

Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council

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Date of NC Board Action: 09/26/2011

Type of NC Board Action: General Comments

Impact Information

Date: 09/20/2012

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 12-1611

Agenda Date: 10/16/2012

Item Number: 10

Brief Summary: This CIS was previously submitted by the GGPNC for a different, but related council file. Please consider our comments.

Additional Information:



PRESIDENT
Ron Ostrow

VICE PRESIDENTS

Linda Demmers – Administration
Robert Menz - Communications

TREASURER

Nelson Bae

SECRETARY

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

**GREATER GRIFFITH PARK
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September 26, 2011

Councilman Ed P. Reyes
Chairman, Planning and Land Use Management Committee (PLUM)
City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Room 410
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: Council File 08-2020; 08-3386-S1, Proposed Ordinance Revising the Citywide Sign Regulations (8/22/2011) Heard Before PLUM 8/9/11 & Scheduled Again for the October 18, 2011 PLUM Meeting

Dear Councilman Reyes:

Attached are the recommendations, with background, of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) Board and its Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation Committee (PZHP) on the proposed ordinance revising the Citywide Sign Regulations. These recommendations (including the text of a Community Impact Statement), **supplement** ones made in the spring of 2009 to the City Planning Commission, PLUM, and the City Council. The Board acted on September 20, 2011.

Sincerely,

Ron Ostrow, President, GGPNC Board

Gary Khanjian, Chairman, PZHP Committee

cc: Councilmember Jose Huizar
Councilmember Paul Krekorian (PLUM)
Councilmember Tom LaBonge,
Councilmember Eric Garcetti,
Councilmember Paul Koretz (GGPNC Area)
Alan Bell and Daisy Mo Planning Department:
GGPNC Governing Board

Attachments: GGPNC Board Recommendations in 3 Sections and text of CIS

CITYWIDE SIGN ORDINANCE, REVISED DRAFT, DATED JULY 22, 2011, PRESENTED AUGUST 9, 2011, TUESDAY, TO PLANNING & LAND USE MANAGEMENT (PLUM) COMMITTEE OF THE CITY COUNCIL Council File 08-2020 and 08-3386-S-1

[The proposed sign ordinance, related documents, and the Planning Department Presentation are available on the (1) GGPNC web site--see on first page of the Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation Committee and/or (2) Planning Department web site under "What's New?" on the left side of the page. Copies of these documents were at the PZHP Committee and Board meetings.]

*****SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GREATER GRIFFITH PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL's (GGPNC) PLANNING, ZONING, & HISTORIC PRESERVATION (PZHP) COMMITTEE--SEPT. 7, 2011, WED., 7 PM--AND BOARD--SEPT. 20, TUES., 2011. 7 PM.**

These supplemental recommendations address new issues due to new provisions in the proposed citywide sign ordinance. Those provisions have been added to and significantly change the citywide sign ordinance approved in spring of 2009 by the City Planning Commission.

This new draft ordinance addresses primarily off-site signs and the creation of new sign districts. These GGPNC recommendations supplement recommendations made to city officials in the spring of 2009.***

***See these supplemental recommendations below at C and D--as separate attachment, as well as E Creation of Citizen Committees to review proposed signs and sign districts and F--Community Impact Statement text that highlights some of the supplemental recommendations. The cover letter to Councilman Reyes, Chairman of PLUM, precedes the supplemental recommendations.]

A. Schedule and Background

On **October 18, 2011, Tuesday at 2/2:30 pm,** the revised draft Citywide Sign Ordinance will again be on the agenda of **PLUM--for action!** Then on to the City Council. Therefore, the GGPNC committees and board **must act in September.**

The current draft citywide sign ordinance is a revision of the draft that was developed by the Planning Department and was being considered by appointed and public officials during the spring of 2009, during which time the city had a **ban on off-site signs--billboard, digital, super graphics, wall, roof, etc.**

Definitions. Off-site signs are those are signs that advertise products and services that are NOT sold in the properties on which the signs are located. On-site signs are those that advertise products and services sold in the building on which the signs are placed.

These proposed recommendations **supplement** the recommendations developed and passed unanimously by the PZHP Committee and GGPNC Board during the spring of 2009. The recommendations were presented in writing and orally to the Los Angeles City Planning Commission (CPC), PLUM, and the City Council.

The ten to twelve points in the 2009 recommendations were made in (a) letters and (b) community impact statements. These documents are on the GGPNC web site, www.ggpnc.org.

To find them, go to the first page, then scroll all the way to the end through many interesting topics. At that point click on the link to the previous GGPNC web site. There scroll a short distance to the image of a billboard in yellow and click on the links to a letter and two community impact statements.

[Printed version of the letter (April 21, 2009) and community impact statement (April 17, 2009) were available at the PZHP Committee meeting, September 7, 2011 and GGPNC Board meeting, September 20, 2011.]

B. Building & Safety Department (BSD) Response 9/6/11 To GGPNC Request of Status of Department's Citywide Survey of Billboards, Legal and Not Legal

The Planning Department is working on ways to provide the survey data through its on line Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS). But the information will NOT include determinations on legality, due to ongoing litigation. The GGPNC/PZHP Committee provided Frank Masi's **2007** survey of all billboards in this NC's area (images, locations, identifying information) to the BSD to assist the department in doing its survey, required under court decision. GGPNC has asked for the BDS survey results every year or more frequently. The results are still not available.

On the BSD web site, under "Reports" are tables from four of the largest sign companies; those table list billboards by address. The BSD's paragraph says that it has NOT confirmed the accuracy of the information provided by the four companies.

CPC, PLUM, and the City Council have been informed of the GGPNC survey during their meetings in 2008, 2009, and 2010 on citywide and Hollywood Sign District proposed sign ordinances, as well as lack of completion and public availability of the BSD citywide survey of billboards, legal and illegal.

C. Proposed Supplemental Recommendations to PZHP Committee and GGPNC Board

1. Effective Management, Communication, Enforcement, Staffing, and Funding City Departments: Planning, Building & Safety, Community Redevelopment Agency, Housing, Transportation, Fire, Police, and City Attorney.

General

- a. **Support effective management, communication enforcement, staffing and funding in each of these departments (1) individually and (2) create effective mechanisms** for these departments, with written and public records, to communicate, coordinate, and share sign and sign district information, ideas, intelligence, strategies, tactics, and best practices on a regular basis, such as every one, two, or three months with regard to proposed signs and sign districts during the time they are proposed, developed, and implemented, as well as monitoring during the sign and district lifetimes.
- b. **Possible mechanisms to implement “a” above are Task Force and Working Groups** that engage top and middle management priority commitment, sign technical expertise, computer and web site expertise, as well as experience working effectively and independently with government staff and elected official, consultants, non-profit organizations, and business representatives. Develop and maintain written records.
- c. **Each department create clear and user friendly web site locations that (1) provide the status and content of proposed off-site sign districts and signs and schedules of public hearings;** (2) include names of litigants, topics of the litigation, as well as administrative and court schedules; (3) indicate summary results of court and administrative decisions and where more detail can be found.
- d. **This information in “c, (1)” above is to be made part of the notice of proposals** to the affected neighborhood councils, resident associations, business organizations, such as local chambers of commerce, other interested stakeholders, and elected and appointed officials
- e. Establish clear areas of responsibility for each department and make that information readily available to the public, neighborhood councils, and resident associations.
- f. Designate a **lead agency**, given the provisions and experience in developing this second draft of the citywide sign ordinance--**the City Planning Department.**

Planning

- a. Support the type of **special sign unit, four to six people**, proposed by the Planning Department and **effective funding of the unit, with public and private funding, including donations, with the condition that the Planning Department staff has clear authority and independence to (1) carry out the provisions of the**

ordinance and in the interests of communities and the city. This authority subject to the review of the City Planning Commission, PLUM, and City Council. (2) Clarify and communicate to the public the options for private and public funding. (3) The special unit responsibilities must include doing the further scrutiny and studies of the topics identified in the cover letter to the ordinance from Alan Bell, Deputy Director of Planning. Those subjects are: Re-permitting, Sign Reduction and Relocation, Revenue Generation, Further Regulation of Digital Displays, Freeway Exposure, Signs Affected by Settlement Agreements, and Combined Signs Among Adjacent Properties.

- b. Support the use of the Planning Department's **on line Zoning, Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS)** as the **mechanism to provide information on proposed off site sign districts and off site signs, schedules, and implementation.** The information should include a detailed description of the sign(s) taken down and confirmed prior to the issuance of a permit to put up a new sign in current sign districts and proposed sign districts. **Neighborhood councils and resident associations impacted by proposed sign districts and sign must be notified of the information** on ZIMAS and in other sources of information in the Planning Department.

D. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

The City Planning Commission (CPC) approved this ordinance on March 26, 2009, after three public hearings that included extensive testimony from representatives of neighborhood councils, community groups, business and development interests, and the sign industry. Unfortunately, proposed changes to the ordinance first made public on July 22, 2011 by the City Planning Department seriously weaken the ability of the city to protect its citizens from the negative impacts of outdoor advertising.

SIGN DISTRICTS: The CPC retained the sign district provision allowing off-site and other prohibited sign types in sign districts, but greatly limited the potential for negative impact on communities by allowing districts only in high-intensity commercial areas zoned regional commercial or regional center. The CPC also approved a provision that allowed property owners to erect these kinds of signs only after acquiring and removing existing billboards in the surrounding community at a more than one-to-one square footage ratio. The CPC voted to "grandfather" only two pending applications for sign districts under the current city sign ordinance.

The revised ordinance now before the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee seriously undermines the CPC's intent by proposing to grandfather a dozen pending sign district applications and proposals for special signage in specific plan

areas. This could result in hundreds of thousands of square feet of new off-site signage in the city without a single billboard being taken down. The CPC rightly decided that removal of billboards that blight commercial streets in many neighborhoods provides a tangible, quantifiable community benefit as well as ensures that there won't be a net proliferation of new billboards and off-site signage in the city.

COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PROGRAMS: The CPC included this provision to allow special signage rules for large properties like shopping centers and college campuses, but the provision didn't allow any off-site or electronic signage generally prohibited by the ordinance. The revised ordinance would allow those generally prohibited sign types if they aren't visible from the public-right-of-way and don't exceed 10 per cent of the total signage on the property. These comprehensive sign programs would be allowed on any commercial property, either public or private, which opens the door to commercial advertising in city parks and recreational facilities.

ELECTRONIC SIGNAGE: The CPC prohibited electronic signage outside sign districts, but the revised ordinance would allow them as on-site, or business signs anywhere in the city. The only regulations proposed are a minimum eight-second message duration and a daylight and night-time brightness limit. These regulations fail to address serious issues of energy use, traffic safety, light trespass on residential properties, change in community character, and potential for privacy invasion. At a minimum, a moratorium should be placed on the installation of any new electronic signs and conversion of existing signs until regulations are in place that protect residents, motorists, communities and others from adverse effects.

OTHER

Donor Signs: Signs recognizing donors would be allowed by-right, without restrictions on size, location, text. This would allow signs carrying corporate logos anywhere, including city parks and other public property. These should not be allowed without strict regulations on size, text, and placement.

Right of Private Action: The provision allowing property owners within 500 ft. of an illegal sign to file suit if the city failed to enforce citations was removed from the CPC-approved ordinance, but should be reinstated.

Signs in the Public Right of Way: The ordinance exempts signage in the public right-of-way from any regulations. This signage should be made subject to all the regulations of the ordinance.

Sign Adjustment: The ordinance would allow a zoning administrator to approve a 20% deviation from sign area and height, location, projection and clearance, and time limits on temporary signs, and would allow variances for adjustments beyond 20%. These are far from "minor" adjustments and should not be allowed without a public hearing and

appeal process.

Signs Covering Windows: The CPC-approved ordinance prohibited any signs covering windows, but the revised ordinance would allow them if the fire department certified that they didn't present a safety hazard. This fails to account for the fact that signage adhered to windows can degrade the view to the outside, and seriously affect the quality of life of tenants of offices and apartments.

Temporary Signs: The revised ordinance doubles the allowable size of temporary signs, opening the door for building-size supergraphic-style signs that can be on a building for as much as 90 days in a given year.

DOT hazard Review: The revised ordinance removes the provision requiring any signs within 500 ft. of a freeway to undergo a DOT hazard review. This should be restored.

E. Proposed Sign Usage Districts: Citizen Committees. Supplemental recommendation from the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council Board, September 20, 2011, regarding Council Files 08-2020 and 08-3386-S1 the proposed draft Citywide Sign Ordinance, dated July 22, 2011. The proposed ordinance addresses primarily proposed off-site sign districts.

“It is proposed that a citizen’s committee be formed by that district’s City Council member(s) where a proposed Sign Usage District would be located to advise, caution and direct the City Council in the appropriate and agreed-upon signage that is intended for their immediate vicinity.”

Background

With the refusal of the City Attorney’s office to handle further individual litigation against offending signage, the influence/control of a stakeholder has over their environment is greatly diminished. This is particularly true if a Sign Usage District (SUD) is given the 5,000 feet of street frontage specified in the new (2011) SUD proposal. It will be difficult for the City Council to fully gauge the response of a community to a proposed SUD or receive useful information on an in-depth basis with the current format of the 2-minute stakeholder presentation currently used by the Council and its committees. While the Planning and Land Use Management Committee

(PLUM) generously allows continual appearances by the same constituents, the speaker is still given only two minutes.

F. GGPNC Board, September 20, 2011, Community Impact Statement Text on Proposed Ordinance Revising Citywide Sign Regulations (dated 8/22/11), Council Files 08-2020; 08-3386-S1. This proposed ordinance addresses primarily off-site sign and creation of off-site signs districts.

The Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) **opposes adoption** of the revised citywide sign ordinance draft now pending before the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee because the draft would now allow (1) **grandfathering of Sign Districts** that have never had public review and **no reduction or exchange of existing signs**; (2) **signs** on large parcels of Public and Private land, opening an opportunity to include **city parks and recreational facilities**; (3) **electronic signage without environmental and safety reviews** for the community; and (4) removal of the **right of citizens to complain and sue**.

The GGPNC **supports** creation of (1) a **special sign unit** in the Planning Department as described by Planning Department staff on 8/9/11 before PLUM; (2) **city department mechanisms**, such as web sites and public notice, for **communicating effectively** to stakeholders, including neighborhood councils, regarding **proposed off-site signs in proposed sign districts**; and (3) **citizen committees**, appointed by city council members in whose areas off-site sign districts are proposed, for the **purpose of providing advise, caution, and direction to the City Council** regarding appropriate and agreed-upon signage.



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September 26, 2011

The Office Of The City Clerk
200 North Spring Street, Room 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

To Whom It May Concern:

At the regularly scheduled, publicly noticed meeting held on September 20, 2011, The Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council voted by consensus to submit the following Community Impact Statement in reference to Council Files #08-2020; 08-3386-S1, which primarily addresses off-site signage and the creation of off-site sign districts:

The Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) **opposes adoption** of the revised citywide sign ordinance draft now pending before the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management Committee because the draft would now allow (1) **grandfathering of Sign Districts** that have never had public review and **no reduction or exchange of existing signs**; (2) **signs** on large parcels of Public and Private land, opening an opportunity to include **city parks and recreational facilities**; (3) **electronic signage without environmental and safety reviews** for the community; and (4) removal of the **right of citizens to complain and sue**.

The GGPNC **supports** creation of (1) a **special sign unit** in the Planning Department as described by Planning Department staff on 8/9/11 before PLUM; (2) **city department mechanisms**, such as web sites and public notice, for **communicating effectively** to stakeholders, including neighborhood councils, regarding **proposed off-site signs in proposed sign districts**; and (3) **citizen committees**, appointed by city council members in whose areas off-site sign districts are proposed, for the **purpose of providing advise, caution, and direction to the City Council** regarding appropriate and agreed-upon signage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ron Ostrow
President, GGPNC