



REPORT FOR ACTION

Area-Specific Amendment to the Sign Bylaw: 2378-2410 Eglinton Avenue East

Date: May 10, 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 2378-2410 Eglinton Avenue East (referred to in this document as 2410 Eglinton Avenue East) to contain a third party electronic ground sign with two faces, with electronic static copy directed east and static copy directed 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 on one side and electronic copy on the other. 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 sign permit term from five to ten years.

The area where the sign would be located is expected to undergo significant re-development as the new Eglinton Crosstown project nears completion. Area re-development will render the proposed electronic ground sign even less compatible with its surroundings.

Toronto Building, in consultation with City Planning and Economic Development and Culture, conducted a 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 six-storey residential apartment building approximately 90 metres to the north. In addition, the proposed sign conflicts with existing first party signs on the subject property, and adds to sign clutter in the area as there are two other third party signs located within the 150-metre separation distance required by the Sign Bylaw.

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 2378-2410 Eglinton 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 by members of the public to amend the Sign Bylaw 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 current 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. As a condition of permit issuance, the existing sign would be removed.

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.

The east sign face would display electronic static copy, and the west sign face would display static copy.

The applicant has proposed to install shielding on the electronic sign face to reduce its visibility from the residential uses located north 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.

Figure 1 - Rendering of Proposed Sign



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

Site Context - 2410 Eglinton Avenue East

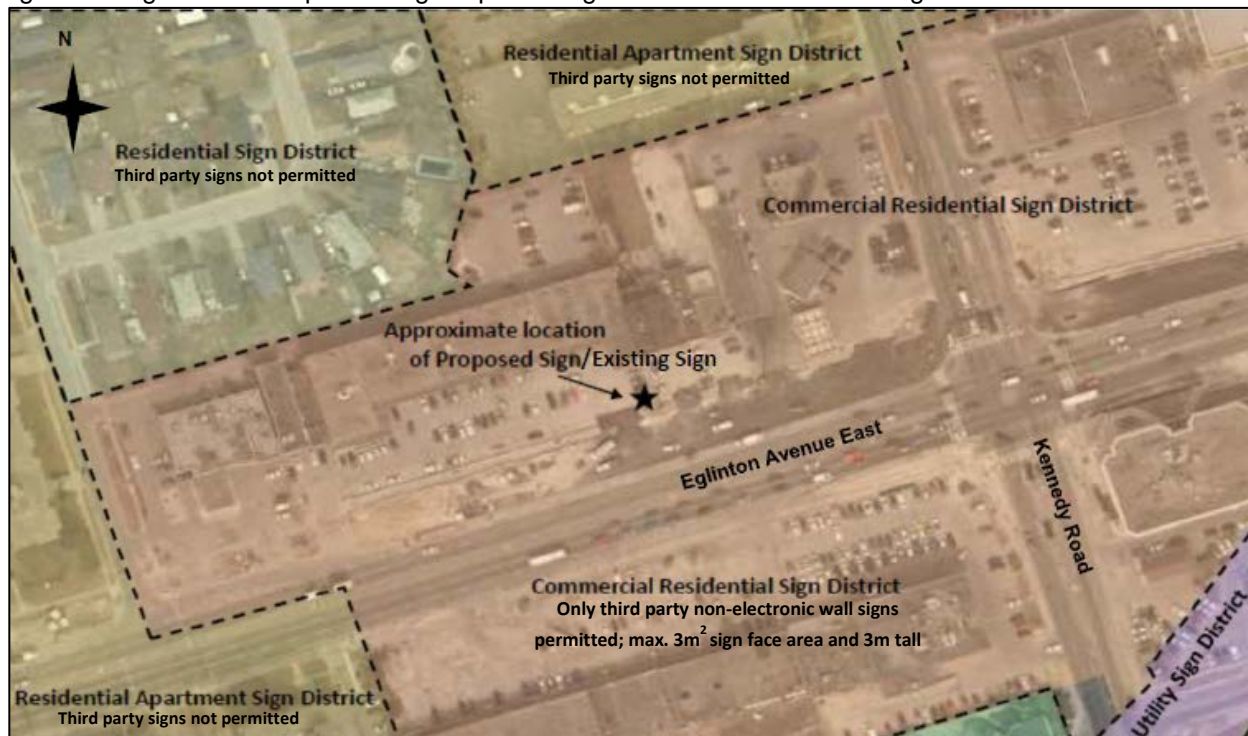
The property at 2410 Eglinton Avenue East is in Ward 21, and contains a two-storey mixed use building on the north side of Eglinton Avenue, approximately 95 metres west of Kennedy Road. The premises is in a CR Sign District, with Residential (R) and Residential Apartment (RA) Sign Districts to the north and west. There is a similar multi-tenant plaza on the south side of Eglinton Avenue East.

There are several small-scale retail businesses which operate on the ground floor of the premises, as well as a branch of the Toronto Public Library. The second storey contains a mix of residential and business uses.

The premises to the east contains a two-storey building with restaurants at the first storey and residential uses at the second storey that would have an unobstructed view of the electronic sign face. Further east is a car wash and a gas station.

There is an existing third party ground sign located at 2410 Eglinton Avenue East which displays static copy on two sign faces. The sign face area is approximately 18.6 square metres on each side. Although the current Sign Bylaw does not permit a third party ground sign, the existing sign has a permit issued under a previous sign Bylaw and can remain in place.

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



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

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.

There is a two-storey building with commercial and residential uses at 2410 Eglinton Avenue East. There is also a six-storey residential apartment building approximately 90 metres to the north, and several residential apartments west of the proposed sign. These developments are consistent with what would be contemplated by the Official Plan and permitted by the Zoning Bylaw.

Although the Sign Bylaw does not permit third party electronic ground signs in CR Sign Districts, where permitted, they must not face any CR, R or RA Sign Districts located within 250 metres. The proposed electronic sign would be located within a CR Sign District, face other CR Sign Districts, and is approximately 85 metres from an RA Sign District to the north.

There are a significant number of first party signs on area businesses. The addition of an electronic ground sign may overpower and conflict with first party signs on this and nearby properties.

Figure 3 - Aerial Photo of Proposed Sign Location and Distances to Nearby Third Party Signs and Residential Buildings (Distances are approximate)



Although the applicant has proposed shielding which may help to reduce some of the impacts of the electronic copy on residential uses to the north, staff do not believe that the proposed shielding will eliminate all of the impacts of the proposed sign.

Where electronic signs are permitted, they must be separated from other third party signs by at least 150 metres. To the north-east, there is a third party roof sign that is approximately 77 metres from the proposed sign. To the south, there is another third-party roof sign that is approximately 90 metres from the proposed sign (see Figure 3). The proposed amendment would eliminate the separation requirement for the proposed third party electronic ground sign and contribute to sign clutter in the area.

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.

The Sign Bylaw Unit received an email from a member of the surrounding community expressing concerns about the impact of the proposed sign on the environment and the health and safety of community members.

Comments from other City Divisions

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

Both City Planning and Economic Development and Culture suggested that the proposed sign would compete with first party signs in the area, impacting the ability of existing and future businesses to identify themselves.

City Planning staff do not believe that the proposed sign would be compatible with the existing residential development in the area, or with the re-development which is expected to occur as a result of the Eglinton Crosstown transit project (See Figure 4 below).

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 six-storey residential apartment building approximately 90 metres to the north. In addition, the proposed sign conflicts with existing first party signs on the subject property, and adds to sign clutter in the area as there are two other third party signs located within the 150-metre separation distance required by the Sign Bylaw.

Figure 4 - Proposed Sign Location Relative to Kennedy Station (Distances are approximate)



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

Robert Bader, Supervisor; Sign Bylaw Unit, Toronto Building
Tel: (416) 392-4113; Email: Robert.Bader@toronto.ca

Ted Van Vliet, Manager; Sign Bylaw Unit, Toronto Building
Tel: (416) 392-4235; Email: Ted.VanVliet@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Will Johnston, P.Eng.
Chief Building Official and Executive Director
Toronto Building

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft of Proposed Area-Specific Amendment – 2378-2410 Eglinton Avenue East