



September 19, 2007

**AIA San Antonio**

**POSITION**

**RE: Proposed Amendment of City Code, Chapter 28 to allow  
Off-Premise Digital Signs**

AIA San Antonio, a Chapter of The American Institute of Architects, generally supports the preservation of San Antonio's natural beauty and its distinctive, historic character. Toward that goal, AIA San Antonio supports the prohibition and removal of Off-Premise Signs, or Billboards, in the city. The "Draft E - Proposed Ordinance of Off-Premise Digital Signs" would change Chapter 28 of the City Code to allow Off-Premise Digital Signs; and while it may contribute to an overall reduction in the number of billboards, it has the potential to significantly degrade the quality of life our city offers. Removal of billboards and prohibition of digital signs would more closely adhere to the American Institute of Architects "Ten Principles for Livable Communities," which can be viewed at: [http://www.aia.org/liv\\_principles](http://www.aia.org/liv_principles)

The City of San Antonio should prohibit Off-Premise Digital Signs until further studies have concluded their safety and non-deleterious affect on neighborhoods. Prohibitions exist at the national and state levels as clarified for Texas by U.S. Department of Transportation Letter dated March 15, 2006. This technology is in violation of almost all existing federal-state agreements that govern implementation of the Highway Beautification Act (HBA) per U.S. Department of Transportation Memo dated July 17, 1996. These prohibitions should provide the guidance for local jurisdictional controls to be in accordance and to avoid potentially costly liability.

- Existing, non-compliant sign structures should not be allowed to be converted to digital technology.
- Minimum distances from pedestrian, residential, educational, historic and scenic areas should be established.
- Existing billboards slated to be removed as part of the installation of a new digital billboard should be within established distance limits from the proposed digital billboard to reduce visual clutter in said area.
- Sound levels, light pollution and energy consumption criteria should be established.
- The process for public input into revisions of the City Code must remain transparent and open, and the public's input should be directly apparent in the revisions proposed.

The AIA San Antonio Chapter prefers the following outcome:

- The City of San Antonio would prohibit the construction of Off-Premise Digital Signs.
- The City of San Antonio would only consider allowing Off-Premise Digital Signs after studies have substantially established their safety for traffic, minimal impact on surrounding neighborhoods and protected buildings, districts and/or corridors, and lighting and noise levels
- The City of San Antonio would not allow Off-Premise Digital Signs in non-compliant existing locations and where digital technology would not be allowed under current state and federal guidelines.
- The City of San Antonio should continue the public process in the development and review of any succeeding drafts of this revised ordinance.