


**FW: Nov 19 Item 5.1 Billboards**

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**From** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Date** Mon 11/18/2024 3:53 PM  
**To** Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachment (101 KB)  
SJCC--PLynam\_2024-11-18.pdf;

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**From:** Paul Lynam <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 18, 2024 3:50 PM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** Nov 19 Item 5.1 Billboards

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Honorable Mayor and City Council,

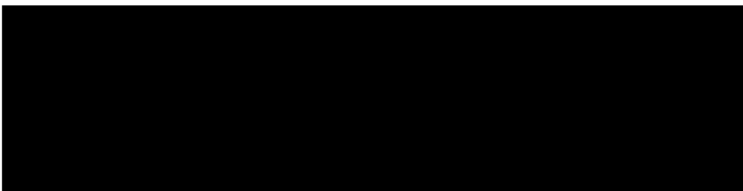
For your consideration, please find attached a (2 page, pdf format) written contribution addressing Council Meeting 19 November 2024, agende item 5.1: Amendments to City Council Policy 6-4 and Authorization to Proceed with Request for Proposal for Large Format Signage/Billboards at the San Jose Mineta International Airport.

In summary, Policy 6-4 should be revised to expunge any provision for billboards (digital or otherwise). No new signage should be approved.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Paul D. Lynam  
Astronomer  
[REDACTED]

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18 November 2024

Honorable Mayor and City Council,

**Item 5.1 Amendments to City Council Policy 6-4 and Authorization to Proceed with Request for Proposal for Large Format Signage/Billboards at the San Jose Mineta International Airport.**

Since the revision of Council Policy 6-4 in September 2018, multiple contributions per year have been submitted to the City of San Jose's elected officials and Commissioners, containing multitudinous citations to independent, peer-reviewed results, attesting to the indisputable harms of light pollution. The prevalence of light pollution across the industrialized world is *accelerating* at a rate outpacing population growth. Over the past 25 years, growth rates of between 49% and 270% have been measured. For rapidly developing conurbations in the industrialized world (like San Jose) this figure could be as high as 400%. Some estimates suggest rates of 7–10% annually. Digital billboards (and the LEDs that they employ) contribute disproportionately to light pollution via several mechanisms, including (but not limited to): emission of multiple intensity peaks across many colors, thus contaminating the entire visible spectrum; emission of a preponderance of blue-rich light (absent from traditional incandescent lights) for which the phenomenon of *Rayleigh scattering* dominates, producing skyglow. The term *scatter* is used advisedly. It is not a colloquialism. Scattering refers to specific, physical mechanisms which redistribute light and its properties. Scattering is a consequence of the physics of ever-present atmospheric aerosols (e.g. water vapor, particles, etc). Scattering is responsible for familiar environmental phenomena such as twilight. Scattering renders clear daytime skies as blue, cloudy skies as gray and is responsible for spectacular red sunsets.

Light pollution is already harming the operation and mission of the University of California Observatories/Lick Observatory. In 1989, of 17 major observatories, Lick was ranked among the top 3 most heavily light-polluted astronomical sites. By 2022, in a list of 23 major observatories worldwide, Lick was cited as the most affected astronomical site in visible light.

Light pollution (and the circadian disruption it induces) is harmful to human health. Every major disease is associated to some extent with short sleep/long light. Sleep disorders are now arguably the most prevalent health concern in the industrialized world. Light pollution is not simply considered as a human health hazard. The WHO has labelled light at night as a probable human carcinogen. Mammals are highly sensitive to light at night, which has the power to dramatically, negatively affect circadian rhythms. Circadian rhythms control aspects of physiology, behavior, metabolism, body temperature, blood pressure and pineal hormone (e.g. melatonin) secretion. It is the shorter wavelengths of light (i.e. blue) that most affect melatonin production.

In consequence, LEDs — with their preponderance of blue emission — are of most concern. Beginning in 1970s, multitudinous studies have identified links between circadian disruption (a.k.a. Daily Rhythm Disruption) to behavioral changes, sleep disorders, mental disorders, diabetes, depression, obesity, coronary heart disease, and references therein), dementia, stroke and cancers of the lung, breast, prostate, colon and rectum. Of the above-listed maladies, the last four have multiple, well-established *causal* pathways between those cancers and light pollution.

Light pollution is harmful to the environment, fauna, flora and agricultural productivity.

A survey<sup>1</sup> conducted by the City of San Jose Building Planning and Code Enforcement in 2021, revealed over 92% of respondents oppose billboards. It has been repeatedly argued that the 2018 revision of Council policy 6-4 contains a cherry-picked, incomplete and inadequate subset of recommendations to mitigate excess light by unjustifiably extrapolating out-of-context, out-of-date provisions. Policy 6-4 is incompatible with existing policies (e.g. 4-2, 4-3) which enshrine protections for dark skies. Furthermore, Policy 6-4 is multiply inconsistent with the letter, and the spirit, of the 'Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan'. In reporting to Committees and Council (e.g. Community and Economic Development Committee, 26 February 2024), referring to 'analysis and engagement with the community', City staff have persistently been insensitive to, neglected and/or down-played the above concerns.

At State level, legislation to reduce light pollution is progressing. The time is coming when light pollution will be as strictly regulated as noise or air pollution. The question for San Jose, in the meantime is: Does the City aspires to accelerate losses the of night sky, biodiversity, etc. and inflict ill-health on its residents, or deliver on the aspirations outlined in the General Plan? There is concensus among multi-disciplinary researchers: Light pollution has gone too far. Efforts to reduce (*not* mitigate) light pollution are urgently required. Accordingly, for existing City policies to be consistent with each other, the General Plan and the City's claims of 'environmental leadership', **Policy 6-4 should be revised to expunge any provision for billboards (digital or otherwise). No new signage should be approved.**

Yours faithfully,



Dr Paul D. Lynam FRAS  
Astronomer



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<sup>1</sup>City of San Jose Survey: Digital Billboards (17 March 2021).



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**OPPOSE - Policy 6-4 and RFP for Billboards - Item 5.1 - City Council 11/19**

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**From** Jordan Moldow [REDACTED]

**Date** Tue 11/19/2024 12:06 AM

**To** Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>; City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>; The Office of Mayor Matt Mahan <mayor@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; District2 <District2@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>

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I request that Council reject staff recommendation (c) for this item, rejecting the authorization to proceed with an RFP for new billboards at SJC.

Excellent letters have already been submitted by Leslie Levitt (on behalf of No Digital Billboards in San Jose (NDBSJ)) and Paul D. Lynam FRAS, Astronomer. Please read their letters fully. They capture everything I could hope to say, and more.

Driving on Highway 101, the most distracting (and sometimes blinding) segments are those where digital billboards are present. The changing messages are distracting, they are rarely messages I want to see, and they are often way too bright. If the signs aren't safe to shine into the eyes of pilots, then they aren't safe to shine into the eyes of motor vehicle drivers either.

Putting such billboards along Coleman Avenue would be so much worse. If nothing else, I hope Council will not authorize any Coleman-facing billboards. The impacts on driving would be the same as on 101, but the deadly impacts can be worse, since a distracted driver can hit pedestrians and cyclists on Coleman.

Staff recommendations (a) and (b) are strictly improvements to Policy 6-4, so I'm fine with approving them. But I'm also fine with rejecting them, given the inherent flaws with Policy 6-4 that have been pointed out by the two aforementioned public comment letters.

Best,

Jordan Moldow, a D3 resident (speaking on behalf of himself)  
Japantown, 95112

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**FW: Item 5.1**

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**From** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Date** Tue 11/19/2024 9:59 AM  
**To** Agendadesk <Agendadesk@sanjoseca.gov>

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**From:** iq4rent sc <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 19, 2024 9:15 AM  
**To:** City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>  
**Subject:** Item 5.1

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I am writing to urge you to oppose any large illuminated billboards in our community. Here are some reasons why.

I have a medical condition commonly known as the "suicide disease" and one of the things that sets it off is bright light. There are numerous times I have spent minutes to hours writhing in uncontrollable pain as the result of passing a lighted billboard around 24th/Santa Clara, along the freeway or in other cities. The effect of these signs (and Sonic Runway), for me, is like an ice pick going through my eye and all I'm focused on is the excruciating pain, driving is secondary.

I know I'm not alone in this, there are other people with medical issues like seizure related conditions, people with astigmatism and other medical conditions where additional and/or unexpected bursts of light can affect them negatively and, as a result, affect their driving ability.

I used to live a block from city hall and one of the things I loved was how dark it still was at night in such a large town, how easy it was to see the stars. I now live one block outside of San Jose in an area that's even darker, the stars are even easier to see and it feels really special. Anything that increases light pollution and robs people of the beauty of the night sky with all its constellations and stars is not a win for the people.

Regards,  
Shaunn Cartwright  
One short, but so meaningful, block out of D9

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