

MEMO TO COUNCIL

DATE: March 1, 2011
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Ray Erlandsen 
Community Development Director
SUBJECT: Animated Signs

PURPOSE:

At Council's direction, staff has conducted research regarding animated signs. This memo is intended to inform council of the progress as well as offer "food for thought" in discussion of how the Council wishes staff to proceed with this issue.

SUMMARY:

Attached is a summary of the findings staff gathered from various communities regarding their handling of animated signs. As noted, there are many ways of handling this issue. Staff requests feedback and direction as to how to proceed with any further potential amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC).

MAR 01 2011 *Spec. Wk Study*

ANIMATED SIGNS

Summary of Findings

Assumption

Staff has prepared this information under the following assumptions; 1) The Town may consider animated sign provisions lifting the prohibition against such signs, 2) Animated signs would be allowed in a similar manner or to a similar extent as other permanent signs are allowed currently. *Note: This summary does not address the use of off-site signage, or modifications to existing, legal non-conforming signs.

What is an animated sign?

Animated signs have slightly varying descriptions from community to community. The following definition could be a starting point for future discussion:

Animated sign - A sign that has a non-static message, typically involving several different images displayed in a sequence similar to that of a television, signs with flashing images, color changes, varying light levels or image intensity including but not limited to electronic changeable copy signs, electronically controlled message center signs, LED lights manipulated through digital input, “digital ink” or any other method or technology that allows the sign face to present a series of images, graphics or displays.



The lower half
of this sign is
“animated”

In what ways do other communities allow animated signs?

In communities where these type of signs are allowed they are typically allowed under one or more of the following manners, or with a combination of the following:

- *As an acceptable form of advertising for any business for use in place of static freestanding or wall mounted signs. (The best examples of this are Times Square in New York City and Las Vegas, Nevada)
- *Acceptable when used as a percentage of allowable copy area for all businesses. (Like the example pictured with the definition, 50% of your sign area may include animation)
- *Allowed based upon size and/or type of business.
Example: Retail businesses with floor area over 250,000 square feet may utilize animated signs; or
Animated signs shall be limited to institutional uses only, such as schools, churches, or community service announcements, sports complexes
- *Allowed based upon geographic location (ie. properties within “freeway zones”, properties within downtown overlay district)

•Allowed on a case by case basis through special approval process (ie. Planning Commission and public hearing, or Design Review Board and predetermined criteria).

A 47 page paper was published by the Federal Highway Administration concerning animated signage in 2008. At that time it was noted that 11 states prohibited such signs. Around half of the states have minimum spacing requirements for these signs along interstate or primary highway systems.

A survey of other AZ communities and their usage of animated signs

Town	Allowed for all Biz?	Allowed as part of Hwy/Fwy zone?	Comments
Buckeye	N	N	
Camp Verde	N	N	
Chandler	N	N	
Cottonwood	N	N	
Fountain Hills	N	N	
Gilbert	N	N	
Globe	N	N	
Kingman	Y	Y	Allowed on Rte 66, US 93 and I-40
Marana	N	N	
Mesa	N	N	
Phoenix	Y	Y	
Queen Creek	N	N	Has an exception for time & temp
Scottsdale	N	N	
Sedona	N	N	
Show Low	N	N	
Surprise	N	N	
Tempe	N	Y	Institutional uses are allowed electronic signs w/rigid design review, no commercial/retail use

Many examples of animated signs visible from AZ Highways/Freeways are placed on Indian Reservations. No survey information was solicited from these entities.

Feedback regarding this summary is requested before staff brings forward any recommendations to the Planning Commission and Town Council for potential amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC).