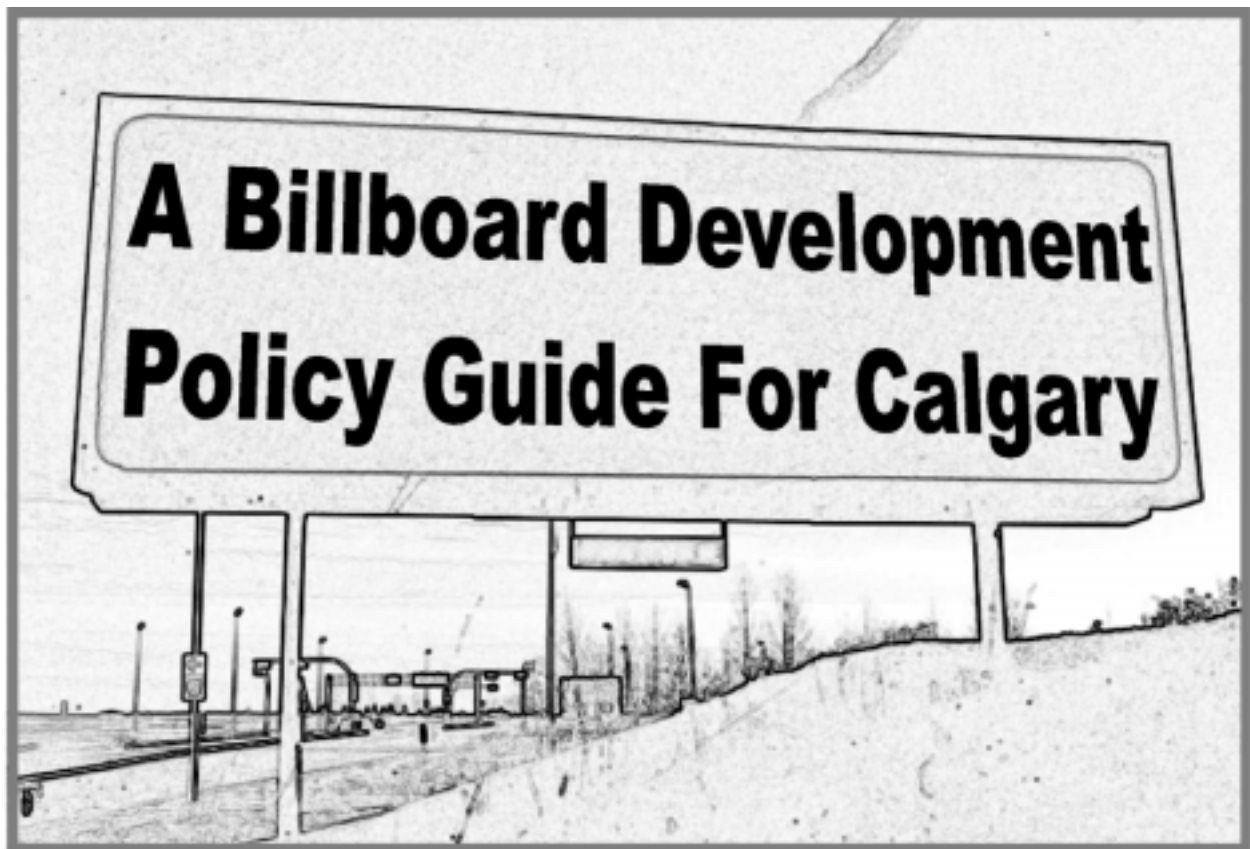


.....

A Billboard Development Policy Guide For Calgary



THE CITY OF CALGARY
PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

1999 May

.....



PUBLISHING INFORMATION

TITLE: A BILLBOARD DEVELOPMENT POLICY GUIDE
FOR CALGARY

AUTHOR: CITY OF CALGARY PLANNING & BUILDING
DEPARTMENT
NEW COMMUNITIES, LAND USE BYLAW
SECTION
CITY, COMMUNITY & DOWNTOWN PLANNING
DIVISION

STATUS: APPROVED BY COUNCIL 1999 05 10

PRINTING DATE: 1999 MAY

ADDITIONAL COPIES: THE CITY OF CALGARY
PLANNING INFORMATION CENTRE
P.O. BOX 2100, STN "M"
CALGARY, ALBERTA
T2P 2M5
(403) 268-5333

.....

A Billboard Development Policy Guide for Calgary

Table of Contents

	PAGE
1 Intent of the Policy Guide.....	1
2 Fundamentals of Sign Regulation in Calgary	3
3 Planning and Urban Design Principles for Regulating Billboard Signs	7
4 Implementing the Principles through the Discretionary Rules of the Land Use Bylaw	9
5 Planning Criteria for the Exercise of Discretion .	11

.....

.....

.....

Abstract: A Billboard Development Policy for Calgary

On 1999 May 10, Calgary City Council approved a policy to reinforce the Land Use Bylaw rules for the development of third party billboard advertising signs. The policy provides guidelines for the exercise of discretion by staff when reviewing billboard development applications.

The Policy Guide was developed with the input of a policy review committee composed of industry, staff, citizen and design profession representatives over a 6 month period of workshop meetings.

The Policy, consisting of six planning and urban design principles and nine planning criteria (with illustrations), is intended to improve the general understanding of the Land Use Bylaw's sign rules, help speedier review of development applications, improve communication between industry and staff, provide for better quality submissions, and hopefully, reduce the number of appeals to the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board.

The Policy Guide also includes a plain English information list that summarises the Land Use Bylaw rules.

In the next month it is intended to post this project information on the Department's web site (www.gov.calgary.ab.ca/).

For Further information call Geoff Bocian at:

(403) 268-1601.

Copies of the Policy Guide are available (\$5.00 + GST) from the City of Calgary Planning & Building Department Information Centre. Please call:

(403) 268-5333.

Preface

The *Policy Guide* has been prepared for the convenience of users of the *Sign Appendix of Land Use Bylaw 2P80* to enhance understanding of the *Bylaw's* rules regarding the exercise of discretion by the Development Authority in the review of development permit (DP) applications for **Third Party Advertising** (TPA) billboard signs. The *Policy Guide* is **not** part of the *Land Use Bylaw 2P80* and the *Bylaw* will prevail whenever there is any conflict between the contents of each.

Acknowledgements

The Planning and Development Department wishes to thank members of the TPA Billboard Policy Review Committee and the following organizations and groups whose members participated on the Committee:

- Alberta Outdoor Advertising Association
- Federation of Calgary Communities
- Inner City Coalition
- Calgary Downtown Association
- Tourism and Convention Centre
- Calgary Chamber of Commerce
- Calgary Beautification Foundation
- Alberta Association of Architects, Calgary Chapter

.....

1

Intent of the *Policy Guide*

1 Intent of the *Policy Guide*

The *Policy Guide* is intended to provide all users of the *Land Use Bylaw* and its *Sign Appendix* with an improved understanding of the scope of discretion exercised by CPAG technical staff administering the development rules for TPA billboard signs.

For administrative convenience, the *Policy Guide* is supplemented with an *Information List Regarding Third Party Signs*. The *Information List* is an educational tool to help people readily understand the TPA sign working rules of the *Land Use Bylaw* and its *Sign Appendix*.

The need for the *TPA Information List* was identified in detailed discussions with the Policy Review Committee, and it is intended to:

- state in plain language, all rules applying to TPA signs;
- indicate the criteria considered by CPAG staff in the exercise of discretion, and
- provide a “road map” for applicants and staff to help identify the development constraints that can apply to a specific site.

The *TPA Information List* is not intended to be used or construed to be a “zoning compliance checklist”. It would not, therefore, form or be accepted as part of a TPA sign development permit application.



Fundamentals Of Sign Regulation in Calgary

2

2 Fundamentals of Sign Regulation in Calgary

The *Land Use Bylaw* rules governing the development of signs in Calgary are based on the notion of an *information needs hierarchy* for signs. The *hierarchy* reflects the relative importance of various types of outdoor signs in terms of public safety, health, welfare, convenience and visual impact for their intended audiences.

The *hierarchy* has three levels - based on priority for visibility, public safety and functioning of the city. Please refer to Diagram 1.

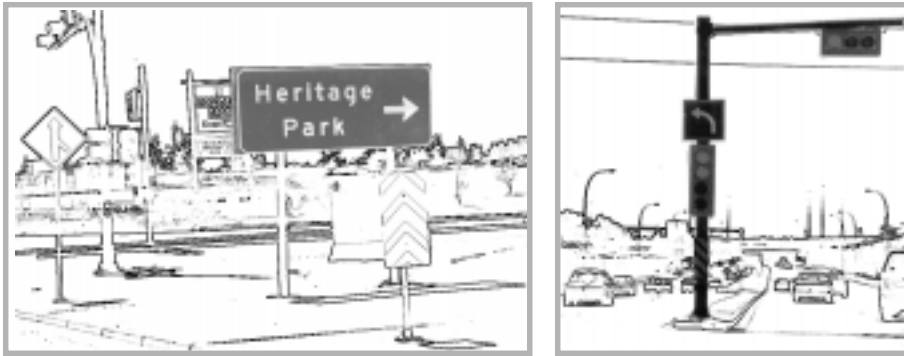
The highest and most important tier of the *hierarchy* in terms of community safety is reserved for *traffic control devices*. These consist of official signs, signals and other visual aids conveying safety warnings, destination information, and other important instructions or information for traffic and pedestrians. Such signs are usually installed within street rights-of-way and on public property.

The second tier includes business, institutional and other non-official identification signs, located on the site. These signs can be free standing or attached to buildings, as specified in the *Land Use Bylaw Sign Appendix*. This level also includes private directional signage for business, institutions and facilities.

The third level encompasses billboard signs and related TPA advertising, such as pillar ads and bench and transit shelter advertising. In terms of their construction value, numbers and material dimensions, billboard signs represent only a minor portion of Calgary's urban fabric. However, from a planning and urban design perspective, billboards can have an excessively disproportionate impact on the visual environment and require substantial application of technical resources to ensure their proper and efficient regulation.

Diagram 1. *Calgary's Sign Hierarchy*

TIER 1 - Traffic Control Devices (civic safety & operational signs)



TIER 2 - Site, Facility & Business Identification Signs (efficiently locates destinations)



TIER 3 – Third Party Advertising Signs (billboards and some portable and temporary signs)







3

Planning and Urban Design Principles for Regulating Billboard Signs



3 Planning and Urban Design Principles for Regulating Billboard Signs

The sign hierarchy previously described is underpinned by a set of basic planning and urban design principles relating to public safety, location, design, appearance and size. These principles, as embodied in the *Land Use Bylaw* and its *Sign Appendix* rules, are usually applied through the exercise of discretion by CPAG staff. However, the principles are not always readily apparent to *Bylaw* users, and the discretionary nature of some of the *Bylaw* rules can make it difficult for applicants to know which specific planning criteria are considered and applied by staff making billboard sign decisions.

The following **six Principles**, which are not listed in any order of importance, embody well-established and proactive notions of ensuring the general safety, health, well being and visual qualities of the community are protected:

- **Principle 1:** To promote the development and maintenance of a high quality urban environment in order to make Calgary a more desirable city to live, work and visit.
- **Principle 2:** To ensure that billboards are integrated and harmonious with the sites that they occupy and with nearby areas, by preventing excessive and confusing sign proliferation.
- **Principle 3:** To protect vistas, open spaces, buildings, landmarks and areas characterised by unique environmental, cultural, historical and architectural resources.
- **Principle 4:** To ensure the visual integrity of established, newly developing and future residential areas, especially at their edges and along public thoroughfares serving these areas. This includes comprehensively planned and designed sites.
- **Principle 5:** To maintain the safety, convenience and enjoyment of public travel in vehicles and on foot, and to protect public investments in roadway design and landscaping, as well as generally maintaining and enhancing the aesthetic features of public thoroughfares and transit corridors.
- **Principle 6:** To restrict and, where appropriate, prohibit billboards having the potential for increasing the probability of traffic accidents by obstructing vision, or causing confusion with official traffic control devices.

.....

4

Implementing the Principles through the Discretionary Rules of the Land Use Bylaw

4 Implementing the *Principles* through the Discretionary Rules of the *Land Use Bylaw*

The **six *Principles*** defined in Section 3 are normally applied according to the individual circumstances and merits of a Development Permit application. The *Land Use Bylaw* provisions described below allow the discretionary application and implementation of the *Principles* and the component *Planning Criteria* described in Section 5:

“General” Discretionary Powers

These apply to all discretionary uses, irrespective of whether the development is a TPA sign. Under *Sections 11(2) and 11(3)* the exercise of discretion, without certainty of use, is allowed with respect to the recognition of:

- on-site development context constraints;
- the effects of previous development approvals;
- the policies of applicable local statutory plans (e.g. area redevelopment plans), and other relevant planning policies and studies;
- the provisions of any applicable Direct Control land use district (some of these prohibit TPA’s);
- urban design and architectural theme areas, and
- transportation and public safety concerns.

In addition, *Section 11(2)(a)(ii)* enables the Approving Authority to refuse a discretionary development permit, even if the application meets the minimum technical requirements of the Bylaw.

Discretionary Rules of the *Sign Appendix*

The following rules may be applied:

- *Section 59(1)*, which applies to all signs states that a sign must not conflict with the general character of surrounding streetscape or the architectural character of nearby buildings, and
- *Section 62(3)(c)*, where a TPA sign must be compatible with the general architectural lines and forms of nearby buildings and the character of the streetscape or area and must not severely restrict the horizon.

The above provisions also apply to numerical rules, depending on the site development context.

.....

5

Planning Criteria for the Exercise of Discretion

5 Planning Criteria for the Exercise of Discretion

In applying the previously described discretionary rules, any of the following **nine *Planning Criteria*** may be taken into consideration by CPAG staff in the review of any development permit application for a TPA billboard sign. The accompanying sketches are only intended to illustrate examples of the application of the *Planning Criteria* and how they can be met.

- I. **Blocking views and vistas of the downtown skyline, the Rocky Mountains and Foothills, parks, escarpments, regional pathways, riverbanks, bodies of water and natural areas, and buildings, structures and landmarks of historical, cultural and architectural significance.**

Preferred Solution

- scale of sign allows scenic view



Planning Criteria Not Met

- sign is too large, out of scale, and blocks scenic view



II. Billboards projecting above the rooflines and supporting walls of buildings on-site and adjacent to the site.

Preferred Solution

- sign is in scale with buildings



Planning Criteria Not Met



III. Conflict with the scale, massing and rooflines of neighbouring buildings.

Preferred Solution

- sign is in scale with buildings



Planning Criteria Not Met

- sign is out of scale and is higher than rooflines of buildings



IV. Appropriateness of billboards on sites that are fully developed.

Preferred Solution

- business identification signs are readily identifiable



Planning Criteria Not Met

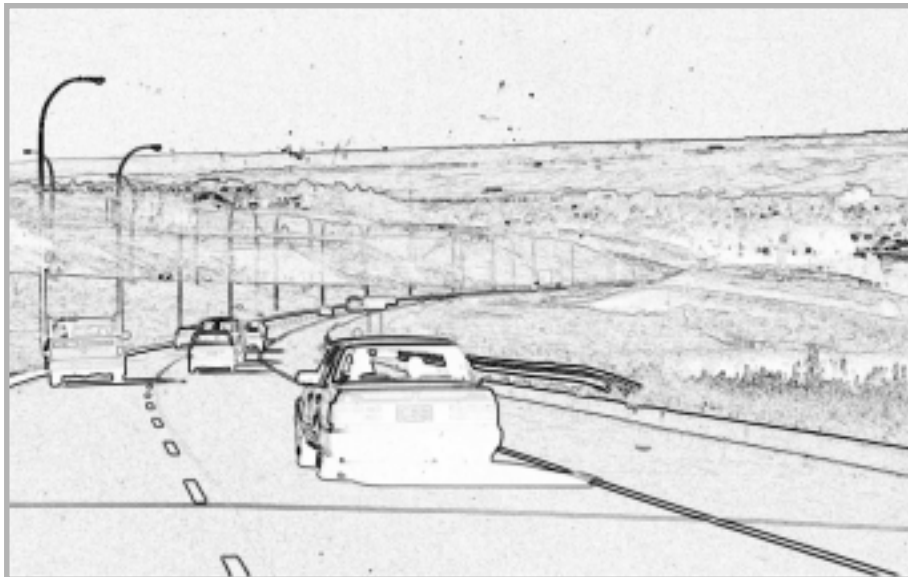
- too many TPA signs conflict with and compromise business identification and traffic signs



V. Impact of billboards on residential development and on public thoroughfares abutting or in the vicinity of residential areas.

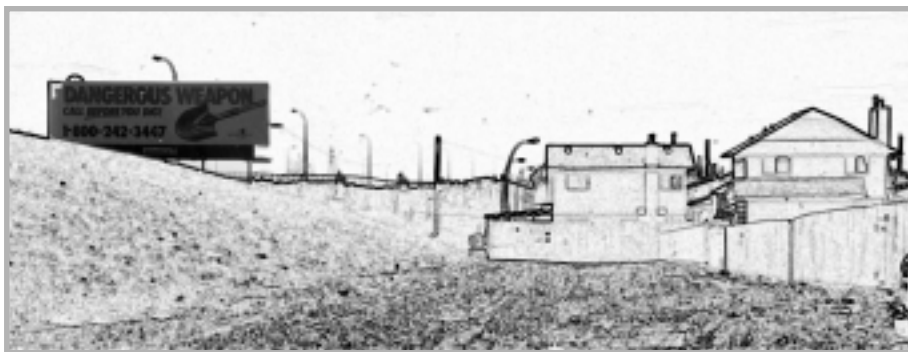
Preferred Solution

- approaches to residential area and major directional signs are not compromised



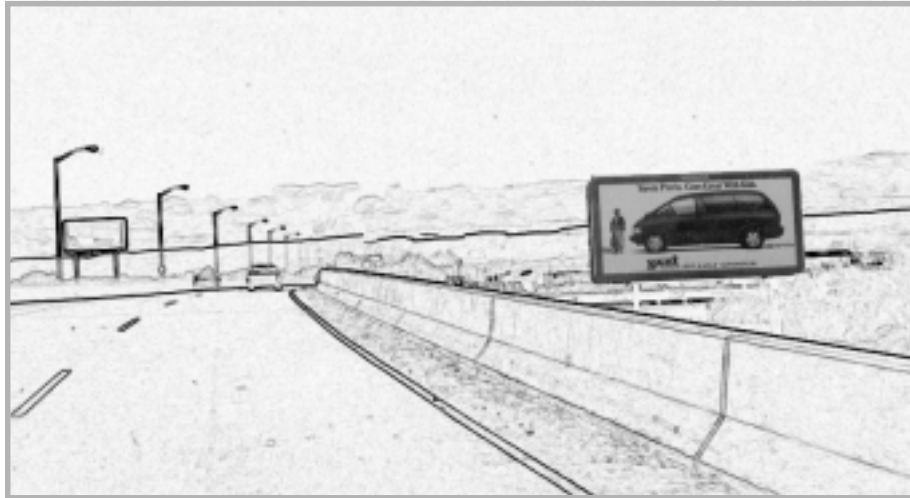
Planning Criteria Not Met

- too close to housing and detracts from major direction sign



VI. Visual impact of side-by-side mounted billboards.

Preferred Solution



Planning Criteria Not Met



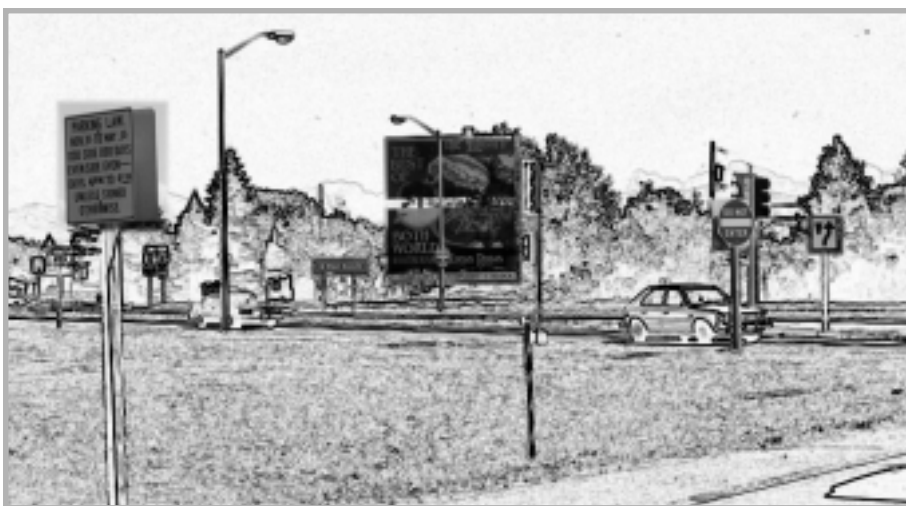
.....

VII. Conflict with other signs in the vicinity - intensification of clutter.

Preferred Solution

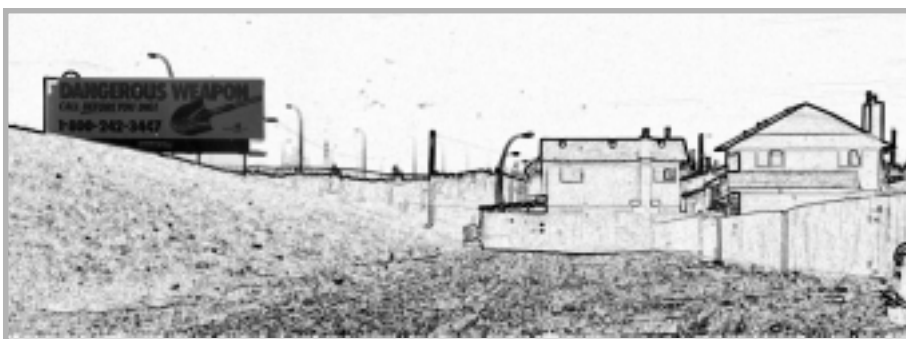


Planning Criteria Not Met



- VIII. Oversized billboards – generally larger than 6 metres x 3.7 metres (20 ft x 12 ft) and which are generally out of scale with surrounding urban development.

Planning Criteria Not Met



IX. Compatibility with architectural and urban design theme areas.

Preferred Solution

- TPA sign compatible with design character of area



Planning Criteria Not Met

- TPA sign does not reflect design theme of area



For Further Information:

If there are any questions or additional information is required concerning the contents of this document, please contact Geoff Bocian at 268-1601.

Information regarding TPA billboard sign development permits may be obtained by calling the CPAG information lines at 268-5363 or 5358.