

Improving Communications to Citizens about Land Use and Development Plans

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning & Development is working to improve the way The City communicates with citizens about land use and development applications in their community. Posting a notice is one way The City informs citizens and communities about a proposed development. Currently, Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 requires that notices be posted for Development Permits that propose certain uses. These development notices (notices) must be posted by the Development Authority and must be located in a visible place, prior to approval.

The purpose of this report is to bring forward minor technical amendments to the Land Use Bylaw, included as Attachment 1, which will enable Administration to require an applicant to post a large format notice for significant Development Permit applications. The proposed amendments also include wording changes to encourage citizens and communities to provide comments when there is support for a development, rather than only in the cases of opposition or concern.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development Committee:

1. Direct Administration to:
 - a. Prepare an amending bylaw to the Land Use Bylaw as outlined as proposed text in Attachment 1.
 - b. Forward the proposed Bylaw directly to a Public Hearing of Council no later than 2018 March to accommodate the required advertising; and
2. Recommend that Council hold a public hearing and give three readings to the proposed Land Use Bylaw Amendment

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

No previous Council direction.

BACKGROUND

Council, citizens, communities, and Administration have raised concerns that the notices posted on site to notify citizens and communities about a development did not make it easy for citizens and communities to understand what was proposed, or know how to get involved in the planning process. The notices were small (18 inches by 24 inches), difficult to understand, and did not communicate in plain language.

To address these concerns, three key goals were identified to guide this project:

1. To increase citizen awareness and understanding of planning and development in Calgary.
2. To encourage informed and meaningful public participation throughout the review of development proposals.
3. To increase accessibility to the planning process for citizens and communities.

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Administration sent Council and the Mayor's Office a memo to provide an update on the project in 2017 July. For reference, the memo is included in this report as Attachment 2.

In 2016, The City of Calgary posted 2026 applications, which included 1394 Development Permit applications, and 632 Land Use Amendment applications. Changes to the notices, notice posting process, and bylaw amendments have been developed to enhance this communication with citizens and communities when developments are proposed. Significant developments that may impact a residential community will require a large format notice to be posted onsite by the applicant prior to approval. The proposed Land Use Bylaw amendments will give the Development Authority the ability to require an applicant to post a large format notice for Development Permit applications. Small format notices will be posted by The City.

The City of Calgary uses several means of communication to inform citizens about proposed developments in their community. This project is aligned with other improvement initiatives The City is working on including Planning and Development Map and adjacent landowner letter improvements (Attachment 3). These improvements will lead to more transparent opportunities for citizens to be informed about a proposed development. In addition, this project is aligned with other Municipalities across Canada that developed or are developing a similar process for posting large format notices.

Development Permit Notices

Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 requires the Development Authority to post notices for some Development Permit applications, which is outlined in Section 27.

Land Use Amendment Notices

Notices posted for Land Use Amendment applications are not mandated by provincial or municipal legislation, therefore, Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 amendments are not required to facilitate the posting of a large format notice in this case.

Land Use Amendment application notices have become a part of the regular approval process, and citizens now expect that these types of notices are posted. If applicants refuse to post a large notice for these types of applications additional Land Use Bylaw amendments may be proposed.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Proposed Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 Amendments

Minor technical Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 amendments are required to facilitate the posting of large format notices by applicants in the case of a Development Permit application (Attachment 1). The amendments will require that the Development Authority ensure a notice is posted rather than being mandated to post the notice. The proposed amendments also include wording changes to encourage citizens and communities to provide comments when there is also support for a development rather than only in the cases of opposition or concern.

A new subsection is proposed that will allow the posting standards to be approved by the General Manager, and that notices must be posted to conform to these standards. The notice posting standards (e.g. size, design, and posting requirements) are not outlined in the Land Use Bylaw but rather the large format posting standards will be outlined in an applicant's guide to posting notices, which will be sent to the applicant when they are required to post a large notice.

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The guide can be adjusted as Administration learns from the process and gathers feedback on the posting standards.

Notice Design

The new notices will be simple to understand, informative, and enable citizens to learn about, and comment on, growth, development and change in their community. The new notices include:

- Plain language information to inform citizens about the application
- A map that identifies the site of the proposed development
- Information about how to learn about the full details of an application and comment, by directing citizens to the Planning and Development Map (calgary.ca/development) or the Planning Services Centre (403-268-5311)

The Planning and Development Map is an online tool that is always available to provide citizens with additional application details, the status of an application, file manager contact information, and offers the ability to provide informed online feedback directly to the file manager, or in the case of a public hearing, directly to the City Clerk.

Two formats for notices have been developed: A small format and a large format. Small format notices are two feet by three feet and are used for most applications, including home occupations and secondary suites. Small format notices are posted by The City. In line with other municipalities, the large format notices are four feet by eight feet and will be requested for a select group of applications that may have a major impact on the community. Guidelines for staff and applicants have been developed to identify the types of applications that require a large notice. The large format posting standards are outlined in an applicant's guide to posting notices, which will be sent to the applicant with a digital file of the notice they are being asked to post.

Administration developed the new notices with the citizen in mind. Attachment 4 provides a comparison between the old and the new notices. The old notices were colour coded by application type: Land use amendment applications were posted using yellow notices for two stages of the application, and Development Permit applications were posted using blue notices. We heard from citizens that The City should continue using colour coding because the coloured notices helped them to understand the type of application that was proposed. Using The City's Brand and Visual Identity Guidelines, the new notices incorporate The City standard colours (red, grey and black) to help citizens and communities distinguish between the type and stage of an application. Administration will work with the Federation of Canadian Communities (The Federation), Partners in Planning, and other stakeholders to help citizens and communities to become familiar with the new colour coding used on notices.

New Notice Posting Process

The City will continue to post the small format notices. The City will manage, but will not print and post the large format notice. Applicants will be asked to pay for the printing and posting of the large format notice, which may raise concern from some applicants. Administration has met with two Building Industry & Land Development Calgary Region (BILD) committees and a NAIOP representative to discuss the posting process and the types of applications that require a large format notice. A process has been established that will require an applicant to provide The

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City with a picture of the notice onsite, a map identifying the location of the notice, and a form stating the notice has been posted and will remain onsite for the period required by The City.

Administration will continue to improve the notice posting process in 2018, as we receive feedback from citizens, communities and customers. Notices for airport applications and disposal of municipal reserve will be developed in 2018.

Testing Period

A testing period is planned for large format notices that will allow Administration to gather feedback from applicants, citizens, and communities, and if necessary adjust the notice design, posting process, or applicant posting standards. The testing period is planned to end on 2018 March 01, at which time large format notices will be required for select Development Permit and Land Use Amendment applications.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The large format notice contributes to a more informed planning process for citizens and communities. These social benefits that are achieved for citizens and communities with the large format notice will balance the posting costs that applicants will be responsible for. The process of having applicants post the large format notice is in line with notice posting processes in other municipalities in Canada.

Engagement

The project team has engaged with citizens, staff, The Federation, and Building Industry & Land Development – Calgary Region (BILD-CR) when developing the notice posting process and in the design of the notices.

Engagement with the Public

Engagement with the public on the notices began in 2016, when two notices were piloted. Feedback was collected through an online survey and incorporated into the design, including showing the file number on the notice, and including a statement if there is a concurrent DP. In 2017, two notices were piloted using the new design, again collecting feedback through an online survey. The 2017 survey resulted in feedback from 413 citizens, summarized below:

- 72% saw an improvement in the new notices
- 80% said new notices clearly show what is proposed
- 83% said new notices clearly communicate how to learn more

A website has been set up at calgary.ca/noticeposting to continue to communicate with citizens, communities and customers the notice posting improvements that have been implemented.

Engagement with organizations

Administration engaged The Federation when developing the design of the notices and the plain language used on the notices. The Federation is supportive of this project; a letter from The Federation is included in this report as Attachment 5.

Administration met with two committees of the BILD – Calgary Region, the Urban Redevelopment Committee and the Inner City Committee. The purpose of these meetings was to share the proposed improvements and ask for feedback regarding the types of applications

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that would require a large format notice, and the proposed large format notice posting process. Their comments included reconsidering some of the uses that would require a large format notice. When Administration reviewed their comments, there was concurrence about the changes requested. The feedback that was received was incorporated into the notice posting process.

Research

Consultation with other Municipalities

Other major municipalities such as, Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto have improved their notices. Administration contacted municipalities to research the posting process used in other municipalities, and have incorporated some of their processes and lessons learned into Calgary's posting process. An evaluation of what other municipalities show on their notices was completed. This evaluation was considered in the design and information shown on the new notices in Calgary.

Consultation with Sign Manufacturers

Administration has consulted with sign manufacturers to develop the posting process and posting requirements that can be delivered by local sign companies. The small and large format notices were designed with consideration for waste reduction and cost effectiveness. Guidelines that are given to applicants for posting large format notices are flexible, and provide opportunities for applicants to reduce costs and waste.

Communication

Details of the pilot posting in 2017 were communicated to the Mayor's Office and Council on 2017 July 24 (Attachment 2). The memo referred to a launch date of Q2 2018 for the large format notices. In response to Councillor feedback, the launch of the large format notice posting was accelerated, launching concurrently with the small format notice.

Strategic Alignment

Notice improvements align with Section 2.3.7 of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), which has the objective to, "promote community education and engagement". This section states that:

"All Calgarians should be provided with opportunities to participate in shaping the future of their community. This means encouraging on-going education, engagement strategies and collaborative neighbourhood planning processes that consider MDP strategies and local community-based aspirations". (Page 2-28)

With this objective, the notices were designed with the citizen in mind including, plain language that explains what is proposed, the location of the property involved, and information on how to learn more about an application and provide comments.

Customer Service and Communications was a part of the notice design team; the notices meet The City's Brand and Visual Identity Guidelines.

The notice improvements satisfy the Engage Policy by continuing with, and enhancing, "consistent and clear engagement practices" using the notice posting process.

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The Plain Language Policy was reviewed when developing plain language for the notices. Plain language used on the notices is clear, concise, well-organized, and easy for the citizen to understand.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

The key goals of the project are linked to positive social outcomes such as: Increased citizen awareness of applications in their community, encouraged citizen and community involvement in approvals in the community, and increased citizen accessibility to the approval process. Improved notices along with other initiatives underway will achieve these goals.

Environmental and economic impacts for posting small format and large format notices were considered and incorporated into the posting process and requirements. Discussions with sign manufacturers have resulted in flexible applicant posting standards that reduce waste and costs to the applicants in the case of the large format notice. Cost and waste reduction was also considered when determining the size of the small format notice. Where possible The City will use materials for the small format notice that can be recycled.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no major impacts to current or future operating budgets, as a result, of this report. There will be minimal cost savings that will be realized by having applicants post the large format notice.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no impacts to current or future capital budgets, as a result, of this report.

Risk Assessment

There is a risk to requiring an applicant to post a large format notice, as this posting process is no longer printed or posted by The City, and could result in timing delays or incorrect postings. To mitigate this risk, a process has been established that requires an applicant to provide The City with a picture of the notice onsite, a map identifying the location of the notice, and a form stating the notice has been posted and will remain onsite for the period required. Discussions with BILD-CR occurred to make their committee members aware of when a large format notice will be required. Flexible posting standards for posting the large format notice will be publicly posted and allows an applicant to use materials and posting options that best suit the posting situation to reduce the cost to the applicant.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The proposed Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 amendments facilitate improvements in how citizens and communities will learn about an application in their community, by requiring an applicant to post a large format notice for select applications. Administration has heard from Council, citizens, communities and Administration that larger notices are needed for more significant developments that could impact a community. Requiring an applicant to post a large notice is in line with what other municipalities require, and increases citizen awareness of an application in their community.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Proposed Wording to Amend Land Use Bylaw 1P2007
2. Memo sent to the Mayor's Office and Councillors
3. Communications on Land Use and Development Plans
4. Comparison of Old and New Notices
5. Letter of Support from the Federation of Calgary Communities