

SUBJECT: ZONE TEXT AMENDMENT AND SUNSET SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT TO MODIFY STANDARDS FOR OFF-SITE SIGNAGE IN THE SUNSET SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

INITIATED BY: DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT

The Planning Commission will consider a request for an amendment to Part 2, Section 8 of the Sunset Specific Plan, amendment to Sections 19.34.080 and 19.34.090 of the West Hollywood Zoning Ordinance, (Regulations pertaining to Off Site Signs and Prohibited Signs), and an associated Initial Study/Negative Declaration to adopt new policies regulating off-site signage (Billboards and Tall Walls) on Sunset Boulevard.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold the public hearing, consider all pertinent testimony, and recommend approval to the City Council by adopting the following:

- 1) Draft Resolution No. PC 17-1207: **A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COM-MISSION OF THE CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR THE SUNSET BOULEVARD OFF-SITE SIGNAGE POLICY; APPROVE AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS §19.34.080 AND §19.34.090 OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD MUNICIPAL CODE, TO STRIKE OUTDATED SIGNAGE LANGUAGE AND REFERENCE THE SUNSET SPECIFIC PLAN; AND APPROVE A RESOLUTION AMENDING PART TWO, SECTION 8 OF THE SUNSET SPECIFIC PLAN TO ADOPT THE NEW SUNSET BOULEVARD OFF-SITE SIGNAGE POLICY, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA.**

BACKGROUND

The Sunset Strip is a unique destination, globally recognized for its vibrant combination of signs, entertainment, and nightlife, and boasts the densest concentration of off-site signage (billboards and tall-walls) on the west coast. This vibrant area brings visitors both day and night, and is a major economic engine for West Hollywood. The Strip has a long tradition of innovative and memorable signage, becoming famous in the 1960s and '70s for custom-painted billboards featuring popular musical artists of the time. Off-site signs, while part of the character of the Sunset Strip, have also inspired discussion in the community about the addition of new signs, desirable types of signs, and ways to

address any potential negative impacts of new or altered signs. The City is re-envisioning 21st century signage on the Sunset Strip to address changes within the off-site signage industry since Sunset Specific Plan (SSP) adoption in 1996.

In 2012, the City Council directed staff to develop a new process for review of off-site sign applications to better address a number of new signage requests. Staff reached out to residents, off-site signage operators and artists to identify a vision and new approach to off-site signage. The proposed policy consists of:

- Future vision for off-site signage that continues to enhance the Sunset Strip
- Guiding principles that direct implementation of the vision
- Detailed policies that regulate location, approval, construction, and operations for new and modified billboards

The proposed regulations would create a Sunset Strip Billboard District and permit improvements to existing signs as well as the phased addition of no more than 18 new signs over 15 years. New billboards will be integrated into new development and significant façade remodel projects via negotiated development agreements. The proposed regulations would allow limited improvements to the 89 existing billboards, and an overall limit of 20 digital signs (either new or modified) installed over the 15 year period. Proposed regulations for off-site signs include specific standards for size, lighting, community benefits, public art components, protection of public view sheds and vegetation.

This staff report describes the genesis of the project, community outreach, technical analysis, and the implementing policies and how they work. Exhibit A of this report includes the Draft Planning Commission Resolution and two attachments as follows:

- A) Draft Zoning Text Amendment strikeout language to relocate existing Sunset Off-Site Signage from the Zoning Ordinance in the SSP,
- B) Draft SSP replacement language for Part 2: Section 8 of the SSP including both new and existing language.

Additional exhibits to the staff report include the Final Initial Study/Negative Declaration analyzing the project in relation to the environment and technical information related to the policy development.

Policy History

The Sunset Specific Plan was approved in in 1996, and included a chapter on the role of off-site signage on the Sunset Strip. Part Two, Section 8, (Billboards and Art Advertising) identified the cultural and economic significance of off-site advertising, and allowed for improvements to existing billboards, as well as new creative off-site advertising on the sides of buildings, (Tall Walls) and selected opportunities for new off-site signage. The SSP contained a provision that allowed for approval of off-site signs that did not meet the exact development standards set out in the SSP if the City found that the alternative proposal was consistent with the goals and policies in the SSP. Over time, numerous projects have come forward that addressed the intent of the SSP policy, but did not meet the exact regulations, and were approved via zone text amendments to allow alternative standards, and eventually applied different sign standards through

individual development agreements and the associated zone map amendments that place properties in the development agreement overlay zone.

As off-site advertising advanced with new technology and shifts in key advertisers, the SSP regulations became outdated, and the case-by-case approach was a necessary but less than ideal way to consider signage on the Sunset Strip. It became clear that the City should develop a revised vision with the policies to provide flexibility and creativity while addressing the City's desire to maintain the tradition of high quality, creative off-site advertising that promotes cultural relevance. The Sunset Strip is one of the top three most valuable locations for signage in the world, along with Times Square and Tokyo, providing a premier opportunity for creating a unique and valuable public space.

The City Council identified five goals to guide the details of the policy update, directing staff to revise the policy within this framework:

1. Creativity: Seek synergy with entertainment, culture and technology to create unique signs that exist only on Sunset.
2. Aesthetics: Integrate signage and structures into architecture and urban design.
3. Land Use: Prevent detrimental land-use practices dictated solely by signs
4. Technology: Incorporate and develop regulations for using 21st Century technology.
5. Quantity: Define the right amount of additional signage to support and enhance the iconic character of Sunset Boulevard.

Background Research

A team of staff, working closely with a team of land use and signage experts evaluated Sunset Boulevard from urban design, economic, and geographical perspectives. The consultant team was headed by Selbert Perkins, an international firm specializing in large scale urban design, graphics and signage, with team members from Standard Vision, an innovative architectural and digital media company, lighting designers Frances Krahe and Associates, and traffic experts from Fehr and Peers. Attachment E describes the analytic process that result in the vision for signage as a catalyst to re-invigorate the existing Strip.

Over the past few years, the project team conducted exploration, analysis and outreach to develop a nuanced approach that preserves and enhances an iconic public place. Work efforts included community meetings, discussions with outdoor advertising companies, property owners and industry experts. The team created an updated inventory of existing of-site signs (Exhibit A, Attachment B, Appendix), as well as analysis and comparisons of other places noted for creative off-site signage such as Times Square, Las Vegas and Tokyo. Additionally the team conducted an analysis of land uses on the Strip, including the financial impacts of signage on development; contemporary practices of the signage and advertising industry with the most current approach to light emission and the relationship of digital billboards to safe driving. The analysis also examined how the unique geography of Sunset Strip influences its urban design.

Economic analysis estimates that the current total value of all the signs on the Sunset Strip is approximately \$44.2 million per year. Based on analysis and conversations with both Sunset and industry stakeholders, the team determined that the City has the leverage and the desire to demand the highest quality for off-site signage on Sunset, and require associated public benefits to enhance the Strip and the community as a whole.

Vision

The team investigation of existing conditions, state of the art off-site advertising practices led to the vision for off-site signage that supports the arts, improves pedestrian orientation and enhances urban design. These statements describe the future Strip that embodies this vision:

- The 21st Century Strip remains iconic, attracting and welcoming visitors.
- Off-site signage energizes the Strip, enhancing urban design.
- Public art programming brings new visitors to the Strip.
- Cutting edge technology upgrades and enhances longstanding synergy of entertainment, advertising, historic resources, arts and music.
- Buildings with integrated billboards create a vibrant experience for all.
- Billboards are good neighbors, contributing positively to the excitement of the Strip without negative impacts to nearby residential neighborhoods.

Policy Development

As the team began to flesh out the vision with policy regulations, it became clear that change should be carefully calibrated but also accommodate the contemporary aspects of the off-site advertising industry to bring new creative energy to the Strip. Because the Strip is both a dynamic and iconic place, maintaining a high quality urban design presence is paramount. In seeking to implement the core project goals identified by the City Council, the team identified several key questions for the policy to resolve:

1. What are right types of new billboards?
2. What is the right number of new billboards?
3. How should new billboards be located- spread out, clustered, or both?
And on what types of properties?
4. How can the quality of existing signs be improved?

To honor urban design principles that allow for more creativity as well as control visual clutter by not adding to the plentiful stock of traditional billboards on poles, it was determined that the majority of new signs should be incorporated into buildings. Analysis of the existing buildings, potential for new development, and amount of underutilized land, revealed that the urban design balance should include both new buildings and remodels, limit quantity, and be phased over time. Based on typical building and financing cycles, the team determined that the policy should be cover 15 years. To address the appropriate balance between old and new, the team determined that the increment of new signage should not exceed an approximate 20% increase over the 89 sign faces that exist today. The resulting recommendation of no more than 18 additional signs that are architecturally integrated into buildings as new development or significant facade remodels supports valuable change without over-saturating the visual and economic environment.

Allowing for digital billboards adds important technological and creative flexibility to the Strip, but numbers should be limited and operations carefully regulated. As the Sunset Strip is a linear experience, it was determined that the opportunities for new billboard should be spread along the Strip, rather than clustered, although areas with key intersections or opportunities for public open space could benefit from a slightly higher concentration.

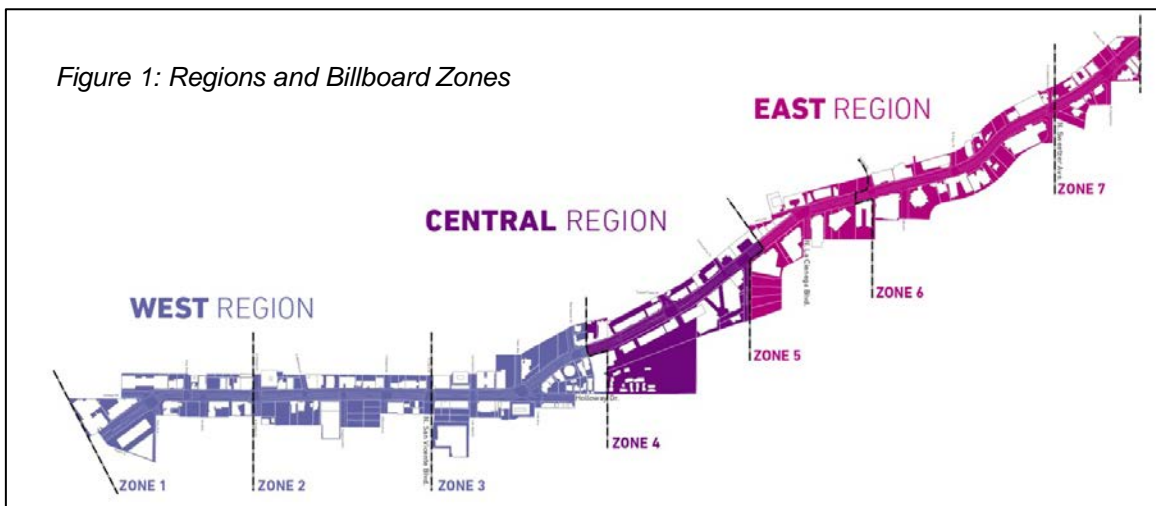
Urban Design Rationale

The policy provides opportunities to enhance signage for a range of property types including, historic properties, sites developed at maximum density, new development and all existing signs.

The proposed policy allocates new billboards to the Eastern and Western regions but preserves the low scale urban design of the Central region with no additional new billboards. As the key driver of creative technology, the policy permits a maximum overall number of 20 digital billboards, which can be achieved in three ways:

1. Incentive for designation and preservation of cultural resources with conversions of existing traditional billboards to digital on sites with designated cultural resources
2. Integrated major improvements to the exterior of buildings that are at, or above, maximum allowable density
3. A creative urban design component for new construction.

The existing urban typology separates the Strip into three distinct regions, West, Central and East, and identifies a series of billboard zones depicted below.



West:

The western section is the most typically urban portion of the Strip, defined by an east-west street grid. Billboards are clustered among buildings, and there are few public viewsheds, but the straight street allows billboards to be viewed from significant distances. The City is in the process of developing a pilot digital billboard on the City-owned site at 8755 Sunset. The proposed policy assumes approximately one half of new billboard projects here.

Central:

The central portion of the Strip is dominated by Sunset Plaza, a cluster of low rise retail buildings which are eligible for historic designation as a district. There are fewer existing billboards in this portion of the strip, which is celebrated in part for its uninterrupted views of the Los Angeles Basin to the south. No new billboards are proposed here, but conversions to digital on sites with designated resources are permitted.

East:

The eastern section of the Strip follows the ancient pathways of the native people along the base of the hills. The curving street creates both public view opportunities as well as high-quality viewing for off-site signage. In recent years several new developments with large scale billboards have been constructed in this area, and two digital billboards have been entitled at 8432 Sunset as part of the Sunset Time project at the former House of Blues site. The proposed policy assumes approximately one half of new billboard projects here.

Billboard Zones:

The Billboard Zones align approximately with the Geographic Areas of the existing SSP to identify 2-3 block zones that define the immediate visitor experience of each character area within the larger three regions. As the addition of digital signage requires thoughtful allocation to ensure that the digital signs do not develop in clusters, the Policy identifies a specific maximum of allocated digital opportunities per Billboard Zone, equaling 20 opportunities over 15 years. The draft policy is crafted to support digital billboards that face primarily east and west, so that the visual experience traveling in either direction would be a serial view of approximately 10 digital billboards allocated at 7 intervals along the 1.6 mile Strip. The policies are designed to be implemented over 15 years

The recommended numbers of projected new and digital signs reflect the greatest potential for change as required for environmental analysis. The following chart outlines the proposed maximum future scenario by type:

PROPOSED POLICY	Sign Faces	Type of Sign Face(s)
Existing Signs	89 *	74 Traditional Billboards 15 Tall Walls
Signs In Progress**	4	4 Digital Faces currently in process
Maximum Potential New Signs Integrated into new or remodeled buildings	18	17 Digital Faces 1 Traditional
Potential 2032 TOTAL Illustrates maximum potential for digital	111	71 Traditional Billboards 4 Digital Billboard faces that predate policy 3 Digital Billboards on Cultural Resource Sites 1 Traditional Billboard integrated into a new building or façade remodel 17 Digital Billboards integrated into a new building or façade remodel 15 Tall Walls
* This number does not include the 2 existing Video Art Signs or other signage that become legal non-conforming. ** Signs In Progress are 8755 Sunset, currently in design phase, and 8432 Sunset, which is entitled but not yet built.		

PROPOSED POLICY

Guiding Principles

The 1996 Sunset Specific Plan integrates urban-design-focused development incentives with historic resources to support economic development and an iconic place. Rigorous analysis for the off-site signage policy developed guiding principles that build on the SSP vision, addressing the specific typography, historic character, design excellence, public art and evolving urban design patterns along the Sunset Strip. The guiding principles are detailed in *Section 2* of the draft *Sunset Boulevard Off-Site Signage Policy* (Exhibit A, Attachment B).

Off-Site Signage Policy:

The proposed policy is a comprehensive set of regulations and guidelines organized into six categories. Each of these categories responds to the guiding principles and includes regulations and standards to address compatibility with the environment, neighborhood quality, and enhancement of the Sunset Strip experience. The following outlines each of the key categories.

- 1. New Signs:** The project team determined that the most effective way to meet the goals for invigorating the urban design is to require additional off-site signage to be integrated into building development, proposing a maximum of 18 new signs integrated into new development projects and significant façade remodels, sign limited to 1500 square feet per project.

Significant Facade Remodels: The team identified an opportunity to allow existing large buildings to upgrade and incorporate improvements to the public realm without adding additional density by permitting new signage with a significant facade remodel. Any existing buildings that integrate a new sign as part of a significant façade remodel must be at or above the maximum density allowed by the SSP. This allows properties that are used to their full potential but need improved aesthetics, branding or pedestrian orientations to add a new billboard in exchange for improved aesthetics and community benefits that add to the Strip's vibrancy. The land use analysis recognizes the potential for multiple sites to redevelop, and identifies approximately 22 sites at, or above, maximum density. In keeping with the limits on digital billboards only 7 significant facade remodels would be permitted opportunities for digital signage.

New Development: The policy requires that new development projects with integrated signs maximize the development potential of the property, addressing the topography and site conditions of Sunset with separate requirements for the north and south side of the Boulevard. New development applying for signage must be developed to at least 75 % of allowable density on the north side of the street and 90% of allowable density on the south side of the street. This concept addresses the concern about billboard projects limiting land use potential, because underutilized sites may only add a billboard if also providing the highest and best use of the property and contributing to the public realm. The policy proposes a maximum of 10 opportunities for digital signage as part of new construction.

Distribution: In keeping with the unique linear qualities of the Strip, the policy proposes that opportunities for new billboards be distributed along the denser, eclectic Eastern and Western regions, but that no *new* off-site signs should be allowed in the lower scale central section.

Integrated Design: Section A of the draft *Sunset Boulevard Off-Site Signage Policy* (Exhibit A, Attachment B) outlines parameters to support high quality integration of billboards and architecture, including regulating the size and number of off-site signs per development project. The square footage of the project is a defining factor in the size of the sign, so that smaller projects have commensurately smaller signs. This approach supports development opportunities while discouraging land uses dictated by signage, providing opportunities for high quality synthesis of signage and architecture, and addressing the need for improvements to the public realm.

- 2. Digital Signs:** Thoughtfully regulated, managed and allocated digital signage is a powerful urban design and financial tool. The studied 2032 policy scenario proposes up to 20 well-distributed digital billboards, including up to 17 new signs with a maximum of 1000 square feet in new development or significant façade remodels, and three conversions of existing traditional billboards on designated cultural resource sites. (Exhibit A, Attachment B, *Figure 2*).

Distribution: The proposed policy allocates digital signs in Billboard Zones 1-7, (Exhibit A, Attachment B, *Figure 2*). Thoughtful distribution of the digital signs along Sunset will create an experience punctuated by large scale public art, enhancing a visit to the Sunset Strip.

Incentives for Preservation of Cultural Resources: A recent City survey identified 109 potential cultural resources on the Sunset Strip. With constant development pressure and a dynamic popular culture preserving cultural resources on the Strip requires meaningful incentives. Conversion to a digital sign can function as a financial incentive for designation. The proposed policy would allow up to three designated cultural resources that have existing billboards to convert those signs to digital signage. The chart in Exhibit C lists the ten existing billboard sites that are eligible for designation and therefore conversion.

Lighting Regulations: Carefully controlled lighting is part of ensuring that signs are good neighbors. As noted in the technical studies, (Exhibit B, *Final Initial Study/Negative Declaration*, Appendices D and E) high contrast between emitted and ambient light is considered to be the light condition that most disturbs the human eye. The draft policy addresses light levels and contrast with detailed requirements and monitoring regulations for all billboard-related light emissions. *Section 3.E* of the draft *Sunset Boulevard Off-Site Signage Policy* (Exhibit A, Attachment B) defines light measurements for both the surface of the sign and spillover light. In addition, the policy addresses the contrast between emitted light and ambient light, requiring an automatic sensor to control required light level reduction to prevent high contrast as ambient light levels shift in the evening and night hours. Exhibit B, Appendix D, *Memorandum from Frances Krahe and Associates*, provides additional technical information.

The light regulations proposed here are more restrictive than typical current regulations in other cities, and require lower light emissions and more gradual transitions than the current operations for the two Large Screen Video Signs on Sunset Boulevard. Consulting lighting designers addressed the human-eye response to contrast, recommending a comfortable viewing experience achieved with a relatively low maximum light level. The policy explicitly prohibits lighting impacts on adjacent residential properties. Fehr and Peers, a traffic consulting firm, prepared an update to their 2014 recommendations for regulating digital signage to address concerns regarding potential driver distraction, (Exhibit B, Appendix E). Their study finds that the proposed policy follows or exceeds best practices for controlling safe levels of contrast between emitted light and ambient light and implements multiple approaches to eliminating potential driver distraction. With detailed requirements that require ongoing monitoring and are tailored specifically for an urban area with high ambient light and relatively low traffic speeds, the policy provides a proactive approach to potential distractions.

Allowing regulated digital technology invites technological advancement while providing additional public art and design opportunities, support for cultural resources, and maximized benefit. The proposed regulations are crafted to avoid many of the potential downsides of typical digital billboards in other settings.

- 3. Modifications to Existing Signs:** The proposed policy increases flexibility for improvements to existing traditional billboards with additional modifications, such as allowing an overall maximum allowable size of 1200 square feet, backlit signs to reduce glare from floodlighting, and a one-time opportunity to be approved for additional height of up to 14 feet above the height limit on the parcel in order to clear a proven visual obstruction (such as a street tree). These modifications allow all existing off-site signs to maximize their value and improve the aesthetic quality. The policies expand opportunities to improve existing billboards and tall wall signs, allowing modifications for adjustments to height, size, and location in compliance with standards that protect identified SSP viewsheds and sightlines. Modifications to traditional billboards, except for conversion to digital technology on historic sites, may be approved at the staff level, provided all sight line, viewshed and light monitoring requirements are met.

Tall Walls: The proposed policy does not permit new Tall Walls but allows for existing Tall Walls to apply for modifications that re-allocate sign area on the building to address changed conditions or improved design. Modifications to Tall Walls require a development agreement.

- 4. Temporary Advertising Installations:** The proposed policy adds a new component to opportunities for temporary creative advertising. In addition to the existing opportunities for temporary creative signage and Tall Walls, the policy provides for a limited number of three dimensional Temporary Advertising Installations at ground level for 30 days, regardless of whether a property is fully developed or has existing off-site signs.
- 5. Public Art:** Realization of the Sunset Strip Billboard District is a critical component of the vision to create a 21st century synergy between off-site advertising and the cultural pulse of the region. The proposed City-operated District is the framework for Sunset Boulevard to expand its role as a large-scale

opportunity for connecting viewers to world class art in innovative and unexpected ways, creating an opportunity for internationally recognized and emerging artists to showcase a variety of digital and video art.

The District will be supported by an annual operation fee from each participating sign and will contract with qualified curators to coordinate arts programming and organize billboard arts events with oversight from the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission. Each new and modified off-site sign shall become part of the District. For traditional billboards, the policy requires art to be displayed a minimum of 96 hours (4 days or monetary equivalent) per year. For Digital Billboards, the policy requires 25% of the programming be dedicated to non-commercial art. The District is envisioned to engage visitors with public art throughout the day with exhibits on individual billboards, and a re-occurring event that coordinates programming for all the digital signs to display art at a pre-scheduled, promoted time, i.e., a “Sunset Moment”. Once a critical mass of signs are operational, the City will host a semi-annual West Hollywood Billboard festival over several days, with coordinated arts programming, special events and awards.

6. Development Agreements: The proposed SSP amendment requires that all new and digital billboards and modified Tall Walls be approved via the development agreement process. These development agreement negotiations should be guided by the established Citywide community benefit priorities. Community members have expressed the desire for a portion of the community benefit funds to be applied to improvements on Sunset Boulevard such as improving pedestrian amenities and access to the hillside communities above the Strip. (Exhibit B, Section 5)

- *New Billboards integrated into Significant Façade Remodels* are required to provide significant on-site improvements to the pedestrian orientation and streetscape of Sunset Boulevard where possible, or provide a monetary developer contribution.
- *New Billboards integrated into New Development* would be subject to appropriate requirements relating to the overall project benefits that prioritize on-site improvements to address the public realm.
- *Digital Billboards* that convert from Traditional Billboards will provide, at a minimum, community benefits associated with improvements to Sunset Boulevard, operations of the Sunset Strip Billboard District, and monetary contributions relative to the anticipated value of the project.

SELECTION PROCESS

The City anticipates the industry demand for digital billboards to exceed the recommended 20 sites. Achieving the vision requires a thoughtful selection process tailored to the different categories of digital signs, and designed to attract the same high caliber of applicants that participated in the City’s competition for the pilot digital billboard project. The selection processes below are based on draft policy guidelines

relating to each sign type. This report provides this outline framework for context as the Planning Commission is not requested to determine a process at this time. Staff will return to the Planning Commission and Council with a tailored selection process following adoption of the policy.

Digital Billboard Conversions: The project team proposes that this category could proceed on a first-come, first-served basis, permitting the first three sites that are designated as cultural resources move forward with conversion of a traditional billboard to digital, including compliance with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards, review by the Historic Preservation Commission, successful negotiation of a Development Agreement and approval by the City Council.

Digital Billboards as Part of Significant Façade Remodels: The policy identifies seven opportunities over the next 15 years for new digital billboards as part of significant façade remodels. During initial stakeholder discussion, staff discussed the possibility of a lottery process to allocate sign opportunities. Feedback led staff to explore the potential of a phased competition process to promote a high level of creativity in order to best implement the established policy goals. A phased competitive process would allow for an evaluation of the first phase of projects to be complete prior to proceeding with the next phase, allowing for community members to respond to actual installed projects.

Digital Billboards as Part of New Development Projects: The City is anticipating a comprehensive update to the SPP. Staff recommends that the appropriate process for determining approval and phasing of the 10 digital billboards allocated to new development be deferred to inclusion in the SSP framework. This ensures that new development projects with billboards align with the vision of the broader SSP update

Existing Applications on File: The City received 21 applications for new billboards on or before September 2012. Seven of these applications were in process prior to that deadline and proceeded per the direction of the City Council. Fourteen projects remain, pending adoption of the policy update. All pending applications were offered the opportunity to withdraw application fees during the policy revision process. Following adoption of this policy by the Planning Commission and City Council, pending applicants may modify their projects to conform to the proposed new regulations. Qualified submitted applications will be considered prior to any new applications. As some of the proposed projects do not meet the draft policy vision it is unlikely that all pending applications will be modified to meet the drafted parameters.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

During the initial analysis phase, the project team conducted broad outreach to develop the policy framework goals and vision, including community meetings, discussions with outdoor advertising companies, property owners and industry experts. In general, community stakeholders were supportive of the potential for innovative signage on Sunset. Over the past months, the project team has held a second series of outreach meetings to discuss the draft policy language, meeting with property owners and billboard operators, community members, the Chamber of Commerce, Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission Art On The Outside Subcommittee, Planning Commission Long Range Planning Subcommittee,

Historic Preservation Commission, Sunset BID, WeHo Heights Neighborhood Association and holding an open community discussion. The project website at www.weho.org/sunsetsigns serves as a resource for the progress of the project.

Response from the business community has been largely positive, noting beneficial opportunities. Business stakeholders have concerns that initial concepts for a lottery selection process might not provide the City with the highest quality projects. Other stakeholders have focused on seeking a higher number of conversions and lighting standards that align with the higher light emission standards permitted in other areas of the country.

Residential community members expressed concerns related to the number of digital billboards, suggesting that a smaller number is preferable. Residents comment letters also requested that community benefits should be reinvested in the Sunset area. While expressing some concerns, the community supported the potential for high caliber art and architecture, but sought more information about how the policy would ensure the success of these concepts.

Arts stakeholders and community members also asked how the policy would ensure a meaningful high visibility platform for artists, requesting the commitment to remunerate artists and curators. The City is researching appropriate payment schedules for curation, and leasing and/or commissioning digital artwork.

To address comments, Staff made minor changes and clarifications to the draft policy circulated with the Draft Initial Study/Negative Declaration. These include edits that clarify language, removal of the requirement that the three digital billboards on sites with cultural resources be limited by region so as to support the more eligible sites, and more restrictive digital lighting requirements to prevent confusion with traffic safety signage. These minor edits do not alter the environmental findings, or require recirculation of the environmental document. The language changes are included in the final draft in Exhibit A, Attachment B, and a chart detailing the sections with revisions is included in Exhibit C.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

An Initial Study determined that the proposed policy would not have a significant effect on the environment, and therefore, a Negative Declaration was prepared (Attachment B). The public comment period was from April 6 to April 27, 2017. The City received 22 comment letters which are addressed in Section 5 of the Final Initial Study/Negative Declaration, (Exhibit B).

NEXT STEPS

Planning Commission comments will be forwarded to the City Council for review. Once the City Council has approved the policy, staff will address the following related work items that support the achievement of the program and the vision:

- Develop final approval process for allocating digital opportunities, including analysis of the relative benefits of a competitive vs. random selection.

- Develop Sunset Strip Billboard District Operations specifics including schedule, vision and scope for arts events, a fee study, and recommendations for remuneration standards for artists and curators.

CONCLUSION

With the goal of continuing to attract and welcome residents and visitors to the Sunset Strip, the proposed Sunset Strip Off-Site Signage Policy encourages creativity, thoughtful use of digital technology, and opportunities for public art and urban design benefits for off-site signage proposals. The policy has been carefully researched and analyzed with a team of experts, and recommends a valid approach to meet the City's visions and goals for off-site signage. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the project, consider if additional changes to the policies should be recommended, and take the appropriate actions towards City Council review.

EXHIBITS

- A. Draft Resolution No. PC 17-1207
- B. Final Initial Study / Negative Declaration
- C. Chart of Edits
- D. Map: Eligible Cultural Resources Sites with Billboards
- E. Billboard Research and Analysis Summary