

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE JANUARY 17, 2012

PUBLIC MEETING PROPOSED LANDSCAPING SIGNS CITY OF VAUGHAN SIGN BY-LAW 203-92 AS AMENDED.

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning and the Director of Building Standards Department recommend that:

- 1) The City's Sign By-law be amended to permit the use of Landscaping Signs abutting major arterial roads as outlined in this report.

Contribution to Sustainability

Vaughan Vision 2020 provides in part that:

Objective 2.3: To create a City with sustainable built form

Conduct a review to ensure that Official Plan policies and zoning by-laws do not unreasonably restrict the application of building technologies and uses that will promote conservation measures and/or the production and distribution of energy.

Economic Impact

N/A

Communications Plan

Notice of this public meeting has been given in accordance the City's Notice By-law No. 394-2002, as amended.

Purpose

To respond to a request from Council for a report respecting permitting Landscaping Signs abutting major arterial roads.

Background - Analysis and Options

Council at it's Meeting of June 28, 2010 approved a recommendation requesting Staff look at permitting landscaping signs as a permitted sign type abutting major arterial roads. The following is the report from Staff.

Landscaping Signs may be defined as fixed permanent signs that are constructed and planted directly on the ground at grade level. These signs are constructed from both hard and soft landscaping materials that are designed to create a visual display used to attract attention to a specific subject matter for identification or advertising purposes. This type of sign relies on the natural topographic features of properties in order to display the sign's message effectively.

As these landscaping displays are capable of conveying a specific message other than itself, they must be interpreted as Signs under the meaning in the City's Signs By-law. Similar to the City's Zoning By-Laws, the City's Sign By-law is permissive in nature. As Landscaping Signs are not defined or identified in the Sign By-law they are technically not permitted to be used within the municipality.

In reviewing the matter, Staff have identified various types of signage that use landscaping materials.

- 1) Attached as Appendixes 1 and 2 are examples of Landscaping Signs using both hard and soft landscaping materials ;
- 2) Attached as Appendix 3 is an example of Landscaping sign using 100% natural plantings;
- 3) Attached as Appendix 4 is an example of the ground sign as defined in the City's Sign By-law that uses landscaping materials.

1) Landscaping Signs using both hard and soft landscaping materials

Appendixes 1 and 2 that are attached to this report are photos of the Landscaping Signs located on the CNR railway lands on the north side of the Gardiner Expressway just west of the Canadian National Exhibition lands in Toronto. These signs are illuminated monochrome third party signs that are comprised of both hard and soft landscaping materials. These third party signs are designed to take advantage of the natural slope that rises from the CNR railway lands and the exposure to the Gardiner Expressway. These signs are comprised of various percentages of both hard and soft landscaping materials. They use natural planting materials with what appears to be natural or coloured gravel materials and painted pressure treated wood. These signs are on Federally regulated lands (C.N.R. Railway) and are not subject to City of Toronto Sign By-laws.

2) Landscaping Signs using only soft landscaping materials

Attached as Appendix 3 is an example of a non-illuminated sign that uses 100% soft landscaping material (Natural Plantings) in its design. This specific sign is used by the Town of Markham to promote their municipality. These specific examples are located on the north side of Highway 7 just east of Highway No. 404 and at their municipal offices just east of Warden Ave. Both of these examples take advantage of the natural slopes to enhance the signs exposure.

3) Ground Signs that use landscaping materials

Appendix 4 is an example of a sign that uses landscaping materials in its construction but would be defined as a ground sign under the meaning of the City's present Sign By-law. They are therefore regulated exactly the same as the more typical metal ground signs. (e.g. Maximum Sign Area, height, setbacks, etc.) This particular sign is being proposed for a property in Vaughan located on the west side of Highway 400 north of Highway 7. The applicant has applied to the City and the Ministry of Transport for the necessary approvals.

This style/type of sign is constructed using a wooden "A"- frame structure that is secured and supported by the ground. This type of sign is designed to be used where the natural topography or slopes do not allow for good exposure for the sign. The background materials are comprised of natural planting materials that are planted within the wooden structure and anchored directly in the ground. The text or advertising copy is constructed from pressure treated wood that is painted white. This style/type of sign is designed and manufactured by the same company that provides the landscaping signs along the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto. (Appendix 1 and 2)

Proposed City of Vaughan Sign Regulations.

Staff have reviewed the matter and are recommending that the City's Sign By-Law be amended to permit and encourage the use of Landscaping Signs. To encourage their use Staff are further suggesting a bonusing system be implemented whereby the area of the sign can be increased dependant upon the amount or percentage of soft landscaping or natural planting materials being used. To further encourage the use of landscaping signs Staff are recommending that the bonusing system also include an illumination provision to encourage solar powered and non-illuminated signs.

The following is a chart that outlines Staffs recommended bonusing.

Type of Sign	Typical Ground Sign	Landscaping Signs using 100% soft landscaping material (Plantings Only)	All other Signs using a minimum of 60% soft landscaping materials	Type of Illumination	
				Non-Illuminated	Solar Powered
Bonusing	0%	150%	125%	Additional +50%	Additional + 25%
Maximum Sign Area for Industrial Properties	10 sqm.	15 sqm.	12.5 sqm.	22.5 sqm. for 100% soft Landscaping Signs or 18.8 sqm. where 60% soft landscaping material are being provided	18.8 sqm. for 100% soft Landscaping Signs or 15.6 sqm. where 60% soft landscaping material are being provided

City of Vaughan Approval Process

The affected properties that may take advantage of these signs directly abut the major arterial roads are subject to site plan control process. These properties all have a site plan agreements or site plan Letters of Undertaking that have been approved by the City prior to their development. Details of the their landscaping design have also been submitted to the City and approved. Therefore amendments to the existing site plan agreements will be required authorizing the alterations to the landscaping area for the proposed signs. This process will allow Staff to closely examine the details of the sites to ensure that any proposed signs do not interfere with established landscaping elements such as mature trees or other established plantings.

It is being proposed that Sign Permits be required prior to the construction of any landscaping signs. As with other types of signage, any visible signs within 400 meters of a limited access Highway such as Highway No. 400 or 407 will require the approval of Ministry of Transportation prior to the issuance of the City's Sign Permit.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

The Region of York's approval will not be required for Landscaping signs that are constructed at grade level abutting Regional Roads. As with other typical ground signs, the Region of York's approval is required for ground signs that incorporate the use of landscaping elements to ensure the Regional setback requirements are met.

At the present time the Region of York appears to be only interested in the location of the actual sign structures and not the form/size/content of any signs located on private properties. They are leaving this up to the area municipalities to regulate this through their individual Sign By-laws.

Conclusion

Staff are recommending that the City's Sign By-Law be amended to permit the use of Landscaping Signs abutting major arterial roads and that the bonusing system proposed by this report be approved.

Attachments

Appendix 1 – Landscaping Signs along Gardiner Expressway in Toronto
Appendix 2 – Landscaping Signs along Gardiner Expressway in Toronto
Appendix 3 – Landscaping signs – Town of Markham
Appendix 4 – Ground Signs using landscaping materials

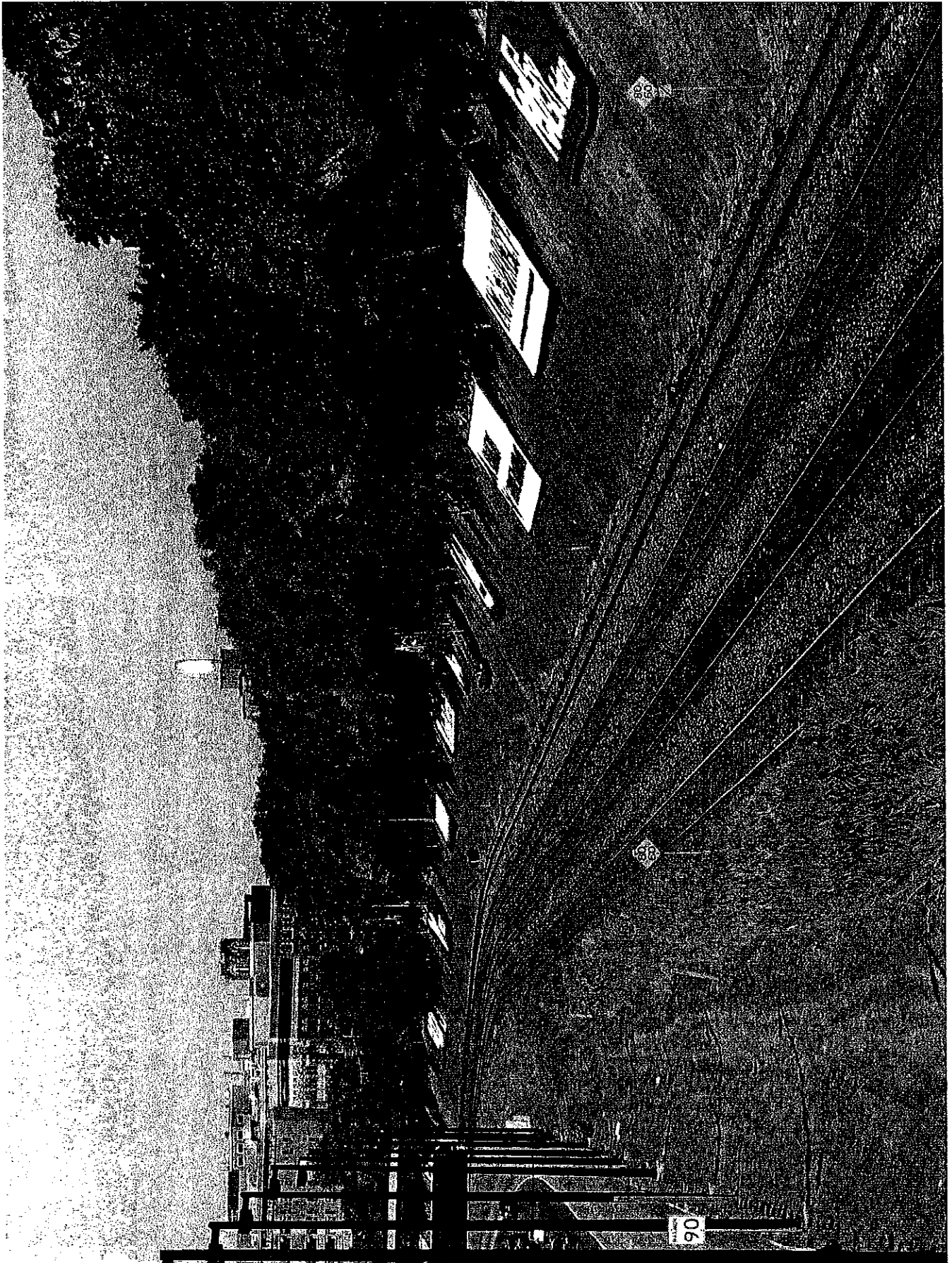
Report prepared by:

John Studdy, Manager of Customer and Administrative Services.

Respectfully submitted,

John MacKenzie
Commissioner of Planning

Leo Grellette
Director of Building Standards



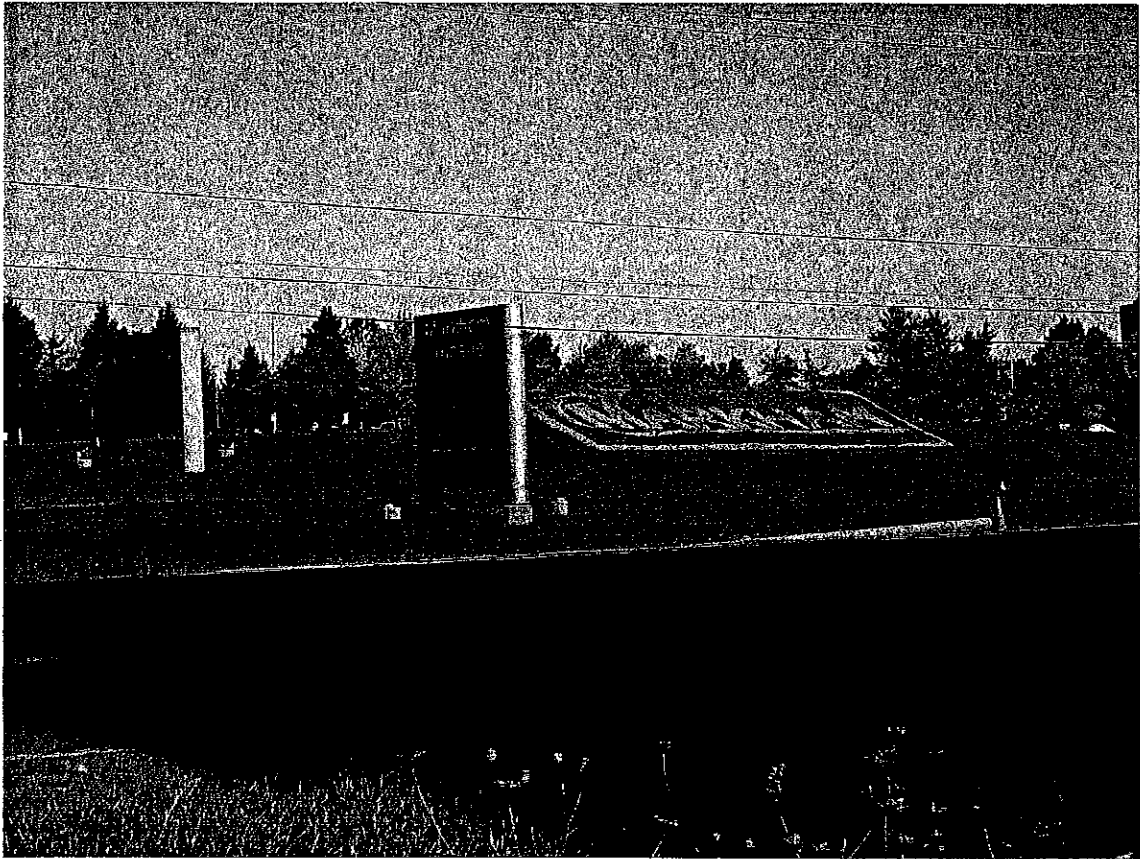
North Side of the Gardiner Expressway (CNR Lands) west of the Canadian National Exhibition Lands.



City of Toronto Landscaping Sign - North Side of the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto



Landscaping Sign - North Side Gardiner Expressway in Toronto



Town of Markham Municipal Offices - North Side Highway 7



North Side of Highway 7 East of Highway 404



Partially Constructed Ground Sign that incorporates Soft Landscaping Materials Elements.



Partially Constructed Ground Sign that incorporates Soft Landscaping Materials Elements.