

## **Digital Billboards – SA Speak Up Community Meeting – May 15, 2019**

Total of nine (9) private citizens attended (seated at two round tables)

- 1. The Clear Channel proposal we are discussing will permanently remove approximately 300 “junior” billboards (less than 100 sq. ft.) and 4 large billboards, to include 1 in scenic, urban, or historic corridors. This translates to a ratio of 4 to 1, in addition to the removal of the “junior” billboards. In the current code, the removal ratio is 2 to 1. What are your thoughts on the 4 to 1 ratio?**

### **Main points:**

- Non-profit voiced concerns over removal of junior billboards as these are used by the organization to advertise their services in low-income communities
- Non-profit inquired whether there will be any pro bono advertising on billboards
- Small billboards made sense along corridors like Blanco and Fredericksburg Road
- Comment in favor of removing junior billboards and inquired who would determine the billboards to be removed in urban and historic corridors; there should be a higher ratio or taking all of them from scenic or historic corridors
- Negative financial impact to property owners if billboards are removed
- Comment against digital billboards altogether

- 2. Do you think the City of San Antonio should require billboard companies to have term limits when it comes to digital billboards? And, why?**

### **Main points:**

- City explained what this is and that we do not have this currently, discussion on benefits
- Comment that this is not practical or difficult to track
- Comment that there is a possible risk of abandonment of billboards or that less maintenance may decrease as the sunset date approaches; rebuttal from another participant that this would not happen - lack of maintenance or abandonment
- If time limit added, seems that the sign companies would require a longer timeframe or “certainty” like ten years; two years would not work
- Whatever value remains at end of limit has to be paid to owner at sunset for taking of property
- Clarification made that St. Petersburg requires removal of digital signs in 20 years
- City explained that the Sign Code will be reviewed periodically moving forward

- 3. In addition to the proposal from Clear Channel, there are other billboard companies wanting to have the opportunity of removing static billboards to install digital ones. Should San Antonio allow other billboard companies to add locations if they take down the same ratio?**

**Main points:**

- City explained that nothing has been determined; through discussion, City trying to figure out whether this proposal should move forward or not and that other companies are interested in the opportunity
- City clarified that proposal entails an exchange to remove an existing static sign and replace with a digital sign
- City clarified that San Antonio is already limited to the current number of billboards
- Comment that other companies should be allowed to participate, it is unconstitutional not to allow them; further, that since City has expended geographically, not allowing more is a legal issue
- Rebuttal from attendee that there are other cities and states without any billboards
- Seems like more of a question for advertising companies, does not feel like can give yes or no response on this
- Acknowledged that while 80 structures to be removed, those driving are still being bombarded by messages

- 4. What do you think about the use of digital billboards to deliver information to the traveling public?**

**Main points:**

- Concerns regarding safety and how billboards cause a distraction to motorists was voiced by several participants
- Participants requesting more research on digital billboards and safety
- City discussed the accident study that was completed during the digital billboard pilot and noted no increase in accidents at that time and that City may have studies from other cities from that time
- City responded to inquiry on City's Climate Action Plan; that City understands, in general, that digital billboard proposal will fit in with it, but nothing has been quantified
- One audience member wanted to expand conversation to discussion of advertising on Via buses

**5. What do you think about the proposal and the opportunity to reduce the overall number of static billboards?**

**Main points:**

- Large billboards can be removed, but removal of junior billboards worries non-profit
- Removal of signs is attractive but does not think it's a fair tradeoff; allow juniors to be removed through attrition
- Recent Sign code update took many hours and thought the issue was resolved; leave the ordinance alone, especially if proposal is on digital billboards; they are taking down small signs and they get to decide which ones get removed; does not think it is worth it, citizens deserve better, Austin does not allow billboards; everyone wants a piece of the pie
- I think the industry will take care of itself; think you [the City] is overdoing it; I think we need to leave it alone
- I do not want any more billboards, digital or both; I think we have enough; proposal is a bad idea