

# MEMORANDUM

MAY 16, 2013

**TO:** BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND  
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

**FROM:** KAIROS SHEN, CHIEF PLANNER  
PRATAAP PATROSE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR URBAN DESIGN  
RICHARD MCGUINNESS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR WATERFRONT  
PLANNING  
JEFFREY M. HAMPTON, SENIOR LAND USE PLANNER III

**SUBJECT:** ELECTRONIC SIGNAGE AMENDMENT

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**SUMMARY:** This Memorandum requests authorization for the Director to petition the City of Boston Zoning Commission ("Zoning Commission") to amend Articles 2 (Definitions) and 2A (Definitions Applicable in Neighborhood Districts and in Article 80, Development Review and Approval) of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code") with respect to electronic signs.

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In April, 2007, the Boston Zoning Commission adopted an electronic signage amendment to Article 11 (Signs) that allows the Zoning Board of Appeals to conditionally approve electronic signs in three (3) areas of the City.

Historically, the Boston Zoning Code has limited signs that have moving or animated images to the adult entertainment district. Generally, these types of signs are inappropriate in most neighborhoods of the City and in certain locations, such as along roadways, and are considered be public safety hazards. The aesthetic impact of electronic signs, if not carefully regulated, can also degrade the character of neighborhood business districts in particular and the city's commercial districts generally.

The current definition of electronic sign specifically states that it is an on-premise sign, one that advertises or announces a use conducted or goods available on the lot on which the sign is located.

This definition does not address the current trend of off-premise signs or billboards changing from the traditional sign area to electronic. The proposed amendment would amend the definition to include off-premise signs thus allowing the electronic sign regulations in Article 11 (Signs) of the Code to govern.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the foregoing, the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff recommends that the Director petition the Zoning Commission to amend Articles 2 (Definitions) and 2A (Definitions Applicable in Neighborhood Districts and in Article 80, Development Review and Approval) of the Code with respect to electronic signs.

An appropriate vote follows:

**VOTED:** That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to petition the City of Boston Zoning Commission to amend Articles 2 (Definitions) and 2A (Definitions Applicable in Neighborhood Districts and in Article 80, Development Review and Approval) of the Boston Zoning Code relative to the definition of electronic sign in substantial accord with the text amendment presented to the Boston Redevelopment Authority at its hearing on May 16, 2013.