



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

RECOMMENDATION REPORT



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Date: January 8, 2009*
Time: After 8:30 a.m.
Place: City Hall
Room 1010
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Public Hearing: Completed on November 12, 2008

Case No.: CPC-2007-5866-SN
CEQA No.: ENV-2003-1377-MND
(REC1)
Related Cases: CPC-2002-4173-SUD
CPC-2005-6124-SN-SPE-SPP
ENV-2003-1377-MND
Council No.: 4, 5, 13
Plan Area: Hollywood
Certified NC: Hollywood United, Central Hollywood, Hollywood Studio District
GPLU: Various
Zone: Various

PROJECT LOCATION: Designated commercial and industrially zoned properties roughly bounded by the Hollywood Freeway (101 Freeway) on the north and east, Melrose Avenue on the South, and La Brea Boulevard on the west.

PROPOSED PROJECT: An amendment of the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District proposing changes to regulations to prohibit certain signage and proposing changes to regulations governing the size, location, and density of certain signage within the District boundaries.

1. Pursuant to 13.11 of the LAMC, an **Amendment of the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District**
2. Pursuant to Section 21082.1, adoption of a Mitigated Negative Declaration Reconsideration for the above referenced project.

APPLICANT City of Los Angeles

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. **Approve and Recommend** that the City Council **Adopt** the requested Supplemental Use District Amendments to the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District, as modified, attached as Exhibit B.
2. **Adopt** Mitigated Negative Declaration Reconsideration - ENV-2003-1377-MND (REC1), attached as Exhibit C.
3. **Adopt** the attached Findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning

Signed Copy in File

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ADVICE TO PUBLIC: *The exact time this report will be considered during the meeting is uncertain since there may be several other items on the agenda. Written communications may be mailed to the *Commission Secretariat, Room 272, City Hall, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012* (Phone No. 213-978-1300). While all written communications are given to the Commission for consideration, the initial packets are sent to the week prior to the Commission's meeting date. If you challenge these agenda items in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing agendized herein, or in written correspondence on these matters delivered to this agency at or prior to the public hearing. As a covered entity under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Angeles does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and upon request, will provide reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to this programs, services and activities. Sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, or other auxiliary aids and/or other services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability of services, please make your request not later than three working days (72 hours) prior to the meeting by calling the Commission Secretariat at (213) 978-1300.

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PROJECT ANALYSIS

Project Summary

The project involves amending the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District (SUD) in order to address the following:

1. Code References

Currently, the Hollywood SUD references sections of the Building Code; however, the City's sign regulations have moved from Chapter IX of the Building Code to Chapter I (Zoning) of the LAMC, and therefore the references have been revised to reflect this change.

2. On vs. Off-Site content

This amendment proposes that all distinctions regarding on or off-site sign content be removed from the Hollywood SUD. Currently, this SUD permits off-site advertising on a number of sign types not permitted elsewhere in the City such as supergraphic signs and blade signs (a type of projecting sign). As of late, there is increasing citywide concern over the legality of the off-site advertising ban passed by City Council. By eliminating any distinction regarding content, this ordinance proposes to more effectively regulate signage based on "time, place manner" – location, size, shape, density, and type of signage. Therefore, this ordinance proposes that a number of sign definitions and regulations be amended in order to accomplish this goal.

3. New Sign Type – Hanging Sign

This amendment proposes a new sign type called a Hanging Sign. A Hanging Sign is a type of sign with individual channel letters and/or a prefabricated image, which is suspended from a horizontal architectural ledge or projection, or from the ceiling of an architectural recess. This type of sign type is already utilized in certain locations in Hollywood, and it can enhance the pedestrian entrances into buildings.

4. Historic Building Definition

This amendment proposes to expand the definition of historic buildings to include buildings that are listed as contributing structures to a National Register Historic District.

5. New Sign Definitions

This amendment proposes to add the definition of certain signs already regulated by the ordinance including architectural canopy signs, inflatable devices, and theater marquee signs. The purpose of adding these definitions is to provide clarity to sign types that are already regulated by the Ordinance.

6. A reduction in the total Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area per lot

This amendment would reduce the amount of Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area from the current ratio of four (4) square feet of sign area per each one (1) linear foot of street frontage to a ratio of two (2) square feet of sign area per each one (1) linear foot of street frontage.

In addition, the amendment proposes that the Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area permitted by the length of a frontage be used on that same frontage.

Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area is the total sign area a building is permitted to have. Included sign types are: architectural ledge signs, awning signs, electronic

message displays, illuminated architectural canopy signs, information signs, marquee signs, monument signs, pedestrian signs, pillar signs, pole signs, wall signs, and window signs. Supergraphic signs, open panel roof signs, and blade signs are not included in these calculations. In addition, this amendment would indicate that maximum combined sign area is a legal maximum only, and may not necessarily be permitted.

7. Prohibited Signs

This amendment would prohibit Temporary Special Displays (TSDs), Inflatable Devices, High Rise Signs, Skyline / logo signs, and Electronic Message Displays unless they are part of a Wall Sign or a Theater Marquee Sign.

8. Fire Safety

This amendment proposes that in addition to a review by the Fire Department regarding the safety of sign materials, the materials be reviewed by the Department of Building and Safety.

9. Illumination

This amendment proposes that general illumination guidelines be included in the Ordinance.

10. Planning Department Sign-Off / Project Permit Required

Currently, certain sign types do not require project permit cases to be generated, but only require a Planning Department sign-off once conformance with the Ordinance is demonstrated. This amendment proposes to include Pedestrian Signs, Architectural Ledge Signs, and Hanging Signs as those sign types that only require a sign-off.

In addition, this amendment proposes that only walls signs under 75 square feet may receive a sign-off. Currently, wall signs up to 300 square feet may receive a sign-off. The amendment proposes that wall signs over 75 square feet will require a project permit.

11. General Design Regulations

This amendment proposes that projects be required to adhere to additional design guidelines concerning issues such as sign maintenance and repair, graffiti removal, and the visibility of access ladders and barbed wire.

12. Electronic Message Display

This amendment proposes to set a maximum height of electronic message displays as wall signs of 75 feet above grade. The amendment also proposes to include illumination standards specifically for electronic message displays.

13. Open Panel Roof Signs

Currently, open panel roof signs may contain a solid panel provided that the terms of the Sign Reduction Program are complied with. This amendment proposes to remove the regulation permitting solid panel portions of open panel roof signs. In addition, roof signs would not be permitted to be on buildings greater than 150 feet in height, and hours of illumination have been included.

14. Supergraphic Signs

This amendment proposes to change the regulations that currently allow supergraphic signs to cover windows on principal building façades to prohibit the coverage of windows on any façade. In addition, this amendment proposes to limit the height of supergraphic signs to 150 feet.

15. Window Signs

This amendment proposes to change the regulations governing the maximum size of windows signs.

16. Sign Reduction Program

Currently, the Sign Reduction Program (removal of billboards in exchange for supergraphic signage) may be waived if the applicant enters an agreement with the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). This amendment proposes to remove this exception, and require that the placement of any supergraphic requires a Sign Reduction Program, regardless of any agreement with the CRA.

Background**Prior/Current Relevant Cases**

CPC-2002-4173-SUD. This case established the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District, effective October 21, 2003 (Exhibit D).

CPC-2005-6124-SN-SPE-SPP. This case expanded the boundaries of the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District to include the property at 1800 Highland Avenue, effective February 14, 2006.

History of the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District

The Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District (SUD) contains regulations for sign development for commercial and industrial properties within the boundaries of the district. The current regulations permit such signage as temporary special displays, blade signs, skyline logos, rooftop signage, electronic signs; include regulations for signage on recognized historic structures; include regulations regarding the size and density of permitted signage; and include regulations permitting supergraphics and solid panel rooftop signs in return for reduction of existing off-site advertising signs in other locations within the Hollywood Community Plan Area.

The Hollywood Signage SUD was adopted in October of 2003 pursuant to Section 13.11 of the LAMC. At that time, on and off-site signage was becoming an important factor in the economics of developing major commercial and entertainment facilities such as the Hollywood and Highland Project. Because of the difficulty in obtaining construction loans for major developments in the area, unique sign programs were developed by the project developers and Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) staff to permit off-site advertising on various sign structures through the use of special legislation exempting these projects from Municipal Code sign regulations and the CRA's Design for Development. The purpose of the Hollywood Signage SUD was to help make it possible for developers to utilize advertising revenue for future projects without having to enter into special agreements for each individual project. The goal of the Ordinance was to acknowledge and promote the continuing contribution of signage to the distinctive aesthetic of Hollywood while managing and controlling blight created by poorly placed, badly designed signs.

City Council Motion

In November of 2007 the City Council adopted a motion instructing the Planning Department, along with the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), to initiate the process to amend the Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District (SUD) to address the issue of supergraphic signage, including temporary special displays (TSDs), and to further address issues and ensure consistency between the Hollywood Signage SUD and the CRA Design for Development for Signs in Hollywood. As a result of this motion, Planning Staff began the process of amending the Hollywood SUD in order to review standards for the location, amount, orientation, lighting, design, quality of construction, and other physical characteristics of signage to ensure that signage continued to enhance development and make a positive contribution in Hollywood.

Planning Process

As a result of the Council motion in November of 2007, Planning Staff began the process of amending the Hollywood SUD. Staff began by holding community outreach events as well as internal “city family” working groups – including the CRA, the pertinent council districts, City Attorney, and the Department of Building and Safety – in order to identify any current issues or problems with the existing SUD Ordinance. Staff was also interested to discover what regulations were working within the Ordinance.

In January of 2008, Staff held three focus groups including representatives from the sign industry, neighborhood councils, homeowners’ associations, business owners, and other Hollywood stakeholders. At these January meetings, staff began to understand the highly divergent viewpoints coming from representatives of the sign industry and some business owners and those coming from residents.

Between January and July of 2008, Staff analyzed comments received from the January focus groups, and continued to meet with other city departments in order to investigate potential solutions to the problems. Staff then formulated a draft set of changes to the existing Ordinance, which was vetted with the community during a series of three (3) additional workshops. At these workshops in July of 2008, additional comments were received regarding the potential ordinance changes.

Throughout the retooling of the draft amendments, staff maintained open communication with the City Attorney’s office, the CRA, Council Districts 4, 5, and 13, and the Department of Building and Safety (DBS) in order to ensure that potential amendments were consistent with the design guidelines adopted by the CRA, legal practices, and DBS processes. Staff has also maintained open communication with representatives of the sign industry, area business owners, and neighborhood groups and other Hollywood stakeholders.

A public hearing was held on November 12, 2008; 60 people signed in at the public hearing and 17 people submitted speakers cards.

Issues

Citywide Signage Issues

Citywide, signage has become an increasingly central issue for business owners and residents. To date, the City Planning Commission has approved an Interim Control Ordinance to preclude

the issuance of permits for off-site signage, while updated citywide sign regulations are developed. If approved, this Interim Control Ordinance would apply to the Hollywood SUD. In addition, the Planning Department is working to revise the existing citywide sign code. It is important to note that this particular ordinance amendment has been on the Planning Department's agenda for over a year. In this difficult context, staff has been especially rigorous in the work undertaken on this amendment. This proposed amendment represents the Department's most current thinking on sign issues, ensured by the collaborative approach undertaken both within the Planning Department, with other city departments, and with the general public.

Supergraphic Signs / Sign Reduction Program

The supergraphic program has been utilized by numerous projects in Hollywood, including the W Hotel, the Sunset and Vine Tower, and the Metropolitan Hotel. Under the Ordinance, any building may be permitted a total of two (2) supergraphic signs, minimum size of 1,200 square feet, and they must be located on opposite sides of the building. In addition, while the supergraphic signs may not cover windows on the principal building façade, they may cover other windows not on a principal building façade. One of the purposes of the supergraphic program was to encourage the removal of billboards, which blight the community, and block views of historic buildings, the Hollywood Hills, and the Hollywood Sign. It is very difficult for a community to have billboards removed without providing incentives. Under the current SUD Ordinance, each supergraphic sign approval must be accompanied with a billboard takedown, although this requirement may be waived if the applicant enters into an agreement with the CRA. The CRA agreement usually involves a combination of billboard take downs and in-lieu fees.

During numerous focus groups with stakeholders, Planning Staff heard a variety of viewpoints regarding these signs. Many people, especially residents, believed that they were receiving no benefit from the supergraphic program, although the intended benefit was the removal of billboards. In addition, residents were concerned about covering windows with supergraphics, aesthetic issues, lighting, height, and architectural quality. Comments from representatives of the sign industry and some Hollywood business owners felt the opposite. Many of these groups felt that the billboard take down ratios were too small (in other words, they should be given more supergraphic signs per each billboard take down). In addition, they felt that covering windows with supergraphics did not affect the occupants' views, and did not mar the aesthetics or architecture of the structure. They also felt that requiring the supergraphics to be located on opposite sides of a building was especially difficult unless the building was of new construction, designed with the supergraphic locations in mind.

Existing legal, non-conforming billboards are a particular challenge in Hollywood, and once the billboard is constructed, it is difficult to remove. The city could pay for the billboard removal, but this is quite cost-prohibitive. In the meantime, the landscape is littered with deteriorating billboards. The supergraphic program is the best way to remove the blight caused by billboards, and therefore this amendment does not recommend this program be eliminated. In fact, this amendment proposes to strengthen the program by requiring that all supergraphic signs participate in the billboard take down program, regardless of an agreement with the CRA. In order to address community concerns about aesthetics, architecture, and lighting, this ordinance proposes to limit the height of supergraphic signs to 150 feet, to include specific lighting guidelines, and to prohibit the location of supergraphic signs on any windows. In addition, the requirement that the supergraphics be located on opposite sides of the building may be too prescriptive for some structures, and therefore this amendment proposes to allow supergraphics to be on adjacent facades so long as they are not visible from any one location.

Temporary Special Displays (TSDs)

TSDs were originally conceived as short-term supergraphic signage that could be used to enhance Hollywood's role in the entertainment industry by advertising movies and other entertainment related content that was time-sensitive. In the current Ordinance, there is no size requirement for these signs, but they are only allowed to be displayed for 120 days per each 365 days. In addition, these signs are allowed to cover windows, as they are temporary in nature. These signs are currently exempt from Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area calculations.

Previously, the CRA permitted TSDs through their Design for Development Guidelines. As a result of various lawsuits against the CRA regarding their guidelines for Temporary Special Displays, the CRA Board approved a prohibition on these sign types in the fall of 2007. Portions of the boundaries of the Hollywood Signage SUD overlap with the Hollywood CRA project area and therefore while Planning may approve TSDs for these portions, applicants may not receive their sign permits as CRA will not clear their permit applications; however, there are portions of the SUD that are not within the CRA project area, and in these areas Planning approved TSDs have been recently installed.

As of late, the regulation of TSDs by the Planning Department has become increasingly difficult as a result of various legal challenges. While TSDs were intended to highlight Hollywood as an entertainment center, Planning cannot regulate content of signs. In addition, Planning cannot regulate the types of businesses (such as theaters or music venues) that are allowed to utilize this sign type. There is difficulty throughout the district in regulating the size, scale, and proliferation of unpermitted, full building supergraphic wraps. The placement of TSDs on historic structures has become problematic and in general, TSDs have become a blighting influence in Hollywood. Therefore, this amendment proposes to prohibit TSDs as a permitted sign type.

Open / Solid Panel Roof Signs

Currently, open panel roof signs are permitted to have one-third of the sign area to consist of open space, at least one-third of the sign area to consist of channel letters, and may contain a solid panel sign in the remaining one-third of sign area, provided that the project participates in the billboard take-down program. At the public hearing, Staff heard many comments regarding concerns about rooftop signs, particularly with some of the new projects approved in Hollywood. Members of the public were also concerned about views to and from the Hollywood Sign and Hollywood Hills. The solid panel roof program is also intended to incentivize the removal of billboards and pole signs. However, this program is used much less frequently than the supergraphic program, and its effectiveness in facilitating the removal of billboards is not as significant as the supergraphic program.

Both skyline / logo signs and high-rise signs have been removed as permitted sign types as these two sign types are very similar to Open Panel Roof signs.

Therefore, staff is recommending that this amendment include language that requires that Open Panel Roof signs are entirely open in nature, and to include language to prohibit solid panel roof signs, including those incorporated as part of an open panel roof sign with a billboard take down program.

Maximum Permitted Combined Sign Area

Maximum Permitted Combined Sign area is the total sign area a lot is permitted to have. Included sign types are: architectural ledge signs, awning signs, electronic message displays, illuminated architectural canopy signs, information signs, marquee signs, monument signs, pedestrian signs, pillar signs, pole signs, wall signs, and window signs. Currently, buildings are permitted four (4) square feet of sign area for every one (1) square foot of street frontage. Supergraphic signs, blade signs, and open roof signs are not included within these calculations.

In the current Ordinance, historic buildings may transfer any unused sign area to a non-historic building to be used for architectural ledge signs, awning signs, electronic message displays, illuminated architectural canopy signs, information signs, marquee signs, monument signs, pedestrian signs, pillar signs, pole signs, wall signs, and window signs. Since the adoption of the ordinance in 2003, no applications requesting the transfer of unused sign rights from a historic building to a non-historic building have been accepted, processed, or approved.

During focus groups and workshops with stakeholders, Staff heard that the amount of signage in Hollywood was too great, and was creating a cluttered, blighted appearance. The aesthetics of many signs were considered to be a problem. In addition, staff has found that it is rare for a lot to utilize all of its maximum permitted combined sign area, leading staff to believe that the current permitted sign area is too large. Therefore, this amendment is to reduce the amount of permitted sign area to two (2) square feet for every one (1) square foot of street frontage. Additionally, this sign area shall be used on that same street frontage from which the permitted area was calculated.

Some owners of historic properties are concerned that by reducing this number, it will reduce their ability to transfer unused sign credits, as the number of credits they are permitted will be reduced. It is true that sign area for all lots would be reduced from four (4) square feet of sign area to two (2) square feet of sign area per linear foot of frontage; however, as stated above, since 2003 no applications requesting the transfer of unused sign rights from a historic building to a non-historic building have been accepted, processed, or approved.

On/Off Site Content

In 2002, the City banned new billboards and off-site¹ advertising. Existing legal billboards were grandfathered in, and allowed to be maintained in place. When adopted in 2003, the Hollywood SUD specifically permitted off-site advertising (though not billboards) on supergraphic signs, open panel roof signs, blade signs, and other sign types. Off-site advertising was specifically prohibited on architectural ledge signs, awning signs, monument signs, pedestrian signs, skyline logos, and wall signs.

Currently, the City is being litigated for several reasons pertaining to the off-site sign ban. Staff has held working meetings with the City Attorney's Office as well as DBS in order to formulate sign regulations for the Hollywood SUD that are enforceable and hold up to legal challenges. Therefore, this amendment recommends removing any distinction between on / off-site content and instead regulate "time, place and manner" i.e. the type, size, density, and location of signage. Billboards will continue to be a prohibited sign type in Hollywood. Staff believes that this amendment will ensure that the Ordinance can continue to promote the contribution of signage to the distinctive aesthetic of Hollywood.

¹ Off-site signs are defined as a sign that directs attention to a business, product, service, profession, commodity, activity, event, person, institution, or any other commercial message, which is generally conducted, sold, manufactured, produced, offered or occurs elsewhere than on the premises where the sign is located.

Electronic Message Displays / Lighting

Electronic Message Displays are defined as displays that use still images, scrolling images, or moving images, including video and animation, utilizing a series or grid of lights that may be changed through electronic means, including cathode ray, light emitting diode display (LED), plasma screen, liquid crystal display (LCD), fiber optic, or other electronic media or technology. The current ordinance limits Electronic signage to wall signs or theater marquees, and also limits their location to certain signalized blocks within the SUD. In addition, electronic message displays may only be displayed on a cinema, performing arts center, or entertainment-related business.

During focus groups and workshops with stakeholders, Staff heard that it is important for any ordinance amendments to take into account changing technology. Many representatives of the sign industry felt that electronic signage should be permitted throughout the district, not just on certain buildings or in certain locations. However, there was also a lot of concern among residents regarding light and traffic impacts.

This amendment does not propose to expand the locations where electronic signage is permitted; however, the amendment does recommend removing the limitation that electronic signage is only allowed on certain entertainment uses. In order to address concerns regarding traffic, the amendment proposes to limit the location of electronic signage to between 35 feet and 75 feet above grade. In addition, in order to address community concerns regarding lighting, this amendment proposes additional regulations to govern the lighting of these signs.

Enforcement

During the almost year long process of amending this Ordinance, Staff has been made particularly aware of increasing anger and frustration among the residents of Hollywood and greater Los Angeles regarding the perceived lack of enforcement for illegally placed signage. Many participants in the process felt that the City wasn't doing enough to enforce the sign code – this includes all departments from Planning to the City Attorney.

While initial enforcement of illegally placed signage remains the responsibility of the DBS (and may eventually fall under the jurisdiction of the City Attorney's Office), during the process of amending this Ordinance, Staff has ensured that proposed amended regulations are easily understood by the public and City Staff, are easily enforceable by DBS, and are legally defensible per the City Attorney. To that end, Staff has worked with DBS, the City Attorney, and the general public in the creation of these amendments, and has made changes to the proposal based on this input.

Conclusion

The proposed amendments to the Ordinance are consistent with the goals of the Hollywood SUD and Hollywood Community Plan. These actions seek to acknowledge and promote the continuing contribution of signage to the distinctive aesthetic of Hollywood while managing and controlling blight created by poorly placed, badly designed signs by strengthening the Ordinance regulations.

Citywide, signage has become an increasingly central and at times contentious issue for business owners and residents of Hollywood and greater Los Angeles. In this difficult context, the Department has been especially rigorous in the work undertaken on this amendment. This proposed amendment represents the Department's most current thinking on sign issues, ensured by the collaborative approach undertaken both within the Planning Department, with other city departments, and with the general public. Planning Staff recommends approval of the requested amendments.

FINDINGS

General Plan/Charter Findings

City Charter Section 556

Los Angeles City Charter Section 556 and LAMC Section 12.32(C)(7) require that prior to adopting a land use ordinance the City Council make findings that the ordinance is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan. The Amendments to the Hollywood Signage SUD are in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan in the following respects:

The Hollywood Community Plan was adopted by the City Council on December 13, 1988. The proposed Amendment to the Hollywood SUD is in conformance with the following goals and objectives of the Community Plan:

- 1. To coordinate the development of Hollywood with that of other parts of the City of Los Angeles and the metropolitan area. To further the development of Hollywood as a major center of population, employment, retail services, and entertainment; and to perpetuate its image as the international center of the motion picture industry.**

This amendment proposes changes to regulations in order to encourage the construction, maintenance and retention of contemporary and historic forms of signage which will promote the advancement of a unique sign program for an area which is undergoing resurgence in commercial development. This amendment proposes changes that would enhance the use of contemporary types of signage such as supergraphics and electronic message displays for both on and off-site advertising. On and off-site advertising continues to be important to the economics of developing major commercial and entertainment facilities in Hollywood. In addition, the amended regulations will encourage iconic signs held to high design and illumination standards to ensure that Hollywood perpetuates its image as an international center of the motion picture industry.

- 2. Land Use Commerce Standards and Criteria: The focal point of the Community is the Hollywood Center. This center area shall function as the commercial center for Hollywood and surrounding communities as an entertainment center for the entire region. Future development should be compatible with existing commercial development, surrounding residential neighborhoods and the transportation and circulation system.**

This amendment proposes changes that would enhance the Hollywood SUD's unique sign program to help create a visually exciting pedestrian environment which maximizes the visibility of Hollywood's historic architecture and distinguishes this area from that of nearby commercial areas. The Amended Hollywood SUD's regulations are designed to protect views of character-defining features of historic structures, views of the nearby Hollywood Hills, and Hollywood's scenic highways, including Sunset Boulevard. Amended regulations to protect these views include: 1) limiting the height of supergraphic signs to 150 feet above grade, 2) incorporating lighting and design standards for all signs, and (3) reducing maximum permitted combined sign area by half. The amended ordinance also includes incentives for restoring historic signage on

historic structures as a means of deriving additional revenue which may be used for the rehabilitation and maintenance of these structures. Amended regulations to minimize distractions to motorists caused by full motion electronic message displays include: 1) requiring electronic message displays to be built at a height where they do not interfere with views of traffic signals and other street directional signage – between 35 and 75 feet above grade, (2) requiring electronic message displays comply with illumination standards and minimize viewsheds to the greatest extent possible in order to not interfere with traffic signage and other directional signage, (3) an electronic message display will only be permitted if it is determined by the Director of Planning, in consultation with the General Manager of the Department of Transportation, that the sign will not present a safety hazard to traffic.

Charter Section 558

Los Angeles City Charter Section 558 and LAMC Section 12.32(C)(7) require that prior to adopting a land use ordinance, the City Council make findings that the ordinance conforms with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice. The SUD Amendments conform to public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice in the following respects:

The amendments to the Hollywood SUD will enhance the unique characteristics of signage in Hollywood; promote historic signage in Hollywood; encourage enhanced aesthetics and quality lighting design of new signage; continue to encourage the development of new sign technologies while preserving historic architecture; and continue to eliminate blight by strengthening the effectiveness of the billboard reduction program.

The Amended Hollywood SUD contributes to the general welfare and good zoning practice by regulating signage in a manner that promotes a distinctive Hollywood design aesthetic, permitting signage which:

- Highlights the entertainment industry and other local businesses;
- Creates a lively, visually exciting atmosphere in Hollywood, while maintaining historic signage and structures;
- Allows newer building-mounted sign technologies which coordinate with and minimally obscure a building's architectural elements;
- Minimizes the obstruction of architectural elements, views of historic architecture, the Hollywood Hills, the Hollywood Sign, and scenic corridors;
- Reduces visual clutter and blight by encouraging the removal of billboards and pole signs through the enhanced sign reduction program;
- Protects residents from glare and protects pedestrians and motorists from traffic safety hazards.

Hollywood Signage Supplemental Use District Findings

The proposed Amendment furthers the following Hollywood SUD Purposes:

1. Provide for the systematic execution of the Hollywood Community Plan and Redevelopment Plan.
2. Promote appropriate and economically viable signage that:
 - Uses clear, attractive graphics;

- Coordinates with the architectural elements of the building on which signage is located;
 - Reflects a modern, vibrant image of Hollywood as the global center of the entertainment industry; and
 - Compliments and protects the character-defining features of historic buildings.
3. Limit visual clutter by regulating the number, size, and location of signs.
 4. Minimize potential traffic hazards and protect public safety.
 5. Protect street views and scenic vistas of the Hollywood Sign and the Hollywood Hills.
 6. Protect and enhance major commercial corridors and properties.

CEQA Findings

A Mitigated Negative Declaration [ENV-2003-1377-MND (REC1)] was prepared for the proposed project. On the basis of the whole of the record before the lead agency including any comments received, the lead agency finds that, with imposition of the mitigation measures described in the MND, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment.

However, the following mitigation measures shall not be imposed as they were included in error in the Mitigated Negative Declaration. The Hollywood Sign District permits rooftop signs, so long as they comply with the Ordinance. As amended, this Ordinance would not permit rooftop signs to have a solid panel; however, open panel roof signs would still be permitted. Therefore, these mitigation measures shall not be imposed:

- MM 1C-2 a) No sign shall be located or mounted on a rooftop or on poles or other structures that pass through a rooftop.
- MM1C-2 b) No sign shall encroach into the airspace above any building or structure.

The following mitigation measures shall not be imposed as they do not represent a tailored, district specific approach to the lighting of Electronic Message Displays in Hollywood. These lighting mitigation measures may be too restrictive for the types, locations, and heights of Electronic Message Displays that are recommended to be permitted in the Hollywood SUD. Instead, the SUD provides general guidelines for lighting that are more appropriate. Currently, the citywide sign code is undergoing revision that may include more specific guidelines for lighting. Therefore, the following mitigation measures shall not be imposed:

- MM1D-2 When measured at ground level from any location other than the property on which an Electronic Message Display sign is located, an Electronic Message Display sign shall not, under any circumstances, increase the total amount of measurable light by more than 2 LUX above the ambient light level that exists when such Electronic Message Display sign is extinguished.
- MM1D-3 When measured from any location within a building on which an Electronic Message Display sign is located, such Electronic Message Display sign shall not increase the total amount of measurable light more than 1 LUX above the ambient-light level that exists when such Electronic Message Display sign is extinguished, unless such light increase is the result of exterior atmospheric conditions.

The attached Mitigated Negative Declaration (Exhibit C) reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis. The records upon which this decision is based are with the Environmental Review Section of the Planning Department in Room 750, 200 North Spring Street. Staff hereby recommends adoption of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), with the revisions as stated above, the mitigation measures of which are implemented within the Ordinance Text, attached as Exhibit B.

CEQA Response to Comments

- A comment was received regarding the applicability of MM1D-2 and MM1D-3 to the Hollywood SUD. It was commented that these lighting numbers may be too low for a standard electronic sign installed approximately 35 feet above grade. The commenter indicated it may be appropriate to create more tailored regulations for the Hollywood Sign District.

Staff agrees that these lighting mitigation measures are not uniquely tailored to the specific site conditions in the Hollywood SUD, and that general lighting mitigation measures are more appropriate until such time that site specific mitigation measures can be formulated.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Summary of Public Hearing Testimony

A public hearing on this matter was held at Selma Elementary School in Hollywood on Wednesday, November 12, 2008.

Public Hearing

- 60 people signed in at the public hearing
- 17 people filled out speaker cards and spoke at the public hearing
 - 2 speaker cards were in Favor of Proposal
 - 5 speaker cards were Against Proposal
 - 10 speaker cards were General Comments

In general, comments regarding the proposed Sign District amendments fell into one of two groups – (1) those community members who wanted to see less signage regulations, and therefore were displeased with the more strict proposed amendments, and (2) those who wanted to see more restrictive signage regulations, and therefore wanted to see even more strict amendments proposed. Therefore, the comments from the public hearing have been divided into **Points in Opposition of More Restrictive Sign Regulations, Points in Favor of More Restrictive Sign Regulations, and General Comments.**

Points in Opposition of More Restrictive Sign Regulations

- Currently the CRA has prohibited Temporary Special Displays (TSDs) in their redevelopment area, but TSDs are still permitted under the Sign District, which means that the only place they are allowed are the industrial and commercial areas south of the Hollywood's historic core. This is a logical place for TSDs. In addition, Building and Safety has added an affidavit process to their application which means that people who legally get permits for TSDs must follow the rules. The problem is that many people aren't following the rules, and are putting up illegal signs. Legally permitted TSDs aren't the problem.
- The purpose of allowing TSDs was to reinforce Hollywood's role in the entertainment industry – and today a majority of the TSDs are entertainment related.
- Against the reduction in the amount of total signage a business can have, because businesses need all they can get. Signage is a good way to offset the cost of doing business in Hollywood.
- The City has made bad decisions about signage – especially with the digital billboard settlement – and now other sign companies are being punished with these reduced regulations.

Points in Favor of More Restrictive Sign Regulations

- The addition of illumination guidelines are good but want more concrete illumination regulations.
- Proposal is ok.
- Businesses may want more signage, but nearby residents are negatively impacted. At night, the signs are so bright that residents must keep blinds closed.

- Keep signage lighting low when approximate to residential uses.
- Do not want to permit supergraphics or electronic message displays because of blight and the damage to historic architecture. All supergraphics should be banned, the billboard reduction program/ supergraphic exchange program should be eliminated, and billboards should be reduced.
- The entire Sign District has been a mistake. Because of the signs residents are denied views of the hills and historic buildings. The whole ordinance should be repealed.
- Want a Design Review Board for all signage in the District.
- Concerned about rooftop signs especially at the new W Hotel.
- Electronic signage causes traffic problems.
- Signage doesn't coordinate with architecture, but distracts from it.

General Comments

- Concerned about enforcement of illegal signs. Changing the regulations won't help improve enforcement.
- Enforcement could be improved if the signs were taxed.
- All of the illegal signage is a disgrace. We need to do a survey of all billboards to find out what is illegal, and then remove those illegal signs. Volunteers could be utilized for this work, and the violations can be published on a website.

Summary of Written Communications

Written correspondence and emails from the public were accepted by the Hearing Officer for this case.²

- 31 written correspondences or emails were received at or after the public hearing.
 - o 9 were in Favor of More Restrictive Regulations
 - o 18 were in Opposition of More Restrictive Regulations
 - o 4 were General Comments

Points in Opposition of More Restrictive Sign Regulations

- Removing the ability for businesses to install TSDs unfairly excludes small signage companies.
- Requiring all applicants of supergraphic signage to participate in a sign reduction program (removing billboards in exchange for new supergraphics) unfairly excludes small sign companies. Most existing billboards are owned by a few large sign companies or developers and small sign companies don't have access to the sign credits to trade for supergraphic signage. The combination of the removal of TSDs and the requirement of sign reduction credits from billboard removal to allow for new supergraphic signs prohibits small sign companies from posting supergraphics in the District. However, the provisions do not eliminate or reduce supergraphic signs, but just transfers ownership to large sign companies.

² The written correspondences included in this section were received at or after the public hearing. It should be noted that the process of amending the Hollywood Signage SUD has been on-going for approximately one year, and many additional emails, phone calls, and letters were received by Planning Staff throughout this year. Summaries of these issues and communications are provided in the Project Analysis section of this Recommendation Report.

- Requiring all applicants of supergraphic signage to participate in a sign reduction program unnecessarily burdens the CRA/LA with regulations that interfere with its ability to implement state redevelopment law. Applicants of supergraphic signage should be able to enter into development agreements with CRA/LA in-lieu of providing full billboard take-down.
- The SUD should remain in effect and enforceable despite the adoption of an Interim Control Ordinance instituting a moratorium on supergraphic signage. Otherwise, a citywide ICO could prevent any supergraphic from temporarily being permitted in the Hollywood SUD.
- The guidelines for locating supergraphic signage on historic buildings is vague, and allow unfettered discretion to deny supergraphic signage on historic buildings, where the signs do not alter or destroy an historic building or historic signage. The amended SUD should permit supergraphic signage on historic buildings, except where the signage covers character defining features or alters or destroys the historic character of the building.
- Supergraphics are an important way to increase city revenue and provide needed services for all residents.
- Supergraphics create excitement in Hollywood. They are bright and energetic. Would rather look at a supergraphic sign than a building.
- Los Angeles is an Advertising City, and these supergraphics make Los Angeles a special place. The signs give character to this city.
- The proposed changes are a violation of constitutional rights.
- Revenue generated from supergraphics will allow property owners to put money back into their property.
- Murals do have a place in Hollywood, and should be permitted.
- All buildings should be given an incentive to improve; certain sign regulations could be used to encourage this.
- The maximum permitted combined sign area should not be reduced. Site-specific signage and graphics should not be punished for the abuse of public space by the billboard companies.
- Instead of just making the sign regulations more restrictive, what about utilizing a creative signage application, similar to what is being done in West Hollywood. This application encourages good sign design and could help with creativity in Hollywood.

Points in Favor of More Restrictive Sign Regulations

- Supergraphic signs should not be permitted. Want a total ban.
- Electronic signage should not be permitted.
- Hollywood today looks as if there are no sign regulations at all. Most signage is ugly, and makes our streets unpleasant places in which to be.
- The Sign Industry controls this city, and determines our urban environment.
- No tourists will come to Los Angeles eventually, because this entire city is just one big billboard. Tourists won't be able to see all that Hollywood has to offer since it will be covered in signs.
- Some people say that Hollywood should be like Times Square. But Times Square is just a few square blocks, much smaller than Hollywood.
- Pasadena is a model we should try to emulate – it is nice to walk around there since there isn't out of control signage.
- Concerned about the signage at the W Hotel – there is too much signage proposed there, including the roof signs.
- Signs are dangerously distracting to drivers and cause accidents.
- The supergraphic signs and “building wraps” are visual pollution and destroy the beautiful architecture in Hollywood.

- If signage is within 500 feet of a residential area, then there need to be additional light restrictions in place to protect residents.
- The signs in Hollywood should be appropriate for children – signs for horror movies and liquor are inappropriate in certain locations. In addition, liquor advertisements do not promote the entertainment concept of Hollywood.
- The signs invade our public space without giving any benefit to the public.
- Historic buildings should not be defaced with signs. Attaching the signs destroys their beauty and also the actual building materials.

General Comments

- Concerned about the use of city property to construct kiosk-type 3-panel signs (such as the bus shelter signs).
- Fines and penalties are insufficient to deter illegal signs and there is no enforcement of existing regulations.
- Concerned that our elected officials and other city leaders have neglected this issue and aren't addressing community concerns regarding billboards, illegal signs, and other visual blight.
- There is a lack of clarity and consistency with the interpretation of the SUD regulations. Some issues that need to be addressed include: opening the process, fairness, and transparency for the sign permitting process. There is too much room for cherry picking applications.
- Need more oversight to ensure consistency of enforcement and fair treatment of all permit applications whether they are large or small.
- Dislike digital billboards. Want to get rid of the billboards we have today.
- Want to see a one year moratorium on the conversion of traditional billboards into electronic billboards. Billboard conversion should take into account light and noise pollution.
- Signage should bring a stream of revenue to the City.