

NO DIGITAL BILLBOARDS IN SAN JOSE

Monday, June 21, 2021

To: San Jose Mayor, City Council & Staff

CC: City Clerk (CityClerk@sanjoseca.gov)

Re: Agenda item 10.1(c) [21-1567](#) for the June 22, 2021 City Council meeting regarding "PP20-002 - Amendment to Title 23 (The Sign Code) of the San José Municipal Code."

REQUEST CITY COUNCIL TO DISCUSS ROOFTOP SIGNS

Dear San Jose Mayor, City Council & Staff:

NDBSJ requests the City Council halt consideration of the proposed amendment to permit on-premise rooftop signs in the Downtown Sign Intensification Zone. Disposition of this amendment is scheduled to be part of the Consent Calendar at the Tuesday, June 22 meeting of the City Council [Item 10.1(c) 21-1567]. We request instead that the Council schedule time at a future meeting for a thorough discussion of this amendment with an opportunity for public input.

Why are we making this request: Adding rooftop signs to downtown buildings IS NOT a routine matter considering there are, to the best of our knowledge, no rooftop signs on tall downtown buildings today (other than the historic DeAnza Hotel). [A routine matter would be removing section 21.04.520 from the sign ordinance, since it refers to a 1994 rotating message billboard pilot program.]

It is also incongruous for the City to discount the design impact of large format skyline and rooftop signs without recognition of and in coordination with the City's own recently released "San Jose Citywide Design Standards and Guidelines".

While we understand the necessity to make city policy concerning on-premise signs consistent throughout the city, we feel it is a mistake to do so by allowing on-premise rooftop signs downtown only because they apparently are allowed elsewhere in the city. We strongly urge that the City Council achieve consistency by instead prohibiting new on-premise rooftop signs everywhere throughout the city.

Why this is important: We remind our elected officials that any threat to our community's historic character, architectural integrity and natural environment has a dollar value, the amount of which the city has neglected to consider in evaluating the impact of out of control, in your face signage proposals that have taken up an inordinate amount of the Council's time and attention over a multi-year period.

Wall mounted signs are more than sufficient for building identification without seriously compromising the architectural integrity of a building as would rooftop signs. Equally important,

rooftop signs not only alter the character of a building, but they will also degrade the collective aesthetics of the entire downtown.

What's this got to do with off-premise advertising signs? We contend that it has everything to do with them. Once the city allows the erection of on-premise rooftop signs downtown we can easily imagine the next ask of you made by the billboard lobby will be to allow rooftop off-premise advertising signs. And given the ongoing implementation of Phase 1, especially after the initial erection of wall mounted off-premise digital billboards downtown, how can the Council argue that wall mounted off-premise signs are ok but rooftop ones are not? There is neither logic nor reason to such an argument.

How will off-premise rooftop billboards look downtown?

Like this:



As we have repeatedly pointed out to the Council over the course of the past year, the city has a problem with accountability and transparency when it comes to signs in general and off-premise

billboards in particular. The city's record has been catering to the billboard lobby and in so doing, ignoring widespread public opposition to both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Now the city's attempt to allow rooftop signs downtown cloaked as merely a routine matter, further contributes to public distrust of both city staff and elected officials when it comes to all things relating to signage.

Removing the proposed amendment dealing with rooftop signs from Tuesday's Consent Calendar and postponing discussion for a later date will help to restore the public's trust and confidence in city government as well as give the public ample time to make clear its views on this most important subject.

Please respond and indicate if you will comply with our request.

Respectfully,

Jason Hemp, Les Levitt & John Miller

No Digital Billboards In San Jose – Steering Committee

NoSJBillboards@gmail.com

No Digital Billboards in San Jose (NDBSJ), the leading community organization working to restore the 1985 ban on new billboards and to permanently terminate the Phase 1 and 2 amendments to the Sign Ordinance.