

# Billboard Regulations Amendment

City of Tacoma

Planning and Development Services

City Council Study Session  
December 1, 2015



# Overview

- ❖ Intent is to resolve outstanding billboard regulatory issues
- ❖ Consider Regulatory Options
  - Existing Code
  - Planning Commission
  - Staff Alternative
  - Hybrid
- ❖ Key Questions
  - Do we want to retain amortization or provide an alternative?
  - Do we want to open new areas to freestanding billboards (and large ones)?



# Community Goals

- ❖ Significantly reduce the number of billboards
- ❖ Protect sensitive areas
- ❖ Avoid continuing legal disagreements



# Standstill Agreement

- ❖ Dismiss existing lawsuits
- ❖ City stays enforcement, including amortization
- ❖ Agree to meet and confer to determine if a permanent solution can be found
  - Focus on consolidation program to remove specified signs from designated areas in exchange for bulletin-sized static billboards
- ❖ Clear Channel relinquished “banked” sign permits
  - To be credited as part of an exchange program
- ❖ Clear Channel removes 31 billboard faces
- ❖ Clear Channel performs maintenance on 14 other billboard structures
- ❖ If fail to reach agreement, either may resume lawsuit

# Public Hearing Testimony

## ❖ Billboard Supporters

- Billboards are an effective tool for local businesses
- Income from billboards is important to billboard owners & property owners
- They were legally installed, should at least preserve nonconforming rights
- Alternative provides a mechanism to move forward without a legal battle

## ❖ Billboard Critics

- 1997 amortization is legally viable and should be enforced
- Alternative does not provide enough removals for benefits realized
- New freestanding bulletin billboards are not appropriate
- Many of the proposed removals are insignificant and shouldn't be given credit (e.g. 72 sq. ft. signs)
- Billboards detract from the community and visibility of businesses
- Concerns about the cost/viability of removing signs along state highways and MAP 21 arterials

# Public Hearing Testimony

## ❖ Billboard Owners

- PC recommendation does not represent an alternative that is significantly different from the existing code, as it includes amortization
- Amortization is problematic and unfair, and removals along highways and arterials with would still require compensation payments
- Limiting the new zones to wall signs was not part of the CWG work, and will severely limit the potential for exchanges
- Local businesses and non-profits benefit from billboard advertising
- Approx. 220 landowners host billboards and get income from them
- 81 sign faces have removed since 2012
- Large signs are necessary for consolidation

# Options

## ❖ Existing Code

- Retain amortization and existing limitations

## ❖ Planning Commission Recommendation

- Limited new exchange program (focused on wall signs)
- Retain amortization (with 3/5 year grace period)

## ❖ Staff Alternative

- Allows freestanding billboards in new zones, and limited areas for new bulletin-sized billboards
- Allows Compliance Agreement as alternative to amortization
  - 40% overall reduction in nonconforming signs in 5 yrs
  - 20% reduction of the freestanding face cap

## ❖ Hybrid

- New areas based on PC/CWG recommendations
- Provide Compliance Agreement as alternative to amortization

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