



## Bandit Sign Presentation City of Houston Department of Neighborhoods-Feb 2021

Strategies for Reducing Urban Blight  
Regulatory and Neighborhood Affairs Committee  
Council Member Sallie Alcorn, Chair





# What are Bandit Signs?

- A bandit sign is any sign which is illegally placed on public property or in the right-of-way. These signs are lightweight, inexpensive advertising signs usually made from paper, cardboard, or corrugated plastic. Some common types of signage include political, real estate, developer, and garage sale signs.



- Illegal areas includes stake-type signs on esplanades, areas between the sidewalk and curb, overpasses, utility poles, light standards, and traffic signal boxes.

# Legal Authority

- ❑ **State-** Chapter 393 of the Texas Transportation Code makes it unlawful for any individual or entity to place and/or commission the placement of a sign on the right-of-way of a public road that is not otherwise authorized by law. Cities may create ordinances to provide permission for their placement and are authorized to take legal action to collect penalties.
- ❑ **Local-** City of Houston Municipal Code Sections 28-38 and 28-39.
- ❑ The Houston Sign Administration of the Houston Public Works Department regulates and permits all advertising signs within the City of Houston. The Houston Sign Code was originally adopted in May 1980 and revised in July 2020. The code provides standards for the use, quality, construction, and location of advertising signs throughout the City. The height, size, and lighting of signs is determined by the category of the street from which the sign will be viewed. The Code also regulates off-premise signs (also known as billboards) in the city, as well as extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).



# Who Can Impound Bandit Signs?

## Chapter 28-39(c)

Employees of the Police Department, Planning and Development, Solid Waste, HPW, DON, and certain other city employees as designated by the Department of Neighborhoods director, are authorized to impound any signs found on a public street, public sidewalk or public alley and transport them for storage. Signs can be disposed of immediately or stored for up to 30 days.





# What are the Bandit Signs Fines?



## **BANDIT SIGNS**

**Fines: \$300 – \$500**

**To avoid fines:** Do not place signs on city property and right of way. Bandit signs typically consist of political, real estate and garage sale signs illegally placed on city property and right of way, including public buildings, structures and streets.

# What about political signage?



## **Legal Department Language on Signs:**

City Rights-of-Way and City Property. While the general prohibitions and policies prohibiting signs continue in effect, the City's historically allows the placement of campaign signs on City property used as a polling place and in City rights-of-way adjacent to polling places. The City's Legal Department contacts political candidates by letter outlining the city's requirements for political signage on city right of ways and property. This exception expires after the election.



# Political signs during an election cycle

- ❑ Campaign signs may not be placed adjacent to early voting locations prior to the beginning of early voting for both the election and the runoff election.
- ❑ Campaign signs may be displayed only by attachment to the ground; no signs may be attached to light poles, telephone poles, fences, pylons, fire hydrants, trees, other signs, or any other fixture or structure.
- ❑ Campaign signs must be placed in a manner that does not impair or impede in any way the use of parking lots, streets, roadways, driveways, sidewalks, walking paths, fire hydrants, or other similar conveyances or structures by the motoring public, pedestrians, or City employees. Signs must not be placed in any part of any driveway or parking space at a polling location.



# Political signs during an election cycle (cont.)

- ❑ Candidates are expected to inform their campaign staff and volunteers of the prohibitions and policies regarding political signs. Candidates will be held responsible for the actions of their supporters regarding to the placement of signs.
- ❑ If the City finds a political sign out of compliance, the City may contact the candidate to advise the candidate the sign must be removed within 24 hours, or else the City may:
  - (1) Remove the sign,
  - (2) Issue a citation to and prosecute in municipal court the candidate and, where possible, the sign company or any individual directly involved in placing the sign illegally, and
  - (3) File suit under state law to recover civil penalties to recoup the City's costs of removing the sign.







Department of Neighborhoods

## INSPECTIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICE



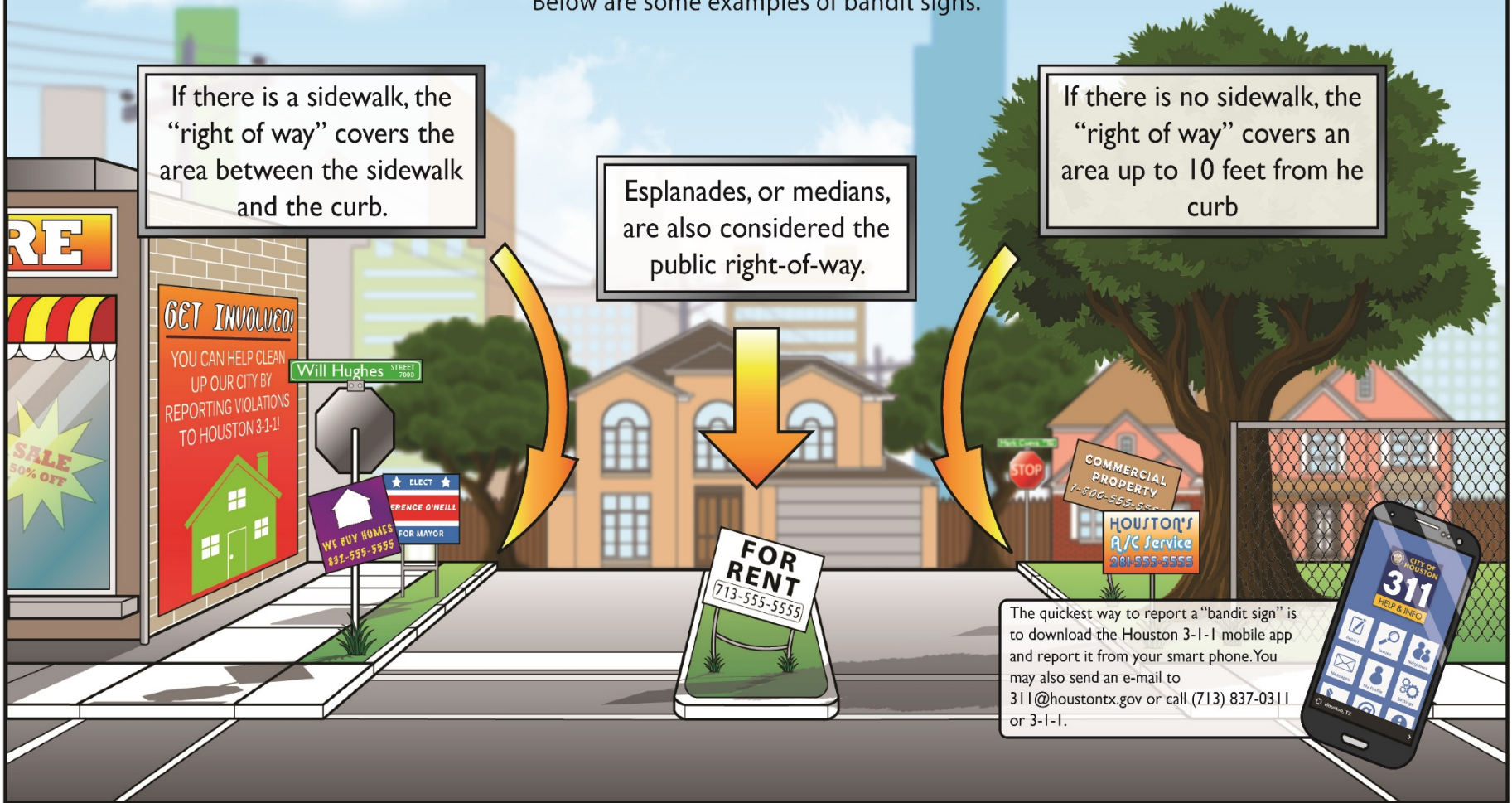
# HOW TO IDENTIFY & REPORT BANDIT SIGNS!

Bandit signs are typically small and placed in large quantities along public spaces such as esplanades. These signs include political, real estate, developer, and garage sale signs, etc. and are placed upon a public street, public sidewalk, public right-of-way, or on any public building or structure of any kind belonging to the city. Below are some examples of bandit signs.

If there is a sidewalk, the “right of way” covers the area between the sidewalk and the curb.

Esplanades, or medians, are also considered the public right-of-way.

If there is no sidewalk, the “right of way” covers an area up to 10 feet from the curb



The quickest way to report a “bandit sign” is to download the Houston 3-1-1 mobile app and report it from your smart phone. You may also send an e-mail to [311@houstontx.gov](mailto:311@houstontx.gov) or call (713) 837-0311 or 3-1-1.



To learn more about our neighborhood code violations, visit us on-line at [www.houstontx.gov/ips](http://www.houstontx.gov/ips) and join us on social media at #NeighborHou.

Questions?

