



VISUAL RESOURCES (1965, R1991, R2001, R2007)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that the quality of the nation's visual environment is as important a resource as that of the nation's natural, historic and cultural resources. The visual landscape, be it on public or private lands, rural or urban areas, reflects our national attitudes and actions toward caring for the Earth. It is a record visible to all, written on the face of the land, revealing our successes and failures in meeting our stewardship responsibilities. The visual landscape's significance is its contribution to our cognitive development, aesthetic experience, spiritual enrichment, and psychological renewal. Effective protection, enhancement, and management of the visual environment is best realized through the combined efforts of landscape architects and other environmental design professionals, an enlightened public, and committed government agencies.

Rationale

The visual environment is derived from the view of natural and man-made elements. The characteristics of the landscape are distinct and offer a pleasing and/or memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape—landform, water, vegetation and human development—contribute to or detract from the quality of the visual environment.

Humans have an unprecedented ability to make large-scale and irreversible modifications to the land. The loss and degradation of important visual resources across the nation are often unnecessary or result from lack of understanding. The lack of public awareness about the visual impacts of our actions on the landscape coupled with a lack of understanding of the tools and techniques through which visual integrity can be maintained can lead to unnecessary acquiescence to change. However, the means exist to undertake place-based design that evaluates the existing resources and the cultural uses of these resources, ultimately respecting the community's needs and uses of place.

The Society believes that the following actions are necessary to ensure the quality of the visual environment:

1. The evaluation, maintenance and enhancement of the existing visual quality of public and private lands, and the safeguarding of them from actions that would degrade or destroy our nation's scenic resources.
2. Creation of a heightened public awareness of our natural and cultural landscapes as a national resource, so that their scenic values are routinely and effectively incorporated into decision-making at all levels of private and governmental practice.
3. Promotion of the widespread understanding and application of available technology for landscape management.
4. Advocacy of the vigorous application of existing statutes, policies, ordinances and guidelines which encourage or mandate protection, enhancement or restoration of the visual environment.
5. Advocacy of the adoption of new or additional legislation, policies and guidelines that encourage or mandate the protection, enhancement or restoration of the visual environment in the project review and approval process.

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