



St. Pete Billboards Coming Down



Photo: Paul Lamison, TBO.com

"Crews Permanently Remove A Billboard At The Intersection Of Central Avenue And 11th Street"

" The agreement, executed in August, calls for the permanent removal of 83 sign faces of the 124 Clear Channel-owned billboards in the city.

In the future, Clear Channel may replace up to six of the remaining 41 sign faces with digital billboards subject to city regulations.

City officials said the effort is aimed at permanently reducing the number of off-premise signs, improving public safety and visually enhancing the city's roadways."

--TBO.com

Scenic experts have criticized the swap as nothing but a bad deal crafted by a billboard cartel to offer officials a short term gain but then saddle the next generation and future officials with long term blight.

Two points stand out:

1) the city had already been benefiting from the gradual elimination of the unwanted billboards through their gradual attrition with a steady decline over the last decade;

2) there is no sunset date for the new digital billboards, which may remain for at least 70 years and condemn city residents and visitors to flashing sky trash for the next generation.

This type of short term gain is never be worth the long term detriment. Bottom line, local officials were fleeced by the billboard cartel. Be warned.

--Scenic Florida

December



Fun Festivals and Events

Central Florida

Nov 11- Jan 1

Light Up UCF

50 Nights of Music, Lights and Ice,
Orlando

Nov 18-Dec 4

7th Annual Festival of Trees,
Daytona Beach

Nov 16-Jan 2

ICE! at Gaylord Palms Resort,
Orlando

Nov19-Jan 1

Festival of Lights, Punta Gorda

Nov14-Jan 4

Leu's Holiday House, Orlando

Nov 26- Dec 31

Now Snowing Nightly, Celebration

Dec 2-4

Sarasota Craft Show, Sarasota

Dec 3-31

Annual Christmas Light Canal Tours,
Punta Gorda

Dec 11

22nd Annual Peace River Lighted
Boat Parade, Punta Gorda

Dec 3

Christmas Boat Parade, Venice

Dec 3

Santa Fest 2011, Tampa

Dec 3

First Saturday Jam, Barberville

"Downtown St. Petersburg Murals Infusing Streets, Alleys With Color"



Photo: Luis Santana, Tampa Bay Times

"Every day about 7:30 a.m., Rasta Geary Taylor pulls into the back alley behind his shop, 1 of 1 Customs. Every day he wonders if it will be splattered or tagged or covered.

But every day, there it sits. Horton the elephant holding a pink flower, grinning Grinches sprayed in a candy-colored mural reaching to the roof.

'Dang,' he thinks. 'Look at that.'

It was more than two years ago that Taylor commissioned the mural with help from Jared 'Thirst' Hernandez and a graffiti artist who goes by Tech. They didn't ask anyone, not even the landlord of his space in the 600 block of Central Avenue. If they kept it positive, bright and attractive, they hoped no one would complain.

No one has. In fact, the opposite happened. Impressive murals have blossomed in downtown St. Petersburg, filling storefronts, side walls and bleak back alleys, brightening cobblestone paths pocked with dust and Dumpsters.

There's Hernandez's comic book mural on Foolish Pride Tattoo Company, next to Christian Thomas's haunting orange faces. There's Sebastian Coolidge's boy squeezing an orange atop the Freshly Squeezed street-wear shop. There's Dan Lasata's black and white tree on the Studio at 620. There's Jennifer Kosharek and Thomas's neon dolls, around the corner from Rebekah Lazaridis' paper moon at the Crislip Arcade.

There's mammoth eye candy from the Vitale Brothers, Tes One and Pale Horse on the back of the State Theatre, an ornate teal-and-orange image projected on the wall and painted to help visiting bands spot the back door from the road. There are old murals turned new again, like vintage advertisements unearthed on the side of Central Coffee Shoppe, patched, brought up to code and restored by John and Paul Vitale. They're planning their next mural for new bar The Bends.

The artists work for free or a small fee. They spend a few hundred dollars on

Dec 2-3

Sanford Historic Trust Tour of Homes, Sanford

Dec 4-Jan 1

Macy's Holiday Parade at Universal Studios, Orlando

Dec 4-Jan 1

Grinchmas at Universal's Islands of Adventure, Orlando

Dec 9-10

Florida's Creative Coast Weekend, Pine Island

Dec 3-30

Wild Wonderland at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo, Tampa

Dec 9-10

Candlelight Tours of Fort Foster, Tampa

Dec 10-11

A Classic Christmas, Winter Park

Dec 11

2011 Holiday Tour of Homes, Ormond Beach

Dec 15

Dinner and Music at The Spirit of the Woods Café, Hillsborough River State Park, Thonotosassa

Dec 19-24, 27

Christmas Celebration of Lights, Homosassa

Dec 31

Orlando Citrus Parade, Orlando

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South Florida

Nov19-Jan 1

Festival of Lights, Punta Gorda

Dec 1-5

Merrick Festival's 2010 Caroling Competition, Coral Gables

Nov29-Dec 4

Sculpt Miami, Miami

Nov 30-Dec 4

Red Dot Fair, Miami

Nov 29 - Dec 4

Scope International Contemporary Art Fair, Miami

Dec 2

Art and Jazz on the Avenue, Delray Beach

Dec 1-4

Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami

paint and when they run out, the mural sometimes stalls. They're getting help from the Central Arts District, a collection of downtown artists and business owners focused on Fourth to Eighth streets. The group has raised about \$2,200 to help pay for and promote murals, among other causes.

'They started to pop up all around the city,' said Wayne Atherholt, interim executive director of the Morean Arts Center, which has its own mural. 'We're one part of trying to improve our neighborhoods.'

Murals have appeared in other parts of the city, too, including the warehouses south of the 2000 block of Central. There's a massive painting by Acud-AKuT and Center One on glass artist Duncan McClellan's 24th Street South studio. McClellan is opening a new workshop next door in the next month or so. He'll hold a contest to choose a muralist to paint that building, he said. The prize will be paint and supplies so the artist will break even.

Murals are allowed on private property if they comply with city sign code, aren't perceived as offensive and don't have words other than the artist's signature, said Elizabeth Brincklow, the city's arts and international relations manager. Nothing can come down just because it's not someone else's taste. The artists don't have to go through a submission process, but they can offer a sketch as a courtesy.

'The city has been really cool,' said Taylor. 'I really have to give them props. Let's start competing with some of these other cities.'

... It is a departure from the renegade tagging that has dotted the city to different degrees through the years. In 1995, there were more than 2,200 reported cases of illegal graffiti. It dropped after the city instituted a removal program, then rose again, then sank.

There seems to be an unspoken level of respect for the murals, which taggers have mostly left alone. The tree mural at Studio at 620 is pristine, but the parking signs in front of it are tagged in black marker.

Why? Well, some mural artists are graffiti artists, pointed out John Vitale. They're already in the community, and by working legitimately with a shop owner, they're building status in the art world they might not otherwise get..."

-- tbo.com

[Read entire article here>](#)

Chicago Citizens And Officials Spoke Up: "Mayor Scales Back Billboard Plans"



Photo: Chicago Tribune

Beach

Nov 24-Dec 4

Pirates in Paradise Festival at Fort Zachary Taylor, Key West

Nov 24-Dec 31

Key West "Bight" Before Christmans, Islamorada

Dec 2-3

Christmas Luminary Trail and Open House, Sanibel and Captiva Islands

Dec 2-4

West Palm Beach Antiques Festival, West Palm Beach

Dec 3

Lincoln Road Gallery Walk, Miami Beach

Dec 10

Big Pine Island Art Festival, Big Pine Key

Dec 4

Christmas Tree Lighting at Whitehall, Palm Beach

Dec 3

Fort Myers Beach Boat Parade, Fort Myers Beach

Dec 7

Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony, Punta Gorda

Dec 9

Barnacle Under Moonlight, Coconut Grove

Dec 9-10, 16-17

Historic Lighted Inn Tours, Key West

Dec 2-Dec 31

Holiday Nights at Edison and Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers

Dec 10

Holiday Boat Parade, Key Largo

Dec 10

Key West Lighted Boat Parade, Key West

Dec 18

Musical Holiday Concert, Islamorada

Dec 17

Christmas Concert, Marathon

Dec 17-23

Holiday Evening Tours of Whitehall, Palm Beach

Dec 31

New Year's Eve Celebrations, Key West

Dec 31

Downtown Countdown, Fort Myers

"Emanuel Temporarily Drops Provision To Allow Digital Signs Close To Residences"

" Amid concerns from aldermen that Mayor Rahm Emanuel's latest budget-balancing venture would result in bright billboards invading Chicago's residential neighborhoods, Emanuel has temporarily set aside that part of the package to save his plan for electronic billboards along city expressways.

The mayor's office has started briefing aldermen in hopes of building enough support on the City Council to vote next month on the scaled-back proposal, which would still let a new billboard conglomerate, Interstate-JCDecaux LLC, erect 34 digital signs overlooking the Kennedy, Dan Ryan and other expressways from nearby city-owned property. The mayor's office says the no-bid deal would bring the city at least \$154 million over 20 years.

But gone for the time being is a second prong of Emanuel's billboard expansion, which was unveiled late last month. That clause would have allowed companies to build digital billboards on city-owned parcels as close as 125 feet from residences in exchange for taking down five conventional signs elsewhere.

Ald. Daniel Solis, 25th, chairman of the zoning committee, said too many aldermen had questions about the five-for-one provision.

'The sensible thing to do was pull back on that portion and move forward with the signs near expressways,' Solis said.

Solis and officials with the mayor's office, though, did not rule out the possibility of reviving the neighborhood provision.

Solis, who is an Emanuel backer, said he hopes to build enough support among his colleagues to eventually pass that part, but he warned that it wouldn't come unless it is part of a billboard ordinance that would call for taking down standard billboards and other large signs that have been posted illegally.

Emanuel's decision to piecemeal the billboard proposal comes weeks after he first unveiled it as a major portion of his plan to bring \$18 million into the city's coffers next year through what his administration calls a municipal marketing campaign.

The mayor's top financial adviser, Lois Scott, said the billboard proposal would raise at least \$15 million a year for the next two years. But that guarantee drops to about \$6 million for the following years.

When the city announced its deal with Interstate-JCDecaux several weeks ago, competitors knocked the plan because City Hall didn't put the expressway and neighborhood program out for bid. They questioned whether the city was getting all the money it could with such a long-term deal. That criticism has become muted since the Emanuel administration pulled back on the neighborhoods proposal.

Interstate-JCDecaux is a partnership of two politically connected firms formed specifically to vie for the Chicago advertising contract. The Emanuel administration acknowledges that it agreed to a deal without checking to see if any other companies would offer more money for the same advertising rights.

Emanuel and officials in his administration have repeatedly said the mayor doesn't support 'sole-source deals.' But they contend that the billboard agreement is different because it came out of the city's 2011 open invitation to about 6,000 city vendors to pitch any ideas they had for marketing on city

Dec 31

New year's Eve Fireworks on Blackwater Sound, Key Largo

Dec 31

Peace at Last, White Springs

Dec 31

New Year's Eve Beach Ball Drop, Panama City Beach

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North Florida

Dec 2

Camellia Christmas 2011, Tallahassee

Dec 10

Holiday Magic by Tallahassee Symphony, Tallahassee

Dec 3

25th Annual Winter Festival, Tallahassee

Dec 3

Sugar Cane Grinding, Newberry

Dec 3-4

Annual Market Days, Tallahassee

Dec 9-10

Southern Pines Blues and BBQ Festival, Perry

Dec 10

Annual Holiday Parade and Lawn Mower Contest, Havana

Dec 10

Caroling the Ravines, Palatka

Dec 17

The Ichetucknee Time Machine, Fort White

Dec 18

Candlelight Tour of Wesley House at Eden Gardens State Park, Point Washington

Dec 18

Old Time Dance at O'Leno State Park, High Springs

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property.

Interstate-JCDecaux was one of five companies that came up with a digital billboard plan in response to that request, and their proposal was selected as the best one, Emanuel spokeswoman Kathleen Strand said.

'This is in no way a sole-source contract,' Strand said.

Still, members of the City Council have questioned the plan.

Ald. Proco 'Joe' Moreno, 1st, said he's concerned that the city isn't getting enough bang for its buck from the conglomerate. He compared the arrangement to the much-criticized parking meter deal made by former Mayor Richard Daley in which the city sold the long-term rights to run the parking meters for less than some thought they were worth.

'That's what I'm concerned about,' Moreno said. 'We're getting \$154 million from this deal. That sounds good, but how do we know that's what it is actually worth? I think the way to find that out is if we had multiple entities to bid.'

...Ald. Robert Fioretti, 2nd, said that rather than introducing intrusive billboards to his ward stretching from south of the Loop to the West Side, the city could raise millions of dollars each year simply by doing a better job of collecting annual inspection fees for existing signs.

'They don't need a trade-in for something even more distracting in the neighborhoods,' Fioretti said. 'Government has to have some role in protecting people from digital blight.'

-- John Byrne and John Chase, Chicago Tribune

[Read entire article here>](#)

Legal News:

With Major Court Decision Expected in January, KCET Reviews Current Situation



Click for Video: KCET.org

"L.A. City Council Allowed Illegal Billboards to be Erected"

" They are impossible to ignore -- enormous, super-bright, in-your-face electronic billboards serving up an endless parade of of ads, day and night, all over Los Angeles. They sprouted up without warning a few years ago, and ever since, they have been a digital ground zero for some bitter fights. We've been following the billboard saga from the start. As an appeals court prepares to rule in a major case, we take a look at where things stand. This high-tech controversy has been moving at stone-age speed.

Vince Gonzales: You could call this story 'the signs that ate Los Angeles.' And



Note from the Editor

Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

for us, it's the never-ending story. For over four years, "SoCal Connected" has been reporting on the city of L.A.'s attempts to manage its estimated six thousand billboards. Legal, illegal, permitted, non-permitted, video and vinyl.

Big and bright. They come in all shapes and sizes and the city council, the highest paid in the nation, seems powerless to regulate them. In the very few cases the city has identified an illegal billboard, nothing seems to happen...

Gonzales: In 2008, we interviewed Keith Stephens, owner of a small billboard company. At the time, the city charged him with illegally putting up this billboard in downtown L.A. It's been four years and the billboard is still there. Keith is still a free man. He finally has a pretrial hearing at the end of this month; nearly four years after his charges were filed. It's a head scratcher for Dennis Hathaway, whom we first met in 2008...

Gonzales: We met [Dennis] Hathaway again here on Pico Blvd in West LA, where the first shot was fired in L.A.'s long billboard wars, a war that soon might end with digital signs going dark all over the city. But first, a refresher.

Despite a ban on new billboards or alterations to current ones, in 2006 the city council approved a deal with three major billboard companies - CBS, Clear Channel and Regency. All of their illegal billboards were made legal, and CBS and Clear Channel were allowed to convert over 800 billboards to new digital signs.

Also, the city permit fee was slashed from \$314 to just 186 bucks -- a small price to pay for a new digital sign that can earn \$150,000 a month in ad revenue. Born out of that agreement was this Clear Channel digital sign in West L.A., the very first one to go up under the deal. But this billboard across street wasn't allowed to go digital.

Its owners Summit Media cried 'foul.' Why were Clear Channel and CBS allowed to go digital but others can't? This billboard street fight quickly ended up in court. The first line of Summit Media's lawsuit against the City of L.A., CBS and Clear Channel says, 'This is a simple case.'

Summit Media claims the city gave the two companies 'special privileges' when it allowed only them to go digital. And under oath, a city official admitted conversions to digital were prohibited at the time of the agreement. The city made the deal with CBS and Clear Channel anyway. And that was illegal, according to a 2009 ruling by L.A. Superior Court Judge Terry Green. He also called the deal 'poison.'

Hathaway: The city council should have known. They can't give special rights to two billboards companies and shut out all of the other billboard companies in the city. I don't know what they were thinking!...

Gonzales: Council member Eric Garcetti voted for that 2006 deal. He says he didn't read the fine print.

Garcetti: It was a very thick settlement and nobody read all the way to the end. If I had known that, I absolutely wouldn't have voted for that.

Gonzales: So the CBS/Clear channel deal has stood the test of time and made the companies tens of millions of dollars, but those millions could have gone away if the Court of Appeals judge in the Summit Media case ruled against them. Perhaps in an effort to get in front of that ruling, which was expected on October 30th, a Clear Channel lobbyist met with Council Member Ed Reyes. With the support of fellow Council Member Paul Krekorian, Reyes presented this motion. The vaguely worded one-pager asked the council to "act now to fix the billboard problem and fast." Reyes wanted to form a working group and take action by October 30th.

Garcetti: I didn't know what the rush was. After all of these years, why would we rush with just a couple of weeks before some court decision legalize all the digital billboards that are out there right now? There's only two companies that have those, that seemed to be unfair not only from a competitive standpoint, but also to put those in permanently?

Gonzales: The motion was cor-written by a Clear Channel lobbyist. Councilman Reyes makes no apologies for that.

Reyes: The truth is we as policy makers are putting forward language that was that did come from the billboards, but that language speaks to being inclusive.

Gonzales: And he says, 'Who better to consult on regulation on the industry than the industry itself?'

Reyes: We don't have specialists in the industry who understand the industry the way the industry does.

Hathaway: Why are the billboard companies or billboard lobbyists writing their legislation?...

Dennis: The Court of Appeals ruled that the digital billboards were put up there pursuant to an illegal deal, the settlement that the city made in 2006, should have been revoked. In other words, that billboard should be turned off!

Gonzales: The Court of Appeals ruling is tentative. A final decision is expected in the next few weeks. If the city, CBS and Clear Channel lose, it could mean all of those digital billboards in L.A. will have to be turned off. But that's if they can find them. As we first reported in 2008, the city has never had a complete inventory of billboards. Nobody really knows where they all are or which ones are legal.

While researching her dissertation on billboards, USC student Lisa Sedano went to the city and asked for a complete billboard inventory. She says they wouldn't give it to her, so she sued.

Sedano: When I explain the story to people, they don't seem to understand that the city has a complete inventory and won't release it, because it makes no sense. It's not like it's national secrets here. It's a list of billboards, and their permit history. That's it.

Gonzales: Lisa settled with the city, and she has the complete list. She has a theory about why L.A. has fought its release.

Sedano: If the city has a complete and public list of illegal billboards, it will increase the pressure on the city to do something about them.

Gonzales: Sedano also thinks city hall has a tough time resisting the power of the billboard companies, who have spent millions lobbying City Hall over the past ten years.

Garcetti: I don't feel any financial pressure from them; they are a presence here, but this is our city. We define what is on our streets. We define what is in our neighborhoods, and people send us here to do their business not the billboard companies' business.

Gonzales: But take a look around L.A., and you can see why some say this city belongs to the billboards. They just have to live in it. "

--KCET.org

[Watch video and read entire article here >](#)