



Administrative Report

N.1., File # 22-4524

Meeting Date: 8/16/2022

To: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

From: GREG KAPOVICH, WATERFRONT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR

TITLE

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING MODIFICATIONS TO THE CITY'S ELECTRONIC SIGN REGULATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2021, the King Harbor Association reached out to staff and City Council inquiring about necessary maintenance work to the existing King Harbor Freestanding Sign located at Mole D within King Harbor. The existing freestanding sign is maintained by the City and displays King Harbor Marina business names as well as information pertaining to the International Boardwalk and Pier. Proposed improvements included an overall structural analysis, upgrades to LED lighting, and new signage to reflect current tenants within King Harbor. The Association also inquired on the possibility of adding an electronic messaging component to the existing sign. On June 22, 2021, the City Council appropriated \$100,000 of funding for improvements to the existing freestanding sign, including the addition of an electronic messaging board.

Current zoning limitations prohibit electronic display signs within the Waterfront. In fact, electronic signs are prohibited City-wide with the exception of properties within the public and institutional zone to accommodate schools and performance theaters. In order to proceed with the sign improvements mentioned above, the City Council directed staff to identify the necessary municipal code text changes needed to accommodate the addition of a new electronic message display. While it is clear that City Council supports the possibility of an electronic message display in the waterfront area, staff is seeking general direction regarding electronic signs citywide. Based on the feedback received, staff will return to City Council with proposed zoning code updates.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Section 10-2.1814 of the City municipal code, electronic message display signs are only permitted in the public and institutional zone, subject to specific design standards (further listed below) as well as review by the Planning Commission. The following standards must be met before Planning Commission may review any request for an electronic sign within the public and institutional zone;

1. Must be on a site with a school or performance theater with seating for at least 1,000 people;
2. Must be located on a site adjacent to a major arterial street (Anita Street, 190th Street, Artesia Boulevard, Aviation Boulevard, Hawthorne Boulevard, Inglewood Avenue, etc.);

3. No more than one electronic display sign is allowed per site and display information is limited to school or theater interests;
4. The size of the electronic portion of the sign shall not exceed 120 square feet per sign face.
5. Maximum height of the sign containing the electronic display shall be 30 feet.
6. The sign must be an LED screen;
7. The pixel pitch of the display shall be 25.4 millimeters or less;
8. The color of the text on any electronic message shall have the appearance of white on a black background, unless alternative colors are approved by Planning Commission;
9. The message shall not flash on and off. A message shall remain fixed for a minimum of 8 seconds;
10. The electronic sign shall not operate between midnight and 6:00 a.m.
11. Design of the electronic sign shall be incorporated into a high-quality decorative structure that is compatible with the architectural design of buildings on-site.

Located on Harbor Drive just north of the Redondo Beach Marina entrance, the existing freestanding sign within the waterfront is positioned within the Coastal Commercial Zone (CC-3) and a zoning text amendment is necessary to allow for the installation of an electronic message display.

Following previous City Council direction, staff proposes a text amendment that would permit electronic signs within the CC-3 zone, subject to review of a design review entitlement. However, similar to the public and institutional zone, staff proposes the signs be subject to certain design standards unique to the CC-3 zone in an effort to ensure impacts to surrounding properties are mitigated. The design standards outlined for the public and institutional zone (listed above) were carefully created to mitigate negative impacts to surrounding properties but not all of the standards are applicable to the CC-3 zone. Utilizing the standards found within the public and institutional zone as a starting point, staff is seeking further direction from City Council regarding potential design standards specific to the CC-3 zone.

The proposed waterfront site does not contain a school or performance theater and is not located on a major arterial street. As such, requirement number one and two listed above would need to be excluded as design standards in the CC-3 zone. Additionally, requirement number three limits the number of electronic signs to one per site and further limits specific messaging displayed on the sign to those associated with the school or theater interests. In other words, only one electronic sign is allowed per property and off-site advertising is prohibited. The Waterfront is comprised of many properties that collectively share parking and access rights. The existing King Harbor freestanding sign is one of approximately four existing marquee signs out on the waterfront and it advertises information across all areas of the waterfront, including the International Boardwalk and Pier areas. Staff is concerned that allowing up to one per property could negatively contribute to excess signage within the waterfront. For these reasons, staff recommends including a design standard that limits the entire waterfront area to one electronic display sign. Alternatively, staff would limit the number of electronic signs to no more than the number of existing marquee signs within the waterfront.

Although the return on the investment is difficult to determine based on increased sales volume, an electronic message board does offer an opportunity to potentially realize revenue from businesses that wish to advertise on the board. The King Harbor Association estimated the message board could generate approximately \$2,000 per month in advertising revenue or \$24,000 annually. Staff proposes allowing messaging related to any business or event taking place within the waterfront. Staff also recommends an allowance for City of Redondo Beach events/news.

Staff would support implementing requirements four through eleven (listed above) related to overall height, size, operating hours, type of screen, display, and color.

At this time, City Council may also want to consider electronic signs in other areas of the City. Potential areas include properties adjacent to the 405 Freeway and properties located along Commercial Corridors such as Artesia Blvd., Pacific Coast Highway, or Torrance Blvd.

Adjacent to the 405 Freeway - The vibrant nature of an LED sign can provide increased visibility. This is noteworthy on highways where driving speeds are higher and for those businesses with a regional customer base. The properties bounded by Marine Avenue and the 405 freeway represent the only area of the City with commercial frontage along the 405 freeway. Businesses consist of Del Amo Motorsports and Ferguson Kitchen & Bath, each of which draw customers from the greater Los Angeles and South Bay area. Additionally, two hotels front the 405 freeway (Homewood Suites and Hilton Garden Inn) and any additional advertising that decreases vacancy within the hotels could positively impact the City's transit occupancy tax (TOT). Finally, a commercial shopping center anchored by a Vons grocery store also fronts the freeway. Inclusion of one shared electronic sign for all of the businesses located within the shopping center could drive in additional traffic and increase sales tax revenue, much like the shared freestanding sign does within the Waterfront. For these reasons, staff recommends the City Council consider including freeway adjacent properties as part of the planned sign ordinance amendments.

Commercial Corridors - The City of Redondo Beach consists of three main commercial corridors that support our local community in the form of retail sales, restaurants, personal services, etc. The main corridors are located along Artesia Boulevard, Pacific Coast Highway, and Torrance Boulevard. It is along these corridors that you can find smaller businesses meant to support the local community such as gyms, dry cleaners, banks, and restaurants. These corridors are meant to serve our existing citizen base and strive to accommodate various forms of transportation choices such as pedestrians and bicyclists. While an electronic messaging sign would increase visibility for these locally serving businesses, the wayfinding needs of a pedestrian are different than those of an automobile. Pedestrians respond better to hanging blade signs and A-frame signs. In addition, the speed limits along the corridors for vehicles do not match those of the 405 freeway, thus drivers do not necessarily need the increased visibility to counter faster driving speeds. Finally, the sheer number of businesses that would be allowed to install an electronic messaging sign would negatively contribute to the character of the commercial corridors. For these reasons, staff does not support allowing electronic messaging signs along the locally serving commercial corridors.

FISCAL IMPACT

The preparation of this report was done in coordination with the Community Development Department.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for the preparation of the recommended Code amendments is available in the annual budgets for the Waterfront and Economic Development and the Community Development Departments.

APPROVED BY:

Mike Witzansky, City Manager