



Jesse Arreguín
Councilmember, District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 19, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Jesse Arreguín
Subject: Portable Sign Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Refer to the City Manager, the Commission on Disability, and the Transportation Commission for consideration the expansion of the existing portable sign program that enables businesses to place portable signs on sidewalks and medians

FISCAL IMPACTS:

Unknown; some staff time involved.

BACKGROUND:

In business, visibility is a crucial component of viability. For many small businesses that may be located in a smaller commercial district, have a storefront that is recessed from the roadway, or may be obscured by nearby installments, visibility is needed to attract the notice of customers that may otherwise overlook businesses that are not in prime locations.

Since 2009, the City of Berkeley has allowed portable signs for businesses on public property¹ (sidewalks and median strips) as a pilot project under the following conditions:

- 1) The signs are placed during the first two Saturdays and Sundays of May and during every Saturday and Sunday between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day
- 2) The signs are located west of Sacramento Street, bounded by Ashby Avenue, Gilman Street, and the East Shore Freeway
- 3) The business receives a permit from the City Manager's Office

An expansion of the portable sign pilot program may have the potential to boost many small businesses in Berkeley and sufficient time has passed to evaluate the impact of the pilot program on both pedestrians and businesses. As the economy slowly recovers and many commercial districts are experiencing an upswing, it is important to help our small businesses succeed and contribute to the value character of our business community.

¹ Berkeley Municipal Code Section 20.16.190

Consideration of the portable sign pilot program should include, but not limited to, the following:

1. The impacts of the current program
 - a. Have there been any incidences or complaints regarding the obstruction of sidewalks, particularly by disabled individuals? How have the signs affecting pedestrian traffic?
 - b. Have there been any complaints regarding signs in the median?
 - c. How have participating business experienced the program?
2. Should the possible expansion of the program, that is any new area to be included, be limited to sidewalks only and/or placement within the vicinity of the storefront? Should the existing program be reformed in any way?
3. What should be appropriate standards for placement in terms of adequate space for pedestrian traffic? If there are existing obstructions within the sidewalk, such as trees, lighting poles, USPS mailboxes, etc., what would be the impact of a portable sign?

Additionally, when considering the possible expansion of the portable sign pilot program, however, it is the utmost priority to ensure that the placement of any portable sign will not impede safe and efficient pedestrian access.

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