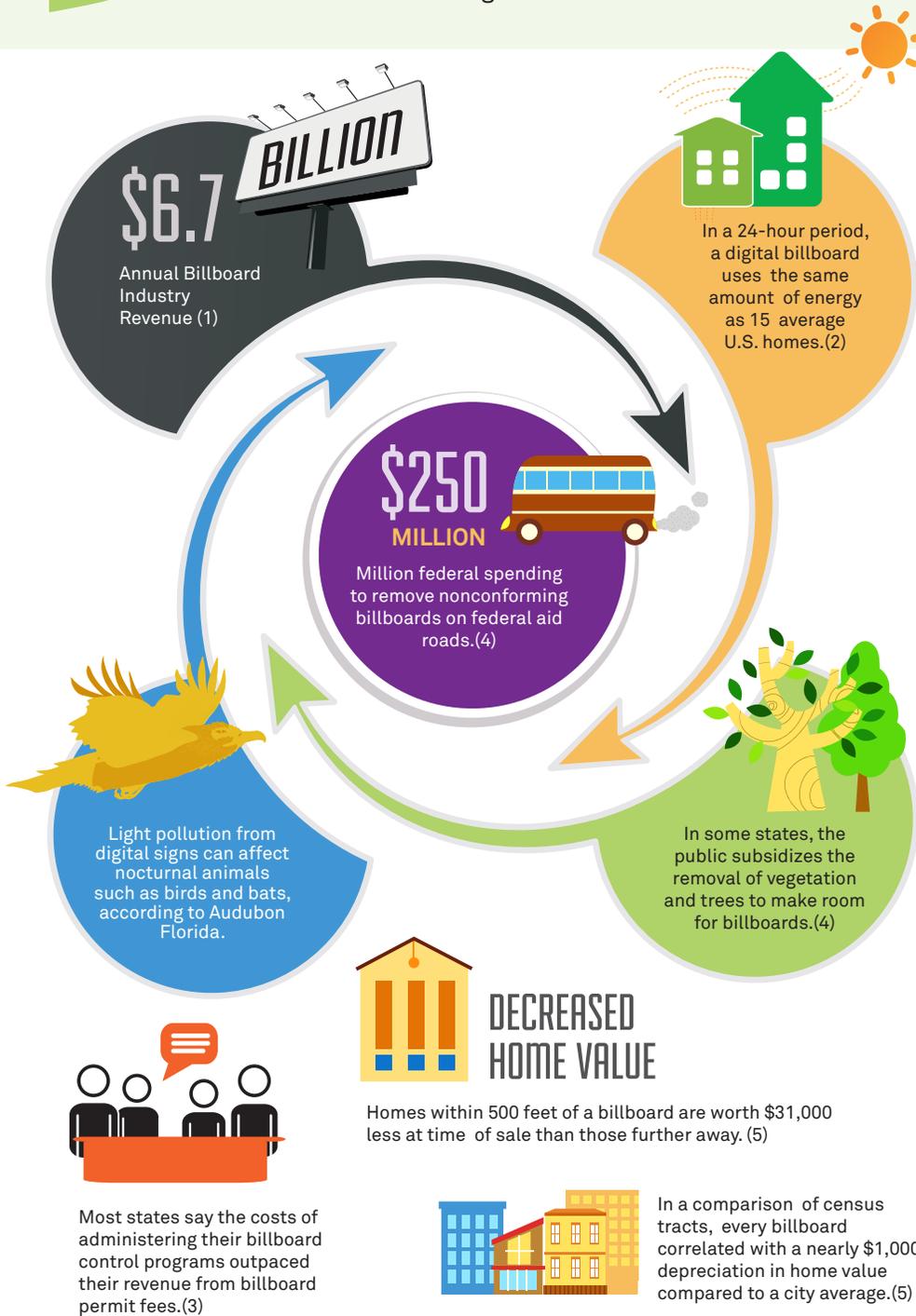


The Facts About Billboards



Whether traditional or digital, these signs contribute to blight, mar scenic views, negatively impact property values and affect the quality of life in neighborhoods.



Reno's Story

In 2000, Reno residents voted to prohibit new billboards. Now, the city has passed an ordinance that would take down some signs – in favor of even more garish digital displays. Scenic Nevada sued the city to enforce the 2000 vote.

After a one-day trial on February 24, 2014, the court ruled for the city and upheld the new digital billboard law. Scenic Nevada appealed that decision to the Nevada Supreme Court on March 28. Meanwhile, the City Council enacted a moratorium on new digital billboard construction until the appeal is decided.

In spite of the vote and over the objections of Scenic Nevada, the city and the billboard industry agreed to a billboard “banking system” – if one comes down, another can go up in a different location.

But when digital billboards enter the equation, this means exchanging a traditional display for a large-screen monitor, flipping every eight seconds with another flashy advertisement. This is not what voters had in mind when they overwhelmingly approved the ballot initiative to prohibit construction of new billboards.

Some city officials hope to reduce blight by trading many of the traditional billboards for a single digital. But the council passed a weak ordinance that allows too many traditional signs to remain, while adding digitals to the mix, starting a dangerous trend.

Digital billboards would have a negative impact on the community: They are instruments of clutter and blight, tarnishing our city landscapes and obstructing our mountain views. They also distract drivers, over-consume energy and pollute the dark skies.

The billboard industry sees digital displays as cash cows – the ad rotation means more real estate for more ad revenue – but the benefit to the city and its residents is lacking.

Resources

1. Outdoor Advertising Association of America (2012)
2. “Illuminating the Issues: Digital Signage and Philadelphia’s Green Future,” Gregory Young (2010)
3. Scenic America survey (1995)
4. Scenic America survey (1999)
5. “Beyond Aesthetics: How Billboards Affect Economic Prosperity,” Jonathan Snyder (2011)