



# CITY OF PORT ALBERNI

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## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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TO: Theresa Kingston, Deputy City Manager  
FROM: Scott Smith, City Planner  
DATE: August 6, 2014

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**SUBJECT: Sign Bylaw**

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### **ISSUE**

To consider the input received from the public regarding the Sign Bylaw.

### **BACKGROUND**

City Council directed that public consultation be completed on the current Sign Bylaw.

A public survey was open from June 6, 2014 to July 31, 2014 and was made available to the public primarily online. The attached letter was also sent to the Chamber of Commerce, inviting the chamber and its members to provide comments.

### **DISCUSSION**

There were 71 respondents that accessed and answered the survey questions. There are several charts attached to the report showing the results of the survey.

The following is a quick summary of the major result of the public input. Of the 71 respondents, 28% owned or operated a business in Port Alberni and 99% were a resident of Port Alberni or the Valley. The third question, asked peoples opinion on the quality of construction and materials used in signs in respect to overall impressions. 59% rated the signs as "Average", with 32% rating as "Poor or Very Poor" and 8% rating "High or Very High". The fifth question asked their opinion of the effectiveness of business signage. Of the 66 respondents 45% indicated the signs where effective and 56% indicated the signs were not effective. On the sixth question, the public was asked if the current sign types, sizes and heights in the Sign Bylaw are appropriate. 72% indicated "Yes" and 28% said "No". Question seven asked how the current sign bylaw impacted the overall community. 60% felt that the Sign Bylaw was "Appropriate"; with 21% indicating it was "Too Restrictive" and 19% indicating it was "Too Permissive". The last question asked if they would like any changes to the current Sign Bylaw, with 36% indicated "Yes" and 64% indicated "No".

The comments that were received with the survey are attached to this report. The comments varied widely, however a number commented on the maintenance and quality of the signs.

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Options

1. City Council direct staff to begin the process of a complete review and rewrite of the City of Port Alberni Sign Bylaw.
2. That the existing Sign Bylaw 4843 be maintained.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although the survey was limited, the results do not appear to necessitate a rewrite of the current Sign Bylaw. Property and business owners can apply to the City for a variance or an amendment to the Sign Bylaw if needed. There have only been two variance applications and one text amendment application to the Sign Bylaw over the last five years. Given the survey results and the relatively few applications for variance to the Sign Bylaw, staff recommends that the existing Sign Bylaw be maintained.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*That the report from the City Planner dated August 6, 2014 providing a summary of public input received with regards to potential revisions to Sign Bylaw No. 4843 be received.*

Respectfully submitted



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Scott Smith, MCIP  
City Planner



# CITY OF PORT ALBERNI

PLANNING and BUILDING DEPARTMENT

4850 ARGYLE STREET, PORT ALBERNI, BC, V9Y 1V8 (250)720-2830

June 17, 2014

Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce  
c/o Bill Collette, Executive Director  
2533 Port Alberni Hwy,  
Port Alberni, BC V9Y 8P2

Re: Sign Bylaw for the City of Port Alberni

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Dear Board and members of the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce;

Port Alberni City Council has requested that staff seek input from the business community in an effort to gauge the need for a full scale review of the Sign Bylaw. A survey is now available to the community through the City website ([www.portalberni.ca](http://www.portalberni.ca)) or through the URL <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B3Q7SKM> until July 31, 2014.

For your convenience the following background information is provided:

- 1996 - Sign Bylaw (#4287) was adopted on September 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 2004 - Strategic Sign Plan Project – A review of the Sign Bylaw was included in the Strategic Sign Plan project. The Bylaw itself was not changed at that time.
- 2005 – A new sign bylaw was drafted by city staff. Input was received from the Chamber of Commerce and the Advisory Planning Commission. The new bylaw was a major review and re-organization of the bylaw text to increase clarity and ease of use and to introduce modern signage types not previously included (ex. Electronic Messaging signs). The process was completed in 2007.
- 2007 - The new Sign Bylaw (#4578) was adopted by City Council on September 10<sup>th</sup>.
- 2014 – On March 10, the City adopted a new Zoning Bylaw (#4832) with a new zoning structure that would necessitate the revision of the interdependent Sign Bylaw.
- 2014 - City staff (Planner, Planning Tech., Building Inspector) reviewed the Sign Bylaw and drafted a new bylaw that would work harmoniously with the new Zoning structure and that would be easier to use and interpret. No major changes were made to sign type specifications. The new bylaw was given three readings and staff were directed to seek input from the business community to determine if there is a need for a full scale review.
- 2014 – On June 9, 2014 the new Sign Bylaw (#4843) was adopted.
- A report will be prepared for City Council that will include all public input received before July 31, 2014.

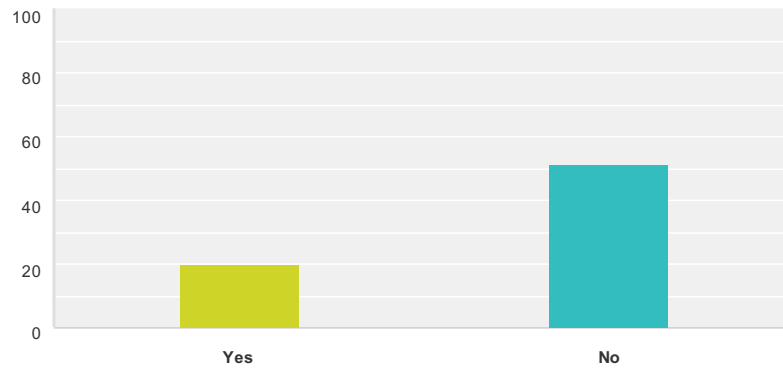
We invite the Chamber of Commerce and its members to respond to the Survey in writing and/or online. Thank you, in advance for your interest in the Sign Bylaw and on behalf of City Council I look forward to your written responses by July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014 addressed to:

Scott Smith, MCIP, City Planner  
c/o City of Port Alberni, 4850 Argyle St., Port Alberni, BC V9Y 1V8  
or via email to [Scott\\_smith@portalberni.ca](mailto:Scott_smith@portalberni.ca) .

Sincerely,  
Scott Smith, MCIP, City Planner

**Q1 Are you the owner or operator of a business in Port Alberni?**

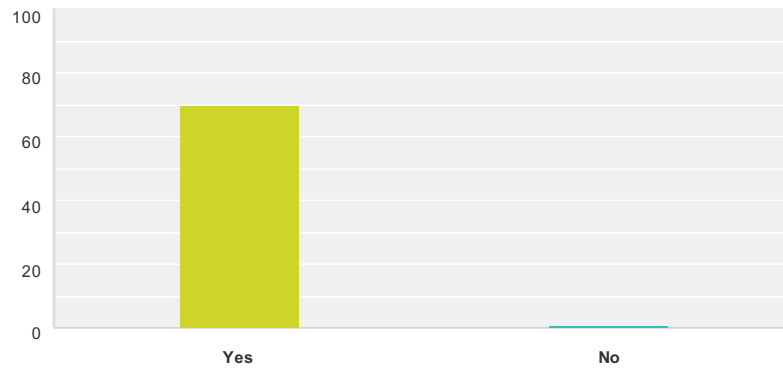
Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	28.17%	20
No	71.83%	51
<b>Total</b>		<b>71</b>

**Q2 Are you a resident in Port Alberni or the Alberni Valley?**

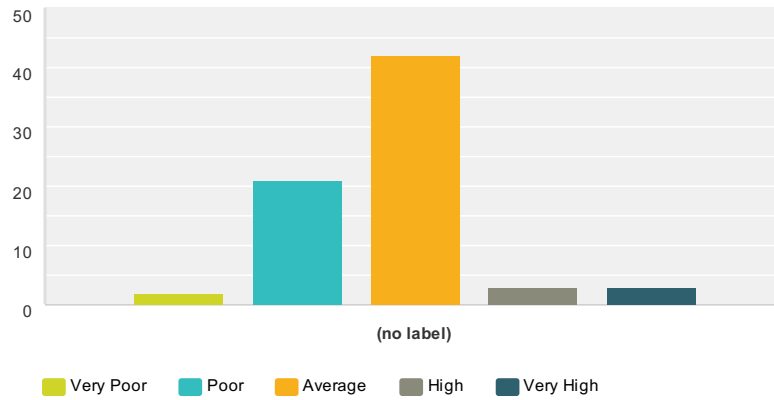
Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	98.59%	70
No	1.41%	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>71</b>

**Q3 With respect to quality of construction, and of the materials used, what is your overall impression of business signage in Port Alberni?**

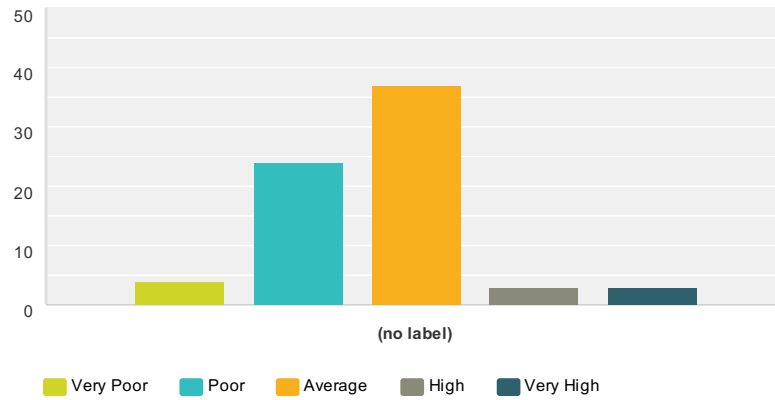
Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



	Very Poor	Poor	Average	High	Very High	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	2.82% 2	29.58% 21	59.15% 42	4.23% 3	4.23% 3	71	2.77

**Q4 With respect to appearance / attractiveness what is your overall impression of the commercial business signage in Port Alberni?**

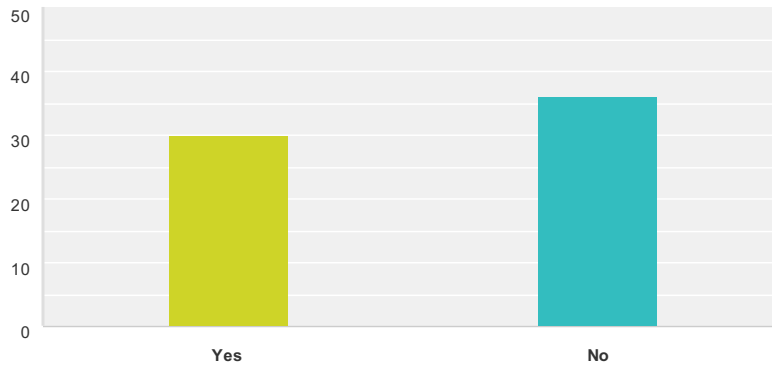
Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



	Very Poor	Poor	Average	High	Very High	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	5.63% 4	33.80% 24	52.11% 37	4.23% 3	4.23% 3	71	2.68

**Q5 Do you believe that commercial business signage in Port Alberni is effective?**

Answered: 66 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	45.45% 30
No	54.55% 36
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>

#	Please tell us why:	Date
1	Most just give the name and it does not give meaning. Lots of new business' but what the heck is Salmon Backpackers? Haven't a clue. Would I use it if I knew, maybe, but I'm too busy to find out!	7/30/2014 9:25 PM
2	Unless you make a visually appealing way for tourists to see what is in the town what is currently present for off highway businesses is as good as it can be.	7/30/2014 12:49 PM
3	Some commercial business signs are effective.If it's advertising the store front it does its job. There are some signs that appear to be dated and non-effective. Those ones need to be refurbished and should be updated as n the bylaw. Commercial signage for businesses that have closed should also be removed after the 14 days as stated in the bylaw.	7/30/2014 8:26 AM
4	Not enough to let passers by know what's ahead	7/29/2014 10:26 PM
5	Of such poor quality, and looks homemade; not professional	7/29/2014 9:52 PM
6	adequate, but then I live here. Have known where everything is, which may not be the same impression, those new to the valley may get.	7/29/2014 9:42 PM
7	Well even though they are not esthetically pleasing they do benefit the businesses in town to get people who may just be driving through to stop. Let's not be a gateway let's be a destination.	7/29/2014 8:44 PM
8	Business signage in Port Alberni lacks professionalism. There is little consideration given to graphic standards, architecture or landscaping. Surrounding communities have adopted sign bylaws that compliment professional signage, for example tofinos cedar sign bylaw or qualicum sign bylaw. More consideration needs to be given to the value of professional signage, as it plays a major role in how our community is perceived by residents and tourists. Businesses need to be encouraged to take pride in their signage, and how it impacts the surrounding neighbourhood.	7/29/2014 8:07 PM
9	Its the fastest way to whete a business is, what it offers etc	7/29/2014 7:09 PM
10	Businesses have to be recognized	7/29/2014 7:03 PM
11	To identify the business and it's product or service.	7/29/2014 6:54 PM
12	There is very little signage in Port, it is not creative or eye-catching and it is not effective. Overall the City of Port Alberni does not do a good job of marketing its assets, and does not have an effective plan to do so.	7/29/2014 6:30 PM
13	Boring and out dated on the smaller businesses	7/29/2014 6:12 PM
14	It gets the business out there. Quality is often related to profitability of a business. I'm sure every business would love to have the best sign, but signs are not cheap.	7/29/2014 5:58 PM
15	I don't know	7/29/2014 12:54 PM
16	most signs run parallel to streets rather than perpendicular so you need to distract yourself from driving by tuning your head to see business signs	7/29/2014 12:38 PM
17	some perhaps...but if I was a tourist on my way to Tofino I don't know that any signs really let me know what's worth seeing in town...like Harbour Quay...etc...Canal Beach...etc....	7/29/2014 12:25 PM
18	Some businesses have their signage on plywood, or other poor quality backing where the paint is chipping, or fading, or missing letters etc. Some of the signage is effective in town....it really is a business to business comparison.	7/29/2014 12:06 PM
19	Billboards coming into town are an eyesore. The little yellow saw blades are hard to see to find McLeans Mill.	7/29/2014 11:47 AM
20	I do not see very much Signage for Business's here in Port Alberni.	7/20/2014 10:23 PM

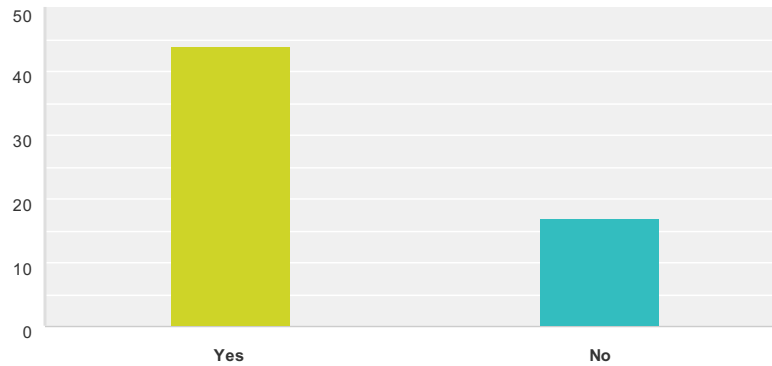


## City of Port Alberni Sign Bylaw - Opinion Survey, 2014

21	No common theme.	7/18/2014 9:06 PM
22	Some Business signage is nicely done, but many are faded or damaged, outdated or still present on closed businesses or buildings.	7/18/2014 10:46 AM
23	If done correctly it can really help people get information they need, or direct them to where they need to be.	7/17/2014 9:31 AM
24	Signage is much more effective since the blue signage went in a few years ago directing people to certain places of interest	7/16/2014 1:16 PM
25	They're not well maintained. A good wash or fresh coat of paint would do wonders.	7/3/2014 7:59 PM
26	So far I have had no problems with it.	7/2/2014 3:39 PM
27	I feel that at best signage has limited effectiveness. Unless someone is specifically looking for one individual business most people are concentrating on the traffic and pedestrians. In this digital age probably 90% have already googled what they are looking for and how to get there.	7/2/2014 10:45 AM
28	Outdated. Difficult to see.	7/2/2014 10:37 AM
29	Signs that are old, faded and unprofessional looking don't make you want to use the business or service.	7/2/2014 9:37 AM
30	Neither yes or no. The signage is just there, like the trees. More eye pollution than anything else. At least the trees have a better eye appealing purpose.	6/27/2014 8:19 PM
31	The size and scale of signage is too small the location of signage is not noticeable Just try to be the tourist and you will see that there is no wayfinding available There should be signage at 3rd and Kingsway, bottom of Johnston and along 3rd by the pulp mill	6/23/2014 1:26 AM
32	Perhaps it is due to the fact that 'The Valley' is still in the process of finding its new self? (by this, I mean that it is perhaps redefining itself after the fallout with natural resources some time back, but is still searching for new attractions to aid in this). As such, many of the small businesses I've seen appear will sometimes disappear shortly after opening (in business timeframe, that is).	6/20/2014 11:28 AM

**Q6 Do you think that current sign types, sizes and heights permitted in the Sign Bylaw are appropriate for this community?**

Answered: 61 Skipped: 10

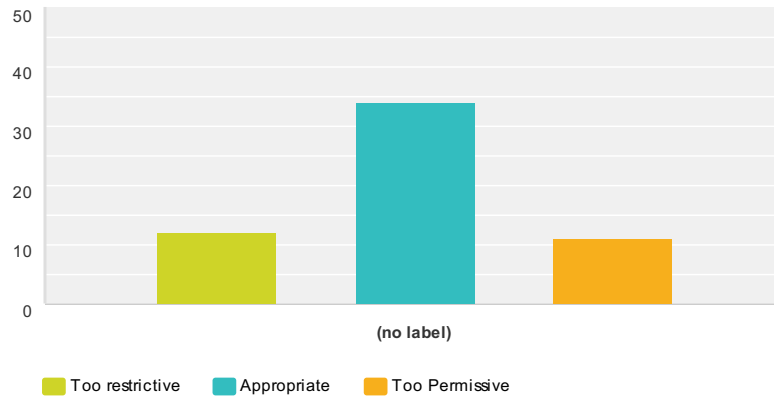


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	72.13%	44
No	27.87%	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>61</b>

#	Please tell us why:	Date
1	too much visual clutter	7/29/2014 9:52 PM
2	I'd like the see them have better upkeep.	7/29/2014 8:45 PM
3	A variety of different types of signage will compliment our community, when produced professionally. This cannot be understated. Like any trade, signage is a profession where expertise has real benefits and value to the products. Simply put, many signs are poorly designed and produced and this is reflected in the overall atmosphere of the commercial neighbourhoods.	7/29/2014 8:14 PM
4	To identify businesses and their products and services.	7/29/2014 6:58 PM
5	don't think that the size/height/type is the issue with poor signage	7/29/2014 6:32 PM
6	billboards shouldn't be allowed	7/29/2014 12:54 PM
7	I believe that there should be a set of specific options available to businesses for signage. One that does not include hand painted signs on plywood. Some of the signage is really not professional looking...which I believe makes the business look not very professional....or makes them look "junk".	7/29/2014 12:06 PM
8	Except for the billboard jungle at the entrance to the community	7/29/2014 11:48 AM
9	I cant think of any signs at the moment that are not appropriate. The large billboard coming into town are big but effective as long as they are maintained. It is the first impression people get.	7/17/2014 9:32 AM
10	I haven't noticed anything that is out of line	7/16/2014 1:16 PM
11	With some freshening up.	7/3/2014 8:00 PM
12	Most signage ON businesses is fine. The billboards, which are the first thing you see entering town, are an eyesore and should be banned.	7/2/2014 11:01 AM
13	certainly no larger or higher and the fewer the better.	7/2/2014 10:46 AM
14	Some are too small for good visibility amongst all the trees etc. some restrictions not appropriate for all businesses	7/2/2014 10:40 AM
15	they are too big	7/2/2014 10:31 AM
16	Every sign should be the same size.	6/27/2014 8:20 PM
17	We do not yet fully know what we are defining through the use of signage. A more open (controlled, but more open) approach may yield new, fresh innovative approaches to growth in sectors throughout the Valley.	6/20/2014 11:29 AM

**Q7 How would you describe the current Sign Bylaw with respect to its overall impact on the community?**

Answered: 57 Skipped: 14

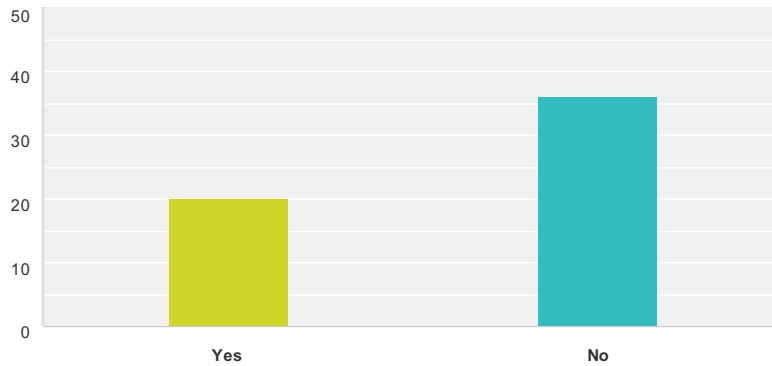


	Too restrictive	Appropriate	Too Permissive	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	21.05% 12	59.65% 34	19.30% 11	57	1.98

#	Comments:	Date
1	Signage in PA should be consistent and stick to a theme for directional and tourist signs. Recently a sign called "historically the orange bridge" was put up that has funky font and may not be as simple to read to passers by.	7/30/2014 8:30 AM
2	Too many signs are too confusing	7/29/2014 9:53 PM
3	My understanding is the existing bylaw emphasizes size rather than quality standard.	7/29/2014 8:17 PM
4	The restrictions force business to appear out dated. Tourists want store fronts to look modern or eclectic not dumpy and faded	7/29/2014 6:17 PM
5	The billboards coming on to town should have a regulated look and upkeep so they are presentable.	7/29/2014 6:00 PM
6	It depends on what the overall purpose of the Sign is. Some of the signs that (I think) are meant for tourists, don't seem to stand out as much as they could.	7/3/2014 8:05 PM
7	The signage should be maintained and dated. This should include the grounds around the signs.	6/27/2014 8:23 PM
8	As per question 6 - more openness may offer more ideas to attract customers/consumers to our little slice of heaven in the valley.	6/20/2014 11:30 AM

**Q8 Are there any specific changes you would recommend to the current Sign Bylaw?**

Answered: 56 Skipped: 15



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	35.71% 20
No	64.29% 36
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>

#	If you chose "Yes" please describe specific changes you would like to see:	Date
1	Upkeep should be mandatory. Broken lightbulbs, cracks, missing letters etc should not be allowed. Small town is what small town does.	7/30/2014 9:27 PM
2	Complete a signage audit and review the signs every 5 years to ensure consistency and that the bylaws are being followed. An audit will also help see if directional signage is effective.	7/30/2014 8:31 AM
3	Fewer signs; higher quality; must be maintained regularly (not just plopped somewhere and forgotten) and get rid of all the billboards	7/29/2014 9:54 PM
4	Required continuous upkeep. They should be required updates for faded signage and damaged signs	7/29/2014 8:49 PM
5	Hire a professional sign consultant to develop an appropriate graphic standard (including color choices) for signs in our community. This will benefit local business owners and residents alike by creating an atmosphere of professionalism and community pride.	7/29/2014 8:22 PM
6	Allow home based businesses larger signs.	7/29/2014 6:59 PM
7	Relax the "prohibited" sign section a bit	7/29/2014 6:18 PM
8	Need clear, effective and enforceable quality standards	7/29/2014 2:57 PM
9	no billboards	7/29/2014 12:55 PM
10	signs must be kept easily readable, and in good repair	7/29/2014 12:33 PM
11	I really wish there was an alternative to the billboards	7/29/2014 11:48 AM
12	allow more signage opportunities on highways, businesses struggle to attract traffic due to confusing layout of City. Much of Port Alberni is bypassed by many - people do not know the main entrance to town is past the Hospital where the new bridge and enhanced roadway will be - This is an opportunity to increase visitation.	7/25/2014 1:45 PM
13	none at this time	7/17/2014 9:32 AM
14	I think it would be a good idea to enforce repair and maintenance of awnings and ensure that they are kept clean.	7/16/2014 3:51 PM
15	More character in design in keeping with the area. Better graphics so one can actually read what the sign says from the road.	7/2/2014 4:26 PM
16	Ban billboards!	7/2/2014 11:02 AM
17	More fleibility	7/2/2014 10:40 AM
18	less of them, and looks ugly when coming in to town all the signs	7/2/2014 10:32 AM
19	More enforcement.	6/27/2014 8:24 PM
20	Make the signage large enough to see and put in areas where they matter	6/23/2014 1:27 AM
21	Be Creative in the Craft. Take for example Cowichan Valley - It is world renowned as the 'mural capital' to a large audience. What could we do to 'capture and hold' the attention of travelers in such a way that suits our needs?	6/20/2014 11:31 AM