

February 3, 2015

Representatives from Scenic Tacoma, Neighborhood Councils, Business Districts, and Historic Tacoma

Summary of interests, values, and goals

Recap of collaboration and compromise

In early 2011, an informal coalition of neighborhood council and business district members, Historic Tacoma board members and individuals, formed in opposition to the City and Clear Channel's 2010 agreement to consolidate and reduce billboards in return for digital billboards. The Scenic Tacoma group emerged, allied with the national Scenic America coalition. In collaboration with a number of individual citizens, we successfully lobbied to remove digital billboards from consideration. In late 2011, Council also took action to significantly tighten code related to billboards. In late 2014, many of the Scenic Tacoma group were asked to join the City's Billboard Community Working Group.

Underlying interests and values: From the common values identified by the Billboard Community Working Group in late 2014, our group most strongly identifies with three: a pleasing city environment, attractive streetscapes, and uncluttered shoreline. We also believe that billboards are the only advertising medium that people don't have a choice whether to view or not; they are on public roadways paid for with public dollars, and should thus be strongly limited and regulated in size, height, dispersal, and proximity to residential, historic and special use areas such as public schools and parks. We also believe in the principle of fair play: Clear Channel purchased its billboards in Tacoma in 2002 and 2003 with full knowledge that it would need to remove them in 2007 under Tacoma's 1997 ordinance.

Collaboration and compromise: We compromised by voting to allow billboards in CCX, UCX, CIX, WR, DCC, and DMU zones, to reduce buffers from 500 to 300 feet, as well as to reduce dispersal requirements in many cases. We agreed to remove most design requirements and to allow wall signs in limited cases. Given our experience in 2011, we feel that we have a good sense of citizen and neighborhood concerns. In turn, we have stood firm on disallowing billboards in residential areas, maintaining healthy buffers between residential and other zones, and been attentive to special use and special district overlays. Given our concern for billboards near residential areas, we also believe lighting should be turned off between 10pm and 6am.

Goals: Not unlike many members of the Community Working Group, we are interested in building an economically robust community, one that will attract and retain new residents and businesses. We believe that a significant reduction in billboards and appropriate location and design standards will enhance Tacoma's built environment, making it a more attractive and unique place to live and work.