

Planning Committee

May 5, 2014



Report PLPD14-026

Proposed Amendments to the Sign By-law

ELECTRONIC SIGNS



Background

Sign By-law is 12 years old -

At the time of its enactment,
Electronic Signs were much simpler -

A message was displayed in one
colour, did not vary in light intensity
but could be changed after several
seconds, could scroll or display an
image.



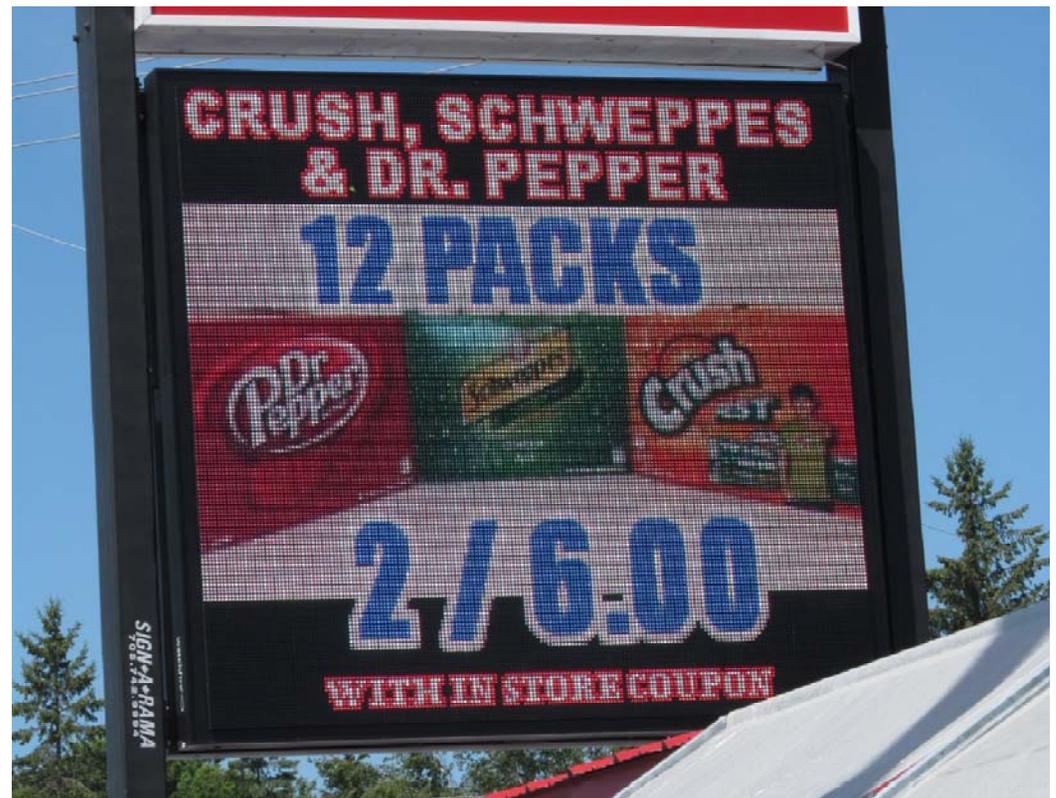
Background

Soon after the enactment of the current Sign By-law, LED (Light Emitting Diode) Electronic Signs appeared. They can be remotely controlled and display multiple text messages and/or images. They can be static or exhibit moving copy, can vary in light intensity and can flash.



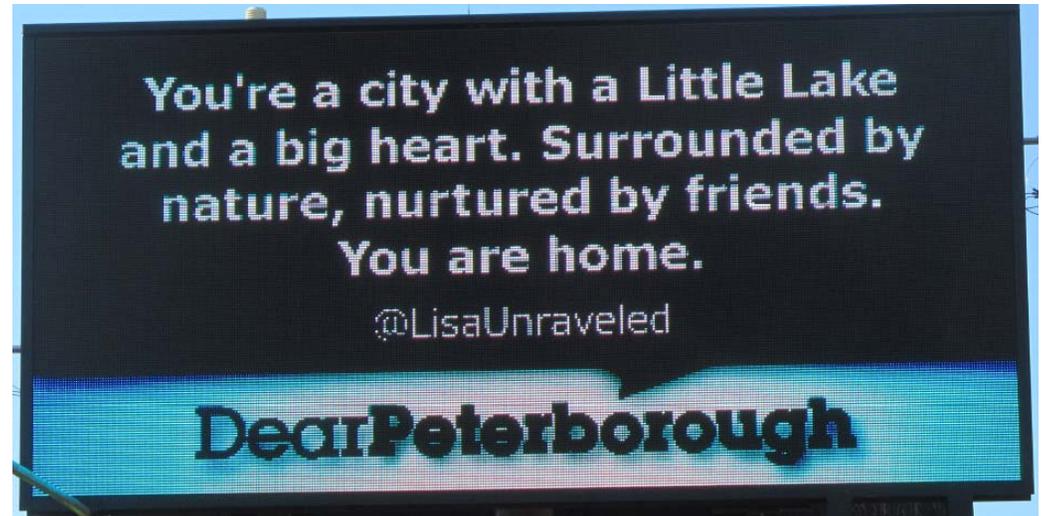
Background

Electronic Signs are now capable of incorporating virtually any kind of movement



Background

In February, Council passed an Interim Control By-law prohibiting the issuance of permits for Electronic Signs for a period of four months...



... to allow for the completion of consultation and further research.



Background

- Three stakeholder group meetings were held. This group included individuals from local sign companies, staff and concerned citizens.
- A Sign By-law Review Committee made up of city staff was also created to examine legalities and details related to the placement of Electronic Signs relative to land-use designations.



Background

What was expressed at the stakeholder's meetings?

- The sign companies understood that there should be minimum setbacks from Residential Districts



Background

- They felt that the technology should be embraced. “Signs with moving copy are a popular form of advertisement because they work”.
- Especially with respect to static changeable copy, they feel that the areas in which they are permitted in the city should be expanded.



Background

- They believe there should be little concern with Electronic Signs (static or moving copy) being located close to intersections...



...because that is where people can see them best when waiting for the traffic lights to change.



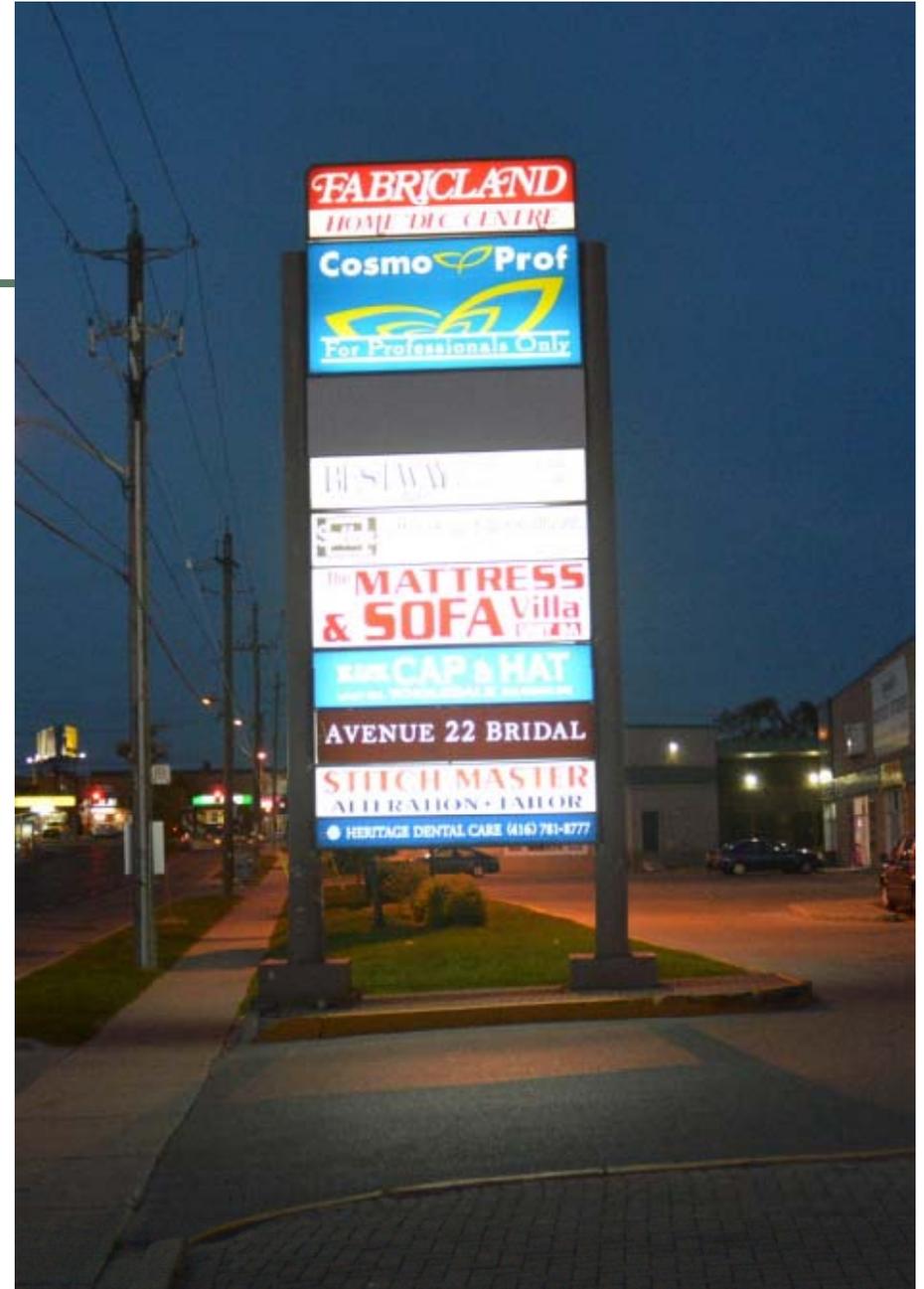
Background

- Others in the group felt that the number of video type electronic signs currently in existence does not reflect well on the character of the city and are a distraction to drivers.
- On Lansdowne Street West alone there are a total of 13 existing and permitted video display type Electronic Signs.



Background

- It was expressed that the brightness of Electronic Signs should be controlled, so as not to dominate a streetscape and to keep light pollution in check (night sky).



Background

- Sign companies felt that Electronic Static Text Message Signs should be capable of some movement in order to transition effectively from message to message.
- It was also expressed that text copy should be able to change quickly so that messaging can be sequenced. That way, when seen from a moving vehicle, a complete message can be comprehended.



Analysis and Recommendations

Electronic Static Text Message

Sign: Sign Copy is changed remotely and the message is displayed using only static text:



Analysis and Recommendations



An Electronic Text Message Sign



Analysis and Recommendations

Electronic Static Copy Sign: Sign Copy is changed remotely and the message may be an image and/or graphic in combination with text



Analysis and Recommendations

Electronic Price Indicator Sign:

Displays price and only uses static text on a Free-standing Sign



Analysis and Recommendations

Concerns with Video and/or Moving Copy Electronic Signs

Visual: Most people's attitude toward these types of signs is that when they proliferate, they have a negative impact on the character of the City.



Analysis and Recommendations

Concerns with Video and/or Moving Copy Electronic Signs

Driver Distraction: When the human eye detects movement, the object moving involuntarily gets our attention.



Analysis and Recommendations

Almost all of the respondents of our survey said this type of sign is distracting. However, studies are inconclusive as to whether they can be the cause of vehicle accidents.



Analysis and Recommendations

Although the sign companies who participated in the stakeholder group meetings wanted some form of movement, staff are recommending the prohibition of Electronic Signs that possess any moving copy including any lighting or back lighting effects.



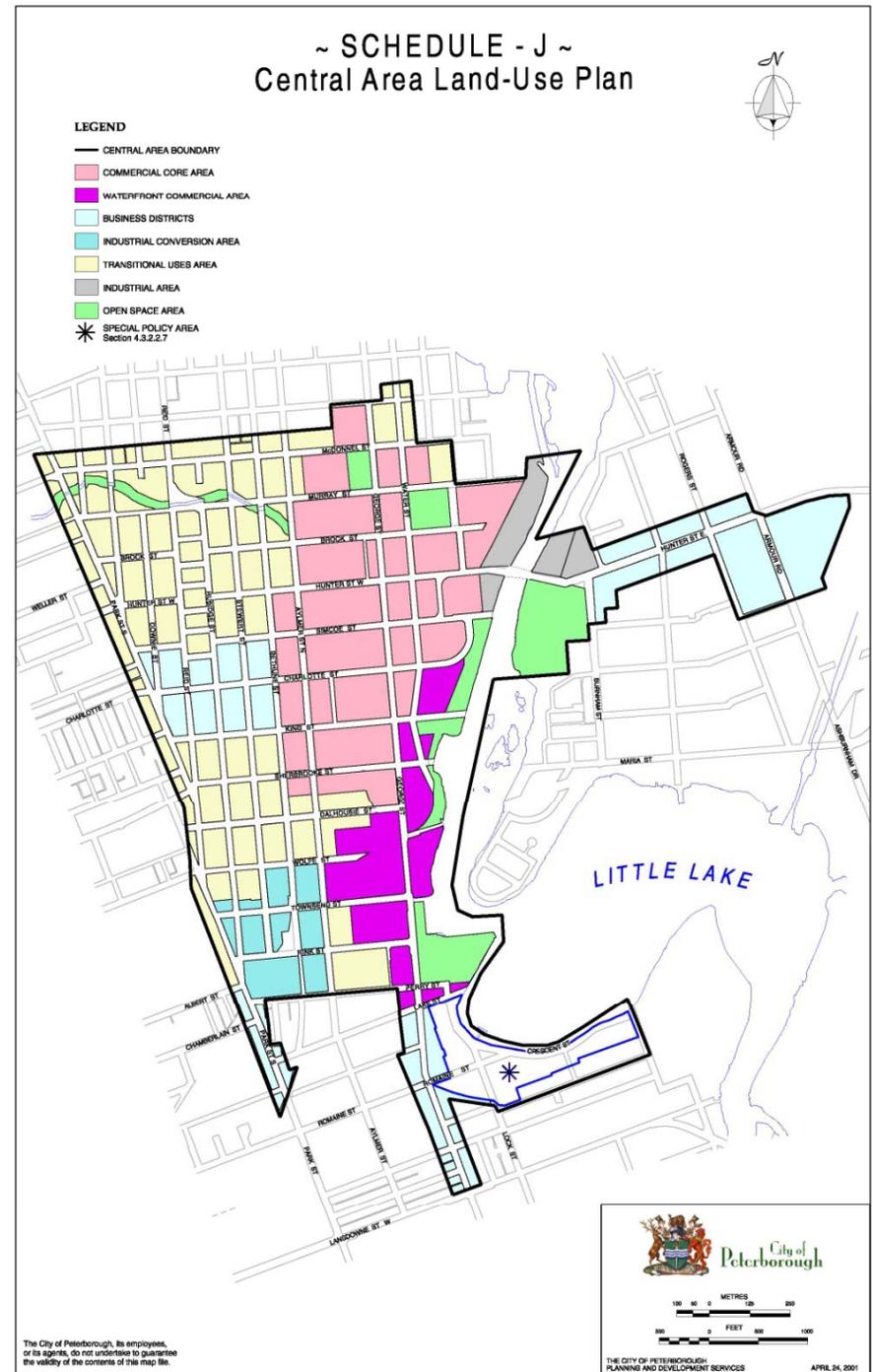
Analysis and Recommendations

The Central Area: the Core, Business Districts, Waterfront Commercial and Transitional Uses Area:

These areas possess mixed land-uses, including high, medium and low density residential. As well, there are a great many heritage buildings.



Analysis and Recommendations



Analysis and Recommendations

As a result,
Electronic Signs are
proposed to be no
longer permitted in
these areas, with the
exception of
entertainment
venues.



Analysis and Recommendations



Your Existing Sign Could Change **From This:**

To This:

Additional opportunity is recommended in most Public Service Districts and on University/College designations on arterial roads only.



Analysis and Recommendations



Additional opportunity is recommended for existing Billboards at select locations along Lansdowne Street West



Analysis and Recommendations

Although there are additional opportunities for Static Electronic Signs in most Public Service Districts, there are new minimum distances prescribed from Residential Districts, designated Natural Areas and street intersections.



Legal Non-Conformity Status: Options

Council has options with respect to existing Electronic Signs or locations that received permits for them just before the enactment of the Interim Control By-law:



Legal Non-Conformity Status: Options

- Grandfather all of them in perpetuity.
- Resolve to require that the signs comply with all Sign By-law regulations within a specified time frame.
- Require that signs comply with selected regulations, such as:
 - No moving copy, including flashing scrolling, fading or lighting effects



Legal Non-Conformity Status: Options

- Brightness
- Setback from intersections
- Minimum time frame for the display of static copy
- Minimum distance from a Residential District



Legal Non-Conformity Status: Options

- Council could also select certain locations where existing Electronic Signs are required to comply with specific regulations immediately or within an imposed time frame. For example, existing Electronic Signs that are too close to an intersection or too close to a Residential District.



Summary

The recommendations relating to the regulation of Electronic Signs are founded on the principle of preserving the character of the city while creating additional opportunities by introducing Static Electronic Signs into some Public Service and University/College Districts.



Summary

Further Amendments:
Through consultation staff have learned of additional concerns with the proliferation of portable signs. The issue as well as others can be addressed with another amendment early in 2015



Summary

The proposed Sign By-law amendments are relatively permissive for Electronic Static Text Message Signs, reducing the need for a large number of portable signs in the commercial and industrial districts



Summary

Revisiting the Sign By-law early in 2015 will also give us the opportunity to tweak Electronic Sign regulations if needed.

