

NoHa Area of Special Sign Control

Community Overview

The NoHa ASSC is an outdoor media powered project for an area of downtown that will create light, vitality and activity and provide a platform for Baltimore's local art community, small businesses, and community focused organizations.

DPOB is requiring all media companies participating in the District to live up to a far higher standard of community benefits and responsiveness than any other signs in the City.

- Media companies will grant DPOB 15-20% of all LED time for local art and civic promotion
- Media companies will adhere to stringent repair and light mitigation standards
- District signs must be aesthetically superior in the judgment of DPOB and its committee of stakeholders and arts groups
- Media companies will supply an architectural analysis showing how the signs fit in architecturally with the building and surrounding area
- Property owners and media companies do not have final say on billboard locations, the sign plan as approved by planning does. Digital billboards will not directly face residential properties.

DPOB is creating a community advisory panel to have oversight on the sign plan implantation, public programming, content concerns, and adherence to the services agreements by media companies

Previous Community Input

Meetings:

Downtown partnership Executive Committee
Downtown Partnership Board
Baltimore City Council Members
Baltimore A&E Districts
BOPA
Visit Baltimore
Charles Street Development Corporation
Waterfront Partnership
Greater Baltimore Committee
Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore

Metro Gallery / Mike Schechter
Harbor East Management
Kathleen, AIA Baltimore
City Center Residents Association Board
CCRA individual members
Downtown Advocacy Network
Design Collective
Ziger Snead
BCT Design Group
Byrnes & Associates
Otterbein Residents Association

Community Input Meeting Schedule:

October 25 – Otterbein Meeting
October 27 – Updated FAQ released
October 28 – Park Charles
October 29 – City Center Residents Association
Nov. 1 – The Atrium
Nov. 2 – 414 Water Street Condos
Nov. 3 – 414 Light Street
Nov. 10 – OPEN TO ALL ZOOM

Registration for this zoom will be emailed to DPOB resident email contacts and is also available at www.GoDowntownBaltimore.com. Registrants will be emailed a meeting link within 24 hours of the meeting and again one-hour before the meeting.

Update on Light Pollution Concerns

Downtown Partnership is looking into creative ways to offset light pollution and looking into becoming carbon neutral through carbon tax credits. The ASSC offers real opportunity for light and vibrancy at the street level, not for rooftop viewing. We are exploring opportunities to be very intentional and thoughtful in this area.

All Baltimore signs will have dimming sensors that adjust to the time of day to soften brightness at appropriate times. Additionally, all signs will be manually dimmable by the operator. Each operator will provide a lighting study as part of the approval process to demonstrate the digital signs do not significantly increase ambient light levels. Sign operators will be required to respond to resident complaints regarding brightness within 48 hours.

Each sign will operate using the most efficient clean energy tier available in market.

DPOB, Department of Planning, and the Planning Commission are looking for community input. If you have questions for feedback about the Sign Plan, please reach out to Lauren Hamilton, LHamilton@dpob.org and/or Caitlin Audette, Caitlin.audette@baltimorecity.gov.

North Harbor Area of Special Sign Control (ASSC) Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Baltimore NOHA Arts District?

The Baltimore NOHA Arts District (the District) is an outdoor media powered project for the north harbor area of downtown that will create light, vitality and activity and provide a massive platform for Baltimore's local art community.

What are the key benefits of the District?

- The District will create vibrant public gathering spaces that will enhance downtown
- The District will support the four different arts districts through an ongoing revenue share
- The District will market local businesses and civic initiatives through LED promotion

How will the district be funded?

The District will be privately funded. No public money or taxes will be required for the District. Additionally, a revenue share from District commercial signage will be reinvested by DPOB into the District for the betterment of the local community.

What are the economic impacts of the district?

The District will provide an expansive digital platform for local artists to promote their work to locals and tourists. The District will benefit downtown landlords through a lease based revenue stream, potentially increasing property values and the City's downtown tax base

What is the timeline to create and activate the district?

The District boundaries were approved by City council and signed by the Mayor on October 18th. The District could launch within six months from approval, but only after the Sign Plan is approved by the Planning Commission. After approval from the Planning Commission, only properties included in the approved sign plan can seek permits. Each property owner would have to seek individual permits for each sign prior to construction.

Who will manage the District?

The district will be managed and subsidized by DPOB (DPOB's revenue share will not cover program costs). District artwork and sign structures will be reviewed by a committee of downtown stakeholders and community groups. Further, a local advisory board composed of residents, downtown stakeholders and arts groups will review and make recommendations related to all District sign structures and artwork to ensure that the signage and art meets appropriate public interests and standards.

Can residents give input on the District?

Residents will serve on the advisory board and DPOB has set up a contact process whereby residents can offer input and concerns directly to DPOB. Residents can also reach out to DPOB or Planning directly with questions or concerns about the sign plan, content, etc.

Why the Name 'North Harbor'?

The name is a geographic marker. The boundaries are North of the Harbor. This is not a neighborhood name.

Frequently Asked Questions

What programming will the District bring to Baltimore?

District activities will focus on public art showings highlighting Baltimore's vibrant local visual arts community. Additionally, the District may partner with other similar media districts in Atlanta, Denver and West Hollywood, by exchanging digital art pieces thereby promoting Baltimore artists to cities around the country.

The district will also provide free LED video time to local art and cultural groups from all Baltimore neighborhoods to promote themselves and their activities.

How is this signage different from typical billboards?

DPOB is requiring all media companies participating in the District to live up to a far higher standard of community benefits and responsiveness than any other signs in the City.

- Media companies will grant DPOB 15-20% of all LED time for local art and civic promotion
- Media companies will adhere to stringent repair and light mitigation standards
- District signs must be aesthetically superior in the judgment of DPOB and its committee of stakeholders and arts groups
- Media companies will supply an architectural analysis showing how the signs fit in architecturally with the building and surrounding area
- Media companies will support Baltimore's efforts to attract national and international events downtown by agreeing to work with the City on attracting such events through special sign promotions

Will this add undue commercialization to Downtown?

No. The signage will be limited in number and focused on vibrant areas of downtown. All District signage will be within downtown boundaries.

How will this affect other potential districts?

DPOB is instituting several unique requirements on District media companies to ensure that the District is community and local art focused. DPOB is requiring maintenance and light mitigation standards that are more restrictive than on any other Baltimore signage. While DPOB will have no oversight related to other districts, it is hoped that the community based restrictions and requirements provide strong precedence for other efforts.

What arts groups will the District support?

The District is being set up to directly support Baltimore's Arts & Entertainment Districts through Downtown Partnership's services agreements with media companies. Under this plan, there will be significant financial support for each A&E District and support for artists to have work featured on the signs.

Will Baltimore City make any revenue?

Baltimore city will make money off the already-existing Billboard Tax. Additionally, three city-owned properties are included in the sign plan in after sent for BID and a healthy procurement process, stand to make revenue as a landlord for digital billboards on those properties.

Are these signs safe for cars and pedestrians?

The Department of Transportation is required to provide findings of fact on this concern to the Planning Department and Planning Commission. It's not the intent of property owners or Downtown Partnership to create a program that would cause safety issues for drivers or pedestrians. Studies show the larger danger to both is cell phone use.