

APPROVED

M E M O R A N D U M

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DATE: FEBURARY 21, 2002 WC 9990
TO: AGENCY COMMISSIONERS
FROM: JERRY SCHARLIN, ADMINISTRATOR
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES PROHIBITING THE
CONSTRUCTION OF POLE SIGN AND BILLBOARD
STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR OTHER SIGN
STRUCTURES

WATTS CORRIDORS REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT, CD 15

RECOMMENDATION

That the Agency adopt the attached resolution approving a Design for Development prohibiting the construction of Pole Sign and Billboard Structures and providing standards for other sign structures in the Watts Corridors Redevelopment Project Area.

RE

Board approval of December 7, 2000 of Interim Design for Development for 21 Project Areas (including the Watts Corridors Redevelopment Project Area) imposing an interim prohibition on Agency approval of billboard applications in those Areas. The Interim Design for Development expired on December 19, 2001.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Not applicable

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The recommended action is Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308.

SUMMARY

1. The Issue

During 1999-2000, Agency staff received an increasing number of permit applications for the construction of billboards in many redevelopment project areas. Concurrently, there was an increasing concern about the impacts of billboards and other types of signage on the Agency's efforts to achieve its redevelopment plan goals in these project areas.

These goals commit the Agency to, among other things, achieve higher quality architectural and urban design principles, create pleasing and livable environments, and improve general visual and aesthetic conditions in its redevelopment and revitalization efforts in the communities it serves. These goals are stated in Section 105 of the Watts Corridors Redevelopment Plan ("Plan"), and direct the Agency to eliminate blight and create a setting conducive to attracting re-investment into the Watts Corridors Redevelopment Project Area ("Project Area").

2. Prior Agency Action to Deal With Issue

The Plan contains provisions that authorize the Agency to adopt Design Guidelines that establish, among other things, design criteria and other details necessary for proper development of the Project Area. Section 520 of the Plan authorizes the Agency to develop sign and billboard standards.

On December 7, 2000, the Agency Board adopted an Interim Design for Development for 21 redevelopment project areas (including the Watts Corridors Project Area) that directed staff to review billboard applications under the Interim document's rules that prohibit billboards. On that date, the Agency Board also directed staff to prepare individual Designs for Development or Design Guidelines for billboards in these 21 Project Areas. The Interim Design for Development expired on December 19, 2001.

From January-December 2001, Agency staff worked on the proposed Design Guidelines for the Project Area by: (i) surveying the Area to determine the number and location of billboard and pole sign structures there; (ii) drafting

Design Guidelines which addresses the unique blight and other negative impacts created by such billboard and pole sign structures; (iii) presenting the draft Design Guidelines to the Council Office in the Project Area for review and feedback; and (iv) finalizing the Design Guidelines into the form of resolution attached hereto. Agency consultant Patricia Smith assisted staff in these tasks.

In adopting the Interim Design for Development and preparing the proposed Design Guidelines, the Agency is carrying out its mission of improving the conditions of blighted communities as determined by both the Agency and City to be in need of the special attention and tools provided by redevelopment.

3. The Issue In The Project Area

The Project Area encompasses approximately 245 acres roughly bounded by 103rd Street, the Harbor and Century Freeways, and Mona Boulevard. The Project Area contains a mix of land uses including residential, industrial and commercial but is predominately commercial in character. The land use pattern consists of commercial or industrial corridors bounded by neighborhoods of single or multiple family residential units.

Commercial development in the Project Area consists generally of one and two story buildings. There are at least 60 (sixty) billboard and pole sign structures located in the Project Area.

The physical characteristics and Agency redevelopment activities in the Project Area that can be adversely impacted by billboard or pole sign structures are:

- a) Historic Resources
- b) Scenic views, vistas, corridors
- c) Recent public investments in streetscape/landscape,
and
- d) Recent public investments in façade improvements

4. Proposed Design Guidelines To Deal With Issue

The proposed Design Guidelines prohibit the construction, or reconstruction, of Pole Sign and Billboard Structures

and contains standards for all sign structures in the Project Area.

a. Prohibition of Certain New Signs

The proposed Design Guidelines for the Project Area would prohibit new "Billboards" defined therein as sign structures that accommodate a sign panel larger than 50 square feet and are placed on or affixed to one or more poles, columns or posts, and are structurally independent from a building or structure. Also, the proposed Design Guidelines would prohibit new "Pole Signs" defined as a sign structure placed on or affixed to one or more poles, where the pole exceeds 8 feet in height, measured from the existing or artificial grade to the bottom of the sign.

b. Standards For All New Signs

The proposed Design Guidelines contains standards affecting all signs in the Project Area. These standards are geared towards making signs an integral part of a well-designed urban landscape and keeping signs and the areas around signs well maintained and safe. For example, the Design Guidelines contains provisions that: (i) all signs shall be designed as an integral part of the building on which they are located; (ii) all signs shall be properly maintained and free from damaged sign material and graffiti; and (iii) no sign may contain flashing, rotating or hazardous lights or any rotating, revolving, or other moving parts.

c. Application To Existing Signs

The proposed Design Guidelines would apply to existing billboards and signs in the Project Area if the cost of "proposed changes" to such structures exceeds 30% of the replacement value of the sign support structure. Among the proposed changes covered by the Design Guidelines are reconstructions, redesigns and renovations of billboard and other sign structures.

d. Limitations

The above-discussed Design Guidelines provisions address only the most significant problems and conditions created by billboards and other sign structures in terms of proper urban design, aesthetics, and distractions to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The proposed Design Guidelines

expressly does not address the content of (or message on) any sign, in order to comply with First Amendment principles. Moreover, the proposed Design Guidelines would apply only to the Project Area, and not to other areas of the City of Los Angeles. Even if other project areas adopt similar Design Guidelines, there still remain many areas within the City of Los Angeles without such regulations, as can be seen by the map appended hereto. As such, there are ample alternative means of and opportunities for communication, both within the channel of signage and through other methods of communication.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET IMPACT

No additional funds will be required from this action.

BACKGROUND

1. Aesthetics as a Legitimate Goal of Agency Action

The adoption and implementation of a redevelopment plan reflects a comprehensive and coordinated effort to make the designated project area more attractive, both to private investment and to the people who live, work and visit in this area.

Additionally, the successful redevelopment of blighted project areas involves more than just generating additional tax revenues. It includes creating or recapturing visual environments where people want to be and feel comfortable. A major portion of the Agency's work focuses on the proper design of the urban landscape in its broadest sense, since the visual environment has a major impact on how a project area looks and "feels." This look and feel contributes to the ability to attract and retain the type of investment that stabilizes and ultimately improves the project area.

Accordingly, most redevelopment plans include specific language either in their Goals and Objectives or elsewhere that acknowledge a concern for aesthetics, the importance of creating a pleasing environment, and the need for traffic safety. Also, redevelopment plans often contain specific language authorizing the Agency to develop additional standards for signs and billboards, through Design Guidelines, Designs for Development, or other

vehicles. The Watts Corridors Redevelopment Plan contains such provisions, at Sections 507 and 520.

In response to dramatic increases in 1999-2000 in requests to review billboard permit applications for conformity to the redevelopment plans, the Agency adopted an Interim Design for Development affecting 21 project areas, including the subject Project Area. (See part 2 of SUMMARY.)

Concern had been expressed over the cumulative impacts of such an increase in signage on the Agency's redevelopment efforts, as well as impacts to the community in terms of visual clutter, distractions, and negative aesthetic appearance. A general consensus was formed among Agency staff and the communities in which they work, that specific Design Guidelines and Designs for Development needed to be adopted for each project area. (See part 1 of SUMMARY.)

The proposed Design Guidelines were properly noticed, and was reviewed by the Council Office. The Council Office recommends adoption of the proposed Design Guidelines before the Agency Board today.


2. How Proposed Design for Development Relates to Ongoing City Billboard Reduction Efforts

Currently, there is a citywide moratorium (titled Interim Control Ordinance) prohibiting the issuance of billboards for any new off-site signs (including billboards). However, the City moratorium is scheduled to expire in mid-June 2002. If the City interim moratorium is not extended (or a new permanent moratorium not adopted) by that date, new billboard and other sign applications can be expected to arrive at the Agency for processing.

Alternatively, if the City adopts a permanent citywide billboard moratorium (either by itself or as part of a billboard reduction ordinance), the City measure will likely have a variance procedure. Under that variance procedure, new billboard and other sign applications could also arrive at the Agency for processing.

Thus, there is the need for the proposed Design Guidelines to strictly regulate such potential streams of applications to construct or rehabilitate billboards or other signage so they conform to the Redevelopment Plan.

Design Guidelines for Pole Sign & Billboard Structures
Watts Corridors Redevelopment Project



Jerry A. Scharin, Administrator

There is no conflict of interest known to me which exists with regard to any Agency officer or employee concerning this action.

THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, CA

RESOLUTION NO. 6037

RESOLUTION ADOPTING DESIGN GUIDELINES
PROHIBITING THE CONSTRUCTION OF
POLE SIGN AND BILLBOARD STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR
OTHER SIGN STRUCTURES IN THE
WATTS CORRIDORS RECOVERY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT AREA

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of redevelopment is to eliminate and prevent the spread of blight and deterioration; and

WHEREAS, to accomplish this purpose the Watts Corridors Redevelopment Plan ("the Redevelopment Plan") includes goals to enhance the environment, including showing a high level of concern for architectural and urban design standards; and to conserve, rehabilitate and redevelop the Watts Corridors Recovery Project Area ("Project Area") in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan, as demonstrated by Section 507 of the Redevelopment Plan; and

WHEREAS, Section 520 of the Redevelopment Plan authorizes the Agency to prepare and adopt design guidelines that establish design criteria and other development and design controls necessary for proper development of both private and public areas within the Project Area; and

WHEREAS, Section 521 of the Redevelopment Plan prohibits the issuance of building permits or other land use entitlements without the prior review and determination by the Agency that the proposed structure conforms to the Redevelopment Plan, including any adopted design guidelines; and

WHEREAS, a preliminary survey of the Project Area indicates there are at least 60 (sixty) Billboard and Pole Sign structures located in the Project Area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA AS FOLLOWS:

The Agency adopts the following Design Guidelines affecting the location of any new Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign structure, as well as the modification, alteration, redesign, reconstruction or renovation of any Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign structure within the Project Area that require a permit or other land use entitlement from the City of Los Angeles:

1. Except as stated herein, all applicable State, County and City of Los Angeles regulations and code requirements shall apply.
2. No provision of these Design Guidelines shall operate to restrict or prohibit any ideological, political or other non-commercial message on any Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign

structure otherwise permitted by the standards set forth herein.

3. As used in these Design Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

- a. "Billboard" means any sign structure that accommodates a sign panel larger than 50 square feet that is placed on or affixed to one or more poles, columns or posts and is structurally independent from a building or structure.
- b. "Building Face" means the area of a building façade as determined by multiplying the height of a building or structure by the length of the building or structure. The building façade may face a street, alley, or public or privately owned lot.
- c. "Pole Sign" means any sign structure that is placed on or affixed to one or more poles or posts, and the pole or post of which exceed(s) a height of 8 feet as measured from the existing or artificially created grade to the bottom of the sign.

4. No Billboard shall be permitted in the Project Area.

5. No Pole Signs shall be permitted in the Project Area, whether or not attached to buildings.

6. No sign structure shall be located or mounted on a rooftop or on poles or other structures that pass through a rooftop.
7. No sign structure shall be cantilevered over rooftops or otherwise encroach into the airspace above any building or structure.
8. The building and ground area around signs shall be properly maintained at all times. All unused mounting structures, hardware and wall perforations from any previous sign shall be removed, and building surfaces shall be restored to their original condition.
9. The Sign Area available for signage copy for any single sign shall not exceed 96 square feet.
10. The total amount of sign area located on any Building Face shall not exceed 25% of said Building Face upon which the billboard is proposed to be placed. No more than one Building Face on the building shall have a sign.
11. All sign structures shall be designed as an integral part of the building on which they are located, and shall reflect a high level of architectural and construction quality.
12. All signage copy shall be properly maintained and free from damaged sign material and other unsightly conditions (including graffiti).

13. Any sign structures shall be at all times kept in good repair and maintained in a safe and sound condition and in conformance with all applicable codes.
14. Razor wire, barbed wire, concertina wire or other barriers preventing unauthorized access to any sign, if any, shall be hidden from public view.
15. No sign structure may contain flashing, rotating or hazardous lights. The direction and intensity of all lighting shall not be such as to cause nuisance or traffic hazard. Night lighting shall be directed onto the sign face with no glare onto adjacent properties.
16. No sign structure may contain rotating, revolving, or other moving parts intended to attract motorist or pedestrian attention. Moving parts for the purpose of bird control are permitted.
17. No sign structure shall encroach over or upon a public right-of-way.
18. All existing signs not in conformance with these design standards shall be deemed non-conforming uses pursuant to Section 506 of the Redevelopment Plan. Accordingly, any modification, alteration, redesign, reconstruction or renovation of an existing non-conforming sign structure shall conform to these standards if the cost of the work exceeds 30%

of the replacement value of the sign structure. Notwithstanding the foregoing, there shall be no increase in the overall size or dimensions of any existing sign or increase in sign area.

19. The Agency may permit, after review and recommendation of the Project Area Committee or Citizen Advisory Committee, if any, minor variations to these design standards, and/or adopt other design standards for sign structures for development projects that are subject to a Disposition and Development Agreement or an Owner Participation Agreement with the Agency.

20. Sign proposals and applications for permits or other land use entitlements for Billboards, Pole Signs, and all other sign structures requiring a permit or other land use entitlement from the City of Los Angeles shall be reviewed for compliance with these design guidelines, the Redevelopment Plan, and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] and the Agency's Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, and be approved or disapproved in the first instance by designated Agency staff. Any proposal or application disapproved or denied by Agency staff may be appealed by the proponent or applicant, or any other party, to the Agency Board of Commissioners.

21. Should any portion of these design guidelines be challenged and determined to be improper for any reason, such provision

or application may be severed and the rest of these design guidelines remain in effect.

ADOPTED: FEBRUARY 21, 2002

Revised

9-6

Community Redevelopment Agency / Los Angeles

AGENDA REVIEW TRANSMITTAL

POA: WC 9990

Agenda Review on: December 31, 2001 1/18/02 Board Meeting on: January 17, 2002 2/7/02
 Author: Ken Moye Ext: 1737 Project Manager: Bill Price
 Originating Dept: Planning Director: Don Spivack
 Presenter: Bill Price/Ken Moye

Title: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES PROHIBITING THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLE SIGN AND BILLBOARD STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR OTHER SIGN STRUCTURES

CD: 15 Project Area: WATTS CORRIDORS

This Item is submitted for: _____

Public Hearing XX Consent _____ Report _____
 Action XX Executive Session _____ Presentation _____
 This Will require City Council Action: _____

This will require City Council Action: _____
 Explain if there is a time urgency to be acted upon by City Council: _____

Was your item reviewed by Loan Committee? Yes | No | NA

Additional review that may be needed:

	By _____	Date _____		By _____	Date _____
Budget	_____	_____	Environmental	_____	_____
Contracts	_____	_____	Equal Opportunity	_____	_____

Approval as to Form, Content & Legally

Submitted by _____
 Project Manager, if applicable

[Signature] 12/19/01
 Department Head/ Deputy Administrator

[Signature] 1-16-02
 Legal Revised by Kay Reiman 1/14/02 Date

Attachment Checklist:
 Check if attachments are ready or put "to follow" if the attachments will accompany the final Board memo.

Map: _____ Resolution (s): _____
 Others: _____