

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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October 10, 2019

To: The City Clerk, Toronto City Hall (via email)
Regarding: Item PH9.3, Temporary Sign Bylaw Review

The Harbord Village Residents' Association (HVRA) represents the neighbourhood area from Bathurst Street to Spadina Avenue, and College Street to Bloor Street.

With three requests for Committee consideration, this is to express our strong support for the recommendations arising from the Temporary Sign Bylaw Review.

Context:

With low-rise residential streets, two arterial main streets (College, Bloor) and one local high street (Harbord) within Harbord Village, we understand the needs this bylaw must balance: supporting a healthy, vibrant, local business community; and, ensuring that public spaces are safe, comfortable and accessible for those coming to, or going through, our neighbourhood.

In 2004, we saw our years-long mainstreet improvement efforts rewarded with completion College Street Revitalization project, which rebuilt College Street from Bathurst to Spadina.

In addition to wider sidewalks for 60% of the street, lay-by parking to reduce pedestrian crossing distance at intersections, and 90 new trees for the public realm, our Project was the first to specifically pilot the sidewalk "zone" concept. With our support and involvement, this concept was subsequently adopted, and expanded city-wide in Vibrant Streets Guidelines (Attachment 1), Complete Streets Guidelines, and the recently approved Harmonized Bylaw for Sidewalk Cafes, Parklets and Marketing Displays.

Upon completion, College Street had all that Complete Streets Guidelines now requires:

- a roadside *Edge Zone* (~0.5m) to buffer pedestrians from traffic and curbside activities such as car access/egress, snow storage, garbage set-out, traffic sign placement, etc;
- a clearly defined *Tree and Furnishing Zone*, locating street furnishings, bike racks, and a-frame signs in a zone parallel but separate from the pedestrian walking path; and
- a straight, clear, continuous *Pedestrian Clearway* running parallel to the building faces.

But with the existing Temporary Sign Bylaw requiring A-frame signs to be at storefront, and limited enforcement resources, the Pedestrian Clearway was soon obstructed by hordes of unlicensed A-frame signs; severely impacting accessibility. This bylaw will complete our intended vision.

Recommendations 1-7: Placement, Licensing and Enforcement Improvements

The Staff report details a high volume of service requests related to scofflaw A-frame sign placements, but this can't come close to the actual impact that is seen on city streets; a condition that has a significant impact on the daily travel of all pedestrians, but especially those with vision impairment, or other disabilities.

We believe that the impact of A-Frame signs on accessibility will be reduced by Staff recommendations, in that the revised Bylaw will:

- *discourage the sidewalk obstruction of illegally placed a-frame signs*, by introducing significant fines for scofflaw behaviour as a strong deterrent;
- *simplify bylaw enforcement, and removal of illegal signs*, by requiring the permit to be clearly displayed in the top corner of the a-frame sign;
- *declutter the promised Pedestrian Clearway*, by requiring A-Frame signs to be located curbside, in the Tree and Furnishing Zone, where such a zone exists. And,
- *allow A-frame signs to be licensed at building face only where there is NO Tree and Furnishing Zone*, and the minimum Pedestrian Clearway width is provided.

We respectfully ask the Committee to support Staff Recommendations 1-7, while considering the following two accessibility-driven recommendations.

Request 1 -- Minimizing Accessibility and Safety Impact of Storefront A-frame Signs.

As stakeholders in the Harmonized Cafe Patio and Marketing Display Bylaw discussions, we *advocated to have storefront patios set back 2.4m from the back of the curb face*. Effectively, this would provide pedestrians with the full Edge Zone and Pedestrian Clearway stipulated in Vibrant Streets and Complete Streets Guidelines (Attachment 1)

Staff argued, and Committee members agreed, that this would negatively impact patios currently licensed without consideration of the Edge Zone. As a result, in attempting to balance sidewalk “vibrancy” and accessibility considerations, *the Harmonized Bylaw specifies that patios may occupy all but 2.1m from the back of the curb face* – pushing the pedestrians within 6” of moving traffic.

But since A-frame signs are clearly a commercial privilege in public space, with no contribution to sidewalk “vibrancy”, that rationale doesn’t apply here.

We ask that this Bylaw reinstate the pedestrian-protective Edge Zone promised to pedestrians in Vibrant Streets Guidelines and Complete Streets Guidelines), by requiring that storefront A-frame signs be licensed no less than 2.4m from the back of the curb face.

Request 2 -- Improving Daily Accessibility of the Pedestrian Clearway:

Even with the licensing and enforcement improvements noted above, the current “complaint based” system still fails to provide daily “feet on the street” to proactively relocate or removesidewalk obstructions, as is the practice in pedestrian-friendly Philadelphia. And as our colleagues in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association, York Quay Neighbourhood Association and others have made clear, the impact of illegal, and fallen A-frame signs presents a significant, unnecessary challenge to pedestrians. And that is particularly problematic on weekends, when people are out enjoying walking, shopping, dining.

We are pleased to see that permit application, license renewal, and associated enforcement fees are based on ‘full cost recovery’. *And in support of Toronto’s commitment to a Barrier Free City, we ask that A-frame Sign Fees be increased to include whatever additional resources MLS enforcement requires to ensure a clutter-free Pedestrian Clearway, seven days a week.*

Recommendations 8-13: Home Builder Identification and Contracted Services Signs

We support Staff Recommendations to include Home Builder Identification Signs, Contracted Services Signs as additional categories of Temporary Signs not requiring a permit. Staff recommendations for

size, location, number, and required maintenance of such signs effectively balance the desire of businesses to communicate with potential customers in the neighbourhood, while minimizing impact on neighbourhood character.

Recommendations 14-16: Advocacy Signs

We support Staff Recommendations to include Advocacy Signs as another type of temporary sign not requiring a permit. Staff assessment clearly acknowledges the desire and right of residents to express their opinions on a variety of topical matters by placing signs on their private property, but also acknowledges the need to balance this right with the visual impact on the neighbouring homes, and neighbourhood in general.

Staff have reasonably limited this right to one sign per premise, located with consent on private property, with height no greater than two metres above grade. But, we question that need for allowing such signs to be 1.2 square metres in area (greater than 4 ft x 3 ft) – while the jurisdictional review Staff provide show Calgary as the most permissive at 1.0 square metres, and Surrey the most restrictive at 0.2 square metres.

In discussion with Staff, we learned that 1.2 square metres was based on the maximum size election sign. But while election signs are up for a few weeks, there is no time limit for advocacy signs. And such a large sign could have a significant, ongoing impact on the look and feel of a residential neighbourhood. And is more akin to shouting at our neighbours, than sharing thoughts with them. Similar to what observe in our neighbourhood, a far better benchmark for Advocacy Signs is the most common contracted services sign (Staff Report Page 16) of 0.25 square meters (16" x 24").

Request 3 – We ask that Recommendation 16(e) be modified to require that no sign face can be larger than 0.25 square metres

In closing, we congratulate Staff for the outstanding job they have done in clarifying, simplifying and streamlining this long outdated Bylaw.

We also applaud them for putting pedestrian safety and accessibility upfront in their considerations, and for what we felt was a very effective consultation process.

We respectfully ask the Committee to support Staff Recommendations, with consideration of the three requests we have noted above.

Sincerely,

Gord Brown and Robert Stambula, for
Harbord Village Residents' Association

Attachment: Typical Main Street Sidewalk Zones (from Vibrant Streets Guidelines)

Typical Main Street

Edge Zone

- Located next to curb
- Provides buffer between vehicles and boulevard
- Accommodates car door swings, mirrors, garbage set out and snow windrow storage

Furnishing and Planting Zone

- May contain street furniture, street trees and other fixed objects
- Elements should be aligned in a manner that does not obstruct Pedestrian Clearway

Pedestrian Clearway

- Accommodates pedestrian movement
- A clear, straight, unobstructed path with a reasonable width to serve pedestrian flow
- Provision of the clearway is a priority

Frontage and Marketing Zone

- Adjacent to building/property line
- May consist of marketing, boulevard cafes and or landscaping
- In some cases may support street furniture, depending on the space available

Notes:

1. If Furnishing and Planting Zone is less than 1.0 metre, consider placing furniture in alternate location; see "Main Street Alternate Location" drawing for details.
2. For tree planting within the Furnishing and Planting Zone, refer to Urban Forestry for minimum tree planting width requirements (1.8 metre minimum typical).
3. The recommended minimum width for the Pedestrian Clearway is 2.1 metres. Where this cannot be achieved, at least 1.7 metres should be secured. In rare and extreme cases, the minimum width may be reduced to not less than 1.525 metres.
4. Frontage and Marketing Zone width varies, but must be 1.0 metres minimum if street furniture is placed here.

