
To	General Committee
Subject	Review of Sign By-law 2018-029
Ward(s)	All
Date	November 26, 2025
Department Head	W. Cooke, City Clerk/Director of Legislative and Court Services
Executive Management Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer
Staff Report #	LCS007-25

Recommendation(s):

1. That City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law) be amended by adding the following sections to section 12.3.0.0.0. – Ground Signs:

Section 12.3.6.0.0. – Third Party Advertising - Ground Signs

Section 12.3.6.1.0. – Third Party Advertising is not permitted on a ground sign unless one or more of the following provisions are established.

Section 12.3.6.1.1. – The third party advertising is for a business, goods, products, services or facilities on an adjacent property to the location the ground sign is situated and the properties are designed to operate as a singular development and linked as to allow vehicular traffic to transition from one parcel to another to access the businesses without having to leave the private property.

Section 12.3.6.1.2. – The third party advertising is for a registered charitable or not-for-profit organization to promote their specific goods, products, services or facilities and/or fundraising initiatives.

2. That City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law) be amended by deleting section 2.1.6.0.0. and replacing it with the following:

Section 2.1.6.0.0. – Ground Sign: means a permanent sign in a fixed location, wholly supported by one or more uprights, poles, braces and located on a

structural base placed in the ground, and shall include soft landscape treatment at the base of the sign or supporting structure. For the purposes of this by-law, a pylon sign is a ground sign.

3. That City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law) be amended by deleting section 2.1.12.0.0. and replacing it with the following:

Section 2.1.12.0.0. – Poster Panel Sign: means a permanent sign that advertises goods, products, services or facilities that are not available at the location where the sign is situated or that directs persons to a location different from that where the sign is located, and shall include free standing structures and signs attached in any manner to the wall of a building or structure and includes a standardized sign structure erected and maintained by a business engaged in the sale or rental of space upon which advertising copy is displayed advertising goods or services that are not necessarily conducted within or upon the lot upon which the sign is located. For the purposes of this by-law, a billboard sign is considered a poster panel sign.

4. That City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law) be amended by deleting section 11.1.11.0.0. and replacing it with the following:

Section 11.1.11.0.0. - signs erected, placed, painted on or attached to a wall of a building or structure that advertises, identifies or provides information on goods, products, service or facilities that are not available at the location where the sign is situated, commonly referred to as third party advertising.

5. That City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law) be amended by deleting section 12.3.5.1.7. and replacing it with the following:

Section 12.3.5.1.7. - Notwithstanding section 12.3.5.1.6., where a lot abuts two or more streets, one (1) ground sign containing a digital display/electronic message board may be erected on each street frontage provided that the said street frontage is greater than 15.0m.

6. That staff in the Legislative and Court Services Department (Enforcement Services Branch) be directed to apply for set fines for offences as set out in the City of Barrie By-law 2018-029 (Sign By-law).

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the City of Barrie's Sign By-law review, recommending amendments in response to Council motion 24-G-034 and multiple exemption requests since the last review in 2018. The proposed changes address third-party advertising restrictions and aim to clarify regulations for mobile and poster panel signs, ensuring transparency and ease of compliance for businesses and the sign industry. These updates will better align Barrie with comparable municipalities and support local businesses by expanding signage opportunities that comply with municipal standards.

Key Findings:

The Sign By-law definition of Third (3rd) Party Advertiser. The definition of a Third (3rd) Party Advertising in the Sign By-law is “advertising which identifies or provides information on goods, products, services or facilities that are not available at the location where the advertising device or sign is located”. Meaning on the parcel of property it is located.

The results of the municipal comparison survey regarding 3rd-party advertising. Staff surveyed six municipalities and found that five of the six responding municipalities allow 3rd party advertising on one or more styles of sign, including commercial ground signs (plaza/mall signs) and signs containing digital display boards.

Review of signage in large commercial plazas in Barrie, including Walmart locations, and multiple land parcels, but operates as a unified property. Staff reviewed signage at several of the City’s larger commercial plazas including the Walmart Shopping plazas in the north and south end and noted many are comprised of two or more parcels of land, however, they are designed and function as one property. These commercial plazas do utilize roadside advertising devices, generally a ground sign, to advertise the numerous businesses found within the parcels, which technically designates some of the signage as 3rd party. In reviewing signage at these commercial plazas, it was found that the properties are designed, built and operated like a single property. To the average person attending to the property to conduct business, it is not obvious that the businesses are situated on more than one parcel, as all parking areas are joined in some manner allowing traffic to flow freely from one property to another without having to re-enter or cross over a street. In many cases, all the parcels are owned by the same registered owner.

Proposed by-law amendments regarding 3rd party advertising. Staff are proposing that the by-law be amended to allow for 3rd party advertising on ground signs for business or tenants in a commercial plaza provided the parcels are adjacent to each other and linked as to allow vehicular traffic to transition from one parcel to another to access the businesses without entering a city street. This proposed amendment would allow these design-built plazas to advertise for all the businesses and tenants within the area without requiring numerous individual signs, reducing “sign pollution” and a decrease in permit costs for the plaza/business.

Results of municipal comparison survey regarding the regulation of signs and other advertising devices. Through the completion of the municipal comparison survey from six Ontario municipalities, it was found that the municipalities regulate signs and other advertising devices by way of a by-law.

Proposed by-law amendments regarding registered charitable or not-for-profit organizations on commercial ground signs owned and operated by a 3rd party. Staff are proposing that the by-law be amended to allow advertising of registered charitable or not-for-profit organizations on commercial ground signs owned and operated by a 3rd party. This amendment will allow registered charitable or not-for-profit organizations to reach more of the community they support with services or to assist in their fundraising initiatives as they may not have their own means of advertising and will help them avoid other costly means of reaching their intended customers. This is permitted by some of

the municipalities surveyed, as well as the City has received several requests of this nature in the past.

Staff believe the amendments proposed regarding 3rd party advertising are a good balance between excessive advertising on all types of signs across the City and the current restrictions, maintaining the overall integrity and intent of the by-law.

Review of the Mobile Signs and Poster Panel Sign provisions. Staff reviewed the Sign By-law provisions for Mobile Signs and Poster Panel Signs and found that the current regulations are still relevant, and amendments made in 2018 remain relevant. This includes the allowance for 3rd party advertising on poster panel signs but prohibits 3rd party advertising on mobile signs. The City's regulations associated with these signs in the by-law are in alignment with other municipalities surveyed.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications for The Corporation resulting from the proposed recommendation.

Alternatives:

The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

- Alternative #1 General Committee could maintain the existing policy/procedure/by-law with respect to 3rd party signage, which does not allow third party advertising on any style of sign other than Poster Panel (billboard) Signs. This alternative is available but not recommended as it does not allow for multi-parcelled plazas to advertise their tenants adequately or in some cases, at all. This alternative would also prohibit registered charities or not-for-profit organizations to communicate their message or fund-raising initiatives.
- Alternative #2 General Committee could alter the proposed recommendation by implementing only one of the 3rd party signage proposed amendments, either permitted 3rd party advertising on ground signs of commercial properties that are adjacent and connected or allow 3rd party advertising on commercial ground signs for charitable or not-for-profit organizations, but not both. Although this alternative is available, it is not recommended as this does not address both concerns that have been brought forth regarding 3rd party advertising.
- Alternative #3 General Committee could alter the proposed recommendation by allowing 3rd party advertising on any type of sign. Although this alternative may be available, it is not recommended as it would erode the integrity and intent of the by-law by allowing advertising of any business or organization regardless of location of operations being within the City or not, whether charitable or profitable, and not assist the local onsite businesses with clientele.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live		
Community Safety		
Thriving Community	X	The ability for commercial ground signs to provide 3rd party advertising related to the business tenants within the properties or to advertise the messages or initiatives of charitable or not-for-profit organizations will: - Assist community-based organizations to spread their message and develop their activities for our residents those requiring their services - Alert possible customers to businesses and other commercial destinations that may not be visible to a roadway,
Infrastructure Investments		
Responsible Governance		

Additional Background Information and Analysis:

In February 1999, following a fulsome review of the sign regulations by an independent consultant, the Municipal Code By-law 88-260 was amended to enact more comprehensive regulations to provide a more effective means of control regarding the placement, maintenance, and content of signs. These amendments included

In April 2005, the City enacted By-law 2005-093, a stand-alone by-law to regulate advertising devices including signs, repealing it from the Municipal Code By-law 88-260 to simplify management of the by-law in the future.

In 2018, a fulsome review of the Sign By-law was undertaken resulting from Council Motion 17-G-024 “That staff in the Legislative and Court Services Department review opportunities to enhance enforcement and increase cost recovery associated with illegal signs and property standards violations including but not limited to the implementation of a sign permit fee system and report back to General Committee.” The Sign By-law 2018-029 was amended to add or clarify definitions, enhance wording for clarification or to align with other by-laws, and to enhance provisions on permissible sign types to address technological advancements in advertising and industry standards.

Advertising is important to local businesses and the local economy, providing business identification, communication and wayfinding. Enforcement of the Sign By-law is essential to manage the City’s objectives of dealing with visual clutter/litter, ensure public safety and preserve Barrie’s exceptional character. When advertising is not controlled and kept to a minimum standard, the community suffers. The Sign By-law 2018-029 prescribes standards and restrictions for the placement and maintenance of signs on public and private property within the City of Barrie, as well as the permitted numbers of signs on a property, sizes, styles, and content of the advertising.

Consultation and Engagement:

There was no public consultation undertaken or required in relation to this report. A survey of comparator municipalities was completed, and key findings are outlined in Appendix A.

Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

Appendix:

Appendix A – Sign By-law Review – Results of Municipal Comparison Survey

Report Author:

J. Forgrave, Supervisor of Enforcement Services

File #:

P00

Pending #:

P7/24

APPENDIX "A"

Sign By-law Review – Results of Municipal Comparison Survey

QUESTION	MUNICIPALITY					
	Bradford	Guelph	Milton	Brampton	St. Catharines	Vaughan
Does your municipality regulate signs?	Yes – Sign By-law 2011-023	Yes – Sign By-law (2021) - 20621	Yes – Portable Sign By-law 087-2009 & Signage By-law 120-2017	Yes – Sign By-law 399-2002	Yes – Sign By-law 2012-154	Yes – By-law 140-2018
Are non city official signs permitted on municipal lands?	No – general provision does not allow with some exceptions when authorized	No – other than City Official Signs	No – Other than in conjunction with special events on City property	Yes – temporary mobile signs for charitable / non-profit organizations with approval of City	Yes – by way of a permit	Yes – builder A-Frames; Charitable / non-profit or community groups special events; real estate
Are permits required to place a sign on private property?	Yes – for mobile, wall and ground signs	Yes – with some minor exceptions	Yes – issued by Building Department	Yes – with some exceptions	Yes – for all ground, pole, projecting, wall, portable and 3 rd party signs	Yes – with some minor exceptions
Does your municipality allow 3 rd Party advertising?	Yes	No – only on permitted grandfathered billboards	Yes – called "off-premise advertising"	Yes – only for charitable / non-profit organizations or on billboards and digital displays on vacant lands	Yes – many already in place, new requirements and permitting required	Yes – specified by sign type and zoning
Is 3 rd Party advertising permitted on the following types of signs? - Ground / Pylon Signs - Poster Panel / Billboard Signs - Wall Signs	Ground Signs – Yes Billboards – Yes, and digital displays with 3 rd Party ads Wall Signs – No Also not permitted on mobile signs, banners or projecting signs	N/A	Ground Signs – No Billboards – Yes Wall Signs – No Also permitted on digital display type signs, not permitted on mobile signs	Ground Signs – Yes Billboards – Yes Wall Signs – No Also permitted on digital display type signs	Ground Signs – Yes Billboards – Yes Wall Signs – Yes Also permitted on digital display type signs, not permitted on mobile signs	Ground Signs – Yes Billboards – Yes Wall Signs – No
Special Conditions for 3 rd Party Advertising (i.e. setback / separation / size requirements)	Conditions imposed relate to the type of sign and not the advertising	N/A	Conditions imposed relate to the type of sign and not the advertising	Conditions imposed relate to the type of sign and not the advertising	Limitations on overall size (smaller than non 3 rd party); not within 300m of another 3 rd party sign; not within 100m of residential lands; not on property that a ground/pole sign has been legally erected; setbacks relate to the type of sign	Conditions imposed relate to the type of sign and not the advertising