

BILLBOARDS (1940, R1962, R1990, R2001, R2010*, R2026)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that billboards (off-premises advertising) require strict guidelines on placement, operation, and maintenance to ensure the public's health, safety, and welfare. ASLA supports governmental restrictions to help preserve an area's aesthetic, cultural, and environmental integrity and help minimize visual distractions.

ASLA endorses and encourages:

- The restoration of scenic, cultural, and ecological landscapes through the long-term phase-out and eventual removal of billboards.
- Moratoriums on construction of new billboards along federal and state highways and along major local transportation corridors.
- The immediate removal of unauthorized or abandoned billboards.
- Governmental incentivization programs to remove billboards.
- Regulations and design guidelines for existing or new billboards to control their size, lighting, animation, and placement.
- Efforts that prohibit the removal of trees and vegetation within rights-of-way and on public lands for the sole purpose of improving visibility of billboards

Justification

Landscape architects are specifically trained to analyze how site elements interact with their visual environment in terms of scale, mass, color, line, and contrast against the surrounding landscape. Landscape architects provide visual and environmental analysis, resource development, and transportation planning services that billboards impact.

Issue

Billboards have created concerns along U.S. roadways by being a visual nuisance, eliminating vegetation, and compromising driver safety.

Billboards degrade the public realm by contributing to visual clutter. Typically, billboards and on-site street-oriented advertising are located to maximize their impact and visibility, competing for prominence so that they will be noticed. The need to be the most visible creates visual clutter that distracts and confuses drivers. Implementation of programs to incentivize the removal of billboards can hasten the elimination of such distracting and confusing visual clutter.

* The 2010 revision included a title change to "Billboards and Signage."

Brightly lit and digital billboards consume valuable energy resources, contribute to light pollution, produce hazardous glare, and conflict with dark sky goals. Billboard lighting distracts or confuses motorists, creating a health, safety, and welfare issue.

Another significant, ongoing issue in the United States regards the removal of vegetation and trees on public land to increase the visibility of commercial advertising billboards. The practice has caused environmental, legal, and public relations conflicts across the country. Billboards located in otherwise pristine or natural areas diminish the public enjoyment of the landscape, especially considering that 35 states permit billboard companies to trim or remove trees and vegetation on public land. In both natural and urban areas, billboards often obstruct and devalue scenery and harm adjacent property values.

Resources

Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. "National Standards for Directional and Official Signs." *Electronic Code of Federal Regulations*. n.d. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-H/part-750/subpart-B>. Accessed August 4, 2026.

Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. "Outdoor Advertising Control." *Electronic Code of Federal Regulations*. n.d. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-H/part-750/subpart-G/>. Accessed August 4, 2026.

California Department of Transportation. "Outdoor Advertising." *Caltrans*. n.d. <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/oda>. Accessed August 4, 2026.

Out of Home Advertising Association of America. "Laws & Regulations." *Out of Home Advertising Association of America*. n.d. <https://oaaa.org/policy-advocacy/general-information/laws-regulations/>. Accessed August 4, 2026.

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