

To: Planning Advisory Committee
From: Andrew Fisher, Manager of Planning & Strategic Initiatives
Date: April 4, 2019
Subject: **Off Lot signage in the Core Area**

INTRODUCTION:

At its March meeting, Council considered a request from Birkinshaw's Tea Room for an exemption to the sign regulations that would allow the placement of an off-lot sign. Under section 6.14 (h) of the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) noted below, staff are not able to issue a Development Permit for an off-lot sign in the Core Area, and there is no mechanism to give exemptions under the LUB. As a result, the following motion was passed:

That Council direct the Planning Advisory Committee to review the Land Use Bylaw and propose amendments to permit non-electronic off-site signage in the downtown core, and further that the PAC do this in the most expedient manner possible.

BACKGROUND:

Attached for reference is a map showing the Core Area District as a yellow line within the Downtown Commercial Zone. Also attached is an excerpt of the LUB pertaining to signs.

On June 24, 2013, Council amended the LUB to adopt a suite of amendments that established a Core Area District within the Downtown Commercial Zone. These amendments included building design requirements to protect and enhance the traditional downtown built form and aesthetic. The signage requirements included in these amendments were intended to promote more traditional signage that was not internally lit.

On December 22, 2014, Council amended the LUB to remove the restriction that off-lot signage be restricted to businesses and uses located within 5 km of town limits. The amendment was the result of a request by a property owner that wanted to operate an electronic billboard at the corner of South Albion Street and Robert Angus Drive. The amendment allowed off-lot signage on any non-residential property but counted towards the maximum number of signs permitted.

On April 18, 2018, at the request of a property owner, Council amended the LUB to allow electronic signs in the Core Area that also included a prohibition on off-lot signage within the Core. LUB section 6.14 (h) states:

- h) Signs that display a business, product, or use not located on the property or premises where the sign is located are not permitted;*

The general intention of the above provision was to limit the ability within the Core Area to sell advertising space to off-lot businesses, which could potentially create an excessive amount of signage. It is important to note that the off-lot prohibition does not apply to areas outside the Core Area. Subsequent to the April 2018 amendment, Staff enforced this regulation by requiring an off-lot sign be moved from a property on the edge of the Core Area to an adjacent property just outside the Core. Over the course of the last year, Staff have advised other individuals and businesses that off-lot signage in the Core Area is not permitted.

DISCUSSION:

With respect to the challenges this particular business may have, these are challenges common to any business looking to drive more customers to their location. Within existing regulations, there are other signage options that might address this challenge. Sandwich Board signs are permitted without needing a permit. Also, a projecting wall sign could be placed on the corner of the subject building that directs customers to the location, as well as, other businesses located within the building. These alternatives could arguably be just as, if not more, effective as an off-lot sign.

The restriction on off-lot signage was recommended by the PAC and adopted by Council in 2018 with the intention to restrict the sale of sign space within the Core Area. Given the low cost of non-electric signage relative to electronic signs, the potential for excessive non-electric off-lots signs is significant regardless of electrification.

OPTIONS:

1. The Council motion directs the PAC to provide a recommendation on an LUB amendment to allow non-electric off-lot signage in the Core Area. A simple way to achieve this would be amend section 6.14 (h) as follows:

h) Electronic Signs that display a business, product, or use not located on the property or premises where the sign is located are not permitted;

2. Alternatively, the PAC could recommend that Council place a limit on the number of non-electric off-lot signs permitted on a property. A limit of one or two off-lot signs could mitigate the potential for excessive signage.

3. The PAC could decline to amend the LUB and keep status quo

Prior to the PAC making a recommendation to Council to amend the Land Use Bylaw, an advertised Public Participation Opportunity must be held.