



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS . 11465 WEST CIVIC CENTER DRIVE . AVONDALE, AZ 85323

WORK SESSION
March 2, 2009
6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR ROGERS

1 ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK

2 GENERAL PLAN AND SPECIFIC AREA PLAN AMENDMENTS UPDATES

Staff is requesting City Council direction on the scope and magnitude of the upcoming General Plan and Specific Area Plan amendments and updates. Additionally, Staff will present a project timeline and public participation plan. This item is for information, discussion and direction only.

3 REVISIONS TO ZONING ORDINANCE SECTION 9 (SIGN ORDINANCE)

Staff is requesting City Council direction on proposed revisions to Section 9 of the Zoning Ordinance, Sign Ordinance. For information, discussion and direction.

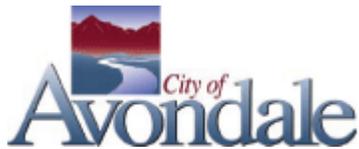
4 ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carmen Martinez".

Carmen Martinez
City Clerk

Individuals with special accessibility needs, including sight or hearing impaired, large print, or interpreter, should contact the City Clerk at 623-333-1200 or TDD 623-333-0010 at least two business days prior to the Council Meeting.



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

SUBJECT:
General Plan and Specific Area Plan Amendments
Updates

MEETING DATE:
March 2, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Brian Berndt, Development Services Director (623)333-4011
THROUGH: Charlie McClendon, City Manager

REQUEST: Staff is requesting City Council direction on the scope and magnitude of the upcoming General Plan and Specific Area Plan amendments and updates. Additionally, Staff will present a project timeline and public participation plan. This item is for information, discussion and direction only

BACKGROUND:

Staff is requesting City Council direction on proposed revisions to the City's General Plan and Specific Area Plans. It has been nearly eight years since the City comprehensively updated its General Plan. Arizona Statutes requires cities update their General Plan every ten years, which for Avondale means by 2012. During this time, it is recommended we be proactive and move forward with this two-year process of updating the General Plan. Additionally, Staff feels now is the appropriate time to evaluate the progress the City has made toward meeting its previous General Planning Goals, and make progressive changes that direct the City more proactively in response to our community values.

This General Plan update will address the creation of new elements, incorporate the Specific Area Plans into the General Plan where appropriate, and include new guiding principles, community value and vision statements, as well as updated goals and policies. It is Staff's hope that these changes will make the document more user-friendly while maintaining a General Plan that is comprehensive and responsive to the community needs as Avondale continues to grow and develop.

In the application, Staff divided this process into three key phases:

1. Phase 1 - Define the process to establish the guiding principles, community values, vision and goals, and collect all relevant data for analysis.
2. Phase 2 - Develop a strong draft that is carried into the public participation process. From this process, edits shall be made accordingly.
3. Phase 3 - Create the final draft for presentation and adoption by City Council.

Staff's goals are to create a:

1. Highly interactive and informative public participation process.
2. This process includes Avondale's web page, a "traveling exhibit," a newsletter, General Plan Summary and ample press coverage. Strong "in-house" communication network so City Council knows where the process is each step of the way.
3. Thorough and innovative General Plan that is a workable, user-friendly development tool for the City and the Community.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Staff is requesting City Council direction on the upcoming General Plan and Specific Area Plan amendments.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff will make a presentation that discusses the upcoming General Plan Amendment and related changes. The City Council may pose questions to Staff and/or offer comments and direction concerning the proposed amendment and to what extent and breadth it should cover. No action is required.

PROPOSED MOTION:

No action is required.

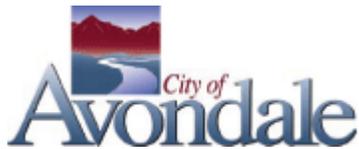
ATTACHMENTS:

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No Attachments Available

PROJECT MANAGER:

Stacey Bridge-Denzak, Planner, Development Services



CITY COUNCIL REPORT

SUBJECT:

Revisions to Zoning Ordinance Section 9 (Sign Ordinance)

MEETING DATE:

March 2, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Brian Berndt, Development Services Director (623) 333-4011

THROUGH: Charlie McClendon, City Manager

PURPOSE:

Staff is requesting City Council direction on proposed revisions to Section 9 of the Zoning Ordinance, Sign Ordinance.

Staff has undertaken the task of revising this section with four primary goals in mind, as follows:

1. Create a Sign Ordinance which is customer friendly and easy to follow;
2. Update the Sign Ordinance to reflect changes in technology;
3. Eliminate any conflicting provisions within the Sign Ordinance or between the Sign Ordinance and state statute; and
4. Use the purpose and intended character of each commercial and employment Zoning District as the basis for determining the types, quantities, and dimensions of signs serving developments in those districts.

This item is scheduled for information and discussion only. City Council direction on proposed changes is welcome.

BACKGROUND:

Tonight's work session represents the first time this item has been presented to City Council or Planning Commission. Prior to adoption of the revised ordinance, the application will be evaluated during public hearings before both the Planning Commission and City Council. Final drafts of the proposed revisions will be provided to the City Council prior to the public hearing.

A neighborhood meeting was held on February 25, 2009. Staff will provide the City Council with a summary of the neighborhood meeting during the presentation.

DISCUSSION:

Signs are an important element of development projects, especially commercial and office projects. Despite their visual prominence, however, the scale and design of signs are often overlooked within the design phase of a project and end up detracting from both the aesthetics of a particular development and the character of a city as a whole. A well written sign ordinance evenly balances the needs of the business community to promote their enterprises with the desires of residents who value high quality commercial development which does not detract from the residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Cities and businesses benefit from a Sign Ordinance which is modern, easy to use, and makes provisions for the latest concepts in design and technology. Avondale's current Sign Ordinance, adopted nearly 19 years ago, is obsolete and no longer easy to use. A comprehensive update to

this section is required to reflect the goals and visions of the City Council, Avondale's business community, and its residents.

Goal #1: Create a Sign Ordinance which is customer friendly and easy to follow.

Since its adoption in 1990, Avondale's Sign Ordinance has been subject to a series of text amendments which have modified or strengthened provisions regarding temporary signs, permanent wall identification signs, and variable message signs, amongst other things. Because of the numerous modifications written by several different authors, the Ordinance as it exists today appears to have no logic to its order and, as a result, application of its requirements can be a difficult task for both staff and the development community.

Staff's first goal is to comprehensively update the organizational structure of the section to make it easier to use by both staff and the development community. The time savings that can result from improvements the Ordinance may make Avondale more competitive for new development projects.

Goal #2: Update the Sign Ordinance to reflect changes in technology

Significant changes in sign technology, methods of illumination, and design techniques have occurred since the Sign Ordinance was last comprehensively updated in 1990. The second major goal of staff's initiative is to modernize the Sign Ordinance to reflect state of the art techniques not originally envisioned.

Depending on the direction provided this evening by City Council, the revised Ordinance may include a provision which allows for video message boards on Freeway Pylon signs adjacent to Interstate 10. Over the past few years, video signs have become more common adjacent to freeways in several Valley cities. These signs can serve as a selling point to attract significant retail development in an area. Conditions would be imposed to regulate the quantity and size of these signs and to ensure they will pose no risk to drivers on I-10.

Goal #3: Eliminate any conflicting provisions within the Sign Ordinance or between the Sign Ordinance and state statute

As currently written, the Sign Ordinance contains several provisions which are either incorrect or conflict with other requirements located elsewhere in the Zoning Ordinance. These types of errors can lead to inconsistency in the application of specific code requirements, potentially leading to a situation where two identical development projects being are given different sets of criteria on which to base their comprehensive sign plan. Fixing those errors and inconsistencies is imperative to ensuring a consistent level of high quality development in Avondale.

Additionally, the current Ordinance is in direct conflict with Arizona State Statute. A Senate bill preventing cities from prohibiting sign walkers was signed into law in 2008. Because Avondale's current Sign Ordinance contains provisions which prohibit all instances of sign walkers, those provisions are no longer valid and must be replaced. The signed bill does allow cities to reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner in which sign walkers can advertise along streets; the proposed revisions to the Sign Ordinance will include list of conditions intended to ensure that sign walkers do not negatively impact the safety of drivers and pedestrians in Avondale.

Goal #4: Use the purpose and intended character of each commercial and employment Zoning District as the basis for determining the types, quantities, and dimensions of signs serving developments in those districts

Avondale's Sign Ordinance as it exists today applies a one size fits all approach to determining the types of signs, dimensions of signs, and quantity of signs allowed for commercial and employment developments. Under today's standards, a neighborhood shopping center located in the C-1 Zoning

District is permitted the same amount, size, and type of signage allowed for a regional shopping center in the C-3 Zoning District.

The proposed revisions to Section 9 will break from this standardized approach and instead base the amount, size, and type of signage permitted on the purpose and desired character of the zoning district in which a development is located. Under this new approach, for example, the neighborhood shopping center in the C-1 District may be allowed an 8 foot tall multi-tenant monument sign whereas the regional shopping center in the C-3 District may be allowed a 14 foot tall multi-tenant monument sign. Many development standards, including building height and setbacks from residential, have been determined by using this same approach. Application of these same ideas to the Sign Ordinance will help achieve development more in tune with the scale of surrounding development.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is requesting that the City Council provide direction for the proposed recommended changes to Section 9 of the Avondale Sign Ordinance.

Specifically, staff would like to encourage the City Council to discuss whether video message signs further their vision for development along Interstate 10 and/or other locations in the City. Staff is also interested in Council's opinions on the proposed shift from a standardized, one size fits all approach for determining the allowed signage to a refined approach based on the desired character of a particular zoning district.

This item is for City Council discussion only. No action is required.

ATTACHMENTS:

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No Attachments Available