



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number: 19-6353

Agenda Item Number: 18.

Agenda Date: 9/5/2019

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Michael Shannon, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Proposed Changes to San Antonio City Code Chapter 28 - Sign Code regarding Digital Billboards

SUMMARY:

City Council will consider a proposed update to the City's Chapter 28 Sign Code which will allow for digital faces to be placed on the backside of thirteen (13) existing digital billboards, a change requested and proposed by Clear Channel Outdoor.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In the 1980s, there were around 2,300 billboards within the San Antonio City limits and, over time, that number has decreased to around 1,200 billboards. Additional billboards are prohibited within the City and in order to relocate a billboard, two billboards must be removed. Similarly, new digital billboards are prohibited within the City and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

In 2007, the City authorized a one-year pilot program for digital billboards that allowed for up to 15 off-premises digital billboards (Ordinance No. 2007-12-06-1247). However, permits for only 13 digital billboards were issued and installed during the one-year pilot program, each having only one side of the billboards as digitals. In general, three signs were removed for each re-face (i.e., a 3 to 1 takedown ratio). Overall, 83 billboards were removed during the 2007 digital billboard pilot program. Since then, City code states that no new off-premises digital signs are permitted in the city or the ETJ. The 13 existing digital billboards are required to follow minimum safety standards including minimum dwell time of 10 seconds, the change of message has to be within 1 second or less, default freeze mechanism (in case of malfunction), and may not

display light of such intensity or brilliance to cause glare or impair vision of drivers.

Clear Channel Outdoor has developed a proposal to modify the existing City Code Chapter 28 - Signs to allow digital faces to be added to the backside of the 13 existing digital billboards by removing an estimated 300 junior billboards as well as removal of some large billboards along scenic, urban and/or historic corridors. Such action would result in increasing the number of digital billboards by decreasing the overall number of billboards within City limits. In addition to removing all junior poster billboards within the City (approximately 265 of them in total), the proposed sign code change would require the removal of four billboards for each new digital face installed (i.e., a 4 to 1 takedown ratio). At least one of the billboard takedowns for each of the additional digital faces would be required to be a large 672 sq. ft. billboard located within a protected designated corridor (i.e., historic, urban, scenic, etc.).

The Development Services Department (DSD) held three stakeholder meetings on February 26, 2019, April 5, 2019, and August 6, 2019, to discuss the proposal. Some of the stakeholders include representatives from the Texas Sign Association, billboard operators, Scenic San Antonio, San Antonio Conservation Society, American Institute of Architects and some neighborhood association groups. DSD also held one community meeting through SA SpeakUp on May 15, 2019, to obtain community input and released two on-line surveys through SA SpeakUp to seek input from the community on specifics related to the proposal.

DSD presented the proposed digital billboard changes to the Planning and Community Development council committee on August 12, 2019, who recommended that DSD bring forward the proposal to full City Council for consideration. The members of the committee also gave direction to staff to incorporate additional discussions of proposed additional digital billboard faces for additional billboard removals (“takedowns”) into the 2020 Sign Code Update process.

ISSUE:

Chapter 28 Sign Code revisions require City Council approval.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose not to take any action at this time and leave Chapter 28 - Sign Code as is and maintain the current number of digital billboards.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council approval of the proposed changes to Chapter 28 - Sign Code that would result in the ability to add up to 13 digital faces to the backside of the 13 existing digital billboards by removing an estimated 300 billboards, to include removal of some large billboards along scenic, urban and/or historic corridors.