



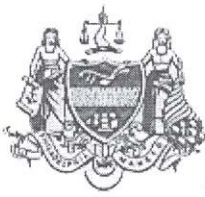
OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA

**ILLEGAL SIGNAGE
CODE ENFORCEMENT
REVIEW**

AUGUST 2007

**Alan Butkovitz
City Controller**



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER
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ALAN BUTKOVITZ
City Controller

ALBERT F. SCAPEROTTO
Deputy City Controller

August 8, 2007

Robert D. Solvibile, Sr., Commissioner
Department of Licenses and Inspections
Municipal Services Building- 11th Floor
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1687

Dear Commissioner Solvibile:

The Controller's Office in response to several complaints concerning illegal signage, conducted a review to assess the magnitude of illegal signage, to determine the cause or causes contributing to its existence, and to develop recommendations for corrective action. The review was conducted pursuant to Section 6-400(d) of the Home Rule Charter. The results of our work are provided in the attached report.

We discussed our findings and recommendations with a member of your staff at an exit conference. However, you did not accept our offer to submit a written response to our comments for inclusion as part of the report. Our recommendations have been numbered to facilitate tracking and follow-up in subsequent years. We believe that our recommendations, if implemented by management, would improve the effectiveness of the Department of Licenses and Inspections' illegal signage code enforcement process.

Very truly yours,

ALAN BUTKOVITZ
City Controller

cc: Honorable John F. Street, Mayor
Honorable Anna C. Verna, President
And Honorable Members of City Council
Members of the Mayor's Cabinet



ILLEGAL SIGNAGE CODE ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

Why The Controller's Office Conducted the Review

In response to several complaints concerning illegal signage, the Office of the City Controller conducted a review to assess the magnitude of illegal commercial signage, to determine the cause or causes contributing to its existence, and to develop recommendations for corrective action. We conducted the review during the three month period ending May 31, 2007.

What The Controller's Office Found

Philadelphia Code Chapter 10-1200, as amended, fixes responsibility for illegal signage code enforcement with the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I). The Code prohibits the posting of commercial signs to streetlight and utility poles. Any person responsible for posting of an illegal sign shall be liable for the cost incurred to remove the sign and a penalty of \$75. The Code also mentions that the potential penalty for a violation is a fine up to \$300 per violation.

Illegal signage, a form of urban blight, is prevalent affecting the quality of life in neighborhoods throughout the city. Investigators at random observed more than 1,200 commercial signs of every size, shape, and color posted to streetlight and utility poles. Many of the poles observed had more than one type of sign posted to them (See Exhibit I). Vehicle towing, housing, roofing, and numerous other types of businesses were represented (See Exhibit II). The heaviest concentrations of signs were observed on poles close to highways located in the Lower Northeast, North Central, and Southwest parts of the city (See Exhibit III). Signs that fall from poles litter the streets and those that are stapled or nailed to poles remain a constant eyesore. Furthermore, the city is losing revenue by not enforcing the Code established to prevent such blight from happening. Had the city collected the \$75 penalty for each of the above 1,200 commercial signs it would have earned \$90,000 in penalty fees alone. Finally, tax revenue could be collected from code violators who are also in noncompliance with the city's tax laws. The revenue collected from violators should minimize if not cover the cost of code enforcement.

At the exit conference, a representative from L&I concurred that illegal signage is a problem and stated that, given its available resources, L&I is doing all that it possibly can to minimize the problem. L&I has neither the personnel nor the proper equipment to strictly enforce the Code and remove illegal signs from streetlight and telephone poles. Approximately three years ago, L&I partnered with the electric company and a telephone company to provide funding to community groups that removed illegal signs from neighborhood utility poles. We were informed by L&I that the program was a success in temporarily reducing the number of illegal signs posted to utility poles.

What The Controller's Office Recommends

The Controller's Office recommends that L&I:

- Develop a methodology and establish formal policies and procedures to facilitate the enforcement of Philadelphia Code Chapter 10-1200, as amended. [47607.01]
- Request additional resources to fulfill its Code enforcement responsibility. L&I should petition the Office of the Director of Finance to appropriate all revenue derived from illegal signage Code enforcement to L&I to minimize, if not cover, its code enforcement cost. [47607.02]
- Coordinate illegal signage identification with other city departments and agencies such as the Streets Department and the anti-graffiti and neighborhood transformation initiative networks that are out in the neighborhoods servicing the public. These departments, agencies, and neighborhood community groups should be solicited to report illegal signage as it occurs. [47607.03]

- Consider obtaining funding from utility companies for community groups to remove illegal signage from utility poles. [47607.04]
- Report to the Revenue Department all Code violators to ensure that they are in compliance with the city's tax laws. This will increase the city's tax revenue and impose stricter fines and penalties on Code violators who are not in compliance with the city's tax laws. [47607.05]
- Educate the public about illegal signage and the resulting fines and penalties. [47607.06]

Exhibit I Illegal Signage Photos



5900 Knox St
19144



Woodhaven & Thorndale Rds
19154



Evans & Byberry Rds
19116



Front & Oregon
19148

Exhibit II

Illegal Signs Observed By Type

A. Vehicle Towing Signs (224 Signs)

1. Green Donate Your Car Signs	(215-817-8010)	(122 signs)
2. City Towing/Junk Car's Signs	(267-633-6601)	(39 signs)
3. We Pay \$100 For Junk Car Signs	(267-442-8367)	(39 signs)
4. Purple Heart Car Signs	(888-414-GIVE)	(1 sign)
5. Top Dollar Paid For Junk Vehicles	(215-365-7100)	(5 signs)
6. Felicia's Towing Signs	(215-356-7023)	(1 sign)
7. Car Signs Misc.		(17 signs)

B. Housing Signs (803 Signs)

1. Port Richmond Rent To Own	(886-202-6142)	(30 signs)
2. Northeast/South Philly Rent To Own		(7 signs)
3. We Buy Houses Signs	(267-481-3005)	(89 signs)
4. We Buy Houses Signs	(215-370-1236)	(5 signs)
5. We Buy Houses Signs	(215-365-4567)	(20 signs)
6. I Buy Houses	(215-783-3738)	(32 signs)
7. We Buy Houses Any Situation	(888-5-sell now)	(14 signs)
8. We Buy Houses	(215-768-3470)	(38 signs)
9. We Buy Houses	(1-800-448-0113)	(55 signs)
10. 1-877-EZ-WAY-OUT		(30 signs)
11. We Buy Houses	(215-892-6569)	(7 signs)
12. We Buy Houses	(215-816-4335)	(14 signs)
13. We Buy Houses	(215-222-2400)	(16 signs)
14. We Buy Houses	(888-874-6920)	(18 signs)
15. I Buy Houses	(267-249-8319)	(129 signs)
16. Cash For Houses	(267-446-8489)	(6 signs)
17. We Buy Houses	(215-820-5780)	(7 signs)
18. Fast Cash We Buy Houses	(201-683-1598)	(35 signs)
19. Avoid Foreclosure	(215-552-8133)	(12 signs)
20. Get Real Cash	(215-953-9229)	(12 signs)
21. Everseal (215-768-5010)	(10 signs)	
22. We Buy Houses	(267-625-5073)	(10 signs)
23. We Buy Mortgages	(215-843-1115)	(7 signs)
24. Cash For Houses	(610-277-3232)	(12 signs)
25. Cash For Houses	(267-228-6808)	(8 signs)
26. We Buy Houses Cash David Slafman 6302 Rising Sun Ave/19111	(267-304-4075)	(3 signs)
27. We Buy Houses Cash	(215-742-5009)	(2 signs)
28. We Buy Houses	(215-669-7205)	(4 signs)

29. We Buy Homes	(866-60-HOMES)	(7 signs)
30. We Buy Houses	(215-609-6966)	(3 signs)
31. Pat Buys Houses	(267-918-0610)	(6 signs)
32. Houses Misc.		(155 signs)

C. Roofing Signs (58 Signs)

1. Curtain Roofing	(215-465-ROOF)	(31 signs)
2. CDM Roofing	(215-431-9318)	(7 signs)
3. Hodgkinson Home Inc.	(215-768-5017)	(5 signs)
4. Roofsmith	(215-843-1636)	(5 signs)
5. On The Top Roofing	(215-243-0146)	(4 signs)
6. MJR Enterprises	(215-222-2800)	(2 signs)
7. Joe Ritchie Inc.	(215-338-1457)	(1 sign)
8. Exterior Home Improvement	(215-487-6434)	(1 sign)
9. WM Kristo Daka Roofing		(1 sign)
10. Regional Roofing	(215-708-1704)	(1 sign)

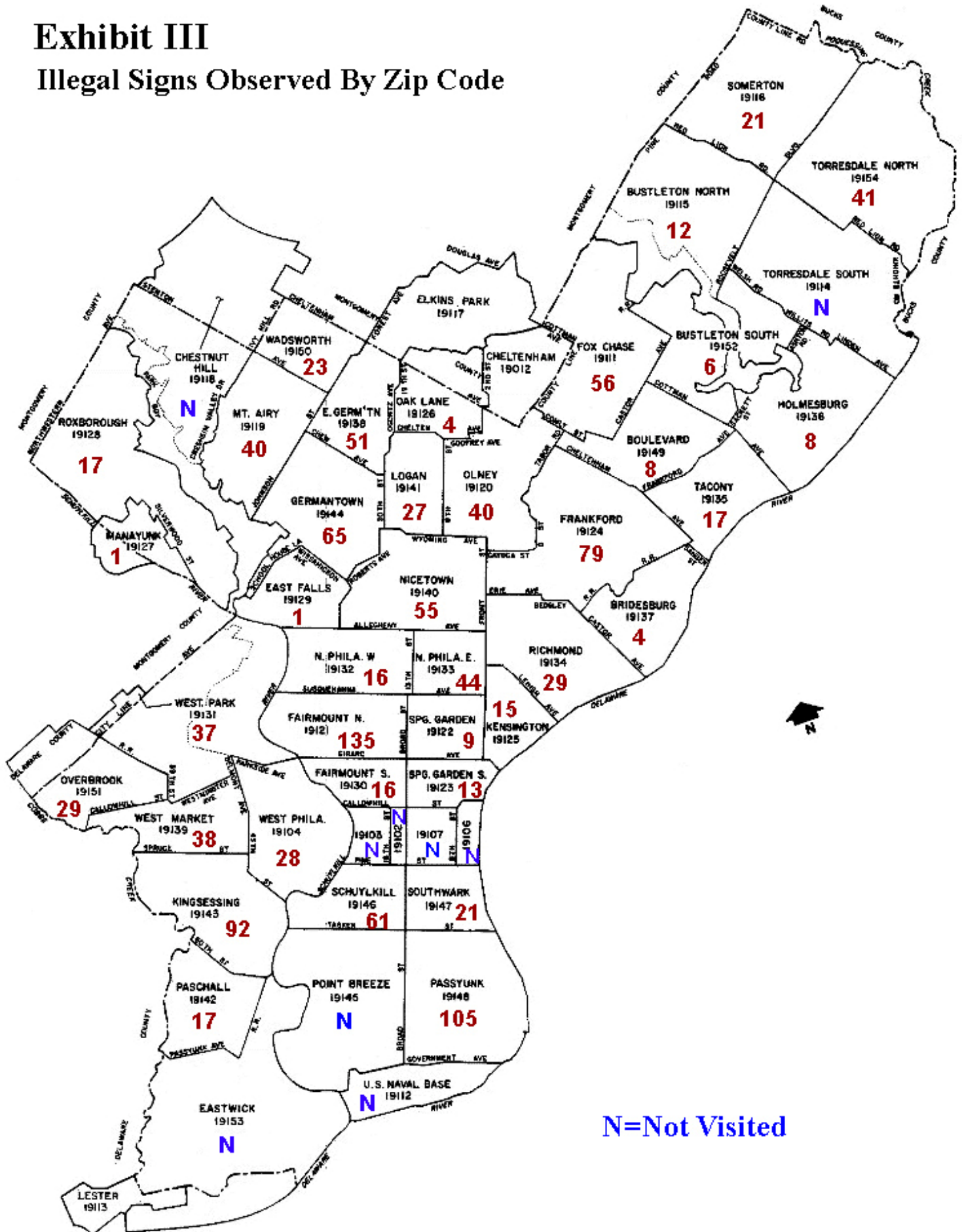
D. Other Business Signs (196 Signs)

1. The Wire Guy	(1-800-830-9510)	(13 signs)
2. Affordable Health Insurance Megalife, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	(215-783-8935)	(24 signs)
3. We Buy Dish Network Equip.	(215-228-3474)	(12 signs)
4. Mr. Wheelchair	(1-877-577-0100)	(6 signs)
5. Weichert Realtors		(5 signs)
6. ABC Newlife Com MJR LLC	(215-22-2880)	(6 signs)
7. Cheap Auto Insurance	(215-713-0900)	(9 signs)
8. DirecTV	(215-228-DISH)	(5 signs)
9. Wheelchair Misc.	(215-897-6613)	(4 signs)
10. Phone Jacks Installed \$50	(1-800-993-3150)	(15 signs)
11. Forman Mills		(8 signs)
12. 1-800 Got Junk		(5 signs)
13. Foreman Pest Control	(215-724-0626)	(5 signs)
14. HMO Enrollment	(215-946-3000)	(9 signs)
15. Academy Day Care	(215-221-9111)	(4 signs)
16. Pat King of Cement	(215-427-1638)	(5 signs)
17. Solid State Inc. Basement Water Proofing	(215-464-8601)	(3 signs)
18. Day Care	(215-455-1094)	(3 signs)
19. Maxwell Realty	(215-546-6000)	(3 signs)
20. K & P Cement	(215-341-1247)	(3 signs)
21. Pro Boxing	(215-668-5915)	(3 signs)
22. Cash for Anything	(215-490-5907)	(3 signs)
23. Sealy Mattress	(215-698-0808)	(3 signs)
24. We Print Shirts	(214-477-3996)	(2 signs)
25. New Batteries	(215-225-7860)	(2 signs)

26. Car Alarm System	(215-924-5827)	(2 signs)
27. Cement Work	(215-200-0785)	(2 signs)
28. Shoe Repair	(215-673-8652)	(2 signs)
29. Carpet Cleaning	(866-370-9269)	(2 signs)
30. Bus Ride to State Prison	(215-657-2406)	(2 signs)
31. Computer Store, 4801 Germantown Ave.	(215-844-5505)	(2 signs)
32. Moving-PV Cleanout	(215-549-3477)	(2 signs)
33. Screen Printing	(215-833-0569)	(1 sign)
34. Nicky Alarmist	(215-472-1125)	(1 sign)
35. WWW.IBigPeople		(1 sign)
36. Infants Our Specialty	(215-879-EASE)	(1 sign)
37. Mulch Concrete	(267-716-3600)	(1 sign)
38. Carpina Concrete	(215-543-9453)	(1 sign)
39. Medical & Dental Plans	(215-355-5222)	(1 sign)
40. Transmission Are US	(267-832-1105)	(1 sign)
41. Junk Removal	(215-886-3442)	(1 sign)
42. All Stars Signs	(215-676-7362)	(1 sign)
43. Cement Work	(215-722-0867)	(1 sign)
44. White Tiger Electric Co.	(215-424-0594)	(1 sign)
45. New Vision Contracting Inc.	(1-800-439-0083)	(1 sign)
46. Radcliff Device	(215-288-8797)	(1 sign)
47. Phila. Hidden Treasure Printing	(215-877-9107)	(1 sign)
48. Alpha Desktop Publishing	(215-334-8836)	(1 sign)
49. New Computer Store, 52 & Girard		(1 sign)
50. National Glass Co.	(215-331-9336)	(1 sign)
51. Car Wash, Smedly Street		(1 sign)
52. Garage For Rent	(610-688-8876)	(1 sign)
53. Real Estate Job	(267-344-1165)	(1 sign)
54. Pat Hale Repair, D. Di Palatina	(215-348-4414)	(1 sign)

Exhibit III

Illegal Signs Observed By Zip Code



N=Not Visited