

Seven Principles for Scenic Conservation

We envision a future in which we, as American citizens...

I. ...retain the distinctive character of our communities and countryside by rebuilding older cities, towns and suburbs as beautiful places in which to live and work; and conserve agricultural land and open space.

- Set aside open space for greenways, parks, trails and river corridors;
- Protect farms and ranches from subdivision through agricultural zoning, conservation land trusts, agricultural land banking, and tax abatement; and
- Create incentives for growth to help rebuild older cities and towns, and to create compact, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly mixed-use communities.

II. ...foster new development that respects the special character of places as defined by their distinctive geographical features, cultures, climate and natural systems.

- Encourage communities to identify and map the visual qualities they most value, and then adopt strategies to conserve them;
- Incorporate aesthetics into performance measures for planning, siting and construction of all new development and redevelopment (including franchise development and other commercial and industrial development); and
- Establish comprehensive community tree policies that preserve existing trees, control tree cutting and tree damage during construction, and add new trees to replace those lost over the years to development.

III. ...encourage a balance of regulatory and market approaches to protect scenic resources including rewarding land stewardship by property owners, local governments and corporations; and providing disincentives for practices that destroy scenic values.

- Provide tax incentives and property tax relief for scenic conservation and good land stewardship; and
- Make visual polluters pay by fining those who break the law; taxing those who use the visual environment for commercial advertising based on the true value of their asset; and levying fees for uncompensated use of the roadways to cover the cost of services and access to the public right-of-way.

IV. ...design a national transportation system that respects aesthetic values as well as economic and energy efficiency, social equity, and environmental qualities.

- Encourage excellence in road design and in bridge construction and reconstruction; and allow flexibility in design standards to respect scenic, historic, natural and community values; and
- Landscape our highways and community gateways to incorporate native vegetation and to reflect themes of local history and culture.

V. ...prevent mass marketing and outdoor advertising from intruding on the landscape or community appearance.

- Produce dramatic and immediate results in the scenic character of our landscape by banning the construction of new billboards and strictly regulating existing billboards; using any constitutional means to remove existing billboards within a reasonable period of time; and halting all cutting of trees and vegetation on public land to improve the visibility of billboards;
- Set height and size standards for on-premise signs;
- Promote well-designed logo and tourist-oriented directional signage systems, along with other information technologies to help travelers find the services they need;
- Regulate other forms of outdoor advertising including the exterior of public buses, floating or flying messages, posters on bus shelters, street furniture, and store windows, corporate sponsorship of public service events so as to minimize intrusiveness on our enjoyment of the built and natural environments; and
- Minimize the visibility of cellular communication, utility and energy generation technologies.

VI. ...teach young people to value the visual environment and to create and respect places of beauty.

- Incorporate scenic conservation into all elementary and secondary environmental and geography education curricula;
- Incorporate the values of scenic conservation into graduate courses in economics, planning, design, and public policy; and
- Integrate scenic conservation projects into scouting and school service learning programs.

VII. ...actively engage business, industry, civic and professional organizations in the movement for a more scenic America.

- Promote the link between business and tourism development and conservation of natural, cultural, recreational, heritage and scenic resources; and
- Enlist retired professionals whose skills and political clout can benefit scenic conservation.