



## CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

November 17, 2015

### **SUBJECT**

Proposed amendment to land use regulations concerning the regulation of billboards. The City of Tacoma is exploring alternatives to its existing billboard regulations, which has resulted in litigation against the City. The goal is to have an overall reduction of billboards and protect neighborhoods and sensitive uses such as historic districts and shoreline areas. There are two proposals being considered, the Planning Commission proposal and a Staff Alternative.

### **SUMMARY – PLANNING COMMISSION PROPOSAL**

The Planning Commission proposal would amend the Tacoma Municipal Code to create a new section specific to billboards (proposed Section 13.06.523). The proposed new section would:

- Create a new exchange program designed to incentivize the removal of nonconforming billboards and allow for the installation of new billboards in exchange for those removals
- Provides relocation credits which emphasize the removal of pole-mounted billboards in favor of wall-mounted ones
- Open the following new zones to billboard wall signs: DCC, DMU, WR, PDB, UCX, CCX, CIX, and NCX.
- Retains amortization as a means to ensure the removal of non-conforming billboards, but extends the timeline for amortization by 3-years for billboards in residential, shoreline, conservation, and neighborhood commercial districts and 5-years for nonconforming billboards in other districts
- Reduces buffer distance from no-billboard zones and sensitive uses (such as schools, parks, historic properties) from 500 feet to 250 feet, with greater reductions for new wall mounted billboards in the downtown
- Increases the height limit for billboards located more than 500 feet from sensitive areas and uses
- Allows for larger and taller wall-mounted billboards with staff review
- Reduces a number of existing design and development standards, but retains the prohibition on freestanding billboards that are off-set, over-cantilevered, extend over buildings, and have more than one face per side
- Requires efficient lighting and illumination to be turned off between midnight and 5 am

### **SUMMARY – STAFF ALTERNATIVE**

The Staff Alternative is based on the Planning Commission's recommendations, as well as the framework provided by the Community Working Group, and is designed to achieve many of the community's goals while reducing the likelihood of continuing legal disagreements with billboard owners. The alternative incorporates the following key features:

- Creates Council authority to enter into a Special Compliance Agreement with billboard owners that could accelerate and ensure a significant reduction in the number of nonconforming billboards in the community and provide an alternative to enforcement of the existing amortization provisions.
- A Special Compliance Agreement would be consistent with the intent and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and would include commitments for overall reductions and commitments for strategic reductions (addressing community issues for billboards such as location in sensitive zones, over-concentrations, and multiple-nonconformities).
- Modifications to the zoning development standards, either within the code or as a component of the agreement, could be incorporated to facilitate the overall intent.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please visit the Planning Services Division's website at [www.cityoftacoma.org/planning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/planning) and click on "Billboards".

### **CONTACT**

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