

## Illegal signs should be an endangered species

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It's hard to ignore those unsightly signs nailed, stapled or tacked to utility poles and trees all over Pierce County. They advertise everything from miracle weight-loss schemes and low, low home mortgages to yard-waste hauling and puppies for sale.

Often the signs blight the landscape for months, until the elements – or annoyed citizens – tear them down.

These guerrilla commercial messages aren't just ugly. They're also traffic hazards. When several are attached to a Yield sign, for example, the clutter can be such a visual distraction that motorists might not notice the yellow triangle.

And the signs are illegal, in violation of Pierce County code banning all off-premises commercial signs. Next month, the county will start doing something about them in an area that arguably has the most illegal signs per square mile.

A \$40,000, four-month pilot program championed by County Councilman Roger Bush will assess how effective it would be to aggressively enforce the prohibition against unpermitted signs. If the program works, the County Council could fund an expansion in the 2008 budget.

The program will affect a fairly large chunk of the county – a 55-square-mile area bordered by Highway 512 to the north, Meridian Avenue to the east, 224th Street to the south and Fort Lewis to the west. Major emphasis will be given to such heavily traveled arterials as Spanaway Loop Road, Canyon Road, Military Road and Brookdale Road.

The program will be executed in four phases: removing and photographing signs; cataloguing the signs and contacting the owners (usually they can be traced by phone numbers or e-mail addresses on the signs); conducting a second sign cleanup of the focus area; and identifying repeat offenders for further enforcement – up to being cited for a civil infraction and fined \$250.

One piece of business must be taken care of before the pilot project can go forward. The County Council needs to erase an old law from the books that – unbelievably – requires the county to give written notice before removing an illegal sign. That should be taken care of at the council's Tuesday meeting.

Needless to say, if a sign's illegal, the county should be able to take it down forthwith – not spend time and resources contacting the person who posted it in violation of county code.

### READERS COMMENTS:

**But if the signs are eliminated** - Submitted by Regfool2 on June 19, 2007 - 7:21am.

how else will our anorexic selves be able to find puppies to give to our kids in our affordable homes with our tidy yards?

**How dare they!!!!** - Submitted by matsherevelis on June 18, 2007 - 7:08pm.

How dare those personally owned businesses advertise on poles!! I mean really now, what are we telling our youth? That safety is not a concern? That the little guy can actually compete with the big billboards and onslaught of advertising you find on the major roads? I wonder if those sign people are even aware that it is illegal!? While we're at it, let's make a motion to ban those ugly lawn ornaments and overweight bike riders in spandex; eye soars indeed. And for safety's sake, put a ban on attractive joggers!! I can't begin to tell you the amount of accidents I've almost gotten into because of them! This is really an atrocity and we should work together to fight against it! With world hunger, our country at war and guns in schools, I am pleased to see that the law abiding WASL passers are focusing on what really matters in life; attractive poles and the real safety issues.

**I agree** - Submitted by citylies on June 18, 2007 - 12:33pm.

The county should take these signs down immediately and maybe fine the bigger violators. This story proves that if there is no enforcement, the laws do not matter and will not be obeyed.

**Sign people** - Submitted by HappyHeathen on June 18, 2007 - 10:24am.

Same ones who speed in school zones and ignore fireworks bans. Probably flunked their WASL test as well. Call Tex and thank him for the eye sores.

**Decks by Tex** - Submitted by Whatever1214 on June 18, 2007 - 7:16am.

This offender should be hung up by his thumbs on a telephone pole in full public view.

