



**PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2026
AGENDA ITEM NO.: 4**

SUMMARY

Case Number	PC-2026-00071 (Zoning Text Amendment)
Request	<p>Proposal by the City of Riverside to consider amendments to Title 19 (Zoning) of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC), including but not limited to Articles VIII (Site Planning and General Development Provisions), and IX (Land Use Development Permit Requirements/Procedures).</p> <p>The proposed amendments are intended to clarify provisions authorizing the relocation of existing off-site advertising signs (billboards) subject to a Billboard Relocation Agreement approved and negotiated by the City Council.</p>
Applicant	City of Riverside Community and Economic Development Department
Project Location	Citywide
Ward	Citywide
Staff Planner	Daniel Palafox, Associate Planner 951-826-5985 dpalafox@riversideca.gov

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Planning Commission:

1. **Recommend** that the City Council determine that Planning Case PC-2026-00071 is exempt from further California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) (Common Sense), as it can be seen with certainty that approval of the project will not have an effect on the environment; and
2. **Recommend Approval** of the Planning Case PC-2026-00071 (Zoning Text Amendment) as outlined in the staff report and summarized in the Findings section of this report.

BACKGROUND

Outdoor advertising displays which are visible from the National Highway System (NHS) are regulated per the Federal Highway Beautification Act of 1965 (FHBA). The FHBA aims to enhance the visual quality of highways by controlling outdoor advertising and supporting the scenic development and beautification of roadway corridors. In California, the FHBA is implemented through the Outdoor Advertising Act of 1933 (ODA), codified in the California Business and Professions Code (Sections 5200 et seq.). The ODA governs the placement and regulation of advertising signs along state-designated freeways.

State Permit Requirements for Billboards

Any off-site advertising display ("billboard") located within 660 feet of any Caltrans right-of-way is required to obtain an ODA permit from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The site criteria includes, but is not limited to:

- Must be located on a property zoned for either commercial or industrial use;
- Must be located outside of any stream or drainage channel;
- Must be located within 1,000 feet from existing commercial/retail activity on either side of the freeway;
- Must have written permission from the current property owner to place the sign at the desired location;
- Must not be located adjacent to a designated Scenic Highway or a Classified Landscaped Freeway; and
- Must have local approval, including any local zoning approval and necessary building permits.

A freeway segment is considered a Classified Landscaped Freeway if any portion is, or may be, landscaped with ornamental vegetation such as trees, lawns, shrubs, or other planting designed to improve the appearance of the freeway. In the City, approximately 85% of the freeways are designated Classified Landscaped Freeways. Classified Landscaped Freeway segments may be declassified, thereby making the segment eligible for an ODA permit, if certain criteria are met, including but not limited to:

- Caltrans does not maintain or plan to maintain the ornamental landscaping;
- The landscaping does not require reasonable maintenance (including watering, mowing, weed control or litter removal);
- The Classified Landscaped Freeway segment is less than 1,000 feet long; or
- The Classified Landscaped Freeway segment has gaps in landscaping larger than 200 feet.

Billboard Proposal

In 2025, a national outdoor advertising company submitted an unsolicited proposal to relocate and replace various billboards throughout the City. The City's existing billboard policy does not authorize applicant-initiated billboard relocation requests. As such, the proposal may not advance unless a Zoning Code Text Amendment is processed.

On January 22, 2026, staff provided the City Council Economic Development Committee ("Committee") with an update on the unsolicited proposal and presented potential text amendments to Title 19 (Zoning) of the Riverside Municipal Code that would be necessary to advance the proposal. The Committee directed staff to proceed with the text amendments for Planning Commission and City Council consideration.

PROPOSAL

The proposed amendments are referenced herein as Exhibit 1 and are separated by Chapter. The following is a summary of the proposed changes including an overview of the current code and proposed changes.

AMENDMENT 1 – CHAPTER 19.623 – BILLBOARDS

I. Current Code

Chapter 19.623 allows for the relocation of only those billboards that were legally permitted by Riverside County and later annexed into the City with a Relocation Agreement. Relocation Agreements are reviewed administratively and approved by the Community & Economic Development Department Director or designee. All other billboards, including those considered legal nonconforming and those on parcels not annexed into the City, are ineligible for relocation. Additionally, all billboard relocation requests must be City-initiated. Generally, the City may initiate a billboard relocation for reasons including but not limited to public improvement projects or other redevelopment efforts. A billboard relocation agreement has not been processed within the last 15 years.

The current code also limits both the quantity of billboards eligible for relocation and the locations for relocation. Relocated billboards must remain on the same parcel. This means that if there is another suitable site elsewhere in the City, relocation is not permitted. Applicant-initiated relocation requests are also not permitted.

Relocated billboards are subject to the ODA requirements described above and Title 19 requirements described in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1 - CITY BILLBOARD RELOCATION REQUIREMENTS	
Legally Permitted	The billboard was originally permitted by Riverside County or had legal non-conforming status.
Annexation	The land where the billboard sits was later annexed into the City.
City-Initiated Request	The City is requiring or requesting the billboard to be relocated.
Located on Same Property	The billboard will stay on the same parcel or property.

No Size Increase	The new billboard must be the same size and shape as the original. There is no increase in area, height, width, number of faces, etc.
Aesthetic Improvement	The relocated billboard will constitute an aesthetic improvement compared to the original.
Similar Lighting	Lighting must match or be similar to the original. No digital displays or moving images are allowed (dynamic signage).
Applicant Responsibility	The billboard owner or applicant must cover all costs for the relocation. Any new structure must meet the current building and safety code.

II. Proposed Change

Chapter 19.623 is amended to authorize both City-initiated and Applicant-initiated billboard relocation requests subject to Billboard Relocation Agreement between a billboard owner/operator and the City. New language clarifies that the City Council is the sole authority to approve or deny any Billboard Relocation Agreement. The City Council also has sole discretion to negotiate the terms of the Billboard Relocation Agreement.

The negotiated terms of the agreement may specify the dimensions and type of billboard sign including if the new sign may be static, digital, single-sided, double-sided, freeway-oriented or along major arterials or regional gateways as denoted by the General Plan. Billboard Relocation Agreements may also specify minimum “takedown” ratios where billboard operators are required to remove a certain number of existing billboards in exchange for permission to install new ones, although this term and its specifics would also be negotiable at the discretion of the Council.

The City Council may also negotiate public benefit provisions which may encompass site improvements, public art installations, street or infrastructure improvements, public messaging allowances, annual fees, revenue-sharing mechanisms, or other measures that generate community or fiscal benefit.

Chapter 19.623 is also amended to outline eligibility criteria and a process for the issuance of a Billboard Relocation Permit. A permit may be issued once a Billboard Relocation Agreement has been approved by the City Council.

AMENDMENT 2 – CHAPTER 19.650 – APPROVING AND APPEAL AUTHORITY

I. Current Code

Table 19.650.020 (Approving and Appeal Authority) outlines the approving and appeal authorities for various discretionary and administrative actions. The table does not provide an approving and appeal authority for a Billboard Relocation Permit.

II. Proposed Change

Table 19.650.020 is amended to incorporate the Community and Economic Development Director as the approving authority for the issuance of a Billboard Relocation Permit. The City Council shall serve as the final approving authority on appeal.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMENT

Notice was published in the Press Enterprise on January 20, 2026. At the time of writing this report, Staff has not received public comments regarding this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed amendments are exempt from additional California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA guidelines, as it can be seen with certainty that the proposed text amendments will not have an effect on the environment.

FINDINGS

Zoning Code Amendment Findings pursuant to Chapter 19.810.040:

- 1) The proposed Zoning Code Text Amendments are generally consistent with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan;
- 2) The proposed Zoning Code Text Amendments will not adversely affect surrounding properties; and
- 3) The proposed Zoning Code Text Amendments will promote public health, safety, and general welfare and serves the goals and purposes of the Zoning Code.

APPEAL INFORMATION

Actions by the City Planning Commission, including any environmental finding, may be appealed to the City Council within ten calendar days after the decision. Appeal filing and processing information may be obtained from the Planning Department Public Information Section, 3rd Floor, City Hall.

EXHIBITS LIST

1. Proposed Amendments
 - a. Chapter 19.623 – Billboards
 - b. Chapter 19.650 – Approving and Appeal Authority
2. January 22, 2026 – Economic Development Committee Staff Report
3. Presentation

Prepared by: Daniel Palafox, Associate Planner
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Approved by: Brian Norton, Acting City Planner