

## The Case Against Billboards on Public Property

(Corrie Kost – corrie@kost.ca)

On Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002 council will consider as Agenda Item #9 “to receive a report on opportunities for private investment in public structures/facilities”. **In fact this is a report on using public land advertising space to raise revenue.**

There are those who would sell our soul to the devil to keep our taxes down. Unnecessary signs are a blight to our community. Advertising signs, because they are meant to have a maximum impact, jeopardizes public safety by distracting both pedestrians, and passing motorists. Moreover, the aesthetic beauty of our community is reduced, the adjacent property values are negatively impacted, and inappropriate messages can be conveyed both to and about our community.

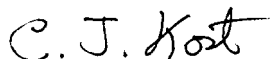
Community character and quality of life have been found to be highest in those who have the fewest billboards. Billboards do little to attract local tourism – on the contrary, **they detract from the very natural beauty tourist profess as the primary reason they come here to enjoy.** Many prime tourist destinations in North America prohibit new billboard construction – and that they keep on booming is no coincidence. Simple, discreet, strategically placed signage on our highways and arterial routes is all that is required to direct tourists to their destination.

Once billboards take a toehold, there will be clamor for more of them as local businesses want to maintain a “level playing field”. But this would be a fool’s paradise as billboards are more cost effective for international establishments. Locally owned businesses would be the ones who suffer. The irony is that some promoters for billboards on public property actually propose that this income can be used to reduce urban blight!

I caution council, that once you permit a billboard it will be nearly impossible to remove it. It will be a permanent mark on the community for generations to come. Not exactly what I would call as being in line with a sustainable community – where you do not rob future generations of their choices. If you cannot learn from the disastrous experiences in the US then you are bound to repeat them here. On the other hand, take a look at Vermont, and the prosperous tourist industry that developed when they banned all outdoor billboards.

In any case, modern communication systems, especially the Internet and the cellphone, have largely rendered billboards obsolete. On the other hand, there’s gold in them thar web pages – why not consider using the District’s web site to generate revenues?

Your truly,



Corrie Kost

Here’s why we don’t need billboards...

