

L.A.'s Signage Sprawl

Lee Powell:

Los Angeles resident Susan Greenberg does not like what she sees just outside her window.

Susan Greenberg:

You have this presence flashing. It's always there. It's always on. It's always flashing.

Lee Powell:

Welcome to L.A., which some are saying has the worst billboard problem in the country. There are small signs, big signs, and then...

David Michaelson:

Supergraphic signs are these very large signs, uh, typically printed on material such as vinyl, that are stretched on the side of a building, sometimes blocking windows.

Lee Powell:

The swelling of signs has city officials saying, enough! Stopping new ads as L.A. considers its legal options, trying to reduce the sign sprawl, searching for visual order. What has people like activist Dennis Hathaway screaming out, like a loud billboard, are the digital signs.

Dennis Hathaway:

Every time the message changes on the billboard, then the light level changes. It's like, like a TV that's on in a dark room.

Lee Powell:

The city wants to ban new digital billboards.

Jack Weiss:

There has been an encroachment onto, uh, not so much into the residential neighborhoods as right next to them.

Dennis Hathaway:

There are people living right on this street here.

Lee Powell:

The sign industry says it is just helping advertisers reach customers.

Ryan Brooks:

Seventy percent of our business are local businesses. And we don't want a solution in search of a problem.

Lee Powell:

But the signs are a problem for the fire department if they block windows. Misdemeanor charges have been filed against some firms violating the rules. Changing habits may be tough in this city, where sign enforcement has been lax and the biggest billboard of all has stood for decades, first put up promoting a housing tract...named Hollywoodland.

Lee Powell:

Lee Powell, The Associated Press.

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