

ITEM #:	<u>53</u>
DATE:	<u>05-13-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>P&H</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **AMENDMENT TO ZONING ORDINANCE MODIFYING BILLBOARD STANDARDS AND CREATING NEW DIGITAL DISPLAY STANDARDS**

BACKGROUND:

City Council held a public hearing on April 22 to consider approval on first reading of a draft zoning text amendment ordinance to modify the City's Billboard standards. [The original report and background is available at this link](#). At the hearing the City Council received input from a representative of Lamar Advertising and the general public regarding the proposed new digital billboard standards and the level of lighting allowed with the new proposal.

Ultimately, City Council continued the hearing to May 13 to allow for staff to reach out for expert information regarding wildlife impacts related to billboard lighting and for staff to review the proposed standards related to the nighttime Nits level (lighting intensity) limitation.

After conferring with the Lamar representative it was determined that lowering the maximum Nits level at nighttime from the proposed 250 Nits to 160 Nits was acceptable. Lamar also stated they use louvers with the LEDs to manage some of the concern about uplighting potential. **Staff has revised the draft ordinance to include the lower nighttime Nits value of 160.**

Staff consulted with Dr. Jim Pease, who echoed similar comments about general light pollution and potential impacts to wildlife and bird migration as that heard at the hearing. He also indicated he provided a response to the Council directly.

Staff also looked at an evaluation of potential significant impacts from environmental studies completed for San Jose, California related to migratory birds and did not find a conclusive determination specific to billboards in urban areas that correlated to digital billboards and impacts on migratory birds due to the height and context of the surroundings. At this time staff is not proposing any additional specific changes to the zoning text amendment to address wildlife compatibility.

The draft ordinance has also been updated to clarify the digital display language related to the removal of nonconforming billboards in order to secure approval of a new digital display. The same standards of removing at least two structures for each new structure and 400 square feet of message area for each new digital message area still apply. Staff also proposes to remove the allowance for Digital Displays along I-35. Although regular billboards are allowed along Highway 30 and I-35, only Highway 30 frontage allows for larger signs. In the spirit of the current limitations, staff proposes to restrict digital displays along I-35.

An updated draft text amendment is attached.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the attached ordinance on first reading.

2. Modify the proposed ordinance and approve on first reading.
3. Refer this item back to staff for more information regarding wildlife or other issues and take no action to approve the ordinance at this time.
4. Deny the text amendment.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The proposed change will allow for a new type of billboard within Ames in limited locations along Highway 30. The proposed standards will allow for billboards very similar to the two high profile billboards in Des Moines near the northeast mixmaster of the I-80/I-235/I-35 interchange (one is on the east side of I-235 and the other is on the south side of I-35).

The proposed standards address concerns about nuisance factors of lighting with automatic lighting controls and potential proliferation of billboard with the removal requirements and spacing standards. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager to approve Alternative #1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Billboard Zoning Map.pdf](#)

[DRAFT ordinance for billboards and digital displays.pdf](#)