



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE & STRATEGIC GROWTH – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 22 October 2024

Subject: Bylaw No. B-27/2024 LUB Amendment for Sign Regulations

Directorate: Strategic Growth and Investment

Issue:

The Standing Committee is being asked to give a recommendation to Council regarding Bylaw No. B-27/2024, being a bylaw to amend Land Use Bylaw No. B-01/2016 to update regulations on signs.

Policy / Council Direction:

Following direction from the Airdrie City Plan and other major policy documents, Land Use Bylaw No. B-01/2016 (LUB) provides the standards and regulations for the City to implement land use goals, objectives, and strategies. Updates to the Land Use Bylaw maintain the document and keep regulations current, ensuring that the LUB continues to work towards these high-level goals.

Land Use Bylaw standards on signs seek to balance private interests with public interests within the city by maintaining the aesthetic appeal of development, ensuring pedestrian and traffic safety, encouraging positive economic development and growth for the city, and limiting possible adverse effects of signage on neighbouring properties.

Specifically, City Plan policies on Service Commercial & Gateways (Policy 5.30) speak to requiring high standards of landscaping, signage, exterior finish, and architecture for buildings visible from major transportation routes and note billboard signs among "visually impactful uses" that should be restricted from gateway locations.

Background:

Administration has recorded potential clarification items and improvements relating to signs in the Land Use Bylaw, prompting a comprehensive review of the regulations in 2023. The updated sign regulations address these issues and improve the legibility and ease of use of this section of the LUB overall.

While reviewing the sign regulations in Airdrie's LUB, Administration consulted corresponding bylaws of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie,

and Rocky View County to review and compare how other jurisdictions address the range of signage types and development regulations. Administration also looked to relevant provincial regulations and published 'recommended practice' documents, as well as guidelines specifically addressing pedestrian and traffic safety and research on the impacts of advertising signs on road safety.

Following the draft of these LUB amendments, Administration sought input and comments from local businesses, sign providers, key stakeholders, and the public throughout May 2024. A public survey (158 respondents) asked about roadside signs, importance of sign types, and principles for managing signs. Administration also conducted one-on-one discussions with billboard sign operators to collect comments and feedback to help edit the draft regulations, and those discussions centred on risk and liability specifics, questions around how to manage existing signs along the highway, and questions about the process for Bylaw updates and public hearings.

The items that would change with the proposed amendment are as follows:

1. Standards are simplified by grouping the types of signs into different classes so that signs with similar uses and impacts could be dealt with the same. For example, the new draft has Awning, Banner, Fascia, and Monument signs grouped together as "Class 2" signs, which are permitted in residential areas and can be exempt in commercial and industrial areas.
2. The list of exemptions (Signs Not Requiring a Development Permit) is expanded and organized under subheadings so that it is easier to read and find relevant information. This captures standards for Construction, Election, Real Estate, and Limited Use which are all addressed separately in the current regulations, as well as small signs that form part of established commercial uses.
3. The section on Universal Regulations better is organized under subheadings to make specific types of rules easier to find.
4. The tables for District-Specific Sign Regulations are simplified and additional districts are grouped together so that there are common rules for similar areas. The same tables also include relevant regulations for each class of signs, effectively combining several LUB sections into one set of standards.
5. Standards on Digital Signs and Illumination are updated to keep in line with provincial guidelines and best practices. Digital signs and lighting within 125 metres of any residence must be turned off between 10pm and 6am, digital displays must be static for 20 seconds, and lighting levels are limited to 5,000 Nits from sunrise to sunset and 300 Nits from sunset to sunrise.
6. A section addressing Signs within the Highway 2 Corridor is added to address conflicts and concerns around safety and liability. Existing billboard signs along the highway would be permitted to remain, but otherwise only signs for identifying on-premises businesses will be allowed within 300m of the highway corridor, and those signs will be subject to stricter size limitations.

Administration Recommendation:

Administration recommends that the Community Infrastructure and Strategic Growth Standing Committee recommends that Council approves Bylaw No. B-27/2024 as presented.

Alternatives/Implications:

In addition to the recommendation above, the Standing Committee has two further alternatives with respect to the proposed Bylaw:

Alternative One: The Standing Committee could choose to recommend that Council table Bylaw No. B-27/2024 to request further information, allow staff to present further details or alternate recommendations, or to amend the proposed Bylaw if desired. As part of this alternative, the Standing Committee could recommend that Council consider specific alternatives or changes to the proposed Bylaw, but for such changes to be presented, the current draft would need to be tabled and a new Public Hearing scheduled where the alternatives and changes would be a part of the required notification process.

Alternative Two: The Standing Committee could choose to recommend that Council defeat Bylaw No. B-27/2024. The current regulations of Land Use Bylaw No. B-01/2016 would remain in effect. This alternative would not provide the intended changes for the LUB's clarity, readability, and organization and would not incorporate changes to address concerns or improve how the Bylaw addresses signs not requiring a Development Permit, portable signs, incidental signage in commercial areas, and updates for standards on lighting and digital media.

Budget Implications:

Administration notes that there is generally an economic benefit to having advertising for Airdrie businesses and industry strongly desires to retain current standards which allow for digital billboard signage along high-traffic corridors. Current LUB regulations also require that Billboard signs provide 10% of their copy rotation to advertise City of Airdrie events, initiatives, local business marketing, or emergency messaging.

Economic considerations also need to include a liability perspective, and there have been number of complaints to the City as well as some claims due to lighting and distraction from digital signage. Where the City assumes responsibility and liability for advertising signs, the level of risk associated with possible approvals can vary depending on type of signs, locations, speed limits, and surrounding uses.

Communications and Engagement:

Following the Standing Committee's recommendation and in keeping with Municipal Government Act requirements and the City of Airdrie Public Notification Bylaw,

Administration will provide notification of the Public Hearing via the “City Connection” section of the local newspaper for three consecutive weeks and the City’s website 14 days prior to the public hearing.

Administration is also continuing discussions with local businesses and sign providers and will provide a full report on this engagement and what we heard before this Bylaw is brought before Council for a public hearing.

Recommendation:

That the Community Infrastructure and Strategic Growth Standing Committee recommends that Council approves Bylaw No. B-27/2024 as presented.

Willow Czaban
Senior Planner

Staff Presenter:	Gail Gibeau RPP MCIP, Team Leader
External Presenter:	N/A
Department:	Current Planning
Reviewed by:	Stephen Utz RPP MCIP, Director
Attachments:	#1: Draft Bylaw No. B-27/2024 #2: Original/Existing Part 5 of Land Use Bylaw #3: Comparison of Changes from proposed Bylaw (Other than Part 5)