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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:

**FRAMEWORK FOR ALLOWING ON-SITE DIGITAL SIGNS OUTSIDE OF SIGN DISTRICTS,
LOCATION AND STATUS OF SIGN DISTRICT APPLICATIONS; CF 11-1705**

On January 31, 2017, the Planning and Land Use Management Committee instructed the Department of City Planning (Department) to report back on the following:

1. Framework for allowing on-site digital signs as a limited use on properties without a requirement to be in a sign district, and
2. Location and status of sign district applications currently under review.

1. FRAMEWORK FOR ALLOWING ON-SITE DIGITAL SIGNS OUTSIDE OF SIGN DISTRICTS

As a restatement of comments included in prior reports to PLUM, dated May 19 and January 27, 2017, the City Planning Commission, in its determination dated January 12, 2016, recommended that digital signs, whether off-site or on-site, be restricted to sign districts. In addition in those reports, the Department commented on the aesthetic, traffic safety, and enforcement challenges inherent in allowing on-site digital signs outside of sign districts.

In light of PLUM's interest in exploring options for allowing on-site digital signs more broadly than in the Tier 1 or Tier 2 Sign Districts provided in the Citywide sign ordinance being considered, the following framework for allowing on-site digital signs as a limited use is proposed for PLUM's consideration:

- a. **Land Use Designation/Zone:** The General Plan land use on the property must be designated as Regional Center Commercial, Regional Commercial, General, or Highway Oriented Commercial and Zoned Commercial.

- b. **Minimum Lot Area:** The property must be at least 150,000 square feet, except for service stations and theaters. The minimum lot area must be contiguous property, not divided by any public right-of-way,
- c. **Minimum Contiguous Street Frontage:** The property must have at least 500 feet of street frontage, except for service stations and theaters. The minimum street frontage must be contiguous, not divided by any public right-of-way and not inclusive of frontage along any alleys,
- d. **Sensitive Uses:** On-site digital signs cannot be within, and must be at least a 500-foot half-radius distance away from (as measured from the sign face), the following:
 - i. Residential zones
 - ii. State or national parks
 - iii. Ecological preserves
 - iv. River Implementation Overlay (RIO)
 - v. Scenic Highways
- e. **On-Site Digital Sign Limitations**
 - i. **Total On-Site Digital Sign Area.** Up to 50 percent of a property's sign allotment may be used for on-site digital signs, not to exceed a total of 300 square feet, except for service stations, which are limited to 50 square feet of on-site digital sign area. Any off-site digital sign on the property counts as a portion of the 50 percent allowed.
 - ii. **Maximum On-Site Digital Sign Size.** No individual on-site digital sign may exceed 300 square feet.
 - iii. **Spacing Between On-Site Digital Signs.** The distance between any on-site digital sign, except for those at service stations and theaters, and another digital sign, either on-site or off-site, could be either the same as or double the current spacing required for off-site, which are the following:

Current Spacing Requirements for Off-Site Signs				
	Sign Area	Proposed Sign		
		< 80 sf	80-300 sf	>300 sf
Existing Sign	< 80 sf	100 ft	100 ft	200 ft
	80-300 sf	100 ft	300 ft	300 ft
	>300 sf	200 ft	300 ft	600 ft

- iv. **Digital Display Standards.** The digital display standards are to be consistent with the illumination standards recommended by the City Planning Commission, which includes a nighttime limit of 300 and a daytime limit of 5,000 candelas per square meter. It may be appropriate to eliminate limits to intensity during the daytime, as generally brightness during daylight hours is not considered to be of concern. The City Planning Commission recommendation also includes limiting the hours of operation of all digital signs to between 7 a.m. and midnight.

v. **On-site Digital Sign Types.** Roof and Projecting on-site digital signs are prohibited.

f. **Process Options**

- i. **Tier 3 Sign District:** As a part of the Department's recommendation to restrict digital signs to sign districts, a Tier 3 type Sign District would allow a wider variety of businesses to establish on-site digital signs while retaining a Citywide prohibition on digital signs. Tier 3 Sign Districts could be established using the same process as provided for a Tier 1 or Tier 2 Sign District. Custom-tailored provisions for on-site digital signs within the boundaries of each Tier 3 Sign District, including spacing between digital signs and/or other eligibility criteria, would be determined during the process of its establishment. Proposed on-site digital signs that comply with the established standards would be permitted administratively.
 - ii. **Director's Determination:** As an alternative, on-site digital signs could be identified as an exception to the Citywide prohibition on digital signs, provided that applicants obtain a Director's level approval for each on-site digital sign. Under this model, review of the application would be done at a staff level and would not involve a public hearing.
 - iii. **Administrative Approval:** A more permissive option would be to allow on-site digital signs that meet the criteria outlined in this report to be able to obtain a building permit from the Department of Building and Safety without any discretionary review or approval. No additional site-specific environmental analysis would be required.
- g. **Relief:** The relief mechanisms in the proposed Citywide sign ordinance would be available for on-site digital signs; generally the proposed ordinance provides a Sign Adjustment to exceed standards by 20 percent or less and a Sign Variance to exceed standards by more than 20 percent.
- h. **Enforcement:** Digital signs that are restricted to on-site messages have the potential to be misused for off-site messages and, with wider availability, could pose a challenge to enforcement resources.

2. **LOCATION AND STATUS OF SIGN DISTRICT APPLICATIONS**

There are 9 sign district applications currently pending:

<i>Common Name (Initiation Date)</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Council District</i>	<i>Status</i>
1. Figueroa Corridor (2011)	Generally bounded by CA-110, Figueroa Street, and Venice and Wilshire Boulevards. The Luxe Hotel and the Fig+Pico Sign District were carved out of this area.	14	On hold
2. Koreatown (2008)	Generally bounded by 6 th Street, St. Andrews Place, Olympic Boulevard, and Shatto Place.	10	On hold
3. City West (2008)	Generally bounded by 1 st Street, Boylston Street, 3 rd Street, and Beaudry Avenue.	1	On hold
4. Mid-Town Crossing (2008)	Generally, San Vicente Boulevard, between Pico and Venice Boulevards.	10	On hold
5. Metropolis (2008)	Generally bounded by CA-110, the CA-110 off ramp, Francisco Street, and Eighth Street.	14	Plans submitted to staff 03/2017.

<i>Common Name (Initiation Date)</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Council District</i>	<i>Status</i>
6. NoHo West (2011)	Generally, Laurel Canyon Boulevard, between Oxnard and Erwin Streets, Erwin Street between Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Radford Avenue, Radford Avenue between Erwin and Oxnard Streets.	2	Approved by PLUM 12/13/2016; to be scheduled for City Council.
7. City Market Center (2013)	Generally bounded by 9 th Street, San Pedro Boulevard, 12 th Street, and San Julian.	14	Preparing Final EIR
8. Amendment to existing Figueroa and Olympic Sign District to include Luxe Hotel (2015)	Bounded by Olympic Boulevard, Figueroa Street, 11 th Street, and Flower Street.	14	Preparing Draft EIR
9. Fig+Pico Sign District (2016)	Generally, Pico Boulevard between Figueroa Street and Pembroke Lane, Flower Street between Pico Boulevard and 12 th Street, and Figueroa Street between Cameron Lane and 12 th Street.	14	Preparing Draft EIR

For any questions regarding this report, please contact Tom Rothman at 213-978-1891 or Phyllis Nathanson at 213-978-1474.

Sincerely,

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Director of Planning



Kevin J. Keller, AICP
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VPB:KJK:TR:PJN:mn