



## STAFF REPORT ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT NO. 25-02

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Community Development Department

**DATE:** September 17, 2025

**CASE NO.:** Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment ("ZTA") No. 25-02  
(CEQA Exemption § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3))

**REQUEST:**

To adopt an ordinance enacting Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment ("ZTA") No. 25-02 amending Title 19 (Zoning) of the Commerce Municipal Code ("CMC") to amend existing billboard regulations and add digital billboard regulations that apply Citywide.

**LOCATION:** Citywide in all applicable zones

**APPLICANT:** City of Commerce

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Planning Commission of the City of Commerce ("Planning Commission") recommend that the City Council: 1) adopt a Categorical Exemption under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000, et seq. "CEQA") and the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regs. §§ 15000, et seq., the "CEQA Guidelines") (CEQA Guidelines § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3)); and 2) adopt the related ZTA as discussed herein.

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE:**

The Public Hearing Notice was published in the Los Cerritos News on August 28, 2025.

**ATTACHMENTS:** A) Planning Commission Resolution No. 25-07  
B) Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:**

Pursuant to CEQA and CEQA Guidelines, the City reviewed the environmental impacts of the proposed Ordinance. Adoption of this Ordinance is exempt from CEQA because it is a ZTA which regulates billboards, which will not have a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and does not qualify as a “project” under CEQA because it will not make physical changes to the environment pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5). In addition, the Ordinance is also exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15061(b)(3) - Common Sense Exemption where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment and CEQA Guidelines Sections § 15301 and § 15303. All future billboard proposals will require their own environmental review as outlined by CEQA guidelines.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Community Development Department has initiated ZTA No. 25-02 to amend Title 19, Chapter 19.25, Signs, of the CMC to modify existing billboard regulations and establish new provisions for digital billboards. The Ordinance would prohibit the construction of new static billboards and allow the construction of new digital billboards, subject to certain standards. The proposed amendment will encourage the elimination or conversion of existing static billboards to digital billboards and ensure that new digital billboards are strategically placed to support economic development in the City, while protecting the public health, welfare and safety of the community.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Under the City Manager’s signing authority, the City hired Terra Realty Advisors, Inc., to assist with evaluating the City’s existing sign regulations as they relate to advertising displays and draft recommended amendments and identify and map all existing static and digital sign locations on Interstate 5 (I-5) and Interstate 710 (I-710) freeways where they traverse the City.

Based on the research conducted by Terra Realty Advisors, Inc., they identified the following existing billboards:

<b>Billboard No.</b>	<b>Caltrans Permit Holder</b>	<b>Permit No.</b>	<b>Caltrans Postmile</b>
1	Outfront Media	27880	Rte 5, 13.94 L
2	Clear Channel	S-07-0151	Rte 710, 22.9 L
3	Clear Channel	34554	Rte 710, 22.9 R
4	General Outdoor Advertising	39053	Rte 710, 22.75 R
5	Clear Channel	40487	Rte 710, 22.68 L
6	Outfront Media	34557	Rte 710, 22.4 R
7	Outfront Media	S07-0296	Rte 5, 13.27 L
8	Bulletin Displays	OF07-0061	Rte 13.17 L

9	Clear Channel	S07-0317	Rte 5, 12.84 R
10	No Permit Issued	N/A	Rte 5, 12.767
11	Criag Realty Group	S07-0305	Rte 5, 12.46R
12	Criag Realty Group	No Permit	Rte 5, 12.536 R
13	Criag Realty Group	S07-0309	Rte 5, 12.34 R
14	Criag Realty Group	No Permit	Rte 5, 12.29 R
15	Criag Realty Group	S07-0307	Rte 5, 12.2 R
16	Regency	40077	Rte 5, 12.05 R
17	Clear Channel	28809	Rte 5, 11.72 R
18	Justman Packing	No Permit	Rte 5, 11.50
19	Clear Channel	28808	Rte 5, 11.34 R
20	Outfront Media	33749	Rte 5, 11.19 R
21	Outfront Media	27761	Rte 5, 11.07 L
22	Outfront Media	27877	Rte 5, 11.06 R
23	Outfront Media	27876	Rte 5, 10.96 R
24	Outfront Media	27760	Rte 5, 10.92 L
25	Coast Advertising	32467	Rte 5, 10.87 R
26	Clear Channel	28789	Rte 5, 10.76 R
27	Bulletin Displays	41305	Rte 5, 10.64 L
28	Outfront Media	40215	Rte 5, 10.49 R
29	Outfront Media	36710	Rte 5, 10.44 L
30	Bulletin Displays	41339	Rte 5, 9.87 L
31	Outfront Media	33748	Rte 5, 9.79 R
32	Clear Channel	33053	Rte 5, 9.75 L
33	Clear Channel	No Permit	Rte 5, 9.701
34	Clear Channel	33266	Rte 5, 9.69 R
35	Vivent Management	S07-0150	Rte 5, 9.57 L
36	Clear Channel	38191	Rte 5, 9.55 R
37	Outfront Media	34577	Rte 710, 21.04 R
38	Outfront Media	34583	Rte 710, 20.91 R
39	Outfront Media	34584	Rte 710, 20.81
40	Clear Channel	34546	Rte 710, 20.6 R
41	Clear Channel	34545	Rte 710, 20.54 R
42	Clear Channel	35105	Rte 710, 20.51 R
43	Clear Channel	41461	Rte 5, 11.95
44	Dunn Edwards	OF07-0021	Rte 5, 11.7 L
45	Outfront Media	38952	Rte 5, 10.78 L

\*Postmile Locations are Approximate

Forty-five (45) static billboards and three (3) digital billboards (Citadel) currently exist throughout the City primarily along the Interstate 5 (I-5) and Interstate 710 (I-710) freeways and on major streets such as Washington Boulevard and Atlantic Boulevard. The high number of static billboards along the I-5 and I-710 freeways and additional billboards along major corridors in the City contribute to sign clutter and negatively impact the image of City. The existing static billboards in the City are outdated. Since some of them have dilapidated structures and vinyl signs tend to become faded and worn over time. Digital billboards, utilizing LED technology, have a more modern aesthetic with the ability to incorporate more dynamic content without the need to replace vinyl signage.

**Outdoor Advertising Act and Regulations:** California Department of Transportation (“Caltrans”) implements and enforces the Outdoor Advertising Act and Regulations. As part of their jurisdiction, they regulate advertising signs along freeways (i.e. billboards) that market off-premise products and businesses.

All future billboard signs are subject to Caltrans regulations and permit requirements if they advertise off-premise products and services. The Outdoor Advertising Act and Regulations have requirements regulating the location, height and distance between billboards, such as a minimum of 1,000 feet between digital billboards. Additionally, billboards must conform with the Caltrans designation of “non-landscaped freeway”, which allows digital billboards in areas adjacent to a freeway which do not have Caltrans landscape areas.

The Outdoor Advertising Act and Regulations contain standards to mitigate impacts of off-premise displays in relation to traffic, safety, light intensity, and manner in which messages are displayed, among others.

**Current Standards:** Chapter 19.25, Signs, of the CMC regulates the use and construction of all signs in the City, including billboards. Billboards are currently allowed as follows:

- **Allowed zones (CMC Sections 19.25.140 and Table 19.13.020A):** Off-site signs are allowed within the Modelo Specific Plan, and Heavy Manufacturing (“M-2”) zone with the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”). Additionally, the Commercial Public Facility (CPF) zone allows for digital billboards.
- **Exceptions (CMC Sections 19.25.140 and 19.25.160.B):** Off-site signs are not allowed within any freeway landscaped area, along Atlantic Boulevard, Washington Boulevard, I-5 freeway, within 750 linear feet off the Citadel Outlets property, within a redevelopment area, within 200-feet of the civic center, a park, school or property zoned for residential use (except the Modelo Specific Plan).
- **Relocation program (CMC Section 19.25.150):** Two (2) non-conforming off-site signs may be abandoned and replaced with one new off-site sign.
- **Development standards (CMC Section 19.25.160.A):**
  - Maximum height: 42-feet
  - Maximum area: 800 square feet per sign face
  - Maximum number of sign faces: Two (2); Three (3) may be allowed on previously approved off-site signs along the I-5 freeway
  - Minimum distance from another off-site sign: 720-feet

- Minimum distance from freeway ramp or street intersection: 375-feet

The current billboard regulations prohibit new off-site signs along large segments of the City such as the I-5 freeway and Atlantic Boulevard. Under the current regulations, limited sections of the I-710 freeway that are “non-landscaped” and properties in the M-2 zone, CPF zone and Modelo Specific Plan allow for off-site signs. The CMC does not have specific regulations for digital billboards, limits the construction of new billboards to only owners who own two or more non-conforming off-site signs that are willing to abandon those signs to construct a new off-site sign, and limits the City’s ability to require a development agreement to customize specific standards for billboards to result in well-designed and sited projects that will benefit the community, including revenues to support municipal services.

Staff has received inquiries from property owners in the City seeking to construct new digital billboards or convert existing static billboards into digital billboards on their properties in areas where off-site signs are currently not allowed. Property owners are seeking to install digital billboards as a way to generate more revenues and to help promote their own businesses to the highly trafficked I-5 and I-710 freeways. Due to increased community interest in the installation of digital billboards and the proliferation of static billboards throughout the City, the City is considering adopting regulations which will result in the reduction of static billboards and construction of new digital billboards in strategic locations that will not contribute to sign clutter.

#### **ANALYSIS:**

As part of Terra Realty Advisors’ work and in collaboration with City staff, a draft Ordinance was developed to accomplish the following goals:

- (1) Modernize existing signage regulations to include regulations for digital billboards to support economic development in the City.
- (2) Improve the image of the City by prohibiting the construction of new static billboards and allowing the construction of new digital billboards and the conversion of existing static billboards to digital billboards in exchange for elimination of multiple static billboards.
- (3) Permit the installation of new digital billboards and the conversion of existing static billboard to digital displays through a development agreement between the City and the sign operator, and where the agreement defines specific community benefits to be provided by the operator.

The proposed Ordinance includes provisions to ensure that the appearance, maintenance, and safety of the community are addressed Citywide as they relate to billboard signs.

#### **Key components of the proposed Ordinance:**

- **Definitions:** Amends the definition of “billboard sign”, and adds definitions for “billboard identification sign”, “development agreement”, digital display or sign”, “director”, “freeway oriented sign”, “new construction”, “repair”, “replacement”, and “static sign or display”.
- **Allowed zones:** Off-site signs are allowed within the Modelo Specific Plan, the CPF zone and other areas of the City subject to a development agreement, or lease or license agreement.
- **Exceptions:** Off-site signs are not allowed within 750 linear feet of the Citadel Outlets property, nor within 250-feet of the civic center, a park, school or property zoned for residential use (except the Modelo Specific Plan).
- **Approval process:** A development agreement is required for any new digital billboards or replacement of an existing static billboard with a new digital billboard, with appropriate standards and public benefits negotiated with the City. The Planning Commission will be the recommending body and the City Council will be the approving body.
- **General standards:**
  - Sign face dimensions: 1,200 square feet per sign face; not to exceed 25-feet in height and 60-feet in length per each sign face.
  - Structure design: no more than two (2) poles are allowed; no more than one (1) digital display surface facing the same direction.
  - Maximum height: 75-feet (converted signs not to exceed height of existing static sign unless it is freeway oriented).
  - Location:
    - New digital billboards: only in area immediately adjacent to the 1-5 or 1-710 freeways zoned for commercial or industrial uses;
    - Replacement of static to digital billboard: only in a commercial or industrial zone;
    - Required distance from residential uses: 250-feet, unless reduced separation is justified through a photometric (light) study;
    - Required distance between two (2) digital billboards on same side of a freeway: 1,000-feet;
    - Required distance between a digital and static billboard on same side of the public right-of-way: 500-feet; and

- Not allowed within freeway landscaped areas per Caltrans.
- Prohibited signs: The following types of signs are not allowed on billboards: moving, animated, rotating, inflatable, and flashing signs, among others.
- Appearance and operations: The sign structure and lighting cannot present any hazard to pedestrians or vehicular traffic, and brightness must adjust automatically as ambient light conditions change, among others.
- Landscaping: Landscaping must be integrated at the base of the billboard sign, if possible, to achieve consistency.
- **Nonconforming signs:** A section was added to address legal nonconforming off-site signs stating that they cannot be altered, moved, or reconstructed unless replaced or converted to a digital billboard.

## CONCLUSION:

The proposed Ordinance intends to allow and regulate off-site signs and specifically encourages the conversion of existing static billboards to digital billboards to improve the appearance of the City from adjacent freeways.

Given that the City of Commerce has high visibility from the I-5 and 1-710 freeways, the proposed Ordinance intends to amend and enhance the existing billboard regulations to ensure the safety of Commerce residents and visitors traveling through the City, enhance the image of the City, reduce visual clutter through the elimination of outdated static billboards, and promote local businesses.

Staff recommends that Planning Commission recommend that the City Council: 1) adopt a Categorical Exemption under the provisions of CEQA and CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines § 15060(c)(2), § 15378(b)(5) § 15301 § 15303 and § 15061(b)(3)); and 2) adopt the related ZTA as discussed herein.

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