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Mark Levine, Borough President

July 31, 2025

**Recommendation on ULURP Application Nos. C250188ZSM and N250189ZRM – 1551 Broadway MiD Signage Text Amendment and Special Permit
By 1551 Broadway Owner LLC**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

1551 Broadway Owner LLC (the “Applicant”) is proposing multiple land use actions to facilitate new signage (the “Proposed Signage”) on a building located at 1551 Broadway (Block 1018, Lots 26 and 27), in Manhattan Community District 5 (the “Site”).

The Applicant proposes the following actions:

1. A zoning text amendment to Section 81-734 of the New York City Zoning Resolution (ZR) to create a new special permit that would modify signage and frontage regulations for small zoning lots of 10,000 square feet in lot area or less; and
2. A special permit per amended ZR Section 81-734 to permit new signage on the Site that would not comply with the underlying signage regulations.

These actions would facilitate two signs on the site, a new 15,515-square-foot LED sign with no required setback, and an as-of-right 7,000-square-foot sign.

BACKGROUND

The Site is located in the Theater Subdistrict of the Midtown Special District. The Theater Subdistrict was created in 1982 to maintain the city’s theaters and included signage regulations for Times Square. Multiple additional zoning actions have since modified the Subdistrict’s regulations, including additional provisions for signage size, location, and brightness.

The current ZR Section 81-732 Special Times Square signage regulations in the Theater Subdistrict require a minimum of one illuminated sign with a surface area of not less than 100 square feet for each 25 linear feet along Seventh Avenue and Broadway.

Per the regulations, the existing condition on the Site includes three signs – a 5,769-square-foot lower sign that reaches 60 feet above curb level, a 5,425-square-foot upper sign that is set back 15 feet from the lower sign and reaches 120 feet above curb level, and a 2,800-square-foot tower sign that reaches 250 feet above curb level. The lower sign is a modern LED sign, the upper sign is a static vinyl sign, and the tower sign is older LED.

Proposed Development

The Proposed Actions would result in two signs on the Site instead of the previously required three. The first would be a 15,515-square-foot, 119-foot-tall, 125-foot-wide LED sign on the

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lower portion of the building (“Sign A”). Sign A would begin at 16 feet above curb level, rise to 135 feet above the curb, and wrap 37 feet to West 46th Street. The second sign would be a 7,000-square-foot as-of-right tower sign (“Sign B”). Sign B would begin 120 feet above the curb and rise to 250 feet.

In addition to reducing the number of required signs along the frontage, the Proposed Actions would permit the Proposed Signage without the currently required six-foot setback at 60 feet. This new signage configuration would allow for Sign A to be one continuous LED sign, as opposed to the existing lower and upper signs separated by a setback.

The special permit provides a process for signage proposals on smaller lots in the Theater Subdistrict to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Fifteen other sites would be eligible to apply for the special permit in addition to the two lots on the Site.

Area Context

The Site is located in Manhattan Community District 5 in Times Square. The surrounding area is primarily zoned C6-7T, C6-5, C6-5.5, and C6-7. The Site is in the Theater Subdistrict of the Midtown Special District

The Site is well served by transit by the N, R, W trains at 49th Street and 7th Avenue, the B, D, F, M trains at 47-50th Streets and 6th Avenue, the 1, 2, 3, 7, N, Q, R, W, S, A, C, and E trains at Times Square and Port Authority, the M20, M104, M7, M50, X1, X7, QM1, QM5, QM6, and BxM2 buses, and regional buses at the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

COMMUNITY BOARD RESOLUTION

On July 10, 2025, Manhattan Community Board 5 (“CB 5”) voted 36-0-1 to recommend approval of the project. The Board approved of the need to keep up with evolving LED technology in Times Square. They also cited the Applicant’s lighting study showing that the brightness levels of the Proposed Signage would be 6,000 nits during the day and 800 nits at night as a reason for approval.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

Iconic signage is part of the identity of Times Square. As technology evolves it makes sense for that signage to change over time, and zoning should not create unnecessary barriers to doing so. It is reasonable for there to be a pathway for the owners of smaller lots to have more flexibility in their signage plans.

Having one cohesive sign at the base of the building at 1551 Broadway is appropriate for the Times Square streetscape. I appreciate that the Applicant’s lighting study shows a limited impact of light from the signs, especially down the side streets, and adjusts the brightness between the day and night.

As LED technology advances, we need to make sure the zoning is able to keep up with the times. If brightness becomes an issue as Midtown becomes more mixed-use, then there is potential

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opportunity for signage regulations to be further updated in the future. For now, smaller lots that address concerns about brightness should be allowed flexibility in their signage plans, as this application has done.

BOROUGH PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, I recommend **approval** of ULURP Application Nos. C250188ZSM and N250189ZRM.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Levine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Levine" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President