



CITY OF ST. ALBERT  
**ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDER**

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**TITLE: BYLAW 18/2016 – DIGITAL DISPLAY PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

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On August 22, 2016 Councillor Heron provided notice in accordance with Section 23 of Procedure Bylaw 35/2009 that she intended to bring forward the proposed motion below.

*In order for Council to debate the motion, the motion must be formally moved.*

**PROPOSED MOTION(S):**

That Bylaw 18/2016 be amended by:

1. Amending section C.5 (1) General regulations (v) to a minimum of 30m from an intersection
2. Amending section C.5 (1) General Regulations (xiii) to a minimum of six (6) seconds before switching copy
3. Amending section C.5 (2) Billboards with a Digital Display (v) to a minimum distance of 150m from another billboard
4. Delete section C.2 Applicability (3) - which reads “Notwithstanding subsection (1), this schedule does not apply to municipal signs or signs that are posted, placed or erected in accordance with a contractual arrangement between the City and another party”
5. Amend section C.5 General Regulations (1)(a) (i) by adding the following Land Use Districts Regional Commercial (RC), Business Park (BP), Business Park Transition (BPT)
6. The above Districts also added to Section 2. Billboards with Digital Displays, Section 3. Fascia Sign with a Digital Display, and Section 4 Freestanding Sign with Digital Display
7. Remove the first sentence of Section C.5(4) (g) which reads - In all districts where portable signs are permitted, a freestanding sign employing a digital display shall take the place of all portable signs allowed on site, and replace with the phrase - On sites with both freestanding signs and traditional portable signs are both on site each freestanding sign ..... continue on as it currently reads

## **BACKGROUND:**

The proposed regulations for digital displays were drafted based on the following three principles:

- 1) Safety
- 2) Support local business
- 3) Aesthetics

With that in mind, please find the responses to the proposed Notices of Motion below.

### **1. Amending section C.5 (1) General regulations (v) to a minimum of 30m from an intersection**

The Transportation Branch has spent the past several years implementing various safety protocols at intersections in the City. In an effort to target a “Safe System Approach” to the City’s transportation network, which focuses on design and operational considerations to influence the roadway environment to enhance safety and minimize risk to road users; there would be a target to maximize the distance between intersection locations and the use of digital displays. To support the “Safe System Approach”, the Transportation Branch has requested a minimum 100m setback from intersections.

Administration believes that allowing additional signage 30m from an intersection may increase risks to road users. Therefore, a reduction of the 100m setback from a roadway intersection is not recommended by Administration.

#### Selection of Consultation Comments

##### Residents:

*Not in residential, non-commercial lands, and most intersections.*

*Digital displays should be allowed setback from St. Albert Trail and streets. To minimize distraction.*

##### Sign Industry:

Not in close proximity to intersections. Safety.

##### Other (those identifying in multiple categories):

*There are too many in close proximity to intersections.*

(It should be noted that the current minimum setback to a roadway intersection for signs in the Land Use Bylaw and Traffic bylaw is 30.5m.)

**Minimum Setback From Roadway Intersection in Other Municipalities Reviewed:**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Minimum Setback from Roadway Intersection **</b>
Airdrie	20m
Calgary	30m
Cochrane	7.5m (Billboards are <b>NOT</b> permitted)
Fort Saskatchewan	5m (Billboards with a digital display are <b>NOT</b> permitted)
Medicine Hat	7.5m corner visibility triangle
Red Deer	7.5m
Strathcona County	150m corner visibility triangle

**\*\* Transportation Association of Canada notes the most common minimum distance is 100m to 200m. (Digital and Projected Advertising Displays: Regulatory and Road Safety Assessment Guidelines pg. 57)**

**2. Amending section C.5 (1) General Regulations (xiii) to a minimum of six (6) seconds before switching copy**

A 6 second hold time is based on a business model for sign companies, not road safety.

While a 6 second hold time has been the “typical” norm in the past, municipalities often cannot tell you what that number is based on, as the number was often simply copied from another jurisdiction.

An 8 second hold time is based on the Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) recommendations. TAC actually recommends 20 seconds for on-site advertising, and 8 seconds for 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertising (pgs. 41 and 43). For consistency and ease of enforcement, the 8 second hold time is proposed to be applied to digital displays on all sign types.

One of the aims of an 8 second hold time is to minimize the potential number of frame changes within a driver’s line of view. TAC recommends that the maximum number of frame changes in a driver’s field of view is two (2) to three (3), (pg. 37).

Over half of the respondents to the December 2016 survey supported an 8 or 10 second hold time.

**3. Amending section C.5 (2) Billboards with a Digital Display (v) to a minimum distance of 150m from another billboard**

As noted in the ‘Summary of Changes’ attachment to the Agenda Report for February

27, 2017, Council, at its August 22, 2016, meeting had indicated that it would like to support the growth of local business.

In order to help facilitate this, the minimum separation distance between two billboards with a digital display facing the same oncoming traffic is proposed to remain 500m. The proposed separation distance of 500m will support the potential for local businesses to be able to have a freestanding sign with a digital display to promote their on-site business(es). Additionally, a billboard with a digital display has a greater potential impact on safety than a traditional billboard, and therefore should have a greater separation distance.

There is a fundamental difference between a sign which helps promote a business on-site and one that displays 3<sup>rd</sup> party (off-site) advertising. A sign which displays on-site advertising only helps promote and contribute to the success of on-site businesses. The 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertising could be local, national, or international advertising of any kind. When a business owner constructs a 3<sup>rd</sup> party sign or allows a large billboard company to lease space on their property for 3<sup>rd</sup> party signs, the sign is a commercial venture in its own right.

There are currently numerous opportunities to advertise on billboards with a digital display, both within St. Albert and just outside of the St. Albert City limits. There are two such billboards located within St. Albert, one on the north end of St. Albert Trail and one on the south end of St. Albert Trail. Additionally, there are three such billboards located along St. Albert Trail between the City limits and 137 Avenue in Edmonton which are currently able to provide billboard advertising to essentially the same audience, if not an arguably larger audience (along the commuting corridor from St. Albert to Edmonton).

Should the separation distance between billboards with a digital display be reduced from the proposed 500m to 300m, the perceived benefit of allowing an increased number of billboards with a digital display within St. Albert, should be weighed against the resulting reality of less opportunity for freestanding signs with a digital display alongside St. Albert Trail. Fewer freestanding signs with a digital display could mean less advertising space for local businesses. This raises the question whether, if at all, local businesses would benefit from billboard-style 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertising, which is normally associated with non-local business advertising.

The economic advantage of adding more billboards with a digital display within St. Albert would be mainly experienced by billboard sign companies (none of which are based in St. Albert), not local businesses.

Traditional billboards are still an option at a lesser separation distance than what is proposed for billboards with a digital display.

Approximately 66% of survey respondents selected 'none-6' as the appropriate number of billboards facing the same direction of travel.

Approximately 75% of survey respondents stated digital display advertising should be locally (St. Albert focused).

A reduction of the 500m spacing is not recommended by Administration.

**Billboard Spacing in Other Municipalities Reviewed:**

Municipality	Minimum Spacing Between Billboards
Airdrie	800m facing same oncoming traffic (Highway Corridor) 400m not facing same oncoming traffic (Highway Corridor)
Calgary	300m facing same oncoming traffic
Cochrane	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party advertising (billboards) <b>NOT</b> permitted
Edmonton	100m to 300m (depending on size)
Fort Saskatchewan	Billboards with a digital display <b>NOT</b> permitted
Lethbridge	100m or 300m facing same oncoming traffic (depending on road)
Medicine Hat	150m
Spruce Grove	800m

\* Transportation Association of Canada recommends a minimum of 300m spacing. *(Digital and Projected Advertising Displays: Regulatory and Road Safety Assessment Guidelines)*

**4. Delete section C.2 Applicability (3) - which reads “Notwithstanding subsection (1), this schedule does not apply to municipal signs or signs that are posted, placed or erected in accordance with a contractual arrangement between the City and another party”**

As Section C.2(3) is not specific to the digital display review, but rather the whole of Schedule C, it may be better addressed and discussed when the Schedule C housekeeping comes before Council. Therefore, administration recommends leaving the regulation as is.

The removal of Section C.2(3) could potentially have a profound affect on the ability of the City to erect signage such as permanent park signage, or traffic and directional signage, on City owned property or the road right-of-way.

Improved internal communication between departments and with Council, rather than an amendment to Section C.2(3), could help mitigate possible concerns with respect to signs located on City property or the road right-of-way.

It should be noted that, in St. Albert, the Land Use Bylaw generally regulates signs on private property, whereas the Traffic Bylaw regulates signs on the road right-of-way.

**5. Amend section C.5 General Regulations (1)(a) (i) by adding the following Land Use Districts Regional Commercial (RC), Business Park (BP), Business Park Transition (BPT)**

In keeping with the desire for a more conservative introduction on digital displays, only the Corridor Commercial (CC) and Commercial and Industrial Service (CIS) land use districts have been included in the proposed amendments at this time. The CC and the CIS are the major commercial and industrial land use districts in the City.

The Regional Commercial (RC) land use district can have a residential component to it, so it is not considered appropriate at this time to allow digital displays in this district. There are currently only two properties zoned as RC. One of these is being developed as a mixed-use development (urban village) with a significant residential component. The other property is being developed as light industrial.

The Business Park (BP), Business Park 2 (BP2), and Business Park Transition (BPT) land use districts currently have additional restrictions regarding signage due to the higher-end look and feel of these land use districts. For example, freestanding signs must be low-profile, and portable signs are not permitted in these districts. Additionally, billboards are currently not permitted in these districts, whether traditional or digital. Therefore, the addition of digital displays would not be in keeping with the intent or 'purpose', of the BP, BP2, and BPT districts as outlined in the Land Use Bylaw.

It should be noted that there are currently no parcels within the City which are zoned BP.

**6. The above Districts also added to Section 2. Billboards with Digital Displays, Section 3. Fascia Sign with a Digital Display, and Section 4 Freestanding Sign with Digital Display**

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It should be noted that there are currently no parcels within the City which are zoned BP.

- 7. Remove the first sentence of Section C.5(4) (g) which reads - In all districts where portable signs are permitted, a freestanding sign employing a digital display shall take the place of all portable signs allowed on site, and replace with the phrase - On sites with both freestanding signs and traditional portable signs are both on site each freestanding sign ..... continue on as it currently reads**

This had already been removed in the February 27, 2017, draft copy of the proposed regulations.

Report Date: April 3, 2017  
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City Manager: Kevin Scoble