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CITY OF COLUMBUS
COUNTY OF ANOKA
STATE OF MINNESOTA

2020 Billboard Report:

Study of Billboards and Spacing Requirements within the City of Columbus

Report Presented to Planning Commission: 08.05.2020

Prepared For: City of Columbus Planning Commission & City Council
Staff Prepared: Ben Gutknecht, City of Columbus Associate Planner

<u>Abstract:</u> The following Staff Report outlines the City of Columbus's study of the impact of billboard standards, specifically the spacing between each erected billboard in responses to *Ordinance 20-03: An Interim Ordinance Establishing a Moratorium on the Issuance of Permits for Billboards or Outdoor Advertising Within the City of Columbus.*

For the ease of understanding, from here on forward, the terms "Billboard", "highway billboard", "Outdoor Advertising Sign", and "Off-Premises Sign" will all be defined as- *Any sign bearing advertising or display unrelated to a business, enterprise, or profession conducted, or a commodity or service sold or offered upon the real property where such Sign is located.**(Section 7B-200, AA)***

<u>SECTION I: Background:</u>

On November 13, 2019, the Columbus City Council adopted *Ordinance 19-06* Amending Chapter 7B of the City of Columbus Code of Ordinances. The Ordinance came into effect on December 19, 2019, upon its publication.
The amendment was the result of a moratorium on the Issuance of permits for billboards established on September 12, 2018. A staff report was drafted that proposed multiple amendments such as, changes to dynamic sign standards, the duration of an Interim Use Permit (IUP) for billboards, aesthetic improvements to new and existing billboards that are reapplying for a new IUP, among other amendments. In the time after the effective ordinance amendment, 21 billboard Interim Use Permits expired on February 16, 2020, of the expired permits, 19 belonging to Clear Channel Outdoor, and 2 belonging to Outfront Media. As Columbus City staff worked with both companies to bring concept plans and permits to the Planning Commission and City Council, they were informed that both companies would be removing a number of billboards that had expired in February of 2020, and reapplying for the remaining billboards. Due to this development, on June 10th, 2020, the Columbus City Council adopted Ordinance 20-03, establishing a moratorium on the Issuance of Permits for Billboards or Outdoor Advertising within the City of Columbus. From which the Planning Commission, City staff and consultants shall conduct a study of official controls related to the erection and use of billboards, particularly regarding the spacing between individual billboards with goals to update the City Ordinance to further benefit local businesses, public welfare, and to keep up with changing industry standards.

<u>SECTION II: Policy Questions for Review:</u>

1. Is the current spacing requirement *"All static signs shall be located no closer than 750 feet from another permitted or nonconforming large off-premises static or dynamic sign on the same side of the highway"* still appropriate considering recent sign removals and ordinance amendments?
2. Likewise, is the current spacing requirement *"Dynamic signs shall be located no closer than 3,750 feet from another permitted dynamic sign in excess of 200 square feet. The 3,750-foot measurement is a 360 degree measurement, calculated as a straight line from one dynamic sign to another dynamic sign, including measurements across the Interstate Highway as well as measurements to a permitted dynamic sign located on any other Interstate Highway"* still appropriate considering recent sign removals and ordinance amendments?

3. Would a universal spacing requirement for both static and dynamic signs be appropriate?
4. In lieu of recent Interim Use Permit applications for billboard column cover corrections that include imitation stone material, does Section 7B-710 (16-a.) requiring billboard pole concealments be constructed primarily of natural stone, brick, approved masonry or stucco panels or similar materials also need to be amended to allow an imitation stone material?

SECTION III: Findings of Fact- City of Columbus City Code and Current Conditions

Note: For the purpose of this Report, the "Existing" or "Current" number of Billboards in the City of Columbus will be twenty-three (23).
This is due to the eight (8) proposed IUP renewal applications, six (6) IUPs that do not expire until a later date, nine (9) billboards approved via CUP, and the proposed removal of thirteen (13) billboards, as outlined below.

1. An ordinance establishing a moratorium on the issuance of permits for billboards within the City of Columbus was adopted by the City of Columbus Council on June 10, 2020.
2. The moratorium was established to research the current Billboard Ordinance post proposed billboard removals, specifically investigating spacing requirements outlined in City Code 7B-310 (E).
3. As of the beginning of 2020, there were 36 Off Premise Billboards in the City of Columbus. One of which is erected along Lake Dr.
4. Nine (9) of the thirty-six (36) billboards are approved via Conditional Use Permit (CUP).
5. Twenty-seven (27) of the thirty-six (36) billboards are approved via Interim Use Permit (IUP).
6. On February 16, 2020, twenty-one (21) of the twenty-seven (27) billboards permitted via IUP expired.
7. A total thirteen (13) of twenty-one (21) expired billboards are going to be removed, as indicated by local billboard companies.
    - In an email dated 05.13.2020, Clear Channel Outdoor indicated that they will remove and not replace twelve (12) of their nineteen (19) billboards up for IUP renewal.
    - In email dated 05.06.2020, Outfront Media formally withdrew one of two pending IUP renewal applications dated 02.28.2020 and formally removed one (1) of two (2) billboards up for IUP renewal.
8. The remaining eight (8) billboards that had expired on February 16, 2020 are proposed to be reapplied for to continue their current placement along I-35.
9. The "current" number of billboards in the City of Columbus is twenty-three (23) (*Figure 1.0) (Table 1.0)*
10. One Interim Use Permit application has been made by Outfront Media and a Concept Plan application regarding column concealment design has been made by Clear Channel.
11. The current spacing for static signs from another static *and* dynamic sign on the same side of the highway is 750 feet, per City Code Section 7B-310 (E).
12. The current spacing for a dynamic sign in excess of 200 square feet to another dynamic sign in excess of 200 square feet is 3,750 feet measured in a straight line 360 degrees around the sign.

13. Currently there is only one dynamic sign in excess of 200 square feet in the I-35 Corridor belonging to Running Aces Horse Track.
14. The shortest distance between existing billboards is approximately 720 feet, measured using Anoka County GIS.
15. The longest distance between existing billboards is approximately 3,370 feet. However, the longest distance between a billboard and City Boundary is approximately 4,420 feet.
16. The approximate average distance between existing billboards only, is 1,235 feet. Furthermore, the approximate average distance between existing billboards and billboards to the Southern boundary of the City of Columbus is 1,300 feet.
17. Our current ordinance requires that any column cover concealment be constructed primarily of natural stone, brick, approved masonry or stucco panels or similar materials.
18. An application has been brought to both Planning Commission and City Council regarding a column cover constructed of imitation stone, while the design may not yet be approved, as of the date of this report, the use of imitation stone has not been rejected.

Table 1.0: Current Billboard Conditions, Post Billboard Removals and Renewals

List of Permited Billboards currently within the City of Columbus, Including those proposed to removed by Billboard Companies and those being reapplied for.

Status	Unique ID	Current PIN #	Permit Type	Date Granted	Date Expires	Current Billboard Company Name
Remain	1	24-32-22-42-0009	CUP	5/21/1986	None	Schubert- Hoey Outdoor Advertising Inc.
Remain	3	25-32-22-21-0008	CUP	1990	None	Clear Channel
Remain	4	25-32-22-21-0008	CUP	1990	None	Clear Channel
Remain	5	25-32-22-24-0006	CUP	1990	None	Clear Channel
Remain	7	25-32-22-31-0005	CUP	4/03/1985	None	Clear Channel
Remain	8	25-32-22-31-0006	CUP	1995	None	Clear Channel
Remain	9	36-32-22-21-0007	CUP	1995	None	Clear Channel
Remain	10	36-32-22-21-0005	CUP	1995	None	Clear Channel
Remain	37	22-32-22-31-0003	CUP	1957	None	Schubert- Hoey Outdoor Advertising Inc.
Remain	2	24-32-22-43-0004	IUP	8/20/2001	8/20/2021	Clear Channel
Remain	32	25-32-22-12-0004	IUP	6/28/2001	6/28/2021	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Remain	34	24-32-22-42-0006	IUP	11/21/2005	11/21/2025	Schubert- Hoey Outdoor Advertising Inc.
Remain	19	36-32-22-34-0005	IUP	4/13/2011	4/13/2031	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Remain	20	36-32-22-34-0005	IUP	4/27/2000	4/13/2031	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Remain	36	36-32-22-34-0005	IUP	6/25/2014	4/13/2031	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Reapply	15	36-32-22-33-0004	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	16	36-32-22-33-0001	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	17	36-32-22-33-0001	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	26	36-32-22-12-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	27	36-32-22-12-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	29	25-32-22-42-0004	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	31	25-32-22-13-0006	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Reapply	33	24-32-22-43-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Remove	11	36-32-22-24-0007	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	12	36-32-22-24-0007	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	13	36-32-22-31-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	14	36-32-22-31-0001	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	18	36-32-22-33-0003	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	21	36-32-22-43-0001	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	CBS Out Front/Outfront Media
Remove	22	36-32-22-42-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	23	36-32-22-41-0002	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	24	36-32-22-13-0003	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	25	36-32-22-13-0003	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	28	25-32-22-43-0004	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	30	25-32-22-13-0003	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
Remove	35	25-32-22-43-0004	IUP	2/16/2000	2/16/2020	Clear Channel
~~Withdrawn~~	~~6~~	~~24-32-22-42-0004~~	~~IUP~~	~~8/22/2018~~	~~8/22/2038~~	~~Supreme Outdoor~~

Key	
	Billboard Remaining due to CUP Apporval
	Billboard Remaining, IUP expires at later date
	Billboard Remaining, IUP to be reapplied for.
	Billboard to be removed per correspondence with Clear Channel and Outfront Media
~~Withdrawn~~	Billboard application was withdrawn

Sign Statistics as of February 2020	
Total # Billboards Prior to Removal Notification	36 (35 along the I-35 Corridor)
Total # Billboards Anticipated to be Removed	13
Total # Billboards being Reapplied for as of July 2020	8
Current # of IUPs (Existing, and being reapplied)	14
Total # of CUPs	9 (one is along Lake Dr)
Total # of Billboards Post Anticipated Billboard Removal	23

Billboard Company Ownership (After anticipated Billboard Removals)	
Clear Channel	15
CBS Out Front	5
Schubert-Hoey	3

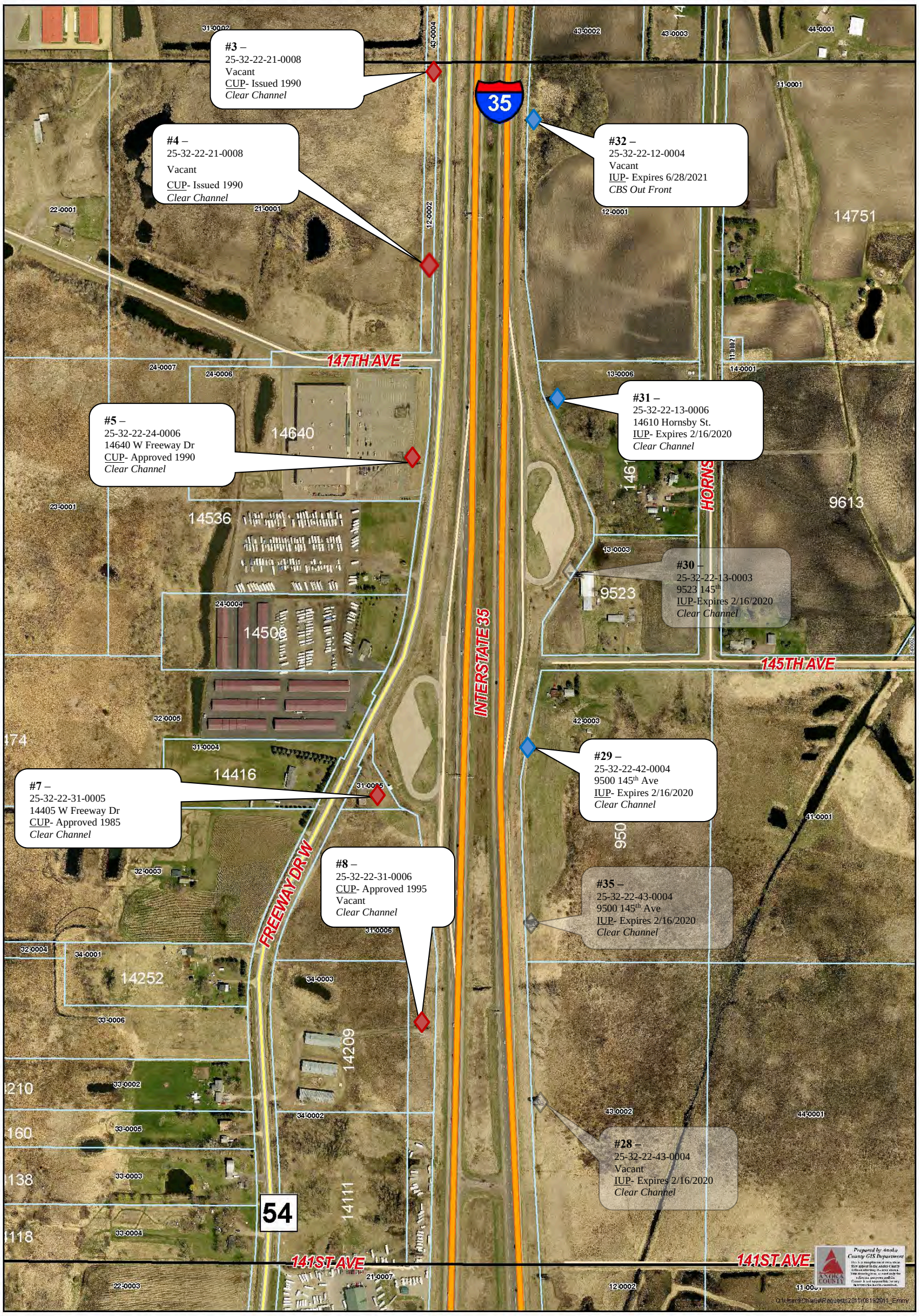
Figure 1.0: Current Billboard Conditions, Post Billboard Removals and Renewals

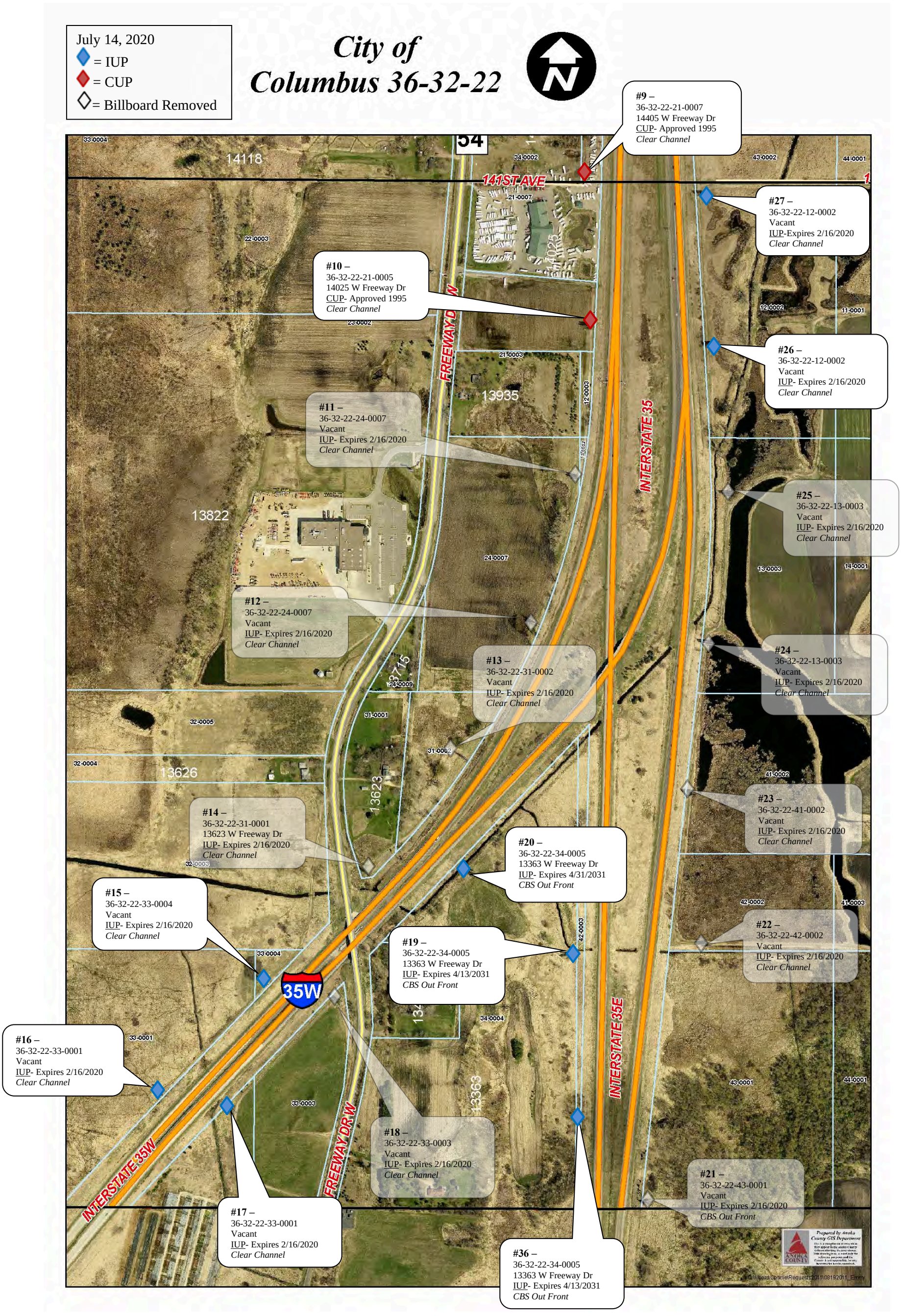
July 14, 2020
= IUP
= CUP
= Billboard Removed

City of Columbus 24-32-22

July 14, 2020
◆ = IUP
◆ = CUP
◇ = Billboard Removed

City of Columbus 25-32-22




July 14, 2020
= IUP
= CUP
= Billboard Removed
City of Columbus 36-32-22
#9 –
36-32-22-21-0007
14405 W Freeway Dr
CUP- Approved 1995
Clear Channel
#27 –
36-32-22-12-0002
Vacant
IUP-Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#10 –
36-32-22-21-0005
14025 W Freeway Dr
CUP- Approved 1995
Clear Channel
#26 –
36-32-22-12-0002
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#11 –
36-32-22-24-0007
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#25 –
36-32-22-13-0003
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#12 –
36-32-22-24-0007
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#24 –
36-32-22-13-0003
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#13 –
36-32-22-31-0002
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#23 –
36-32-22-41-0002
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#14 –
36-32-22-31-0001
13623 W Freeway Dr
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#20 –
36-32-22-34-0005
13363 W Freeway Dr
IUP- Expires 4/31/2031
CBS Out Front
#15 –
36-32-22-33-0004
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#19 –
36-32-22-34-0005
13363 W Freeway Dr
IUP- Expires 4/13/2031
CBS Out Front
#22 –
36-32-22-42-0002
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#16 –
36-32-22-33-0001
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#18 –
36-32-22-33-0003
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#21 –
36-32-22-43-0001
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
CBS Out Front
#17 –
36-32-22-33-0001
Vacant
IUP- Expires 2/16/2020
Clear Channel
#36 –
36-32-22-34-0005
13363 W Freeway Dr
IUP- Expires 4/13/2031
CBS Out Front
141ST AVE
FREEWAY DR N
FREEWAY DR W
INTERSTATE 35
INTERSTATE 35E
INTERSTATE 35W
35W
14118
13935
13822
13626
13623
13363

SECTION IV: Staff Observations of Current Conditions

With the removal of 13 billboards from the I-35 district three major areas are opened to future billboard development. These areas are measured from existing billboard to existing billboard or the City Boundary. The three largest areas are approximately 4,420 feet, 3,370 feet, 2,308 feet, for a total of approximately 10,098 feet along the I-35 corridor available for potential billboard construction, as indicated in *Figure1.1*. This measurement does not include areas within 750' of the TH97 I-35 interchange, and locations that currently have a principal use that is not residential or agricultural, per the City Code. *Table 1.1* outlines the number of billboards that could be constructed the areas created by the proposed removal of thirteen (13) billboards and the assumption that the remaining six (6) Interim Use Permits are reapplied for and granted. Please note, that these numbers do not include the two locations that are circled on the *Figure 1.1*, billboards #18 and #30. Both of which leave an opening of approximately 1,500 feet between existing billboards, meaning they realistically could only accommodate the current 750' spacing requirement.

Table 1.1

Spacing Requirement (feet) (Measured on the same side of the freeway)	**Approximate Number of Billboards**
750' (current static sign standard)	13
850'	11.88
1,000'	10
1,500'	6.7 billboards
2,000'	5 billboards
3.750'	1 billboard

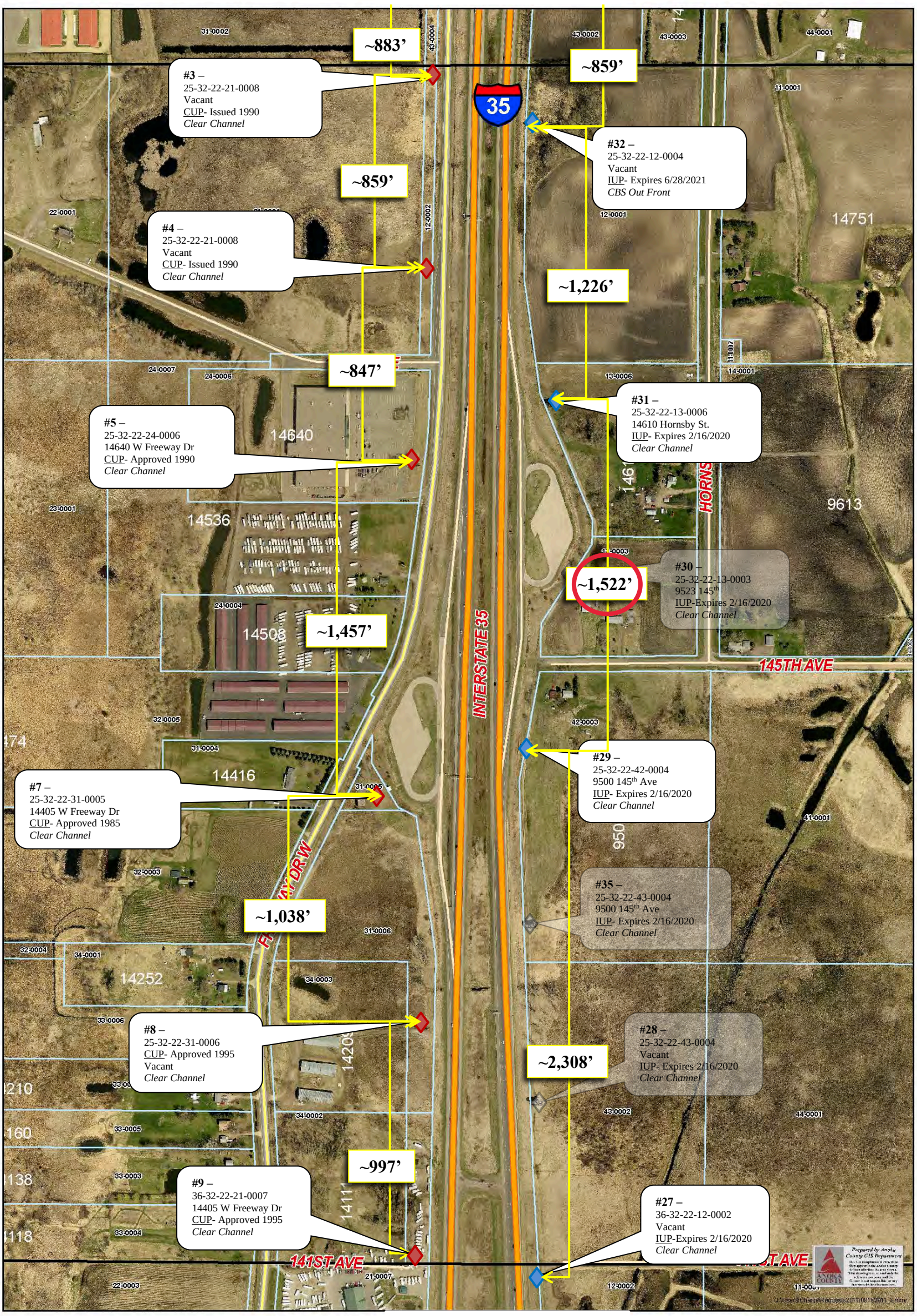
Figure 1.1: Current Approximate Billboard Spacing

July 14, 2020
◆ = IUP
◆ = CUP
◇ = Billboard Removed

City of Columbus 24-32-22

July 14, 2020
◆ = IUP
◆ = CUP
◇ = Billboard Removed

City of Columbus 25-32-22



July 14, 2020
= IUP
= CUP
= Billboard Removed
City of Columbus 36-32-22
N
#9 – 36-32-22-21-0007 14405 W Freeway Dr CUP- Approved 1995 Clear Channel
#27 – 36-32-22-12-0002 Vacant IUP-Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
141ST AVE
~792'
~780'
#10 – 36-32-22-21-0005 14025 W Freeway Dr CUP- Approved 1995 Clear Channel
#26 – 36-32-22-12-0002 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
FREEWAY DR
INTERSTATE 35
#11 – 36-32-22-24-0007 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#25 – 36-32-22-13-0003 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
~3,370'
#12 – 36-32-22-24-0007 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#13 – 36-32-22-31-0002 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#24 – 36-32-22-13-0003 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
~4,420'
#23 – 36-32-22-41-0002 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#14 – 36-32-22-31-0001 13623 W Freeway Dr IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#20 – 36-32-22-34-0005 13363 W Freeway Dr IUP- Expires 4/31/2031 CBS Out Front
#15 – 36-32-22-33-0004 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#22 – 36-32-22-42-0002 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
~1718'
~780'
~784'
#19 – 36-32-22-34-0005 13363 W Freeway Dr IUP- Expires 4/13/2031 CBS Out Front
#16 – 36-32-22-33-0001 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#18 – 36-32-22-33-0003 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#21 – 36-32-22-43-0001 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 CBS Out Front
#17 – 36-32-22-33-0001 Vacant IUP- Expires 2/16/2020 Clear Channel
#36 – 36-32-22-34-0005 13363 W Freeway Dr IUP- Expires 4/13/2031 CBS Out Front
Prepared by Anoka County GIS Department

SECTION V: Findings of Fact- Studies, Regional Standards, and State Standards

- The current minimum standard for spacing outlined by the state of Minnesota is 500 feet per Minnesota Billboard Control Act.
- The City of Burnsville requires 2,000 feet between each billboard, measured 360 degrees between each pole.
- The City of Egan (Chap11. Sub 28. (D)) prohibits Off-premise signs. However, those that are approved via CUP are allowed to erect another in it's place *if* it meets all criteria, one of which is that it cannot be 1,500 linear feet from another large off premise sign on the same side of highway, and 300 feet across highway.
- In White Bear Township "off premise advertising signs shall be located no closer than 800 feet measured along the freeway, from any other off premises advertising sign."
- In the City of Blaine, the minimum distance between billboards measured linearly on the same side of the highway is 550 feet.
- A Study called the *Valuation of Billboards* by Stoops and Wolverton conducted in 2006 found that when using the standard of 8 seconds minimum for effective advertisement exposure time, and the average speed of 70 MPH, the minimum sign spacing for effective exposure to an advertisement is 821 feet.

SECTION VI: Staff Observations of Regional and State Standards and Studies

Although the practice of reviewing neighboring communities Ordinances does not always yield answers or provide a clear direction, as no two communities are the same. It does however offer an appreciated insight and information when reviewing sign ordinances, specifically billboards. As these are a common land use on many highways and freeways that are interconnect within a region. This can be especially beneficial when being part of a metropolitan area. When reviewing the four communities researched it was found that each has a stretch of Interstate 35 running through its municipal boundary and permits billboards via Conditional Use Permit (CUP), expect one, which allows the continued use as long as it was previously permitted via CUP. Additionally, majority of the communities require that the billboards be located in their Industrial districts. With that in mind, it does appear that the four communities surveyed all vary in their spacing requirements. To start, the State of Minnesota has the shortest requirement at 500 feet, closely followed by the City of Blaine at 550'. The City of Burnsville has the most restrictive requirement of 2,000 feet measured 360 degrees around the pole, followed by the City of Egan at 1,500 feet and only allows billboards that are previously approved via CUP and are constructed to replace existing billboards. White Bear Township has a spacing requirement of 800 feet and only allow them in their Industrial Districts. It is the staff's opinion that when examining these neighboring communities and considering recent Ordinance amendments, our spacing and location standards are not the least or most stringent, rather low to average in comparison. Furthermore, taking into consideration the study conducted in 2006 stating that the minimum distance at 70 MPH for effective advertising is 821 feet, any shorter and the viewer may be less

susceptible to the ad. Indicating that the further the distance, the more time there is for advertisement viewership.

SECTION VII: Proposed Changes/Staff Recommendations

Billboard Spacing Recommendations: with the intent of the Moratorium being the investigation of impacts of Billboards to the City and Community welfare in light of recent changes to Section 7B-710 and changes to the Billboard industry in the City of Columbus, staff recommends making an amendment to the current spacing requirement. This is due to our current standards being less stringent than or meeting the average standards of the four mentioned regional communities. Additionally, due to our current code the larger areas of open Right of Way recently created by the removal of billboards offers space for the exact same number of billboards to be erected again. With these considerations this affords the City of Columbus room to increase the spacing should the Planning Commission and City Council deem it necessary. Less billboards may also be seen as a benefit to the remaining billboards, as it allows them to be focused on more, potentially increasing their advertising effectiveness. Lastly, it is recommended that existing signs currently erected and proposed to be renewed be allowed to remain at a shorter distance, provided they continue to meet all other standards of the code, due to our variance from the norm by permitting billboards via IUP rather than a CUP.

Billboard Column Cover Concealment Recommendation: Staff recommends that Section 7B-710 (16-a.) be amended to allow for imitation stone as an approved concealment material. This is due to a recent Interim Use Application providing such materials as an option, and the City of Columbus Planning Commission and City Council finding it suitable for column cover concealment.

SECTION VIII: Next Steps

1. The Planning Commission will review the 2020 Billboard Study and discuss any alternative billboard spacing and column cover concealment material provided in the 2020 Billboard Report.
2. Planning Commission will make their recommendation to the City Council.
3. City Council will make the final determination and should any amendments be approved, request an Ordinance be drafted with City recommendations.
4. The City of Columbus will write a summary for publication and the final Ordinance amending the Chapter 7B of the city of Columbus Code of Ordinance will be adopted.

Citation: Source of Information

- Minnesota Billboard Control Act
  - http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/billboards/control-act.html
- City of Burnsville Code of Ordinance
  - https://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=468
- City of Egan Code of Ordinance (Chap11. Sub 28. (D))
  - https://library.municode.com/mn/eagan/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CICO_CH11LAUSREZO_SS11.71--11.98RE
- White Bear Township Code of Ordinance
  - http://www.ci.white-bear-township.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/1746/Ord-33---Signs-PDF
- City of Blaine Code of Ordinance
  - https://library.municode.com/mn/blaine/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIIBLZOOR_CH34SI_34.08BI
- *The Valuation of Billboards*, Stoops and Wolverton, *Appraisal Institute*, 2006.
  - https://billboardinsider.com/billboard-spacing/#:~:text=Paul%20Wright%20in%20Billboard%20Appraisal,exposure%20time%20for%20a%20sign.