

INTRODUCTION

At the April 6, 2017 Digital Signs workshop, 31 members of the sign industry attended to share their needs, wants, values and priorities. Several topics and options were presented at wall stations for review and commenting. Additionally, small group discussions revealed key themes regarding digital signs in Edmonton. The results are presented verbatim on the following pages.

Some key themes that emerged as part of this workshop were: A need for more enforcement for signs, that the current rules over-regulate signs, that there are several impacts that can occur from digital signs (mostly due to lighting effects), and that signs need more quality control.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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WORKSHOP RESULTS

COMMON THEMES EMERGING FROM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

What are your needs, wants, values, and priorities?



Public Consultation Summary

What We Heard: Digital Signs Workshop | April 6, 2017

WALL STATION PRESENTATION BOARDS

Workshop participants had the opportunity to comment on the presentation boards below. Participants' comments have been recorded on the following pages.

WINDOW VS. FASCIA SIGNS

How should window signs and fascia signs be differentiated?

What regulations should there be for window signs?

What size of window signs should be allowed?

Should digital window signs be regulated differently?

SUCCESSFUL SIGNS

What aspects of digital displays make for positive contributions to the city?

What does an attractive digital sign look like?

What regulations should there be related to:

- Landscaping
- Materials
- Design elements
- Lighting

to improve attractiveness of digital signs?

MULTI-SIDED SIGNS & MAXIMUM SIGN SIZE

How should the sign area of a multi-sided sign be calculated?

Should there be a total amount of sign area that can be divided across multiple sign faces?

What should the largest single side (sign face) of a digital sign be?

What is a reasonable size for a sign?

SIGN CONCENTRATION

How should we manage the separation distance between freestanding and digital sign types?

How far apart should digital signs be from each other (with either on-premises or off-premises advertising)?

How far apart should digital signs be from non-digital freestanding signs?

Should there be different distances for digital signs with either on-premises or off-premises advertising?

SIGN AREA VS. COPY AREA

How should we measure the sign size?

What is the best way to capture the full size of the sign?

Should copy area and sign area be distinguished?

Method 1

Method 2

DEMAND FOR DIGITAL SIGNS

Where are you seeing growth in demand for digital signs?

Which types of businesses or organizations are expressing interest in digital signs?

What kinds and sizes of digital signs are your clients looking for?

Where on a property or building are your clients interested in installing signs?

Where in the city are the signs intended to be located?

What impacts could digital signs have in these new locations?

What regulations would help mitigate these impacts?

1. WINDOW SIGNS VS. FASCIA SIGNS

How should window signs and fascia signs be differentiated?

Definitely no room for digital in window signs, viewing is not optional
Just lights in window also problematic. Need to regulate. Consistency for emerging technology.
Window signs should be treated like fascia – they are aimed at the same audience
New and future innovation will turn any surface into a EMC
Fascia digital for strip malls. Changing tenants, saving materials, energy
Graphics 50% of window no permits required whether applied inside or outside of glass. Open/Hours not restricted.
Electronic message restricted – require permit – size type
Should be either or, not both allowed. Window vs. temp sign vs. permanent sign

2. SUCCESSFUL SIGNS

What aspects of digital displays make for positive contributions to the city?

Extra costs may make it harder to sell. Minimum landscaping. Mandatory Pole, cladding, etc.
Amber Alerts and/or emergencies/city messaging a must on all digital signs. Landscaping requirements should be based on built environment.
Regulations on amount of light and hours (night, day) and zones (IES, residential, downtown zones)
Aspects for positive contribution: Follow the rules, stay focused on off-premises, not on/off. Reduce size to just area
Ensure that signs are fully functional and do not include discoloured copy
Sound design!
Landscaping feature requirements Calgary Trail and Whitemud – waterfall. Adds aesthetics to area.

3. MULTI-SIDED SIGNS AND MAXIMUM SIGN SIZE

How should the sign area of a multi-sided sign be calculated? What is a reasonable size for a sign?

Signs up to 65m ² should be allowable in appropriate areas. Different sign sizes make sense based on setbacks, traffic speed, development in area, etc. Sign area should be done on a per-side basis
65m ² common in other major cities (Vancouver, Toronto, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg)
20m ² sign size
One face of single, double or multiple-viewing one at a time 10x2, 20m ²
Sign size should be dependent on parcel size, surrounding landscape, setback from roadway
No limit on size of sign. Regulations should be based on context. Interesting perspective Rogers Place good example

4. SIGN CONCENTRATION

How should we manage the separation distance between freestanding and digital sign types

Depends on sizes and context of area. Current regulations provide a good balance. Distance between digital and non digital: Depends if on/off premises. Should there be different distances: Yes
Every landowner/property owner/business owner should be allowed to advertise business regardless of what the neighbouring properties are doing
Distance between digital off premises signs: 100m – 300m based on area. Digital off premises sign to digital on: 30 m. Digital on/off to digital on/off: 100–300m based on area. On/off premises sign to on premises sign: 30m
Sign buffers should have a clear formula, including the size of each sign
Off premise should be forced to observe set rules of zone. On premises signs should not be penalized because of off premises or on/off premises digital. Decrease separation between dissimilar usage.
A-frame signs are also allowed on right-of-way without permit – Bylaw 5590
Should be different sign distance between digital vs. non digital as digital attracts the eye more than non-digital.
"Should be different sign distance between digital vs. non digital as digital attracts the eye more than non-digital." – I don't agree because the image is still static
Current distance regulations are good. Should have different distances for different categories.
Shouldn't matter if it's on premises or not, regulations should be the same distance for on and off premises

5. DIGITAL MESSAGE DURATION

How would a longer minimum message affect your business?

6 second ads are national agreed format/accepted
Negatively impacts sign revenue. Punitive to both the sign industry, and land owners with signs on their property
Highly changing signs distract drivers, cause accidents, taking drivers' eyes off the roadway
"Highly changing signs distract drivers, cause accidents, taking drivers' eyes off the roadway" I disagree based on research
6 seconds is fine
I don't see an issue here. 6 seconds or less is just fine. 10 seconds is too long considering it is read in a split second.
Would limit our ability to sell the ads
Depends on zoning/area. IE. Schools in high residential different than commercial areas
Punitive. Advertisers are used to 6 seconds, 6 seconds is common among major cities and has existed with no issues.
Larger duration limits number of advertisers sign can accommodate. Can negatively impact revenue

6. SIGN AREA AND SIGN COPY

How should we measure the sign size?

Copy area more important than sign area, larger signs allow for more esthetically pleasing signs.
Distinguish between sign and copy area. Allow for higher sign areas in order to allow sign companies to build signs that better fit into the built environment.
Copy area more relevant than sign area, it should be high enough so that companies have an incentive to build esthetically pleasing signs (pole covers etc.)
Max area should apply to advertising copy only – should not include site identification – Kingsway
Some structures add aesthetic appeal. Counting structure size in max sign area could result in less attractive structures.
Copy area except if background or illuminated, then sign area, never structure, only sign portion.
I don't believe the structure should be included in calculation. It doesn't convey any message.
Method 1 does not provide a disincentive to include aesthetic improvements
Method 2 makes sense
Structure/sign face = Ratio
Method 1: Do not include support structure in sign size, as that would not promote aesthetic additions.
Digital copy should emulate static signs
Should apply to everything
Should have max sign area (total) and max information area (copy area)
Distance from bottom of sign from ground could cause sight obstruction for drivers trying to get out of private property.

7. DEMAND FOR DIGITAL SIGNS

Where are you seeing growth in demand for digital signs?

Signs should be allowed near intersections. Safer to react when stopped.
Would like to see more allowable digital sign locations in the downtown area.
They look awesome and modern. Look out the window at the Ice District. Regulations broken but signs look great!! And the message is instant and timely
Everywhere. Reduced costs, reduced power costs, ease of maintenance.
Digital signs can bring vibrancy and energy to commercial zoned areas
Signs close to intersection can increase possibility of driver collision due to driver distraction – Minimum distance regulation required and will mitigate risk
"Signs close to intersection can increase possibility of driver collision due to driver distraction – Minimum distance regulation required and will mitigate risk" – Disagree. We conduct studies through engineering firms that show no correlation between signs and collisions.
Higher demand for larger screens
That's when most people have time to look – when they are stopped
Schools: convenience of changing a sign from inside in the winter. Advertising school events and important dates.

8. SOMETHING ELSE?

If we did not capture a pressing issue that you are facing, please add it below.

Old DCs are subject to older bylaw.

Clearer Development Officer mandate – explain that can't vary height. Promote FAQs – educate to reduce calls. Variance power as a Development Officer – scaled back latitude in recent years. Experienced enough to give latitude – have a conversation. Break down adversarial attitudes. Online status of applications – more capacity.

Off premises is not anywhere same as on – treat as separate entities, don't bunch them.

Fee structure unfair and not being interpreted intelligently – fix it. Based on product type. Make it easier and cheaper to get a permit.

Make 100m to residential and get rid of CSC zoning for off-premises

Safety. Don't want to sell dangerous signs. Focus on thoroughfares.

How are existing signs going to be dealt with upon renewal?

Enforcement resources essential. Light, not NITs

How far is City prepared to go to defend bylaw? Legal reps at SDAB hearing – DO to defend purpose of regulations, establish impact. Court of Appeal. Goes beyond enforcement by the Board. Appeals/variances by the Board weaken the bylaw.

Permit renewal – roll of the dice.

What is the problem with roof signs or digital roof signs?

Sign placed crossing property line. Two different bylaws

COMMON THEMES EMERGING FROM SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Quality

Quality Control: brightness, engineering, landowner authorization
Quality Control: enforcement (brightness) Follow up concerns. Quality of sign impacts urban landscape (landscaping, sign quality, "simulate or match architecture) Clarification: Requirements, where permitted, issues with discretionary, simplification of process and timely, Process cleanup: rejected at City and approved at SDAB. Static signs: Rules should also apply to digital
Public should perceive signs positively. Need high quality examples
Everything needs to look good. Keep inferior products out.
Resolution should be higher when people are closer, but doesn't matter much when viewed from a distance. Regulate based on distance of viewer.
Design and aesthetics: landscaping, cladding, match architecture (consistent)

Enforcement

City needs to take action on safety issues (distractions)
Enforcement: brightness: quality of the signs
Lack of enforcement allows low quality signs and repeat offenses. Gives all signs a bad name
Complaint based – lack of resources
Sign Compliance: Did not build what was applied for, need mechanism to take down.
What is distracting, scientifically?
Over regulation: discretion of paying advertisers.
Increased enforcement is required for sign offenses
Greater compliance with sign bylaw is needed in heritage areas

Over Regulation

Design elements are self regulated
City trying to limit impact, limits sign area. Pigeonholes you into doing something basic. Sign area should include copy but not other things.
Height signs is way less of an issue in other cities. Restriction on height variances should be relaxed for some types of development. Problem if it's not high enough to see.
24 hour city, so not all signs will turn off
Ease of use – simple and straightforward

Fairness & Equality

Real estate signs (or other signs not requiring permits) placed anywhere
Digital signs: modern form of communication
Digital signs: businesses need to communicate. [Digital Signs are an] Efficient and easier ways to communicate
Consistency – same rules in all instances/people. All play by the same rules
Charging construction cost for an already built sign makes no sense
Equal opportunity: larger companies have more strategic locations
Lost appeals at the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, undermined by the Board
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board needs more consistency. There are signs that should be refused but are later approved by the Board
Larger companies can obtain better legal advice
What does the City want to do? Increase in third party signs or help local businesses?
Going to SDAB is frustrating for everyone

Land Use Impacts

Light pollution – large amount of waste (need efficient lighting)
Environmental perspective: with respect to an overall lighting bylaw and the element of signs that contributes to this. Energy consumption associated / GHG emissions. Light pollution (inappropriate brightness, esp. at night)
Digital signs have a lot of waste light (it's not targeted)
Need to consider digital sign impact (day vs. night)
Health impact due to lighting and light pollution
Curfew times. Turn the lights down low. Can also save energy
Brightness is always an issue for the public. Dimming signs properly, just too bright . City has dimming guidelines, enforce them
Quality of digital signs getting better: pixels are getting smaller, content runs better
Too much copy on screen hard to read and more distracting
Is quality of ad related to effectiveness?
Every school should have a digital sign, many requests for one
Encourage diverse designs and character in digital signs

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Bylaw Changes

Risk of renewal – consistency
Third party advertising being used on sign owners premises – why is it allowed?
Clarification/consistency: less discretionary, simplification of process (time/requirements), video vs. static (content on sign, clarification where permitted)
Huge expense with renewing sign permits. Risk in investing when renewals are difficult or uncertain. Reasonable renewal process needs to be in place – if nothing is changed, it should be renewed.
More consistency between development officers and SDAB. Give development officers more latitude to have some discretion – not exercised as much anymore. Used to be able to vary height
Accessible, clear on website
Try to remove vagueness and subjectivity. What does adversely affect built environment mean? What does sign dominates the site mean?
All signs on site need to be cohesive with overall development
Possibly limiting digital signs on premises to only advertise for their own business and possibly advertising only in hours which the business is open. When 3rd party advertising is added on signs, most businesses would want to have them illuminated longer.
If the bylaw changes, what will happen with existing temporary signs that haven't changed. Some sort of grandfathering should be in place – digital and static.
Land surveys: good to know. Good to be tightening up. CNC zoning: get rid of digital sign on premises. Business – high traffic. Signs shouldn't be the beauty. Distance from residential
Some good quality signs don't comply with regulations. Sometimes regulation doesn't solve the problem of quality
Room for innovation – keeping up with technology
What is the purpose of temporary approvals? If the area doesn't fundamentally change, renewal should be simple
Revisit bylaw for temporary digital
Height restriction – Other areas have no height constraints. Would like to see smaller scale off-premises signs permitted to allow more flexibility eg. at schools. Clean up with temporary signs with allow small scale off premises signs
Area specific – character areas
Fairness of Process: takes time and money to get a permit that is denied
Go to SDAB to get a sign. Lots of preparation and effort
Sign appeals should be taken to the Court of Appeal instead of the SDAB
Planners should have greater variance power in granting sign permits
Use plain language in notification letters
Ease of use: other cities have pages on digital signs. Create specific guidelines
Regulations should be clearer and less open to interpretation
There needs to be increased consistency among the signs approval team
Clarify permitting process for different sign types
Too many variances granted can weaken the regulations
Keep up with innovations in technology
Provide sample submission packages to Sign Association so they can distribute to their members

Increase communication efforts about upcoming changes to submission requirements
Increase education efforts about the importance of applying for sign permits. Increased information sharing will improve relations with applicants
Increase amount of sign permitting information provided on the City's online SLIM mapping service. Include higher quality aerial photography in SLIM Maps
More consistency required in setback regulations. Need easier access to Curb to Property Line maps
Association would like a more streamlined permitting process with reduced timelines
Allow a temporary banner to be located on the premises while the permanent sign permit is in planner review
Provide an email address or phone number that Association members can contact to report illegal signs

NEXT STEPS

Thank you to everyone who participated in this workshop. Your input will be used to inform changes to the Digital Signs Review project.

For more information regarding the Digital Signs Review project, please visit www.edmonton.ca/SignRegulationsReview

DIGITAL SIGNS REVIEW PROJECT TIMELINE

