INTRODUCTION

On June 1, 2017 an open house was held to discuss digital sign regulations with the users of signs, such as businesses, schools and Community Leagues. On June 8, 2017 an open house was held for the general public. People who had completed the insight survey about digital signs and provided their email address were invited to the event. In total 34 people attended the two open houses.

At both events, display boards were laid out with key questions for participants to answer. To view all the display boards go to the end of this document. People provided comments on post it notes so that participants could read the input and respond. Similar questions were asked at both events and the answers have been grouped into key themes below.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.edmonton.ca/signregulationsreview

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ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Below is brief summary of some of the key points we heard at both engagement events. All detailed comments are provided in the following pages.

- **New Locations** – Some Community Leagues would like to switch to digital signs for ease of changing the messages, being able to display more information, and saving volunteers' time. Other participants noted that digital signs should not be on parkland as they would negatively affect adjacent residential areas and contribute to light pollution.
- **Sign brightness** – comments focused on the need to consider the impact during different seasons and times of day, the effect of white backgrounds and choosing the best option for measuring brightness
- **Context** – it was felt the signs should fit the site plan, the architecture of the area, and not contribute to visual clutter
- **Size** – some preference for small sign sizes, and general concern with the scale relative to the surroundings and how it impacts pedestrians and cyclists
- **Animation** – desire to limit the videos and fast moving images as they are too distracting for drivers
- **Location** – some felt signs should be restricted in residential, mixed use, main street and high traffic areas. Digital signs may fit in some commercial areas, industrial areas and malls.

SIGNS IN SCHOOL/PARKLAND

INTEREST IN DIGITAL SIGNS	• Bylaw prevents Community Leagues from installing lighted or digital signs on parkland • Community League signs use letters on a board and take money in human resources to change • Keeping changeable copy current is a challenge • Without digital signs users are unable to put up more than one message at a time • Want to replace older signs and get more visibility • Would like to have the opportunity for a digital sign on parkland for ease of updating the message – fine with diming it during certain hours • Digital signs should be allowed for schools, community leagues and recreation centres, with restrictions on brightness and how they face residential properties • Tension between getting our message out, but not impacting adjacent residential
CONCERN WITH DIGITAL SIGNS	• Emit too much light, are too distracting and unsafe, take away from the look of neighbourhoods • Do not want digital signs on community or school property because in a residential area it would be impossible to not adversely affect residents • Digital signs may have a place and purpose business wise, but don't belong anywhere near a residential area
HOW SIGN WOULD BE OPERATED	• Colour – not just black and white • Needs to be visible at night • Low luminosity, basically looking like a poster – do not need animation • Would want animation (for example soccer registration showing a kid running) • Freestanding and angled not to impact residents • No video or moving effects, turned off at night, and 2–3 messages with 10 second timing • Dilemma in designing a sign that could be changed (wording, messaging, graphics) remotely from a computer that would not create light into residential front windows

REGULATING DIGITAL SIGNS

BRIGHTNESS	• Primary design consideration should be brightness and the distraction to drivers • To reduce impact of digital signs, reduce brightness and temperature • Looped messages need individual control of brightness because the varying background colours when the sign is changing are distracting • Bylaw should only stipulate brightness limits in luminance (NITs) – current signs have too high of NITs (450 versus recommended 150 maximum), which can be a source of disabling glare for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists • Signs should not have a bright white background – it is distracting • Front lit instead of backlit – use a different display technology (e-ink) so the sign is not an outward light source, but just a digital billboard • Adaptive brightness – snow, cloud cover and rain can affect the perception of sign intensity • Consider seasonal brightness – It should be easy to write an algorithm to vary the brightness and white balance to dim the signs for the winter commute • Dim lights when dark, especially in the winter when they reflect off the snow, which creates more light pollution • Require all signs to have an operational sensor that will dim the signs for night use • There is dark skies technology that can minimize the distance and direction that digital light travels • Follow the general principles that are promoted by the Light Efficient Communities Coalition • Reduce the amount of flashing and frequency of image changes
ARCHITECTURE AND CONTEXT	• Architectural design should fit with with overall site plan • Ideally signs should follow the architecture of the area they are in and fit the context of the adjacent land uses and type of street • Sign frames that fit the character of the area • Digital signs do not always fit with the character of the area, especially in older areas • Affects how attractive a city is year-round, but really affects the winterscape • Make them more visually attractive • Visual clutter is bad for urban design and vibrancy

SIZE	• 3 votes for 2m2 • 1 vote for 5m2 • 3 votes for 10m2 • 1 vote for 65m2 • 20m2 is easier to be seen • All sizes are acceptable other than 65m2 • Scale relative to surroundings should be considered • All signs should be human scale and comfortable for cars, and people cycling and walking by it • It is relative to the context of the location, adjacent built form and use by humans and animals (for parkland) • Also relative brightness is influenced by the size of sign • Size should be dependent on percentage of field of view as opposed to actual size
ANIMATION	• Video/moving effects makes signage more relevant • Flow rate of animation a concern as message should be visible at a glance • Keep duration of stills to a minimum of 8 seconds • Signs with too many moving images are an intentional distraction from driving • Not a fan of any sort of complex video playing on the screen – no scene, no quickly changing images, no flashes of light • Slow changes in intensity and colour
NUMBER OF SIGNS	• Too many signs can create clutter • Scale signs to scale of property • Not many small signs, invest in a big one for a whole property, otherwise it is visual clutter • One sign per property – if there are multiple businesses than one per business • Decrease the number of signs per kilometre • Decrease the number of signs per business
SHARING SIGNS	• Sharing a digital sign like the NAIT one would be good, that way there is less equipment • Looped signage for multiple places can offer a solution in certain areas • Have seen shared business digital signs and they are too bright distracting and irritating • Good to share sign boards, if possible, if businesses are close together (one major sign per strip mall) • I would be pleased to advertise community events (on business sign)

SIGN CONTENT	• Content of signs should be carefully considered (ex. nudity, sexual content, drinking, smoking etc.) • Non-offensive content – proper vetting of ads prior to being run
TYPE OF ADVERTISING	• A message is a message – there should not be a distinction between on/off premises • There should be a difference between permits for digital signs close to a school/ business and community and a digital sign for advertising with no connection to the community (3rd party) • I prefer signs be "attached" to the building, not a billboard • Prefer signs attached to a structure or within the frame of a building, not randomly sprouting from every available free space
HOURS OF OPERATION	• Hours of operations tied to zoning or permit • Non-intrusive digital signs that can be turned on/off at specified times eg: off at 9 p.m. on at 5 p.m. • Strict limits on shining on houses from 10 p.m. to sunrise
LESS REGULATION	• Easier access to permits based on current process and guidelines • Window signs should have minimum regulation and all other signs facing roadways focus on minimize video/movement of images • The city doesn't regulate any other form of advertising therefore they shouldn't regulate digital signs
CONCERN WITH DIGITAL SIGNS	• Need to seriously consider the negative effects of light pollution and the adverse effects of lighting conditions in signs, which can be possible triggers of photosensitive epilepsy • Light pollution adversely affects the environment (bird migration, predator-prey interactions, diurnal cycles etc.) • Consider migratory birds • Light pollution affects human health – melatonin and other hormonal production • They are ugly, unsafe and a big distraction • They distract drivers, are overall ineffective and unappealing • Overall, digital signs do not have a positive effect on the City • Open that digital signs are illegal – they cause distracted driving • Digital signs have not added to the attractiveness of Edmonton

LOCATING DIGITAL SIGNS

SIGN LOCATION – ROAD SAFETY	• Location should not conflict with road safety • Restrict digital signs at intersections, especially major ones • The colors of the digital sign can be confused for the changing of the traffic lights • Restrict on arterial roads • No signs on freeways: Whitemud, Henday, Yellowhead • Keep away from heavy vehicular traffic areas to reduce driver distraction • They must be on major corridors and they have to be controlled (suggestion that the City should own and control these signs) • Higher restrictions in high collision areas, lots of pedestrians, and traffic circles
APPROPRIATE SIGN LOCATIONS	• Agree to business districts, downtown, and high traffic areas getting signs within reason • Yes signs in industrial or retail areas • Small signs in malls that are well-removed from roads are possible areas • Permissible – inside malls, industrial as long as they are not facing traffic
SIGN LOCATION MORE RESTRICTIVE	• More restrictive regulations in residential, mixed use and main street areas • Residential areas, including mixed use, must be free of signs that can affect people's ability to sleep, distract drivers and thereby create a safety issue • Third party digital signs should never be allowed in, or impact, residential areas • No digital signs anywhere – they take away from green space and cost the City in enforcement and energy costs • Digital signs lead to increase in light pollution this is bad for our health and for wildlife, therefore, keep out of residential areas and parks • Minimal residential (school, community halls only) • Any restrictions should only pertain to residential areas • The downtown is already an area where there is a confusing and unattractive mix of lights controlling traffic, decorative lights etc. – no more please • Consider sign-free stretches to give the brain a respite from constant bombardment of advertising

JUNE 1 PRESENTATION BOARDS

INTEREST IN DIGITAL SIGNS

As a business owner or representative of an organization:

Why does your company or organization want to use a digital sign?

What are the benefits for your company or organization using digital signs?

Would a digital sign replace other types of signs that are currently being used by your company or organization?

CURRENT REGULATIONS

Are there any regulations preventing you from having a digital sign right now?

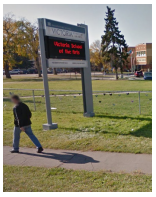
Did you understand what rules you needed to follow in order to get a sign permit?

Do you think the Bylaw is regulating the right things?

COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

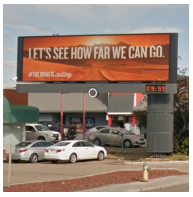
What size of freestanding digital sign would work best for your company or organization?

Approximate digital sign message area


2 m²

5 m²

20 m²



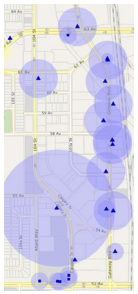
40 m²

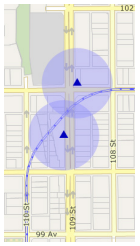
CLUSTERING: LOCATIONS AND MESSAGES

Do you think each business should be able to have a digital sign, regardless of the size or quantity of other digital signs are in the area? Why or why not?

Would you be willing to share a digital sign with other businesses in the same development?

If there are only certain locations on a site that can have a digital sign and not enough locations for all businesses, who should be able to put their digital sign in that location?


Gateway Boulevard & 63 Avenue



109 Street & Jasper Avenue

SUCCESSFUL SIGNS

What regulations would ensure digital displays make positive contributions to the city?

COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

How would you want to operate your digital sign?

- hours of operation
- video/moving effects
- message duration
- other considerations

Where would you locate it?

JUNE 8 PRESENTATION BOARDS

SIGN PREFERENCES

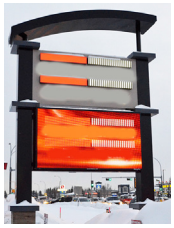
What aspects of digital displays do you think make for positive contributions to the city?

Are there some digital signs that you like, but others that you don't like? Which ones, and why?

- Brightness?
- Overall size?
- Scale relative to surroundings?
- Size of words and letters?
- Landscaping design?
- Architectural design?
- Location and orientation of the sign?
- Number of signs on a property?

SIGN APPEARANCE

How do digital signs affect your opinion of Edmonton as an attractive and livable city?



WHAT WE HEARD: SIGN SIZE

12% selected "other – specify"

20% selected less than 10m²

2% selected between 10m² and 20m²

1% selected between 20m² and 40m²

42% selected no sign

**The values do not add to 100% because some people said two things, like "there should be no signs because they are distracting to drivers."*

Of those, the following responses were received:

- **23%** Brightness, moving images is distracting to motor vehicle operators
- **18%** Depends on where it is/attributes of the sign
- **3%** No maximum – let landowner decide
- **4%** Other

Do we need different regulations based on size, location, or context? If so, what should they be?

SIGN LOCATIONS

The Zoning Bylaw has many sign schedules (lists of regulations) that have different rules for signs depending on the zone they are located There are also sign regulations in plans and policies.

For example, sign schedules for residential areas are stricter than all other areas.

Are there areas of the city that should be more restrictive or more permissive regarding digital signs?

How would you make them more restrictive or permissive in the areas you indicated?

Such as:

- Major transportation corridors
- Downtown
- Main Street areas
- Mixed use high-rise (office or residential)
- Suburban shopping centres
- Malls
- Industrial areas

WHAT WE HEARD: DIGITAL SIGNS NEAR RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Reporting back, the May 2017 Insight Community Survey asked respondents about digital signs close to residential areas.

- **75%** of respondents agree with the statement "Digital signs for schools, parks, and community leagues should not be adjacent to or facing a residential property."
- **87%** of respondents agree with the statement "All digital signs should not be adjacent to or facing a residential property."
- **58%** of respondents agree with the statement "Schools, parks, community centres, and recreation centres should be able to have digital signs."

What are the impacts of digital signs near residential areas?

What regulations need to be in place to minimize impact of digital signs near residential?

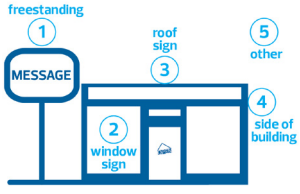
Should regulations for digital signs be different:

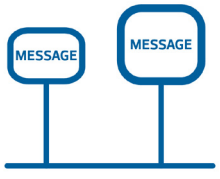
- **For businesses?**
- **For schools, recreation centres?**

SIGN PREFERENCES

Other than size and location, what is important to regulate on a digital sign?

What is important to regulate for signs of different types?





SIGN PREFERENCES

We'd like to know what you think about sign size and their locations.

Thinking of digital signs, and assuming some signs are going to be allowed in commercial areas, would you prefer large signs and more of them or smaller signs and less of them, or something in between?

Please tell us your preference by placing a dot in the section below.

	Larger signs	Smaller Signs
More signs		
Fewer signs		

WHAT WE HEARD: SIGN SIZE

In the May 2017 Insight Community Survey, we asked respondents what size they felt was reasonable for a free-standing digital sign from the four photos below.

48% of respondents felt that 10 m² as a reasonable size for a digital free-standing sign.

48% (1,088 people) selected 10m²

28% (640 people) selected 20m²

7% (162 people) selected 40m²

1% (26 people) selected 65m²
CURRENT PERMITTED MAXIMUM SIZE

1% of respondents felt that 65 m² as a reasonable size for a digital freestanding sign.

NEXT STEPS

Over the summer and fall, the Zoning Bylaw Team will use the feedback from the following engagement events to help draft updated digital sign regulations:

- Sign Industry workshop – April 6, 2017
- Insight Survey – May 2017
- Sign Users Open House – June 1, 2017
- Public Open House – June 8, 2017

Regulations will also be reviewed by multiple City groups. A second round of engagement events will be held with the public in early 2018 to get feedback on the draft regulations. The draft regulations will be presented to Urban Planning Committee in spring 2018.

DIGITAL SIGNS REVIEW PROJECT TIMELINE

DIGITAL SIGNS WORKSHOP #1
April 6, 2017

INSIGHT COMMUNITY SURVEY
May 2017

DIGITAL SIGNS WORKSHOP #2
June 1, 2017

DIGITAL SIGNS WORKSHOP #3
June 8, 2017

DRAFT CIRCULATION
Summer/Fall 2017

URBAN PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
Winter 2018