

Westwood South of Santa Monica Blvd
Homeowner's Association
Incorporated November 8, 1971
P. O. Box 64213
Los Angeles, CA 90064-0213

Los Angeles City Council
Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street, Room 340
Los Angeles, CA 90012
VIA EMAIL: clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org

Re: CPC-2017-455-CA/Temporary Signs on Construction Walls

Dear Chair Huizar and Honorable PLUM Committee Members

The issue of signage and particularly of off-site signage is important to our community. A large part of our concern related to signage has to do with the need for effective enforcement of the City's regulations. Over the years we have seen many examples where enforcement has been hampered by regulations that are not clear to those entrusted with enforcement duties. The proposed amendments to the temporary wall sign ordinance will address this shortcoming and serve to ensure that temporary wall signs at construction sites are: a) temporary and, b) are erected at construction sites where business is not being conducted. There are examples citywide of construction wall signs that have been erected and maintained for YEARS where construction was not taking place. These walls and their associated signage are a long term blight on our communities and were never intended to be erected for long term placement. There are also locations across the city that are, in fact, ongoing businesses who have maintained temporary construction wall permits around their businesses. The temporary wall signs were never intended to be placed at locations with ongoing businesses. This must be stopped. Having a restaurant pull a temporary construction wall permit for restriping a parking lot while remaining open is an abuse of this program. Having a lot rented out for vehicle storage by car dealers and auto mechanics surrounded by temporary construction walls is wrong.

While some temporary wall sign operators may conduct themselves in the spirit of the law, there are others who clearly do NOT do so. The city should act to maintain a level playing field that encourages compliance and acts swiftly against those in violation. Inspectors have sought clarification of the regulations and it is now brought to PLUM to support their recommendations and the recommendations of the City Planning Commission (CPC).

I refer you to our letter to the CPC transmitted on May 24, 2017. Rather than recount the points made in that letter, I will attach it with this correspondence. We have a number of additional suggestions that we would like to see considered to further strengthen this program. After the current recommendations have been considered, we would ask PLUM to request that the Planning Dept. review these recommendations for return to the CPC and PLUM for further consideration.

Please take action as soon as possible to clarify the language pertaining to the placement of temporary construction wall signs and their prohibition at locations where business is being conducted. This is a critical and timely matter that should move forward to full Council now.

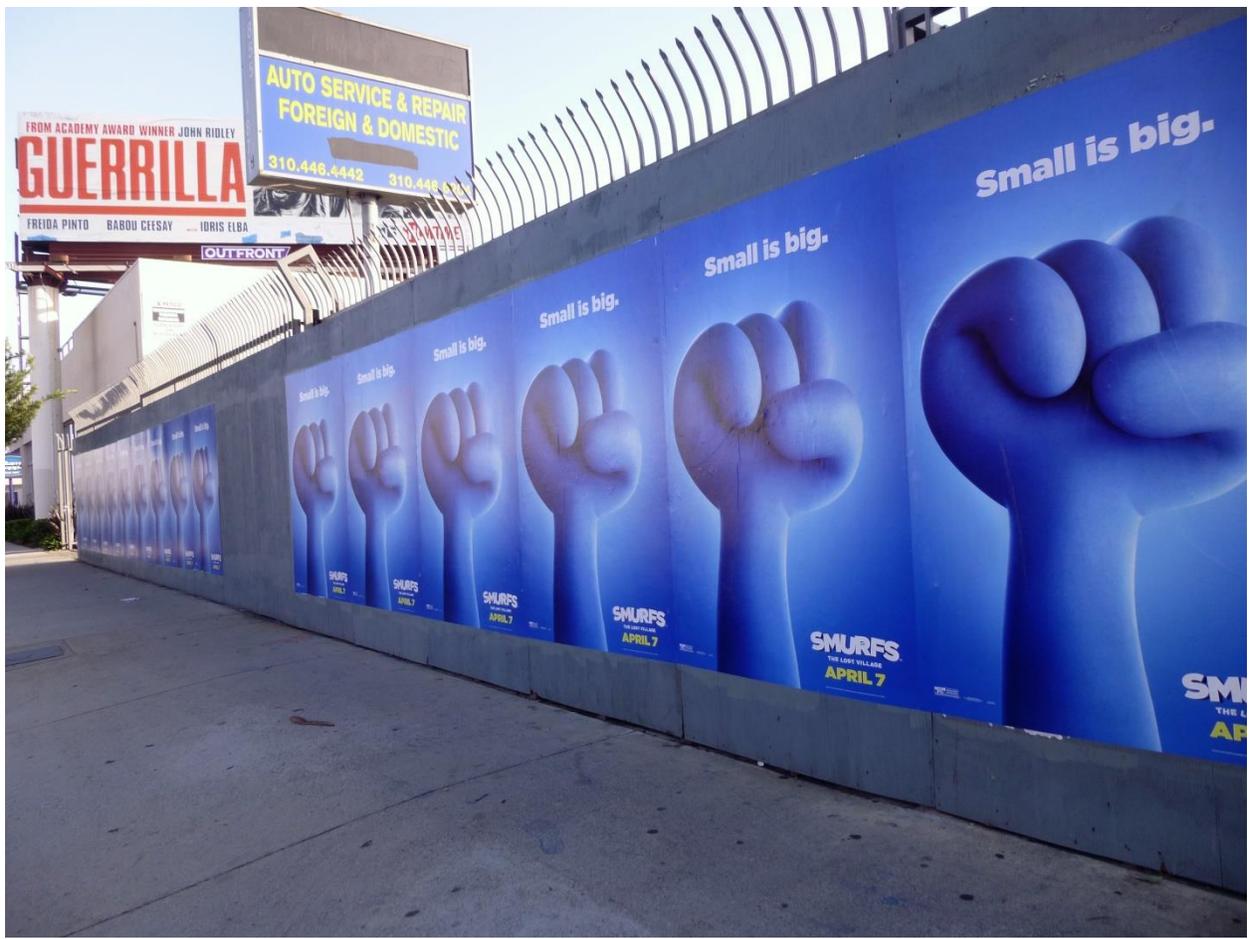
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Broide".

Barbara Broide
President

cc: CD 5 Planning Deputy
CD 5 Deputy Jack Sripoona







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May 24, 2017

Los Angeles City Planning Commission
Via email: cpc@lacity.org / james.k.williams@lacity.org

RE: CPC-2017-455-CA / ENV-2017-591-CE
May 25, 2017 CPC Agenda Item 6 / Temporary Construction Wall Signage

Dear President Ambroz, Vice President Dake Wilson and Honorable City Planning Commission Members:

The issue of signage and particularly of off-site signage is important to our community. We have invested many years in our efforts to stem the tide of off-site sign intrusion into our visual environment and to support strong public policy that protects neighborhoods across the City.

To that end, we have reviewed the proposed revisions to the ordinance that regulates off-site signage on "temporary" construction walls. Before noting issues we trust you will address, we would first like to strongly advocate for the cessation of any off-site signage on such structures. If such structures are needed to protect the passing public and/or to secure a construction site, then they should be erected and maintained by the property owner for so long a time as they are needed. What we have seen instead, is that sign operators find vacant lots or lots awaiting construction and make arrangements to erect the gray plywood walls covered with advertisements around these sites; these walls have become all too familiar around LA and often go up well before such structures would be required as a result of construction activities. And, their presence is not only a blight on our communities, but they also can create a safety hazard.

Assuming that the unfortunate practice of permitting off-site advertising on such structures will continue, it is important to address some shortcomings in the proposed ordinance:

We note that the proposed ordinance specifically states that permits for temporary signs are not to be issued "if such wall surrounds an operating business, including an operating parking lot." In our community we have documented parking and vehicle storage on such properties. It is important that the ordinance be clear in its prohibition of the operation of any business activity on the property. At 1855 Westwood Blvd., the former STR Auto Repair business was sold to Jamison Properties and a mixed use project is being proposed there. The lot was enclosed by gray construction fencing and off-site ads placed. However, the property is actively rented and used by Beverly Hills Porsche to place vehicles that are in their possession for repair. The lot's gate is open for the easy access to these vehicles. (I contacted the land use consultant for the project and complained and requested that the signage be removed which has been done. However, I suspect that I was successful in this effort because the project is currently under

review and seeks community and neighborhood council support.) Photos of that lot are included with this correspondence.

A large property on Santa Monica Blvd. spanning a full square block east from Barrington is enclosed in the gray fencing. Inside the property are rows upon rows of new cars awaiting sale. This is not a formal "parking lot" for customers do not come and go and park their cars. Is this activity clearly prohibited under the proposed ordinance? (The same question goes for the storage of vehicles for repair noted above.) Photos of that property are also included with this correspondence.

A corner property at Cotner and Olympic (northeast corner) that was previously an Enterprise Car Rental lot and which used the adjacent building as its office (and continues to use that building) is now walled off with temporary walls and signage and houses stored construction equipment (not in use). That property has high walls and gates so it is impossible to photograph the interior from the street.

No doubt there are many other such locations. If a property owner or tenant is enjoying any use of their property, it should not be possible to also derive income from signage on temporary walls. Must the language in the ordinance be broadened to strengthen the City's ability at enforcement time? Is "parking lot" language sufficient to allow for enforcement against storage lots?

From a public safety point of view we have additional concerns. The walls are built in such a way that it is most often not possible to view within the lots. Sometimes there are gates and gaps between the walls and the gates, but not always. If there is a gap large enough for people to enter, then the walls could provide a place that is out of view that could be used unsafely. The walls make it difficult, if not impossible, to see what might be going on inside the property. (Enforcement staff should be able to see inside such lots without having to request access. Police should be able to view into such lots to determine if there are people on the property. Anything can be happening behind those walls. There should be a requirement for periodic cut out "windows"/ view spots where activity within can be seen. Barricaded lots could become locations for illegal activity. Some lots are fully secured; however, some have a point of entry and that would suggest that anything could transpire behind the walls. To assure public safety, there should be a requirement for cut out view points (wired or open) at designated distances.

While temporary wall signs are permitted only on commercial and industrial zoned land, oftentimes that land (or a portion of that land) is directly across from residential properties. In these cases, the residents could be faced with living with advertisements within their daily view. There should be a ban on signage posted across from residences—whether homes, apartments or condos. (The mixed use district is likely a separate situation.) At the minimum, there should be a requirement to allow only posting of ads at the very corners of those blocks for one width of a standard poster-- not all along the residential street.

We would recommend that all temporary wall signs be required to have a posting of the rules governing temporary wall signs and the telephone number and/or email address for enforcement of terms. The name of the permit holder and contact info should also be included so that graffiti can be reported for removal quickly.

Section 14.4.17.F.3 requires the permit holder to remove graffiti within 500 feet of their walls. However, in specifying the locations of graffiti to be removed ("not be limited to") some

key graffiti targets have been left out and should be stated as required. They are: sidewalks and utility boxes. On my recent site visits, I saw graffiti in numerous sidewalk locations adjacent to temporary wall signs as well as on a utility cabinet. (These were on Idaho Avenue between Barry and Barrington Avenues in CD 11.)

Finally, because these structures can have a very strong impact on neighborhood character, especially when there are multiple temporary construction walls in a neighborhood, we would like to suggest that there be consideration of a policy to limit the maximum number of square footage of signage in total for any given location. This would help to address the negative impact from having huge expanses of these billboard-like structures at pedestrian level.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Barbara Broide
President

cc: CD 5 Planning Deputy Faisal Alserri
CD 5 Deputy Jack Sripoona
Planning Director Vince Bertoni
Planning Deputy Director Kevin Keller

Photos attached:

1, 2, 3: STR Auto, 1855 Westwood Blvd. LA 90025

I will bring copies of photos (additional photos as well as those following) to the CPC hearing.

