

Saving Historic & Vintage Signs

VITAL SIGNS, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES.

March 9, 2022



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

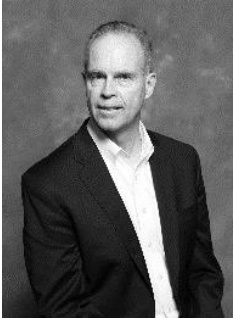
Disclaimer

This presentation is not:

- Legal advice
- The final word on today's topics
- A political opinion

Before taking any actions on the information contained in this presentation, you should review this material with internal and/or external counsel.

James Carpentier, AICP

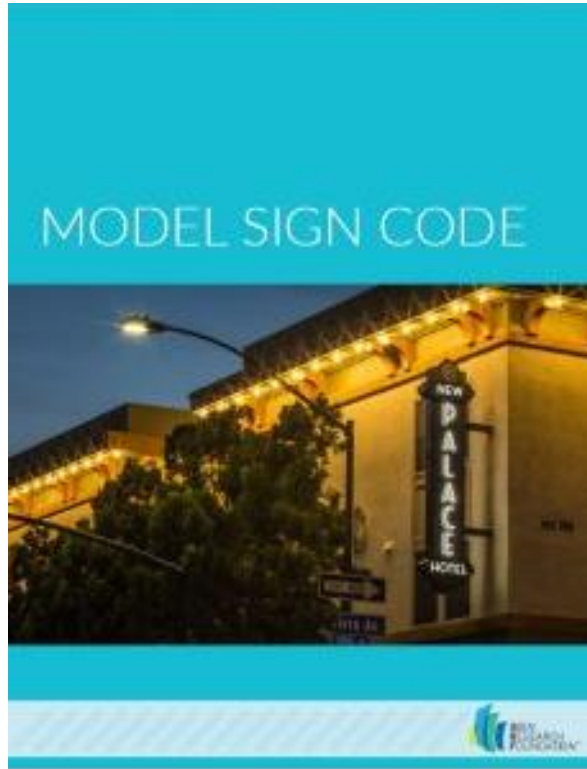


- Director of State & Local Government Affairs with the International Sign Association (ISA)
- 25 + years experience as a planner in the public and private sectors
- 10 + years experience working with sign regulations throughout the country
- Author and speaker on sign matters at national and regional venues

ISA – Over a Decade of Working with Planners

- AICP CM provider since 2011
- Webinars through the Planning Webcast Series and APA Chapter Divisions
- Presentations at APA National Planning Conferences and at State and Regional APA Chapter Conferences
- *Planning for Sign Code Success*[™] workshops

Resources – Sign Research Foundation



www.signresearch.org

Upcoming Resources



- New *Reed* Resource
 - SCOTUS *Austin v. Reagan*

What is your favorite vintage or historic sign and why?



Saving Historic & Vintage Signs Salt Lake City, Utah

VITAL SIGNS, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES.

Anthony Riederer AICP, LEED-ND
March 9, 2022



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

Anthony Riederer AICP, LEED-ND



- Senior Planner with Clackamas County, Oregon
- Leads the County's Design Review and Historic Preservation programs
- With City of Salt Lake City, streamlined city's standards and the city's Vintage Sign Ordinance
- RDG Planning and Design, worked with communities across the Midwest.

Yesterday and Tomorrow – Salt Lake City’s Vintage Signs

- Agenda
 - Background and Challenges
 - Public Engagement
 - Project Objectives
 - Regulatory Approach
 - What’s Next?



Background and Challenges

- Salt Lake City underwent a period of development and urbanization in the mid-20th Century.
- Many of the signs of this era had elements that were mechanically or electronically animated or constructed of neon.
- In many cases, these signs form character defining features of these neighborhoods and corridors.



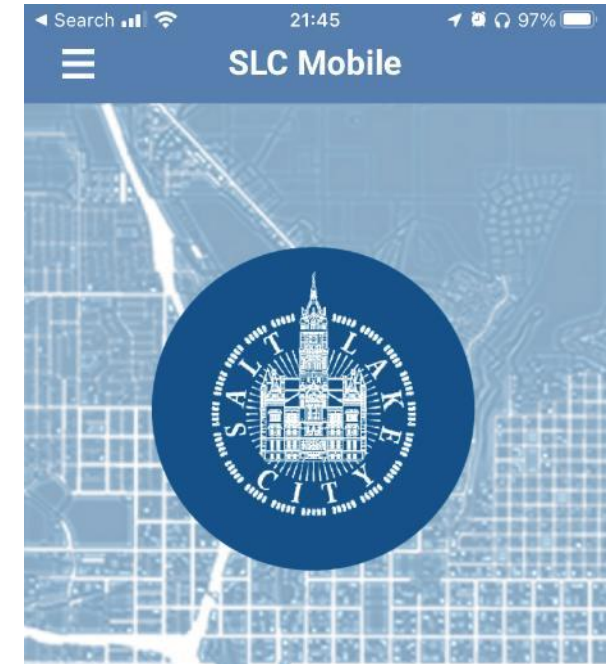
Background and Challenges

- Amendments to the Salt Lake City sign chapter made many of the existing non-conforming to the city's code.
- This significantly limited the ability of a property owner to restore, adapt, or relocate these signs.



Public Engagement

- Community Initiated
- Website
- NextDoor
- Community Orgs.
- Open House
- Three Walking Tours
- SLC Mobile App





Question

What challenges/issues might arise in working to preserve vintage signs?

Project Objectives

1. Clarify ability to restore existing signs
2. Permit relocation within site
3. Permit adaptation of signs for new uses
4. Permit relocation of signs to new site



Regulatory Approach

- Restoration of Existing Signs
 - “As is, where is”
 - Language was added to the “Nonconforming Signs” section explicitly allowing for the temporary removal of nonconforming signs, so long as they were ‘...reinstalled in the same location and manner.’



Regulatory Approach

- Flexibility for Existing Signs
 - Designation as a Vintage Sign
 - Established through a Zoning Certificate (formerly 'Special Exception' process).
 - Administrative Review



Vintage Sign Designation Criteria

Must not have special permissions and meet at least 4 the criteria

The sign was specifically designed for a business, institution, or other establishment on the subject site.

The sign bears a unique emblem, logo, or another graphic specific to the city, or region.

The sign exhibits specific characteristics that enhance the streetscape or identity of a neighborhood.

The sign is or was characteristic of a specific historic period.

The sign is or was integral to the design or identity of the site or building where the sign is located.

The sign represents an example of craftsmanship in the application of lighting technique, use of materials, or design.

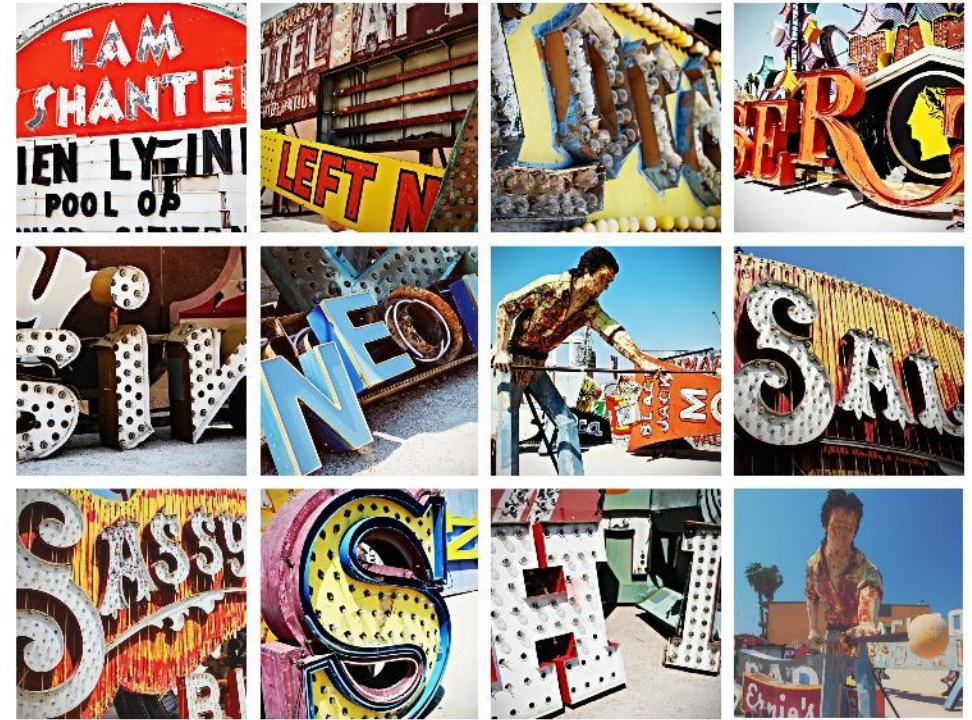
Onsite Flexibility for Designated Signs

- A vintage sign may
 - Be relocated within its current site
 - Be modified to account for changing uses within it's current site
 - Be restored, recreated, or reinstated on its original site



Offsite Flexibility for Designated Signs

- A vintage sign may
 - Be relocated to a new site for use as public art.
 - Can only be relocated to certain commercial/mixed use zoning districts.
 - Be relocated to the new location of a business, if the new location is within the same and contiguous zoning district as the original location.



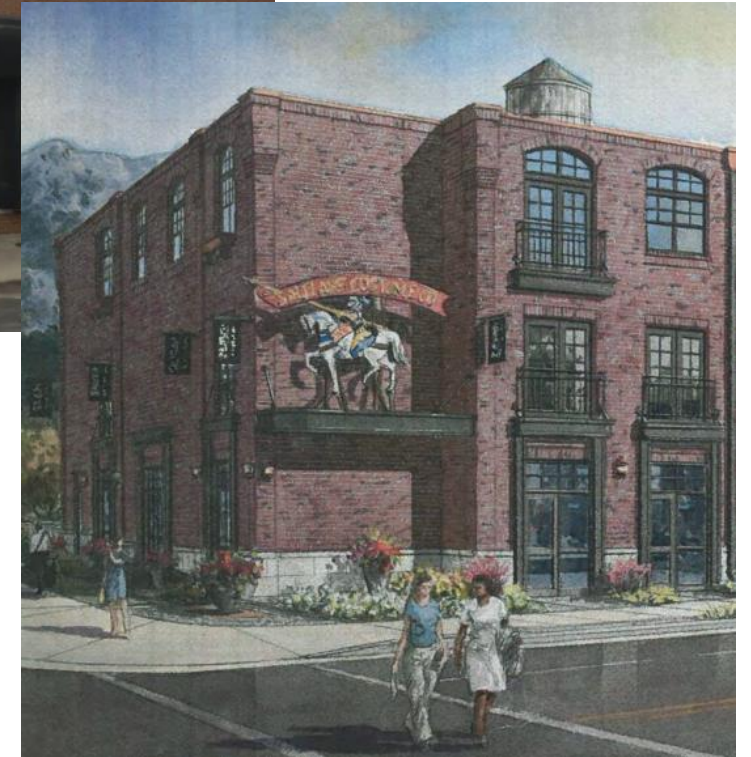


Question

What creative adaptations or re-uses have you seen and/or imagined for vintage signs?

What's Next?

- Communicating the availability of this flexibility to developers through the pre-application process.
- Continuing outreach to promote the this code amendment to the owners of vintage signs.



Saving Historic & Vintage Signs Tucson, Arizona

VITAL SIGNS, VIBRANT COMMUNITIES.

Daniel Bursuck AICP
March 9, 2022



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

Daniel Bursuck AICP



- Principal Planner with the City of Tucson
- Development of land-use codes and long-range corridor planning
- Background in landscape architecture, urban design, and planning
- Recent projects include project manager for overhaul of the City's sign ordinance to bring it into compliance with the *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* U.S. Supreme Court Case

For Today: Sign Regulations to Build a Sense of Place

- Agenda:
 - History of Signs in Tucson
 - Tucson's Historic Landmark Sign Ordinance
 - Tucson's Sign Design Option
 - Façade Improvement and Additional Tools



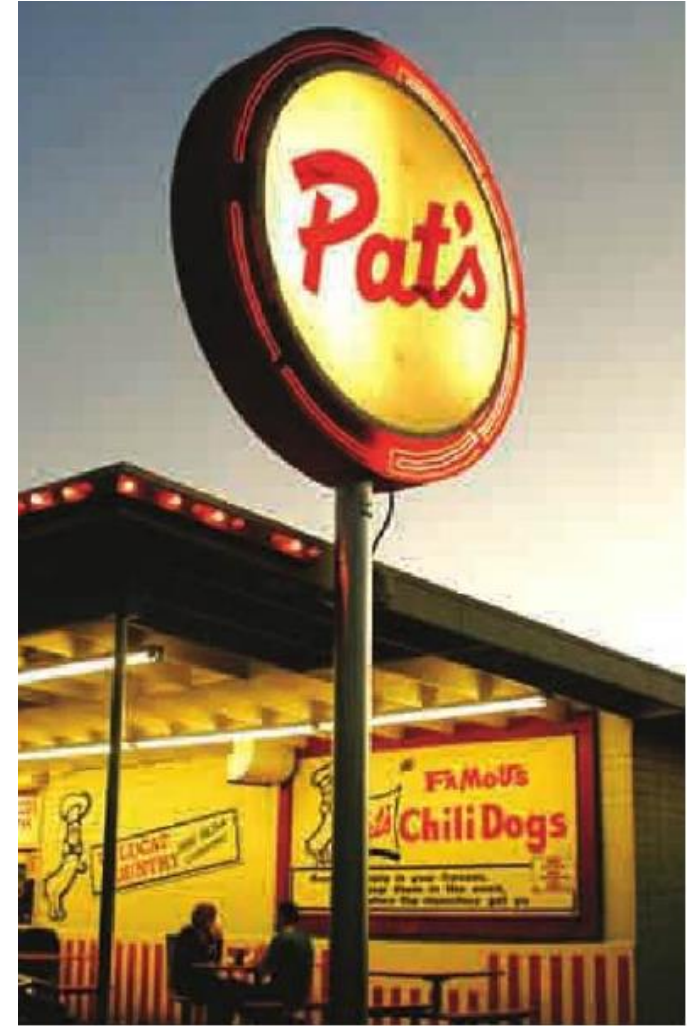
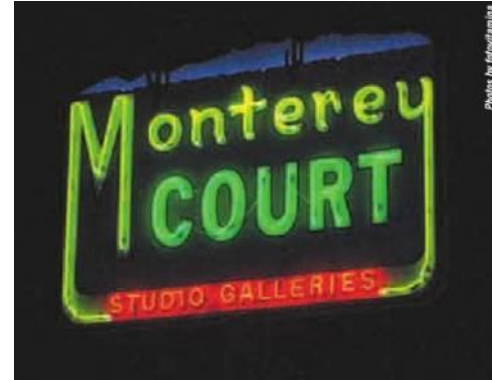
History of Signage and Regulations

- Three Distinct Eras in Tucson
 1. Post-World War II - neon & automobile era
 2. Post-life magazine article
 3. Re-appreciation of historic signage



Post-World War II Era

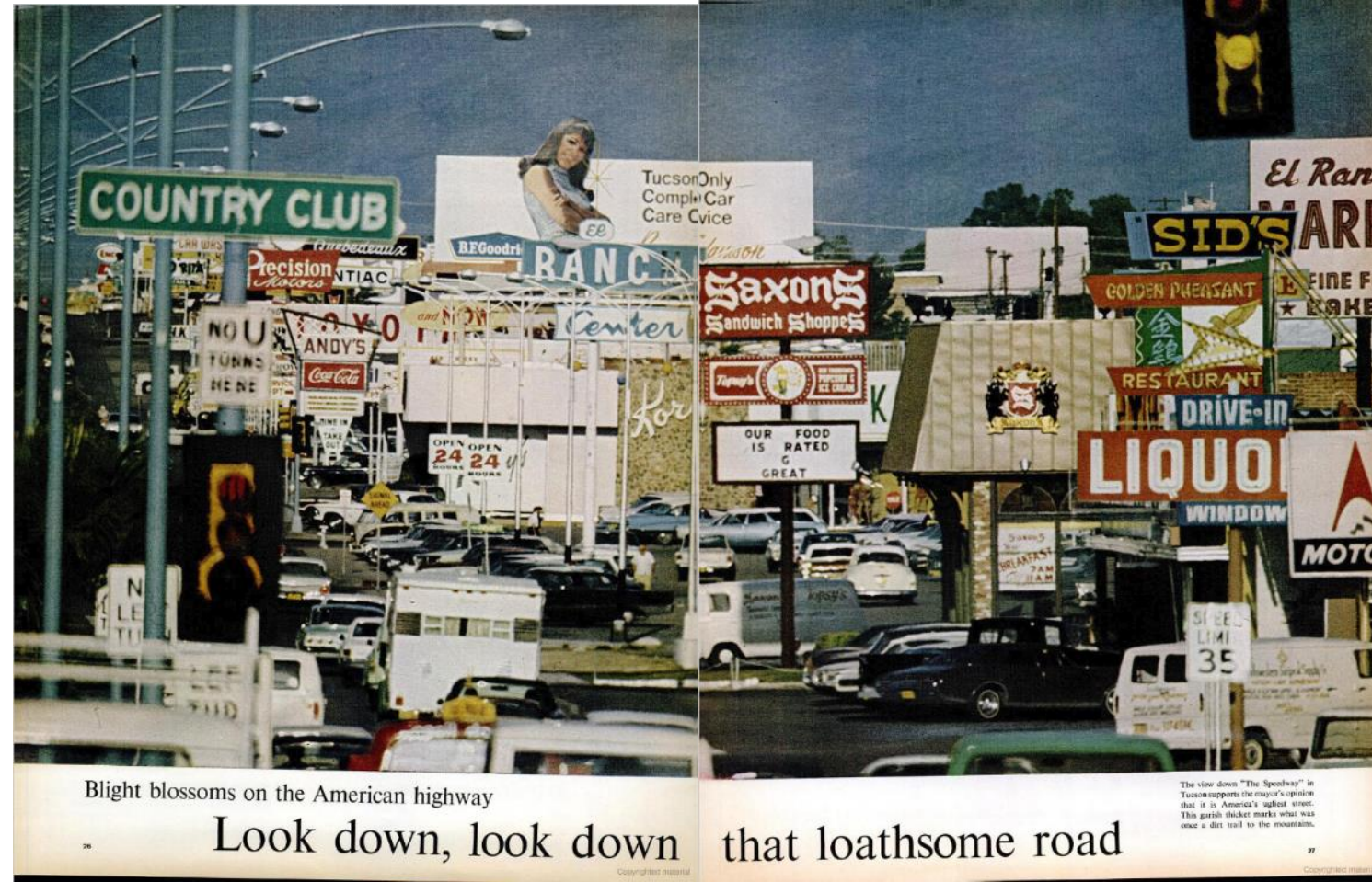
- Automobile oriented
- Historic US-80
- Varied designs many with neon
- Provide a historic account of a specific time in Tucson's history



*Source: fotovitamina

Post-Life Magazine Article

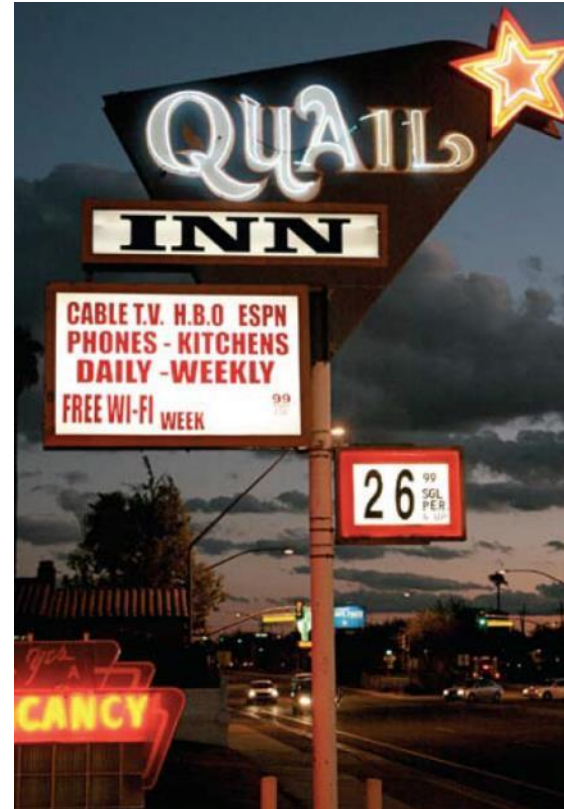
- Speedway boulevard listed in *Life* Magazine article about blight
- Mayor at the time quoted as saying “...ugliest street in America.”
- Sign policy became: “reduce and suppress”



*Source: Life Magazine - Google

Re-appreciation of Historic Signs

- Recognition of signs historic and cultural value to Tucson
- City began a two-year effort to develop the Historic Landmark Sign Ordinance in 2009
- Additional historic measures adopted in 2018



Historic Signs in Tucson

- In the 2000's, The City of Tucson realized they had a problem related to it's historic signs.
 - Businesses were coming to the City to restore mid-century modern signs
 - These signs provided a historical account of Tucson
 - However, our sign code did not have anything to address historic signs
 - In fact, it was drafted to do the exact opposite – **remove non-conforming signs**
- This led us to look for some solutions

Historic Landmark Sign (HLS) Ordinance Purpose

”...to preserve the City of Tucson’s unique character, history, and identity, as reflected in its historic and iconic signs, restore the sense of place that existed within the central business district and in areas of the City with concentrations of surviving historic signs, and to protect the community from inappropriate reuse of nonconforming and/or illegal signs.”



Historic Landmark Sign (HLS) Ordinance – Structure

- Specific guidelines created to qualify that fall into two categories:
 - Technical Guidelines
 - Cultural / Historical / Design Guidelines
- HLS Performance Requirements related to:
 - Restoration / Repair
 - Adaptive Reuse (Change of Copy)
- Review and approval



Opportunities of HLS

Opportunities

- Maintain historic character of community
- Support existing businesses
- Reduce costs that could be accrued if need to construct new sign
- Economic Development and tourism



Challenges of HLS

Challenges

- How do we determine what is historic? Is it age?
- Difficult to determine culturally significant.
- How to minimize complexity with so many criteria?



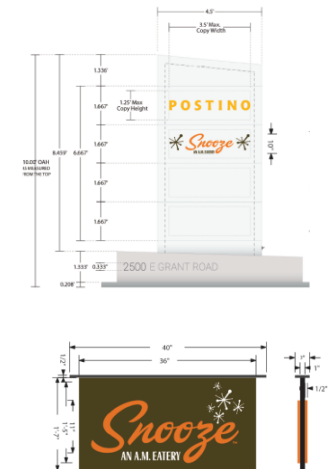
Sign Design Option

- Helps to provide further options for historic signs not covered by the HLS Ordinance
- Allows for an option to have one or many signs to be reused if they meet a certain design criteria and the further purpose set forth in the sign code
- Must undergo a review by a Sign Design Review Committee



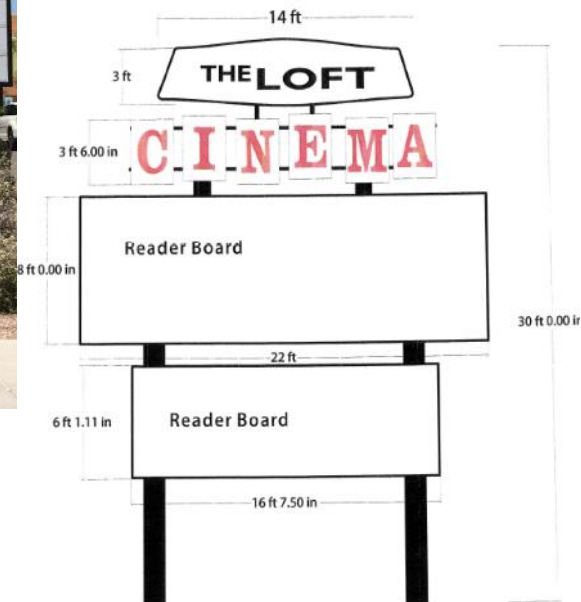
Sign Design Option

- Review Criteria:
 - Meets the purpose sign code;
 - Creates a clear connection with the shapes, textures, colors and materials used in the appearance of the buildings of the premise;
 - Creates proportional sizes of signs;
 - Improves the legibility of signs;
 - Enhances vehicle reaction time to the signs;
 - Creates an organized wayfinding and identification, or messaging;
 - Protects significant scenic views;
 - Promotes a well-organized visual environment; and,
 - Represents a best practice of the design of dark sky sign illumination



Sign Design Option Example

- The Loft Cinema
 - Renovation of marquee sign to return to design from 1970's
 - Existing sign was non-conforming
 - Newly proposed sign did not meet the era requirement or the change of copy requirement



Additional / New Tucson Programs

- Visual Improvement Program
 - Façade & Sign Grant Program
 - 50% matching grant to reimburse up to \$20,000 of well-designed property improvements
- Adjustments of Historic Landmark Sign Ordinance
 - Removal of concentration requirement
 - Allow for signs from outside of Tucson



Question: Historic Landmark Signs

The original name of the Tucson historic sign code was the Historic Landmark Sign code, but that was changed to Heritage Landmark Sign code

Why do you think they changed the name to Heritage Landmark Sign code?

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James Carpentier AICP
March 9, 2022



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

Presentation Outline



The Case for Saving Historic and Vintage Signs

Placemaking
Cultural Heritage
Economic Impact



Current Regulatory Framework



Best Practices



Conclusion

The Case for Saving Historic and Vintage Signs

- 2012 BrandSpark Better Homes and Gardens American Shopper Survey where 100,000 consumers were polled in 50 states and found that only 4% disagreed and 77% agreed with the statement “*vintage signs are worth preserving...*”



mesapreservtion.org



Sfneon.org by Al Barna

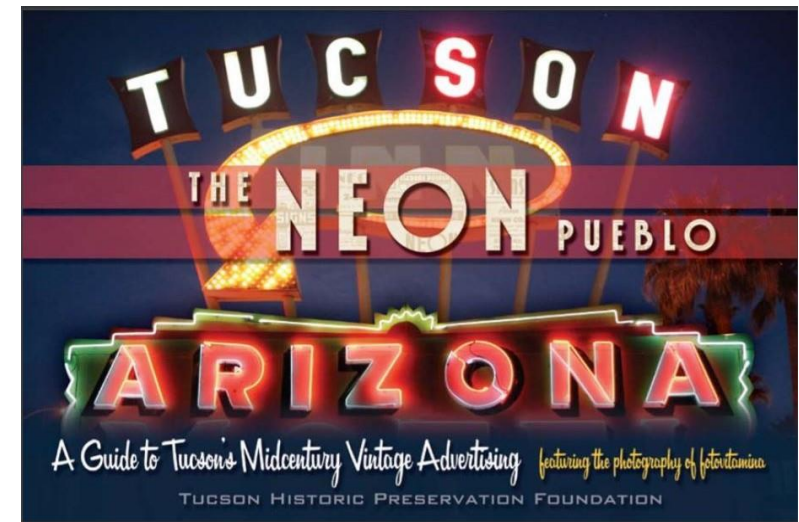
Placemaking

- Historic and vintage signs play a role in placemaking
- Historic and vintage signs can also be a part of and enhance creative placemaking
- “Creative placemaking is a new way of engaging creative people and activities to address social and economic issues in communities”*

*Vazquez, Leonardo, *Creative Placemaking*, APA, PAS Memo Nov./Dec. 2016

Economic Impact

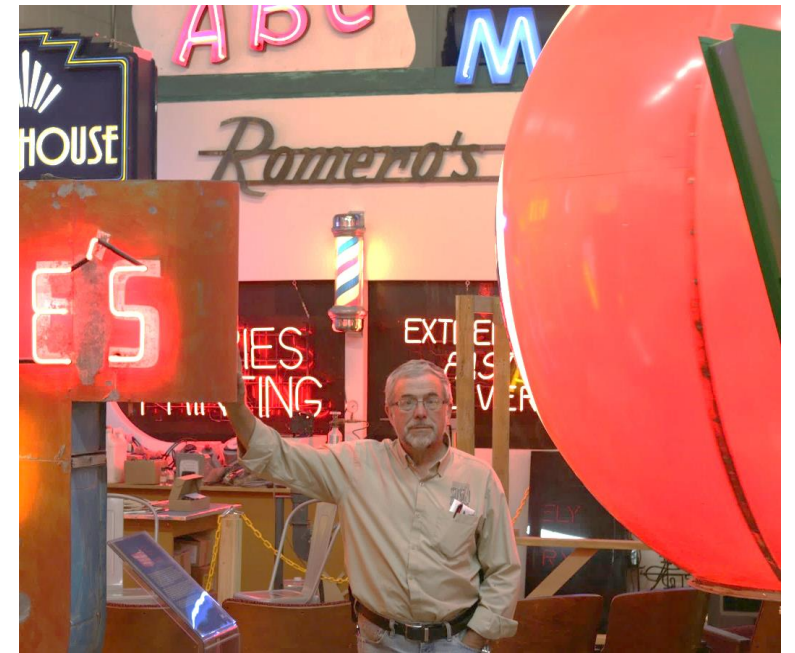
- The city of Tucson, Arizona has had its HLS ordinance for over 10 years
- The Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation has hosted evening tours of some of historic neon signs
- The Foundation has also created an award winning self-guided driving tour of vintage signs, which is termed “The Neon Pueblo”



Preservationtucson.org

Economic Impact

- Jude Cook began his own sign business Cook & Company over 40 years ago
- Cook recently opened the Ignite Neon Sign Museum in Tucson, Arizona
- The Ignite Museum has become a destination



Economic Impact – Gilbert AZ

- Gilbert, Arizona, represents a jurisdiction that has turned an economically depressed downtown into a vibrant downtown.
- How did they do it?
- The Town's design guidelines encourage neon signs



Current Regulatory Framework

- “The primary focus of sign regulation over the past century has been on eliminating signs, not preserving them.”*

*Stephen R. Miller, *Historic Signs, Commercial Speech, and the Limits of Preservation*, 264 *JOURNAL OF LAND USE* [Vol. 25:2] Spring 2010



Best Practices - Nashville

- Nashville, Tennessee adopted a Landmark Sign Ordinance in 2011. A Landmark sign is defined as, *“a sign that exemplifies the cultural, architectural, or commercial identity of Nashville and Davidson County, is iconic in its location, and contributes to the surrounding neighborhood character.”*



Debra Jane Seltzer/RoadsideArchitect.com

Best Practices – Nashville

- Landmark Sign Ordinance has three categories of signs, historic, vintage and replica.
- A Historic sign must be 50 years old and meet five criteria including:
 - Excellence in a particular period of construction; and/or is unique;
 - Retains the majority of its character-defining features;
 - The sign is unique or was originally associated with a chain or franchise business that is either a local or regional chain or franchise only found in Nashville or the southeastern United States.

Best Practices – Nashville

- A vintage sign must be constructed between twenty-five and fifty years before the date of application.
- Applications are reviewed on the cultural and iconic contribution to the surroundings.
- A replica sign is permissible when based on sufficient historical documentation of the sign and its location.

Best Practices – Nashville

- The code allows for relocation of a sign, to another location on site, or a similar business, or within a one-mile radius
- Signs are exempt 100% from the sign code for signs that do not advertise the business and 50% for signs that do advertise the business



Best Practices - Miami

- Miami's code allows for designated signs to be repaired, restored, structurally altered, reconstructed, or relocated
- The code is administered by the Historic & Environmental Preservation Board (HEPB) through the Certificate of Appropriateness Process.
- The HEPB reviews eight different criteria in determination if a sign is "historic."

Best Practices - Miami

- The unique characteristic of Miami's criteria to qualify as "historic" a sign can be recognized by the neighborhood as a focal point
- No stated limitations on the age of a sign such as 25 and 50 years as is common in other codes



Debra Jane Seltzer/RoadsideArchitect.com

Final Thoughts

- It is common to exempt the historic or vintage sign from the sign code allowances
- Allow flexibility in the time frame
- Flexibility in the allowed sign location
- The re-creation of a lost historic or vintage sign
- Exempt historic and vintage signs from permit fees
- Streamline the approval process
- Be Inclusive when creating the code



Resources & Code Assistance

- ISA provides complimentary sign code help
- Resources available at: www.signresearch.org



Contact Us

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HLS Program -

<https://www.tucsonaz.gov/pdsd/historic-landmark-signs-hls-preservation-program>

VIP Program -

<https://connecttucson.com/visual-improvement-program/>



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Thank You

