

# Community Impacts and Digital Advertising



Ignoring warnings and studies by some experts, officials here are permitting digital signs under regulations pushed by the sign industry.



Billboards, traditional and digital, spoil scenic views and degrade community character, leading to clutter and blight.

Washoe County and communities all over the United States are banning new billboard construction and prohibiting digital "upgrades." (2, 10)



Removing a single digital billboard for a road construction project has cost millions for taxpayers in at least one community. (9)

Digital billboards create safety hazards, distracting drivers with very bright ads and flashing changeable lights every six to eight seconds. (3)



One digital billboard uses more energy than it takes to power 15 homes in a 24-hour period. (11)

Light pollution not only dims the night sky, but also affects human health and animal behaviors. (5, 6, 7)



Digital billboards contribute to light pollution. At night they are often set to display more than three times brighter than traditional signs. (4, 7)

Traditional billboards cause reduction in nearby property values, (1) but scenic beauty is an economic driver, attracting new residents, businesses and tourists. (2)



A majority of Reno voters prohibited new billboards in 2000 and rejected digital billboards in a 2011 Reno voter survey. (10)

## Who Needs Digital Billboards?

The billboard industry sees digital displays as cash cows – the ad rotation means more real estate for more ad revenue – but there is no benefit to residents.

Driver safety is at the mercy of the billboard industry's business plan. Distracting messages are blasting at three times the brightness of a traditional billboard at night, flipping every six to eight seconds. After a study showed drivers looked too long at these electronic signs, Sweden removed all digital billboards from its roadsides, but here safety studies are ignored.

No one seems able to turn these signs off at night, even if they are too bright or shine into nearby windows. They are on 24/7 in Nevada, contributing to light pollution that scientists say is increasing globally by 6 percent a year.

The billboard industry claims to offer community services, such as free ads for law enforcement agencies. But cell phone apps and the Nevada Department of Transportation's digital reader boards already serve the same purpose.

Communities don't need digital billboards to be successful. For example, Hawaii, Alaska, Maine and Vermont prohibit all billboards.

What if we allow digital billboards now and try later to remove them? It costs taxpayers when digital billboards have to be removed for road projects. Nevada state law says billboard owners must be reimbursed for the removed sign and the ad revenue lost.

For traditional billboards, that cost is high; for digitals, it's astronomical.

A digital costs between \$250,000 and \$500,000 and rotates 16 ads. In St. Paul, Minn., to remove one digital for a bridge project cost taxpayers \$4,321,000.

So who really needs digital billboards? The billboard industry does.

Contact us to find out how you can help stop digital proliferation.

### Resources

1. "Beyond Aesthetics: How Billboards Affect Economic Prosperity," Jonathan Snyder (2011)
2. scenic.org/billboards-a-sign-control/the-truth-about-billboards/100-billboard-control-is-good-for-business
3. scenic.org/billboards-a-sign-control/digital-billboards/112-digital-billboard-safety-studies
4. Digital LED Billboard Luminance Recommendations How Bright is Bright Enough
5. Turning Night Into Day: Light Pollution's Impacts on Wildlife | lighting.com
6. Urbanwildlands.org/Resources/LongcoreRich2004.pdf
7. Illinoislighting.org/resources/ICROL-Digital Billboards.pdf
8. scenic.org/storage/PDFs/scenic%20America%20billboard%20fact%20sheet.pdf
9. finance-commerce.com "MnDOT paid \$4.3M to remove digital billboard" by Brian Johnson (2014)
10. scenic.org/blog/124-new-poll-shows-reno-voters-opposed-to-digital-billboards
11. Illuminating the Issues, Gregory Young, 2010