



C100 Urges Residents and ANCs to Protect Neighborhood Commercial Areas by Opposing Digital Billboards, Rooftop Signs and Billboards Draped on Buildings

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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The Committee of 100 on the Federal City urges residents and ANCs to oppose the District's proposal to allow proliferation of bright constantly changing electronic billboards in neighborhood commercial and mixed-use areas that would be permitted under regulations now being circulated for comment by the District Department of Transportation. The proposed regulations would also give the mayor sole discretion to permit digital TV video screens as large as 1200 sf, like those at Gallery Place/Verizon Center, as well as huge billboards draped on the sides of buildings, in "Designated Entertainment Areas" throughout the city. Further, the regulations would permit digital rooftop signs to be installed in all four quadrants of the city. Comments on the regulations are due by July 13, 2015.

"This scheme would reverse 85 years of DC billboard and sign regulation," said Meg Maguire, Chair of the Transportation Subcommittee. "Gargantuan T.V. screen billboards and signs as big as 6,000 sq. ft. on the sides of buildings will become the *trans fats of the DC streetscape*, clogging our public arteries with unwanted light and unsolicited messages."

The proposed regulations would permit the following by right:

- **"Variable-message" billboards:** 40sf video monitors flashing a different screen every ten seconds could be installed anywhere zoning allows commercial activity. This would include mixed residential/commercial districts, where there would be no restriction on proximity to, or impact on, residential units or offices.
- **"Designated Entertainment Areas" (DEAs)** - Supersized full-motion-video billboards up to 1200sf could be erected anywhere in the city that a mayor, in

his/her sole discretion with only token consultation, labels an “entertainment area” – for example, a neighborhood commercial strip with a theater and a couple of bars featuring live music. There would be no restrictions on either size or location of what could pop up near residential areas, historic sites, parks, monuments, federal buildings or anything else. In addition to Gallery Place and Verizon Center, two more much larger electronic billboard zones would be created instantly on the waterfront: SW Waterfront and the Nationals Ballpark. For the first time, projected image signs would be allowed that could turn any available surface not already occupied by some other sign into a full motion video.

- **Rooftop signs** - Still-image digital signs could even be located on rooftops, visible for miles around.
- **“Special Signs”** – Gargantuan wall-mounted billboards, whose size is limited only by the size of the building on which they’re mounted, could migrate in DEAs from downtown where, since 2001, they have been largely confined. Some have been as large as 6000sf.

“Appropriately sized commercial signage is vital to businesses, customers and visitors. But outsized commercial blight in the Nation’s Capital constitutes theft of our visually appealing neighborhood mixed-use residential and commercial areas. It is time to reaffirm our historic commitment and just say “NO” to the construction of any additional billboards or large outdoor commercial signs,” said Ms. Maguire.

The draft regulations, *Second Proposed Rulemaking – Title 13: Sign Regulations*, are out for public comment until **JULY 13, 2015**. (View the proposed regulations at <http://dcregs.dc.gov/Gateway/NoticeHome.aspx?noticeid=5312901>)

For complete Committee of 100 comments on the sign regulations, *Call to Action Fact Sheet*, television interview and testimony, see <http://committeeof100.net/digital-billboards/>

Residents, businesses and ANCs should send e-mail or written comments by no later than JULY 13, 2015 to both addresses below:

Mayor Muriel Bowser, Mayor of the District of Columbia eom@dc.gov

Alice Kelly, DDOT alice.kelly@dc.gov and publicspace.policy@dc.gov
