

MEMORANDUM

September 16, 2015

TO: Planning Commission
Chris Beale, Chair
FR: Steve Wamback, Chair
Billboard Task Force, Planning Commission
RE: Summary of Task Force recommendations for Billboard Regulations

This memorandum is to transmit to you a summary of the Billboard Task Force recommendations for regulatory changes for billboards, in preparation for discussion at the September 16 Planning Commission meeting.

The Task Force consists of four members and one alternate from the full Commission: myself, Don Erickson, Meredith Neal, and Anna Petersen. Brett Santhuff served as alternate. The group met five times, starting August 17 and concluding last night.

The purpose of this Task Force was to review the Community Working Group reports as well as staff review of work so far. The Task Force was formed to pick up where the CWG left off while also considering prior years' work, to incorporate the Commission's role in recommending code, and to form a recommendation for the Planning Commission in developing draft code and preparing for public review.

We discussed all major topics relating to existing and relocated billboards: design, maintenance, landscaping, height, lighting, buffering, dispersal, and allowed zones. We also discussed an exchange mechanism whereby billboards may be removed and some or all of the square footage be relocated to a new (conforming) location.

The summary of recommendations is attached. The recommendations reflect consensus among the group and we believe that the package will be at an appropriate level of detail to be released for public review.

A draft of code revisions will be provided to the Commission at the September 16th meeting.

Summary of Task Force Recommendations – Billboards

Exchange:

The Task Force recommends adoption of an exchange system to allow the removal of billboard faces and to relocate the square footage, in all or in part, in another location. This includes allowance of wall-mounted billboards in additional zoning districts. The Billboards Community Working Group did not make any recommendations regarding specifics of an exchange program.

In the existing “allowed” districts (M1, M2, PMI, and C2), new pole-mounted billboards would be allowed in exchange for removal of an equivalent nonconforming billboard.

In the “newly allowed” districts, only wall-mounted billboards would be allowed.

The following exchange “values” are assigned providing for square footage on a newly located billboard for each square foot removed of an existing nonconforming billboard. The ratios are as follows:

- Relocating from a non-conforming pole sign in any zone to a wall sign downtown (DCC, DMU, WR) or UCX has a 2:1 ratio – the biggest incentive of the exchange. Two square feet of new billboard wall signage will be granted for every one foot of billboard pole signage removed.
- Relocating from a non-conforming pole sign to wall sign in same district or “newly allowed” zone will result in a 1.5:1 exchange. One and a half square feet of new billboard wall signage will be granted for every one foot of billboard pole signage removed.
- All other sign relocation in the C-2 and industrial zones would be a 1:1.5 ratio granting 1 square foot of new billboard pole signage for every one and a half square feet of non-conforming billboard removed.
- Relocation from non-conforming pole signs to wall signs in the NCX would be allowed at a 1:1 ratio once the following non-billboard zones and overlay zone are rid of non-conforming billboards (R-2, R-4, RCX, CONS, S10, and C1 – 17 billboards).

Finally, the Task Force recommends keeping an amortization clause in the regulations, to be modified to align with the new exchange program and with a revised “sunset” date. Billboards would still be considered nonconforming if they are not compliant as of the date of the regulations and amortization should be pursued.

Maintenance:

The CWG, staff, and the Planning Commission Task Force have concurred that the recommendation is to retain existing code related to maintenance.

The Task Force also recommends including language specific to immediate graffiti removal from a billboard. TMC 8.120 states that a site with graffiti is considered a nuisance. When a correction letter is sent the property owner has 18 days to abate the condition. The Task Force recommends stricter language for billboards, requiring abatement within 48 hours of notification. This would be enforceable under TMC 13.05.100, but would be supplemental to that language (which also allows 18 days for compliance).

Design:

The Task Force concurs with the CWG and recommends removing the requirement that billboard faces are within five degrees of perpendicular of the roadway, as well as the deleting the 10-foot maximum setback requirement. Wall mounted signs must meet the requirements for all wall signs**, and may not be located on the primary façade of a structure. Pole-mounted billboards would be subject to the applicable sections of the freestanding sign regulations. ++

Further, the Task Force agrees with the deletion of the clause about cantilevered design; however, offset faces would not be allowed. Pole signs would be required to be a single pole only. The rationale behind this is to reduce the amount of visible structure.

For sites with an existing freestanding on-site sign, a billboard may be allowed only if it is building-mounted. No freestanding billboard would be allowed.

Landscaping:

The Task Force concurs with CWG and staff to delete the section about the required landscaping buffer. The remaining language should be retained.

Dispersal:

The Task Force forwards the following recommendation for changes to the dispersal language in the current TMC (which has a 500-foot dispersal restriction on all billboards).

- Billboard faces over 300 sf in size, not located on the same structure, shall be a minimum of 500 feet apart, including billboards which may be located outside the City limits.
- Billboard faces of 300 sf or less in size, not located on the same structure, shall be a minimum of 300 feet apart, including billboards which may be located outside the City limits.
- Wall mounted billboards shall not be located within 200 feet of another billboard within the same view corridor (i.e., billboards on opposite or perpendicular faces of a building/s may be closer).

Rationale: in order to achieve a reduction in the number of faces in undesirable areas, and in order to remove nonconforming billboards, additional areas need to be provided for an exchange.

Size/Dimensions:

The Task Force forwards the following recommendations for allowed billboard sizes:

- Maximum size of 300 square feet for all non-industrial zones permitting billboards
- Maximum size of 672 square feet in M-1, M-2, and PMI for existing freestanding signs
- Wall mount maximum of 672 square feet in all districts allowing billboards, with larger sizes permitted downtown with staff review.

The Task Force concurs with staff to retain existing vertical and horizontal face dimensions for pole mounted signs; for building mounted signs vertical and horizontal dimensions are flexible.

Lighting:

The Task Force recommends that any billboard lighting be LED or equivalently efficient lighting. All billboard lights must be turned off from midnight until 5 a.m. In addition, the code should clarify that timers or other device are used to make sure lights are off during daylight. Otherwise, retain current language.

Buffering:

The Task Force recommends a buffer of 250 feet from all “non-billboard zones”, overlays, and protected uses. In short, retain the existing buffering language but change “500 feet” to “250 feet”. Religious institutions are removed from the list of buffered uses (unless deemed historically significant by historic preservation officer).

Height:

The Task Force recommendation is that for any freestanding billboard within 500 feet of residential, shoreline, view-sensitive, historic, and conservation districts the maximum height should be 30 feet; building mounted signs may be higher based on staff review.

If a billboard is located more than 500 feet from residential, shoreline, view-sensitive, historic, and conservation districts the maximum height would be 35 feet.

Wall mounted signs must be at least 10 feet from the ground to discourage vandalism. There are existing wall mounted signs permitted in the city without limitation to height above the ground.

Location:

Add UCX, CCX, CIX, DCC, DMU, WR, PDB, and NCX to zoning districts allowing billboards (see matrix below). The reasoning behind this is that these zones have development characteristics that are very similar to the current “allowed” zones. In addition, the allowed zones already have a concentration of billboards. By adding these zones, additional acceptable areas are opened up for relocating and consolidating billboard faces. The Task Force has included limitations on billboards in these new areas (e.g., no new pole-mounted billboards) and has maintained buffers, height, and lighting limitations.

In addition, the Task Force recommends a future consideration of off-premises signs that are smaller (maximum of 32 square feet) and incorporated into an overall streetscape design. These signs would be allowed in all “billboard” zoning districts as well as C-1 and all downtown districts. The Task Force concurs with the staff recommendation that code be developed for these kinds of signs:

- must be located on a building face which is perpendicular to the sidewalk if the near edge of the sign is within 10 feet of the sidewalk;
- signs are also allowed on permitted information kiosks ;
- signs must be located a maximum of 7 feet above the adjacent sidewalk;
- require a minimum 200 foot dispersal between each pedestrian scale outdoor advertising sign; and
- signs will require a sign permit (and a street occupancy permit if applicable) and square footage utilized will be deducted from banked billboard square footage.

Billboard Use Matrix

Size	Type of Sign	Existing allowed				"New Zones"							
		PMI	M2	M1	C2	CIX	UCX	NCX	CCX	DCC	DMU	WR	PDB
72 sf	Jr Poster/Wall Mount	P	P	P	P	P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	P
72 sf	Jr Poster/Pole Mount	relocated only				Not allowed							
< 300 sf	Poster/Wall Mount	P	P	P	P	P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	P
< 300 sf	Poster/Pole Mount	relocated only				Not allowed							
> 300 sf	Bulletin/Wall Mount	P	P	P	P	P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	P
> 300 sf	Bulletin/Pole Mount	P*	P*	P*		Not allowed							

P = permitted

P* = existing signs permitted, but no new

P+ = permitted once all billboards are out of R, SHR, CONS, RCX and C-1 Districts

Additional items:

The Task Force recommends that a definition of “pedestrian-scale outdoor advertising sign” be developed to accommodate this additional type of signage.

Further information is needed about the effects of “MAP 21” applicability to arterial streets and the off-premises signs located along those streets.

Prior to any relocation of signs, all illegal signs must be removed.

The Task Force made a recommendation to keep the “cap” on billboard faces and square footage.

** The wall-mounted sign definition includes any sign mounted or painted on the wall of a building. There are specific regulations for wall-mounted signs in TMC13.06.521. These would apply to a wall-mounted billboard, as well.

E. Wall Signs. Special regulations governing wall signs are as follows:

1. A wall-mounted sign shall not extend above the wall to which attached or above the roofline.
2. A wall sign shall not extend more than 18 inches from the wall to which it is attached.
3. No wall sign shall cover wholly or partially any wall opening nor project beyond the corner of the wall to which it is attached.
4. Where a wall sign extends over a public or private walkway, a vertical clearance of eight feet shall be maintained above such walkway.
5. For the purposes of this subsection, any building with an actual or false mansard roof may use such walls or roof for wall sign installation.
6. An architectural blade designed primarily for the placement of signs may be erected on top of a wall, parapet, roof, or building face and shall comply with all applicable height limitations. All supporting structure for such signs shall be completely enclosed.
7. Painted signs, on the building, shall be calculated with the allowed sign area for a business.

++ The freestanding sign definition is “A permanently installed, self-supporting sign resting on or supported by means of poles, standards, or any other type of base on the ground” and would include pole-mounted billboards. The standards for freestanding signs are below, and could apply to billboards in addition to any other specific regulations. As with wall-mounted, this section could be referenced in the billboard section as well.

G. Freestanding signs. Special regulations governing freestanding signs are as follows:

1. No freestanding sign shall be located within 15 feet of a residentially-zoned district, and where the side of a commercially zoned property abuts the side of a residentially-zoned property the first 100 feet of the commercial frontage shall have a sign setback requirement of 15 feet.
2. Minimum clearance. All freestanding signs shall have a minimum clearance to the ground as follows:
 - a. Over parking lots and other similar areas where vehicles are moved or stored, 14-1/2 feet;
 - b. Over footpaths, sidewalks, and other spaces accessible to pedestrians, eight feet.
3. Signs shall be located upon the frontage for which the sign area is calculated.
4. No freestanding sign shall project over a public right-of-way, unless an adjacent structure or sign is built out to or over the property line that blocks visibility to a freestanding sign on the adjoining property; then, such freestanding sign may be located so that the sign structure is on private property and the sign cabinet may project over the right-of-way, subject to all the provisions regulating projecting signs which project over rights-of-way.
5. Signs placed on public property and/or right-of-way, abutting the business for which they identify, will require a Street Occupancy Permit. Sign regulations shall be determined by the zoning district of the abutting property.

CITY OF TACOMA

Planning Commission Billboards Task Force Recommendations

Presented to: Planning Commission

September 16, 2015

John Harrington, Planning and Development Services

Task Force

- ❖ Four members with one alternate
- ❖ Steve Wamback, Chair
- ❖ Held 5 workshops, just under 3 hours each
- ❖ Produced a summary of recommendations

Exchange Ratios

CWG made no recommendations

Recommendations

- 2:1 ratio - Wall mounted granted downtown for non-conforming pole mounted removed
- 1.5:1 ratio - Wall mounted granted in same district or "new" zone for non-conforming pole mounted removed
- 1:1.5 ratio - Relocated pole mounted granted for non-conforming pole mounted removed
- 1:1 ratio - Wall mounted square footage granted in NCX for non-conforming pole mounted removed - permitted only if all billboards are out of R, RCX, CONS, SHR and C-1 zones
- Keep amortization clause with revised "sunset" date

Wall Signs



Maintenance

CWG recommendations

- Retain existing regulations

Recommendations

- Concur with CWG recommendation, and add
 - Graffiti must be abated in 48 hours of notice of violation or monetary penalty is imposed to land owner.

Design

CWG recommendations

- Retain, but remove:
 - 5 degrees of perpendicular
 - Cantilevered and off-set
 - Maximum 10 ft setback

Recommendations



- Concur with CWG adjustments except:
 - Wall mounted signs prohibited on primary facades
 - Retain prohibition of off-set faces (shown above)
 - Free-standing signs required to be single pole
 - On sites with an existing freestanding on-site sign, only wall-mounted billboards allowed

Landscaping

CWG recommendations

- Delete section about required landscaping buffer for billboard support base

Recommendations

- Concur with CWG recommendation

Dispersal

CWG recommendations

- 200 ft or less in Industrial zones and CIX
- 300 ft or less in CCX, UCX
- CWG split for commercial and downtown
 - 100-400 range in C-2, PDB
 - 100-500 ft range DCC, DMU, WR

Recommendations

- 500 ft for faces over 300 sf*
- 300 ft for faces 300 sf or less
- 200 ft for wall mounted faces within same view corridor

*no new pole mounted signs are permitted over 300 sf

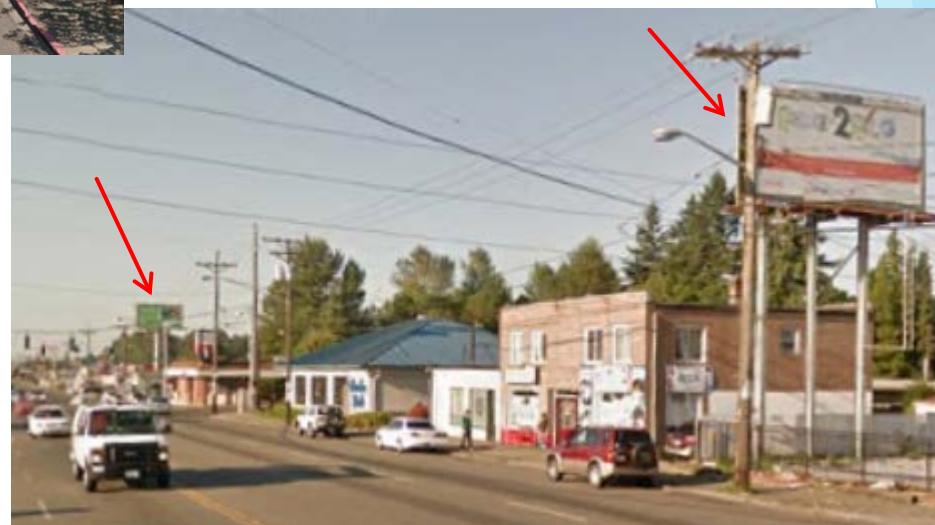
Dispersal

500 feet from 672 sf face



Over concentration
4 billboards in 366 ft

~300 feet to 288 sf face



Size/Dimensions

CWG recommendations

- Max 300 sf in non-industrial zones
- Max 672 sf in industrial zones
- CWG split for mixed use, commercial and downtown
 - 300-672 range in mixed use and commercial
 - 378-672 range downtown

Recommendations

- 300 sf in non-industrial zones and relocated signs in industrial zones
- Max 672 in industrial zones for existing freestanding signs
- Max 672 for wall mounted in all districts with larger size downtown with staff review
- Retain existing vertical/horizontal dimensions for pole signs, wall signs are flexible

Size



Lighting

CWG recommendations

- Retain current code

Recommendations

- Retain current code and add:
 - Require LED or equivalent lighting
 - Must be turned off from midnight to 5 am
 - Timers or other devices should be used to make sure lights are off during daylight.

Buffers

CWG recommendations

- Buffer to Residential districts:
 - 100 ft in industrial zones
 - 250 ft in commercial and mixed use zones
 - No recommendation for downtown
- Buffer to sensitive uses (parks, schools, churches, etc)
 - 250 ft or less in industrial and downtown zones
 - 100 ft or less in commercial and mixed use zones
- Buffer to billboard prohibited and overlay districts
 - 250 ft or less in industrial and commercial zones
 - No recommendation (100-300 range) in mixed use and downtown zones

Buffers

Recommendations

250 foot buffer to:

- All billboard prohibited zones (all R, all SHR, RCX, HMX, URX, NRX, DR, C-1, T)
- All billboard prohibited overlay districts (HIST, CONS, VSD)
- All sensitive uses (public open space, playground parks, recreational property, primary and secondary schools, churches*)

*Only includes churches that are historically significant

Height

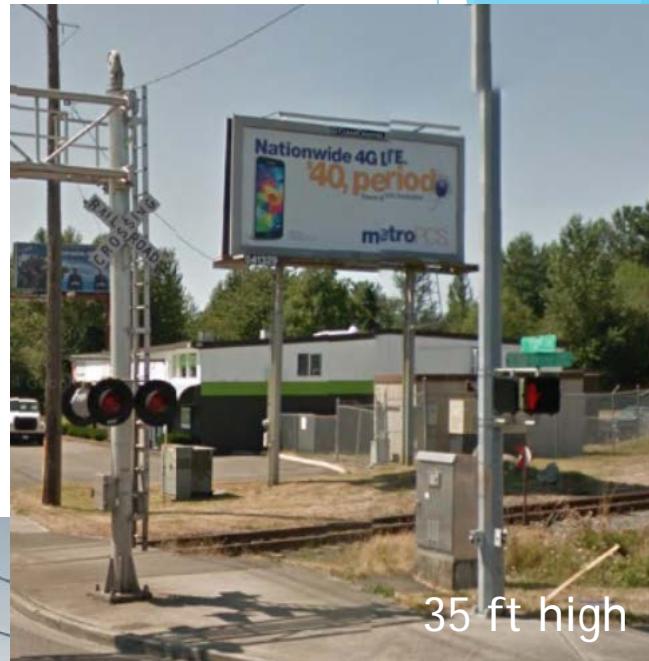
CWG recommendations

- Retain 45 ft maximum PMI zone
- No recommendation outside the PMI zone
 - 2/3 of CWG voted for 35-45 ft

Recommendations

- 30 ft maximum if located
 - within 500 ft of R-Dist, SHR, VSD, HIST, CONS; building mounted signs may be higher with staff review.
- 35 ft maximum if located
 - more than 500 ft from a Residential, SHR, VSD, HIST, CONS district
- Bottom of wall mounted signs must be at least 10 ft above the ground to discourage vandalism

Height Examples



Location (Zones)

CWG recommendations

- Add 3 mixed use zones - UCX, CCX, CIX
- Add 3 downtown zones - DCC, DMU, WR (wall signs only)
- Add 1 commercial zone - PDB

Recommendations

- In addition to CWG recommendations, add:
 - NCX - wall signs permitted only after all billboards are removed from R, RCX, CONS, SHR and C-1 Districts (17 billboards)

Location (Zones)

Billboard Use Matrix														
Size	Type of Sign	Existing allowed				"New Zones"								
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< 300 sf	Poster/Pole Mount	relocated only				Not allowed								
> 300 sf	Bulletin/Wall Mount	P	P	P	P	P	P	P+	P	P	P	P	P	
> 300 sf	Bulletin/Pole Mount	P*	P*	P*	Not allowed									
	P = permitted P* = existing signs permitted, but no new P+ = permitted once all billboards are out of R, SHR, HIST, CONS, RCX and C-1 Districts													

Pedestrian Scale Signage



Pedestrian Scale Billboards

CWG recommendations

- No recommendations

Recommendations

- Future consideration of pedestrian scale < 32 sf signs allowed in all billboard districts and the C-1 and DR
 - Allowed on building faces perpendicular to sidewalk
 - Allowed on information kiosks
 - Signs must be a maximum of 7 feet above the adjacent sidewalk
 - 200 ft dispersal between each such sign
 - Require permit and street occupancy permit if applicable (can use banked billboard square footage)²⁰

Tentative Schedule

(as of September 16, 2015)

Date	Event
March 24	City Council - Resolution No. 39145
May - Sept.	Discussions with Clear Channel
June - Sept.	Community Outreach - Stakeholders, Billboards Community Working Group, Neighborhood Councils, Business District Associations, interested parties
June - August	Planning Commission - Review
August 11	City Council - Study Session
August 15	Standstill Agreement - Existing expires but automatically extends
September	IPS Committee - Status update
October 7	Planning Commission - Public Hearing
October 21	Planning Commission - Recommendation
November 17	City Council - Study Session and Public Hearing
November	IPS Committee - Recommendation
December 1	City Council - First reading of ordinance to adopt amendments
December 8	City Council - Final reading of ordinance to adopt amendments

Next Steps

- ❖ September 16th Meeting
 - Set public hearing date
- ❖ October 7th public hearing
 - Staff report and draft of new TMC
13.06.523 Billboards

CITY OF TACOMA

Planning Commission Billboards Task Force Recommendations

Presented to: Planning Commission

September 16, 2015

John Harrington, Planning and Development Services