**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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**Peterson proposes halt to new billboards while city reviews proliferation of signs in neighborhoods**

**INDIANAPOLIS** – Mayor Bart Peterson today asked for a moratorium on all permits for new outdoor advertising signs, typically known as billboards, while the city undertakes a comprehensive review of local ordinances governing all types of advertising signs.

Currently, businesses must obtain a city permit to place a billboard advertising their business or product somewhere other than their own premises.

“One of the most common complaints we hear in city government is about the proliferation of billboards and other advertising signs,” Peterson said. “Whether it is billboards in subdivisions or flyers tacked to telephone poles, there are many neighborhoods across the city with too many signs.”

If a moratorium is approved by the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC) and the City-County Council, no new billboards could be constructed or placed anywhere in the city for one year while the city reviews sign ordinances.

A moratorium, Peterson said, would prevent the unnecessary proliferation of advertising signs while neighborhood groups, businesses and city officials work toward a compromise among residents trying to keep their neighborhoods clean and sightly and businesses that need to advertise.

“Neighborhoods must have more control over the appearance and upkeep of their areas,” the Mayor added. “We now are ready to take the next step in working with neighborhoods and businesses in addressing this issue.”

Specifically, the Mayor announced:

- **Comprehensive ordinance review.** In conjunction with neighborhood leaders, businesses and residents, the city will conduct a year-long review of the existing sign ordinances and make recommendations for potential changes. Current sign ordinances regulate things such as billboards, signs painted on or affixed to buildings, signs affixed to telephone poles or temporary signs placed in public rights-of-way, such as medians and intersections.

- **Creation of a steering committee.** A steering committee comprised of neighborhood representatives, businesses and city staff will be created to help with the ordinance review and guide city policy regarding the permitting and inspection of signs. Steering committee members will be named later this month.

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• **New sign specialist.** The Department of Metropolitan Development has appointed a sign specialist who is charged with creating a comprehensive inventory of outdoor advertising signs and will play an integral role in inspecting and permitting signs in Marion County.

• **Tagging signs in public rights-of-way.** In an effort to deter illegal signs, such as those placed in public right-of-ways, city inspectors will begin tagging illegal signs with orange stickers that identify the sign as a violation. The new policy will not only help educate the general public, but will send a message to repeat offenders that the city will not tolerate signs in public rights-of-way.

• **Continued efforts.** All city zoning inspectors will aggressively continue to enforce the existing sign ordinance and will continue to target resources in cleaning up temporary signs in neighborhoods, such as the September 2001 month-long initiative which removed more than 3,000 illegal signs.

The Mayor credited the Marion County Alliance of Neighborhood Associations and City-County Councilor Karen Horseman for pushing for better laws to regulate the use of signs throughout the city.

“This is an important issue to neighborhood groups and residents, who are concerned about the growing number of signs in our community and the blight that results from temporary signs that litter our streets and sidewalks,” said Councilor Horseman. “I am pleased that we have all been able to come together to determine a plan of action that will ultimately add value to our community.”

Legal notice to all businesses will be posted tomorrow, and the city will present the proposal regarding the moratorium and ordinance review to the MDC on April 2. The City-County Council then will consider the proposal later.

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