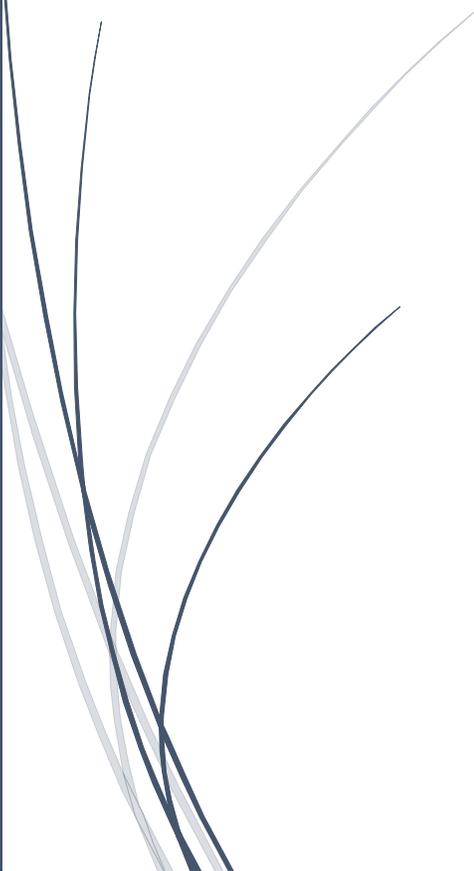




# Reviewing and Updating Calgary's Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw

**Strategic Services - ROADS**  
TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT  
THE CITY OF CALGARY







## Table of Contents

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Table of Contents.....	2
Executive Summary .....	4
Background .....	7
Purpose of the Bylaw .....	7
Legal Background .....	8
Purpose of the Review .....	8
Safety.....	8
Standards.....	9
Proliferation.....	9
Process.....	9
Current State.....	9
Calgary’s Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97 .....	9
Time .....	9
Place .....	10
Manner.....	10
Customer Demand .....	11
Service Requests & Enforcement .....	12
Economic Environment .....	14
Investigation.....	14
Municipal Review .....	14
Research .....	16
Ipsos Reid – 2011 Sign Regulations Research.....	16
Boulevard Transportation Group – July 2011 .....	16
Engagement.....	18
External Stakeholders .....	18
Temporary Sign Industry .....	18
Federation of Calgary Communities.....	19
Business Improvement Areas (BIA) .....	19
Calgary YMCA .....	19
Calgary Real Estate Board (CREB).....	20



Public Survey.....20

    General responses .....21

    Community Association representative responses .....21

    Not-for-profit organizations responses .....21

    Business representative responses .....21

Internal Stakeholders .....21

Analysis .....22

    Meeting Customer Needs.....22

    How Calgary Compares .....22

    Safety.....23

        Playground and School Zones .....23

        Prohibited Highways .....23

        Banners and Overpasses .....24

    Standards - Time, Place and Manner .....24

        Time .....24

        Place .....25

        Manner .....26

    Proliferation .....27

    Process.....27

        Permit System.....28

    Enforcement .....29

Recommendations .....30

    Bylaw Revisions .....31

    Administrative Updates .....33

APPENDIX ‘A’ – 311 Heat Maps .....35

APPENDIX ‘B’ – Stakeholder Summary .....38

APPENDIX ‘C’ – Sign Library .....41

APPENDIX ‘D’ – Prohibited Highways.....44

## Executive Summary

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The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw (29M97) which governs the use of temporary signs in the road right of way (RROW) has been in effect for twenty years without significant revision. Though the bylaw has served The City of Calgary and its customers well, there are many sections that need to be updated to better reflect the growth of the city and the increased focus on the public and pedestrian realms.

While most of the current rules around placement will be maintained, it is recommended that an enhancement of the bylaw can be achieved through updating the bylaw's language, and consolidating and clearly organizing the sections. This will improve the clarity and transparency of a number of aspects of the bylaw. In turn, this will provide improved guidance on how our customers can best use signs for their organizations and businesses on the public RROW. Likewise, changes to procedures and guidelines used by city staff to approve the use of the signs is also recommended. The end state will provide greater alignment to The City of Calgary's approach to public safety, quality service and customer-centric systems which provide consistent and predictable results.

Stakeholder engagement and public input into these recommendations was extensive, including an online survey that more than 6700 people participated in, and shared over 36,000 comments. While not a top of mind issue for most Calgarians, the majority of survey participants believe that there are too many signs, and they are distracting and unattractive. However, they also feel that their use is important for community groups. Community groups and businesses agree that temporary signs are cost-effective and efficient, and expressed concerns if their use of these signs was further restricted or banned.

In contrast to many jurisdictions, the recommendations will continue to allow the use of small advertising signs. This is in response to the current economic conditions for small business in Calgary. It also recognizes the past practice in regulating signs, and that Calgary has the physical space to support their use. However, most other 'best practices' that were identified during the municipal review and stakeholder engagement have been addressed in the final recommendations. The goal is to address both safety and aesthetics, promote responsible use, and reduce the overall amount of signs currently seen at the side of the road.

The proposed revisions reinforce The City's commitment to safety by controlling sign height and spacing to improve sightlines for users of the roadway, while maintaining a ban on signs that would obstruct movement on sidewalks. The list of roadways that prohibit temporary signs will be updated according to established criteria, including roads with a posted speed limit greater than 60 km/h. This would include sections of Bow Bottom Trail, Airport Trail and Metis Trail. Temporary signs will also be prohibited in playground zones, and only signs that have been given permission and safely secured may be used over roadways.

The recommendations also address the public's concerns over the proliferation of signs which verges on "sign blight" and "visual pollution." In recognition of this, additional sign rules to

require minimum separation between signs, and clear language to assist enforcement have been recommended. Election sign rules will also be adjusted to define the election period, add new spacing requirements, and extend the time requirement to remove signs after the election.

The recommended changes to the Temporary Signs on Highways bylaw and any related administrative processes are summarized in the following table. This table also identifies the key improvement areas of safety, standards, and proliferation that the changes would address.

<b>SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>			
	<b>SAFETY</b>	<b>STANDARDS</b>	<b>PROLIFERATION</b>
Identify Roads to be Added to Prohibited List	✓	✓	✓
Establish Maximum Sign Heights	✓	✓	
Prohibit Signs in Playground Zones	✓	✓	✓
Require Minimum Distances between Signs by Same Owner		✓	✓
Prohibit Holding Signs Above Roadways	✓		
Adopt Start Date for Election Period		✓	
Relax Time for Sign Removal after Election		✓	
Update Fine Schedule and Penalties			✓
Establish List of Mobile Community Sign Users		✓	
Remove Community Identification Signs from Bylaw		✓	
Adopt Annual Permit Model for Mobile Community Signs		✓	✓

As a response to our customers and the needs they identified to us, the approval process for the large format street signs which require permitting will also be streamlined.

For the first time, a fee for permitting Mobile Community Signs (formerly known as Community Association signs) will be recommended as a yearly flat rate, similar to existing process for other contractors who operate in the road rights of way. By adopting the yearly permit system, The City will be able to address the needs of the professional temporary sign community through a permitting system which would not require day-to-day contact. This will allow the sign



companies to react quickly to the needs of their customers – including Community Associations, Not-for-profit organizations, Charities, Schools and amateur sports leagues. A flat yearly fee should not have significant impact to these customers and end-users, compared to a ‘per sign’ fee structure that many other municipalities use. Using a standard ‘per sign’ fee of \$100, this could have cost the not-for-profit companies over \$500,000 in permit costs over the past 18 months. Given Calgary’s current economic climate it is important to ensure the financial impacts of permit fees do not create an unnecessary burden on the not-for-profits and associations which use temporary signs.

This recommendation has the support of the Temporary Sign Industry as a recognition that a permit system provides them the authority to conduct their business in the road right of way (RROW), and creates a fair and equal footing for all industry members to follow. Though there will be a cost to the sign industry to conduct business in the RROW, there is a recognition by a majority of the professional operators that having some “skin in the game” is required to protect their interests and ensure their needs can be sustained and supported by The City of Calgary.

By addressing the needs of the sign community through an improved approval process, the not-for-profit organizations, community organizations and minor sports leagues can continue to use the signs efficiently, effectively and affordably.

## Background

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For many Calgarians the signs which are commonly seen at the side of roadways, on boulevards and in various places in view of Calgary's streets and pathways are common fixtures of the streetscape. As the seasons come and go, so do the signs with their offerings of seasonally associated activities and services. Signs for these Calgarians blend into the landscape like other features and fixtures. For others, they provide reminders for community events, sport registration and open houses where The City of Calgary initiatives are presented or discussed. Yet another segment of our customers see street signs as a representation of the degradation of the urban landscape which has become all too indicative of urban clutter and "visual pollution". These opposing visions are at the core of the issues and debate which has evolved over the use of temporary signage as a form of advertising and expression. The conflict which has grown from these contrasting views has drawn municipalities across the country into discussions over the management, control and permitting of signage on public property.

### Purpose of the Bylaw

The City's Roads business unit is the steward of the Road Rights of Way (RROW), and has the authority and the responsibility to manage obstructions and/or the placement of items in these public spaces. The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97 was enacted to provide the basic rules and guidance in how signs can be placed on the street.

The regulation and management of signs by The City have the following values:

- The reduction or elimination of obstructions to driver vision of traffic in the roadway;
- Protection of safety of other roads users such as bicycles and pedestrians and how signs might impact their safety;
- Enhancement of pedestrian mobility and the restriction of potential obstructions which signs can present to their freedom of movement on sidewalks, pathways and pedestrian walkways and overpasses;
- The Restriction of certain sign uses, practices and installations which pose a risk to the safety of those who install or use signs in or near the RROW;
- Protection of the visible and concealed RROW infrastructure which could be damaged as a result of sign installations and use.

In contrast, the professional temporary sign community, realtors, business owners and citizens wish to use Calgary boulevards and roadsides to promote their events, services and commercial offerings.

In order to balance the needs of these customers, a balance must be struck to provide them with access to RROW but with a mind for safety, transparency and equity. In addition, the economic impacts of managing this balance must be considered as to not impose significant financial impacts on sign related activities, but provide solutions which will address some of the costs related to the services Roads provides to the suppliers and users of temporary signs.

## Legal Background

In 1995, Temporary Sign Bylaw 33M95 was enacted by The City of Calgary, which prohibited the placement of most signs in the RROW. The bylaw was challenged in Court shortly afterwards, and on January 30, 1997, portions of that Sign Bylaw were struck down. The Courts have recognized that municipalities have jurisdiction to regulate signs by imposing time, place and manner restrictions. However, the Courts have cautioned against complete bans on signs, and regulations of this type are unlikely to be upheld. The issue of freedom of expression, as protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*<sup>1</sup>, has been a common argument against overly restrictive sign control laws.

The City's current sign bylaw, Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97, was created to better align with the direction of the courts. The bylaw re-write took a more permissive approach, allowing for a variety of signs to be placed on RROW as long as the time, placement and size rules were followed.

## Purpose of the Review

Though the bylaw has served The City and its customers well for nearly two decades without significant revision, Calgary's physical landscape, business environment and operational needs have changed significantly over that time. Given this transformation of our city and the changes in our customer's focus and desires, a review of The Temporary Signs on Highways is due. It has been identified that some aspects of the bylaw have become redundant or overlap with more recent and inclusive bylaws. In addition, some of the language and terminology in the bylaw requires updating and modernizing to reflect the expectations of our citizens, customers and partners.

Four key themes have been identified for the review:

### Safety

The primary goal of regulating signs on the RROW is safety. The rules must be clear and easily understood to promote compliance, so that all people who choose to use signs do so in a manner that does not limit accessibility or put people at risk, and also protects public property from harm.



Photo 1: Vision of Traffic... an Issue of Safety.

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<sup>1</sup> The basis of the challenges are often related to Section 2 (b) rights which include freedom of expression, and the Courts have moved to protect these rights as a fundamental right which is guaranteed.

## Standards

The bylaw regulates the duration, placement and manner of signs that may be placed on the RROW. Since the bylaw was created, many other municipalities across Canada have drafted sign control bylaws, and have included rules that work for their specific communities. A review of these laws will help determine if there are ‘best practices’ to weave into the update of Calgary’s bylaw.

## Proliferation

The biggest complaint about Temporary Signs is that there are too many of them. The amount of signage in general is viewed as unattractive, and that it reduces the impact of public service and community-focused message signs. The review will look at practical and responsible ways to reduce the amount of signs on the RROW, while balancing the desires of our customers to have access to public spaces for their messages.

## Process

Every day, The City provides service to citizens, visitors and businesses that use or are impacted by our roads, including the permit process to use certain signs. It is important to understand our customers and their needs, and ensure the steps and processes that support those services are designed and delivered in a way that meets their expectations.



**Photo 2: Sign Proliferation... a Concern for Many of our Customers.**

## Current State

### Calgary’s Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97

It is largely a permissive bylaw which regulates the use of temporary signs at the side of Calgary’s highways. The bylaw has in practice provided opportunity for business and Community Associations to promote events, their services and most commercial offerings in some fashion. The bylaw regulates the following:

#### Time

As a function of their temporary nature, restrictions must be placed on how long signs can be placed so they do not become permanent fixtures in the RROW. Like many Canadian cities, Calgaryans can place most temporary signs for up to fourteen consecutive days. To ensure that signs do not linger on the streetscape and provide relevant and timely information, there are additional restrictions on signs that communicate an event – requiring their removal within 24 hours of the conclusion of the event.

## Place

The majority of the rules and requirements related to the location and proximity to the roadway are aligned with Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) guidelines. These guidelines support driver and pedestrian safety, ensure that drivers have clear, unobstructed vision while operating vehicles in the RROW. In addition these guidelines provide pedestrians with a clear path of movement on sidewalks and pedestrian pathways and overpasses.

These criteria for compliant sign placement includes minimum distances from intersections, curbs and crosswalks. As part of these guidelines, a list of roads have been identified as prohibited or restricted from sign use based upon criteria which aligns with road safety, including posted speed limits, the volume of traffic and consideration for safe stopping or pull off locations for sign operators and installers signs at the sides of these roadways. These restricted and prohibited roads are directly identified in the bylaw.

## Manner

The manner in which a sign is placed refers to its size and what means are allowed to keep it upright while on view. Signs with a maximum face size of 0.6 square metres can be placed in the RROW without consultation or involvement by The City, provided the related placement rules are followed. All potential sign users including businesses, not-for-profits and various public and private organizations can use these small format signs to promote their events and services without oversight. Though these “small format” temporary signs are not expressly named in the bylaw, these signs could be characterized as “business” signs. A large majority of election signs also fall into this category.

The small format signs include what the sign industry calls “A-Frame Signs”, “Sandwich Board Signs” and “Lawn Signs”. They include the common coroplast sheets attached to metal “H” frames, plastic “Spider” bases or wooden stakes. Another version of these types of temporary signs include thin plastic sleeves which fit tightly over a wire frame to form the sign.

Larger signs with a sign face over 0.6 square metres require a permit and are currently called Community Association Signs in the bylaw. Though there is some ambiguity in the language, only Community Associations can use these signs as a means to promote their functions and events. Though this may have been the initial intent of the bylaw, other groups have incrementally been approved for use of these larger signs as years have passed. Some criteria have been applied to access to this sign type/class which has limited the number of users who have access to Community Association Sign use. However, a degree of ambiguity continues to be a factor related to the sign class.

Sign Class or Type	
Sign Name	Authorization
Business	None
Garage Sale	None
Election	None
Poster	None
Banner	By Permit
Community Association	By Permit
Community Identification	License of Occupation

Figure 1



Another element related to *manner* includes how signs are mounted or supported in the RROW. This includes rules related to spiking, supporting or fastening signs so they remain upright and visible. It also relates to the characteristics of the sign which may pose a hazard or distract drivers through lighting, movable features or attachments. In the case of The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw the practice of supporting signs with wires or string, spiking signs into the RROW or permanently affixing signs is prohibited.

### Customer Demand

The answer as to why temporary signs are so popular with charities, community associations and minor sports organizations is simple. Temporary signs are affordable, efficient and effective.

In the estimation of the stakeholders engaged, the use of temporary mobile signs rates in the top three of most effective ways to promote their services or drive interest in their organization. Not-for-profit organizations and community associations receive a higher rate of return through the use of these signs versus other costly, labour intensive

methods including direct mail or telephone campaigning. Given the budget constraints faced by these organization, the affordability and the positive impact temporary signs provide greater value for money.

Advertising Cost Comparison (2016)	
TRADITIONAL MEDIA	
Newspaper Ad	Starting at \$ 1100.00
Magazine Ad	Starting at \$ 1150.00
Radio Ad (30 sec)	Starting at \$ 800.00
Billboard (4 weeks)	Approx. \$ 2000.00
TEMPORARY SIGNS	
4'x 8' sign rental (2 weeks)	\$189.00
Sandwich board sign	\$170.00
2'x 1.5' H-frames (100)	Starting at \$ 1900.00

Figure 2

Sign Permit Numbers June 2015 - Dec 2016	
Number of Permits	Number of Signs
<b>1597</b>	<b>5,361</b>

Figure 3

Efficiencies are gained by hiring of professional sign companies to manage the production and placement of signs. This avoids the operating costs related to sign design, ownership, maintenance and storage. The professional sign companies have identified the most effective locations for placement to meet the expectations of their customers. Signs are placed in the communities or near the hubs where the not-for-profits operate. This method connects the targeted demographic to an organization's programs, events or message. Though

social media and technology have been major drivers for the promotion of events and programs, they are typically used by specific demographics. Those demographics who have not embraced social media and other technology are best reached with street signage.

The importance of signs was also highlighted by for profit businesses and services. Temporary signs are documented as being helpful in creating a vibrant business community in Calgary. Support and use of signage in the for-profit sector included the same reasons as with the not-



for-profits. The affordability was mentioned most, along with effectiveness and the ability to reach a wide audience in an efficient manner. Though some critics of these types of “business” signs see them as a “blight”, some business respondents did see a responsibility to be sensitive to the needs of the community and ensure the design and placement of the signs respected other users of the RROW. In light of Calgary’s current economic struggles, affordable and effective ways to achieve business goals cannot be underrated. Anecdotally, some business owners claim that 80 to 90 percent of their business is driven by their use of temporary signage in their various forms.

Though some of our internal and external stakeholders believe that temporary signs are increasingly irrelevant in today’s connected world of technology and social media, demand for the use of signs in the RROW remains strong (Figure 3). Since reactivating the permitting application system for sign use in the RROW, requests for sign permits continue to rise. Though the numbers have not reached those acknowledged in 2010 by The Boulevard Group for their study on Community Association Signs, they are edging close to these levels.

There is also a commercial value for the sign companies to be able to use the RROW for advertising in this manner. While the sign companies have stated that they charge their not-for-profit customers lower rental fees than they offer to commercial businesses, more than \$1.01 million in sign rental fees would have been charged for Community Association-type signage on the RROW over the past 18 months (based on estimates in Figures 2 & 3). This amount reflects only the numbers of signs for which permits were granted by The City. A number of the industry members who perform regular patrols, site monitoring and audits have concluded that a great many signs placed in the RROW have not been permitted – as much as fifty percent. Given this, the number of signs on the street which require permits will have at least met and likely surpassed 2010 levels during the 2016 operating year.

### Service Requests & Enforcement

The City’s Calgary Community Services (CCS) business unit is responsible for the enforcement of the Temporary Signs on Highways bylaw, as well as most other bylaws on behalf of the corporation. The officers of CCS hold appointments as Peace Officers and/or Bylaw Enforcement Officers. The Temporary Sign bylaw is enforced primarily on a complaint basis. There is no clear mandate to enforce this bylaw proactively unless the offence is a clear and imminent threat to public safety. Sign complaints are registered through The City’s 3-1-1 system, which is a 24/7 Customer Service Centre that receives complaints by phone, email and mobile application. These complaints are known as Service Requests (SR’s).

<b>Temporary Sign Service Requests (SR) for 2016</b>				
Temporary Sign SR’s	Total “General Bylaw” SR’s		Percentage of Total	
<b>4203</b>	<b>62143</b>		<b>6.7%</b>	
<b>Top 5 General Bylaw SR’s</b>				
Graffiti	Material on Public Property	Untidy Property	Snow & Ice on Sidewalks	Long Grass & Weeds

Figure 4

As far as how the general work flow is managed, temporary sign enforcement has been relegated to a lower order of priority and is regarded as a nuisance issue. At present, it is expected that complaints are responded to within 10 days. The prioritization and response times for temporary sign complaints were established in 2005 by Calgary’s City Council (CPS2005-64).

The location maps of these SR complaints for the period of 2014-2016 are found in Appendix ‘A’ of this report, and show that sign complaints are a city-wide issue. CCS provided the sign complaint numbers seen in Figures 4 and 5. For a few citizens, temporary signs are a significant concern, as approximately 20% of all complaints over the past 7 years have been called in by only 20 people. The CCS officers generate many of the SR complaints themselves when impounding signs they find in the RROW, but many of the cheap cardboard or plastic signs that are illegally placed are removed and disposed of without

Temporary Sign Complaint Numbers 2010-2016	
<b>Total number of Service Requests (SRs):</b>	24,321
<b>Number of participants:</b>	4,660
<b>Number of citizens entering &gt; 50 SRs:</b>	20
<b>Number of SRs created by these 20 citizens</b>	5,181

Figure 5

being documented.

CCS is business unit that impounds non-compliant signs from the RROW. Though the Temporary Signs bylaw does provide for violation tickets to be issued by officers for most breaches of the law, this approach has not traditionally been the primary response. Instead, CCS’s enforcement strategy has been the removal of signs determined to be in contravention of the bylaw, and educating the owners of the signs to promote future compliance.

The removal or “impoundment” of non-compliant or illegal signs in the RROW is done by enforcement officers who attend the complaints entered into 3-1-1

or by the unit’s Property Custodian at the request of officers in the field. Once the sign is impounded it is taken to the Impound and Evidence Facility at the East Calgary Landfill for processing and is held for a minimum of 30 days. Sign owners are contacted and informed of

IMPOUNDED SIGNS - CALGARY COMMUNITY STANDARDS		
SIGN TYPE	YEAR	
	2015 JAN TO DEC	2016 JAN TO DEC
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION SIGNS	28	38
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION SIGNS FOR COMMERCIAL USE	2	45
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION/ DEVELOPER SIGN - OVERSIZE	0	2
DEVELOPER SIGNS	101	135
ELECTION SIGNS	61	18
NON-COMPLIANT SIZED SIGNS	18	0
NON-REGULATED TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES	1	6
REALTOR SIGNS	50	95
STANDARD A-FRAMES	57	117
NON-STANDARD A-FRAMES	3	75
COROPLAST SIGNS	0	7
<b>Total Signs:</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>538</b>

Figure 6



the bylaw action and signs can be reclaimed for a fee. Figure 6 shows that 859 signs were impounded over the past 2 years. Signs advertising new developments, open houses and homes for sale accounted for more than 40% of the total.

## Economic Environment

Calgary's economy began to contract with the significant drop in oil prices in 2014, and there has been little recovery over the past 2 years. The rapid transformation from a city with the lowest unemployment in Canada to the highest by the end of 2016 has negatively affected all sectors, including retail and service sectors. Charities and not-for-profit organizations have not been immune to the impact.

Signs are a practical way to promote events, services and business offerings at an affordable cost. It is therefore important to consider the economic impact that any of the possible revisions to the bylaw may have on our customers. The spirit of the current bylaw is one of permissiveness in the interest of free expression and opportunity to promote business, services and messages of not-for-profits in the City of Calgary. Recommended solutions should look to balance the demands of all sign uses with the economic realities, and the perceptions of citizens. Of particular note is the need to ensure any permitting processes are efficient and timely as required by the professional sign industry who are the suppliers of larger format temporary signs to not-for-profits, community associations, minor sports organizations, and to The City of Calgary as well.

## Investigation

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### Municipal Review

As part of the investigation into regulating signs, a series of Canadian cities were selected as a means to compare and contrast how the issues of temporary signs in the RROW has been managed. Each was chosen to gain particular insight into aspects of rules, regulations and approvals for these kinds of signs.

Municipalities			
Vancouver	Edmonton	Red Deer	Saskatoon
Winnipeg	Toronto	Mississauga	Oakville

There appeared to be no typical or standard approach to the bylaws related to the regulation, permitting and enforcement of signage in the public realm – specifically the Road Rights of Way (RROW) – across Canada. Each jurisdiction had developed their bylaws and temporary sign processes as a function of their local character and often in response to local conditions or concerns. When compared to other jurisdictions, there are components of Calgary's Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw regulating temporary sign aligns with other cities. These include:

<b>Similarities</b>	
<b>Placement Guidelines</b>	The inclusion of guidelines to protect safety through specified distances for signs from intersections, curbs and other street features as to not restrict driver vision of traffic
<b>Sign Standards</b>	The creation of sign classes with specified time, place and manner restrictions or requirements
<b>Prohibited Roadways</b>	A list of roadways which does not allow the placement of temporary signs in the interest of traffic safety
<b>Large Format Signs</b>	References for permitting of large format signs in jurisdiction which do not prohibit the use of signs in the RROW

In contrast to these other jurisdictions, Calgary is at the permissive end of the sign-control spectrum and is certainly the most accommodating when compared to the municipalities included in the scan. Given that Calgary does not require placement exclusively at mapped locations, the nationally or provincially active companies view our process as unrestrictive and open based upon their experience and comparative view.<sup>2</sup>

A number of key sign control components were identified from other municipalities that differed from Calgary’s approach:

<b>Differences</b>	
<b>Clear Criteria for Large Format Signs</b>	A clear set of criteria or description of what kinds of groups can use large format signs to promote their events, activities or business
<b>Height Restriction</b>	A prescriptive method for the measuring of signs, particularly using the ground or “grade” to measure height of signs
<b>Minimum Distances</b>	No provisions for buffering distances between sign, or minimum distances between signs of any class
<b>Start Date for Election Signs</b>	In regard to election signs, when they can be placed in approach of an election

<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the local signs industry members who have been active only in the Calgary market are less likely to see the Calgary temporary sign environment as “permissive”. ROADS has reinstated a permit approval system with enough rigor to ensure Roads has the authority to approve the request and that the location can support the use of a temporary sign safely. The local sign industry has become comfortably accustomed to placing signs without scrutiny, whereas the national and provincial operators have had significant experience in working in restrictive or more managed temporary sign environments.

<b>Fees</b>	Fees associated with the permitting system. Other areas charged an average of \$100 per sign permit – the lowest being \$15 – and some also required a damage deposit (including election signs).
<b>Permit Process</b>	The process of approval and permitting for signs and the enforcement models vary significantly across the jurisdictions investigated

Figure 7

These six sign control components will be addressed in the recommended updates and changes to The City’s sign control bylaw and process.

### Research

There have been two recent research projects which have assessed the interest in signs, their placement and impact on Calgary’s streets and sidewalks.

#### Ipsos Reid – 2011 Sign Regulations Research

Ipsos Reid, a market research company, conducted a questionnaire and a series of focus groups in the late spring of 2011 on behalf of The City’s Development and Planning business unit. Though primarily focused on private property and development interest in digital sign technology, a great deal of the survey did touch on issues related to signs placed in the RROW. A number of the questions in the survey used images of signs in RROW locations, and the key findings related to temporary signs in the RROW are noted in the chart below.

They study did reveal that citizen did have a sense of being bombarded by messages due to the volume of signs which they see.

Nearly half of Calgarians (48%) who were involved in this survey said that there are “too many signs” in the city – both on private property and the RROW. The study specifically noted that Community Association-type signs generated a lot of debate, with the consensus generally siding in favour of their use. This compromise was a recognition that Calgary’s community organizations need these signs to operate and thrive.

#### Boulevard Transportation Group – July 2011

A study was commissioned by The City of Calgary to review The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97 and existing guidelines related to Community Association signs. The recommendations were based on results of their municipal bylaw reviews, traffic sign guidelines and accepted practices from the Transportation

Association of Canada (TAC). However, there was no evidence that the study group consulted with the general public, the sign industry, or the end users of the larger format Community

<b>Ipsos Reid Key Findings - 2011</b>
Signage is not a key top of mind issue for Calgarians
Signage regulation is the assumed responsibility of The City; and most are generally satisfied with the performance
Citizens are concerned about the number of temporary mobile signs
Signs less distracting to driving than Cell Phones, Construction, Traffic Volume and Bad Driving Habits

Figure 8

Association signs as part of the review. The key recommendations are listed in the chart below in Figure 9. This review clearly identifies the key issues associated with large format signs in the RROW – sustainability and capacity to administer the program, the issues related to who can use these signs, the issues related to approval and the inclusion of Community Associations – to name a few.

Of particular concern, however, is the impact the above recommendations would have on not-for-profit organizations, minor sports leagues, community associations and other charities or services. Of particular concern would be the financial impacts, but the focus on reducing proliferation would diminish the availability of these signs to these disadvantaged groups.

None of the recommendations of this review were pursued at the time of the study.

BLVD Recommendation	Impact to CA Signs
<b>Reduce the number of user groups</b>	Impact on particular user groups, and a revenue fallout to sign industry providers.
<b>Identify and map allowable locations with the recommendation of Community Associations</b>	Costly methodology with significant up-front costs, Community Associations have noted they don't have the capacity and expertise to provide approval support.
<b>Increase set-backs between sign and some corners</b>	The suggested setback of up to 90 metres would greatly reduce available space for sign use in the city
<b>Limit permit applications by group to 10 per year, with a 2 week gap for all users between applications</b>	Additional loss in advertising potential for sign users.
<b>Implement a \$100 per sign fee and a damage deposit of \$300 per sign<sup>3</sup></b>	Less cost effective – costs downloaded onto entities such as not-for-profits and charities with limited advertising budgets.
<b>Require sign to be lettered in white only with black background. Maximum of 10 words per sign</b>	Reduces the value of signs for organizations with an established brand (colour themes, logos, images). Limit of words reduces the potential effectiveness of the large format signs, though it would increase readability.

Figure 9

<sup>3</sup> Edmonton has implemented a fee of only \$15.00 per sign (under review) and has built out the locations in a GIS Mapping model. The costs associated with sign use in Edmonton are a full third greater than that of Calgary at present.

## Engagement

The Engagement plan undertaken for this project – the review and revision of the Temporary Signs in Highways Bylaw - has been extensive. Concerns and opinions were gathered from both internal and external stakeholders. Though the engagement process has been ongoing for some time in an informal manner the most current and first formal steps took place with members of the Temporary Sign Business Community in June of 2015. The most public facing aspect of this process involved a survey designed and conducted by The City’s Engage Resource Unit in October of 2016 and was initiated during the Thanksgiving Day weekend.<sup>4</sup> In addition, a number of internal and external stakeholders were informed of the bylaw review and the survey. Some of this engagement took place via e-mail and phone calls, but a number of these groups were also engaged directly in face-to-face meetings.

The project team was committed to gathering a city-wide cross section of opinion on the issue of temporary signage. By including both external and internal stakeholders who either work with groups or may be impacted by sign use, a range of opinion related to temporary signs and their use in the RROW was gathered. The Executive Summary of stakeholder engagement can be found in **Appendix ‘B’** of this report. The entire **“What We Heard”** report for the Temporary Signs Review project can be found online on The City’s website at [www.engage.calgary.ca](http://www.engage.calgary.ca).

### External Stakeholders

#### Temporary Sign Industry

Two engagement sessions took place with owners and operators of the professional sign companies to inform them about updating the bylaw, discuss the issues facing the industry and the concerns related to how Roads was managing the Temporary Signs approval process<sup>5</sup>. Three key themes were identified:

- Consistency regarding the permit process and approval.
- Better, equitable enforcement of the rules related to temporary signage.
- The allowance and proliferation of unpermitted small signs has had a negative impact on business.



Photo 3: Community Association Sign... Communicating with Community.

<sup>4</sup> The survey was made available to our customers and all stakeholders starting on Friday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016. It accessible until the morning of October 25, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> At one time these companies rented the signs and did little in the way of graphic design. Most of these companies now provide graphic design services, which makes them more than just a rental service.



## Federation of Calgary Communities

Face-to-face and conference call meetings were held with staff from the Federation of Calgary Communities to better understand the concerns and experiences of this organization with 151 constituent communities. The project team understood the value placed on temporary signage by Community Associations from the on-line survey, but it was identified that capturing the opinions of this important stakeholder – in their own words – was a priority. Three central themes were identified:

- Community Associations should not have the added responsibility of approving temporary signs in neighbourhoods.
- Limitations on the number and location of signs would have a negative impact on Community Associations' ability to share information.
- Extra costs/fees would have a negative impact on Community Associations.

## Business Improvement Areas (BIA)

Temporary signs are a polarizing feature of these pedestrian-focused shopping and entertainment districts. The BIA exists to enhance the economic vitality of the businesses in the area, in part through marketing, promotion and events. However, BIA's also advocate for improvements to the physical environment of the streetscape and pedestrian areas to draw more people to the district.

Temporary signs are utilized by the business owners as they directly target potential shoppers who are walking by, compared to the business signs that are attached to the front of the shop or restaurant that are aimed at the street. The placement of these signs often obstruct the movement of pedestrians however, resulting in safety and accessibility concerns for people with visual impairments or who use mobility aids. A sizeable number of these signs are placed in a manner that is prohibited under the current rules within the Temporary Signs bylaw.

An offer of direct engagement was offered to all the BIAs as a means to gather the value temporary signs have for these organizations and their members. The Inglewood BIA responded, and an on-site meeting took place with both the Executive Director and a member of the Board. These same themes and conflicts were discussed and viewed, as well as the challenging position the officers of Calgary Community Standards have been placed in to enforce the existing rules, where a complaint about one sign could require the removal of almost all other signs in the BIA.

When asked to prioritize the importance of keeping signs in the sidewalk area for business promotion versus having a pedestrian-friendly environment, the Inglewood BIA leaned more toward improving pedestrian access and safety with the removal of improperly placed signs. There was interest to work with The City to explore improved signage options that could be attached to the buildings, to reduce the negative impact to the individual businesses due to the loss of temporary signage on the sidewalk.

## Calgary YMCA

In the interest of capturing how not-for-profits and other like organizations use and value temporary signs, a meeting was set the Calgary YMCA. Without access to temporary signs, it was felt that many of the programs which the YMCA support could be jeopardized, particularly



given the current economic climate. Program subsidies have increased as a result of the current downturn. The use of temporary signs has provided the necessary interest and participation in the YMCA’s programs to fund their programs and maintain subsidies in the facilities they run on behalf of The City. Four key themes were identified:

- Signs provide excellent value for money, and they can market services and programs directly in the communities where they are available.
- The process to obtain a permit needs to be clear and easily followed, including which groups may qualify.
- Urban densification has reduced available spaces in the RROW for signs. Upgraded sidewalks, street furniture, tree wells and extended lot lines intrude into areas previously used for signage.
- Due to densification of land in the RROW, there is increased competition for space which causes overcrowding and a sense of sign proliferation

### Calgary Real Estate Board (CREB)

As users of signs in the RROW to promote properties for sale, and to direct customers to open houses, the Calgary Real Estate Board (CREB) was contacted to inform them of the project underway regarding the review of the temporary sign bylaw. Information was provided on the Engage Resource Team’s on-line survey and CREB was encouraged to contact their members to fill out the survey as a method of capturing the opinions on sign user from Calgary’s business community. As part of the discussion, the contact at CREB introduced the idea of a collaboration on a project which CREB has been working on. This project would create an educational video to assist their members on how best to use signs responsibly and legally in the RROW.

### Public Survey

An on-line survey was conducted to gather opinions from our customers through a city wide lens. Given the time restraints related to the project it was decided that a survey – if publicized widely – could capture a great deal of opinion on signs. Although an online survey is not statistically valid, it would also provide the opportunity to compare results to some of the previous research done on signs and temporary signage in Calgary.

This survey was marketed to all residents city-wide using a number of different methods:

Awareness Campaign			
Media Interviews	Temporary Signs	Facebook Advertising	Twitter #yyctransport
Direct calls and emails to Stakeholders Sign Businesses – CREB – YMCA – FCC – United Way			

Figure 10

The survey was available from October 4-21, 2016. The City received a substantial response with over 6700 surveys completed, and more than 36,000 comments provided.



Analysis from the survey is complete and the top themes are listed below. The themes were categorized according to how the questions were relayed in the survey, and are in no particular order.

### General responses

- Respondents preferred seeing less signs in general, but liked them to be of a uniform height above the ground.
- A strong preference for the larger community signs that had a black background with white or coloured letters - easier to read and less intrusive. Signs that had white backgrounds, coloured backgrounds or had pictures on them were the least liked.
- The majority believed that temporary signs are a *distraction to drivers*, are *unattractive*, and are *abundant*. However, they felt they are *important for community groups*.
- No significant difference between the yes and no responses on whether signs are *important for Calgarians*, *important for business*, or if signs are just *something you expect as part of city's landscape*.
- Half of respondents said they had been called to action by a message observed on a temporary sign.

### Community Association representative responses

- Temporary signs are effective in prompting action, promoting awareness, are a main source of communication and an important means to share local information
- Temporary signs create awareness of community events and aid in increased participation
- Location of temporary sign placement can enhance their effectiveness

### Not-for-profit organizations responses

- Temporary signs are effective tools to increasing membership and enrollment and increase attendance and participation in programs, events and services
- Temporary signs allow not-for-profit organizations to reach a larger audience
- Temporary signs are important for not-for-profit organizations as an affordable means to promote their operations

### Business representative responses

- Use of temporary signs is a cost-effective and efficient way to advertise products and services and drive business

## Internal Stakeholders

Given the importance of signs to many of our internal stakeholders, we engaged a number of City of Calgary business units. The project team also identified that many of our internal stakeholders have connections with an additional groups and organizations which may be impacted by the review of the bylaw. In the interest of informing both internal and as well as additional external stakeholders, the following internal stakeholders were engaged about the survey and the project: Calgary Community Standards, Calgary Neighbourhoods, Calgary Recreation, Calgary Customer Service & Communications, Calgary Transit and Calgary Parks.

## Analysis

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### Meeting Customer Needs

A great deal of The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw continues to be relevant, but the bylaw is a reflection of the Calgary that existed nearly two decades ago. In the meantime, our city has evolved and so has our customer's use of temporary signs. Given the lack of national standards and benchmarks, Calgary's response to the management and regulation of temporary signs has evolved as a function of its unique character and local conditions. Some of the language and terminology in the bylaw does not reflect current conditions and practice in the management and regulation of temporary signs.

Updating of the bylaw is required to reflect the current demands for both the permission and management of signage on the RROW. Enhancing the clarity and the focus of the bylaw will help our customers understand and voluntarily obey the rules for temporary signs placed in the RROW. Most importantly, revising the bylaw will provide direction to our customers on how to best use temporary signs safely and effectively. For Calgary Community Standards, updating the language of the bylaw will support their enforcement efforts and provide them with the direction to assist them in the field.

### How Calgary Compares

There are many aspects of the current bylaw which align and are consistent with the jurisdictions reviewed during the project. The highest priority of all the bylaws reviewed is the protection and safety of road users. This is consistent with Calgary's approach. Like other municipalities, a reasonably consistent list of placement rules is included in the current bylaw which gives direction for how signs can be placed and used in the RROW. These rules include minimum distances from curbs, distances from intersections and requirements for sign sizes in the various classes which are allowed. These rules support pedestrian safety and mobility for sidewalk use, ensure vehicle vision of traffic and minimize or eliminate impact on the transportation activities undertaken in the RROW.

When compared to other jurisdictions, Calgary's bylaw regulating the temporary signs in the RROW is permissive and weighted in favour of responsible sign use. Most users of signs have some outlet to place signs in the RROW whether they be a business, not-for-profit or community organization. This is not the case in other Canadian cities and where some sign classes have been eliminated, relegated to private property or have been restricted from use by requirement for permits.

However, the legal 'ban' on signs has not resulted in a disappearance of signs from the RROW in those municipalities – as the customer demand for cost-effective advertising is still high. This can place the business community into an adversarial role with The City – where they may knowingly break the law, as a cost of doing business. Some municipalities have assigned additional resources into enforcing these sign laws, including private property signage as well. As an example, Brampton, Ontario has reportedly removed or impounded an average of 8000 signs per year, with more than 20,000 impounded in 2016. Mississauga, Ontario reported that more than 25,000 signs were removed or impounded in 2015.

## Safety

The impact of temporary signs on public safety, vision of traffic and their role in driver distraction was a prominent theme in the Engage Survey. Many respondents provided input to the effect that temporary signs definitively distract drivers and are “dangerous”. However, there is little definitive evidence to support this perception. While there has been academic research conducted in regard to the impact of digital and LED signage on driver safety and distraction, little research has been published



Photo 4: Sign Bunching... Impact on Effectiveness.

about the smaller temporary signs.

This is a clear knowledge gap, and many studies have identified the need for direct investigation of the issue to understand the impact of temporary signs in the RROW.

However, there is no question that signs can impair visibility and sightlines in and along the roadway. Reasonable restrictions and requirements within a bylaw that support these guidelines are defensible and easily understood. Currently, these include minimum required distances from intersections, curbs and crosswalks.

### Playground and School Zones

Blocked sightlines have been identified as a potential risk related to the placement of signs in Playground and School Zones. Many municipalities have placed restrictions on signs in these areas due to the volume of both vulnerable pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Of particular concern is the maintenance of driver attention through these areas, as there is potential for unexpected actions such as students wandering or bolting into the path of vehicles. Signs placed in these areas may also impede or disrupt pedestrian traffic, especially in areas where the loading and unloading of students takes place. It is recommended that this municipal ‘best practice’ be adopted in Calgary.

### Prohibited Highways

Another safety component is the list of Prohibited Highways in the bylaw. The current list of roadways was completed twenty years ago, but the city has grown significantly since without any updates to the list of Prohibited Roadways in the bylaw. The criteria used to designate the list of prohibited roads are still valid and include:

- Roads with a posted speed limit above 60 km/h;

- Roads with limited opportunities to safely stop and pull over areas which increase the risk of collisions;
- High volume traffic areas, which also make pulling over and stopping a safety hazard.

It would be expected that the list of Prohibited Highways (or portions of roads) would expand since the last bylaw revisions nearly 20 years ago. Using the established criteria, The City has identified 10 new road sections that could be added to the list of prohibited roadways, including sections of Bow Bottom Trail, Airport Trail, and Metis Trail (Attachment 'D'). To ensure future updates can be made in a timely manner, the list of Prohibited Highways will be removed from the text of the bylaw. The Traffic Engineer will be empowered to designate prohibited roads in accordance with policy, and the list and a new map will be maintained on The City's website. An official copy will be kept with the Roads business unit.

### **Banners and Overpasses**

The bylaw authorizes the use of signs, such as banners, to be secured to elevated structures such as overpasses or pedestrian walkways that are above the road. The banners may only be used by community-related groups, similar to those who may use Community Association signs. Permits are required, and specific size, design and mounting instructions are required to be followed for safety reasons. While no changes are recommended to this program, a related practice has been identified that should be addressed: the holding of signs or banners from overpasses. While not a regular occurrence, it has resulted in concerns about the risks this behaviour poses to both the people holding signs and the people below on the roads, sidewalks or pathways. Currently, signs carried or worn by a person are exempted from the Temporary Signs bylaw, as the law was only intended to address the placement of signs on the RROW. An amendment is recommended to adjust the exemption so that it does not apply when on any elevated structure in the RROW. This ensures that only signs that have been given permission to be properly secured may be used in these spaces.

### **Standards - Time, Place and Manner**

In general terms, most sign control bylaws use regulations that address the TIME, PLACE and MANNER of how temporary signs can be used. Opportunities have been identified through the jurisdictional scan and additional research that relate to these elements. As well the stakeholders and customers of the temporary sign program were consulted to understand their changing needs and business challenges, and get input into how these sign standards can help or hinder.

#### **Time**

Time relates to how long a sign may remain on view in the RROW and still be considered as a temporary sign. Calgary's current standard is 14 days, which is similar to what was seen in other municipal bylaws. The recommendation is to maintain this as the standard. However, there are two types of signs that currently differ from this standard: Election signs and Community Identification signs.

#### **Election Signs**

The Temporary Signs bylaw does set a timeline for the removal of Election signs – 36 hours following the election. Calgary Community Standards revealed in their session with the project

team that a significant number of sign complaints arise from this deadline not being met by the campaign offices. Given that the staff related to political campaigns are mostly volunteers, other municipalities have attempted to better manage the expectation for the removal of these signs in a fair and realistic manner. The review revealed that the typical timeframe for the removal of election signs is 72 hours. It is recommended the Temporary Signs bylaw be revised to align with this municipal benchmark.



Photo 5: Election signs

However, the bylaw does not currently have a ‘start date’ for an election period. During the election period, some of the placement rules for election signs on RROW are relaxed, allowing them to stay up longer, and be larger than the regular temporary signs. Having both a beginning and end to the election period clearly defined is necessary to help candidates and their volunteer staff to plan for and properly conduct their sign campaigns on public property. Official campaign start times can be taken from both provincial and federal statutes, and should be included to address this gap.

### Community Identification Signs

The inclusion of Community Identification Signs in the bylaw was identified as an issue to be resolved, as they are not mobile or temporary, but rather constructed as permanent structures in the RROW. They require Licenses of Occupation to be placed or constructed. These licenses are often renewed once they expire which can see these signs remain in the RROW for years. Over time, other bylaws in The City have been created or amended that authorize and support the use of these types of signs: The Sign Licensing Bylaw (23M2001) and the Real Property Bylaw (52M2009). The Community Identification Sign section in the Temporary Signs bylaw is redundant, and should be removed. This ensures that all signs regulated in this bylaw are of a temporary nature.



Photo 6: A Community Identification Sign for the community of Mahogany.

### Place

Where signs can be placed is another key



instrument which municipalities can use to regulate temporary signs. Calgary's current bylaw contains many of the standard placement rules which other municipalities also have in place, including minimum distances from curbs and intersections.

### Prohibited Roadways

However, the significant growth of Calgary's road network over the past 20 years is not reflected in the current bylaw. As referenced earlier, updates to the list of Prohibited Roadways based on the established criteria will help to address this.

### Manner

The manner in which signs are placed addresses the means by which they may or not be attached or mounted in the RROW or how they are designed.

### Sign Height

The municipal review identified a lack of sign design requirements in the current bylaw which address sign height. At present sign size is regulated by the size of the face of the sign only. This has resulted in some innovative sign designs which comply with the maximum sign face size of 0.6m<sup>2</sup> (2'x3'), but are raised on extended legs to reach heights of up to 2 metres. This gap has been identified by all stakeholders through our engagement process. The major concerns include the following:

- The spirit of the bylaw intended that sign height be a maximum of 3';
- Sightlines are impacted by signs over 3' from the ground;
- Given these signs do not require permits, and may be placed by all sign users in any quantity provided all other rules are followed;
- These kinds of signs – which appear to mimic Community Association Signs due to their height – dilute the messages of permitted and regulated large format signs; and
- Our customers revealed in the public survey that they prefer a more uniform height for signs placed in the RROW.

Other bylaws in force in Calgary which regulate signs do have clear measuring criteria including Calgary's Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 which requires measurements be made from "grade". It is recommended to close this loophole, and clearly define a maximum height above grade.

An exception to this sign height standard are Election signs and Community Association signs, as they are currently allowed to be larger than 0.6m<sup>2</sup>.

### Aesthetics

As part of the online public survey, some questions related to sign design and the look of the streetscape were included to provide insight into customer and citizen preferences. A great deal of comment was captured during the survey. Interestingly, people had a clear preference for the status quo for Community Association signs – they liked signs with simple black backgrounds with a limited range of white or coloured text. The signs with coloured backgrounds, images or pictures were liked the least.

In contrast, organizations and sign companies who have their own design services prefer the newer approach which allows for multi-colour printing and the integration of images and photographs at a competitive cost. Their vision is to move away from the signs that use neon



movable letters, which fade over time, and use available technology to improve the streetscape with better designed signage. Concerns over limiting the freedom to use colours of choice have been raised by organizations who have invested in a professional logo or brand which has a colour component, including the YMCA.

Some municipalities have adopted design rules which limit the use of coloured backgrounds, lettering and graphics (Mississauga and Halton Region), but it is not a common practice. Others such as Oakville have advised against the adoption of restrictive design requirements.

Some design control is recommended, to ensure that the messages can be clearly read by people moving along the road.

### Proliferation

The most common complaint about temporary signs are the numbers, or the proliferation, of signs in the RROW that contribute to “sign blight”. Signs are often bunched up at prime locations which offer high visibility to the public, including both business signs and election signs. At times little regard has been given to the practicality of this practice by the sign owners at large, as the bunching affects the readability of all of the signs.

Other jurisdictions have addressed this issue by including minimum distance requirements or buffers between signs placed in the RROW, whether they are large or small format. During our engagement with the sign industry members, it was suggested that establishing minimum distancing between signs can help decrease proliferation, which both our customers and citizens dislike the most. One professional sign company with experience in over 165 jurisdictions added that the lack of a sign buffering standard in the Temporary Sign on Highways Bylaw contributed their corporate view of the Calgary sign situation as a “Wild West Environment”. It will be recommended to require a minimum separation of 20 metres between signs from the same owner, company or candidate.

### Process

Though some of the issues noted above are relevant to Community Association Signs, a number of exclusive concerns have arisen over this sign class. This is the sign class which requires the most interaction with city staff because they are regulated by permit. No fees are currently collected for this work done by City staff. At present, one full time employee performs the function of approving these sign for use in the RROW and has the assistance of two other members on an *ad hoc* basis during peak periods. It has also been revealed that some commercial and for-profit groups have been able to slip into the list of permitted sign users which is clearly not in alignment with the original intent and spirit of the bylaw.

The approval process has evolved in regard to Community Association Signs. The unofficial list of community-interest groups which have been granted access to these signs has grown to include charities, minor sports organizations, schools and institutions, public town halls and not-for-profits organizations of all sorts. The larger format Community Association signs are not available for purely commercial advertising. Preference has been established to better support the needs of these community groups to inform residents of the recreation, sports, arts, cultural,



social and educational opportunities that are available. These programs enrich and strengthen our neighbourhoods, and support Calgary's reputation as a vibrant, caring and liveable city.

Interestingly, The City of Calgary is one of the most frequent users of this sign class for announcements related to public engagement events, public safety messages and other city business. The City is exempted from the rules in the bylaw.

Other municipalities do have defined criteria related to the use of these large format signs. Where they are allowed to be placed in the RROW, they are reserved exclusively for non-commercial, community related or governmental groups or organizations by permit only. No business or for profit messages are allowed on these signs placed on public lands elsewhere in Canada. It is recommended that the bylaw be updated to clearly define the groups and organizations which may access the larger format signs.

### Permit System

Though the bylaw provides direction on the rules related to signs, there is also the administrative process which provides the permits and management of the approval system for Community Association Signs. A great deal of engagement has taken place with our customers from the sign industry. Most stakeholders have noted that process improvements are necessary to streamline the process of approval, particularly with time delay to receive approvals. The desires of sign companies and permit applicants for quick approvals align with the expectations of their customers (end-users) including not-for-profits, event organizers and community associations.

The current approval process ensures accountability that signs are properly placed on the RROW, but does take time given that each location is reviewed on mapping systems, and some permit requests had up to 35 locations on one request. Though Roads should only approve signs which they have authority to provide permits for, many sign companies would like a solution to improve the process to either make problematic locations more identifiable or easier to access for sign use.

Given that The City has committed resources to sign permitting and approvals, there have been discussions around the lack of cost recovery and fees for the services provided. During engagement sessions with the industry, the members of the sign companies acknowledge that the opportunity to use RROW has value, as does the permit process which allows the industry to operate officially within municipal legislation. By operating within the rules, sign companies can continue to operate without the fear of enforcement action by The City. Companies agree that a cost for service may be needed, provided they receive value for the fees they pay.

In municipalities where these signs are approved and permitted for placement in the RROW, fees are assessed to the applicant who is typically a professional sign company. These fees are typically in the \$90.00 to \$100.00 range per sign, but do vary across the country.

## Enforcement

Many citizens commented on a perceived lack of enforcement of temporary signs, and suggested that greater attention should be given to the enforcement of sign rules. As noted during the survey, signs with expired or irrelevant information were not being removed quickly enough. Given the lack of removal, some citizens view many temporary signs as *de facto* permanent signs.

The professional sign companies also have concerns regarding the amount of small advertising signs. In their opinion, small format signs are used in numbers and in locations which compete with the messages of their customers, affecting the value of their product, while also having an impact on the aesthetic of the RROW. The professional sign companies also generally agree that there has been inconsistent enforcement action regarding these small format signs which has led to their proliferation and widespread use throughout Calgary.



Photo 7: Calgary Community Standards Enforcement... Evidence and Impound Facility.

Some of these sign companies also commented that enforcement has not been reactive enough to catch sign infractions, and note that some companies are aware of this and have exploited this situation. Some sign companies claim as many as 50 percent of the large format signs they see in the RROW have not been permitted or approved for use by The City. Though this claim may be anecdotal in nature, it does reflect the current concerns of sign companies who are following the rules and obtaining permits. As a response to this perception, a sizeable number of sign complaints are placed to 3-1-1 by the sign companies themselves in the interest of levelling the playing field and to encourage compliance by their industry.

Calgary Community Standards (CCS) is aware of these concerns related to enforcement. Signs have been categorized as a nuisance issue, placing the complaints toward the bottom of the list as they prioritize their call volume. It is often more efficient to wait and address a number of sign complaints at once, rather than doing one at a time – however this results in signs staying up longer. Calgary Community Standards model of enforcement is focused on education and compliance, including the removal of the offending signs, and therefore few tickets are written as a result of sign infractions.

Discussions with CSS resulted in a number of recommendations which will assist them in the enforcement related to temporary signs:

- Modernizing and updating the language of the bylaw helps to provide clear rules for people to follow, making it easier to enforce the bylaw with greater confidence
- Defining and confirming the appropriate groups who may use the large format Community Association Signs
- Visual identification of Community Association signs that have a valid permit (can be verified at a distance)

## Recommendations

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The recommendations which follow strive to balance the needs of a large and diverse customer base, and wishes of citizens. Though the issues around temporary signage may not be top of mind for our citizens, they do have some strong opinions which were shared during the engagement portion of the project. The goal was to provide some continuity as The City moves forward on the issue of signage in the RROW by retaining the permissive environment which has become part of Calgary's character in regard to temporary signage. With a vision toward a collaborative relationship with the professional sign community who serves the charitable, not-for-profits and other organizations by providing the larger format signs (i.e. Community Association Signs), the revised bylaw and associated processes will provide the industry and their customers a predictable, repeatable, efficient and affordable model in support of these customers.

In contrast to many jurisdictions, the recommendations will continue to support the use of small format signs. This is in support of Calgary's history in regard to temporary signs, but also is reflective of the current economic conditions. The reality is that users of these signs rely on their affordability and their flexibility to support their operations. However, most other 'best practices' that were identified during the municipal review (Figure #7) have been addressed in these recommendations.

In support of efforts to address the proliferation of signs and "sign clutter", additional sign rules and clear language to assist enforcement will be established in the bylaw and in the related processes as recommended by stakeholders. Key changes to address sign proliferation:

- New road sections to be added the list of prohibited roadways, including sections of Bow Bottom Trail, Airport Trail, and Metis Trail
- No signs in Playground Zones or School Zones
- Minimum distances between signs from the same owner, business or candidate

Updates have been made to all signs classes to assist with enforcement of the revised bylaw. A great deal of these measures were suggested by the sign industry members and have been recommended in the interest of innovation. Many jurisdictions have a tentative or adversarial relationship with the sign suppliers and producers. This is an opportunity to change the conversation through collaboration.

The following tables outline the recommendations to improve the management of temporary signs on RROW in Calgary.

## Bylaw Revisions

Community Association Signs	
<b>Name change</b>	Recommend changing the name to “ <b>Mobile Community Signs</b> ” to reflect the range of community-based organizations that may use this larger sign.
<b>Establish user list</b>	Standardize which user groups may use the larger format sign: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community associations, registered not-for-profit or charitable organizations, not-for-profit amateur sport organizations, elementary and secondary schools, universities and colleges, hospitals, and public events hosted by elected officials (open house)</li> </ul>
Community Identification Signs	
<b>Remove from bylaw</b>	Remove the regulation of Community Identification Signs from the Temporary Signs Bylaw given these sign are (semi) permanent in nature, and require written agreements to be installed on city property. The authority to grant permission is legislated in other bylaws.  This ensures the Temporary Signs Bylaw addresses only short-term use signs (no longer than 14 days).
Prohibited Highways	
<b>Identify roads to be added</b>	Updates necessary to reflect city growth and addition of new roads since 1997. Established criteria will determine which roads should be prohibited from temporary sign placement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posted speed limit greater than 60 km/h</li> <li>High vehicle volume roads</li> <li>Lack of safe access</li> </ul>
<b>Remove list of Prohibited Roadways from the text of the bylaw</b>	List and map will be maintained online, and available to customers at their convenience. Traffic Engineer may update list as required to address any future expansion of the road network.

Sign Height	
<b>Establish height restriction measure</b>	Establish the method of determining sign height as a measurement from the ground or “grade” to establish alignment with the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 and with other jurisdictions.
<b>Set maximum heights</b>	Maintain the maximum height of temporary signs 0.92 metres (3 feet) but as measured from grade.  Establish the maximum height of the newly established Mobile Community Signs and Election signs as 2.5 meters (8 feet) as measured from grade.

Sign Placement	
<b>Prohibit in Playground Zones and School Zones</b>	Maintains clear sightlines for both drivers and the pedestrians in these activity areas.
<b>Require minimum distance between signs (same business or owner or candidate)</b>	20 metre separation. Addresses complaints about proliferation of one owner’s signs in any one location – signs having the same or similar content. Also includes signs from the same candidate (election).
<b>Change minimum distance from intersections</b>	With a new height restriction, the small format signs (0.6m <sup>2</sup> ) may be placed 15m away from an intersection, rather than 30m. May encourage greater compliance from businesses and realtors.
<b>Maintain exemption for The City</b>	Signs used by The City for operational, public safety, display, advertising or ornamental purposes may be placed where necessary to communicate with the public at large.

Signs over Roadway	
<b>Prohibit the holding of signs above a roadway</b>	In the interest of the safety of all users of the roadways, prohibit the practice of holding or waving of signs from overpasses or elevated walkways above a roadway.

Election Signs	
<b>Establish start date for the Election Period</b>	Align with election guidelines from when the writ is dropped for Federal and Provincial elections, and when the nominations are closed for Municipal elections
<b>Relax time requirement to remove election signs</b>	Extend the requirements related to sign removal to 72 hours (from the current 36 hours) after polls close to align with other jurisdictions.

Enforcement and Penalties	
<b>Clear language to support enforcement</b>	Ensure language contained in the bylaw supports successful enforcement, and can hold parties responsible for their actions in the Road Rights of Way (RROW).
<b>Update schedule and value of penalties</b>	Update the penalty values associated with offences related to the bylaw to align with similar penalty values in other bylaws. Update the structure of Schedule A of the bylaw, in a manner which aligns with accepted practices.

### Administrative Updates

New Permit Process for Mobile Community Signs	
<b>Adopt annual permit model</b>	<p>Model after current practice used to approve roadway contractors in residential areas. Provide annual city-wide permits to professional sign companies erecting large format temporary signs in the Road Rights of Way (RROW).</p> <p>Sign Companies would receive yearly, colour coded stickers to be placed on their signs similar to what is currently used for the placement of newspaper boxes to denote their status as a permitted operator to enforcement officials.</p> <p>Provisions will also be established to accommodate the single-time sign user or small operator (per location, per sign basis).</p>

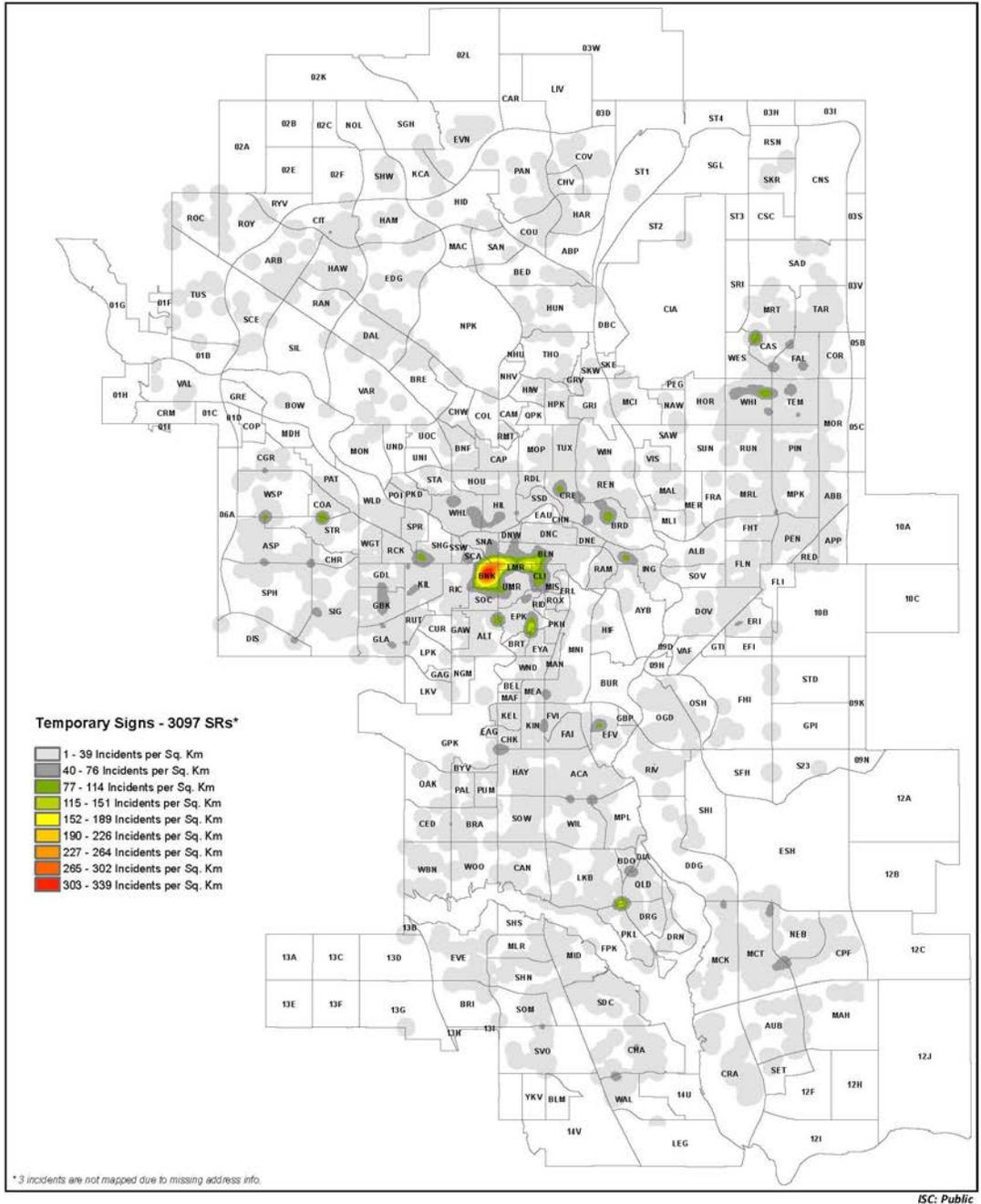
<p><b>Establish a fee for the permit</b></p>	<p>A fee is required to demonstrate the value of obtaining a permit to operate on the RROW, and helps support voluntary compliance of permit conditions – as failure to follow rules would result in penalties or a loss of permit.</p> <p>Removing the requirement to seek approval for each location and sign message will save the industry time and money. Stakeholders support the addition of a reasonable fee to ensure that proper process, follow up and enforcement occurs.</p>
<p><b>Establish sign design guidelines</b></p>	<p>As a condition of the permit, establish design guidelines to ensure sign messaging is clearly readable from the roadway.</p> <p>The logo of the organization may be used, similar to existing rules for signs (banners) over roadways.</p>

<p><b>Communication</b></p>	
<p><b>Roads</b></p>	<p>Ensure Roads staff in the District Offices are informed as to their roles and expectations, and supported to continue to remove temporary signs which impede or interfere with work taking place in the RROW.</p> <p>Integrate the practice of reporting illegal signs or signs which require investigation by Calgary Community Standards through 311 in support of compliance, reduction of sign proliferation and the support of best practices.</p>
<p><b>Calgary Community Standards</b></p>	<p>Establish a process for communicating and providing up-to-date lists of operators who have been approved for the placement of signs in the Road Rights of Way.</p> <p>Implement a visible permit sticker for Mobile Community Signs that can be clearly seen by Calgary Community Standards officers while on patrol.</p> <p>Update public communications regarding the rules and enforcement of temporary signs to encourage compliance, and to better manage expectations.</p>

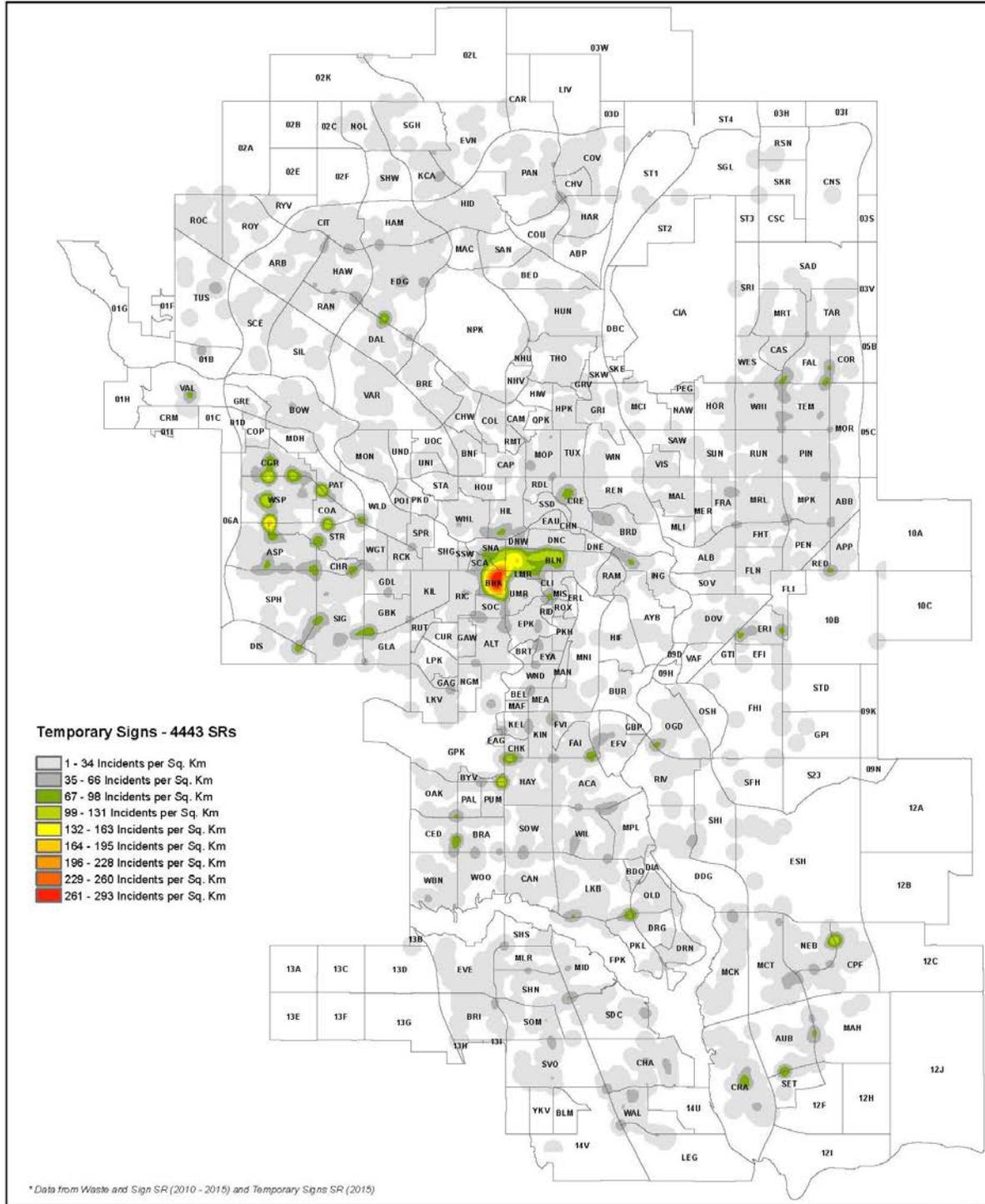
# APPENDIX 'A' – 311 Heat Maps

## Complaint Distribution (Heat Maps) for Temporary Signs - 2014-2016

Temporary Signs Complaints from Waste and Signs SR  
2014 data

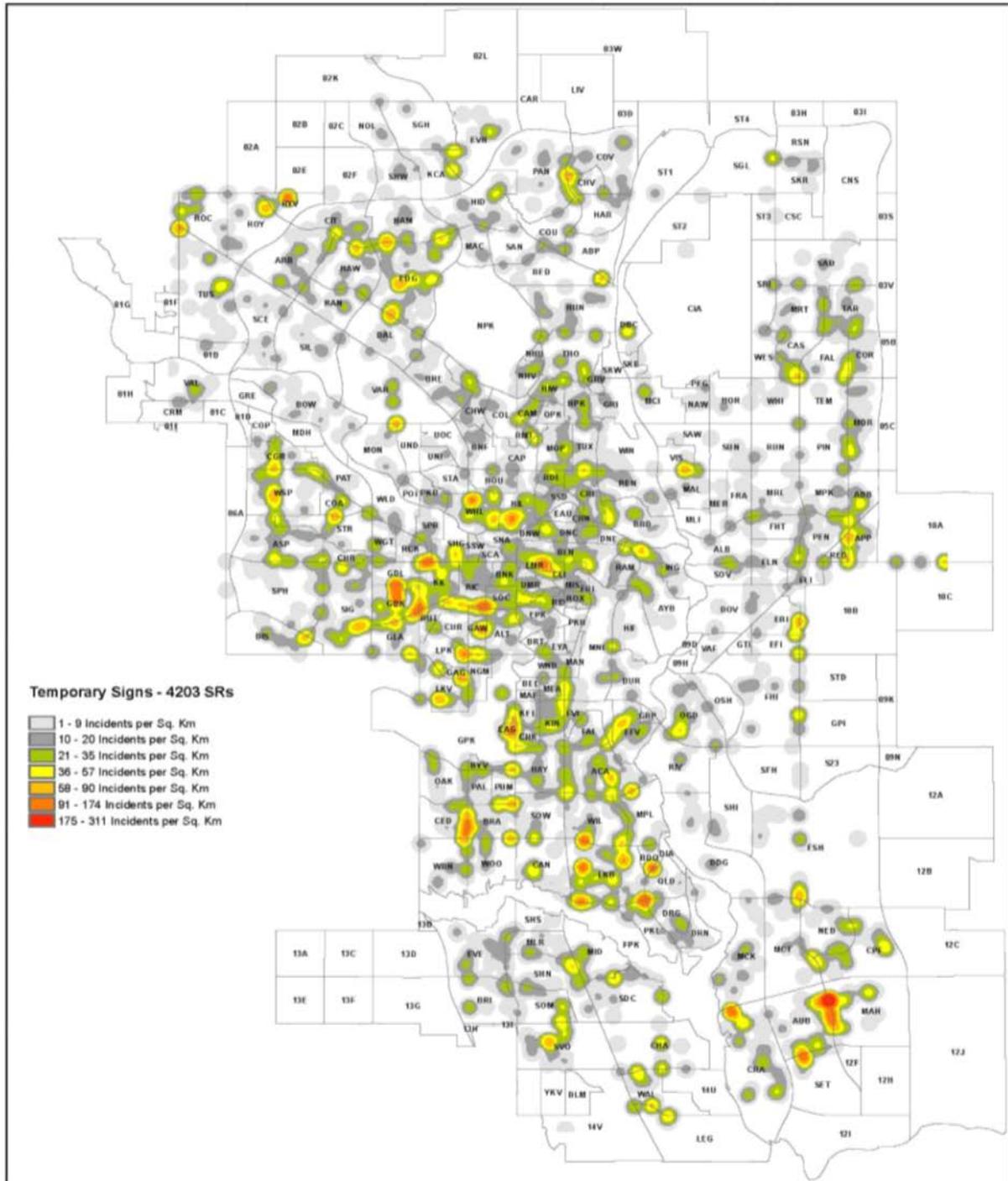


### Temporary Signs Complaints\* 2015 data



ISC: Public

### Temporary Signs Complaints 2016 data



## APPENDIX 'B' – Stakeholder Summary

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### **Executive Summary - Temporary Signs Review**

Stakeholder Report Back: What We Heard

February 13, 2017

The Temporary Signs on Highway Bylaw (29M97) has not been updated since 1997 and is due for revision. Amendments to the bylaw will focus on regulating the use of signs on public land by updating the process in which temporary signs are used, including, how they're managed, their size, where they're placed and how they're used.

In-person engagement sought feedback from representatives from various sign companies operating in Calgary and the Federation of Calgary Communities. The Federation of Calgary Communities is a member-based support organization for many not-for-profit organizations, including approximately 150 Community Associations. Sign companies' businesses would be directly impacted by amendments to Bylaw 29M97. These groups were targeted for both in-person and online engagement. The online survey was open to everyone, including community associations, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the general public. Questions that were asked are found on page four of the Temporary Signs Review What We Heard report.

Data analysis from online engagement is complete and the top themes are listed below. The themes were categorized according to how the questions were relayed in the survey. Their order here are in no particular order.

#### **Not-for-profit organizations responses**

- Temporary signs are effective tools to increasing membership and enrollment and increase attendance and participation in programs, events and services
- Temporary signs allow not-for-profit organizations to reach a larger audience
- Temporary signs are important for not-for-profit organizations as an affordable means to promote their operations

#### **Citizen Responses**

- Temporary signs create awareness, promote attendance at community events and are an effective means to receive local information
- Temporary signs are considered a distraction to drivers
- Temporary signs are not effective and get ignored

#### **Business representative responses**

- Use of temporary signs is a cost-effective and efficient way to advertise products and services and drive business

#### **Community Association representative responses**

- Temporary signs are effective in prompting action, promoting awareness, are a main source of communication and an important means to share local information
- Temporary signs create awareness of community events and aid in increased participation
- Location of temporary sign placement can enhance their effectiveness

### **All respondents' responses**

- Signs that have a black background and white letters are uniform, easier to read and less intrusive
- Signs with a black background and two colour lettering enhances ease of reading without being overly distracting to drivers
- Signs with a black background and multiple colour lettering help highlight the message without overwhelming the viewer
- Managing and controlling signs needs more attention and consistency regarding enforcement of regulations, locations and length of time signs are displayed
- Temporary signs are considered a distraction to drivers
- Temporary signs are considered to be important for community groups
- Temporary signs are deemed to be unattractive
- Temporary signs are considered abundant
- Temporary signs are effective for small businesses with minimal exposure
- Temporary signs are supported in some instances and accepted as a normal part of the streetscape

Data analysis from engagement with the Federation of Calgary Communities and the sign companies was collected separately and is complete. Their top six themes, in no particular order, are listed below.

- Community Associations should not have the added responsibility of approving temporary signs in neighbourhoods.
- Limitations on the number and location of signs would have a negative impact on Community Associations' ability to share information.
- Extra costs would have a negative impact on Community Associations.
- Consistency regarding the permit process and approval notice would be an improvement in the bylaw.
- Sign companies are seeking better enforcement of the bylaw
- Increased numbers of small advertising signs would have a negative impact on sign companies' business and should be regulated equitably within the bylaw.

Overall, there was a high level of interest in the Temporary Signs Review survey. This executive summary and the What We Heard report reflect the diversity of opinions that were shared. Opinions are used to create themes and these may not always be in agreement. The feedback that was collected will be used to support the project team in proposing amendments to Bylaw 29M97. These amendments are meant to meet the needs of businesses, community associations, not-for-profit organizations and the general public. Proposed changes to the bylaw will be presented to Council in April 2017.

## Stakeholder Engagement Timeline



	<p><b>INTERNAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged with numerous stakeholders including Calgary Community Standards, Calgary Parks, Calgary Recreation, Calgary Neighbourhoods, Customer Service and Communications and Law.</li> <li>Internal stakeholder engagement continued throughout the project.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SIGN INDUSTRY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met with the Professional Sign Industry on September 30, 2016 as a check-back with the industry.</li> <li>Confirmed information received during the 2016 meeting and collected feedback related to re-establishing a Roads administered permit system.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>EXTERNAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contacted numerous Not-for-profit organizations to collect information related to sign use by this stakeholder group.</li> <li>Informed these groups about the On-line Survey as a means to provide their opinion about signs and to note their value to their organizations.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>ONLINE SURVEY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with the Engage Resource Unit on a City-wide survey to collect our customer's opinions of signs governed under The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw 29M97.</li> <li>Received over 36,000 comments about signs from over 6700 participants.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>EXTERNAL &amp; RE-ENGAGEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Met directly with The Calgary YMCA, Federation of Calgary Communities, and representatives of Business Improvement Areas to collect and documents their comments related to sign restrictions and sign use.</li> <li>Met with the Sign Industry to share the results of the On-line Survey and to collect feedback on project and permit recommendations.</li> <li>Communicated with all Stakeholders on next steps, and invite to attend or speak at Committee meeting in April 2017</li> </ul>
	<p><b>REPORTING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee Presentation before SPC on Transportation and Transit scheduled for April 19, 2017.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX ‘C’ – Sign Library

### SIGN LIBRARY

#### Regulated, small format signs



Figure 1: Coroplast Business Sign, with a Coroplast Garage Sale Sign... Both Using Wooden Stakes.



Figure 2: Coroplast Sign on Metal "H Frame".



Figure 3: Standard "A-Frame" or "Sandwich Board" Sign, commonly used by Realtors and Small Businesses.



Figure 4: Coroplast Sign on Plastic "Spider" base.

**Permitted, large format signs (Mobile Community Signs)**



Figure 5: Movable Letter Community Association Sign.



Figure 6: Community Association Sign using Three Colours of Text.



Figure 7: Community Association Sign with Top and Bottom Banners, and use of Contrasting for Messaging.



Figure 8: Community Association Sign Using New Technology... Full Colour Printing With Contrasting Banners Top and Bottom.

## Examples of Temporary Sign Bylaw Violations



Figure 9: "A-Frame" sign on a Traffic Island.



Figure 10: A Series of "A-Frame" Signs, some oversize, all within 30 Metres of an Intersection



Figure 11: Sign Attached to a Traffic Control Device.



Figure 12: Developer Sign... permanent installation into RROW. Would require a Licence of Occupation or Other Approval.

## APPENDIX ‘D’ – Prohibited Highways

### Prohibited Highways for Temporary Signs

**NEW** Highways to be Added to the List of Prohibited Areas:

Roadway	From	To
114 Avenue SE	Barlow Trail	Stoney Trail
61 Avenue SE	Macleod Trail	Centre Street
37 Street SW	Anderson Road	Fish Creek Boulevard
Airport Trail	Deerfoot Trail	East City Limit
Bow Bottom Trail	Deerfoot Trail	Canyon Meadows Drive
Metis Trail	Stoney Trail	McKnight Boulevard
Mount Royal Gate	Richard Road	Crowchild Trail
Sarcee Trail NW	Country Hills Boulevard	Crowchild Trail
Silver Springs Gate	Crowchild Trail	Silver Springs Boulevard
Symons Valley Road	North City Limit	Stoney Trail

**EXISTING** Highways (or portions of) where a Person shall not place a Sign:

Anderson Road	Barlow Trail	Beddington Trail	Blackfoot Trail
Bow Trail	Bowness Road	Centre Street North	Country Hills Boulevard
Crowchild Trail	Deerfoot Trail	East Freeway	Elbow Drive
Glenmore Trail	John Laurie Boulevard	Macleod Trail	Marquis of Lorne Trail
Memorial Drive	McKnight Boulevard	Nosehill Drive	Parkdale Boulevard
Sarcee Trail SW	Shaganappi Trail	Southland Drive	Trans Canada Hwy
14 Street West	16 Avenue North	36 Street East	85 Street N.W.
3rd Avenue N.W. from Parkdale Boulevard to Bowness Road			
17th Avenue South, East of Deerfoot Trail			
52 Street East from 17th Avenue South to McKnight Boulevard			
68 Street East from 17th Avenue S.E. to the northern City boundary			

Existing highways will be reviewed using the established criteria and modified where appropriate. This would include referencing only specific sections of the roadway that meet the criteria.

Example:

Roadway	From	To
Country Hills Boulevard NW	Shaganappi Trail	Beddington Trail
Country Hills Boulevard NE	Coventry Hills Boulevard	East City Limit

The list of all Prohibited Areas will be available online on The City’s website (calgary.ca), and a map will be developed for easier reference by the public. The official copy will be held by the Traffic Engineer.



**END OF REPORT**

**Kevin Hammel and Andrew Bissett**

Strategic Services - ROADS

Transportation Department

The City of Calgary

April 2017