



City Council Report

915 I Street, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

www.cityofsacramento.org

File #: 2016-01115

Consent Item 12

Title: City of Sacramento Honorary Street Sign Topper Policy

Recommendation: Pass a Resolution approving an Honorary Street Sign Topper Policy.

Location: Citywide

Contact: Ryan Moore, Principal Engineer, (916) 808-6629, Department of Public Works

Presenter: None

Department: Public Works

Attachments:

1-Description/Analysis

2-Resolution

3-Exhibit A - Policy

Description/Analysis

Issue Detail: In order to recognize historic or significant neighborhoods and districts the City of Sacramento has allowed Honorary Sign Toppers (Toppers) to be placed on top of street sign poles in various locations around Sacramento. Currently there is no formal policy addressing guidelines for the content or placement of Toppers. A policy is needed to ensure consistency, traffic safety, and appropriate sign content.

Policy Considerations: The following Sacramento 2035 General Plan policies support the recommendation:

- HCR 2.1.1 The City shall identify historic and cultural resources, including individual properties, districts, and sites (e.g., archaeological sites), to ensure adequate protection of these resources.
- HCR 3.1.2 The City shall coordinate with and support public quasi-public, and private (e.g., SHRA, CADA, Native American Tribes), entities in their preservation programs and efforts.
- M 1.1.1 The City shall manage the travel system to ensure safe operating conditions.
- M 1.1.4 The City shall effectively operate and maintain transportation facilities and infrastructure to preserve the quality of the system.

Economic Impacts: None

Environmental Considerations: In accordance with Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, no environmental review is necessary because there is no possibility that the recommendations in this report may have a significant effect on the environment.

Sustainability: Not applicable

Commission/Committee Action: None

Rationale for Recommendation: From time to time various public or private groups come forward desiring to recognize the historical significance of a neighborhood or the contributions of a distinguished citizen with the placement of Toppers. Historically, administrative guidelines developed at the staff level have been used to vet and approve proposed Topper projects. The administrative guidelines do not adequately address Topper content, nor approval authority for content. The formalization of a policy which specifies neighborhood outreach, traffic safety, and content, will ensure Toppers are placed appropriately and will provide an avenue for City Council approval of content.

Financial Considerations: The program is revenue neutral for the City. Groups who nominate neighborhoods or individuals for recognition through Topper placement will be required to reimburse the City for staff costs, fabrication, placement, and maintenance of Toppers.

Local Business Enterprise (LBE): Not applicable

Background: A Topper is a decorative sheet metal sign which is placed on top of existing street identification signage.

Historically the City has allowed the placement of Toppers recognizing historic or otherwise relevant neighborhoods in Sacramento. Proposals are evaluated for traffic safety (primarily ensuring the signage does not compromise driver sight distance) and also through historic preservation and urban design sections to ensure that proposals do not pose any problems with known cultural resources. Staff also performs a cursory review to ensure that the proposed Toppers recognize a legitimate district or neighborhood.

Need for Policy

There currently exists no formal City Council approved criteria for the vetting and approval of Toppers. The impetus for bringing forward a policy at this time for City Council approval are:

- Feedback from some stakeholders who have implemented Topper projects in the past have reported that the absence of a formal policy has resulted in a confusing and unpredictable permitting process.
- The lack of any formal City Council approval under the current practice results in a de facto staff level approval of Topper content. There seems to be no evidence of significant past controversy over the placement of Toppers recognizing geographical features, such as a neighborhood or a district. However, more recent proposals for Toppers recognizing individual citizens, the merit of whose contributions may be more subjective and/or controversial, has highlighted the need for formal City Council consideration of Topper nominees.
- Unlike Revocable Encroachment Permits which are issued for banners, tree lighting, or sidewalk dining, Revocable Encroachment Permits for Toppers authorize improvements in the public right-of-way which not only contain editorial content, but are also intended to be in place in perpetuity. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that Topper applicants conduct appropriate outreach to residents and businesses in the vicinity of the Toppers. The proposed policy specifies outreach guidelines and makes Topper approval conditional upon completion of stakeholder notification.

Proposed Policy - Summary

The proposed policy for Topper permitting and implementation includes the following major elements (see Attachment 4 for complete Policy):

- Permissible locations for Toppers.
- Acceptable subject matter for Toppers (i.e. Neighborhood/Geographical content or Distinguished Citizen content).
- Guidelines for the types of organizations which may be applicants for a Topper project. Groups or organizations, rather than individuals, are identified as appropriate applicants because individuals are more transient and difficult to track and therefore are more difficult to collect maintenance costs from in the future, if needed (see "Costs" section below).
- Guidelines for Topper design and appearance.
- Specificity regarding the extents and timing of formal neighborhood outreach and notification.
- Permitting through a Revocable Encroachment Permit, requiring that the applicant be responsible for all costs associated with permitting, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of Toppers.
- Approval of Toppers by City Council Resolution prior to implementation.

In essence, the proposed policy provides little more than clarification of the existing administrative policy for the purpose of providing predictability and consistency for applicants. The only significant changes are the specific requirements for neighborhood outreach and the requirement for City Council approval of implementation.

Costs

The program should continue to be revenue neutral for the City. Applicants will be responsible for the following costs:

- \$500 non-refundable permit fee, due at application.
- Topper fabrication and installation cost, which varies according to the size and complexity of the Topper design. The likely minimum cost per sign is approximately \$400. This funding is collected from the applicant once the City Council has approved a project.
- Maintenance costs as needed. Toppers typically do not require maintenance. Maintenance funding is required in relatively rare situations when toppers are damaged or vandalized. Funding for maintenance is collected when needed, not as part of the application process.

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-

Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

October 25, 2016

APPROVAL OF HONORARY STREET SIGN TOPPER POLICY

BACKGROUND

- A. In order to provide an avenue for the recognition of historic or significant neighborhoods and the contributions of distinguished citizens, the City of Sacramento has historically allowed Honorary Street Sign Toppers to be placed on top of street sign poles in the public right-of-way.
- B. Currently there is no formal policy addressing guidelines for the content or placement of Street Sign Toppers. A policy (Exhibit A) is needed to ensure consistency, proper neighborhood outreach, traffic safety, and appropriate sign content.

BASED ON THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE BACKGROUND, THE CITY COUNCIL RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The Honorary Street Sign Topper Policy is approved.

Table of Contents:

Exhibit A – City of Sacramento Honorary Street Sign Topper Policy

CITY OF SACRAMENTO POLICY RELATING TO HONORARY SIGN TOPPERS

Purpose

1. Regulations governing the placement and content of Honorary Sign Toppers in the City of Sacramento provides an avenue to recognize the distinguished contributions and service of selected Sacramento citizens, and historic or significant neighborhoods and districts while ensuring consistency in placement, content and traffic safety.

Definitions

1. "Honorary Sign Topper," or "Sign Topper," is a sheet metal sign that is placed on top of standard City street sign identification.

2. "Applicant," is an organization that applies for a Sign Topper project and which is responsible for payment of permitting, fabrication, installation, and maintenance costs for the project. The applicant must be a non-profit organization, a neighborhood association, a property business improvement district (PBID), or other organization that is geographically designated to serve the area in which the sign toppers will be installed, as deemed appropriate by the City Council. Individuals may not be Sign Topper applicants.

3. "Honorary Corridor" is a street on a linear alignment with no more than six consecutive intersections at which Honorary Sign Toppers are located.

4. "Honorary Neighborhood" is a neighborhood of significance in which Sign Toppers are located at no more than 12 contiguous intersections.

5. "Candidate" is a nominee, whether individual or historic or significant neighborhood or district, for recognition as either an Honorary Corridor or an Honorary Neighborhood.

6. "Offset Intersection" is an intersection at which the minor street crossing the major street is dis-contiguous at the major street, resulting in two closely spaced 3-legged intersections.

7. "Central City" is that portion of the City of Sacramento bounded by the American River, the Sacramento River, the southern extents of the public right of way on Broadway, and the eastern extents of the public right of way on Alhambra Boulevard.

General Provisions

1. Sign Toppers shall be attached to City poles above existing street name signage only.

2. Sign Toppers shall be affixed to street name sign poles or streetlight poles only, consistent with the method of placement of existing street name signage at an intersection.

3. Sign Toppers shall be two sided.

4. Only one Sign Topper may be placed on any one existing pole.
5. Sign Toppers shall not be attached to traffic signal mast arms.
6. Nothing in this policy or associated with Honorary Sign Toppers shall cause or result in the renaming of any streets.
7. Honorary names shall not duplicate any currently existing official street names.
8. One single intersection may not be part of two different intersecting Honorary Corridors and/or Honorary neighborhoods.
9. Up to two Sign Toppers may be located at any one intersection, coincident with existing street name signs. If less than two street sign identification poles exist at an intersection, additional poles, which comply with city standards, may be added at the applicants' expense.
10. Location of new poles, if applicable, is subject to review and approval by City Staff.
11. Sign Toppers for an Honorary Corridor may only be placed on a single street for a specific candidate, and must be placed at consecutive intersections. Sign Topper Corridors may not be greater than six consecutive intersections or 2500 feet, whichever is less.
12. Sign Toppers for an Honorary Neighborhood for a specific candidate may be placed on multiple streets as long as the intersections at which they are located are contiguous and form a logical grouping or boundary with respect to the neighborhood or district being identified. No more than 12 intersections may be included in any one Honorary Neighborhood. If Sign Toppers are located on one street, they may not be at more than six consecutive intersections or 2500 feet, whichever is less.
13. For the purpose of determining a maximum of intersections in an Honorary Corridor or an Honorary Neighborhood, offset intersections shall be counted as a single intersection.
14. Sign Toppers may not be attached to traffic signal poles.
15. Sign Toppers may not be located at intersections where one or more leg is classified as an arterial street, except within the Central City, where Sign Toppers may be located at arterial intersections.
16. No one candidate may receive City Council approval for a Sign Topper recognition on more than one corridor or neighborhood.

Qualifications of Candidate for Honorary Corridor

1. The candidate must have a distinguished reputation and record of service in the Sacramento Community, the determination of which shall be left to the sole discretion of the City Council.

2. A candidate must be a person and may not be a class or group of people, event, place, organization, ideology, or commercial interest.

3. The individual must have resided and/or worked, for a period of not less than 10 years, in the City of Sacramento.

Qualifications of Candidate for Honorary Neighborhood

1. The candidate neighborhood must be distinguished by a historic or significant neighborhood, the determination of which shall be left to the sole discretion of the City Council.

2. The candidate neighborhood name must recognize the geographical location of the neighborhood and may not be a person, class of people, group of people, event, organization, ideology, or commercial interest.

Design & Appearance

1. Sign Toppers shall not be retro reflective and shall not mimic or resemble a traffic control device in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

2. Sign Toppers shall not have dimensions which exceed a rectangular window of 36" in length and 12" in height. The geometry and color(s) of Sign Toppers shall be at the discretion of the applicant, subject to review and approval through the Sign Topper program permitting process. The design and appearance of Sign Toppers should be contextually appropriate for the location.

3. Sign Toppers shall not impede driver sight distance or otherwise create a safety hazard.

Permitting

1. Sign Toppers shall be implemented under a Revocable Encroachment Permit and shall be owned by the applicant. All costs associated with permitting, installation, repair, maintenance, and or replacement shall be at the expense of the applicant.

2. No less than 60 days prior to City Council consideration of Sign Topper placement, the applicant shall be responsible for providing a standard City Sign Topper form letter stating notice of intent to place Sign Toppers to:

- a. Each address located on a street adjacent to, and within one block of, an intersection at which Sign Toppers are to be located.
- b. Each Property Business Improvement District within whose boundaries any Sign Toppers are proposed to be located.
- c. Each Neighborhood Association within whose boundaries any Sign Toppers are proposed to be located.

3. Failure to provide this notice may result in denial of a Revocable Encroachment Permit and forfeiture of permit fees.

4. The applicant shall be responsible for all costs associated with maintenance of Sign Toppers if they require repair or replacement. If maintenance is required, the applicant will

be contacted and given a cost estimate for repair or replacement. All maintenance work shall be performed by City forces.

5. Sign Toppers shall be removed if the applicant is unavailable, unwilling or otherwise fails for any reason to provide reimbursement for maintenance or replacement. Once an applicant is notified by City that funding is required for Sign Topper maintenance, the applicant will have 60 days to provide funding before Sign Topper(s) are removed.

6. Final approval of sign toper placement must be specified by resolution of the City Council.