

Bandit Sign Volunteer Training

City of Houston
Department of Neighborhoods
Office of Neighborhood Engagement
Bandit Sign Volunteer Training Program





TaKasha L. Francis Esq.
Director
Department of
Neighborhoods



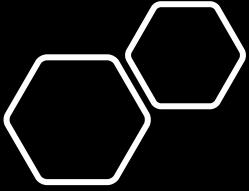
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Public Services & Finance
Department of Neighborhoods



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Assistant Director
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Department of Neighborhoods

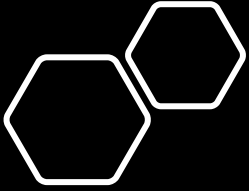


Paul D. Green, M. B. A.
Division Manager
Office of Neighborhood Engagement
Department of Neighborhoods



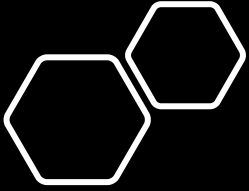
Handouts

- **Excerpts, Transportation Code Ch. 393 and Texas Penal Code (Trespass, Theft, Criminal Mischief and Assault)**
- **Houston Municipal Code Sections 28-38**
- **Bandit Sign Report**



Program Mission

- **Reduce urban blight**
- **Prohibit signs which create traffic hazards**
- **Prohibit signs that distract or confuse motorist**
- **Prohibit signs that impair the driver's ability to see pedestrians, obstacles or read traffic signs**



Goals

- **To improve not only the aesthetics of a neighborhood but also have the community take a more of an active role in the removal of bandit signs in their neighborhoods.**
- **To transform blighted neighborhoods more strategically, through many different efforts, starting with confiscation of illegally placed bandit signs by using bandit sign volunteers.**
- **To educate, train and deputize volunteers per Council Districts or in unincorporated areas of Harris County to be authorized to remove bandit signs.**

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

- **Must be 18 years of age**
- **Be a United States citizen**
- **Successfully complete a Bandit Sign Volunteer Training Workshop**
- **Commit to always carry yourself in a professional and courteous manner.**
- **Respect the public we serve and never threaten a citizen**
- **To adhere to program policies and procedures and ensure you protect the program's continued success.**



Why Become a Bandit Sign Volunteer?

- **Now more than ever do we need the spirit of volunteer community service.**
- **We've learned over the years that "many hands make light work". As municipalities and local authorities, we have a mission to create a space for individuals to express their altruism.**
- **Our priority is to invest in blighted areas more strategically. No task is too small, especially the confiscation of illegally placed bandit signs.**

What is the Volunteer Bandit Sign Removal Program?

The Volunteer Bandit Sign Removal Program or “Sign Busters” is an effective sign removal program, powered by Houstonian Volunteers. This one-of-a-kind sign removal program was designed to improve not only the aesthetics of a neighborhood but execute the beginning of neighborhood regeneration.

Points To Remember

1

The Inspections and Public Service Division is hard at work addressing neighborhood code violations. However, it's volunteers that serve as the glue that keeps the community together.

2

Service is a chain reaction. Tell all your family and neighbors about our program and how you're making a difference. Show others that it can be done, and it can be very effective.

3

The change that you're promoting is generational. By having a clean and safe neighborhood, you're extending the longevity of your neighborhood allowing future families to see the beauty not blight.

More People More Impact

“Most people are familiar with the concept of volunteering, but few recognize the full power of volunteerism.

Volunteerism enables contribution by generating well-being for both individuals and communities.”

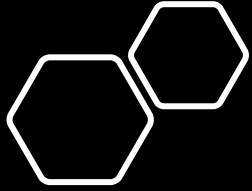
What are Bandit Signs?

Bandit Signs are usually lightweight, inexpensive, advertising signs typically made from paper, cardboard, or corrugated plastic that are illegally placed on public property or in the right-of-way.

This includes esplanades, areas between the sidewalk and curb, overpasses, utility poles, light standards, and traffic signal boxes

Examples of Bandit Signs





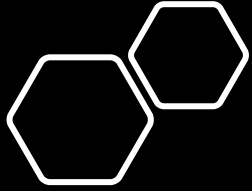
What are Bandit Signs?

- For our purposes, a “Bandit” sign is a colloquial term for an illegal sign placed in a road right of way (ROW)
- Transportation Code Chapter 393: a SIGN is an “outdoor sign, display, light, device, figure, painting, drawing, message, plaque, poster or other thing designed, intended, or used to advertise or inform.”
Sec. 393.001
- A person may not place a sign on the right of way of a public road unless the placement of the sign is authorized by state law. Sec. 393.002

Why are Bandit Signs Dangerous?

So what? It's just a sign!

- They can cause accidents
- Clutters the roads and Right of Ways
- Broken Windows Theory (encourage further crime and disorder).
- Linked to criminal and predatory activity



Where are Bandit Signs Located?

- On medians and islands
- On utility poles and trees
- On traffic boxes & sign poles
- On public property next to roadway, such as libraries, schools and park entrances



Department of Neighborhoods

INSPECTIONS AND PUBLIC SERVICE



HOW TO IDENTIFY & REPORT BANDIT SIGNS!

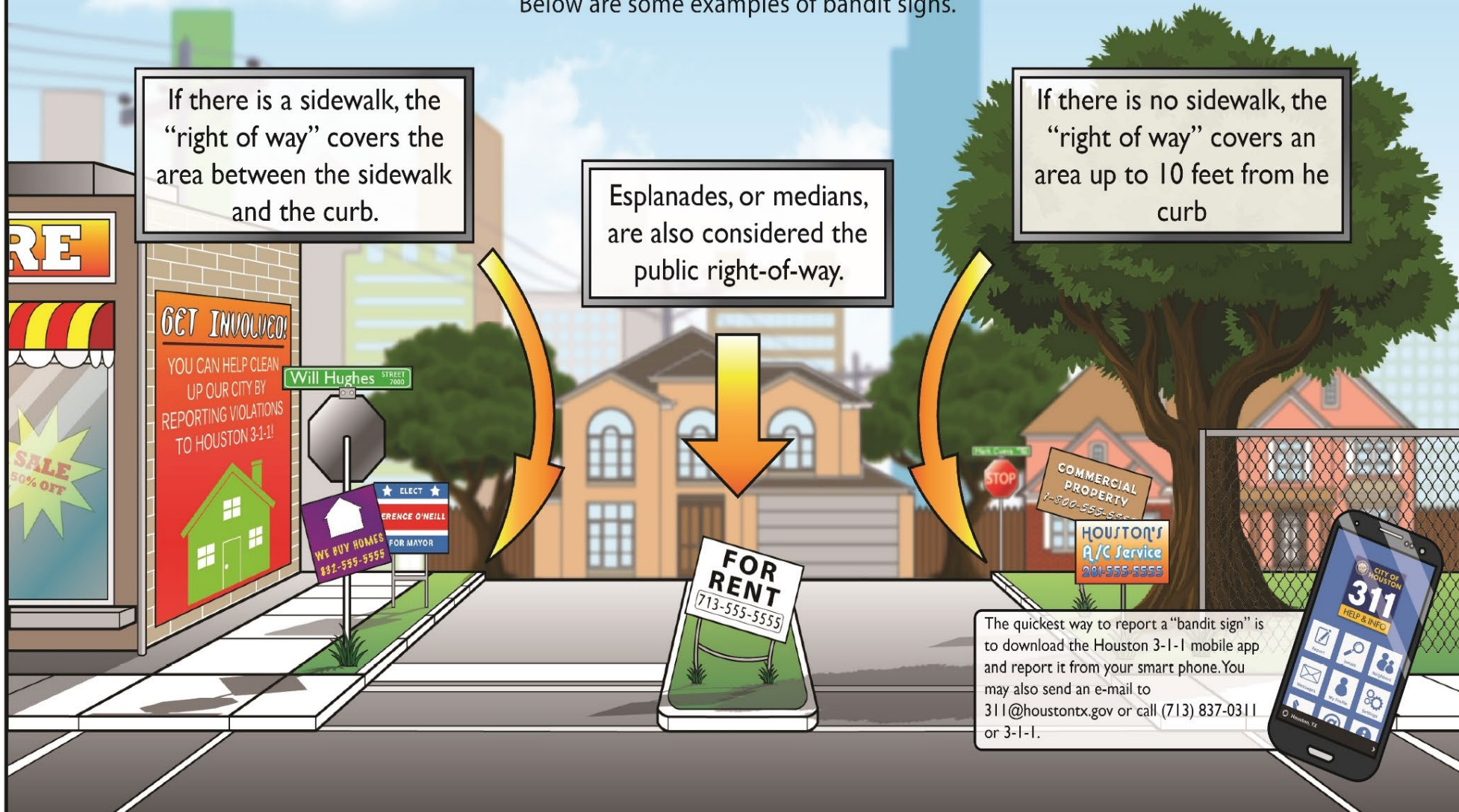
Bandit signs are typically small and placed in large quantities along public spaces such as esplanades. These signs include political, real estate, developer, and garage sale signs, etc. and are placed upon a public street, public sidewalk, public right-of-way, or on any public building or structure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

Below are some examples of bandit signs.

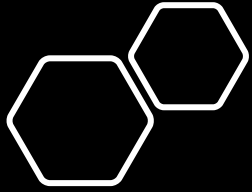
If there is a sidewalk, the “right of way” covers the area between the sidewalk and the curb.

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



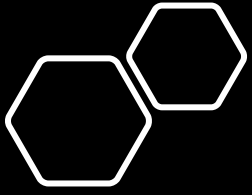
The quickest way to report a “bandit sign” is to download the Houston 3-1-1 mobile app and report it from your smart phone. You may also send an e-mail to 311@houstontx.gov or call (713) 837-0311 or 3-1-1.



Example:

**Signs on the
light poles**

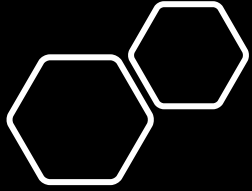




Example:

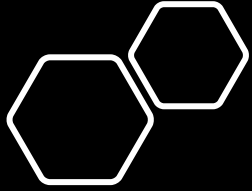
Signs on the
Right-of-Way





What is a Right-of-Way? (ROW)

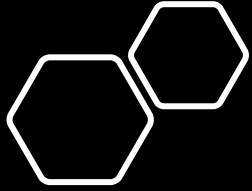
- **Public ROW's vary from road to road. In the unincorporated area, the County Road Log specifies if a road is a County road. Then it is a question of how much of the adjoining land is public ROW. (Note: ROW's can sometimes be an easement on private property)**
- **Telephone poles Rule of Thumb (ROT). A common ROT to determine a public ROW is to identify telephone poles along public road. Typically, any signs placed between the line of telephone poles and the roadway are in public ROW.**
- **Ditches/curbs Rule of Thumb . A common ROT is from open ditch to open ditch and/or directly next to the curb.**
- **County General Rule from road center . Public ROW is generally 50 - 60 feet from the center of a County road.**



**Again, how do
you know if a
sign is illegal
or not?**

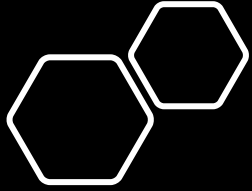
**A 1-2-3
approach**

- **#1: In esplanades**
- **#2: On traffic control devices and utility fixtures**
- **#3: Along the roadside (remember the two Rules of Thumb & the County General Rule, but again, the County Road Log is the official record of county roads)**
- **#4: Telephone poles**
- **#5: Ditches / curbs**
- **#6: Distance from the center of the road**



Special Cases and Issues

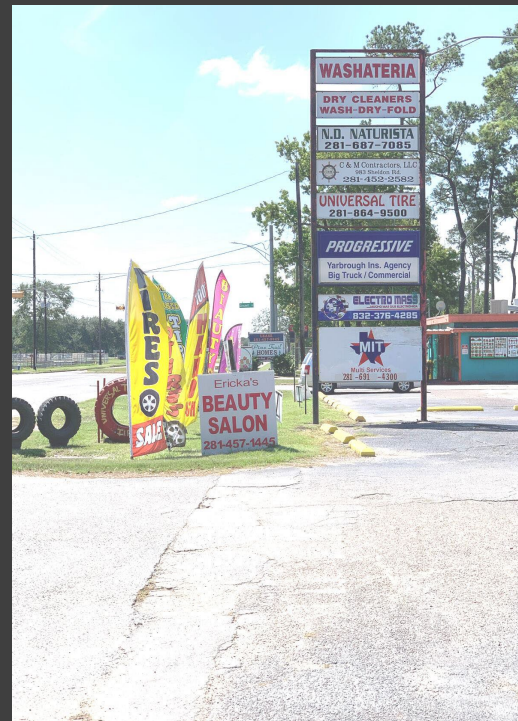
- **Political Signs**
- **Property Rights / Sign Valuation**
- **Liability: Civil and Criminal**



Sign Value/ Property Rights

- Under current state law, signs worth \$25 or more in value require the City to take notification steps
- Volunteers should NOT pick up signs that were placed in ROW by the property owner
 - *Property owner places a Garage Sale sign in ROW
 - *Business places advertising on the premises in ROW

Property Rights (continued)



What are they?

Political Signs
On
Right-Of-Way



Where can they be placed?

Political Signs

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 not be placed adjacent to polling places not used for early voting prior to the day before Election Day for both the election and the runoff election.



Stephen
Castell
OF HOUSTON
CONTROL

KHAN
Locke

KHAN
FOR CITY CONTROL

ANNISE
PARKER
FOR MAYOR

VOTE Curtis
GARMON
for Houston City Council At Large Pos. 4

★ FO
MAYOR

KAREN
DERR
for Houston
Karen

PA
H

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DEH
AM
HOLM
www.grandhubs.com

KADEN
For

ANNISE
PARKER
FOR MAYOR

PROTECT PRIVATE
PROPERTY
Yes Prop. 1
www.txfb.org

George
Foulard
for
City Council District G
georgefoulard.com

RICK
Rodriguez
for HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL
AT LARGE POSITION 1

A Listener. A leader.
OLIVER
Dennington

LEGAL HAND OUTS

- **Chapter 393 of the Texas Transportation Code**
- **393.0025/.0026: Exceptions: City, Utilities, etc.**
- **393.003: Confiscation, Notice, Auction, Volunteers**
- **393.004: Straight-up collect and dispose**
- **393.005: Criminal Penalty**
- **393.006: Penalty Exemption political candidates**
- **393.007: Civil Penalty**

- **City of Houston Municipal Code Sec. 28-39**

HAND OUTS

Chapter 393 Texas Transportation Code

Sec. 393.001. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "sign" means an outdoor sign, display, light, device, figure, painting, drawing, message, plaque, poster, or other thing designed, intended, or used to advertise or inform.

Sec. 393.002. SIGN PLACEMENT PROHIBITED. Except as provided by Sections 393.0025 and 393.0026, a person may not place a sign on the right-of-way of a public road unless the placement of the sign is authorized by state law.

Sec. 393.0025. MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY TO REGULATE SIGN PLACEMENT.

(a) A person may not place a sign on the right-of-way of a road or highway maintained by a municipality unless the placement is authorized by the municipality.

(b) This section does not apply to the right-of-way of a road or highway in the state highway system.

Sec. 393.0026. EXCEPTION. (a) This chapter does not apply to a temporary directional sign or kiosk erected by a political subdivision as part of a program approved by the department and administered by the political subdivision on a highway within the boundaries of the political subdivision.

(b) This chapter does not apply to a sign placed in the right-of-way by a public utility or its contractor for purposes of the utility.

Sec. 393.003. CONFISCATION, NOTICE, AND PUBLIC AUCTION. (a) A sheriff, constable, or other trained volunteer authorized by the commissioners court of a county may confiscate a sign placed in violation of Section 393.002.

(b) If the owner of a confiscated sign is known, the sheriff or constable shall notify the owner of the confiscation by certified mail, return receipt requested, not later than the 10th day after the date of the confiscation. If the owner of the sign is not known, the sheriff or constable shall publish notice of the confiscation in a newspaper of general circulation in the county not later than the 10th day after the date of the confiscation.

(c) A notice under Subsection (b) must:

(1) include a description of the sign and the location from which the sign was confiscated;

(2) include a statement that the owner may reclaim the sign before the 21st day after the date the notice was mailed or published if all fines that are imposed under this chapter are paid; and

(3) state the date, time, and location of the public auction where the sign will be sold if the sign is not reclaimed.

(d) A notice by publication under Subsection (b) may contain multiple listings of confiscated signs.

(e) The sheriff or constable may sell a sign at public auction if, before the 21st day after the date notice under Subsection (b) was mailed or published, the sign has not been reclaimed. The sheriff or constable shall sell the sign to the highest bidder at the auction.

(f) The sheriff or constable shall remit the proceeds of an auction under Subsection (e) to the county treasurer for deposit to the credit of a fund in the county treasury designated by the commissioners court.

City Rules City of Houston Municipal Code Sec. 28-39.

HAND OUTS

28-38a. No person in the city shall paint, print, post, or otherwise display a poster, picture, bill, advertising matter, informational matter or political advertisement of any kind in , at or upon any curb, sidewalk or other public improvement in public street, alley or grounds, any bridge or part of same, any structure or erection of any kind belonging to the city, or any other public place, unless express consent therefor shall be first granted by the city council and entered on its minutes.

(b) Stake-type signs constructed of cloth, wood, paper or similar lightweight materials that are picked up in the right-of-way may be disposed of immediately. Signage impounded pursuant to this section may be redeemed in the manner specified in section 4608(c)(2) of the Sign Code. The custodian of the storage area shall maintain records of where such signs were located when they were so impounded and the date on which they were so impounded and shall hold the same in the storage area for a period of not more than 30 days. Any signs so held may be redeemed by the owner thereof upon the payment of hauling and storage fees to the city through the custodian thereof. Amounts of the fees are stated in the city fee schedule. Such fee shall be in addition to and not in lieu of any fine imposed upon such owner for violation of this chapter.

General Sign Regulations

City of Houston Municipal Code Sec. 28-39.

(c) Employees of the Department of Neighborhoods, Houston Police Department, Department of Planning and Development, Department of Solid Waste Management, Houston Public Works, and certain other city employees as designated by their department director, are hereby authorized to impound any signs found on a public street, public sidewalk or public alley and transport or cause the same to be transported and stored at a location to be designated by the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods or his designee.

(d) Any person violating any provision of this section, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than \$300.00 nor more than \$500.00 for each violation, and each day that the violation continues shall constitute a separate offense.



HAND OUTS

Citations?

**Can
Citations
Be Issued?**



**Citations may be issued to violators by
City of Houston Department of Neighborhoods
Inspection and Public Service Division
Code Enforcement Officers**



PPR

- **Pull signs posted on utility poles**
 - **Pickup signs placed in the right-of-way**
 - **Remove and discard of all illegally placed signs**
- *People pulling together to remove blight.**

Bandit Sign Volunteers

- **Role 1: Removal of Signs**
- **Must be trained and authorized by City of Houston Department of Neighborhoods in order to confiscate signs as a volunteer**
- **May discard small signs of less than \$25 in value w/o notice**
- **Employees responsible for maintenance of ROW**
- **Role 2: Gather evidence for demands and civil lawsuits**

- **Role and Responsibility**

- **Do Not Remove Signs!!**
- **From private property**
- **With value of at least \$25 (Large Signs)**
- **From polling locations during elections**

Bandit Sign Volunteers

- **Role and Responsibility**

Bandit Sign Volunteers

- Volunteers May be Dismissed for???
 - Criminal activity, such as trespassing, bribery, assault, defacing property, illegal carry, etc.
 - Verbal or physical threats
 - Impersonating a police officer or misrepresenting role
 - Performing under the influence of drugs or alcohol

- Role and Responsibility

Volunteers may be Dismissed For



Criminal activity, such as
trespassing, bribery, assault,
defacing property, illegal carry,
etc.



Impersonating a police officer
or Misrepresenting role.



Verbal or physical threats or
performing under the
influence of drugs or alcohol.

- **30.05 Criminal Trespass (enter or remain)**
- **31.03 Theft (appropriate to deprive)**
- **28.03 Criminal Mischief (damage, destroy)**
- **22.01 Assault**
 - *offensive physical contact
 - *cause bodily injury; OR
 - *threaten with imminent bodily injury
- **REPEAT: City Attorney does not defend sign volunteers in criminal proceedings**

Caution: Crimes

- **Role and Responsibility**

VOLUNTEER LIMITATIONS

- Even if you are licensed, you may not possess or carry weapons while servicing as a Bandit Sign Volunteer
- We are NOT peace officers, and you must NEVER present yourself as a police officer
- Do not get involved in police matters
- Cannot enforce any civil, traffic or criminal laws
- You may reside outside of Houston, but you are only allowed to be a Bandit Sign Volunteer within Houston City Limits
- No compensation



Safety Tips

Bandit Sign Volunteers



Safety Tips (modified from TxDot)

- ⦿ Wear gloves and reflective vests during sign removal.
- ⦿ Legally Park your vehicle in a safe place – do not block road.
- ⦿ Do not go onto private property.
- ⦿ Work facing traffic; never turn your back to oncoming cars.
- ⦿ Avoid using headsets, which can prevent you from hearing oncoming traffic.
- ⦿ Do not remove signs in high traffic areas.
- ⦿ Only remove signs in the daylight hours; not at night.
- ⦿ Work in pairs whenever possible. If not, at least let someone else know when/where you are removing signs.
- ⦿ Avoid verbal confrontation. If a confrontation occurs, leave the area and retreat to a safe location.

**Bandit Sign Removal
Documentation**

**Bandit Sign
Volunteers**

BANDIT SIGN VOLUNTEER DOCUMENTATION

DATE	VOLUNTEER NAME	LOCATION OF BANDIT SIGN	COUNCIL DISTRICT	INFORMATION ON BANDIT SIGN

**Email to Mayra Hypolite at
mayra.hypolite@houstontx.gov**

**Bandit Sign Inspection
Hours Documentation**

**Bandit Sign
Volunteers**

Document Inspection Time

Download CauseConnect Mobile App

Download the Mobile App

The CauseConnect mobile app is available on iOS and Android and syncs with your web-based VH Portal account. Once you've downloaded the app simply log in with the same username and password you use to log in to the VH portal website. After you log in, you'll automatically be connected to the same volunteer opportunities you see on the website.



Where to Dispose of
Bandit Sign?

Where to Dispose all Bandit Signs

**Solid Waste North Main Neighborhood
Depository/Recycling Center
9003 N. Main Houston, Texas 77022**

Where do we
dispose of signs?



Solid Waste North Main Neighborhood Depository/Recycling Center

Where to Dispose of Bandit Sign?

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

North Main Neighborhood Depository/Recycling Center
9003 N Main
Houston, TX 77022

This facility accepts Junk Waste, Tree Waste and Recyclables at no additional charge to City of Houston residents.

Located in North Houston

[Get Directions](#)

⚠ EFFECTIVE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2022, all Neighborhood Depositories hours of operations have been updated.

HOURS:
Tuesday- Sunday, 9 am to 6 pm
Closed on Monday

Key Map # 535G



Assessment

Bandit Sign Volunteer Assessment

Name:		Email:		Address:		
QUESTION NUMBER	QUESTION	ANSWER #1	QUESTION	ANSWER #2	QUESTION	ANSWER #3
QUESTION #1	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #2	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #3	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #4	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #5	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #6	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #7	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #8	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #9	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #10	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #11	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #12	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #13	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #14	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	
QUESTION #15	COULD WE REMOVE? Y/N		DO WE REMOVE?Y/N		DO WE REFER TO CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS? Y/N	



Department of Neighborhoods

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANT WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND RELEASE

This form must be signed by each community service volunteer (Participant) who will be performing community service through the City of Houston Community Service Program (Program) for the City of Houston (City), both on and off premises or property.

I UNDERSTAND that I am volunteering my services to the City gratuitously, without any express or implied promises by the City to compensate me for my services, and that I am not entitled to, and will not receive remuneration of any kind, including, but not limited to, salary or reimbursement for my transportation, parking, travel, or any other expenses whatsoever which may be incidental to my services for the City.

I UNDERSTAND that I am not an employee or agent of the City and that I am not entitled to any benefits normally associated with employment or agency, including but not limited to, Workers Compensation, retirement, and leave accrual and that there has been, and will be no promise of future employment or agency with the City.

I UNDERSTAND that I must conform to the rules and regulations of the City and that my community service

I UNDERSTAND that I will be participating in the Program doing community service for the City at my own risk which includes transportation to and from a community service site. I will not engage in any task with which I am not completely comfortable, and I will abide by all applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as the rules and directions of the Program or City coordinators, employees or supervisors. If I see any situation that I feel is unsafe, I will call it to the attention of a Program or City supervisor or coordinator.

In consideration of and as a condition of being permitted to participate in the program, by doing community service for the city, both on or off city premises or property, I, the undersigned, for and on behalf of myself, my minor child(ren) (if applicable), my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns: do hereby release, acquit and forever discharge the city of Houston, Texas, together with its former and present elected and appointed officials, directors, legal representatives, agents, servants, employees, successors, assigns and all affiliated persons and entities (hereinafter collectively city), of, from and against any and all liabilities or every kind, claims, causes of action, whether at law or in equity, in contract or tort, under statutory or common law or pursuant to the Texas or United States constitution(s) (including all expenses of litigation, costs and attorneys' fees), known and unknown, losses, judgments, fines, demands, damages, loss of use or services, or injuries to real and/or personal property and/or persons (including death) (collectively claims), caused by, arising out of, touching upon or in any way relating to the community service done for the city through the program, and/or the presence, malfunction, maintenance, addition, substitution, use or condition of any tangible personal or real property owned, leased, operated, or utilized by the city connection with participation in the program, even if the claim is the result of the actual or alleged sole negligence of the city and/or the result of the actual or alleged gross negligence of the city, and/or the actual or alleged joint or concurrent negligence of the city and any other person or entity, and/or the actual or alleged strict, statutory or constitutional liability of the city.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian

Date of Birth

(PRINT) Name of Participant

Date

Bandit Sign Volunteer Waiver and Release Page

Great Works Starts with You

The City of Houston is a large city, and the Department of Neighborhoods can only do so much. Creating the Volunteer Bandit Sign Program allows concerned citizens like yourself to fight blight along with us.

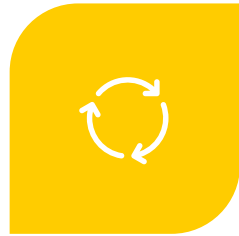
Through your participation, we can cover more ground than ever before!



Questions



LEGAL AUTHORITY?



PROCESS?



DOCUMENTATION?



**DISPOSING OF
BANDIT SIGNS?**



QUIZ?

Bandit Sign Volunteer Training



Bandit Sign Training Completion
Process:

1. Email me the following information:
 - a. Completed Assessment,
 - b. Signed Volunteer Waiver.
2. You will receive the 1-year
Bandit Sign Volunteer Training Certificate.

