

Scenic Texas Opposes TxDOT Billboard Proposal

The Texas Department of Transportation announced a new proposal for taller billboards on federal Texas highways. As one of two members of the Scenic Texas team, I helped urge Texas citizens to join Scenic Texas in opposing the newly proposed billboard rule change.

Scenic Texas: Scenic Texas, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual environment of Texas, particularly as seen by the traveling public.

Situation: During the early summer of 2014, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) proposed a 35% billboard height increase from 42.5 feet to 65 feet.

Objective: Scenic Texas set out to prevent the billboard height increase from taking place in order to prevent visual pollution on federal Texas highways.

Tactics: In order to prevent the TxDOT billboard height rule change, the Scenic Texas PR team worked to make Texans aware of the new proposal and also inform citizens of what they could do to help make sure the proposal would be withdrawn. To accomplish this, we pitched stories to Texas-wide print and broadcast media, and also planned strategic messages and posts to share with our social media followers.

Results: The plan to prevent taller billboards on federal Texas highways was a success! In just about two months' time, news coverage concerning the new billboard proposal garnered more than 16 million impressions, with stories appearing in print and on broadcast television and radio stations throughout the state and around the nation, such as Houston Chronicle, Houston Matters, Austin's KXAN, and National Public Radio. Houston Chronicle's Facebook billboard posts reached more than 5,000 users and more than 900 public comments were received. In August, TxDOT withdrew the proposal for taller billboards.



Scenic Houston Street Scene

October 2014

Preserving Houston's Streetscapes

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Welcome to this month's Scenic Houston Street Scene, our update to you on scenic activities and issues.

Please send your comments and suggestion to: info@scenichouston.org.

Sincerely,

Anne Culver, President

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Campaign for a More Scenic Houston Donors

Our successful campaign has been made possible with donations from the following:

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Streetscape Initiative - Design Checklist



Scenic Houston's Streetscape Initiative supports vibrant, prosperous and stable communities by raising awareness of the connections among health, safety and prosperity and the built environment. This resource is particularly relevant as the city rebuilds its infrastructure.

Published in 2013, the [Streetscape Resource Guide](#) remains on the forefront of initiatives to encourage optimal street planning, design and construction. Scenic Houston continues to work to provide additional resources to ensure that all stakeholders, designers and contractors are able to easily locate and analyze streetscape plans to ensure the design standards found in the Guide are incorporated. The Streetscape Resource Guide's accompanying [Design Checklist](#) has been completed for use and is now available on our website.

If your organization is interested in a presentation about the Scenic Houston Streetscape Resource Guide, please contact Ashley Shelley at ashley@scenichouston.org.

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Scenic Houston Annual Dinner - October 30th!



HONORING
Scenic Visionary RICHARD J. CAMPO
Scenic Hero MARGARET LLOYD

Join us at Scenic Houston's Annual Dinner on October 30th at the Houston Country.

Each year, Scenic Houston celebrates those who have made lasting contributions that support the Scenic Houston mission, and who work to create a livable city that promotes prosperity and growth. This year's *Scenic Visionary* award will be presented to **Richard J. (Ric) Campo**,

chairman and chief executive officer of Camden Property Trust, and Scenic Texas vice president, **Margaret Lloyd** will receive the *Scenic Hero* award.

A special thanks to committee chairs Kathryn Coleman, Kathy Elek, Ashley Gribbsy, Olga Moya, Claudia Williamson, and Elynn Wulfe. See [here](#) for more details.

The Campaign for a More Scenic Houston - Goal Exceeded!

Scenic Houston is excited to report our [Campaign for a More Scenic Houston](#) was a success and exceeded the initial fundraising goal, garnering more than \$800,000 from generous corporations, foundations and individuals, including 100% support from the Scenic Houston Board of Directors. See full list of donors to the right.

Campaign success enables Scenic Houston to tackle its priorities: promote streetscape improvement projects using the Streetscape Resource Guide, foster airport corridor enhancements, develop education and outreach capacity, and grow Houston-area city participation in the Scenic City Certification Program.

This fundraising achievement is one milestone in Scenic Houston's overall mission to improve the visual character of Houston. [Read the final report for the campaign.](#)

NPR report: Growing Number of Cities Regard Billboards as Visual Pollution

A [report on National Public Radio](#) concludes that roadside billboards are becoming increasingly unpopular among the public, even as the industry seeks to put up signs that are bigger, taller, and brighter than ever before.

Reporter John Burnett found that while the billboard industry is lobbying municipal leaders harder than ever, particularly to allow digital billboards, "a growing number of cities regard billboards as visual pollution."

Burnett highlights a [recent example](#) from Texas, where an industry-backed proposal to allow for taller billboards generated over 900 public comments, all opposing the idea, which was subsequently dropped.

The [nearly 200 comments](#) on the NPR story also reflect a strong public opinion opposing the visual pollution of roadside billboards.

Thank you for taking time to read this month's *Street Scene* newsletter.

Forward this to your friends who are interested in preserving the visual character of their hometown too!

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TxDOT Drops Proposal for Taller Billboards

Citing the 900-plus comments by Texans in opposition and studies provided by Scenic Texas that contradicted billboard industry reports, on September 18 TxDOT withdrew its proposed rule that would have increased most billboard heights from 42.5 feet to 65 feet. The largest block of public comments in opposition came from Houston.

For more information and access to Scenic Texas' comments and supporting expert research, visit <http://bit.ly/1r42FWw>.

Our Mission: Scenic Houston preserves and enhances the visual character of Houston. Scenic Houston promotes sign control, billboard reduction, freeway landscaping, scenic byway development, and enhanced design standards for public projects. Our success improves the quality of life for all Houstonians.