

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

M E M O R A N D U M

3E

DATE: NOVEMBER 15, 2001

APPROVED

VM9990

TO: AGENCY COMMISSIONERS

FROM: JERRY SCHARLIN, ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT PROHIBITING THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLE SIGN AND BILLBOARD STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR OTHER SIGN STRUCTURES VERMONT/MANCHESTER RECOVERY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT, CD 8

RECOMMENDATION

That the Agency adopt the attached resolution approving a Design for Development prohibiting the construction of Pole Sign and Billboard structures and providing standards for other sign structures in the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project Area.

RE

December 7, 2000 - Board approval of Interim Design for Development for 21 Project Areas (including the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project Area) imposing an interim prohibition on Agency approval of billboard applications in those Areas.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

No funds required for this action.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The recommended action is Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15308.

SUMMARY

1. The Problem

During 1999-2000, Agency staff received an increasing number of permit applications for the construction of billboards in many redevelopment project areas. Concurrently, there was an increasing concern about the impacts of billboards and other types of signage on the Agency's efforts to achieve its redevelopment plan objectives in these project areas. These objectives commit the Agency to, among other things, create a community image that expresses an aesthetically pleasing and clean community through planning and implementation programs, including development and enforcement of urban design standards. These objectives are stated in Section 105 of the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Plan ("Plan"), and direct the Agency to eliminate blight and create a setting conducive to attracting re-investment into the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project Area ("Project Area"), Attachment A.

## 2. Prior Agency Action to Deal With Problem

The Plan contains provisions that authorize the Agency to adopt design guidelines called Designs for Development ("DFDs") that establish, among other things, design criteria and other details necessary for proper development of the Project Area. Sections 507 and 520 of the Plan specifically authorize the Agency to develop sign and billboard standards.

On December 7, 2000, the Agency Board adopted an Interim Design for Development for 21 redevelopment project areas (including the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Project Area) that directed staff to review billboard applications under the Interim document's rules that prohibit billboards. On that date, the Agency Board also directed staff to prepare individual DFDs for billboards in these 21 Project Areas. The Interim Design for Development is scheduled to expire on December 19, 2001.

From January-October 2001, Agency staff worked on the proposed DFD for the Project Area by: (i) surveying the Area to determine the number and location of billboard and pole sign structures there; (ii) drafting a DFD which addresses the unique blight and other negative impacts created by such billboard and pole sign structures; and (iii) finalizing the DFD into the form of resolution attached hereto. Agency consultant Patricia Smith assisted staff in these tasks.

In adopting the Interim Design for Development and preparing the DFDs, the Agency is carrying out its mission of improving the

conditions of blighted communities in determined by both the Agency and City to be in need of the special attention and tools provided by redevelopment.

### 3. The Problem in the Project Area

The Vermont/Manchester Recovery Project Area encompasses approximately 189 acres. The project consists primarily two corridors, Manchester and Vermont Avenue. The Manchester Avenue corridor stretches from Figueroa Street on the east to Van Ness Avenue on the west. Vermont Avenue corridor stretches from 79<sup>th</sup> Street on the north to 88<sup>th</sup> Street on the south. A shorter corridor also runs along Western Avenue, bounded by 85<sup>th</sup> Street on the north and 89<sup>th</sup> Street on the south. The Project Area contains a mix of land uses including retail stores, auto related uses, churches and other community service centers, but is predominately commercial in character. The land use pattern consists of commercial corridors bounded by neighborhoods of single or multiple family residential units.

Commercial development in the Project Area consists generally of one and two story buildings.

There are at least 53 billboard structures and numerous pole sign structures located in the Project Area.

The community continues to recover from the economic impacts of the civil disturbance of 1992 through private and public investment. The Los Angeles Unified School District recently completed the Youth Opportunity Unlimited Alternative School (near Manchester and Vermont Avenue). The Agency consistent with one of the Plan objectives is working on developing a full service shopping area at the northeast corner of Vermont and Manchester Avenue. The continued proliferation of billboard and pole sign structures in the Project Area would be detrimental to the visual aesthetics of its commercial corridors.

### 4. Proposed DFD To Deal With Problem

The proposed DFD prohibits the construction, or reconstruction, of Pole Signs and Billboard structures and contains standards for all sign structures in the Project Area.

#### a. Prohibition of Certain New Signs

The proposed DFD for the Project Area would prohibit new "Billboards" defined therein as sign structures that accommodate

a sign larger than 100 square feet and are placed on or affixed to one or more poles, columns or posts, and are structurally independent from a building or structure. Also, the proposed DFD would prohibit new "Pole Signs" defined as a sign structure placed on or affixed to one or more poles, where the pole exceeds 8 feet in height, measured from the existing or artificial grade to the bottom of the sign.

b. Standards For All New Signs

The proposed DFD contains standards affecting all signs in the Project Area. These standards are geared towards making signs an integral part of a well-designed urban landscape and keeping signs and the areas around signs well maintained and safe. For example, the DFD contains provisions that: (i) all signs shall be designed as an integral part of the building on which they are located; (ii) all signs shall be properly maintained and free from damaged sign material and graffiti; and (iii) no sign may contain flashing, rotating or hazardous lights or any rotating, revolving, or other moving parts.

c. Application To Existing Signs

The proposed DFD would apply to existing billboards and signs in the Project Area if the cost of "proposed changes" to such structures exceeds 30% of the replacement value of the sign support structure. Among the proposed changes covered by the DFD are reconstructions, redesigns and renovations of billboard and other sign structures.

d. Limitations

The above-discussed DFD provisions address only the most significant problems and conditions created by billboard and other sign structures in terms of proper urban design, aesthetics, and distractions to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The proposed DFD expressly does not address the content of (or message on) any sign, in order to comply with First Amendment principles. Moreover, the proposed DFD would apply only to the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project Area, and not to other areas of the City of Los Angeles. Even if other project areas adopt similar DFDs, there still remain many areas within the City of Los Angeles without such regulations, as can be seen by the map appended as Attachment B hereto. As such, there are ample alternative means of and opportunities for communication, both within the channel of signage and through other methods of communication.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET IMPACT

The recommended action is in conformance with the FY 2001-2002 work program and budget.

BACKGROUND

1. Aesthetics as a Legitimate Goal of Agency Action

The adoption and implementation of a redevelopment plan reflects a comprehensive and coordinated effort to make the designated project area more attractive, both to private investment and to the people who live, work and visit in this area.

Additionally, the successful redevelopment of blighted project areas involves more than just generating additional tax revenues. It includes creating or recapturing visual environments where people want to be and feel comfortable. A major portion of the Agency's work focuses on the proper design of the urban landscape in its broadest sense, since the visual environment has a major impact on how a project area looks and "feels." This look and feel contributes to the ability to attract and retain the type of investment that stabilizes and ultimately improves the project area.

Accordingly, most redevelopment plans include specific language either in their Goals and Objectives or elsewhere that acknowledge a concern for aesthetics, the importance of creating a pleasing environment, and the need for traffic safety. Also, redevelopment plans often contain specific language authorizing the Agency to develop additional standards for signs and billboards, through Design Guidelines, Designs for Development, or other vehicles. The Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Plan contains such provisions, at Sections 507 and 520.

In response to dramatic increases in 1999-2000 in requests to review billboard permit applications for conformity to the redevelopment plans, the Agency adopted an Interim Design for Development affecting 21 project areas, including the subject Project Area. (See part 2 of SUMMARY.) Concern had been expressed over the cumulative impacts of such an increase in signage on the Agency's redevelopment efforts, as well as impacts to the community in terms of visual clutter, distractions, and negative aesthetic appearance. A general consensus was formed among Agency staff and the communities in


which they work, that specific Designs for Development needed to be adopted for each project area. (See part 1 of SUMMARY.)

The subject DFD was properly noticed. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as well as the Council Office reviewed the proposed DFD. Both the CAC and Council Office recommend adoption of the proposed DFD.

2. How Proposed DFD Relates to Ongoing City Billboard Reduction Efforts

Currently, there is a Citywide moratorium (titled Interim Control Ordinance) prohibiting the issuance of a permit for any new off-site signs (including billboards). However, the City moratorium (like the Agency's Interim Design for Development) is also scheduled to expire in mid-December, 2001. If the City interim moratorium is not extended (or a permanent moratorium not adopted) by that date, new billboard and other sign structure permit applications can be expected to arrive at the Agency for processing. Alternatively, if the City adopts a permanent Citywide billboard moratorium (either by itself or as part of a billboard reduction ordinance), the City measure will likely have a variance procedure. Under that variance procedure, new billboard and other sign structure permit applications could also arrive at the Agency for processing.

Thus, there is the need for the proposed DFD to strictly regulate such potential streams of permit applications to construct or rehabilitate billboards or other signage so they conform to the Redevelopment Plan.

  
Jerry A. Scharlin, Administrator

There is no conflict of interest known to me, which exists with regard to any Agency officer or employee concerning this action.

# Vermont-Manchester

Proposed  
Redevelopment  
Project

Redevelopment Plan Map

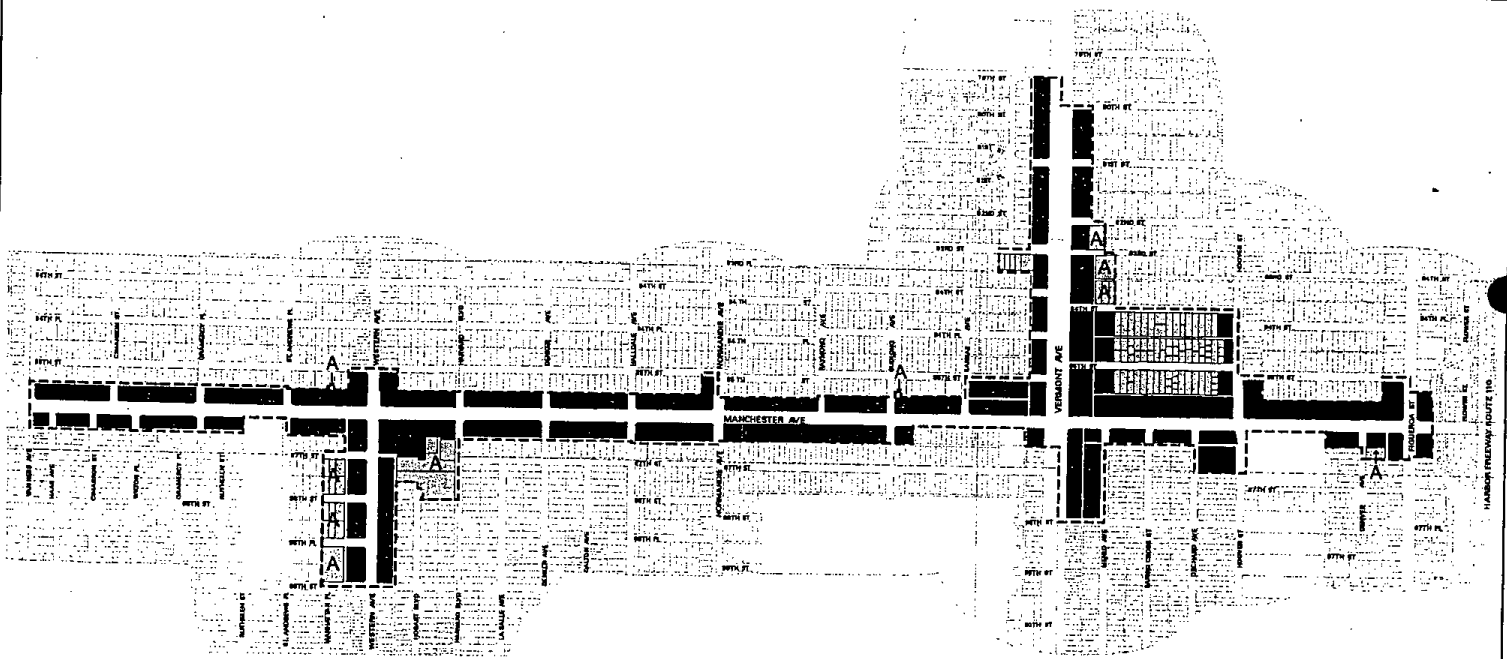
Exhibit No. 1

February 1996

## C R A / L A

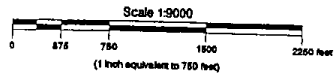
Community  
Redevelopment  
Agency

City  
of  
Los Angeles



**Land Use Designations**

- Commercial
- Residential
- A Alternate Land Use is Commercial



Prepared by  
CRA GIS Team  
March 21, 1996





RESOLUTION NO. 6012

RESOLUTION ADOPTING A DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT  
PROHIBITING THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
POLE SIGN AND BILLBOARD STRUCTURES AND  
PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR OTHER SIGN STRUCTURES IN THE  
VERMONT/MANCHESTER RECOVERY REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT AREA

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of redevelopment is to eliminate and prevent the spread of blight and deterioration; and

WHEREAS, to accomplish this purpose the Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Plan ("Redevelopment Plan") includes objectives to enhance the environment by creating a community image that expresses an aesthetically pleasing and clean community through planning and implementation programs, including development and enforcement of urban design guidelines; and to conserve, rehabilitate and redevelop the affected Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project Area ("Project Area") in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan, as demonstrated by Section 105 of the Redevelopment Plan; and

WHEREAS, Sections 507 and 520 of the Redevelopment Plan authorizes the Agency to prepare and adopt designs for development that establish design criteria and other development and design controls necessary for proper development of both private and public areas within the Project Area; and

WHEREAS, Billboard and Pole Sign structures, as defined herein, are of particular concern to the Project Area, as indicated by Section 512 of the Redevelopment Plan; and

WHEREAS, Section 521 of the Redevelopment Plan prohibits the issuance of building permits or other land use entitlements without the prior review and determination by the Agency that the proposed structure conforms to the Redevelopment Plan, including any adopted design for development; and

WHEREAS, a preliminary survey of the Project Area indicates that there are already at least 53 Billboard and Pole Sign structures located in the Project Area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA AS FOLLOWS:

The Agency adopts the following Design for Development affecting the location of any new Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign structure, as well as the modification, alteration, redesign, reconstruction or renovation of any Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign structure within the Project Area that requires a permit or other land use entitlement from the City of Los Angeles:

1. Except as stated herein, all applicable State, County and City of Los Angeles regulations and code requirements shall apply.

2. No provision of this Design for Development shall operate to restrict or prohibit any ideological, political or other non-commercial message on any Billboard, Pole Sign, or other sign structure otherwise permitted by the standards set forth herein.
3. As used in this Design for Development, the following definitions apply:
  - a. "Billboard" means any sign structure that accommodates a sign larger than 50 square feet that is placed on or affixed to one or more poles, columns or posts and is structurally independent from a building or structure.
  - b. "Building Face" means the area of a building façade as determined by multiplying the height of a building or structure by the length of the building or structure fronting on a public street or sidewalk.
  - c. "Pole Sign" means any sign structure that is placed on or affixed to one or more poles or posts and the pole or post of which exceed(s) a height of 8 feet as measured from the existing or artificially created grade to the bottom of the sign.
4. No Billboard shall be permitted in the Project Area.
5. No Pole Signs shall be permitted in the Project Area, whether or not attached to buildings.

6. No sign structure shall be located or mounted on a rooftop or on poles or other structures that pass through a rooftop.
7. No sign structure shall be cantilevered over rooftops or otherwise encroach into the airspace above any building or structure.
8. The building and ground area around a sign structure shall be properly maintained at all times. All unused mounting structures, hardware and wall perforations from any previous sign shall be removed, and building surfaces shall be restored to their original condition.
9. The area available for signage copy for any single sign shall not exceed 100 square feet.
10. The total amount of sign area located on any Building Face shall not exceed 10% of said Building Face.
11. All sign structures shall be designed as an integral part of the building on which they are located, and shall reflect a high level of architectural and construction quality.
12. All signage copy shall be properly maintained and free from damaged sign material and other unsightly conditions (including graffiti).

13. All sign structures shall be at all times kept in good repair and maintained in a safe and sound condition and in conformance with all applicable codes.
14. Razor wire, barbed wire, concertina wire or other barriers preventing unauthorized access to any sign shall be hidden from public view.
15. No sign structure may contain flashing, rotating or hazardous lights. The direction and intensity of all lighting shall not be such as to cause nuisance or traffic hazard. Night lighting shall be directed onto the sign face with no glare onto adjacent properties.
16. No sign structure may contain rotating, revolving, or other moving parts.
17. No sign structure shall encroach over or upon a public right-of-way.
18. All existing signs not in conformance with these design standards shall be deemed non-conforming uses pursuant to Section 506 "Nonconforming Uses" of the Redevelopment Plan. Accordingly, any modification, alteration, redesign, reconstruction or renovation of an existing non-conforming sign structure shall conform to the design standards contained herein if the cost of the work exceeds 30% of the replacement value of the sign structure. Notwithstanding the foregoing, there shall be no increase in the overall

size or dimensions of any existing sign or increase in sign area.

19. The Agency may permit, after review and recommendation of the Citizen Advisory Committee, if any, minor variations to these design standards, and/or adopt other design standards for sign structures for development projects that are subject to a Disposition and Development Agreement or an Owner Participation Agreement with the Agency.
20. Sign proposals and applications for permits or other land use entitlements for Billboards, Pole Signs, and all other sign structures requiring a permit or other land use entitlement from the City of Los Angeles shall be reviewed for compliance with this Design for Development, the Redevelopment Plan, and requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] and the Agency's Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, and be approved or disapproved in the first instance by designated Agency staff. Any proposal or application disapproved or denied by Agency staff may be appealed by the proponent or applicant, or any other party, to the Agency Board of Commissioners.
21. Should any portion of this Design for Development be challenged and determined to be improper for any reason, such provision or application may be severed and the rest of the Design for Development remain in effect.

ADOPTED: November 15, 2001

37  
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**Community Redevelopment Agency / Los Angeles**

**AGENDA REVIEW TRANSMITTAL**

POA: VM 9990

Agenda Review on: November 1, 2001 Board Meeting on: November 15, 2001  
Author: RIVERO Ext: 1757 Project Manager: JAUREGUI  
Originating Dept: Professional Services Director: Mark Nelson  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

ADOPTION OF DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT PROHIBITING THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLE SIGNS AND BILLBOARD STRUCTURES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR OTHER SIGN STRUCTURES

CD: 8 Project Area: VERMONT / MANCHESTER

#33

This Item is submitted for: \_\_\_\_\_

Public Hearing X Consent \_\_\_\_\_ Report \_\_\_\_\_  
Action \_\_\_\_\_ Executive Session \_\_\_\_\_ Presentation \_\_\_\_\_  
This Will require City Council Action: No.

This will require City Council Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
Explain if there is a time urgency to be acted upon by City Council: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was your item reviewed by Loan Committee? Yes No NA

Additional review that may be needed: \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Budget \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental \_\_\_\_\_  
Contracts \_\_\_\_\_ Equal Opportunity \_\_\_\_\_

Approval as to Form, Content & Legally  
Submitted by [Signature]  
Project Manager, if applicable

[Signature]  
4/06/01

[Signature] 10/31/01  
Department Head/ Deputy Administrator

[Signature] 11-1-01  
Legal [Signature] with change 11-05-01  
Date

**Attachment Checklist:**

Check if attachments are ready or put "to follow" if the attachments will accompany the final Board memo.

Map: To be attached Resolution (s): See Attached  
Others: \_\_\_\_\_