SCENIC HOUSTON

Advocating aesthetic policies for 40 years

City of Houston
On-Premise Signage
Issues

The Problem

ALTERATIONS
NEW AGE
WIRELESS
VoiceStream
dish
DIRECTV
ID CAR
COPIES
FAX
CARRIBE
RESTAURA
CLU
smoke shop
ABC
NO
ALTERATIONS

The Economist
(June 21, 2001)

“ Houston is ugly…. Since cities now have to attract skilled workers with “quality of life” benefits, this is a big problem, and not one that can be overcome by cheap housing….

New York Times
(October 9, 2003)

"Houstonians …are grappling with an existential question: Is their city too ugly to be host to the Olympics? ….

Referring to the welter of commercial signs along U.S. 59, the route into the city from George Bush Intercontinental Airport, [a local architect says] we ought to be embarrassed. It's awful. I don't know any other city where that kind of introduction awaits you."

Wall Street Journal
(January 22, 2004)

"In a 2001 profile, the Economist magazine bluntly called Houston ugly. Ten years ago, during the 1994 National Basketball Association finals, the New York Post said, in a headline: "This place is a hellhole."….

Super bowl members offered official directions to visitors, cabbies and limo drivers so visitors won't see a particularly garish stretch of freeway leading from Bush Intercontinental Airport to downtown along I-45."

Attention-Getting Devices

What Are Competitor Cities Doing?

Raleigh/Durham, NC

Source: Scenic North Carolina

Enforcement –
Inconsistent Enforcement Resulting in Wide-Spread Misuse

Illegal Signs
under
the City of
Houston Sign Code

Comparison of Municipal On-premise Sign Permit Fees

Houston, TX	**$15.00** permit/3 yrs
Austin, TX	**$45.00** initial fee**;** **$220.00** renewal fee every 2 yrs.
San Antonio TX	**$20.00/yr**; plus $10.80 (1-32 sq. ft.) & **$2.00/ft.** of height
Dallas, TX	**$45.00** minimum (increasing scale up to $374.00); **$220.00** renewal fee every 2 yrs.
Charlotte, NC	**$35.00/yr** (up to 100 sq. ft.); **$50.00** (> 100 sq. ft.)
Raleigh, NC	**$60.00** (all types)
Portland, OR	**$131.00** (electric)/**$100.00** (non-illuminated) per year
Chicago, IL	**$85.00/yr** minimum – **$2.00/1,000** cubic ft of volume

Oaxaca, Mexico (popl. 250,000) – Urban Redevelopment

- Oaxaca City is the capital city of the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca.

- In the past five years, Oaxaca has instituted strong sign, anti-graffiti ordinances and strict sign enforcement.

Houston's Existing Height Conditions: Freeways (Allowable 42 ½ height for On-Premise Multiple Signs)

Houston's Existing Height Conditions: Major Thoroughfares (Allowable 35 ft height for multiple signs)

TABLE 4609
ALLOWABLE ON-PREMISE GROUND SIGN HEIGHTS AND SIZES BY SIGN TYPE AND CATEGORY OF RIGHT-OF-WAY

Sign Type	CATEGORY A (Local Streets/Scenic Districts)		CATEGORY B (Thoroughfares)		CATEGORY C (Freeways)	
	Height	Size	Height	Size	Height	Size
	(Ft.)	(SFt.)	(Ft.)	(SFt.)	(Ft.)	(SFt.)
Single Business	14	100	24	200	42 ½	300
Multi-Tenant 2 or 3 Businesses	19	200	30	400	42 ½	525
Multi-Tenant 4 or more Businesses	24	300	35	600	42 ½	750
Flag	20	-	40	-	60	-

Scenic Districts (Richmond)

I-10 Beautification Efforts (Energy Corridor Area)

- Decorative concrete pavers at all intersections
- Decorative concrete wall panels with special texture and color
- TxDOT sidewalks along frontage roads (32 miles)
- Reforestation and landscaping between frontage roads and main lanes
- Four miles shared-use trails at base of Barker Dam
- Three (3) shared-use trails under IH 10 to Addicks Dam
- Two miles shared-use path Turkey Creek to Addicks Dam
- Landscaping at proposed Trammel Crow twin office towers
- Landscaping at ConocoPhillips proposed entrance
- Energy Corridor esplanade enhancements
- Right-of-Way landscaping along North Eldridge Parkway
- Proposed two-mile wide sidewalk along Barker Cypress
- Proposed 20-acre park between Addicks Dam & IH 10
- Detention ponds

<u>Total dollars committed to date</u>: $ 43,000,000

Hundreds of acres will be transformed and millions spent to enhance the aesthetics of the commercial corridor along I-10 through screening and landscaping standards • pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements • architectural & landscaping standards • community entryways

Cleveland, OH

Attention Getting Devices Banned

Restricts Billboards to “General Industry and Unrestricted Industry Districts”

Restricts On-Premise Business Signage to 12 feet in height

Density = Five (5) signs/per business allowed

Denver – Substantial Sign Changes in 2003

- Only 2 on-premise signs per business
- Restricted to 12 feet in height above grade for most districts
- On-Premise Sign Amortization and other permit restrictions for grand-fathered signs above height restrictions

Four-legged Stool Approach to Improvement of Houston's Signage Blight ...

- **Strong Sign Code Enforcement (both on- and off-premise signage)**

- **Height & Size Reductions throughout the city, including increased designation of scenic districts and scenic rights-of-way**

- **Complete Ban on Attention-Getting Devices**

- **Multiple Options for reduction of existing "grandfathered signs" through specific permitting conditions and amortization**