REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

COUNCIL REPORT

Meeting Date:	**August 25, 2026**
Subject:	**Bylaw No. 26/023 – Land Use Bylaw Amendment to Sign Regulations – 1st reading**
Approvals:	**Amanda Owens** Director Planning & Development Services **Andrew Boutilier** Chief Administrative Officer

Recommendation(s):

THAT Bylaw No. 26/023, being an amendment to the Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 to change sign regulations, be read a first time; and

THAT the required Public Hearing be scheduled for September 22nd, 2026.

Summary | Background:

Through the implementation of sign regulations in Land Use Bylaw 26/001, Administration has identified several provisions that would benefit from clarification or amendment. These changes are based on operational experience and feedback from the business community.

Administration is proposing targeted amendments to variance authority and billboard, fascia, and freestanding sign regulations within Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001 to improve clarity, reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers, and provide greater flexibility while maintaining public safety and the intent of the bylaw.

The authority to amend the Land Use Bylaw is vested with Council pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act.*

Through administration of the current regulations, several issues have been identified, and the proposed changes can be summarized as follows:

1. Variance Authority

The current regulations restrict Administration's authority to only consider a variance for permitted-use signage. The proposed amendment expands Administrations authority to include both permitted and discretionary signage across all districts. This provides the Development Authority with increased flexibility to consider site-specific circumstances and offer solutions that better support businesses.

2. Billboard Signs

The existing billboard clearance regulation contains an error by stating that a billboard sign shall not exceed a clearance of 2.7 metres. Administration is proposing that this regulation be changed to require a minimum clearance of 2.7 metres instead. This reflects the original intent of the bylaw which was to establish a minimum clearance requirement and not provide a maximum clearance requirement for billboard signs. Additionally, Administration is proposing to remove the existing requirement for billboard development permits to expire after five years. This provides certainty for applicants, streamlines the permitting process, and eliminates unnecessary permit renewals.

3. Fascia Signs

For Fascia signs that have a very minor wall projection (0.10m or less), Administration is proposing a new variance authority to allow (up to) a 50% reduction to the existing minimum clearance requirement of 2.7m. The current 2.7m minimum clearance requirement unnecessarily restricts signage location opportunities for businesses when a proposed fascia sign is flush mounted to a wall.

4. Freestanding Signs

Current regulations limit the maximum sign area of a freestanding sign to be based on the number of businesses advertised. In practice, this creates unnecessary complexity and restricts businesses that wish to install a larger sign despite advertising only one to three businesses. Administration is proposing that the maximum sign area for any freestanding sign be 23 square metres for each sign face regardless of the number of businesses advertised.

Currently, a freestanding sign needs to be at least 30 metres from any other permanent sign on the same parcel which unnecessarily limits signage opportunities for businesses that have both fascia and freestanding signs. Administration is proposing to remove this separation requirement. The existing minimum 30 metre separation requirement between two freestanding signs on the same site is proposed to remain.

The existing setback regulations for freestanding signs conflict with one another. One setback regulation states that a sign must be 1 metre from a parcel boundary while another regulation requires the sign support structure to be 3 metres from a parcel boundary and 5 metres from a curb. Administration is proposing to remove the redundant 3 metre parcel boundary setback requirement while retaining the 5 metre minimum setback from a curb. The existing 1 metre setback from a parcel boundary is proposed to remain.

Finally, the notice posting requirement for freestanding signs in non-residential districts is proposed to be removed to streamline the development permit process where this sign type is an appropriate and expected form of development

5. Billboard and Freestanding Sign Height

Administration is proposing increased billboard and freestanding sign heights when a development site is situated below an adjacent road or highway, to improve sign visibility affected by grade differences.

Administration is proposing the following amendments to the sign regulations contained in Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001:

i. Expand Administration's authority to consider variances for both permitted and discretionary signage types.

ii. Permit the minimum clearance for fascia signs to be reduced by up to 50% where the sign projects no more than 0.10 metres from the building wall.

iii. Correct the billboard clearance regulations to establish a minimum clearance of 2.7 metres and increase the minimum clearance to 4.4 metres where a billboard projects over a lane, loading area, or parking area.

iv. Remove the requirement for billboard development permits to expire after five years.

v. Remove the requirement that limits the maximum sign area of a freestanding sign based on the number of businesses advertised and establish a single maximum sign area of 23 square metres per sign face. As a result of this amendment, the freestanding sign illustration will be replaced.

vi. Remove the requirement for a freestanding sign to be separated by 30 metres from another permanent sign on the same parcel.

vii. Remove the requirement for sign supports to be located three metres from a parcel boundary while retaining the minimum five-metre setback from a curb.

viii. Remove the notice posting requirement for freestanding signs in non-residential districts.

ix. Introduce a new provision to allow increased billboard and freestanding sign heights based on verified grade differences from adjacent roads or highways. A new graphic is proposed to illustrate the application of the height provision.

Strategic Plan Alignment | Impact:

Economic Development & Competitiveness

The proposed amendments support a more competitive and business-friendly regulatory environment by improving clarity, reducing unnecessary requirements, and increasing flexibility while maintaining public safety and community aesthetics.

Rationale for Recommendation(s):

Administration recommends approval of the proposed signage amendments to Land Use Bylaw No. 26/001. The amendments address issues identified through the practical implementation of the current regulations, improve the clarity and consistency of the bylaw, remove unnecessary regulatory barriers, and support business investment.

Attachment(s):

1. Bylaw No. 26/023
2. Presentation