



SUBJECT: Sign Variance Application for 2209 Plains Road East

TO: Planning and Development Committee

FROM: Planning and Building Department

Report Number: PB-23-17

Wards Affected: 2

File Numbers: 530-009/16

Date to Committee: April 4, 2017

Date to Council: April 18, 2017

Recommendation:

Approve the application for variances to Sign By-law 34-2007, made by Burlington Signs National, to permit the installation of a new ground sign, which requires the following variances:

1. A setback of 0 m instead of the minimum required 3.9 m.
2. A sign height of 4.68 m instead of the maximum permitted 3.6 m.

Subject to the following condition:

1. The variances apply to the proposed ground sign only and are valid only for the duration of the existing uses on site.

Purpose:

To recommend approval of the variance request to allow the installation of a new ground sign at 2209 Plains Road East.

Background and Discussion:

Property Details

The subject property has the following characteristics:

- Located on the north side of Plains Road East, between Brenda Crescent and Queensway Drive (see Appendix A – Location/Zoning Sketch). Surrounding uses consist of:

- North: CN Rail corridor and QEW/Highway 403
- East: General contractor's office
- South: Medium-density residential
- West: Motor vehicle sales showroom
- Currently supports a two-storey multi-tenant building containing automotive-related uses, and associated parking and storage areas. The subject property is approximately 0.32 ha (0.80 ac) in size and is accessible from Plains Road East via two separate shared driveways.
- Zoned "GE1 – General Employment 1" under Zoning By-law 2020 (see Appendix A – Location/Zoning Sketch)

Existing Signage

Several fascia signs are currently installed on the subject building; each sign indicates an individual tenant of the building (see Appendix D – Existing Sign Elevation). The proposed ground sign would allow for each tenancy to be depicted on a single sign (see Appendix C – Proposed Sign Elevation).

Discussion

The applicant proposes to install a ground sign along the front (south) lot line of the property (see Appendix B – Detail Sketch), between the two access driveways. The sign would be roughly perpendicular to Plains Road East and to the front façade of the building, and would be visible to eastbound and westbound vehicular traffic. The proposal requires the following variances from Sign By-law 34-2007:

- To permit a 0 m setback instead of the minimum required setback of 3.9 m from the property line; and
- To permit a sign height of 4.68 m instead of the maximum permitted height of 3.6 m.

Sign By-law 34-2007

The City's Sign By-law contains various regulations pertaining to signage, including general prohibitions listed under Section 5, and specific regulations for ground signs under Subsection 6.1. The following regulations are pertinent to the subject application:

- 6.1.7 The maximum size, height and setback of ground signs shall be as follows:

SIGN AREA PER FACE (m ²)	MINIMUM SETBACK FROM PROPERTY LINE OR DEEMED WIDTH WHICHEVER IS GREATER	MAXIMUM HEIGHT MEASURED FROM GRADE TO TOP OF SIGN COMMERCIAL ZONE	MAXIMUM HEIGHT MEASURED FROM GRADE TO TOP OF SIGN EMPLOYMENT ZONE	MINIMUM SETBACK FROM A LOT LINE ABUTTING A RESIDENTIAL ZONE, HOSPITAL, PARK OR SCHOOL	MINIMUM SETBACK FROM ANY OTHER LOT LINE
2.7 times the height (metres) of the ground sign	1.5 m	1.2 times the setback (metres) from the closest street to a maximum height of 10.5 m	3.6 m	15 m	4.5 m

Staff notes that enhanced setbacks are generally required for ground signs that exceed the height regulations specified in the Sign By-law. By-law Enforcement staff has advised that in this case, due to the additional height being proposed, the minimum setback requirement is 3.9 m. This value is determined by dividing the proposed sign height (4.68 m) by 1.2.

Intent of Sign By-law Regulations

The Sign By-law regulations are intended to provide businesses with sufficient means of identification from adjacent public areas while ensuring that signage does not pose a negative visual impact on the existing streetscape and nearby land uses, and that it does not impact public safety. Regulating the type and design of signage ensures that each property maintains an acceptable mix of signage, and that new signs are compatible with surrounding development.

The Sign By-law regulates signage in terms of a number of aspects. Size, amount, location, clarity, compatibility, aesthetics, visual character, safety, and consistency with City objectives are all considered under the By-law and balanced with the public's right to expression.

Comments from Other Departments

Staff from the Planning & Building (By-law Enforcement) and Capital Works (Site Engineering) Departments were circulated on the subject application. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) was also circulated, as the subject site is located within its regulated area. No objections were received.

Staff Considerations

Although the requested variance contemplates a 0 m setback from the south lot line, staff notes that in its proposed location, the sign would be positioned approximately 21.5 m from the road due to the large boulevard on the north side of Plains Road East. Staff also notes that the subject building maintains a front yard setback of 11.18 m. Among other aspects of the proposal, staff has considered the subject site's context and its configuration with the adjacent boulevard in order to evaluate the potential impacts of the requested variances.

In staff's opinion, the requested setback variance would facilitate the orderly placement of the sign within the existing landscape strip, between the two access driveways. The proposed location of the sign near the midpoint of the front lot line would maintain a sufficient separation distance from the subject building and from adjacent properties. The proposed location would also facilitate appropriate spacing between the subject sign and other ground signs on neighbouring properties. Therefore, staff is satisfied that the proposed sign would be compatible with adjacent uses and signage and would not have a cluttering effect on the subject site or the overall streetscape.

Staff notes that the aforementioned boulevard would assist in mitigating any impacts of the proposed sign on the streetscape of Plains Road East. Moreover, the proposed sign would have no adverse visual impacts on the residential uses on the south side of Queensway Drive, which runs parallel to Plains Road East (see Appendix A – Location/Zoning Sketch), due to the east/west orientation of the sign and the substantial separation distance between the proposed sign location and the existing residences. Staff is of the opinion that the requested setback and height variances would enhance the visibility and wayfinding functionality of the sign for motorists travelling along Plains Road East without causing adverse visual impacts.

In terms of design, staff considers the proposed ground sign to be in keeping with its surroundings, given the GE1 zoning designation of the subject property and neighbouring properties on the north side of Plains Road East. The design reflects the commercial/industrial nature of the area.

Based on the above, staff considers the variances to be relatively minor deviations from the regulations of the Sign By-law that are compatible with and do not pose any negative impacts on the subject site and building, the surrounding uses and signage in the area, or the overall streetscape. In the opinion of staff, the requested variances meet the intent and purpose of Sign By-law 34-2007.

Financial Matters:

The application has been processed under the standard fee for sign variances in accordance with the Development Application Fee schedule.

Environmental Matters:

There are no environmental matters arising from the recommendation of this report.

Conclusion:

Staff, having had regard for Sections 9.9.1, 9.9.2, and 9.9.3 of the City's Sign By-law 34-2007, is of the opinion that the proposed sign variances are minor, desirable, and within the general intent of Sign By-law 34-2007 and recommends that the application be approved subject to the proposed condition of the Recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Klassen

Planner I

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Appendices:

- a. Sketch No. 1 – Location/Zoning Sketch
- b. Sketch No. 2 – Detail Sketch
- c. Sketch No. 3 – Proposed Sign Elevation
- d. Sketch No. 4 – Existing Sign Elevation

Notifications:

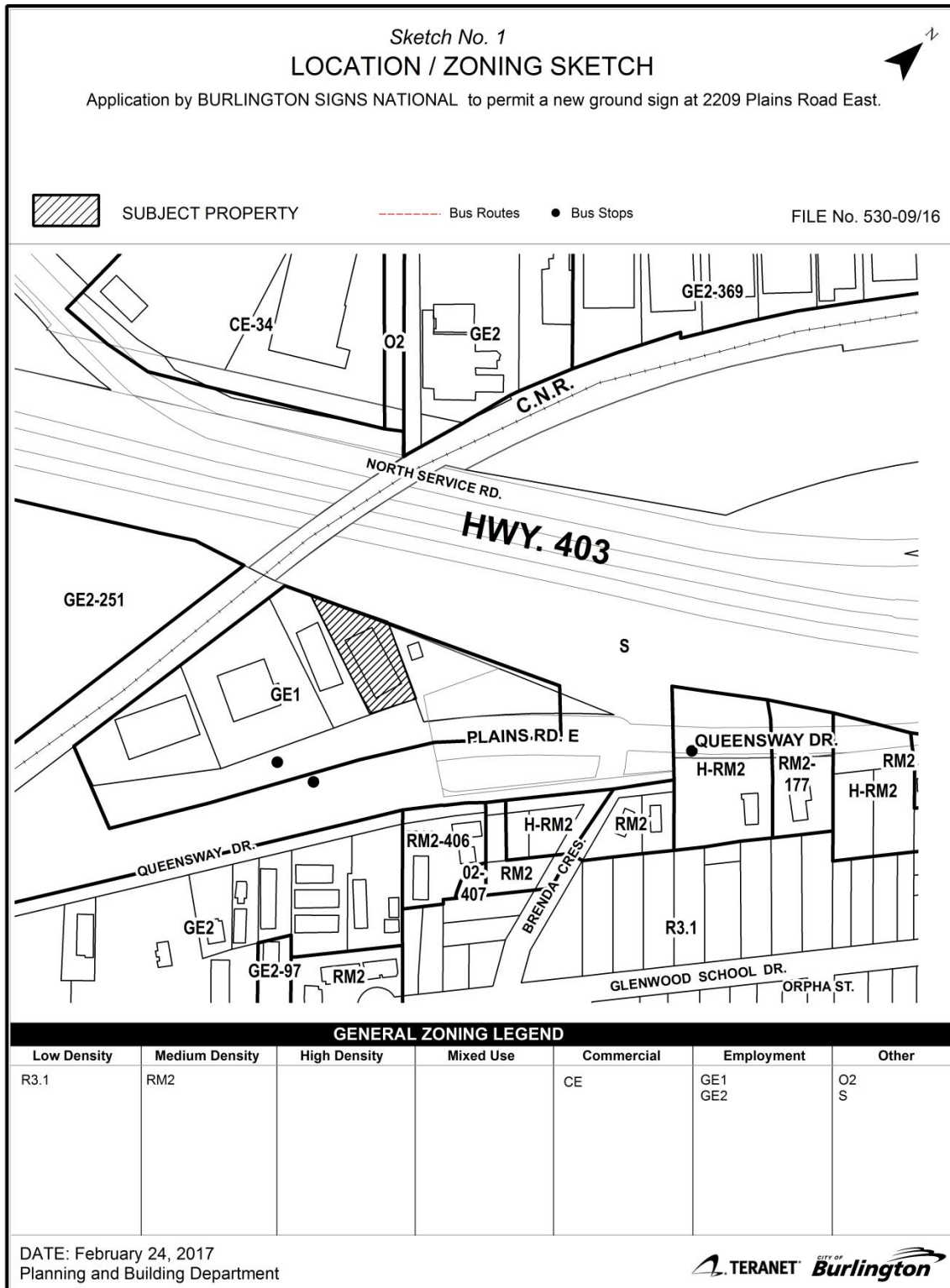
Burlington Signs National

1229 Advance Road, Unit 2, Burlington, ON L7M 1G7

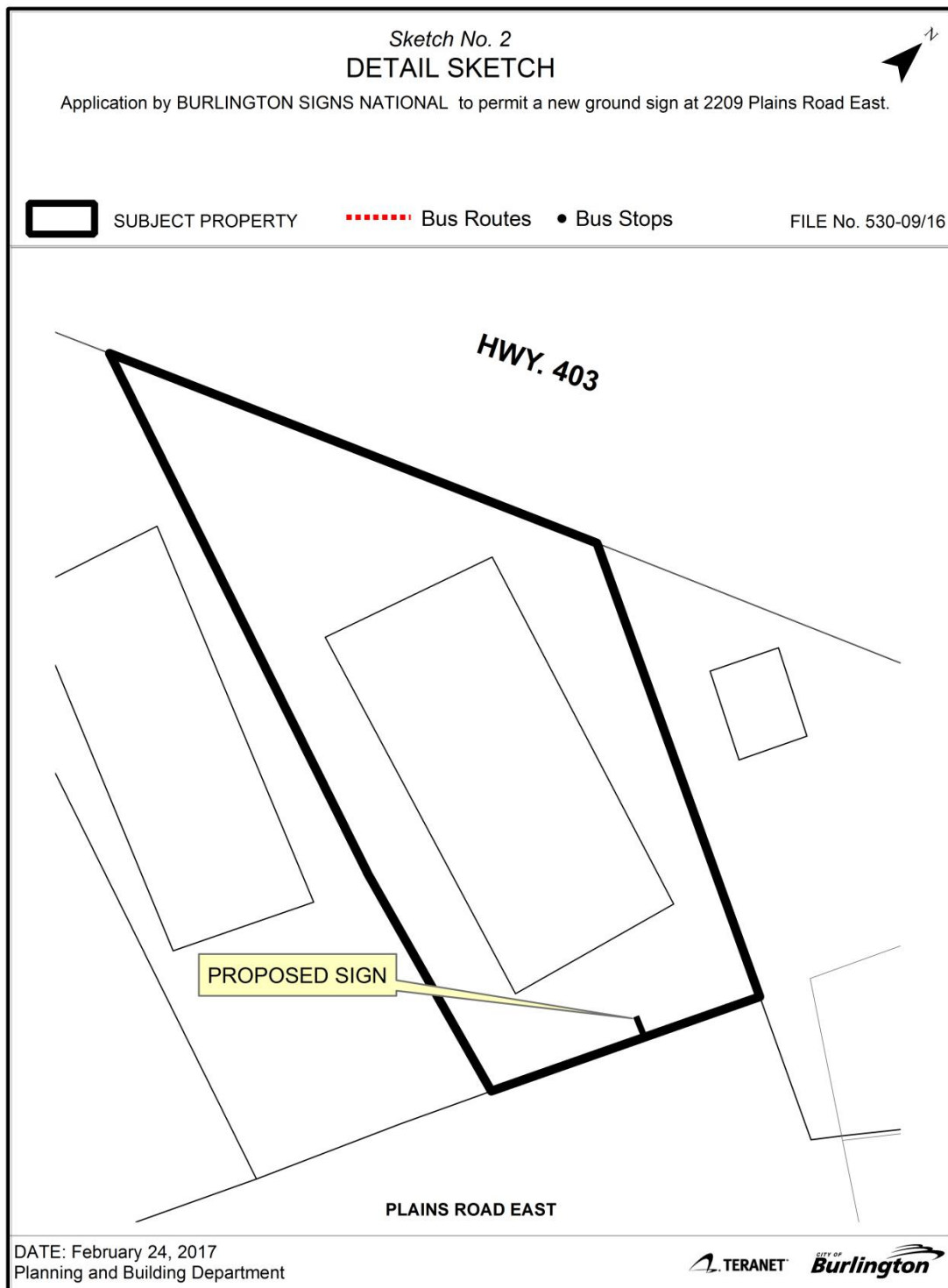
Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, Director of Finance and Director of Legal. Final approval is by the City Manager.

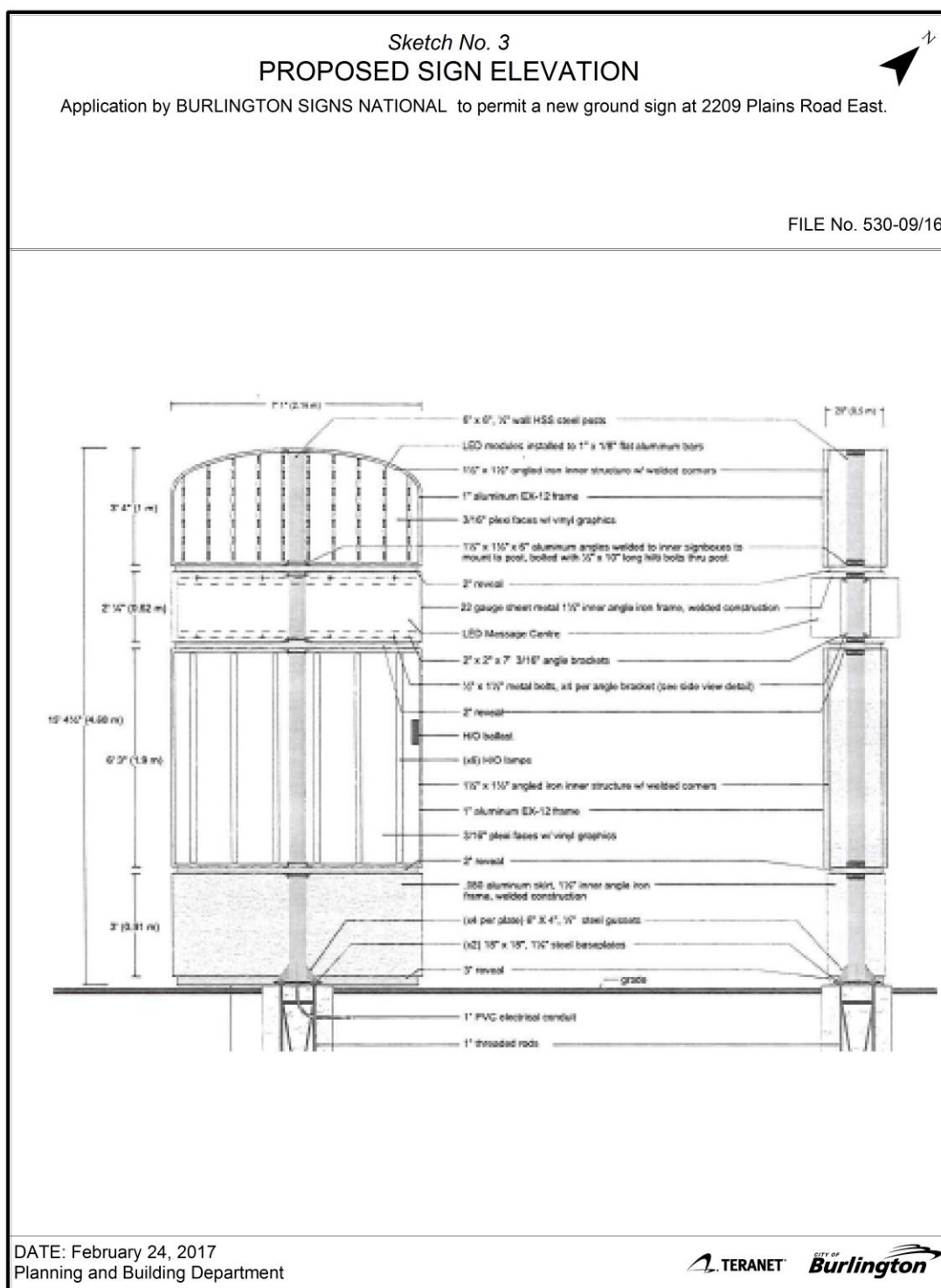
Appendix A – Location/Zoning Sketch



Appendix B – Detail Sketch



Appendix C – Proposed Sign Elevation



Appendix D – Existing Sign Elevation

