



Friends Calls for Elimination of Unnecessary Signs

March 1998

The following article was written by Les Conklin, president of Friends of Scenic Drive. Versions of the article appeared in both the Sonoran News and the Scottsdale Progress Tribune. A subsequent article called for the elimination of political signs from scenic corridors.

Sunday on the Desert Foothills Signic Drive

"Last Sunday, I was driving along the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive and I was reminded of Uluru. "Uluru" is the Australian Aboriginal native name for Ayers Rock. "Desert Foothills Scenic Drive" is the name the Cave Creek natives gave to the northern part of Scottsdale Road.

Ayers Rock is Australia's most visited park, an "inverted Grand Canyon". Unfortunately, the view of Ayers Rock includes a ragged, continuous line of tourists streaming to the top. To the native peoples "The Rock" is a sacred place and they respectfully ask visitors not to climb. But international tour companies promote the idea. For now, the Australians ignore environmentalists and natives and put up with an unpopular situation. For many a visit to Ayres Rock is diminished.

Tradition of Preservation

On a much smaller scale, the natives of Cave Creek and Carefree created the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive in 1963 to showcase Sonoran plants and preserve the desert. Since 1995, natives who live along the Scenic Drive, with the support of the City of Scottsdale, have been working to restore and enhance the Scenic Drive. Progress has been made. A Scottsdale Improvement District which most of the natives supported will result in power poles and lines along the drive being buried. But signs posted by builders and real estate companies detract (to put it mildly) from the scenery. What is supposed to be "visual open space" is clogged with promotional signs for developments, some of which are miles away from the Scenic Drive.

The Weekend Crop

On weekends when even more visitors are in the area hundreds of cheap, attention-grabbing directional signs sprout up along the Scenic Drive basically trashing the area and obscuring plants and plant identification signs. The City of Scottsdale attempts to enforce an inappropriate sign ordinance and the environmentalists and natives put up with an unpopular situation. The area is diminished.

Ordinance Revisions Needed

What can be done? Well some places - Carefree at the northern end of the Scenic Drive comes to mind - protect desert character with strong sign ordinances. The time has come for the City of Scottsdale to see what can be done to protect scenic corridors. For our part, Friends of the Scenic Drive will provide space on our Web site for developments along the Scenic Drive to describe their neighborhoods – they can include a map. All we ask is that they adopt a quality, standardized, low-key sign for their development and stop posting directional signs along the Desert Foothills Scenic Drive.

Everybody Can Win!

Today's real estate signing practices along the Scenic Drive are counter-productive. Having a maintained landmark and scenic corridor will help sell high-end houses. Surely, visitors to north Scottsdale must wonder, like an American visiting Ayers Rock, why unique natural beauty, heritage and natives are not respected."