



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Amendments to the Sign By-law

Date:	May 18, 2016
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Building Official & Executive Director, Toronto Building
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	PG16004

SUMMARY

This report recommends amendments to the Sign By-law to update the provisions that apply to Special Sign Districts to replace references to provisions of various By-laws from former municipalities with those in the Sign By-law. The report also responds to requests from the Planning and Growth Management Committee to explore the creation of two new sign districts, in the Entertainment District and on Yonge Street between Finch Avenue and Steeles Avenue.

When the Sign By-law was introduced in 2010, three of the Special Sign Districts continued to rely on the former City of Toronto Sign and Zoning By-laws. That reliance on regulations contained in three separate By-laws, has complicated sign applications for the public and made the review of signs in these areas very time-consuming for staff. The report proposes to consolidate and update all of the applicable regulations for the University Avenue, Dundas Square, and City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign Districts, into the Sign By-law.

This report also recommends amendments to the By-law as it applies to the location of signs within visibility zones. A visibility zone is a three-metre setback from the intersection of a driveway and a public roadway. There are circumstances where it is appropriate to allow a sign to be placed within a visibility zone. This report recommends that decisions to allow a sign within a visibility zone be made as variances to the Sign By-law and determined by staff or the Sign Variance Committee, as opposed to the current provision which requires an owner to obtain a site-specific amendment through City Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building, recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the proposed amendments to Chapter 694, Signs, General as outlined in Appendix 1 to this report, including: establishing certain premises as an OS-Open Space Sign District; and adding a Schedule C, Special Sign District Regulations, to Chapter 694, containing modified regulations for the Dundas Square Special Sign District, City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign District, and University Avenue Special Sign District; as well as new regulations for the Entertainment District Special Sign District; amending the regulations concerning signs in visibility zones; amending Sign District Map Ward 27: Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Ward 28: Toronto Centre Rosedale, and Sign District Map Ward 20 Trinity-Spadina of Schedule A, Maps, with maps substantially similar to the maps attached as Appendix 1 to this report; and,
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to prepare the necessary Bills for introduction in Council to implement Council's decision, subject to such stylistic and technical changes to the draft By-laws as may be required.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendations in this report have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

PG 33.2 – Special Sign District – Entertainment District:

At its meeting of May 29, 2014, the Planning and Growth Management Committee requested staff to consult with affected stakeholders and report back on amendments to the Sign By-law required to create an "Entertainment District" Special Sign District
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.PG33.20>

PG 9.10 – North-Yonge Sign Study

At its meeting of January 20, 2016, the Planning and Growth Management Committee requested staff to consult with affected stakeholders and report back on amendments to the Sign By-law required to create a "North Yonge Street" Special Sign District
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.PG9.10>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Sign By-law was adopted by City Council to establish a consistent set of signage regulations across the city and replace the existing signage standards of the seven pre-amalgamation area municipalities.

The Sign By-law created six Special Sign Districts, which are areas where the style, number, and/or type of signs are a contributing factor to the character of the area. The regulations for three of these Special Sign Districts currently rely on both the Sign By-law and the Zoning By-law for the former City of Toronto. This complicates the application process for clients and the review of applications by staff. As a result, this report recommends integrating these regulations into the current Sign By-law.

Staff have also identified an amendment to the regulation of signs in 'Visibility Zones' which is proposed to improve and simplify the administration of the Sign By-law. A visibility zone is the area within three metres of the intersection of a driveway and a street. The purpose of the visibility zone is to reduce or eliminate obstructed views for drivers when entering/exiting a property.

Currently, for a sign to be placed in a visibility zone, an amendment to the Sign By-law is required because signs located in visibility zones are prohibited. It is proposed that signs located in visibility zones be removed from the list of prohibited signs (Section 694-15B of the Sign By-law), and be regulated by the general provisions of the By-law.

COMMENTS

CHANGES TO EXISTING SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICTS:

When the Sign By-law was adopted in 2010, three of the Special Sign Districts permitted signs by reference to provisions within the former City of Toronto Sign By-law.

Having the current Sign By-law rely on references to the other By-laws has created challenges for staff and applicants, particularly with respect to the use of different terminology in each By-law.

This report recommends that the language in the Sign By-law for the University Avenue, City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square and the Dundas Square Special Sign Districts be updated to incorporate provisions from the former City of Toronto Sign By-law.

Dundas Square Special Sign District

The current Sign By-law references the provisions of the former City of Toronto Sign By-law where the regulations allow the large and dynamic signs which are common in the Dundas Square Special Sign District ("DS-SSD").

This report recommends that the provisions for the DS-SSD currently contained in the former City of Toronto Sign By-law be incorporated into the current city-wide Sign By-law. This will include permitting the replacement and/or modification of existing roof signs in the DS-SSD, as they include a number of the signs facing Dundas Square.

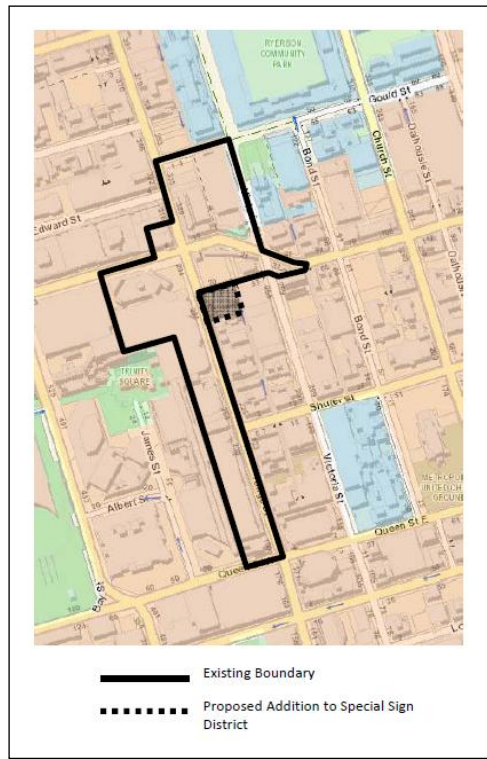
For signs that are not specifically permitted by the regulations in the DS-SSD, such as electronic signs and roof signs, the provisions in the current Sign By-law for CR-Commercial Residential Sign Districts would apply. This is consistent with the signage permission for the surrounding area.

This report also recommends amending the Sign By-law to modify the boundaries of the DS-SSD, and Downtown Yonge Street Special Sign District, so that the DS-SSD includes the Hard Rock Café at 279-283 Yonge Street, (See Figure 1).

Although this property is currently a part of the Downtown Yonge Street Special Sign District, due to its relationship with Dundas Square, it is more suitable as part of the DS-SSD.

The signs located on the roof of 279-283 Yonge Street have come to form an integral part of Dundas Square, creating a southern boundary.

Figure 1 - Dundas Square Special Sign District



University Avenue Special Sign District

The University Avenue Special Sign District ("UA-SSD") is an area with more restrictions on signs, so that the signs are more compatible with the character of University Avenue and do not interfere with the view to Queen's Park at the north end of the Sign District.

The additional restrictions for the area limit signs to first party only and restrict the size and height of all sign types so that they do not extend above the first storey of buildings fronting onto University Avenue. The sign face areas in the UA-SSD are restricted to 2.5 square metres, as opposed to being a percentage of the building wall area as in other Sign Districts.

To incorporate the existing UA-SSD permission into the current Sign By-law, it is recommended that the current CR-Commercial Residential and I-Institutional District

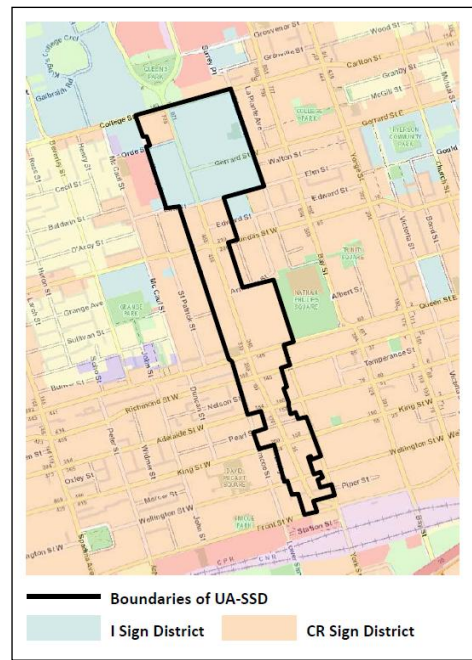
designations be maintained, but refer to the requirements of the current Sign By-law instead of the former City of Toronto Sign By-law (See Figure 3).

The only significant change between the CR designations in the two By-laws is that the current Sign By-law would not permit large, first party painted mural signs and overhanging structure signs. It is expected that this will have no impact, as those sign types are very uncommon in this area.

There is also no impact expected from this change for properties designated I-Institutional, as the regulations in the previous By-law are generally consistent with the regulations in the current Sign By-law.

There will be no change to the regulations for third party signs in the UA-SSD as no third party signs are permitted under either Sign By-law.

Figure 2 - University Avenue Special Sign District



City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign District

The City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign District ("CHNPS-SSD") also has greater restrictions than other sign districts throughout the city. These controls are intended to reduce the visibility and impact the signs have on City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square.

As shown in Figure 4, the CHNPS-SSD is divided into three areas: Area A to the north, Area B to the east, and Area C to the south. In these three areas, the building elevations that would be visible from City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square are only permitted to have non-illuminated first party signs, no higher than the second storey of the building where they are displayed.

It is recommended that these restrictions continue in order to minimize the impact that signs visible from City Hall or Nathan Phillips Square will have on their function as public spaces.

It is also recommended that the regulations for the CHNPS-SSD be updated so that those properties which were designated as CR-Commercial Residential in the former City of Toronto By-law, be continued as CR-Commercial Residential as permitted under the current Sign By-law.

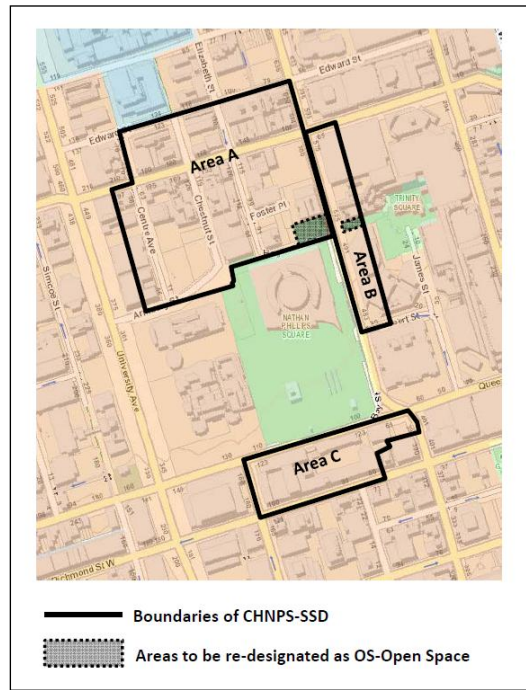
Similar to the UA-SSD, the only substantial change will be that large first party painted wall murals and overhanging structure signs will no longer be permitted. It is expected that this will have no impact as those sign types are uncommon in this area.

As well, it is proposed that two properties, 500 Bay Street (Larry Sefton Park) and the portion of Trinity Square located in Area 'B', be removed from the CHNPS-SSD and re-designated as OS- Open Space under the current Sign By-law (see Figure 3).

Removing these properties from the CHNPS-SSD will eliminate duplicate regulations and simplify the administration of the Sign By-law.

As third party signs are not permitted under either Sign By-law, there will be no change to those regulations.

Figure 3 - City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square Special Sign District



NEW SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICTS

In addition to updating the regulations for existing Special Sign Districts, this report also responds to two separate directions from the Planning and Growth Management Committee to explore the creation of two new Special Sign Districts; one for the Entertainment District and one for North Yonge Street.

North Yonge Street Special Sign District

Early in 2016, staff were asked to review the area of Yonge Street between Finch Avenue and Steeles Avenue and report back on the establishment of a North Yonge Special Sign District (“NY-SSD”).

Although some local business owners were supportive of a NY-SSD, staff do not recommend that a new Special Sign District be created.

While there is a consistent low-rise commercial built-form in the area, it is not unique to this area of the city.

Staff also reviewed the signs in the area to determine if they were a defining characteristic. While this area does contain a large number of first party signs, the signs are typical of those found in other commercial areas. In addition, many of the businesses

in the area are in the process of obtaining permits for their signs. As a result, the amount and appearance of the signs in the area is likely to continue to change over the next few years to be more consistent with the Sign By-law requirements for this area.

Entertainment District Special Sign District

In May of 2014, staff were asked to report in 2016 on amendments to the Sign By-law, required to create an Entertainment District Special Sign District ("ED-SSD").

Based on a study of the area, including the built form and signs, as well as consultation with the Entertainment District Master Plan Committee, staff recommend the creation of an Entertainment District Special Sign District.

In February 2013, the Entertainment District Business Improvement Area developed a master plan for the Entertainment District. This plan was developed in consultation with City of Toronto staff, members of the public, local businesses and the Ward Councillor. This master plan document set out goals for the development and built form of the area, including objectives for signs.

Identity Areas

The Entertainment District Master Plan creates five "Identity Areas" for properties within the Entertainment District Business Improvement Area (see Figure 4). These areas formed the basis for the review of regulations for the ED-SSD.

Of the five Identity Areas, it is recommended that regulations in the ED-SSD be applied to three areas within the Warehouse and the Theatre Areas (See Figure 5).

The remaining parts of the District are either consistent with the current regulations in the Sign By-law or currently contain buildings with signs that are better regulated on a site-specific basis through Signage Master Plans or By-law amendments.

In addition to creating the ED-SSD, it is also recommended that the area containing Metro Hall and David Pecault Square be re-designated as OS-Open Space. This is consistent with other parks and Civic Centres throughout the city.

Figure 4 - Entertainment District Business Improvement Area: Identity Areas



Guidelines for Signage in the Entertainment District Master Plan

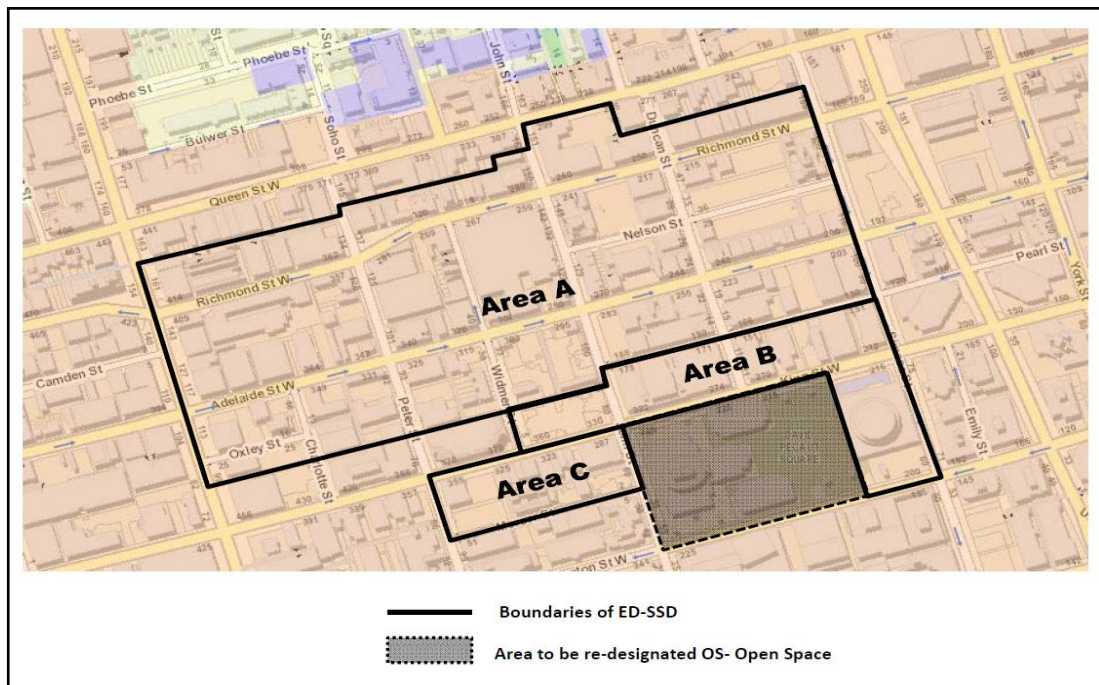
The Entertainment District Master Plan sets out a number of guidelines for signage within the area; these guidelines have been set out with the objective of enhancing the quality of the streetscape and retail environment, and to promote pedestrian movement.

The guidelines are set out as follows:

- Signage should exhibit high-quality materials and design;
- Commercial signage should not overwhelm the building and/or the storefront;
- Back-lit illuminated sign boxes are discouraged;
- Signage should be integrated into the design of building façades wherever possible;
- Signage should not obscure windows or other architectural elements;
- The scale and positioning of signage should orient to the pedestrian, through location at or near grade level for viewing from sidewalks;
- Signage on heritage buildings should be complementary and consistent with traditional sign placement; and,
- Protruding flags and banners as commercial signage should be encouraged.

The regulations proposed for the ED-SSD will help reinforce the guidelines for signage set out above, and allow for new development with new signs which are similar to the existing signs in the area, complementing the area's distinguishing characteristics.

Figure 5 - Proposed Entertainment District Special Sign District



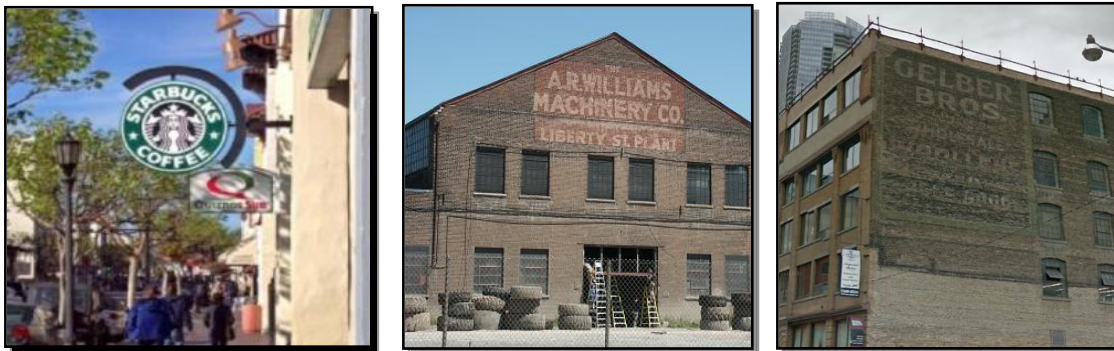
Area 'A' ("the Warehouse Area")

The Warehouse Area is defined largely by a concentration of mid-rise buildings, many of which have historic and architectural significance. These buildings contain a broad mix of uses, including office, commercial, restaurants, bars and night clubs, and areas of high-density and smaller residential uses.

The objectives for the Warehouse Area set out in the Master Plan are to:

- Protect, reinforce and leverage the ‘warehouse’ look and feel of the precinct to create a unique heritage destination;
- Continue to intensify the mix and variety of uses with sensitivity to the precinct’s heritage character and function;
- Enhance streetscapes and promote active uses at grade to enrich the street life; and,
- Explore new opportunities for public spaces to enhance the area’s appeal.

Figure 6 - Examples of signs proposed for the Warehouse Area



Although the area is undergoing re-development, Figure 6 shows examples of sign types that could contribute to the look of the area as well as the other objectives set out in the Master Plan such as promoting retail uses at grade. The proposed regulations for the Warehouse Area should further promote these types of signs while recognizing the mixed-uses and re-development taking place.

The proposed permission for first party signs in Area 'A' of the ED-SSD would be similar to the provisions for CR-Commercial Residential Sign Districts, with the modifications listed in Table 1 below.

Third party signs in the Warehouse Area of the ED-SSD will be subject to the same requirements for third party signs in CR-Commercial Residential Sign Districts.

Table 1 – Proposed regulations for the Warehouse Area of the ED-SSD

Area 'A'	Sign Type recommended	Proposed Regulations
	Wall Signs (for mid-rise buildings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building must be between five and ten storeys tall • Located on upper two storeys • Maximum sign face area of 20% of wall area Non-illuminated • Restrict sign copy to alpha-numeric copy only
	Other Wall, Projecting and Overhanging Structure Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located at the first storey only • Maximum sign face area of 1.0 square metre
	Ground Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum height of 1.5 metres • Maximum sign face area of 0.5 square metres

Although not part of the proposed regulations for Area A of the ED-SSD, it was also discussed throughout the consultation, that the area try to build upon the look of the re-located CHUM-FM sign (See Figure 7) that is located on the corner of Duncan and Richmond Street West. It was suggested that this historic sign has added to the look of the area and that other possibilities for signage similar to the CHUM-FM should be explored in the future as they may further enhance the area's appeal.

Area 'B' and Area 'C' – ("The Theatre Area")

The Theatre Area is defined by the King Street West corridor, comprised of both contemporary and historically significant buildings. The area contains a mix of uses with restaurants and theatres having the most distinct signage.

Figure 9 shows samples of the existing sign types in Area 'B' and Area 'C' of the ED-SSD. Area 'B' will include the signs on theatres in the area, and Area 'C' will include many of area restaurants.

The objectives for the Theatre Area set out in the Master Plan are to:

- Protect and enhance remaining heritage resources that contribute to King Street West's distinction;
- Enhance the streetscape to complement the 'main street' character and support outdoor cafés and high levels of pedestrian and streetcar traffic; and,
- Enhance the Metro Hall, David Pecaut Square and Roy Thomson Hall complex to serve as the District's premiere open space destination.

In reviewing the signage that exists in the Theatre Area, and in reviewing the objectives listed above, the following was observed:

- Large illuminated signs perpendicular to the street are common on both theatres and restaurants;

Figure 7 - CHUM Sign at Duncan Street and Richmond Street West



- Signs integrated into or located on awnings and canopies are common;
- Electronic sign copy has been implemented on the theatres and has not been found to impact surrounding land uses; and,
- Narrow sidewalks and patios on King Street West limit the opportunities for ground signs.

Figure 8 - Examples of existing signs in the Theatre Area of the ED-SSD



The proposed permission for first party signs in Areas A and C of the ED-SSD would be similar to the regulations for CR-Commercial Residential Sign Districts contained in the Sign By-law, with the modifications listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Proposed Regulations for the Theatre Area of the ED-SSD

	Sign Type recommended	Proposed Regulations
Area 'B'	Projecting Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow signs up to the fourth storey • Maximum sign face area of 2.5 square metres
	Overhanging Structure Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow signs up to the fourth storey • Maximum size of 20% of the wall area on which the sign is located • Allow signs to display readograph sign copy
	First Storey Wall Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow wall signs to have a maximum size of 2.5 square metres • Permit electronic sign copy • Maximum aggregate area of wall signs limited to 20% of wall area at first storey
	Ground Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not permitted
Area 'C'	Projecting Signs and Overhanging Structure Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum sign face area of 2.5 square metres • Maximum projection 1.5 metres from wall • Allow signs up to the third storey of a building • No separation distance between projecting signs
	Ground Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum height of 1.5 metres for ground signs • Maximum sign size of 0.5 square metres

Third party signs in the Theatre Area of the ED-SSD will be subject to the same requirements for third party signs in CR-Commercial Residential Sign Districts.

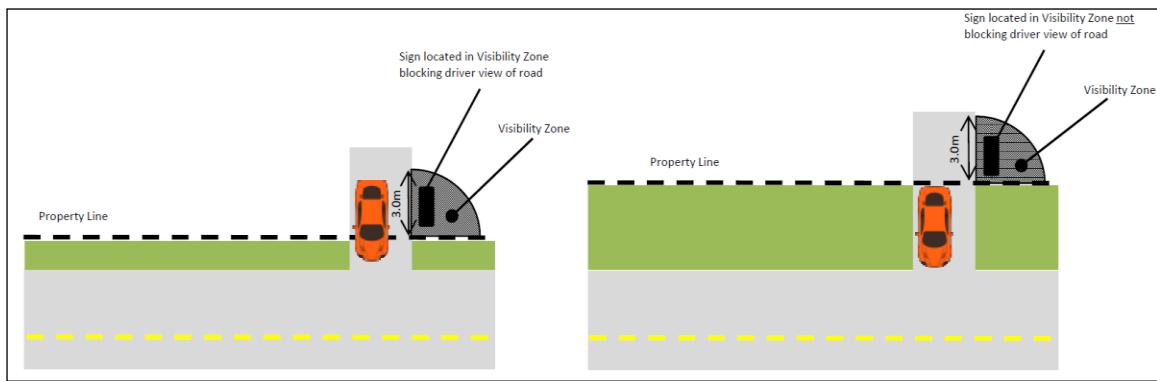
SIGNS IN VISIBILITY ZONES

As shown in Figure 9 below, there are circumstances where a sign can be placed in a visibility zone, and not obstruct the view that a driver would have of the street.

The proposed change would allow these signs to be considered by staff or the Sign Variance Committee, and permitted, where appropriate, instead of the current By-law provisions which would require a site-specific amendment through City Council. The Ward Councillor would continue to have the ability to have a decision of the Sign Variance Committee reconsidered by the appropriate Community Council.

It should be noted that public safety is addressed by one of the criteria through the sign variance process which must be satisfied prior to a variance being granted.

Figure 9 - Examples of Signs in Visibility Zones



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ATTACHMENTS

1. Appendix 1 – Draft Amendments to the Sign Bylaw and Schedule 'A' Maps

