

January 31, 2017

VIA E-MAIL

Los Angeles City Council
Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: January 31, 2017 Planning and Land Use Management Committee Meeting
Agenda Item No. 2: Citywide Sign Ordinance (CF 11-1705)
Digital Display Signs on Historic Buildings in Existing Sign Districts

Dear Chair Huizar and Honorable Councilmembers:

This firm represents the Hollywood Museum (the “Museum”), a privately-funded nonprofit organization located at 1660 N. Highland Avenue in the historic Max Factor Building. The Museum has received numerous accolades for its efforts to educate the public on the history of Hollywood – the place – and the art, history, technology and worldwide cultural impact of the entertainment industry. The Max Factor Building is designated City of Los Angeles (“City”) Local Historic-Cultural Monument No. 593.

On behalf of the Museum, we write in support of Councilmember O’Farrell’s proposal to revise the draft Citywide Sign Ordinance (the “Ordinance”) to allow off-site digital signs pursuant to a sign adjustment approval process on buildings that are: (1) designated as City Historic-Cultural Monuments; and (2) are located within a sign district that was established prior to the Ordinance’s effective date. The Museum appreciates your Committee’s ongoing support for revising the Ordinance in this manner, rather than an approach that would require the individual modification of each sign district to allow this sign adjustment approval process. Not only would requiring the individual amendment of each sign district create unnecessary work for City staff, it would take several years and further delay the filing of potential applications for much needed sign adjustments.

As set forth in the Planning Department’s January 27, 2017 Staff Report, the recommended approach would allow the Planning Director to grant a sign adjustment for digital display signs subject to the following limitations:

Planning and Land Use Management Committee
January 31, 2017
Page 2

1. The sign must be located on a building designated as a Historic-Cultural Monument in a sign district established prior to the effective date of the Ordinance.
2. The maximum sign area for an individual sign may not exceed 20 percent of the area of the façade of the building on which the sign is located.
3. A sign adjustment may not be granted that would cause the maximum sign area for all signs combined to be exceeded, as set forth in the applicable sign district regulations.
4. The sign must conform to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
5. In order to grant a sign adjustment, the Planning Director must make the findings set forth in the Ordinance and follow the project permit adjustment procedures established by Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 11.5.7.

We believe the above limitations will more than adequately protect historic buildings, while allowing their owners to obtain signage that is highly needed to support the financial viability of historic properties. Buildings that have been designated Historic-Cultural Monuments, such as the Max Factor Building, are often restricted in their ability to utilize traditional signage because strict compliance with existing sign districts and the Los Angeles Municipal Code would call for the placement of signage on character-defining features of the building. With owners unwilling or unable to install such signage because of how it would impair the historic integrity of their buildings, these properties become less commercially viable, which in turn often leads to under-investment and neglect of our City's historic buildings. Allowing the owners of Historic-Cultural Monuments to utilize modern sign technology, such as Digital Displays, and to place signs in locations and in formats that would otherwise not be allowed – after a rigorous sign adjustment process – will further the long-term viability of these historic properties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Victor De la Cruz
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP

cc: Hon. Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember, Council District 13
Ms. Christine Peters, Policy Advisor, Council District 13