

Digital Billboard Update

The Bad News: Neighborhoods Lost Round One

The Could-Be-Good News: There will be a Round Two

San Antonio is one of the unique cities in the United States. Aren't we fortunate to live here, work here, and be a part of its fabric? While we embrace change, we want to conserve those elements that contribute to the special qualities of our City – the San Antonio River Walk, the City's historic character, and its unspoiled scenic vistas. They appeal to you personally, and they also appeal to businesses looking for a home. "Quality of Life" is definitely a factor valued by the business community when determining location.

Yet, on December 6, 2007, your City Council representative voted with 8 others to pass an ordinance to allow billboard companies to place 15 digital signs anywhere in San Antonio during 2008. These signs will replace existing sign faces. So, that means you have now lost the protection of each scenic corridor that through an intensive public process had banned any new billboards.

In District 8 the scenic corridors include:

- IH 10W from Wurzbach northward
- FM 1604
- The Wurzbach Parkway

In other areas of the City, scenic corridors were established along:

- US 281 between the airport and downtown
- Hwy 151 on the west
- The remainder of FM 1604
- All of City South
- Corridors in some inner-city neighborhoods

Each billboard of any kind reinforces the perception that ugliness is the price of progress – that our quality of life depends on destroying the very resources we most value. This is a false choice and bad public policy. It is your elected official's job to uphold good public policy. In this instance Councilwoman Diane Cibrian did not do so.

The Mayor has said that this issue will come up again by the end of 2008, but it may occur as soon as the next six months. So, now you have a job to do – convince our councilwoman to vote for good public policy.

In October 2007, a City-wide Task Force was formed to maintain San Antonio's scenic environment by limiting billboards. This Task Force will continue. One of the members, Scenic San Antonio, will be asked to do more. Scenic San Antonio will have a re-organizational meeting:

Wednesday, January 9, 2008, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
The River House, 509 King William, behind the Steve's Homestead
(from King William, turn on to Johnson toward the river & in to the driveway)

I have agreed to co-chair Scenic San Antonio, and I need your help. Please attend this meeting. And, please email: scenic@scenictexas.org to join Scenic San Antonio. Scenic San Antonio promises you information on this complex situation and the opportunity to get involved during 2008 to set good public policy.

June Kachtik
junekac@aol.com