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May 25, 2021

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION TRANSMITTAL OF PROPOSED CITYWIDE SIGN
ORDINANCE; CF 11-1705**

On September 25, 2019, the City Council adopted instructions directing the Department to revise the proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance. The proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance (proposed Ordinance) is a comprehensive effort to revise, consolidate, and modernize the City of Los Angeles' (the City) sign and sign district regulations. The instructions primarily amend and supplement the off-site sign regulations in a prior version of the proposed Ordinance including the introduction of a regulatory framework for allowing off-site signs on public property, a phased-in Tier 3 Sign District for private property, and a focused sign reduction requirement.

Background

The Department drafted a revised draft Ordinance in response to the adopted instructions and released the proposed Ordinance for public comment on December 10, 2020. On February 25, 2021, the City Planning Commission (CPC) considered this revised version of the proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance (herein referred to as Version C). The CPC took public comment on Version C and after deliberation disapproved Version C and the accompanying staff recommendation. The CPC, in-lieu of Version C, recommended Version B+ with slight modifications. Version B+ is a prior iteration of the proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance that was amended by the CPC and previously recommended to City Council in late 2015.

Version A and Version B of the Citywide Sign Ordinance were previously considered versions of the proposed Ordinance that were ultimately abandoned during this Committee's deliberation on the topic. These previous iterations were substantially similar to the Versions transmitted herein, however several provisions related to digital displays, off-site signs, and sign districts have been significantly altered.

Comparison of Versions B+ (recommended by CPC) and C (proposed Ordinance)

Both Version B+ and Version C of the Ordinance share several commonalities. The regulations are substantially identical for most sign typologies, and both propose strengthened requirements for the establishment of a sign district including mandatory off-site sign reduction. Additionally, they create sign-specific relief mechanisms, consolidate sign regulations, remove content related provisions, and institute enhanced penalties for certain sign code violations. However, they diverge substantially in how off-site signs and digital displays are regulated.

The City has maintained, since 2002, a ban on new off-site signs outside of sign districts, specific plans, certain supplemental use districts, and development agreements. Version B+ and Version C both maintain this prohibition and narrow the exceptions to solely Sign Districts, though in the case of Version C an additional exception is provided allowing for relocated off-site signs to be placed on public property. Version C also incorporates a new Tier 3 Sign District that potentially provides the same ability to relocate to private property after an initial phase which prioritizes public property. The Department did not recommend inclusion of Tier 3 Sign Districts for private property. Both of these new allowances for off-site signs in Version C include requirements for off-site sign reduction, which is partially targeted to areas with an overconcentration of off-site signs.

Version B+ further diverges from Version C in how it regulates digital displays. Version B+ limits digital displays to sign districts for both on-site and off-site signs. It also has exacting illumination and brightness standards for digital displays. Version C, has a limited allowance for on-site signs with digital displays, and regulates illumination and brightness standards without the same specificity.

City Planning Commission Recommendation

As aforementioned, the CPC modified the original Version B+ of the proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance when it re-recommended it at their February 25th meeting. The modifications address two items. The first modification restricted the operation of signs with digital displays to the hours of 7:00 am to 12:00 am. The second modification clarified that a community benefits package will be required as part of the establishment of a Tier 2 Sign District.

The Department drafted an updated comparison chart between Version B+ and Version C. This has been included as part of this report as Exhibit A, and reflects the actions and amendments taken by the CPC at its February 25th meeting.

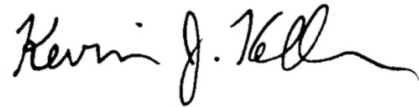
Conclusion

In conclusion, the Department transmits both the CPC recommended and updated Version B+ as well as the City Council requested Version C for the City Council's consideration.

Furthermore, the Department recommends that if the Committee were to move forward with Version B+, that staff should be directed to make, 1) corrections related to the removal of content related provisions; 2) review and update any referenced fees; and 3) integrate updated regulations for Temporary Signs on Temporary Constructions Walls (undergoing separate revisions per Council File # 17-0893).

Sincerely,

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin J. Keller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

KEVIN J. KELLER, AICP
Executive Officer

VPB:KK:AV:HSC:ap

Key Differences: CPC Version B+ and Version C

	Version B+ (February 2021)	Council Instruction Version (February 2021)
On-Site Signs with Digital Displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed only in Sign Districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations limited to 7 am to 12 am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed in Sign Districts and as a limited use in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C Zones 75% of sign area allotment; not more than 350 sf total; no one sign larger than 300 sf Property must have 150-foot frontage Not permitted within 100' of SF zones, Scenic ROWs, or another digital sign Operations limited to 7 am to 12 am
Content-Related Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amended definitions and content-related provisions to allow any On-Site Sign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed all content-related provisions
Relocation Agreements	<i>Not Recommended</i>	<p>Allowed in Tier 3 and on Public Property w/ specific limitations</p> <p><i>*Tier 3 Private Property relocations not recommended by Planning Staff</i></p>
Public Property	<i>Not Recommended</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Property is defined Relocation Agreements allowed on C, M and PF zones Prohibited in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not within 200' of SF zones, ecological preserve, RIO, state scenic highway

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not within HPOZ, parks, schools, libraries, civic buildings (most), Sign Districts ○ Must be 500' from another digital offsite sign ● Limited operations to 7 am to 12 am
Tier 1 Sign Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Min 15 acres or 5,000' of street frontage; Reduced in GDHI Area ● Regional Center or Regional Commercial & zoned C or R5 ● Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Area & zoned C, M or R5 ● LAX Specific Plan; or Port of LA Plan; or 20,000-seat stadiums/arenas; or 60-acre zoos/botanical gardens ● Distancing Restrictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SFD ○ Scenic Hwys/Parks ● Council Approval ● Operations of digital displays for on-site and off-site signs is limited to 7 am to 12 am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No operational hours restrictions for digital displays
Tier 2 Sign Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allowed in all zones except OS & PF ● 3 acres of non-residential development or 50,000 s.f. of non-residential floor area if in designated Regional Center, Regional Commercial, or Greater Downtown Housing Incentive Area, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allowed in R5, C, and M zones or if rezoned from those zones to a Specific Plan zone ● No operational hours restrictions for digital displays ● All other provisions identical

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 acres of non-residential development or 100,000 s.f. of nonresidential if in other areas Operations of digital displays for on-site and off-site signs is limited to 7 am to 12 am 	
Tier 3 Sign Districts	<i>Not Recommended</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows Relocation Agreements on private property Allowed in C2, C4, and M zones Must be at least 3 acres, 1 block or 2640 s. f. of street frontage Off-site sign location restrictions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not with 500' of single family homes, scenic highways, nature preserves Not allowed in existing most specific plans, CPIOs, overlays, and Tier 1 and 2 sign districts Limited operations to 7 am to 12 am <p><i>*Tier 3 Private Property relocations not recommended by Planning Staff</i></p>
Off-Site Sign Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 Sign Districts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5:1 – Static Signs 10:1 – Digital Signs Sign Impact Area and Areas w/ Reasonable Relationship to new off-site sign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier 1 Sign Districts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1 for static signs 2:1 for digital signs Relocation Agreements/Tier 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:1 for off-site signs or in-lieu payment (not less than 2:1) Not less than 4:1 if relocating to existing location (public property only)

Community Benefits Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicable to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Sign Districts 	Applicable to both Tier 1 and Tier 2 Sign Districts
Targeted Blight Reduction	<i>Not Recommended</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billboard Blighted Areas defined • Tier 3 and Relocation Agreements must equally distribute sign reduction and public benefit payment b/w vicinity of sign and Billboard Blighted Areas
Freeway Exposure	No exceptions to 2000' buffer	Exception from 2000' buffer for Relocation Agreements on Public Property
Illumination Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of 0.3 foot candles above ambient lighting • Maximum nighttime brightness of 300 candelas per square meter and maximum daytime brightness of 5,000 per square meter • Neon, neon-like, or LED elements must be dimmable and controlled by timer • No use of highly reflective materials • Maximum lumen output of no more than 20 lumens per square foot. • Light emitting diodes restricted to maximum horizontal beam spread of 165 degrees and a maximum vertical beam spread of 65 degrees, oriented downward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of 2 foot candles above ambient lighting for static signs. • Digital Displays are limited by separate regulations.
Digital Display Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh rate limitations • Transition requirements • Illumination testing requirements • Council authority for additional testing and illumination standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh rate limits • Instance transition requirement • Council authority for additional testing and illumination standards

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit on operating hours of 7 am to 12 am for all digital displays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of 0.3 foot candles above ambient lighting • Maximum nighttime brightness of 300 candelas per square meter and maximum daytime brightness of 7,500 per square meter • Limit on operating hours of 7 am to 12 am for all digital displays for on-site signs and relocation agreements with digital displays
Civil Administrative Penalties & Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant penalties for off-site and on-site sign violations • Fines start at \$2000/day for violations • Escalate by size of sign and number of violations • Appeal Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies solely to off-site signs • Fines start to accrue after 30 days not 15 days • DBS discretion in applying fines • Refined appeal process for civil penalties
Applicability to Existing, Applied for and Initiated Sign Districts and Specific Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather date of March 26, 2009 for Sign Districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather date of September 25, 2019 for Sign Districts and Specific Plans