

Proposed Citywide Sign Ordinance and Digital Billboard Options

Briefing to
PLUM

Department of City Planning

June 24, 2014



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Ordinance Background

- City banned off-site signs in 2002
- City was sued; spent years in court
- Courts ruled that City can only make limited exceptions to ban
- Needed revisions have taken more than 5 years and 15 hearings



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Why is this ordinance needed now?

- To comply with court rulings
 - Limited, objective criteria for exceptions
 - Address aesthetics and traffic safety
 - Content neutrality
- To preclude further lawsuits and legal costs
- To modernize, streamline and refine the city's sign regulations



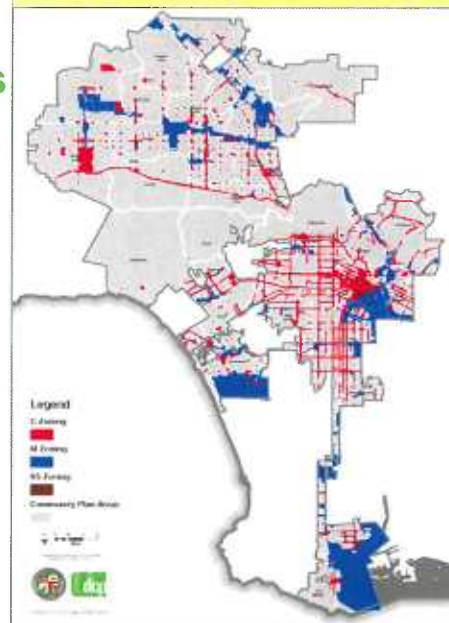
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Sign Districts: Currently Eligible Areas

- Every commercial or industrial property
- R5 properties downtown

Off-site signs also allowed through Specific Plans anywhere in the city

Areas Eligible for Sign Districts (current)



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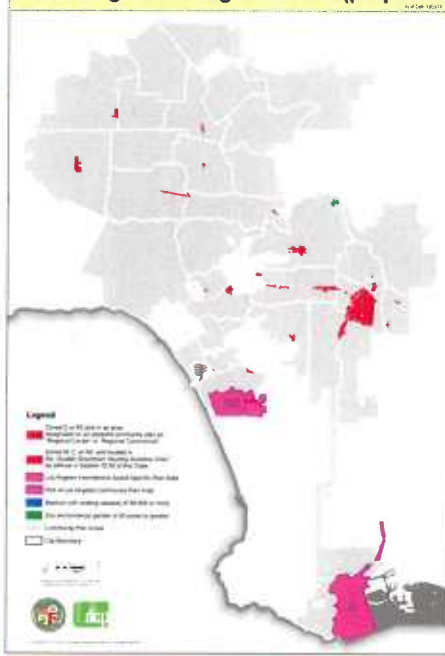
Sign Districts: Proposed Eligible Areas

- Regional centers, LAX, Port of LA, greater downtown area, stadiums, LA zoo
- Prohibited near single family zones, LA River, state/national parks, ecological preserves
- 90% reduction in eligible areas



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Areas Eligible for Sign Districts (proposed)



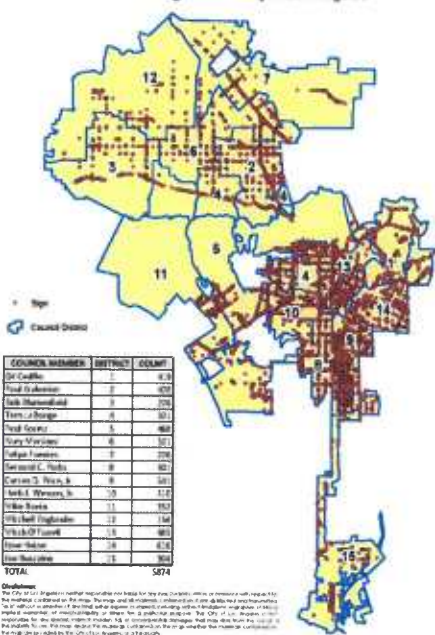
Sign Reduction Ratio

- Proposed ratio: greater than 1 for 1
- Half of this may be met by community benefits related to traffic or aesthetics
- Other cities have higher ratios



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Off-Site Signs in the City of Los Angeles



Digital Displays

- New brightness limits: 7,500 candelas (day), 450 candelas (night)
- Sensors for automatic dimming



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Administrative Civil Penalties: Background

- Enforcement fees currently only a few hundred dollars
- Value of off-site signs up to hundreds of thousands
- City has struggled with flagrant violations
- The NYC example:
 - Over 10,000 citations issued
 - Removed 3,000 illegal billboards



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Administrative Civil Penalties: Recommendation

- Penalties proportionate to off-site sign values
- 15-day grace period
- Penalties waived if sign copy removed
- Appeal process with expedited option
- Penalties will only go into effect 90 days after the effective date of the ordinance



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“Rebuttable Presumption” Signs: Background

- State law requires proof of illegality to enforce off-site sign regulations
- Proof requires evidence
- Two categories of signs – those with a permit, and those without
- For signs with no permit, there is likely no evidence



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“Rebuttable Presumption” Signs: Recommendations

Signs with no permit:

- No permit likely means no evidence of illegality
- Allow as legal nonconforming

Signs not in compliance with permit:

- Permit can be used as evidence of noncompliance
- Subject to citation and enforcement



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Should digital billboards be allowed outside of Sign Districts?



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Background & Summary

Visioning Group met 3 times

- Option 1: No digital off-site signs outside of Sign Districts.
- Option 2: **"Public Option"**. Digital billboards on public (city-owned) property only.
- Option 3: **"Public/Private Option"**. Digital billboards on public and private properties.



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Santa Clarita

- 62 billboards removed
- 3 digital billboards constructed on public property near freeways
- 65% of revenue to City (after deductions)
- Sign consultant helped negotiate terms



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Sacramento

- 17 existing, legal, non-conforming billboards must be removed
- Up to 4 digital billboards facing freeways allowed
- The city will receive an initial payment of 330K then 720K over 5 years



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Chicago

- Up to 60 digital billboards constructed on public property near freeways
- 1 out of 8 messages must be a PSA
- City gets 15 million then 155 million over 20 years
- City gets revenue share between 30-50% (projected to be 276 million or 42%)
- City pays back 41.8 million for construction costs



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Recommendations

- Approve proposed sign ordinance
- Select a digital signs option for further study
- Support creation & continued funding of Sign Unit



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