signage Master Plan for these types of large multi-occupancy developments to govern sign approvals for the project thereby ensuring consistency of signage programs with the project's vision and original design intent.

6.0 ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The effectiveness of a sign by-law is very much dependent on implementing the organizational structure and administrative processes that will support achievement of the by-law's objectives. This section of the report describes recommendations designed to provide the support required by the new sign by-law in order to achieve its objectives.

6.1 Create Dedicated Sign Unit in Toronto Building

A key recommendation of the New Sign By-law Project is creation of a dedicated Sign Unit in Toronto Building. This new Sign Unit will consolidate sign approvals and enforcement in a single staff unit for dealing with signs.

6.1.1 The Current Situation

The staff and activities related to the administration of permits and enforcement of sign by-laws is presently split between two divisions of the City: Toronto Building and the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (ML&S).

Current sign by-laws contain the requirements to be met for the issuance of permits for signs on private property. These requirements include where different types of signs are permitted and what standards with respect to matters such as the area, height, location and distance from other signs.

The sign by-laws do not contain standards for the structural design of signs or how they are erected on property or attached to buildings. With limited exceptions, all signs must be designed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the *Building Code Act*.

Toronto Building receives and reviews permit applications for signs to establish if the application complies with the applicable sign by-law, the Building Code and other applicable law. A permit is issued if the application for a sign complies. Toronto Building staff inspect the installation of the sign to ensure compliance with the applicable sign by-law, the Ontario Building Code, and the approved permit plans.

A complaint about the possible non-compliance of a sign with an issued permit is investigated and enforced by Toronto Building staff. Such complaints typically are: the sign was erected in a location not approved; the sign is located closer to another sign than permitted; the sign is larger or higher than approved, or in some other characteristic does not comply with the applicable sign by-law or approved permit.

Where investigation of the complaint finds non-compliance, Toronto Building's enforcement actions can include the issuance of Orders to Comply and Notices of Violation to the permit holder. This can be the property owner and the sign company which generally obtained the permit on behalf of the owner and erected the sign.

The majority of complaints the City receives about signs are complaints about signs erected or installed without a permit. These complaints are investigated and enforced by the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division. Where investigation by ML&S indicates an action is warranted, ML&S staff issue Notices of Violation to the property owner and the sign company.

To streamline the processing of these two types of complaints, ML&S receives all sign complaints and determines whether the complaint relates to non-compliance with an

issued permit or a sign installed without a permit. Based on this determination, the complaint is investigated either by Toronto Building or ML&S.

The current division of sign permit, inspection and enforcement responsibilities between Toronto Building and ML&S staff create potential issues related to coordination of permit approval and enforcement activities related to signs. These include consistent interpretation of sign regulations and the investigation of complaints since currently, the staff dealing with the matter depends for example on whether the complaint deals with a sign that has an issued permit or not.

Prior to amalgamation, some of the former municipalities such as Scarborough and North York had dedicated Sign Units. Their staff dealt with all sign issues related to permit applications, complaints, and enforcement. This allowed for all sign matters to be consolidated within a single administrative unit and dealt with by the same staff avoiding the need for coordination between two sections.

In discussions with current City staff and Councillors who had experience with these Sign Units in the former municipalities, all commented they found the dedicated Sign Units to be more effective than the current arrangements, particularly with respect to enforcement of complaints about signs.

The Out-of-Home Marketing Association of Canada (OMAC) has submitted its suggestions related to a new sign by-law. The OMAC submission was made on behalf of the OMAC members who represent over 90% of the outdoor advertising signs in the City of Toronto.

One concern of OMAC members is that the City of Toronto does not currently have a unit dedicated to the sign by-law interpretation,

application, and enforcement. OMAC supports the establishing a dedicated Sign Division with responsibilities to process sign applications, advise municipal enforcement staff and process variance applications.

6.1.2 Sign Unit Responsibilities

The Sign Unit's responsibilities will include:

- Processing all permit applications for permanent signs;
- Reviewing permit applications and plans for compliance with the sign by-law and Building Code;
- Issuing permits for signs;
- Sign by-law enforcement for permanent signs;
- Preparing reports on applications for sign by-law variances and amendments.

Creation of a dedicated Sign Unit will promote greater consistency and efficiency in the approval of sign permits and sign by-law enforcement. The Sign Unit in Toronto Building will develop specialist staff trained and experienced in signage matters and regulations.

6.2 Alternative Models for Sign Variance Applications

Currently applications for approval of a variance from the applicable sign by-law are processed by Toronto Building staff.

Council has presently delegated approval of most sign variance applications to each Community Council which considers the report prepared by staff and adopts a recommendation on the application. Variance applications involving video display signs must be approved by Council at present.

Dissatisfaction with the City's current process for dealing with sign by-law variances was received in comments made by the public and groups like OMAC.

OMAC has commented that there is currently no guidance in place for what is to be considered by the Community Councils in assessing variance applications. In its view, this results in a process that is not fair or equitable.

The most frequently expressed concerns by the public about the current variance process included the lack of explicit criteria for assessing variance applications, the absence of notification to the public of variance applications, and the ability for the public to present their comments on the application to Community Council.

As described earlier, the *City of Toronto Act* grants Toronto the ability to design a scheme for granting sign by-law variances or amendments to suit its needs.

6.2.1 Delegation to an Appointed Sign Variance Committee

Granting a variance from the sign by-law is a legislative or quasi-judicial power of the City. Section 21(1) of the *City of Toronto Act* permits the delegation of this power to a group by Council.

One model to consider is for Council to establish an arm's length Sign Variance Committee and delegate to it the power to review and make decisions on all applications for variances from the provisions of the sign by-law.

Council could define the composition of the Sign Variance Committee with respect to the members of the public appointed to it and their qualifications.

The Sign Variance Committee would operate according to procedures established by Council

with respect to dealing with applications for variances from the sign by-law.

Based on the number of variance applications currently processed annually by the City, it appears that one Sign Variance Committee operating City-wide would be sufficient to handle the application workload with appropriate staff support.

During the consultation process, the option to continue to have members of Council involved in the processing of sign variance applications was expressed. A Councillor's knowledge of the Ward and community as well as accountability to the public were mentioned as reasons for continuing to advise Councillors of sign variance applications.

Should Council choose not to establish a Sign Variance Committee, the following alternative models can be considered.

6.2.2 Variance Applications

Based on the consultation process and comments received, there appears to be a greater public concern about variance applications for third party advertising signs or billboards than about variance applications for first party signs. This may reflect the differences between these sign types and the nature of the variances being applied for.

A first party sign is a sign that applies to the business or use where it is located.

A third party sign is a sign that displays a message about something that is not available at the location where the sign is located.

In the case of first party signs, a review of variance applications shows variances for first party signs often arise on a technical matter related to the physical characteristics of the property or premises where the sign is located

or aspects of the sign. Decisions on these types of applications and the associated issues are considered of a minor nature and appropriate for delegation to Sign Unit staff with an accompanying process for notice and appeal of decisions to a Sign Variance Committee. The *City of Toronto Act* provides for the delegation of matters that Council considers to be of a minor nature to staff.

Variance applications for third party advertising signs in recent years tend to involve seeking relief from basic sign standards such a location, number and size of third party signs or a request to reduce the required separation distance between third party advertising signs. Such applications appear to attract more public interest than variance applications for first party signs.

Based on these differences, the following approval processes are recommended for sign variances.

6.2.2.1 Variance Applications for First Party Signs

It is recommended that the approval of variance applications for first party signs be delegated to staff of the Sign Unit.

Public notice of the sign variance application would be given by:

- The applicant posting a notice sign on the property describing the nature of the variance and displaying as part of the sign, a picture of the proposed sign.
- Mailed notice of the sign variance application to all owners of property within 60 metres of the property. This notice area corresponds to the notice area prescribed by the Planning Act for giving public notice

of minor variance applications to the zoning by-law.

The notice sign and the mailed notice would state a date by which any written comments on the application are to be submitted to the City's Sign Unit.

Staff of the Sign Unit would make a decision on the application no earlier than one day following the date given for the submission of comments.

Notice of this decision on the variance application would be given to the applicant, the Councillor of the Ward in which the sign is located, and any person who in writing has requested notification of the decision.

Staff decisions on delegated sign variance applications could be appealed by the applicant, the Ward Councillor, or a person who has received notification of the decision. The notice of appeal must be submitted in writing and state the nature of the objection to the decision. Such an appeal must be filed no later than 20 days from the date that notice of the decision is given.

Where notice of an appeal is received within the appeal period, the appeal would then be considered by the appropriate Sign Variance Committee at its regular meeting. The decisions of the Sign Variance Committee on appeals would be final and could not be appealed further.

6.2.2.2 Variance Applications for Third Party Advertising Signs

It is recommended that variance applications for third party advertising signs be considered by the Sign Variance Committee.

Public notice of the sign variance application would be given by:

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- The applicant posting a notice sign on the property describing the nature of the variance and displaying as part of the sign, a picture of the proposed third party advertising sign.
 - Mailed notice of the sign variance application to all owners of property within 120 metres of the property. This area of notice corresponds to the notice area prescribed by the Planning Act for giving public notice of applications to amend the official plan or zoning by-law.

The notice sign and the mailed notice would state a date by which any written comments on the application are to be submitted to the City's Sign Unit.

After the deadline for written comments has passed, Sign Unit staff would prepare a report on the application assessing the application and making a recommendation with respect to the variance application based on the application of the evaluative criteria described in Section 6.4.

The Sign Variance Committee as part of its regular agenda would consider the report from the Sign Unit staff. The decision of the Sign Variance Committee on variance applications for a third party advertising sign would be final and could not be appealed further.

6.3 Applications for Prohibited Sign Types

It is recommended that where a type of sign is prohibited by the sign by-law in a sign district that such a sign can only be permitted in the sign district following the approval of an application to amend the sign by-law to permit the type of sign at the location.

For example, where the sign by-law prohibits a roof sign in a sign district, this type of sign

should only be permitted if Council, through Planning and Growth Management Committee, has considered the application and approved an amendment to the sign by-law.

The variance process should not be used to apply for approval of prohibited sign types because its purpose is to provide a degree of flexibility with respect to sign standards for permitted sign types, not to also grant relief from provisions that represent a core intent of the sign by-law's regulations with regard to the permitted location of a sign in an area of the City.

Applicants seeking permission to erect prohibited signs are seeking to change a fundamental aspect of the sign by-law and its intent regarding the type of signs permitted in a sign district. Accordingly, such applications are above the threshold that can be considered an adjustment to standards of a permitted sign type. Such applications involve consideration of changing a major regulation and warrant review as an application to amend the sign by-law.

6.4 Criteria for Evaluating Sign Variances

Both the public and sign companies commented on the need for Toronto to establish criteria that staff and Council can use to evaluate applications for sign variances. These comments stem from the perception based on past decisions made on variance applications that the decisions appear to have been made without the benefit of an evaluative framework.

To address this concern and perceived gap in the current sign variance approval process, a series of specific criteria are recommended to provide guidance to staff and Council for evaluating sign variance applications made to the City of Toronto.

It is recommended that in making a decision on any application for a variance from a provision of the new sign by-law, the City shall be satisfied that the variance and proposed sign meet all of these criteria:

- a) The variance is warranted due to physical circumstances applicable to the property or premises; and
- b) The variance will permit the erection of a sign which is consistent with the architecture of the building or development of the property; and
- c) The proposed sign is visually in harmony with signs, buildings, and other features of the property, the premises, and the surroundings; and
- d) The proposed sign will not alter the essential character of the area;
- e) The proposed sign will not adversely affect adjacent properties; and
- f) The proposed sign does not adversely affect the environment or public safety; and
- g) The proposed sign is not otherwise prohibited as a type of sign by the sign by-law.

These recommended criteria are intended to clearly set out what staff and Sign Variance Committee are to take into consideration in evaluating applications for variances from the provisions of the new sign by-law. The criteria are intended to provide the public and sign companies with clarity on the basis on which the Sign Variance Committee will reach a decision on variance applications.

6.5 Licensing of Sign Companies

The City currently licenses many businesses operating in Toronto through Chapter 545 of the Municipal Code.

City licensing of companies that install, lease or manage the display of third party advertising signs has been suggested as an additional method for the City to ensure that the operations of these companies comply with City by-law and requirements for signs.

Licensing of sign companies would occur under Chapter 545 which sets out the City's objectives with respect to the licensing of businesses and the Toronto Licensing Tribunal.

Chapter 545 sets out the grounds for the denial of a license. These include that the business, its officers, directors, employees or agents have not carried on its business in accordance with law and with integrity and honesty. A license can also be denied where there are reasonable grounds to believe the business has breached a law.

It is recommended that Chapter 545 of the Municipal Code be amended to license companies that install, lease or manage the display of third party advertising signs in Toronto.

6.6 Identification of Approved Third Party Advertising Signs

As mentioned earlier, the greatest number of comments and suggestions made at consultation sessions was about third party advertising signs. The public and others voiced a concern about the lack of a straight forward method an person can use and rely on to determine if a third party advertising sign or billboard was erected with a permit and complies with the sign by-law.

Billboards erected without a permit are a focus of the City's enforcement and a priority concern for many members of the public and some sign companies. At present, the public must contact the City to make the inquiry and then wait for the City to provide the information on whether a billboard has been erected with a permit.

It is recommended that a simple system of a visible identifier on third party advertising signs be implemented as part of the new sign by-law and as part of the licensing requirements for companies dealing with third party advertising signs.

The publicly visible display of identifier on every permitted billboard will give the public this information more directly and efficiently.

The City required identifier on the billboard will display a unique number thereby indicating the billboard was erected in compliance with a permit.

Such identification methods are used by several municipalities for permanent and temporary signs to inform the public of the sign's status and facilitate enforcement.

The Region of York and the City of Vaughan require temporary signs to display a municipally issued sticker. The City of San Francisco requires each third party advertising sign to display identifying information including the sign company and the permit number.

The identification information should be linked to a publicly accessible City database of approved third party advertising signs that the public could access through the City's Web site.

Toronto currently operates a similar system to give the public access to the status of restaurant inspections. The Dinesafe web site provides the public with the status of a particular restaurant.

This inspection information is also visible to the public on the notice posted at the restaurant.

This type of highly visible identifier for billboards provides a simple and straight forward method for the public to determine the compliance of billboards. It also promotes transparency and access with respect to information on third party advertising sign compliance with City requirements. This system also allows City staff to efficiently link the sign with relevant City information to determine compliance and facilitate effective enforcement if necessary.

OMAC has stated its support for such a system of identifiers on outdoor advertising signs. Its members are prepared to cooperate with City staff to implement such an identification system on existing signs across Toronto. OMAC considers such a system will benefit companies that adhere to permit requirements and allows for the City to deal swiftly and appropriately with companies that do not.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Opportunities

During the public consultations, comments were made in favour of reducing the energy consumption of signs, powering signs from renewable energy sources, controlling their illumination, and reducing the volume in the waste stream represented by the materials used in signs. The new sign by-law contains several provisions which advance the City of Toronto's Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Goals.

(a) Energy Efficiency

The new sign by-law requires all third party advertising signs using electricity and all digital display signs to be powered by renewable energy from an authorized distributor or provide on-site renewable energy production for the sign subject to the requirements of By-law 218-2008.

To reduce energy consumption during periods of a smog alert, no sign should be illuminated when a smog alert has been issued for the City of Toronto.

(b) Resource Efficiency

The sign copy on third party advertising signs is changed frequently as the advertising is replaced with new copy. To direct this sign waste away from the waste stream, it is recommended that companies applying for sign permits for third party advertising signs demonstrate that the material constituting the changeable copy in a sign will be recycled or re-used once it is removed from the sign structure.

(c) Sign Illumination

The type and level of sign illumination can create issues of impact on the public as well as wildlife and sensitive areas in the City. The new sign by-law prescribes lighting requirements designed to deal with these impacts.

The new sign by-law requires all lighting of signs to be consistent with Toronto's Bird Friendly Guidelines as follows:

- No up-lighting of signs is permitted;
- Signs using illumination methods other than down-lighting must be shielded so as to prevent any light spilling onto adjacent properties.

Illumination requirements are established in the new sign by-law that correspond with the types of uses in different areas.

In natural areas, parks, open space areas, residential areas, institutional and utility areas, no sign shall be illuminated between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

In mixed use, commercial, industrial and employment areas a maximum level of light attributable to a sign of 6.5 lux or 0.20 foot-candles above ambient lighting levels is set in order to control the amount of light from the sign falling onto nearby properties.

The new sign by-law requires that all signs including those containing a digital display incorporate a default design that will result in the sign display no longer operating when a malfunction occurs in the sign.

8.0 DISPLAY TECHNOLOGY AND SIGNS

8.1 Background

The production methods and materials used in signs have changed with time and continue to evolve. Signs originally were fabricated manually by painting the sign on a surface or assembling materials into a sign. For example, early billboards relied on sign painters to paint the display and copy on the sign.

The arrival of industrial printing allowed signs to be produced mechanically in large numbers and printed on sheets of paper or other material. Sign painters were replaced by installers who manually applied the printed sign panels to the sign structures. The use of large size ink jet printers allows the artwork of the sign copy to be printed efficiently with high levels of realism in terms of colour and image detail.

The methods used to illuminate signs have also evolved as lighting technology has advanced. Incandescent bulbs gave way to fluorescent bulbs and now LED lighting is widely used to illuminate signs. These changes in illumination methods have generally been accompanied by lower energy consumption in signs. For example, LED lighting consumes less electricity than an incandescent bulb for a comparable level of illumination output in a sign.

Municipal sign by-laws tend to limit signs and their displays to sign copy that is static. This is reflected in sign regulations which regulate the physical motion, rotation and other types of movement in signs. For example, rotating or animated signs are usually not permitted. Exceptions are generally trivision or posturn signs which usually consist of three sided vertical louvers that display a sign with different copy each time they rotate.

The degree to which electronic sign copy displayed on a sign changes in real time began to be addressed in sign by-laws with the arrival of electronic changeable message display boards and their use in signs. These were most frequently single colour amber or red LED displays of text and numbers such as the display of time and temperature. In some cases, simple pixel images are displayed. This LED technology produces a low definition and coarse pixilated display on the sign. As a result, these electronic displays are suited only for simple text messages or animated effects.

Since then significant technical advances have been made in the quality of electronic display technology. These have mirrored the shifts seen in the displays used in televisions and computer monitors. The application of LED and LCD display technology to these screens together with the use of digital images and content has allowed for the display of higher definition images and high speed image change than could be achieved with earlier analog displays.



The images are computer controlled and can change in seconds. As a result, the sign with a digital display can present the public potentially with thousands of images in the course of a day, depending only on the rate of copy change and the number of sign messages available for display. The increased frequency in the display of different advertising has inherent economic benefits for the sign owner.



Digital displays have migrated into the City's external visual environment through signs. Signs with digital displays provide ways to display sign copy in ways substantially different from signs of the past. They provide better image quality, greater sign brightness, and higher kinetic intensity in the sign when the sign copy and images are fully dynamic with motion and animation. As a result, signs with digital displays can be the most visually intense type of sign in a city.

The area in downtown Toronto around Yonge-Dundas Square currently contains the greatest number of digital displays in the City. These types of signs form one part of the vision of the

City and area businesses for the area and the associated Business Improvement Area.



Most major North American cities are reviewing their sign regulations with regard to digital display signs. While some municipalities prohibit digital displays, other municipalities restrict them to special districts where they are considered appropriate and subject to specific requirements.



The rise of digital display signs raises public concern in most cities when they start to appear. Public concerns about this type of sign

expressed during the public consultation conducted for the New Sign By-law Project focused on sign brightness, the potential for distraction, the effect on public safety, and the compatibility of such visually intense and dynamic signage in the City.

8.2 Distraction and Road Safety

The purpose of a sign is to be noticed and attract attention, in other words “to catch your eye.” Since the greatest potential for a sign to be noticed by the most people exists along streets with high levels of traffic and drivers, there is often a concern about the potential for signs to distract drivers and negatively affect road safety.

This distraction and safety concern is increased with respect to digital displays because unlike traditional static signs, these new signs are dynamic and animated with changing messages or full motion video.

The relationship between signs, driver distraction, and safety has been the subject of numerous studies in recent decades. The studies reach various conclusions including the following:

- Signs with moving or changing messages are more likely to distract a driver than signs that are static and do not change. A report done for the City of Toronto in 2004 found that drivers make twice as many glances toward dynamic signs as they do toward static signs. These glances toward dynamic signs are longer with signs containing video and scrolling text attracting the longest glances.
- Distractions 2 seconds or more in length are linked to an increased risk of accidents;
- It takes up to 4 seconds for a driver to read a message on a sign;

- Driver distraction can be caused by the message change as well as the expectation of an upcoming change in message. This urge to keep watching the message is referred to as the Zeigarnik Effect.

In April 2009, a major report on safety and digital display technology in outdoor advertising signs was issued by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. The study found that the role of digital display technology in traffic safety is complex and no single research study will answer the many questions associated with this issue. However, the study also found that research conducted over the last ten years consistently demonstrated empirical concerns about driver distraction from roadside billboards

Likely hazards resulting from driver distraction provides a reasonable basis for continuing to restrict the location of these types of signs.

In addition to the issue of potential distraction from digital display signs, an equally important consideration about where in the City such signs may be appropriate is taking into consideration the effect of these signs on the City’s visual environment.

8.3 Effect on Visual Environment

Characteristics such as sign brightness, message change, the interval between successive message displays, and the duration of a message’s display are all key features and capabilities of these digital displays in signs.

Research on digital displays in outdoor advertising signs has demonstrated that signs incorporating this display technology can capture and hold a person’s attention even at the expense of distracting the person from performing another primary task. Established principles of human perception and cognition

indicate that an object that is brighter than its surroundings and changes visually draws a person's eye to it.

The degree of illumination and dynamism in the messages displayed by a sign with a digital display make such signs potentially the most visually intense and dominant signs in places where they are located. This is particularly the case at night when illuminated signs contrast against the darkness of their surroundings and are highly visible.

By virtue of their visual characteristics made possible by their enhanced display capabilities in comparison with conventional static sign displays, digital displays present new issues with respect to the appropriateness of these types of signs in an area that are not associated with traditional forms of sign displays.

Accordingly, municipalities that have reviewed these digital display signs in the process of updating their sign by-laws or in response to public concern about the visual impact of such signs on communities have proceeded cautiously. Where in fact cities have approved new permissions for these types of signs, the potential location of digital display signs has been quite limited. For example, New York, San Antonio, Boston and Portland only permit digital displays in special districts.

In August 2009, the City of Los Angeles amended its sign ordinance (by-law) and banned new digital billboards citywide. This was in response to public concern about visual pollution from digital and other types of signs and to address the potential for existing billboards to convert to digital billboards. At the same time, Los Angeles banned new supergraphic signs (large vinyl advertising signs stretched across the walls of a building).

Toronto faces similar issues and pressures with respect to digital displays in third party advertising signs. This matter was frequently raised by the public in the public consultation sessions held for the New Sign By-law Project. When applications for the approval of such signs come before Toronto Council they are often accompanied by extensive discussion.

Currently signs in Toronto containing animated copy and digital displays are generally limited to the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area. These signs were part of specific detailed amendments to the sign by-law for signage programs for buildings and development projects.

Animated signs are also currently permitted within specific areas adjacent to the Gardiner Expressway as described in Section 297-13 of Chapter 297, the sign by-law of the former City of Toronto. Within this defined area, signs may consist of animated or other changeable copy provided the area of the copy.

It is recommended that new signs with digital displays and animated copy only be permitted within the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area and within the Gardiner Gateway area, an area bounded by Strachan Avenue, Dufferin Street, King Street, and Lake Ontario. This generally corresponds with a portion of the area where animated signs are permitted by Chapter 297.

It is further recommended permitting new signs with digital displays in other areas of the City only proceed by way of an application to amend the sign by-law and only after a signage vision for an area has been adopted or a Signage Master Plan has been prepared for a development.

9.0 SIGN STANDARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the report contains recommendations for the new sign standards to be applied in the new sign by-law.

For each major sign type, the following information is presented:

- A general summary of the main standards found in the current sign by-laws and applicable to the type of sign;
- Discussion of the objectives for standards regulating the sign type and recommended sign standards.

The information on current sign standards is presented for the purpose of informing the development of a new sign by-law. This is general information and is not intended to describe all aspects and regulations found in the current sign by-laws. This summary information should not be used in place of the actual sign by-law.

9.1 Distinction Between First and Third Party Signs

Municipalities and their sign by-laws generally recognize first and third party signs as different classes of signs and apply different regulations to each.

A third party sign is a sign that displays a message about something that is not available at the location where the sign is located. For example, a sign advertising a car located on a property or building that is not a car dealership is a third party sign since the product advertised is unrelated to the first party location where it is found.

It follows that a first party sign is a sign that applies to the business or use where it is

located. For example, a ground sign located at a car dealership which identifies the business is a first party sign.

All of Toronto's current sign by-laws distinguish between first and third party signs with respect to sign standards and requirements. Some current sign by-laws require that certain types of signs like ground signs or wall signs cannot also be third party signs.

Some out-of-home sign industry persons suggested the new sign by-law should no longer distinguish between first and third party signs. Rather, any sign could be first or third party presumably with no difference in sign standards.

First party signs function as an accessory to the business or use. The role of the sign is to identify the business and allow the public to locate and identify the business or use. This describes the function of signs permanent signs businesses erect on their buildings or property.

This is in contrast to the message and sign copy a third party sign displays. It is generally unrelated and not accessory to the business or location where it is found. Its purpose is to display advertising which is usually changed throughout the year. Unlike a first party sign, a third party sign is generally not owned by the owner of the business, property or building where it is erected.

The new sign by-law continues to distinguish in its regulations between first and third party signs. The rationale for maintaining this distinction is because the signs are used for different purposes by different users. They differ in function and characteristics and this should continue to be recognized in the new sign by-law.

A specific matter addressed by the new sign by-law is the display of second party copy in a sign. This refers to the display for advertising purposes of for example a product like a candy bar in the wall sign of a convenience store. The product is offered for sale on the property where the sign is located but the portion of the sign displaying the candy bar brand does not identify the first party, in this case the convenience store.



The current sign by-laws do not generally deal with this. This has led to issues of interpretation on the extent to which second party copy can be part of a first party sign.

It is appropriate to address and regulate this type of situation in order to avoid first party signs becoming entire third party advertising signs by displaying only a product available on the premises. Accordingly, it is recommended that the new sign by-law permit up to a maximum of 30% of the area of any first party sign to include third party advertising thereby providing a clear direction on this matter.

9.2 First Party Ground Signs

Ground signs are signs permanently mounted in the ground. They are free standing signs supported by the ground and generally located at the front of a property adjacent to a street.

Ground signs are generally oriented perpendicular to the street to be visible to passers-by and allow them to identify the location and business.

Current sign by-law refer to these signs by several other terms including free standing sign, pylon sign, an pedestal sign.



Ground signs can be used by one or more businesses, depending on the nature of the development.

The regulations for ground signs commonly found in current sign by-laws deal with the number of ground signs located on a property, where the signs are located, the maximum area

or size of the ground sign, and the maximum vertical height of the ground sign.

Ground Signs: Existing Standards	
East York	<p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plaza: 1 ground sign maximum 6.0 m height and 12 m² area Shopping Centre: 1 ground sign for each lot line with street frontage, maximum 12.2 m height and 47 m² area <p>Office Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ground sign maximum 2.5 m height and 9 m² area <p>Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ground sign in each yard abutting a street maximum 2.5 m height and 6 m² area
Etobicoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ground sign maximum 11m height and 0.1 m² in area for each 1.5 m of frontage
North York	<p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not permitted on lots less than 12.2 m frontage Maximum height ranges from 7.7 m to 12.2 m depending on frontage Maximum area of 0.9 m² for every 3 m of frontage <p>Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not permitted on lots less than 24.4 m frontage Up to 3 ground signs depending on frontage Maximum height 7.7 m Maximum area 0.09 m² for every 1.2 m of frontage to a maximum of 14 m²
Scarborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ground sign maximum area from 1 m² to 8 m² or greater depending on lot frontage Maximum height varies depending on sign area
Toronto	<p>Industrial and Mixed Use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 ground sign 10 m maximum height and 25 m² Ground sign not permitted to be a third party sign
York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not permitted on lots less than 7.5 m frontage 1 ground sign for each frontage Maximum 9.0 m height and maximum area of 0.3 m² for every 1 m frontage

As reflected in the approach to ground signs in the current sign by-laws, the main objectives in setting regulations for first party ground signs are to:

- Permit up to two ground signs on each frontage that a property has on a street to provide visibility and identification of the location.
- Limit the maximum ground sign area in proportion to the size of the property to ensure the ground sign is in scale with the size of the property and its street frontage. This is achieved by basing the size of the ground sign on the length of the street frontage on which the sign is located.
- Provide a range of maximum heights for ground signs depending on the land use and other property characteristics such as street frontage. For example, the maximum height of a ground sign in a Residential Apartment Sign District is 1.5 metres. In a Commercial Sign District or Employment Industrial Sign District, the maximum height of a ground sign is proportionate to the property it is located on as follows:

Frontage	Maximum Sign Height
Less than 20 m	3.5 m
20 to 30 m	5.0 m
30 to 40 m	6.0 m
40 to 50 m	8.0 m
More than 50 m	10 m

Recommended Standards for First Party Ground Signs

- Two ground signs for each street frontage of a property;
- Maximum sign area: 0.3 m² for each 1.0 metre of the street frontage on which the sign is located, maximum sign area of 15 m².
- Maximum height of 1.5 metres to 10 metres.



9.3 First Party Wall Signs

Wall signs, also referred to as fascia signs, are generally attached to the front wall of a building.

The location of wall signs is generally limited to the facade of the building facing a street. This corresponds to the side of the building that is most visible to the public and those passing by on the street. Where a building is located on a corner lot, wall signs are sometimes also

permitted to face the flankage street. Wall signs are most commonly located on the ground floor of a building, the usual location of the main occupancy and use of a building. Where a sign by-law permits wall signs above the ground floor, it generally restricts the maximum area of such additional wall signs and the location on the upper floors where the sign can be erected.

Wall Signs: Existing Standards	
East York	<p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 fascia sign for each street or parking frontage, maximum 3 m length 1 fascia sign for each occupant in a plaza, maximum 1.2 m height, all signs at same height <p>Office Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 fascia sign per building abutting a street or parking, maximum 2 signs of maximum 2 m height and maximum 6 m² area <p>Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum height 2 m and 9 m² maximum area
Etobicoke	<p>Commercial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 fascia signs per occupancy on a street frontage facade Maximum area 30% of 1st storey street frontage 2nd storey fascia signs maximum area 15% of the street frontage facade
North York	<p>Commercial and Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumulative sign area 20% for 1st storey and 15% for other storeys
Scarborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 sign per occupancy Maximum area ranges by use from 5% to 25% of the area of the wall facing the street
Toronto	<p>Commercial and Industrial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 30% of building face of 1st storey, 15% for 2nd storey No fascia signs facing street above 2nd storey or 10 m height except for logo or corporate symbol or name if located on the uppermost storey of the building Maximum area 25 m² for commercial and 70 m² for industrial
York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 sign per 1st storey occupancy, maximum area 30% of street frontage facade of 1st storey 1 sign per occupant on second storey, maximum area of 15% of street frontage facade of 2nd storey Painted wall signs permitted only in non-residential areas, maximum area of 65 m² and only 10 painted wall signs permitted in the City of York



The approaches current sign by-laws take to regulating the size and location of wall signs continues to be relevant and applicable since they are achieve these objectives:

- Ensure the size of the wall sign is in scale with the building and its façade facing the street;



- The wall sign at grade should be the primary sign on a multi-storey building in terms of size;
- The wall signs located on upper floors should be secondary to the wall signs at grade by controlling their size and location.



Recommended Standards for First Party Wall Signs

- Maximum sign area for a wall sign on the first storey: 20% of the first storey façade of a building facing the street;
- Maximum height for a wall sign on the first storey: the lesser of 4.5 metres above grade or the base of a windowsill on the second storey facing the street;



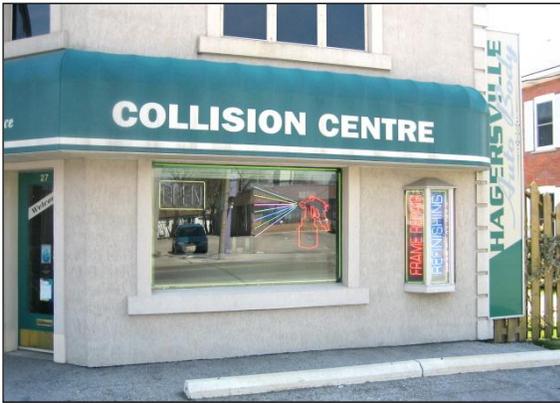
- Maximum sign area for a wall sign on the second storey: 10% of the second storey façade of a building facing the street;
- A wall sign cannot be located above the second storey of a building facing a street;
- A wall sign is not permitted to be project above the wall or parapet of a building.



9.4 Signs on Overhanging Structures

Signs are often located on overhanging structures such as awnings, canopies or marquees. These overhanging structures are attached to a building wall.

An awning or canopy is a surface made of a flexible material like canvas and mounted on a supporting frame structure. This forms the base for a sign.



Awnings can be rigid and fixed or in other cases retractable and capable of being extended from the building wall. Canopies are usually fixed in place and may be partly supported by the ground.

Signs on awnings and canopies are generally considered by the current sign by-laws as a type of wall sign and subject to the same standards. This reflects the shared characteristics and purposes of a sign whether it is on a wall, canopy, or awning with respect to their location on a building. Accordingly, it is recommended that signs on these types of overhanging structures be regulated in a manner similar to wall signs.

Recommended Standards for Signs on Overhanging Structures

- Maximum sign area for a sign on an overhanging structure on the first storey: 50% of the external surface area of the overhanging structure;
- Maximum sign area for a sign on an overhanging structure on the second storey: 25% of the overhanging structure;
- A sign cannot be located on an overhanging structure that is above the second storey of a building;
- An overhanging structure with a sign is not permitted to project above the wall or parapet of a building.

9.5 Projecting Signs

A projecting sign is attached perpendicular to the main wall of a building facing the street.

Projecting signs are most commonly found along pedestrian oriented streets where they contribute to their scale and character particularly in the case of commercial and shopping areas.



This type of sign is secondary in purpose to the wall sign which it complements in size. In the case of some businesses, overhanging signs advertise products available on the premises.

Not all of the current sign by-laws deal with projecting signs. Generally, such signs are indirectly dealt with through a restriction on the maximum distance a sign can project out from a wall. It is appropriate to include in the new sign by-law specific standards for projecting signs.

Recommended Standards for Projecting Signs

- Maximum 1.0 m² sign area;
- Minimum 6.0 metre spacing between overhanging signs on the wall of the business to which they apply;
- Minimum 2.5 metres vertical clearance above grade or the sidewalk below.

9.6 Window Signs

A window sign is a sign that is attached to the interior of a window.

The sign by-laws of the former Etobicoke, Toronto, and York permit window signs with no limitations. The sign by-law of former East York limits a window sign to 50% of the window.



Most of the sign by-laws do not permit a sign to obstruct a window.

The objective for regulating the amount of the window that can be covered with a sign is to avoid signage obscuring the window and visibility through the window. A second objective is to prevent the window area from being covered with signage and functioning in practice as additional wall sign area on the building.



It is also important to ensure no sign is mounted on the exterior of a window so as to obstruct a window.

Recommended Standards for Window Signs

- Maximum area of window sign equal to 25% of the entire window.

9.7 Roof Signs

Roof signs are generally located on or above the top of the roof or parapet of a building.

The current sign by-laws deal with roof signs in various ways.

Roof Signs: Existing Standards	
East York	Commercial, Industrial and Utility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum property area of 2,000 m² • Maximum 8 m height • Maximum 2 roof signs up to 15 m in length permitted on 1 property
Etobicoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted unless incorporated into an architectural roof treatment such as a cupola or parapet wall
North York	Commercial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum area of 32.5 m² • Minimum separation of 229 m from any other roof sign on same side of the street • Roof sign can be a 3rd party sign
Scarborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum area varies by use and type of sign
Toronto	Mixed Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted Industrial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum 1 per building but not on a building more than 2 storeys or 10 m in height or a listed or designated building or within 12.5 m of one • Maximum area 25 m²
York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot extend more than 6 m above a flat roof, cornice or parapet • Maximum area 0.3 m² per 1 m of street frontage

Most municipalities do not permit roof signs in their sign by-laws. Part of the rationale for not permitting roof signs is to avoid the negative visual impacts roof signs create in the areas where they are located and to the buildings on which they are placed.



Roof signs strongly impact affect the nearby visual character. Impacts include:

- The additional vertical height of a roof and its visible area above a building intrudes into the skyline and punctures the prevailing height of the development profile created by buildings along the street;
- The size and height of roof signs is often out of scale with the building below the roof sign which serves as its base;



- Roof signs project above the collective development form and scale established by buildings along a street;

- Roof signs undermine the urban design objectives for the appropriate massing and form of buildings.
- Roof signs undercut the limits on building height established in zoning by-laws to promote appropriate heights for buildings and development.



Unlike wall signs which are also erected on buildings, roof signs are difficult to integrate into the architecture or design of a building.



Frequently, the space between the roof of the building and the sign consists of the visible supporting structure and apparatus associated with the sign.

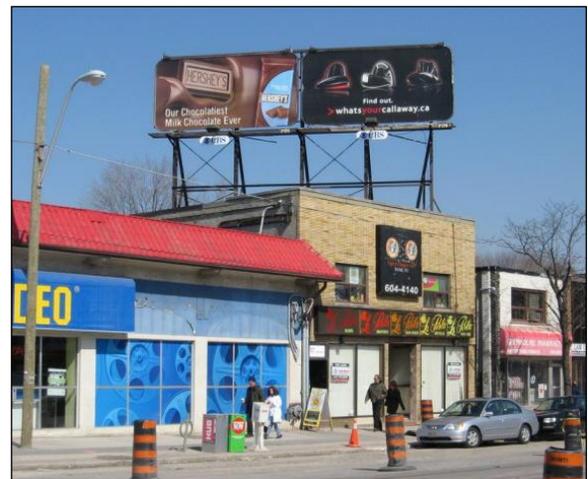
The majority of existing roof signs in Toronto are billboards or third party advertising signs.

The impact of roof signs on the amenity of the streetscape was identified in the Avenue Road Avenue Study which was completed in 2008.

The study found 19 rooftop billboards in the section of Avenue Road from Lawrence Avenue to Wilson Avenue. It found that the concentration of rooftop billboards along this section of Avenue Road detracted from the amenity of the streetscape and recommended that the sign by-law be amended to prohibit additional rooftop billboards.

Recommendation for Roof Signs

- Prohibit new first and third party roof signs.



9.8 Mural and Painted Signs

The sign by-law of the former City of Toronto contains specific standards for a sign referred to as a mural sign. This type of sign is defined as “a sign painted directly on the face of a wall.”

If the mural sign is not illuminated, it can be 100 m² in area or four times the 25 m² maximum size of an illuminated mural sign.



The sign by-law of the former City of York permits a “painted wall sign” to be 65 m² in area.

This approach to limiting the size of this type of sign which is located on the wall of a building differs from how these by-laws limit the maximum area of other wall signs.

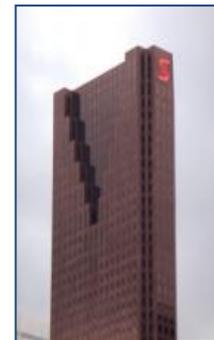
The maximum area of a wall sign is generally set as a percentage of the wall on which it is erected. This latter approach applies to the vast majority of signs located on the walls of buildings in Toronto.

The difference in approaches leads to a mural sign or painted wall sign being much larger than the wall sign the sign by-law would otherwise permit on the building.

It is appropriate to establish consistency in the manner in which the maximum area of a sign located on the wall of a building is set. Accordingly, it is recommended that the mural and painted sign regulations not be carried forward to the new sign by-law.

9.9 Logo Signs

A logo sign is a wall sign erected on the uppermost storey of an office building and usually consists of a company symbol or trademark.



Current by-laws contain standards for the minimum building height where a logo sign is permitted and a maximum size for the logo sign.

Recommendations for Logo Signs

- Erected on a building with a height of 10 or more storeys;
- Located only within the uppermost storey of the building or on the mechanical penthouse;
- Maximum logo sign area: 20% of the façade of the storey or mechanical penthouse on which it is erected;
- Same building occupant identified on each logo sign.

9.10 Third Party Advertising Signs

Third party advertising signs are signs that advertise a product, service or event that may or may not be located or available at the location where the sign is erected and displayed.

Depending on the individual sign by-law's regulations, these permanent signs may be located on the ground, on the wall or roof of a building.

Current sign by-laws in Toronto refer to these types of advertising signs with various terms including billboard (East York, York), off-premise sign (North York, York), standardized outdoor advertising sign (Etobicoke, East York, York), street ad (Etobicoke), non-accessory sign (Scarborough), market place advertising sign (Scarborough), and third party advertising (Etobicoke, Toronto).

Some sign by-laws also incorporate the terms the outdoor advertising industry uses to refer to particular types of third party advertising signs. These types of signs include poster panel, bulletin, spectacular, posturn or trivision.



Third party advertising signs are usually the largest signs in communities. These signs are often located in highly visible locations in high

traffic areas to maximize the exposure of the sign's advertising to passing traffic and pedestrians. This reflects the fact that outdoor advertising is primarily sold to advertisers based on the number of drivers or persons passing or otherwise viewing the sign on an hourly or daily basis.



Municipalities attempt to control the degree to which third party advertising signs become a prominent part of a community's overall visual character through various measures. In addition to the standard sign provisions for size and height, municipal sign by-laws apply various other controls to regulate the number and location of third party advertising signs.

These include permitting third party advertising signs only on vacant properties; not permitting third party advertising signs within specific distances adjacent to expressways or highways; allowing third party signs to only take the form of a ground sign; not permitting a roof sign to be used as a third party sign; not permitting an

approved sign to be either a first or third party sign; requiring minimum separation distances between third party advertising signs control concentration; requiring minimum separation distances between third party advertising signs and other uses to address visual impact on sensitive uses; setting a maximum for the number of third party signs permitted within the municipality.

Toronto's current sign by-laws implement these types of controls to varying degrees or not at all. As a result, Toronto presently has varying levels of control on third party advertising across the City. This variation in sign by-law provisions is visually evident if different parts of the City with similar types of land uses or development are compared with respect to the presence and concentration of various types of third party advertising signs.

Toronto's current regulations for third party advertising signs tend to be more permissive than those of other municipalities including those in the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario. Current sign by-laws in Toronto tend to provide more possibilities for third party advertising signs to occur in Toronto than would be the case in other municipalities.

9.10.1 Third Party Advertising Signs in Toronto

Over 4,000 third party sign faces have been identified in Toronto. Expressed as a ratio, this is equal to approximately one third party sign face for every 623 Toronto residents.

Some Ontario municipalities limit the number of third party advertising signs in the municipality to a maximum number or cap. These provide some comparative ratios based on current municipal population.

- Town of Oakville: Maximum 35 signs permitted (1 per 5,000 population);
- Town of Markham: Maximum 10 signs permitted (1 per 26,000 population);
- City of Burlington: Maximum 50 signs permitted (1 per 3,300 population).

The City of Niagara Falls sets the maximum number of third party signs permitted in the municipality as a ratio of population: 1 sign for every 625 persons.

The sign by-law of the former City of Scarborough sets the maximum number of third party advertising signs as the official population of the municipality divided by 1,500.

The sign by-law of the former City of York sets a maximum of 177 off premise sign locations.

Table 2 provides information on the number of third party advertising sign faces in each Ward for Toronto. The average number of third party advertising sign faces per Ward in Toronto ranges from a low of 4 sign faces in Ward 4 to a high of 230 sign faces in Ward 20. The average number per Ward across Toronto is about 93 sign faces.

Third party advertising signs have been generally permitted only in commercial or industrial areas as well as in utility and railway corridors. Using only the amount of land designated in the Official Plan for these types of land uses, the average density of third party sign faces in Toronto is 15.51 sign faces per km².

The highest density of third party advertising sign faces is in Ward 20 (83.64 sign faces per km²). The lowest density is found in Ward 4 (0.32 sign faces per km²).

Table 2
Third Party Advertising Signs in Toronto

Ward		Total Area (km2)	Total Non-Residential & Non-Open Space Area	Total 3rd Party Sign Faces	3rd Party Sign Faces per km2 of Non-Residential Land	Population per 3rd Party Sign Faces
1	Etobicoke North	4.96	4.71	64	7.59	1,032
2	Etobicoke North	6.27	13.61	178	17.10	301
3	Etobicoke Centre	7.31	1.18	11	0.92	5,602
4	Etobicoke Centre	8.74	0.41	4	0.32	13,319
5	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	7.41	8.85	159	15.90	377
6	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	5.49	5.72	101	12.10	602
7	York West	4.7	7.98	229	22.50	217
8	York West	2.81	8.17	87	14.55	570
9	York Centre	4.8	4.42	61	7.91	725
10	York Centre	5.55	1.27	66	6.12	933
11	York South-Weston	4.22	2.54	282	32.98	231
12	York South-Weston	4.87	2.38	95	14.37	554
13	Parkdale-High Park	3.97	0.57	110	15.28	545
14	Parkdale-High Park	2.26	1.04	100	36.50	596
15	Eglinton-Lawrence	4.57	3.53	138	23.75	340
16	Eglinton-Lawrence	5.9	0.49	103	14.67	498
17	Davenport	3.41	0.81	136	31.92	397
18	Davenport	2.26	1.07	81	32.14	563
19	Trinity-Spadina	2.5	1.59	130	34.12	300
20	Trinity-Spadina	1.85	2.78	230	83.64	465
21	St. Paul's	3.43	0.42	48	11.01	961
22	St. Paul's	4.02	0.69	47	6.94	1,275
23	Willowdale	7.5	2.07	92	9.66	893
24	Willowdale	7.66	2.83	22	1.92	2,262
25	Don Valley West	11.81	1.78	28	1.56	1,979
26	Don Valley West	2.23	3.2	54	10.07	1,443
27	Toronto Centre-Rosedale	2.4	1.93	165	36.91	399
28	Toronto Centre-Rosedale	0.68	2.31	226	41.62	283
29	Toronto-Danforth	3.24	0.6	57	11.59	740
30	Toronto-Danforth	3.1	3.54	182	28.48	271
31	Beaches-East York	4.12	0.97	90	14.35	576

Ward		Total Area (km2)	Total Non-Residential & Non-Open Space Area	Total 3rd Party Sign Faces	3rd Party Sign Faces per km2 of Non-Residential Land	Population per 3rd Party Sign Faces
32	Beaches-East York	4.19	1.45	81	13.78	693
33	Don Valley East	4.93	1.32	12	1.86	4,779
34	Don Valley East	4.87	3	48	5.31	964
35	Scarborough Southwest	4.79	3.96	133	18.68	427
36	Scarborough Southwest	7.59	1.5	62	5.60	829
37	Scarborough Centre	7.16	6.45	123	13.98	503
38	Scarborough Centre	5.97	3.46	38	4.51	1,862
39	Scarborough-Agincourt	4.6	2.22	6	0.93	7,792
40	Scarborough-Agincourt	4.92	1.9	27	3.94	2,184
41	Scarborough-Rouge River	7.03	8.6	90	10.43	724
42	Scarborough-Rouge River	6.48	7.49	41	1.38	1,899
43	Scarborough East	6.68	1.04	27	2.32	1,910
44	Scarborough East	11.18	2.72	20	1.09	2,773
		Total	Total	Average	Average	Average
		224.43	138.57	92.82	15.51	623

9.10.2 Regulations for Third Party Advertising Signs

The six existing sign by-laws in Toronto differ in the degree to which aspects of third party advertising signs are regulated or not and what standards govern the physical attributes of these signs. To varying degrees, regulations are applied to third party signs now with respect to: sign type, location, maximum sign area, maximum sign height, separation between third party signs and separation from residential land uses, as well as maximum number of third party advertising signs per municipality.

The current sign by-laws generally permit third party advertising signs to take the form of wall, ground or roof signs. The sign by-laws of former Toronto and North York, in some instances, permit certain types of signs to be either first party or third party. As a result in some cases, signs originally approved as first party signs over time are converted to third party advertising signs.

Third Party Advertising Sign Types			
	Wall Sign	Ground Sign	Roof Sign
East York	Yes	Yes	Yes
Etobicoke	No (Commercial Zone) Yes (Industrial Zone)	Yes (Industrial and Commercial Zones)	Yes (Industrial Zone)
North York	No	Yes	Yes
Scarborough	Yes	Yes	Yes
Toronto	Yes	No (Mixed Use Districts) Yes (Industrial Districts)	No (Mixed Use Districts) Yes (Industrial Districts)
York	Yes	Yes	Yes

These restrictions on the types of signs that can be third party signs work together with other standards that regulate where third party signs are located and their physical characteristics.

(a) Permitted Locations and Separation

The distribution of third party advertising signs across Toronto is the product of several sign by-law regulations in the current sign by-laws. These include the zoning district or area in which the signs are permitted, the characteristics of the property on which they are located, the required minimum separation between third party signs, and the required separation from residential and other uses or structures.

These standards have the greatest effect on the dispersal of third party signs across Toronto and the prevalence or concentration of third party signs in an area of the City.



	Location	Minimum Separation from Residential Zone	
		Third Party Sign	
East York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only fronting on Metro arterial road • Commercial Zone • Industrial Zone • Utility Zone • Minimum 2,000 m² property for ground or wall sign • Maximum 2 outdoor advertising structures per property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Etobicoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Zone (Vacant Lot Only) • Agricultural Zone (Vacant Lot Only) • Industrial Zone • Utility Zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 61 m same side of street but not applicable to signs at grade separated railway crossing • 230 m between any two roof signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 m for sign facing residential zone, 20 m for sign backing residential zone • 61 m for roof sign from residential zone
North York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Zone (Roof Sign) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 153 m from another roof sign on same side of street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Zone Undeveloped land over 4,046.7 m²) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Zone (Roof and Ground Sign) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 229 m from another roof sign on same side of street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railway or Hydro Corridors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45.7 m from another off premises sign on the same side of the street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 153 m
Scarborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial Zones • Employment Zones • Commercial Zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 m from another third party sign • 75 m from an intersection • 25 m from a ground sign • No ground or wall sign within 400 m of Highway 401 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 m
Toronto	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Use Districts • Industrial Districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 m radius from another third party sign • 300 m between third party signs over 70 m² • Roof sign 30 m setback from certain intersections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial District • Industrial District • Transportation – Utilities District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91 m from another sign on the same side of the street facing same traffic flow except at the intersection of 2 arterial streets or where a railroad overpass crosses • Maximum 2 signs at intersection of 2 arterial streets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

The minimum separation between third party signs currently varies across Toronto.

The existing average required separation distance in Toronto, Canada's largest city, is 105 metres between third party signs for the current sign by-laws.

	Separation Distances
East York	0 metres
Etobicoke	61 metres 230 metres (roof signs)
North York	45.7 metres 153 metres, 229 metres (roof signs)
Scarborough	75 metres
Toronto	60 metres
York	91 metres

This is comparable with an average of 95 metres required separation distance followed by other comparable major Canadian cities.

	Separation Distances
Montreal	60 metres
Calgary	75 metres
Ottawa	150 metres
Edmonton	100 metres
Mississauga	92 metres
Vancouver	90 metres

In addition to the controls on the location of third party signs found in Toronto's sign by-laws, Chapter 693 of the Municipal Code prohibits the erection of any third party sign on lands within 400 metres the limit of the following highways:

- Gardiner Expressway from Highway 427 to the Humber River;
- Highway 27 from Highway 401 to Steeles Avenue;
- Highway 2A from Highway 401 to Old Highway 2, and Highway 2 from Highway 401 to the Region of Durham boundary;
- Eglinton Avenue from the East Mall to a point 0.5 kilometres east.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has adopted a Commercial Signing Policy which regulates the erection of signs on a property within 400 metres of any Provincial Highway. MTO prohibits the erection of signs advertising an item not available on the property where the third party advertising sign would be located adjacent to a freeway or expressway. This includes all of the 400 series highways within Toronto.

(b) Maximum Sign Area and Height

Each current sign by-law generally limits the size and height of third party advertising signs. Third party advertising signs tend to be the largest signs permitted by the existing sign by-laws and found in Toronto.

	Maximum Area	Maximum Height
East York	None No more than 2 standardized outdoor advertising structures to a 15 m maximum length per property	8 m
Etobicoke	67.5 m ² Industrial Zones 7 m ² on lots up to 30 m frontage 19 m ² on lots up to 60 m frontage 28 m ² on lots over 60 m frontage For fascia sign, 20% of the area of the first storey facade	7.7 m for ground sign 7.5 m above the roof for a roof sign
North York	Commercial Zone 25 m ² 32.5 m ² Roof Sign Industrial Zone 25 m ² 23.3 m ² Roof Sign Railway & Hydro Corridors 25 m ²	7.7 m Commercial & Industrial 7.5 m Railway & Hydro Corridors
Scarborough	8 m ² Market Place Advertising 25 m ² Non-accessory sign	Ground 4.5 m Market Place Advertising 7.5 m Spectacular 10 m Poster Panel, Posturn, Bulletin Wall No higher than the wall
Toronto	25 m ² 100 m ² non illuminated mural	
York	8 m ² Junior Panel 25 m ² Poster Panel 65 m ² Bulletin	Ground 6 m Poster Panel, Posturn 7 m Bulletin Roof Same heights as ground signs but measured from roof Wall No higher than the wall



Recommendations for New Third Party Advertising Signs

1. Permitted Third Party Advertising Sign Types

- Third party advertising ground sign;
- Third party advertising wall sign;
- Third party roof sign not permitted;
- Existing third party advertising sign that complies with the regulations of the new sign by-law can be converted to a trivision sign.
- Any new third party advertising sign may contain a tri-vision sign face.

These recommendations allow third party advertising signs to continue to take the form of wall and ground signs. New rooftop third party signs would not be permitted consistent with the prohibition of new first party roof signs due to their impact on the visual character and amenity of areas and streetscapes.

Permitting existing third party advertising signs with one static sign face to convert to a tri-vision sign containing three changeable sign faces provides additional third party sign opportunities for existing third party sign locations.

The current sign by-laws of Scarborough, Toronto and York generally permit a third party advertising sign to contain a mechanically changing sign face or tri-vision panel. The new sign by-law carries this permission forward.

2. Maximum Sign Size and Height

- Maximum 20 m² sign area;
- Maximum 10 metres height for ground sign;

- Maximum 15 metres height above grade for wall sign and not facing a street.

The 20 m² maximum sign area corresponds to the industry standard size for a third party advertising sign. The maximum sign heights are comparable to the current standards in Toronto.

3. Permitted Locations

Sign Districts

- **Commercial-Residential District or Commercial District**
 - Only wall sign permitted for third party advertising sign
- **Employment-Industrial District**
 - Only ground sign permitted for third party advertising sign
- **Employment-Industrial Office District**
 - Not permitted

These sign districts correspond with business parks and office centres. These are areas within which maintaining quality in the area's visual character is an important objective for achieving a high quality business setting. Accordingly, third party advertising signs are not permitted.

- **Utility District**
 - Wall and ground signs permitted;
 - Permitted within 30 metres from the limit of an intersecting Major Street as identified in the Official Plan.

Areas of commercial and employment land uses as well as utility corridors correspond generally with the locations

where third party signs are found in Toronto today.

4. General Requirements

- Freestanding ground third party advertising signs cannot be located in any building setback from a street required by a zoning by-law.

This complements the intent of the zoning by-law to maintain required yards next to streets open and free of major structures.

- Not permitted within 400 metres of any limit of Highways 2, 2A, 27, 400, 401, 404, 409, and 427, the Queen Elizabeth Way, the Don Valley Parkway, and the F.G. Gardiner Expressway.

This generally corresponds with the location restrictions for third party advertising signs of the current Toronto regulations and the highway corridor sign management policies of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

- Not permitted within Heritage Conservation District unless permitted by the policies of the Heritage Conservation District Plan.
- Not permitted on a listed or designated heritage building unless expressly allowed.

This corresponds to the regulation found in the sign by-law of the former City of Toronto. It protects the visual character of heritage buildings.

- Minimum 100 metres radius separation from any other third party advertising sign.

The 100 metre separation between third party advertising signs provides an

appropriate spacing of third party signs and is comparable with some current Toronto regulations.

Measuring the separation in a radius around the sign provides separation from all other third party signs nearby and recognizes the existence and visibility of nearby signs, unlike some current regulations which only consider third party signs on the same side of the street or facing the same direction of traffic. Radial separation is the approach taken in the sign by-laws of the former Cities of Scarborough and Toronto.

- Minimum 30 metre setback from a street intersection.

This requirement prevents the location of third party advertising signs on properties around street intersections.

- Minimum 30 metres separation from any limit of a Residential District, Residential Apartment District, Open Space District.

This standard provides for a minimum separation between third party advertising signs and sensitive uses to minimize visual conflict and impact.

- All new third party advertising signs shall be required to renew their sign permit every five years and comply with the sign by-laws in effect at that time.

Many of the third party signs currently erected in the City were established under previous sign by-laws that may no longer be in effect.

As new sign by-laws have been adopted since the erection of these signs, the existing signs may no longer comply with the newer sign standards. If these signs were

originally legally erected, they can continue to remain in place despite not complying with more recent sign standards.

As a result, there is a low rate of natural attrition of existing third party signs that do not comply with more recent sign by-law provisions unless attrition of the sign occurs through redevelopment of the building or property.

It is recommended that any new third party signs erected in the future under the new sign by-law be required to renew their sign permit every five years. At the time of

renewal, the third party advertising sign will need to comply with the provisions of the sign by-law in effect at the time of renewal. If in the period since the original erection of the sign the standards have changed to the extent that the sign cannot comply with the new requirements, the sign permit would not be renewed unless approved by the City in accordance with either a sign variance or amendment to the sign by-law.

This provides a tool for the City in the future to achieve greater compliance among third party advertising signs with any future changes to sign regulations

10. CONCLUSION

The City of Toronto currently regulates signs with a patchwork of different sign by-laws and other approvals. The current sign regulations to a large degree continue to consist of the sign by-laws of the former municipalities prior to the 1998 amalgamation of the new City of Toronto.

The New Sign By-law Project provided an opportunity to prepare new sign by-law regulations for the City and provide common provisions for sign standards and approaches to the control of signs.

The New Sign By-law Project also provided an opportunity for public consultation on both the current sign by-laws and signage issues.

The framework for the new sign by-law is in part based on the Toronto Official Plan's vision of future growth and development. The new Sign Districts draw from the land use structure and designations of the Official Plan and complement the zoning districts of the draft new zoning by-law.

The new sign by-law also provides for Special Sign Districts where it is appropriate to establish signage provisions particularly suited to the characteristics of a specific area.

This Report recommends creation of a dedicated Sign Unit in Toronto Building to consolidate sign approvals and enforcement in a single unit to deal with permanent signs. This is designed to respond to some of the key issues identified with respect to the approval of signs by the City as well as enforcement of sign by-laws.

This Report presented alternative models for dealing with applications for variances from the provisions of the sign by-law. It also recommended criteria City staff and the Sign

Variance Committee could apply when evaluating sign variance applications.

The new sign by-law contains provisions that support the City's environmental goals including energy and resource efficiency. The sign by-law includes specific standards for the illumination of signs, something absent from current sign by-laws.

The growth in the use of digital display technology in signs was reviewed. It is recommended that the implementation of these types of signs in Toronto be done carefully in the context of concerns about public safety and their impact on the appearance and character of areas.

This report recommends that new signs incorporating digital displays be limited to existing special districts where such sign now exist. In the future, the introduction of new signs of this type into other areas of the City should be assessed only after an integrated vision for signage in an area has been prepared that specifically considers how such signs fit into the context of the area or major development project in which they are proposed.

The new sign by-law establishes new sign standards that apply across the City. The approaches to particular types of signs generally follow the practices of current sign by-laws but standards of necessity will differ from existing by-laws given the degree of variation found between the current by-laws.

In addition, the new sign by-law contains changes to existing standards where it was considered necessary to do this in order to address current issues or bring about an improvement in the methods of sign regulation.

The new sign standards are also intended to support the intent and direction of the City's vision for future development in the Toronto. This is fundamental for achieving quality in Toronto's visual character and the appearance of the public realm across the City.

