

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Scenic America and Scenic San Diego

June 7, 2023

## **Scenic America and Scenic San Diego Oppose Approval of Digital Advertising Kiosks**

**JUNE 7, 2023, WASHINGTON, SAN DIEGO** - We are disappointed and disheartened at the San Diego City Council's 7:1 vote to approve up to 75 new digital advertising kiosks in downtown San Diego yesterday. Labeled "wayfinding kiosks" by supporters, these sidewalk billboards will add visual blight, distraction, and confusion to our scenic community beginning in three years.

Not to mention, this program is counter to San Diego's longstanding outdoor advertising laws, which have kept our community nearly free of such visual pollution for four decades.

San Diego was the first to take a case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, establishing its legal authority to limit outdoor advertising clutter in the 1981 case *Metromedia v. San Diego*. The city then became a nationwide leader when it froze the number of billboards at those existing in 1983.

By approving these kiosks, the City Council has opened the door for advertising companies to file for similar exemptions. **It cannot be overstated that the Council's ruling could devastate the scenic character of our community.**

Among the 10 largest cities in the nation, San Diego is unique in its relative absence of outdoor advertising. This hard-fought legacy deserves preservation. But elected officials are looking only at dollars promised by ad agencies, ignoring what will be lost if our urban environment is transformed into a visually blighted one like those of Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Las Vegas.

Similar to San Diego, we have seen the proliferation of these digital "wayfinding kiosks" in other major cities. In California alone, there have been changes to city and municipal code to allow for digital sidewalk displays in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Santa Monica. Similar amendments have also been approved in Houston, and more cities may continue to follow suit if allowed.

In San Diego, rumors are rampant at City Hall that the ad screens are just the tip of the iceberg. Next will be a wholesale dismantlement of sign limits.

The kiosk ordinance will be brought before the City Council again before Mayor Todd Gloria must choose whether to sign it into law. New outdoor digital advertising is currently outlawed in San Diego, and we intend to do everything in our power to keep it that way. We join the Sierra Club and the Save Our Heritage Organisation in direct and full opposition to this move to add hundreds of thousands of rotating outdoor ads to our sidewalks.

**Mark Falzone**

President

Scenic America

**Pamela Wilson**

Director

Scenic San Diego

--

Scenic America, founded in 1982, is the nation's only 501(c)(3) organization dedicated solely to preserving, protecting, and enhancing the visual and scenic beauty of the United States and its territories. Based in Washington, DC, Scenic America currently has 46 state and local chapters and affiliates, and more than 80,000 members and supporters around the country.

Scenic America's various accomplishments and contributions include:

- Supporting the establishment of the National Scenic Byways Program in 1991 and leading the effort in Congress to revive the program in 2019 and to restore dedicated funding in FY21, 22, and 23.
- Ensuring that the federal government and states uphold provisions of the Highway Beautification Act, helping to stop new billboard construction in hundreds of communities nationwide, and helping to successfully defend communities' rights to ban digital billboards in the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Successfully advocating for federal support for utility undergrounding, programs in gateway communities, and other scenic priorities in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- Earning recognition from the American Society of Association Executives for our outstanding advocacy and communications work in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Scenic San Diego is a community group of volunteers that since 2012 has fought for the continued beautification of San Diego through strong defense of the City's strict off-site outdoor advertising limits. It is an affiliate member of Scenic America.

## **Media Contact**

Max Duchaine  
Communications Director  
Scenic America  
[max.duchaine@scenic.org](mailto:max.duchaine@scenic.org)  
(202) 792-1303