

Reasons to Develop Good Sign Legislation in the La Crosse Area

The recent conversion of the Hwy 16 billboard to electronic has awakened pent-up anger over the excess of billboards and signs in our area. Several hundred people have contacted elected officials and attended and/or spoken at meetings. The result has been a 6-month moratorium in the County and up to 12-months in La Crosse to study the issue. We are asking for development of improved legislation regulating all outdoor signs to benefit residents, business, and tourists.

These concerns are substantiated by numerous city and county studies and plans including the Highway 53 Corridor Enhancement Plan 2000; Confluence: The La Crosse Comprehensive Plan 2002; First Impressions Report 2007; La Crosse County Land Use Policy 2008; Mormon Coulee/Shelby Visual Preference Survey 2004; Comprehensive Plans for Onalaska 2005 and Hamilton 2009; Eco-municipality plans for the City of La Crosse 2007 and La Crosse County 2007.

We are Overrun with Billboards and Signs

- La Crosse has the 2nd highest number in the state - only Milwaukee has more.
- La Crosse has 278 billboard faces. Eau Claire has 50.
- La Crosse County, with about 400 faces, is 7th of 72 counties in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin has the 5th highest number in the nation.
- More than 700 U.S. communities prohibit new billboards and/or electronic signs
- Four states have outlawed billboards completely.
- 80% of LaX County agreed the appearance of **business signs** should be regulated -2008 Comprehensive Plan
- 84% of LaX County residents agreed that new **billboards** should be limited -2008 Comprehensive Plan



We Have Inadequate Regulation

- Sign companies are legally erecting billboards and signs facing windows of local residences and businesses.
- Local property owners have no rights, despite ruined views, "hidden" businesses, and reduced property values.
- All the electronic billboards proposed for the Coulee Region would shine in windows of homes, apartments, offices, businesses, and assisted living and long-term care centers.

Billboards and Excess Signs can Detract from Aesthetics, Development, and the Local Economy

- The presence of signage can limit business, home, office, and apartment development that could create jobs and broaden our tax base. Who wants to build or buy near a billboard? "Billboards lead to urban blight."

Billboard and Sign Control is Good for Business and Tourism

- In Williamsburg, Virginia, sales for eating and drinking establishments grew from \$48 million in 1988 to \$81 million in 1992, three years after billboard controls were toughened. In 1991 alone, total retail sales rose 44 percent despite an ongoing recession.
- Local business owners have expressed wanting more attractive signs in the area, but are concerned about their relations with fellow business owners if they speak out on the issue.
- Vermont took down its last billboard in 1975. From 1976-1978, tourism revenues increased by over 50 percent.

Electronic Billboards and Signs Risk Safety and Health

- Billboards are designed to distract motorists' attention from the road.
- A two-second distraction of any kind more than doubles the risk of a crash or near crash.
- Drivers take their eyes off the road for two seconds or longer twice as often when they are looking at digital advertising signs than when they are looking at traditional billboards.
- Billboard industry sponsored safety studies have been proven to be highly flawed.

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Energy Use and Waste

- A digital sign can use about 46 times the energy of a typical billboard and almost 30 times the energy of the average U.S. home.
- The LED lights create so much heat that the billboards need to be air conditioned in warm weather.
- Digital signage generates more waste than the paper, vinyl sheets, plywood or canvas of static billboards.