



Area-Specific Amendment to the Sign Bylaw: 2075 Lawrence Avenue East

Date: April 17, 2019
To: Planning and Housing Committee
From: Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building
Wards: 21 – Scarborough Centre

SUMMARY

The City received an application to amend the Sign Bylaw to enable 2075 Lawrence Avenue East to contain a third party electronic ground sign with two faces, directed east and west.

The Sign Bylaw is a harmonized, City-wide set of regulations governing signs which was adopted in 2010. Under the Sign Bylaw, City Council considers applications from the public where significant changes are requested. The Chief Building Official (CBO) brings forward all of the applications to amend the Sign Bylaw on an annual basis, so that City Council can consider the overall and cumulative impact of these applications on the City's built environment, and the Sign Bylaw itself.

This report is in response to an application for an amendment that would facilitate the replacement of an existing third party ground sign that was established under a previous Bylaw with a third party electronic ground sign displaying static copy east and west along Lawrence Avenue East. Under the current Sign Bylaw, neither the existing third party ground sign nor the proposed third party electronic ground sign is permitted in a Commercial Residential (CR) Sign District. The applicant's proposal would require that the existing third party ground sign be removed prior to the sign permit being issued. The proposed amendment also seeks to modify the applicable sign permit term by extending the initial permit from five to ten years.

Toronto Building, in consultation with City Planning and Economic Development and Culture, conducted a thorough review of the application, and does not believe that the applicant's rationale is consistent with the objectives of the Sign Bylaw.

Toronto Building does not recommend approval of this amendment as the proposed sign is likely to have a negative impact on a number of residential properties to the south, as well as an 11-storey residential apartment building approximately 145 metres to the west. In addition, the proposed sign adds to sign clutter in the area and conflicts with existing first party signs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council refuse the application to amend the Sign Bylaw to add an area-specific amendment to Schedule 'B' of Chapter 694, Signage Master Plans and Area-Specific Amendments, to replace the existing Sign Bylaw regulations concerning third party signs applicable to the premises municipally known as 2075 Lawrence Avenue East with regulations to allow for, and regulate, a single third party electronic ground sign, as described in Attachment 1 of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The recommendation in this report has no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

There have been no previous decisions regarding this proposal. However, electronic signs have been the subject of considerable research and public consultation by the City of Toronto. The Sign Bylaw was amended in 2015 to expand the areas where electronic signs are permitted, while minimizing the impact of electronic signs on sensitive uses, including residential.

PG 5.13 - Electronic and Illuminated Sign Study and Recommendations for Amendments to Chapter 694:

The amendments approved by City Council in 2015 sought to reduce the impact of electronic signs by increasing the minimum separation required between electronic signs and sensitive land uses, and reducing the maximum permitted brightness levels at night. Third party electronic signs are now permitted in Employment, Utility and Commercial Sign Districts, but are not a permitted sign type in CR Sign Districts, where there are residential uses.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.PG5.13>

COMMENTS

Annual Reporting

Area-specific amendment applications are considered together annually by City Council. This practice allows for the applications made throughout the year to be reviewed and considered in a more comprehensive manner.

The Sign Bylaw allows for applications to amend the Sign Bylaw by members of the public to implement significant changes for an area. Examples of those changes include: developing a comprehensive plan for all signage on a premises, implementing a prohibition on signs in an area, altering a premises' sign district designation, or

changes to administrative provisions, such as permitting requirements. The application for amendment process was not intended to be used to expand permissions for a sign that is no longer permitted by the Sign Bylaw.

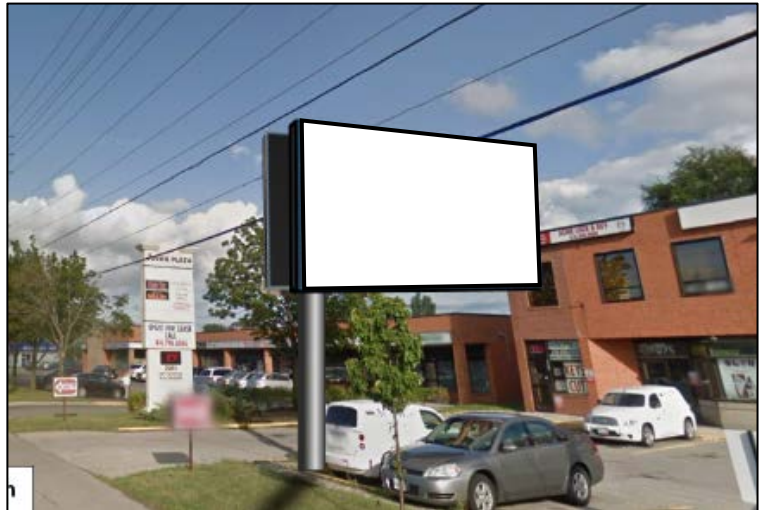
Applicant's Amendment Proposal

The applicant is seeking an area-specific amendment to the Sign Bylaw to establish regulations to allow for a new third party electronic ground sign to be displayed in approximately the same location as an existing third party ground sign with mechanical copy.

Both the east and west sign faces would display electronic static copy.

The sign faces would each measure 3.05 metres vertically by 6.1 metres horizontally, for a total sign face area of approximately 18.6 square metres, which is more than six times larger than permitted for third party signs in CR Sign Districts. The applicant is proposing a height of not more than ten metres, which is comparable to the height of a three-storey building.

Figure 1 - Rendering of the Proposed Sign



The applicant's proposed amendment would also modify the sign permit term of five years, applicable to all third party sign permits, to an initial duration of ten years.

The proposal includes the removal of an existing third party ground sign with mechanical copy from the subject property, and a four-sided third party ground sign with static copy also located on the subject property. As a condition of permit issuance, both existing signs would be removed.

The applicant has proposed to install a shielding device on the sign face to reduce its visibility from the residential uses located south of the proposed sign.

The applicant did not provide reasons or justification for the addition of an electronic static display in a CR Sign District, where third party electronic ground signs are not a permitted sign type.

Site Context - 2075 Lawrence Avenue East

The property at 2075 Lawrence Avenue East is located in Ward 21, on the south side of Lawrence Avenue East, approximately 75 metres east of Warden Avenue. It is designated as a CR Sign District, with a residential neighbourhood to the south that is within an Residential (R) Sign District. There is a multi-tenant plaza across Lawrence Avenue East to the north, and an 11-storey building with residential uses to the west, both located in CR Sign Districts (see Figures 2 and 3).

There are several retail and service businesses which operate at the subject property. These businesses are located at the first and second storey of the building. There are no apparent residential uses on this property.

The property immediately west of Warden Avenue, located approximately 145 metres from the proposed sign, contains an 11-storey building with residential units above the second storey. These units would have an unobstructed view of the electronic sign face directed west.

The area-specific amendment requested by the applicant would permit a sign that is even less consistent with the regulations for a CR Sign District compared with the existing signs, because of the electronic copy being proposed.

Figure 2 - Sign District Map Showing Proposed Sign Location and Surrounding Area



Area Compatibility

CR Sign Districts are consistent with the CR Zoning designation and the *Mixed-Use* designation in the Official Plan. These areas contain a mix of commercial and residential uses.

The building on the subject property has no residential uses that would be impacted. However, the proposed sign may overpower first party signs for area businesses due to the display of electronic copy.

Although electronic signs are not permitted in a CR Sign District, where permitted, they must be separated by at least 60 metres from sensitive uses, including R Sign Districts. There is an R Sign District approximately 45 metres to the south. The visibility of the proposed sign and its impact on residential homes may be somewhat addressed by buildings, fences and the shielding proposed by the applicant.

Further, where electronic signs are permitted, they must not face any CR, R or RA Sign Districts located within 250 metres. Approximately 145 metres to the west is an 11-storey building, also in a CR Sign District, with residential units above the second storey. Residents in this building would have a direct view of the proposed sign.

Although the applicant has proposed shielding to reduce the impact of the electronic copy on residential uses to the south, no measures are proposed to reduce the impact of the proposed sign on the residential uses to the west.

Figures 3 and 4 show areas to the west and east of the proposed sign. There are many first party signs for businesses in the surrounding area. The proposed sign will contribute to and further emphasize the sign clutter along this section of Lawrence Avenue East.

Figure 3 - Proposed Sign Location, Looking West



As set out in the Sign Bylaw, notification of the proposed amendment was sent to all property owners within a 250-metre radius of the subject property, and a notice was posted at the property. The notice provides details of the proposed amendment and invites feedback by email, telephone or in person at a public meeting which was held on February 5, 2019 at the Scarborough Civic Centre.

Two telephone calls have been received from the community, stating their objections to the applicant's proposal because of the sign clutter already in the area, and the impact of the proposed sign on the surrounding residential community.

Figure 4 - Proposed Sign Location, Looking East



Comments from Other City Divisions

Staff from City Planning and Economic Development and Culture reviewed the application and overall, were not in support. Both commented that the addition of an electronic ground sign would contribute to sign clutter on the subject property, due to the large number of first party signs already being displayed.

Staff from City Planning identified that the proposed sign would not be compatible with the existing residential development in the area. It was also suggested that the proposed sign would compete with first party signs in the area, further impacting the ability of existing and future businesses to properly identify themselves.

Conclusion

The applicant has not provided a basis for the CBO to recommend that City Council amend the Sign Bylaw to establish site-specific regulations to allow for a third party electronic ground sign in this CR Sign District. There is also no basis provided by the applicant to justify extending the permit term to ten years, twice as long as is permitted by the Sign Bylaw.

The CBO does not recommend approval of this amendment as the proposed sign is likely to have a negative impact on a number of residential properties to the south, as well as an 11-storey residential apartment building approximately 145 metres to the west. In addition, the proposed sign adds to sign clutter in the area and conflicts with existing first party signs.

It is the position of the CBO that the CR Sign District designation and current regulations for the subject property are appropriate, and should not be modified as requested by the applicant.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Will Johnston, P.Eng.
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Toronto Building

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft of Proposed Area-Specific Amendment – 2075 Lawrence Avenue East