



BAR Review Levels

These levels of review are applicable in most cases. Please note that during the administrative review process, Staff may determine that a project requires Board review. Contact Staff at 703.746.3833 to confirm which level of review is required for your project.

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
<p>Temporary signs, as permitted by the Zoning Ordinance</p> <p>One sign of one square foot or less in area that is not internally illuminated</p> <p>Signs located at least four feet behind the surface of a window</p>	<p>New wall signs, projecting signs, changeable copy signs, and window signs</p> <p>Resurfacing or replacing existing signs that comply with the administrative approval policies</p> <p>Signs with targeted external illumination, e.g. mini spotlights and gooseneck lighting</p>	<p>Freestanding and monument signs</p> <p>New awning, canopy, and marquee signs</p> <p>Individual letter pin-mounted signs installed directly onto a masonry wall</p> <p>Signs with internal or back-lit illumination</p> <p>Comprehensive sign plans for multi-tenant buildings</p> <p>Signs with a total area greater than 75% of what is allowed by the Zoning Ordinance, or greater than X square feet</p>

Introduction

Signs are prominent visual elements of the streetscape in commercial areas of the historic district. Buildings in the historic district have many architectural characters, but they are predominantly pedestrian-oriented. Signs should be sympathetic to and not detract from the architecture of the buildings. When signs distract, shout out to the pedestrian, are not sensitively placed on the architecture, or obscure it, a negative image of the streetscape is created. High-quality signs that complement a building help maintain the quality of the historic district. The building's style, ornamentation, materials, color, and texture are the primary visual elements, while signs should play a secondary role.

Many types of signs can be approved administratively by Staff. Refer to the [Criteria & Standards for Administrative Approval of Signs within the Historic Districts](#) for more information.



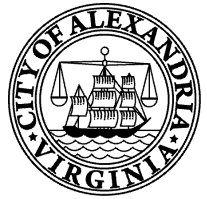
Prohibited Signs

Per the Zoning Ordinance, the following types of signs are prohibited in the historic district and cannot be approved by the Board:

- o A-frame “sandwich board” signs
- o Internally illuminated signs higher than 35 feet above grade
- o Pole signs
- o Electronic signs
- o Flashing or animated signs
- o Moving or windblown signs
- o Signs located in the public right-of-way

Guidelines

- o Signs should be designed in styles and materials that are appropriate and sympathetic to the age and architectural style of the building.
- o Signs should not detract from the architectural character of historic structures.
- o Signs should be attached in a manner that causes the least damage to the building material. On masonry buildings, anchors and brackets should be installed into the mortar joints to avoid damage to the brick or stone. Upon removal of the signage and hardware, any damage caused by the sign should be repaired.
- o Individual letter pin-mounted signs should be installed on a sign band or backing rather than anchored directly onto the wall.
- o Signs on historic buildings should not have letters that are more than 1.5 inches thick.
- o The Board discourages the illumination of signs from multiple sources.
- o The Board discourages internally illuminated signs, such as halo-lit, back-lit, and neon-style signs.
- o Where signs have lighting, the illumination should be adjustable with the final level determined in the field by staff, and the color of the light should be warmer rather than whiter/cooler.
- o The Board discourages exterior cloth or plastic banner signs, whether installed vertically or horizontally.
- o Internal and external window signs should not obscure the interior view of a retail establishment. Windows should not be painted, inappropriately tinted, or otherwise made opaque.
- o Freestanding signs, where permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, are only appropriate for buildings which are set well back from the street and have no other means of appropriate signage.



Additional Information

- o A permit is required from Code Administration for all sign installations.

Zoning Regulations

- o All signs must meet the regulations in [Article IX](#) of the Zoning Ordinance.
- o The area of any sign hung, placed, painted or displayed on a marquee or awning shall be included in determining the total area of signs erected or displayed.
- o On multi-story buildings, there are separate area regulations for all signs located 20 feet or less above grade and for all signs located more than 20 feet above grade.
- o A sign is defined by the Zoning Ordinance as *“any object, device, display, or structure, or part thereof, visible from a public place, a public right-of-way, any parking area or right-of-way open to use by the general public, or any navigable body of water which is designed and used to attract attention to an institution, organization, business, product, service, event, or location by any means involving words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, logos, colors, illumination, or projected images. The term does not include flags of any nation, state, or other geopolitical entity not related to a commercial business, product or service. The term also does not include public art or architectural elements incorporated into the style or function of a building. The term “sign” also does not include the display of merchandise for sale on the site of the display.”*
- o Per [§ 4-1409](#) of the Zoning Ordinance, a painted mural is not considered a sign as long as it does not include advertisement for any business, organization, or product. Any painted text, logo, or picture that meets the definition of a sign is considered a wall sign. However, regardless of the sign or mural content, any painting of previously unpainted masonry requires a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Board. Refer to chapter on masonry for more information.
- o Commercial freestanding signs are only permitted on a lot with a width of at least 100 feet at the front lot line and only where drive-in service or off-street parking is provided, leaving a distance between the building and a side lot line of 25 feet or more, or where a building is setback 25 feet or more from the front lot line. Freestanding signs are not permitted on parcels fronting Washington Street, unless it is the minimum signage necessary to comply with [§ 9-7-7](#) of the City Code.



A-Frame and Retail Wayfinding Signs

An A-frame or “sandwich board” sign is a freestanding two-faced sign with supports that are connected at the top and separated at the base, forming an “A” shape. Per the Zoning Ordinance, these signs are prohibited in the historic district. In 2010, the City adopted the [Wayfinding Design Guidelines Manual](#) to guide implementation of a comprehensive citywide signage system. The wayfinding system projects a consistent image for the entire city and reduces visual clutter. As part of this system, the City has installed permanent sign structures at corners along King Street to direct pedestrians to businesses on the side streets in the Central Business District. The signs have updatable, changeable sign panels for each business. More information on this program and its regulations can be found [here](#).





Comprehensive Sign Plans for Multi-Tenant Buildings

Many buildings in the historic district house more than one tenant or business, each of which may need a sign in order to have a visible presence. In such instances the Board prefers that a sign plan be developed to prevent a jumbled appearance with uncoordinated signs. A sign plan typically specifies the size, type and location of all signs on the building. Comprehensive sign plans are reviewed by the Board as a Certificate of Appropriateness. Each tenant then makes an individual application for approval of their own sign. A sign that meets the requirements of a coordinated sign plan that has already been approved by the Board can be administratively approved by Staff, regardless of whether the sign otherwise meets the requirements for administrative approval.

Glossary

Awning sign - Any sign attached to and made a part of an awning or any similar projections from a building, with changeable, fixed or both types of lettering in use. Refer to chapter on awnings, canopies, & marquees.

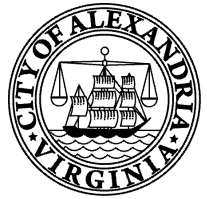
Banner sign - A sign of flexible material affixed to a framework or flat surface.

Building frontage - The length of the main wall of a building which physically encloses or covers usable space. Said frontage shall be measured at the width of the wall at the height where the sign is mounted.

Canopy/marquee sign - Any sign attached to a canopy or marquee. Refer to chapter on awnings, canopies, & marquees.

Changeable copy sign - A non-electronic sign or part of a sign that is designed so that characters, letters or illustrations can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or surface of the sign.

Freestanding sign - A sign that is supported by structures or supports in or upon the ground and independent of any support from any building or wall. It also means any non-portable sign supported by a fence, retaining wall, or by upright structural members or braces on or in the ground and not attached to a building. A freestanding sign can have one or two sides and can have messages on each side.



Monument sign - Any freestanding sign consisting of a structure built on grade in which the sign and the structure are an integral part of one another. A monument sign is not a pole sign, and it does not have any visible supporting posts or poles under the sign area. This sign generally has a low profile in accordance with height restrictions for this sign type with little or no open space between the ground and the sign and has a structure constructed of masonry, wood, or materials similar in appearance.

Projecting sign - Any sign, other than a wall, awning or marquee sign, affixed to a building and supported only by the wall on which it is mounted. A projecting sign has a sign face that is not flat to the wall on which it is mounted and has two sides and can have messages on each side.

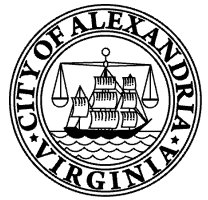
Temporary sign - Any sign intended to be displayed for a short time period based on a property condition. All temporary signs are not illuminated. Unless a different time period is specified, a temporary sign may not be displayed for more than 120 continuous days, and there must be a 30-day interruption between postings of temporary signs.

Wall sign - Any sign attached to a wall or painted on or against a flat vertical surface of a structure.

Window sign - Any sign visible from outside a building and visible through any window or door and attached to or within four feet in front of or behind the surface of a window or door.

Additional Resources

[National Park Service Preservation Brief #25: The Preservation of Historic Signs](#)



SIGNAGE TYPES FOUND THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT



^ PAINTED



^ PIN MOUNTED



^ AWNING



^ CHANGEABLE COPY



^ PROJECTING



^ VINYL WINDOW LETTERS



^ PROJECTING



^ PROJECTING AND WALL



^ FLAT SYMBOL