

PUBLICATION BOXES

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, PRINT YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

NAME (print)

ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE

Email

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December 15, 2014

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

On behalf of the Downtown Neighborhood Association, I would like to thank the Portland Bureau of Transportation for working with neighborhood associations, publishers, and community groups to create a viable solution for the problem of uncontrolled placement and condition of publication boxes in the right of way.

The Downtown Neighborhood Association first got involved in this issue in 2011, when officers from the Clean and Safe district reported at our Public Safety meeting that abandoned publication boxes were being used for drug drops in downtown. We had heard that the Northwest District Association was cleaning up the abandoned and derelict boxes in their neighborhood, so we contacted them to find out how to proceed. We did a full survey of the publication boxes in Downtown Portland and discovered that well over half of the boxes were in poor condition, which we defined as being broken and unusable. There were also a number of boxes that were not being used for publications at all, but for distribution of bumper stickers. Several publications had ceased operations and their boxes were abandoned. We contacted the publishers with the results of our survey and applied for an Office of Neighborhood Involvement Graffiti Abatement Grant to clean up the boxes in downtown.

Representatives from the Northwest District Association, the Pearl District Neighborhood Association, and the Downtown Neighborhood Association met in early 2012 to discuss possible solutions for the problems of derelict publication boxes in the right of way, as well as the placement of publication boxes next to ADA curb cuts or on narrow sidewalks. We quickly realized that the condition and placement of newspaper boxes was a PBOT issue that had to be addressed comprehensively. Publication boxes, unlike all other privately owned items in the public right of way, are completely unregulated, but they fall under the purview of PBOT. The members of our ad hoc group also met with several publishers to discuss the condition and placement of their boxes with varying levels of success. We did notice that shortly after those meetings, the distributors were doing a better job of keeping the publication boxes in downtown clean.

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In the spring of 2014, PBOT created a working group to address publication boxes in the right of way and the result of those meetings is the proposed regulation under consideration today. The proposal creates guidelines defining how and where boxes can be placed. It also requires that all publication boxes clearly display contact information for whoever is responsible for the maintenance of the box, which will make it easier to report broken or abandoned boxes. The proposal has a mechanism for cleaning up abandoned boxes and PBOT is fair in how they treat publishers with boxes that are in violation of these guidelines.

~~While it is safe to say that no one got everything that they wanted,~~ ^U we do believe that the proposed regulation will help clean up Portland's sidewalks and make them safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Felicia Williams
President, Downtown Neighborhood Association