City of Kelowna

Sign Bylaw Engagement Report

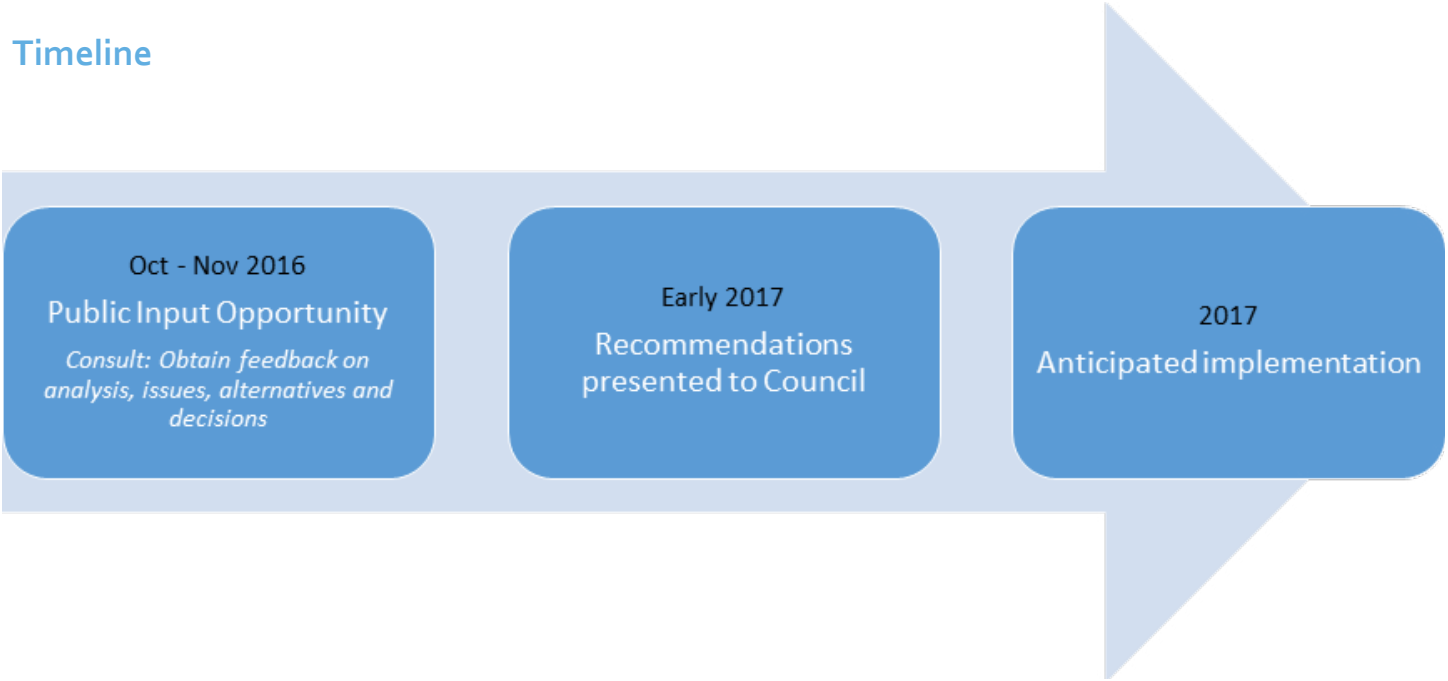
December 2016

Process

Residents and businesses were invited to share their thoughts on signage in Kelowna from October 14 to November 13 through an online survey, social media channels and the Get Involved web platform.

The online survey provided links to the current Sign Bylaw, as well as examples of common forms of signage. Input opportunities were promoted through the City's news bulletins, the website, social media channels, the City's Get Involved website and City in Action newspaper ads.

Timeline



"I think businesses need to be free to express and market themselves, at least as far as their storefronts go. Putting restrictions on small businesses creative marketing abilities can hinder their success significantly."
– Facebook comment

Online survey and social media comments

An open, online survey was made available from October 14 to November 13, 2016 and promoted through the City's news bulletins, the website, social media channels, the City's Get Involved website and City in Action newspaper ads.

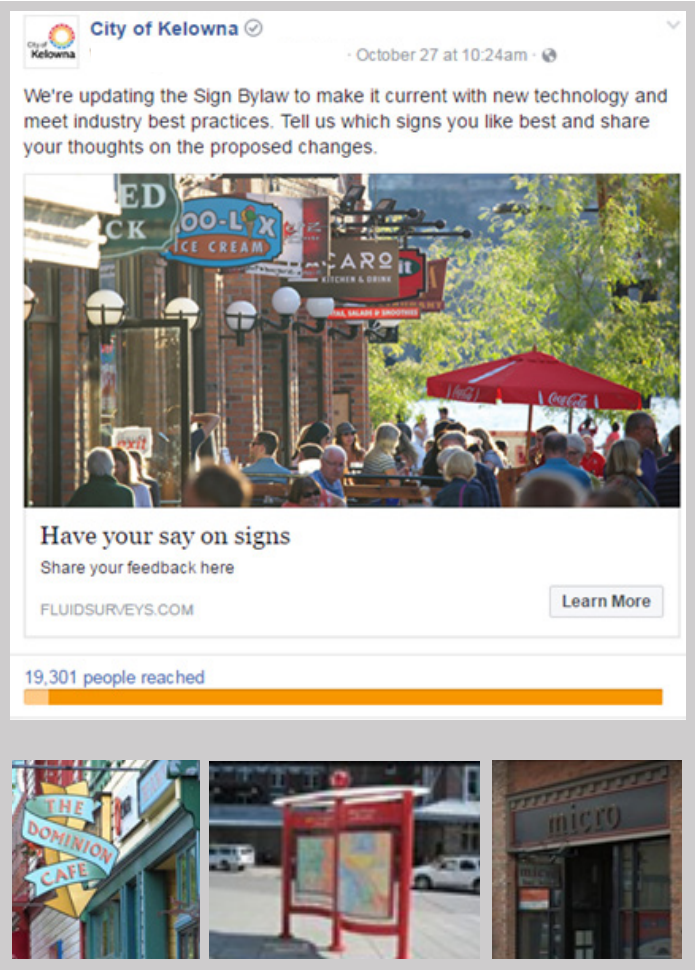
Over the course of the month, 598 survey responses were received.

Results from open surveys such as this are a collection of opinions and perceptions from interested or potentially affected residents, and not a statistically valid random sample of all Kelowna residents. This report contains results from the open survey. Due to the opt-in and open method, results are qualitative in nature and cannot be said to represent views of all Kelowna citizens.

The primary objectives of the engagement were to:

- Inform residents of the current bylaw and proposed updates
- Obtain input from residents regarding the proposed sign bylaw updates, including electronic signs, size and height of standalone signs, sandwich boards and temporary signage

In addition to the survey responses, residents were asked to share photos of signs they like through Get Involved and on Facebook. As a result, 19 photos and 77 Facebook comments were submitted.



"[...] Safety, identification and way finding is fine, but advertising is too much and makes Kelowna look cheap and tacky."
- Survey comment

What we heard

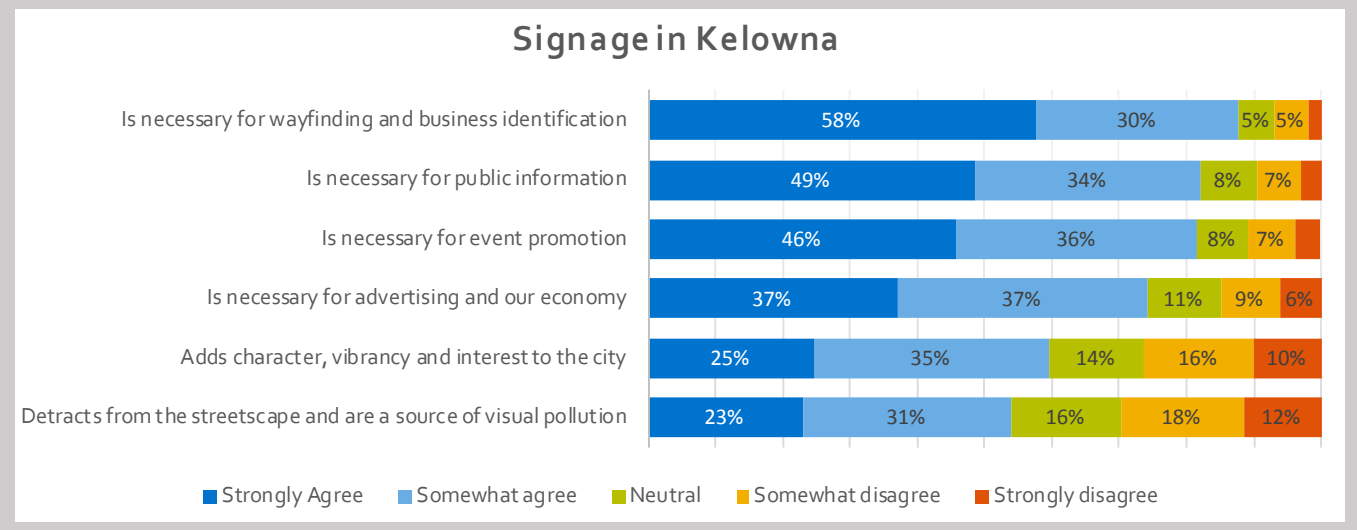
In order to inform the parameters for the Sign Bylaw update, the engagement was designed to gather input primarily on electronic signs, size and height of standalone signs, sandwich boards and temporary signage.

This report provides a summary of the comments received through the online survey, social media channels and the Get Involved site.

General thoughts on signage in Kelowna

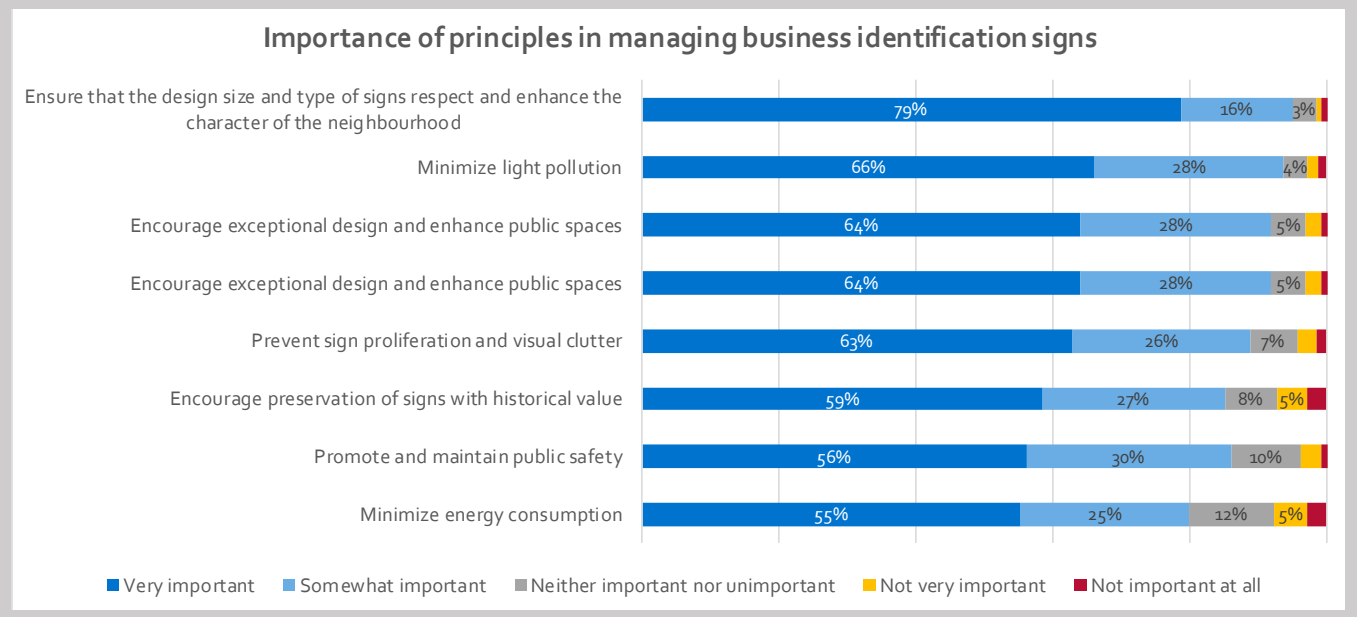
Survey respondents were asked to rank their level of agreement regarding their feelings on the purpose of signage. As per the chart below, the highest level of agreement was that signs are necessary for wayfinding and business identification, followed closely by the purpose of conveying public information and promoting events.

> *"Newer areas of the city should be able to be more creative and use lighting and colour. Areas where shops rely on driving customers should not have such strict height restrictions." – Facebook comment*



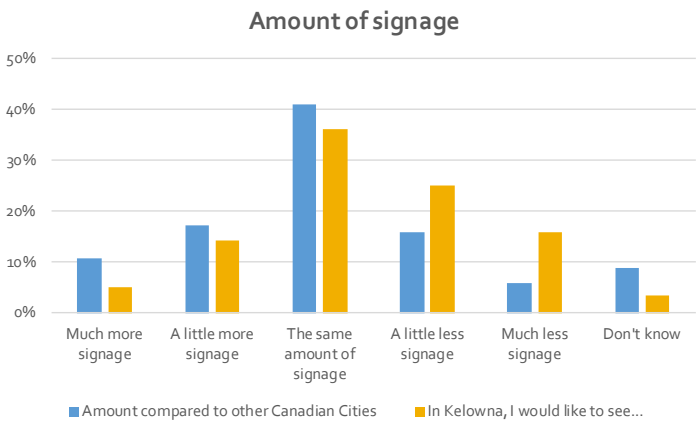
Regarding the current sign bylaw, 22 per cent of respondents said that it isn't restrictive enough, while 16 per cent believe it's too restrictive. More than 40 per cent said they either didn't know or had no opinion and the remaining 20 per cent said the current regulations are appropriate. The online survey provided links to the current Sign Bylaw, as well as examples of common forms of signage.

Ensuring the design, size and type of signs respect and enhance the character of the neighbourhood was ranked by survey respondents as the most important principle, while minimizing energy consumption was ranked as the least important.



Amount of signage

Residents were asked for their opinion on the amount of signage in Kelowna compared to other cities in Canada and whether or not they would like to see more or less signage. More than 40 per cent said they think Kelowna has the same amount of signage as other cities and 36 per cent said they would like to continue to see the same amount of signage in the city.



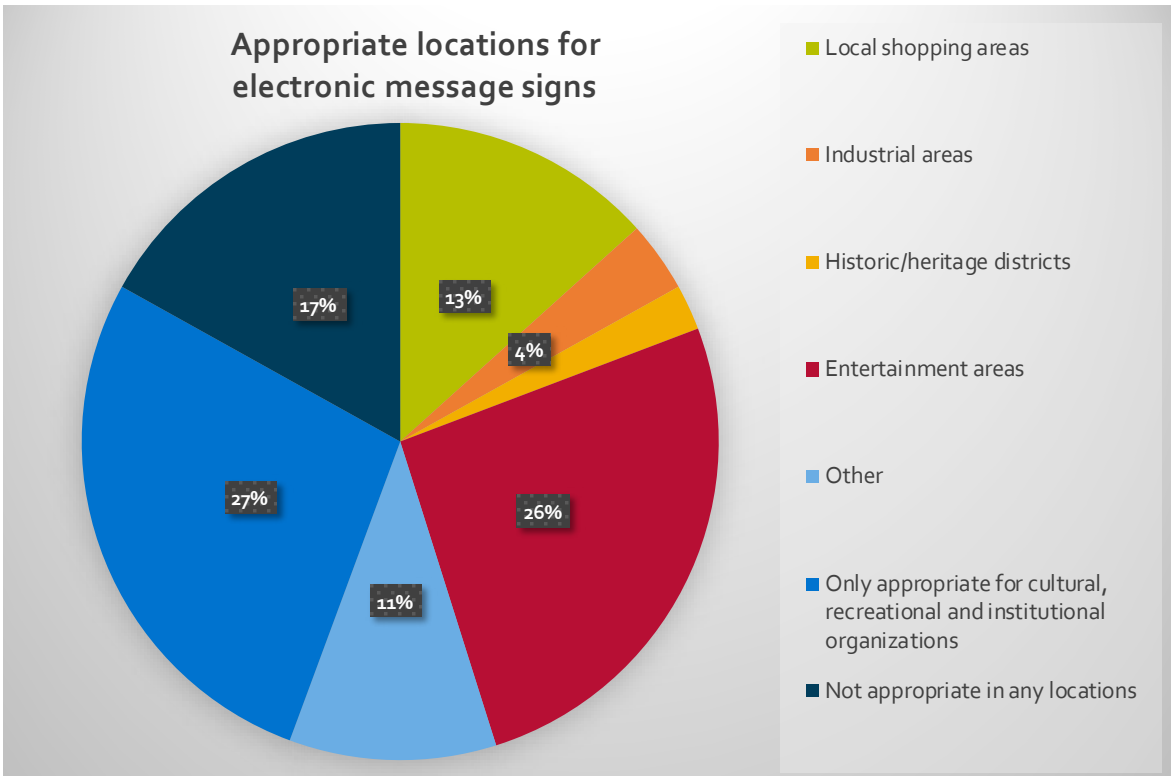
Electronic Signage

Electronic message signs (text only) are already allowed in the Bylaw, but one of the proposed updates includes making them only permitted by cultural recreational and institutional organizations. The majority of respondents agree with the proposed change, with 36 per cent saying they strongly agree and 30 per cent saying they somewhat agree. Just over one quarter of respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed.

Respondents were asked where else electronic message signs would be appropriate in the City. Most respondents said they were only appropriate for cultural, recreational and institutional organizations or in entertainment areas, such as the Cultural District, Orchard Plaza and McCurdy Corner.

Responses in the "other" category included parking lots, sports arenas, away from residential areas and all of the above.

When asked about proposed regulations around brightness, location, and hours of operations, 79 per cent strongly or somewhat agreed and less than 12 per cent disagreed. Other considerations mentioned in the comments included moving to low-light mode earlier during the winter months, avoiding electronic billboards, and limiting the number of electronic signage in an area.



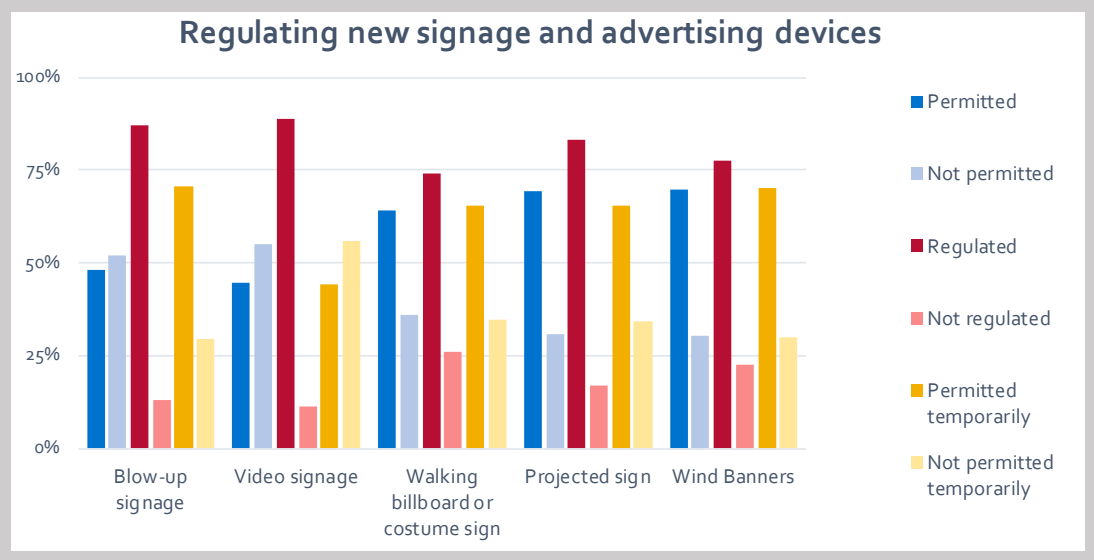
"Flashing electric signs should not be allowed on any street. They are a distraction for drivers."
– Survey Comment

Opinions on third-party advertising signs, new trends and technology

Residents were asked for their thoughts on whether or not a variety of new signage and advertising devices should be permitted, regulated or permitted temporarily. The types of signage included blow-up signage, video signage, walking billboard or costume signage, projected signs and wind banners. The majority of respondents believe these signage types should be regulated and more than half said blow-up signage and video signage should not be permitted. The opinion results are charted below.

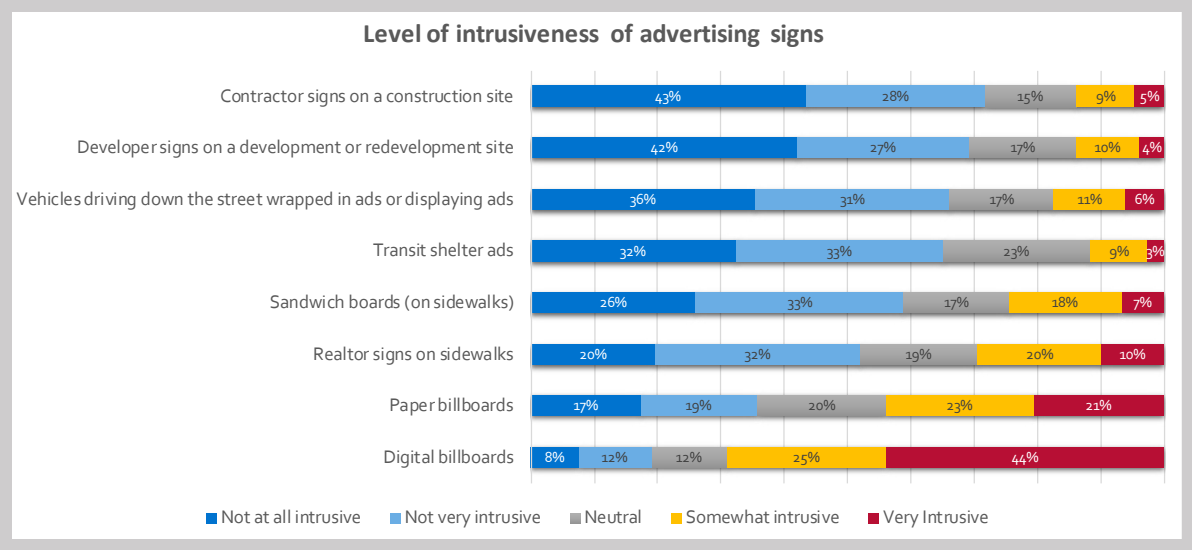
Survey respondents were also asked to identify the intrusiveness of third-party advertising signs, which are signs that are not associated with specific business locations and direct attention to products and services not sold or provided on the site where the sign is located.

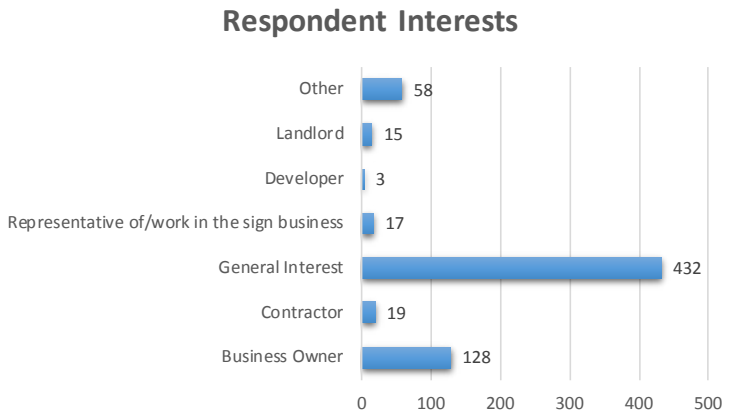
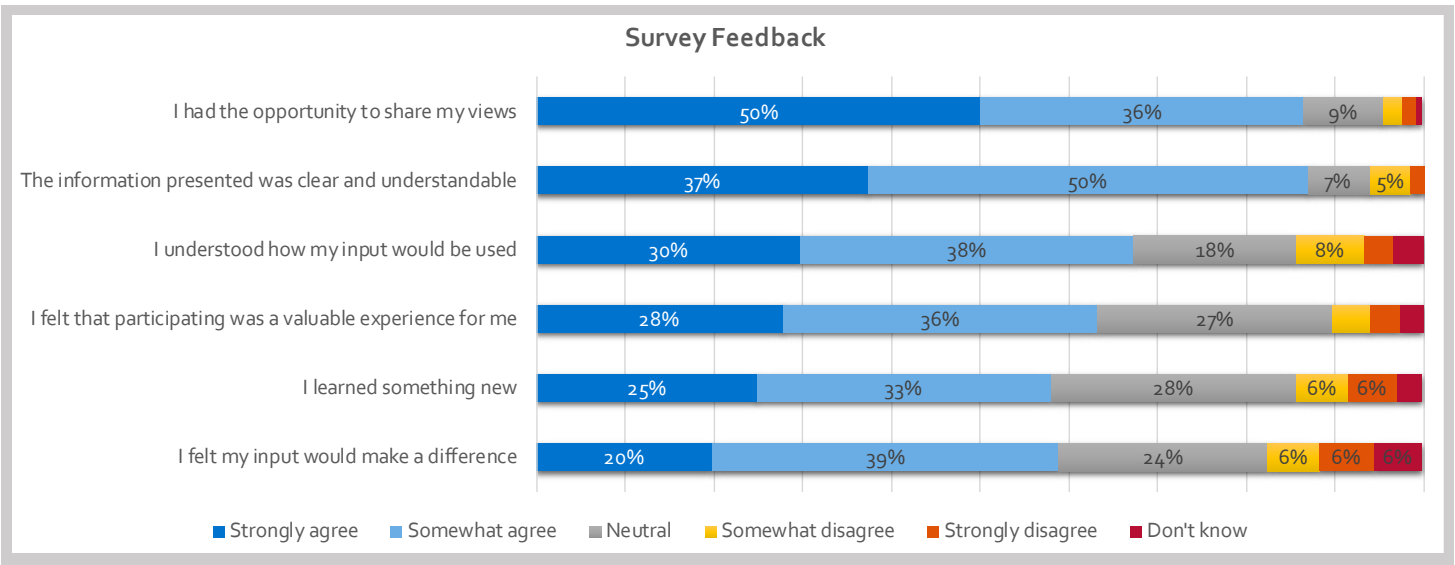
Digital billboards were rated somewhat to very intrusive by 69 per cent of respondents. Paper billboards came in as slightly less intrusive, with only 44 per cent of respondents saying they felt they were somewhat to very intrusive. Respondents indicated the least intrusive types of advertising were transit shelter ads, vehicles driving down the street wrapped in ads, contractor signs and developer signs.



"Most types of signs are good as long as it's regulated and the city does not take in the look of Las Vegas and maintains cultural and historical appeal." – Survey comment

"There is no need for massive illuminated billboards. When driving past these at night time it's incredibly distracting and unnecessary." – Survey comment



Survey respondent demographics
Over half of respondents identified as being under the age of 40. Survey respondents were able to self-identify in one or more categories with the marjority indicating they had a general interest in the sign bylaw.

Survey feedback
More than 86 per cent of survey respondents agreed that the information presented was clear and understandable and felt they had the opportunity to share their views. Furthermore, the majority of respondents also said they understood how their input would be used, felt their input would make a difference, that participating was a valuable experience and that they learned something new.