



## CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

### Committee of the Whole Agenda Communication

**Meeting Date:** July 14, 2025

**Prepared By:** Jon Oliphant, AICP, Planning & Development Director

**Agenda Item:** Potential Billboards Code Amendment Discussion

**Explanation:** The City's zoning code allows for the placement of small and large billboards within the city limits. Small billboards are classified as signs that advertise goods, products or services not sold on the premises on which the sign is located and can be a maximum of 64 square feet. A large billboard is the same type of sign up to a maximum of 672 square feet. A billboard cannot be located any closer than 500 feet from the nearest lot line of any residential zoned lot or parcel used for residential purposes unless a small billboard is separated by a highway where the maximum permissible speed limit is not less than 55 miles per hour. In such locations, which is limited to the US 24 corridor, the minimum setback is 300 feet. No billboard, whether small or large, can be located anywhere but on a corridor where the maximum speed limit is not less than 55 miles per hour.

A variance application was submitted and considered last year during a public hearing by the Planning and Zoning Commission to potentially allow a 10'x20' electronic digital billboard at 1230 Peoria Street. Todd's Servicecenter was located on the property for decades prior to its demolition in 2021. The sign was proposed to be 16' from the intersecting front property lines abutting Eagle and Peoria and approximately 394' from the nearest residential zoned lot at 1103 Eagle. There were three components to the variance request:

1. The allowance for a large billboard adjacent to a road with a maximum permissible speed limit of less than 55 miles per hour;
2. The allowance for a large billboard to be located less than 20 feet from the property line; and
3. The allowance for a large billboard to be located within less than 500 feet from the nearest lot line of any residential zoned lot.

Staff had some concerns regarding the proposed location as well as the placement of any billboards near corridors that do not allow for such off-premise signs, as it could create precedent. The proposed size, 200 square feet, while less than the maximum allowable large billboard size, was greater than the 160 square foot maximum for a ground sign. Moreover, most ground signs along the BR 24 corridor are less than half the size of the proposed billboard. Its size would have dwarfed many of those existing signs. It would have been 30' in height and most of the ground signs through this corridor are 20' in height or lower.

Billboards are intended to draw the attention of motor vehicle traffic to the displayed message. The location was at a signalized intersection that experiences peak traffic volumes in the morning and afternoon when Central Intermediate and Primary Schools are in session. The most recent (2023) annual average daily traffic at the intersection is 16,200, which does not include the section of Eagle to the south of BR 24. Additionally, Washington Community High School is nearby and it adds to the volume. The area also experiences increased pedestrian activity frequenting the businesses on BR 24, which could result in more accidents. The vast majority of all traffic incidents reported by the Washington Police Department occur on BR 24 to the west of Wilmor Road once it widens to four lanes.

The petitioner indicated that the billboard would "allow for the property to be developed in a first-class manner." While the property's location gives it demand for non-residential development, staff felt that a billboard would inhibit its development potential. Finally, the proposed sign would detract from the aesthetics of the corridor. Among the placemaking strategies within the 2023 Comprehensive Plan is to

initiate a façade improvement program along BR 24, which is intended to make the corridor more inviting to residents and visitors to the city. The City has had its second round of the Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program to provide funding to assist with exterior improvements that are visible by the general public.

The PZC unanimously recommended denial of the variance and following that, the petitioner, Robinson Outdoor, LLC, on behalf of Eagle Ridge Development Company, LLC, requested that it be pulled from further consideration. As such, it was not scheduled for a first reading ordinance at the next Council meeting.

Staff was recently approached by representatives from Civic Digital Displays about the possible placement of a digital billboard at the northwest corner of the Eagle/Peoria intersection. The company has billboard locations in the region in Bartonville (two such signs with face sizes of 8'x16' and 7'x14'), Canton (8'x16'), East Peoria (10'x30'), Metamora (7'x14'), Morton (7'x21'), and two in Pekin (both 10'x30'). Those billboards are a combination of monopoles and ground signs, each of which contain decorative masonry below the sign face. A copy of the company's brochure is attached along with renderings of a design idea for such a billboard. Staff has informed the company's representatives, Cody Giebelhausen and Jeff Giebelhausen, of the current regulations and the need to either approve a variance or to amend the zoning code in order to allow for any billboards on properties other than the US 24 corridor.

**Fiscal Impact:** The City would not receive any revenue as a result of billboards being located on private property. The City could benefit by having dedicated space on the sign to utilize for the advertisement of City emergencies, meetings, programs, etc., though it would be strongly recommended to have something in writing that memorializes the parameters of such usage.

**Action Requested:** Staff requests feedback on this topic at the July 14 Committee of the Whole meeting. Representatives from Civic Digital Displays will be in attendance to give a brief presentation. If there is interest in the future approval of a zoning code text amendment that would allow for further allowance of billboards in the city, staff will start drafting that with the assistance of the City Attorney and will schedule it for an upcoming Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing for a recommendation prior to a first reading ordinance at a Council meeting.

## WHY CIVIC DIGITAL?

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- HIGHLY COVETED LOCATIONS
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### MORTON | MAIN & COURTLAND

The only digital billboard in town!

This welcoming digital will capture traffic moving through the primary link of residential and commercial areas in Morton.



**MORTON**

## COMMUNITY MESSAGE CENTERS AND DIGITAL BILLBOARDS

*Founded and Owned by*

**Cody Giebelhausen**

309.265.8412

[cody@civicdigitaldisplays.com](mailto:cody@civicdigitaldisplays.com)

**Jeff Giebelhausen**

309.657.9371

[jeff@giebgroup.com](mailto:jeff@giebgroup.com)

**Maggie Marchand**

*Vice President of Sales*

309.824.7608

[maggie@civicdigitaldisplays.com](mailto:maggie@civicdigitaldisplays.com)



309.324.0588

[civicdigitaldisplays.com](http://civicdigitaldisplays.com)



**YOU'LL WANT TO  
GET ON BOARD.**



# CIVIC

## OUR LOCATIONS

*Coming Spring '25!*

### MORTON | MAIN & COURTLAND

The only digital billboard in town!

### EAST PEORIA | E WASHINGTON ST & LEADLEY

The closest digital billboard to highly coveted Washington residents!

A long left hand read and right read from the intersection of Rt. 8 & US 150, this location captures traffic movement from Washington & EP residents commuting to and from the Levee District, Downtown Peoria and I-74. East Peoria's best value digital billboard!

### PEKIN | BROADWAY

Right in the middle of Pekin, Tazewell County's largest city and County Seat!

Exceptionally long unobstructed left & right reads across the street from Kroger in one of Pekin's heaviest retail and business corridors. Pekin's only current digital capturing true "in-town" passersby.

### PEKIN | COURT ST & VETERANS

Exclusive Pekin commercial & retail corridor!

Soon to be the second digital billboard in Pekin capturing "in-town" traffic, this premier location is situated directly between Walmart & Menards at a signalized intersection capturing three legs of potentially standing traffic in a major retail area.

### CANTON | ROUTE 9 & 78

The only digital billboard in Fulton County!

This three sided digital captures traffic at one of it's busiest intersections with traffic constantly flowing through Canton's commercial corridor. You can't get closer to the street than this one!

### METAMORA | ROUTE 116 & 89

Exclusive Metamora/Woodford County digital billboard!

Located at the intersection, this prime location captures stopped & slow moving traffic in the highly desirable community of Metamora and surrounding Woodford County. You can't get closer to the street than this one!

### BARTONVILLE | GARFIELD & AIRPORT

Exclusive retail corridor!

Not only the first digital in Bartonville, but also the first billboard offering the west side of town, capturing traffic moving between the new Aldi and surrounding commercial corridor, vast residential areas, High School and Greater Peoria International Airport.

RIGHT LOCATION. RIGHT MESSAGE. **BRIGHT DISPLAY.**



METAMORA



PEKIN



EAST PEORIA



CANTON



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