

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín (Author)

Subject: Referral to City Manager – Relocation Agreement with Becker Boards, LLC

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager and City Attorney to review and negotiate a Relocation Agreement with Becker Boards, LLC for building up to two off-premises signs along Eastshore Freeway on private property and return to City Council with a final resolution and Relocation Agreement for Council action on February 11, 2025.

The proposed Relocation Agreement would allow for the installation of billboards, in exchange for up to \$15,000,000 of community benefits over 30 years and the removal of various existing off-premises signs within the City, primarily from within residential areas.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Funding for this contract is available in the FY 2025, and each FY thereafter for 30 subsequent years. Funds will be allocated by the City Council to City programs or non-profit organizations.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

New off-premise signs are allowed in the City in Manufacturing (M) zoning districts along the Eastshore Freeway by Relocation Agreement authorized by the City Council. There is currently only one off-premise sign located along the Eastshore Freeway. The City can benefit from allowing a limited number of new off-premise sign on private property in order to create revenue and free advertising for City and non-profit beneficiaries. In addition to City approval, such new off-premise sign would also need to approval from the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The current billboard located along Eastshore Freeway does not have protective measures to prevent light from spilling out behind sign. Currently, no off-premise signs in Berkeley provide any on-going revenue to the City. The M zone along the Eastshore Freeway would be appropriate for the addition of a limited number of new off-premise signs.

BACKGROUND

In 2023, Becker Boards approached the City with an offer to build up to two new off-premise signs on private property in one or more of the M zones along Eastshore Highway in exchange for removing signs elsewhere in the City pursuant to a Relocation Agreement. The Relocation Agreement would also provide funding for various City and

community groups, as well as free advertising for the City and its small-business community.

Becker Boards has provided impact studies for all possible locations showing there will be no city residences that would be able to see any light spill from the sign faces (0% light, zero residences).

Among other benefits, Becker Boards, LLC has proposed the following terms:

Up to \$100,000 per year with periodic escalators, for each of the following non-profit organizations:

- 1) [The Black Repertory Group](#)
- 2) the UC Theatre's CCP Workforce Development Program
- 3) Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP)

Free advertising to the following organizations, [in addition to any others agreed to by parties](#), upon the new signs:

- 1) Berkeley Chamber of Commerce
- 2) Downtown Berkeley Association
- 3) Visit Berkeley
- 4) City of Berkeley

A decorative pole cover on each sign.

Each sign will have 100% of its carbon impact offset.

Each LED panel will have a louvered design that blocks light from spilling onto behind and beyond the viewing angle of the sign.

The future removal of numerous existing billboards, mainly within residential districts of the City.

Payment of fees to the City for each year the signs to be removed remain.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Not Applicable

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Section 20.04.040(D) of the Municipal code authorizes relocation agreements to effectuate the purposes of the Sign Ordinance and allows the City Council to approve a Relocation Agreement if the Council finds such agreement improves upon the status

quo it replaces. The proposal from Becker Boards significantly improves upon the status quo it replaces by:

- Creating significant community benefits in the form of long-term payments to various city and non-profit programs
- Creating significant free advertising to the City and to Berkeley-based small business
- Reducing the number of overall number of billboards in Berkeley, especially in primarily residential areas, or areas with residences nearby, and by generating fee revenue for existing billboards until they are removed (where the city would otherwise receive no benefit).
- In addition to benefits, no residences would be able to see light from the digital faces due to the propriety technology (specialized louvered led clusters) that Becker Boards has access to.

CONTACT PERSON

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