

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. Also, contact Code Administration at 703.746.4200 to confirm building permit requirements.

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Temporary signs, as permitted by the Zoning Ordinance	New wall signs, including individual letter pin-mounted signs or projecting signs New window signs (attached to or within four feet of a window) Modification of existing signs previously approved by the Board	New awning/canopy, flag, freestanding, or digital signs Internally illuminated, halo-lit, or back-lit signs Comprehensive sign plans for multi-tenant buildings Signs that don't comply with the Criteria & Standards for Administrative Approval of Signs within the Historic Districts

Introduction

Signs are prominent features in the streetscape of the historic districts' commercial areas. While the buildings display diverse architectural styles, signs primarily cater to pedestrians. Signs should be sympathetic to, and not detract from, the architecture of the building and surrounding streetscape.

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.

SIGNS

OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



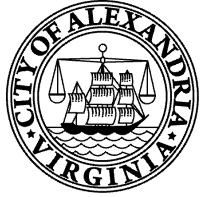
Prohibited Signs

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

- o Flashing signs
- o Illuminated wall signs located higher than 35 feet above grade within historic districts
- o Moving signs
- o Pole signs that exceed six feet in height
- o Roof signs
- o Signs erected on public land

Guidelines

- o Signs should be designed in styles and materials that are sympathetic to the age and architectural style of the building.
- o Signs should not detract from the architectural character of historic structures.
- o Signs on historic buildings should not have letters that are more than 1.5 inches deep.
- o Sign lettering should be appropriately scaled to the size of the sign and optimized for pedestrian viewing.
- 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 The Board discourages the illumination of signs from multiple sources.
- o The Board discourages internally illuminated, 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.
- 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

Zoning Regulations

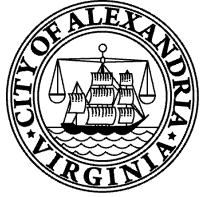
- o All signs must meet the regulations in [Article IX](#) of the Zoning Ordinance. A sign is defined by the Zoning Ordinance as *“An object, device, display structure, or part thereof, visible to and designed to communicate information to persons in a public area by any means involving words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, fixtures, logos, colors, illumination, or projected images. A sign may have one or two faces and may have messages on each face.”*
- o Any text, numbers, symbols, logos, or trademarks within a mural are regulated as signs, per § 9-205 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- o Architectural elements located at least four feet behind the surface of a window or door are not regulated as signs.
- o Any sign that exceeds the maximum permitted number, height, or sign area may be permitted with an administrative special use permit.
- o The area of any sign hung, placed, painted or displayed on an awning shall be included in determining the total area of signs erected or displayed.
- o Window signs cannot exceed more than 20% of the glazing area of the window where it is installed.

Retail Wayfinding Signs

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. More information on this program and its regulations can be found [here](#).



The retail wayfinding signs on King Street have updateable, changeable sign panels for each business.



Comprehensive Sign Plans for Multi-Tenant Buildings

Many buildings in the historic districts 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

Digital sign - A sign that can change its content by way of electronic or mechanic means. Digital signs include, but are not limited to, images projected onto a building, televisions, monitors, and other screens.

Flashing sign - A sign consisting of, or illuminated by, flashing or intermittent lights or other lights of changing degrees of intensity, brightness or color except for digital signs.

Freestanding sign - A sign that is supported by an independent structure and is not attached to a building or other structure. Freestanding signs include, but are not limited to, monument signs, minor freestanding signs, and pole signs.

Illuminated sign - A sign that is backlit, internally lighted or lighted by direct external lighting features.

Monument sign - A freestanding sign without visible supporting posts or poles under the sign face.

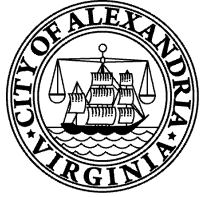
Moving sign - A sign that has moving parts. A flag is not a moving sign.

Mural - A work of art or artistic expression that is generally applied, painted, or placed directly on the exterior of a structure.

Pole sign - A freestanding sign that is mounted on one or more visible, ground-mounted poles. A flag affixed to a pole is not a pole sign.

SIGNS

OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Portable sign - A temporary, freestanding sign, including but not limited to A-frame signs.

Projecting sign - A wall sign that has two sides and projects from a wall or from the corner of a corner building.

Roof sign - A wall sign attached to a building which extends, in whole or in part, above the roof line or eaves, or is located on a penthouse. The term “roof sign” shall not include a wall sign which is mounted on a parapet wall above the roof line and below the top of the parapet.

Sign face - The portion of a sign which contains words, letters, figures, designs, symbols, logos, or similar and any distinctive background, separate from the building or structure to which it is attached, containing these elements.

Sign area - The sum of the areas of the smallest rectangle around each individual word, figure, design, symbol, logo, or similar and any distinctive background, separate from the building, containing these elements. For freestanding signs, sign area shall not include the base of the sign and shall only include the area of one sign face.

Sign area ratio - The ratio of the building wall’s width to the sign area.

Temporary sign - A sign intended to be displayed for a short period of time. Typically, a temporary sign may not be displayed for more than 120 days, and there must be a 30-day interruption between postings.

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

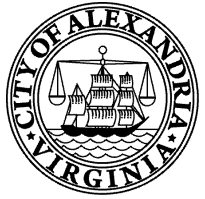
Window sign - Any sign visible through any window or door and attached to or within four feet in front of or behind a window or door.

Additional Resources

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

SIGNS

OLD AND HISTORIC DISTRICT CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



SIGNAGE TYPES FOUND THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICTS



^ PAINTED



^ PIN MOUNTED



^ AWNING



^ CHANGEABLE COPY



^ PROJECTING



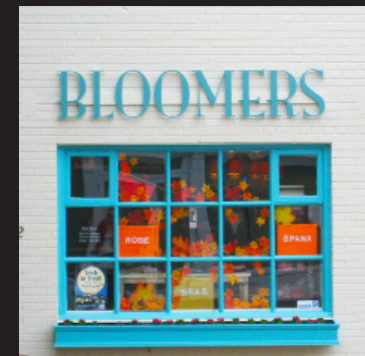
^ VINYL WINDOW LETTERS



^ PROJECTING



^ PROJECTING AND WALL



^ FLAT SYMBOL