



September 17, 2015

**The City Clerk and LA City Clerk Site for CIS submittal;**  
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**City Planning Commission: President David H. Ambroz, Vice President Renee Drake Wilson, AIA**  
**and members via [james.k.williams@lacity.org](mailto:james.k.williams@lacity.org) / [cpc@lacity.org](mailto:cpc@lacity.org).**

**RE: Sign Ordinance – Council File 11-1705 ✓**

The Woodland Hills–Warner Center Neighborhood Council supports the adoption of the strong LA City Sign Ordinance, as adopted by the City Planning Commission, with some possible amending conditions as elaborated below.

The Board is against recently proposed changes being considered by the LA City Council PLUM Committee (and sent to the CPC for its consideration) which would 1) provide amnesty to certain existing billboards and 2) allow for a Conditional Use Permit process for the placement of off-site billboards (including digital) outside of Sign Districts.

The Board is also against any provision that would overturn the ban of off-site billboards in the Warner Center Sign District. Furthermore, the Board is against the creation of a Sign District along Ventura Boulevard for the purposes of introducing additional billboards within the Woodland Hills portion of the Ventura-Cahuenga Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan.

Specifically:

- 1) We are strongly opposed to any efforts to grant amnesty to billboards listed in the Department of Building and Safety's citywide billboard database that either lack permits or are in violation of their permits (resulting in added faces, changes in size, etc.). Where evidence of violation can be established, billboard owners shall be required to remove unpermitted signs and bring violating signs into compliance. Appropriate penalties for the violations should be assessed and collected.
- 2) With the exception of the Warner Center Sign District and the Woodland Hills portion of Ventura Blvd., new off-site signs, including digital billboards, should be allowed only in sign districts in areas currently zoned "regional center" or "regional commercial" as designated by the revised sign ordinance approved by the City Planning Commission on March 26, 2009.

In his June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015 letter to the City Council, City Attorney Michael Feuer stated, “nothing about state law requires the City to grant amnesty for hundreds of billboard structures that either have no permit or were constructed in violation of City permits. We therefore also support:

- 1) Taking aggressive enforcement actions regarding 391 of 937 billboards that have been altered in violation of their permits.
- 2) Taking enforcement actions, to the extent possible, against the 546 remaining structures that lack permits.

The corollary is that we remain in strong support of proposed penalty provisions / fines for non-compliance and consequently strenuous enforcement of permits, which we trust will provide meaningful deterrents from future flagrant disregard for city regulations.

Now it is time for the City Council and City Attorney to step up and maintain the quality of life that the majority of Los Angeles citizens expect. To preserve and improve the public realm while containing the distracting drone of commercial messages impinging on our stakeholders thoughts:

- 1) We support the increased mandatory takedowns of existing billboards in a ration of a minimum of at least 2 traditional/static billboards for each new static billboard erected.
- 2) We support a minimum mandatory takedown of 8 traditional/static billboards for each new digital billboard permitted and erected. Takedowns should occur in the same area / community planning area where new signage is to be erected.
- 3) Whenever new signage is permitted, the damage to the public realm by virtue of the intrusion on the streetscape must be mitigated. As the damage is ongoing, the mitigation must be ongoing in the form of fees to maintain and/or enhance the streetscape within ½ mile of the signage.
- 4) However, even if additional community benefits are offered beyond streetscape fees, the mandatory takedown requirement cannot be reduced. The 2002 City Sign Ordinance places a total ban on all new billboards. Our goal is to reduce signage in our community. Those being granted the privilege to erect new billboards must offset their negative impacts via streetscape fees and community benefits along with contributing to the removal of existing signage.

Finally, the City’s new Sign Ordinance must be consistent in its permitting to pass court review as has been evidenced in the courts and therein lies a big problem. We oppose the expansion of billboard sites outside of Sign Districts via a Conditional Use Permit, which will inevitably introduce inconsistency. Any proposed Conditional Use process provides a wide-open opportunity for future numerous well-financed legal challenges by the billboard industry and will require unnecessary expense, along with constant community vigilance and involvement – an unfair burden placed upon all, and one that could exceed the capacity of this Neighborhood Council and the Planning Department when many other critical issues deserve our attention.

Sincerely,

**Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council**



Scott Silverstein, Chair