

**BILLBOARD STAKEHOLDERS GROUP**  
**Minutes from May 3, 2006**

***I. Welcome & Introductions***

Sandra Montgomery welcomed the group to the second stakeholder meeting to review and explore possible changes to the existing Outdoor Advertising Regulations. Staff and stakeholders re-introduced themselves.

***II. Lamar Outdoor Advertising Presentation***

Bobby Soule of Lamar gave a PowerPoint presentation to the stakeholders that focused on state-of-the art, computer controlled electronic billboards. This is a product that transmits light through Light Emitting Diode Display (LED) technology. Lamar has LED billboards in other jurisdictions, some of which are local. Lamar has a Network Operations Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana that receives artwork to be displayed digitally through the network. The Center then allows Lamar to control the advertising content on each digital display billboard within its jurisdiction.

A preliminary study by Virginia Tech Transportation Institute is due out this summer that will indicate that changeable copy message signs do not represent a safety hazard to motorists.

Instant copy change is important to Lamar's clients and the ability to change copy also provides the opportunity to post amber alerts or timely public service announcements in an instant, versus printing vinyl and applying it to a billboard.. Mr. Soule stated that an LED display is cleaner looking, and more aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Soule proposed that a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance should allow the digital, LED display product, with automatic changeable copy, and mimic the current NCDOT regulations in terms of changing every 8 seconds. Nationwide, by July of this year, Lamar will have about 200 LED billboards. In fact, the LED display boards manufacturer cannot produce them fast enough to meet demand at this point.

Mr. Soule asked the stakeholders to separate Lamar's request from Adam's request when it is proposed to City Council.

A discussion followed with the following points made:

- Lamar is taking current inventory in other communities and converting key locations to the LED technology, particularly along interstates.
- NCOT requires a minimum of 8 seconds per ad. The change is instantaneous and up to 6 advertisers at a time can be accommodated in a minute. An average driver would see 6 ads in a minute.
- NCDOT regulations do allow double faced signs.
- Using wireless equipment to access cell phones only makes sense in pedestrian areas.
- Tri-vision billboards do not interest Lamar as much as the digital technology.
- Other large cities that allow LED billboards include Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Birmingham, Pensacola, Baton Rouge.

Copies of Lamar's presentation were provided to stakeholders and are available online at: <http://www.ci.charlotte.nc.us/Departments/Planning/Rezoning/Stakeholder+Groups/Text+Amendment+Stakeholder+Group/Billboard+Regulations.htm>

### ***III. Adam's Outdoor Advertising Presentation***

Bailie Morlidge of Adams Outdoor Advertising shared a PowerPoint presentation with the stakeholders. He stated that if "we do nothing, nothing changes", but if we "do something, we design the future together". Adam's has heard what the stakeholder's have said and in response, recognize that billboards can create clutter, that some signs are too large, and that the visual quality of outdoor advertising can be improved.

Mr. Morlidge noted that all of Adam's signs are assets. At present, there are no new locations available for new billboards. There have been less than 8 new billboards that have been constructed in the last three years.

Adam's is proposing to reduce clutter by taking down billboards in cluttered areas. The square footage of these billboard signs taken down could be deposited into a "billboard bank". Adams could then withdraw square footage to pursue new advertising opportunities. Adams proposes a Sign Overlay District in Uptown where this square footage could be used to enliven the Uptown environment. Mr. Morlidge stated he would bring copies of a Wall Street Journal article to the next meeting that addresses the new technology.

Adams is proposing that "wallscape" billboards be allowed on the sides of buildings in the Uptown area, not freestanding billboards. Adam's envisions wallscape that are fun and creative, with little area of the sign devoted to text, or advertising. Mr. Morlidge proposed that up to 15% of the total billboard area could contain text. He demonstrated that at the intersection of Mint and Carson, there are 3 billboard structures, with a total of 9 faces. If 7 of the faces were removed, the removed square footage could be used to create a new advertising opportunity Uptown on a wall of a parking deck or building. A question was asked if Adams would be open to having a Review Committee to approve each sign. Mr. Morlidge indicated he is open to the idea. Center City Partners would have to be involved, too.

A question was asked if the wallscape would cover windows. Mr. Morlidge responded that the wallscape can cover windows. Mr. Morlidge suggested that the City could cap the total number of Uptown Wallscape. He continued by stating that Adam's is willing to donate a certain percentage of all new Uptown advertising space to upcoming events for art groups, non-profits, and entertainment groups.

Sandra Montgomery suggested that in the interest of time, the second half of Adam's presentation should be kept for the following meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Everyone agreed.

Ron Morgan suggested that the stakeholder group should include residents from Uptown since we are suggesting changes that would effect them. Cheryl Myers agreed to work with staff to provide names of Uptown residents who may want to participate.

Ron added that he would like to see a reduction in a ratio of square footage placed into a billboard bank. He would prefer to trade 3 square feet of old billboard area for 1 square foot of new space. He also stated that the non-conforming billboards are legal, and that Adams is not allowed to convert them now. The City Attorney should weigh in on any proposal to address non-conforming billboards

Ms. Montgomery adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

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<http://www.ci.charlotte.nc.us/Departments/Planning/Rezoning/Stakeholder+Groups/Text+Amendment+Stakeholder+Group/Billboard+Regulations.htm>

#### ***IV. Wrap Up & Next Steps***

At the next meeting, Adams will complete their presentation, and the stakeholders will begin discussion of the ideas presented. The next stakeholder meeting is scheduled for May 10, 2006 in Room 280.