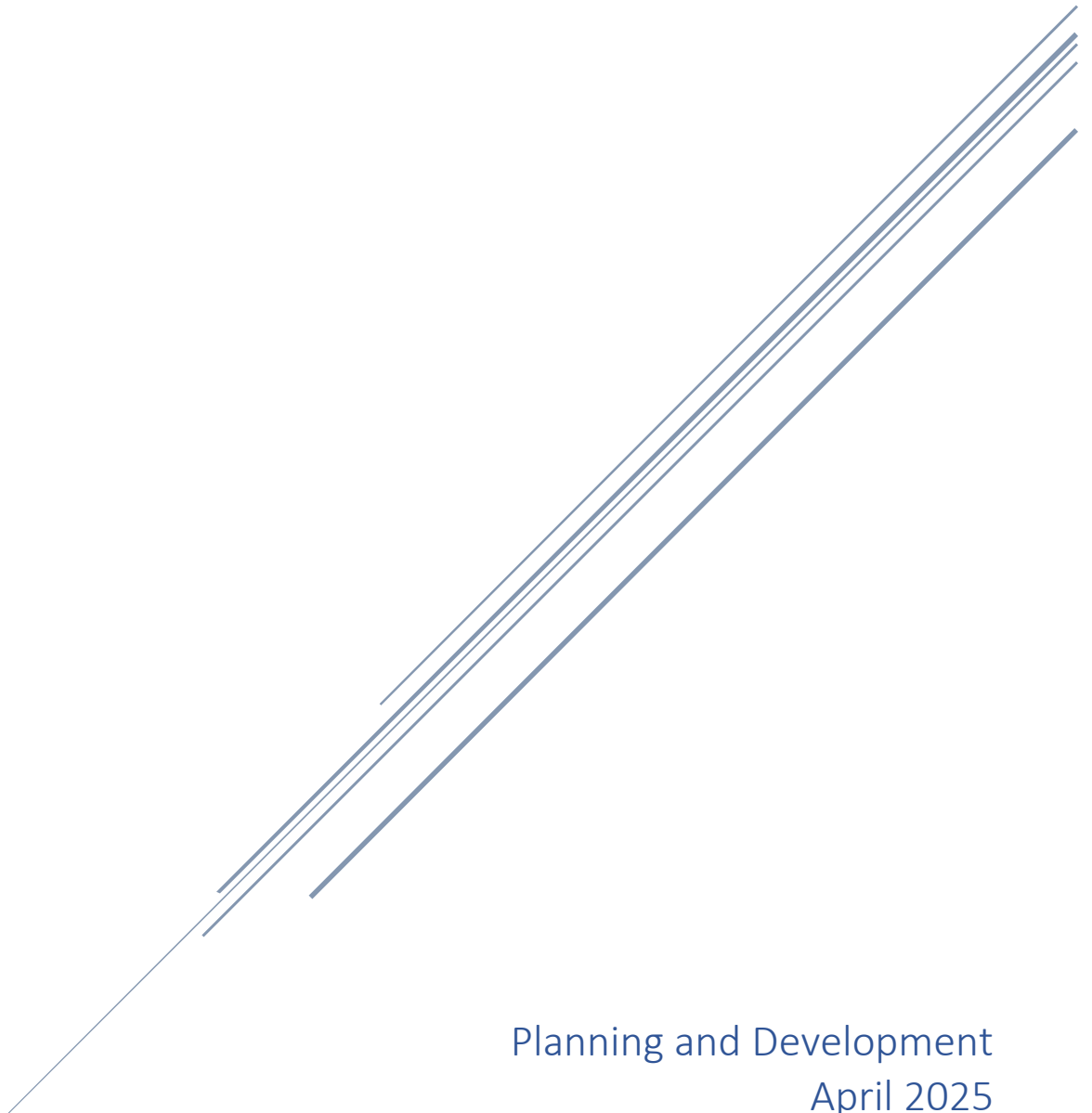


Report: Analysis of Land Use and Development Notification Signs



Planning and Development
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Executive Summary

On-site land use and development notification signs are used by municipalities to provide information about proposed land uses and developments, seek community input, and provide information about ongoing the planning and development processes. This report provides recommendations for requiring and implementing notification sign requirements based on an analysis of the City's current notification requirements and limitations, regulatory framework, and a review of comparable municipalities.

The report finds the City's current notification requirements have some limitations. While the City provides notification through newspaper advertisements, website posts and mail outs for public hearings and approved discretionary use permits and or variances, the use of on-site notification signs could be beneficial in addressing:

- reduced readership of the newspaper and advertisement publishing challenges.
- Mailouts may not capture interested landowners beyond the notification radius. Mailouts also do not capture renters, or people employed or attending activities in the area.
- Residents without access to the internet or those unaware of the City's public notices page.

The report reviews comparable municipalities and finds:

- All municipalities require notification signs, with variations in types of planning and development applications requiring these signs.
- Most municipalities have similar types of requirements for what the notification sign should include.
- Most municipalities require the applicant to produce, install, maintain and remove the sign.

The report provides an analysis of notification signs, which finds:

- Notification signs are more useful if the proposed land use change or development occurs within a developed area, the decision can be influenced by residents, the proposed land use has not already been approved by an existing ASP or ARP, and where new regulations are proposed.
- Signs should be placed on the site once an application is deemed complete to provide the most time for residents to respond.
- To ensure signs are clear, concise, and readable, the City should provide a template for the sign. The applicant should be required to produce, install, and remove the sign to reduce costs to the City.

Administration recommends adopting a land use and development notification sign policy, and associated guidelines and LUB amendments, which require notice of application signs for:

- MDP amendments in developed areas.
- New Area Redevelopment Plan or amendment.
- Area Structure Plan amendment in developed area.
- Redistricting in developed area, involving an ASP or ARP amendment, or no ASP or ARP in effect.
- New proposed Direct Control Districts.
- Multi-lot subdivisions without an ASP or ARP in effect.
- Development Permits with Discretionary Uses or Variances where greater community awareness is desired by administration.

The policy and associated guidelines also establish the requirement for notice of development approval signs at the discretion of the Development Officer for development permits approved for discretionary uses or involving a variance. The notice of application signs and notice of development approval signs would be prepared and installed by the applicant following established guidelines and based on a standardized City template.

Introduction

Land use and development notification sign are used to improve communication and transparency between the municipality, developers, and the public. The purpose of this report is to examine:

- 1) current notification requirements;
- 2) provide a jurisdictional scan of on-site notification sign requirements; and
- 3) provide recommendations to require and implement signage requirement in the City.

Existing Notification Requirements

The City does not require notification signs; however, the following forms of notification are required:

- 1) **Notice of the public hearing** for new and amended statutory plans and redistricting bylaws ten days in advance of the date. A newspaper advertisement, city website post and a mailout is required. Municipal Reserve (MR) disposal also require an on-site sign as per the Municipal Government Act.
- 2) **Notification of an approved discretionary use permit or variance** in a newspaper, posted on the City website, and a mail out to property owners.
- 3) **Application for subdivision approval without an Area Structure Plan or Area Redevelopment Plan in effect** through a mail out to adjacent landowners.

The City also has the discretion to advertise by other means such as social media channels. Table 1 identifies the existing notification provided for common planning applications.

Table 1 – Notification Requirements

	Newspaper Ad	Mail Out	Website	Site Sign	Open House
New ASP	•	•	•		•
ASP Amendments	•	•	•		•
Redistricting not in alignment with ASP/or DC	•	•	•		•
Redistricting in alignment with ASP	•	•	•		
Subdivisions without an ASP or ARP	•	•			
MR Disposal	•	•	•	•	
Road Closure	•	•	•		
Development Permit (permitted use)			•		
Development Permit (discretionary use or variance issued)	•	•	•		

Gap Analysis

While the City requires application notification through various means, on-site notification signs could address some of evident gaps in the current notification process, including:

- Reduced readership of the newspaper and advertisement publishing challenges.
- Mailouts may not capture all interested landowners beyond the notification radius. Mailouts also do not capture renters, or people who employed or attending activities in the area.
- Residents without access to the internet or those unaware of the City's public notices page.

Regulatory Framework

The following regulatory framework establishes the requirements for advertising future land use and developments in Spruce Grove.

Municipal Government Act

Section 606 establishes advertising requirements for proposed bylaws, resolutions, and public hearings, including: published at least once a week for two consecutive weeks in at least one newspaper, mailed to every residence in the area, and the public hearing must be advertised at least 5 days in advance.

Section 653 Application for Subdivision Approval requires notice to owners of adjacent lands if the subdivision area is not contained within an ASP or a conceptual scheme. Notice can be given through either a mail out to adjacent landowners, notification sign on the subject site, or in the newspaper. Section 674 (1) requires on-site signage for Municipal Reserve disposal. The MGA enables municipalities to adopt an Advertising Bylaw to provide different ways of providing notice to the public, including by electronic means. The City has an Advertising Bylaw.

Land Use Bylaw

Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Section 21 Amendment Applications contains notification requirements for LUB Amendments, including:

- Notification of a Public Hearing to Registered Owners of land within 30 m of the affected area, or those determined by the City to be affected.
- Public Hearing held by Council.
- Applicant may be required to hold a public meeting prior to the Public Hearing.

Section 16 Notice of Development Permit Decision requires notice for Development Permits approved for a Discretionary Use or variance is granted, including:

- Publishing a notice in the local newspaper.
- Mailing a notice to all property owners within 30 m or more of the subject site.
- Posting a notice on the City's website.

Advertising Bylaw

The Advertising Bylaw provides the requirements for statutory advertising, including proposed bylaws, resolutions, meetings, and public hearings. It requires:

- Statutory advertisements to be posted on the City's website for at least 10 days.
- If there is a local newspaper, a statutory advertisement may be published in it.

The Advertising Bylaw does not have requirements for Development Permit applications.

Public Participation Policy

The City of Spruce Grove's Public Participation Policy describes the municipality's administrative public participation approach, with sub-section 3.2 (a) stating the priority to "Provide timely, accurate and accessible information to the public."

Property Identification Signs Policy

The Property Identification Signs Policy 6,002 is proposed to be rescinded to provide a more detailed policy for notification signs. This policy requires a neighbourhood concept sign and land use identification sign to be placed in all new developments to provide the public with an understanding of future land uses proposed for an area.

Comparable Municipalities

Notification sign requirements from Edmonton, St. Albert, Stony Plain, Canmore, and Calgary were reviewed (table 2), and found:

- All municipalities require notification signs, with variations in types of applications requiring signs. For example, Edmonton requires signs for certain redistricting applications, while Stony Plain, St. Albert, Calgary and Canmore require them for all redistricting applications.
- The municipalities have similar requirements for what the notification sign should include.
- Most municipalities require the applicant to produce, install, maintain and remove the sign.
- Most municipalities have a guide and or sign template.



Notice of rezoning application sign in Edmonton

Table 2 – Notification Sign Requirements

Municipality	When is a Sign Required	Sign Requirements	Timing	Developer versus City Role
Edmonton	Rezoning except if conforms with statutory plan/City initiated in annexed lands.	Max. 3 m high and sign area of 1 to 3 m ² , address, current and proposed zone, uses within zone, contact info.	21 days before public hearing, removed within 30 days of decision.	Applicant prepares sign, City reviews.
	DPs within certain zones/planner discretion.	Contact info., address, development description, graphic.	14 days of valid DP.	City designs sign, applicant installs.
St. Albert	ASP, ARP or amendment, redistricting.	Max sign area 3 m ² , height 3m. ASP/ARP amendment: map with current and approved use(s). Redistricting: existing and proposed districts, proposed use(s), site area.	Within 14 days of application and 21 days before Council, removed within 30 days of Council decision.	Applicant prepares sign. City provides template and approves.
Stony Plain	ASP amendments and redistricting applications	Max. 3.0 m in height, copy area 1.4 to 3.0 m ² , current and proposed land uses, area, contact info.	21 days before public hearing, removed within 7 days of decision.	City has a template applicant must follow.
Canmore	ASPs, ARPs, and amendments, rezonings, subdivisions over 3 lots, DPs with discretionary use or variances.	0.2 m X 0.36 m sign or 1.22 m X 1.22 m sign for multi-unit (6+), non-residential over 500 m ² , subdivisions over 3 lots and new ASP/ARPs.	10 days min prior to decision. Notice of decision posted for at least 21 days.	Applicant prints and installs sign. Administration provides sign template.

		DPs require 2 signs: Notice of application and decision		
Calgary	Rezoning and certain DP applications.	Large and small signs depending on project. Two rezoning signs required 1) Application received: map, proposed land use change, comments deadline. 2) Public hearing: date, location, and time. Development permit sign: rendering, development details.	Rezoning sign: application received and for the public hearing. Development notice sign when application received.	Applicant prepares and installs sign except smaller format signs where a 3rd party company prints and installs sign.



Notice of rezoning application in

Analysis

The following section provides an analysis of notification sign impacts, and requirements.

What is the purpose and impacts of notification signs?

Notification signs are beneficial for communication and transparency including:

- Providing information about a change in land use and/or a proposed project to be built.
- Providing information about the planning and development process.
- Allowing community input.
- Providing information about a decision and opportunities to appeal.

Notification signs have the following impacts:

- Require additional resources from the applicant to produce and install.
- Applicant may receive more inquiries from community if their contact information is provided.
- Adds time to the planning and development process.

When Should Notification Signs be Required?

While requiring notification signs for all applications without exceptions provides a straightforward requirement to developers or builders, they are more useful if:

- Proposed land use change or development occurs within a developed area, where it will have more of an impact to the road network, infrastructure, or access to parks, commercial, or other amenities. This would include Municipal Development Plan (MDP) amendments in developed areas, new Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP) and amendments, and Area Structure Plan (ASP) amendments and redistricting applications in developed areas.
- Proposed land use change or development can be influenced by residents, for example a public hearing is required, or decision can be appealed (Subdivision and Development Appeal Board). This would include new statutory plans or amendments, and development permits involving discretionary use permits or variances.
- The proposed redistricting has not already been approved by an existing ASP or ARP or does not align with the ASP or ARP.
- New regulations are proposed, such as a Direct Control application.

Timing

To provide residents with more time to provide comments and ask questions, signs should be placed on the site once the application is deemed complete. This also allow for more flexibility if the public hearing date shifts. Public hearing dates and the issuance of discretionary use permits or those involving variances are also advertised in the newspaper, city website and through notification letters.

City versus applicant roles

Notification signage present a cost to developers, with the average sign costing approximately \$300 to \$700 to design, construct and install. To ensure signs are clear, concise, and readable, the City should provide a template for the sign. The developer should be required to produce, install, maintain, and remove the sign to reduce costs to the City.

Notification Signs Recommendation

Administration recommends the adoption of a land use and development notification sign policy, associated guidelines, and required LUB amendments.

The policy and associated guidelines would establish the requirements for notice of application signs for the following types of land use and development applications:

- MDP amendments in developed areas.
- New Area Redevelopment Plan or amendment.
- Area Structure Plan amendment in developed area.
- Redistricting in developed area, involving an ASP or ARP amendment, or no ASP or ARP in effect.
- New proposed Direct Control Districts.
- Multi-lot subdivisions without an ASP or ARP in effect.
- Development Permits with Discretionary Uses or Variances and where greater community awareness is desired by administration.

The policy and associated guidelines also establish the requirement for notice of development approval signs at the discretion of the Development Officer for development permits approved for discretionary uses or involving a variance and where greater community awareness is desired by administration. The notice of application signs and notice of development approval signs would be prepared by the applicant based on a standardized City template.

Requiring notification signs supports transparency about the planning and development processes and will provide beneficial information to interested residents on land use and development activity that reflects:

- Potential impacts occurring in developed areas to the road network, infrastructure, or access to parks, commercial, or other amenities.
- Focusing on application types can be influenced by residents like those that require a public hearing, or where a decision can be appealed to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.
- Captures proposals that have not already been approved by a previous planning process (i.e. existing ASP or ARP), or those that do not align with the ASP or ARP.
- Discussion on new regulations.