

PROPOSED REVISED SIGN BY-LAW & AMENDMENTS TO CURRENT SIGN & CANOPY BY-LAW

Public Participation Meeting – May 23, 2017

Comments presented by Jennifer Pastorius, Old East Village BIA Manager.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. In 2016, the Old East Village BIA held a community consultation with the area businesses to discuss the upcoming Sign and Canopy By-Law review.

The Businesses and property owners were pleased to provide feedback and share their experiences. I would like to thank the City of London Buildings- Permits, Inspections and Property Standards team for receiving the information gathered at that meeting and integrating the feedback into this draft.

There were three consistent topics identified at the consultation which I will speak to today: 1)Efficiency and customer service 2) Onerous processes and fee increase and 3) The importance of the By-Law intent and the Old East Village being identified as a Special District.

We recognized in the original report the feedback provided regarding the timeliness and quality of service provision was outside the scope of the Draft Sign By-Law. So, it was encouraging that this most recent report included the annual rates of approval and the recognition that improvements need to be made. I would like to thank staff for providing a detailed review of the durations it has taken for permit approvals, the future inclusion of measures to show improvement, for plans to make applications available online, for the creation of a one pager “how to guide for businesses” and the integration of the industry recommended two week turn around for a completed application. Also, identified was a need for better customer service at the service counter. Staff have shared with the BIA that they recognize this is an area in which ongoing efforts are necessary. The BIA looks forward to an online application process which is trackable as a great first step to create transparency in the process and identify the Staff recommended improvements to process as aids which should assist in getting small businesses with limited resources fully operational faster. We look forward to sharing these improvements with the businesses once implemented.

Also identified were challenges with the easement and structural engineer processes as well as with fees. Both the easement and structural engineer requirements are currently part of a linear process. The proposal to address the structural components (if necessary) simultaneously to the general application and the removal of the easement registration from the permit application process, should provide a better and quicker experience with less paperwork. A more streamline and efficient process was strongly recommended during our community consultation.

Regarding fees, businesses will be pleased to learn that there are no proposed increases to the Sign Permit application fees. There may be feedback regarding the increase to the one time encroachment fee, however if the efficiencies suggested in this report are implemented and successful, the industry suggested two week turn around period may take the sting out of the fee if completed permits can be expected to be processed quickly.

Finally, the inclusion of the By-law Intent was highlighted in the September business feedback as very relevant to the area and the inclusion of the Old East Village as a Special District was welcomed. In the draft presented today, the By-law intent among other things states, that staff will authorize signs that *are consistent with the City of London's planning, urban design, and heritage objectives. One size does not fit all – some parts of the City have characteristics that warrant exemptions, limitations, experimentation, etc;* The Old East Village is one of the oldest areas in London and with heritage age building often comes unusual built form and design and therefore the BIA welcomes a tool which maintains quality standards while at the same time acknowledges distinct situations which may require flexibility.

In 2016 the Old East Village Commercial Corridor Urban Design Manual was included as a part of the Official Plan. In these guidelines, particulars surrounding signage and awnings have been included to encourage design choices that consider the current built form. The inclusion of the Old East Village as a Special District in the Sign By-law further encourages mediums that conform and/or complement the current built form. However, in the most recent version of this review, Old East Village was not included as a Special District.

I would like to request that the Old East Village Community Improvement Plan area be included as a Special District under the new Sign By-Law as it, like the Downtown warrants exemptions, limitations and experimentation with signs and advertising devices in order to improve upon the visual quality of the overall community image.

The Old East Village BIA have had the opportunity to submit feedback during this process and worked with staff to ensure our context is represented and many aspects of our feedback were integrated into the presented version. The Old East Village BIA believes a renewed and even more effective Sign and Canopy By-Law will only enhance the revitalization of the area and we are happy to continue to assist in any further review that may be necessary.