

Text Amendment #2016-0002 Sign Regulations for Properties

- Proposed text amendments:
 - Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance, and
 - Sec. 9-7-7 of the City Code
- Overall signage policy amendment in phases
 - First phase: right of way signs
 - This phase: public/private properties
 - Next phase: historic district policies
- Ad Hoc Group On A-Frame & Digital Signage held eight public meetings



Issues/Goals

- Reed V. Gilbert requirements
 - Content neutrality
- A-Frame signs
- Flags as signs
- Lightbox signs – channel letter signs
- Pole signs – monument signs



Items for Consideration

- Signage is an important urban design component of a quality place
- Well designed signage can significantly improve the built environment
- Signage is critical to commerce and the exchange of ideas
- Signage can create landmarks



Background

- Effort triggered by concerns about:
 - Proliferation of A-Frame signs, especially on King Street
 - Electronic/digital signs
 - Reed v Town of Gilbert Supreme Court decision
- Formed 16-member the Ad Hoc Group On A-Frame & Digital Signage
- Group reached consensus on A-Frame and digital signs
- Group guided staff on creating content-neutral signage regulations



The City of Alexandria, Virginia established an Ad Hoc Group for Digital Signs and Portable A-Frame Signs (The Group) to review zoning regulations for some commercial signs.

Businesses and the Public are invited to attend meetings of The Group.
For information on The Group:
www.alexandriava.gov/planning

Digital Signage in Alexandria – Generally, animated signs (including “chasing” lights, moving images, and scrolling messages) are not permitted, but there are provisions in the Zoning Ordinance for schools and churches to use digital signs to convey information to the public. As sign technology changes, The Group is examining possible ways the City’s regulations can address the new signage products that are coming into form.



Portable A-Frame Signs in Alexandria – In most cases, portable signs, including A-Frame signs in front of businesses, are not permitted. The City does have a special wayfinding A-Frame Signage Program that started in 2009, which only permits special A-Frame signs at intersections along King Street to direct shoppers to businesses that are on the side streets. Some other businesses that are not on the side streets; however, have also been placing A-Frame signs in front of their establishments.



In the interest of balancing desires for business vitality with issues of clutter and safety, The Group will examine whether current regulations adequately serve the needs of the community or whether policy modifications are needed.

AD HOC GROUP’S TASKS - The Ad Hoc Group will help the City evaluate the following:

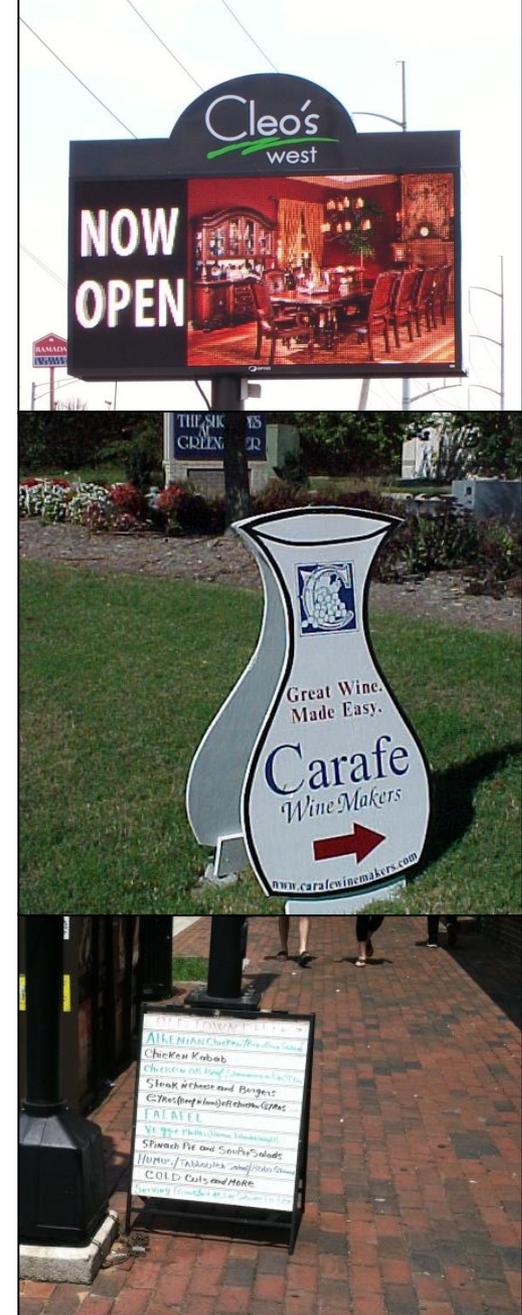
- What issues have been observed regarding A-frame and digital signage in recent years
- What regulations and guidelines exist to address current issues
- What changes are needed to these regulations based on current issues
- What additional recommendations are appropriate to further address current issues and to otherwise improve signage policies and programs for Digital signage and A-Frame signage

AD HOC GROUP’S MEMBERSHIP - The Ad Hoc Group consists of representatives of business, civic, historic and neighborhood organizations. Opportunities for Public Comment will be provided at each Ad Hoc meeting.

AD HOC GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE – The Ad Hoc Group is anticipated to meet in the Month of May with a report to the City Manager’s Office, Planning Commission and City Council to follow. The first meeting is being scheduled and will be advertised via the City’s website and other methods.

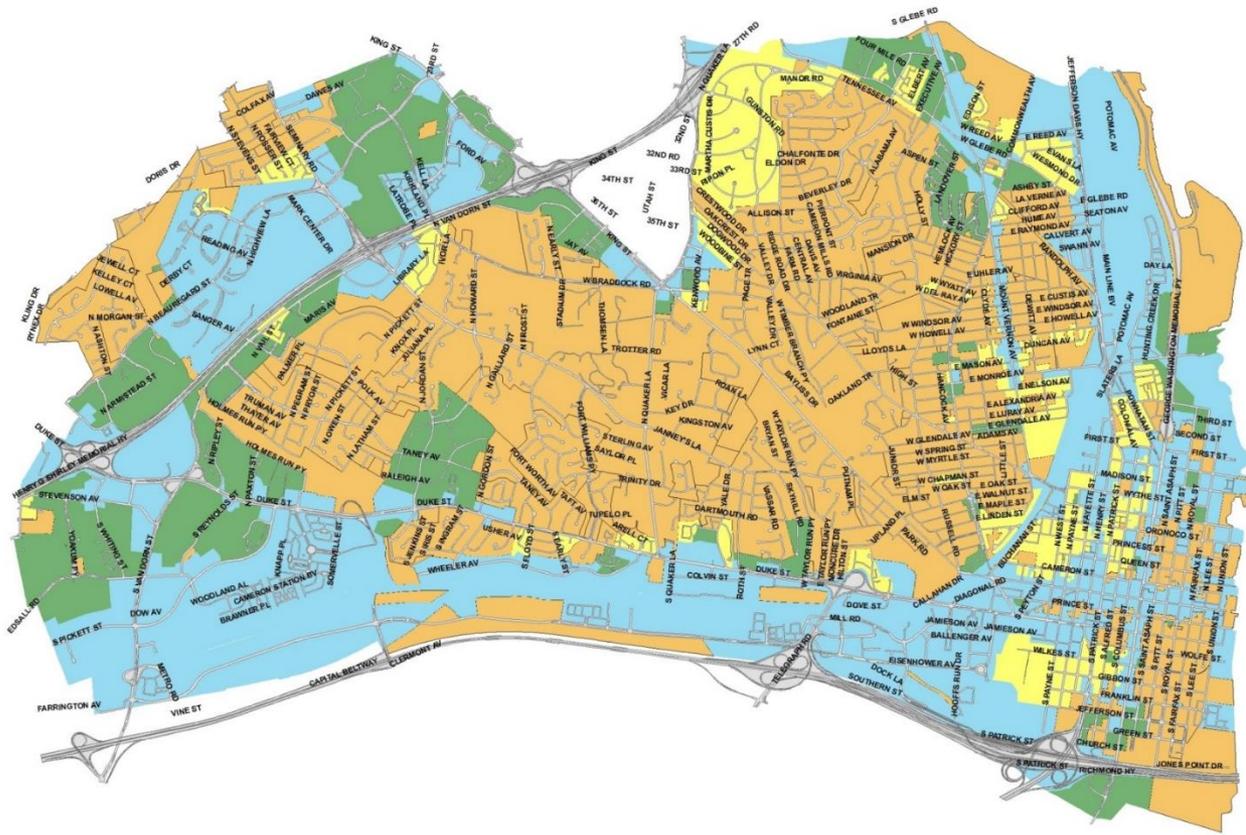
Ad Hoc Group on Signage Consensus

- Current conditions do not warrant allowing digital signs
 - Technologies may evolve, and allowance possible in the future
- A-Frames signs should be permitted only on private property outside historic districts
- Enforcement is necessary to address King Street A-Frame sign issue
- Support for Text Amendments in response to Reed v. Gilbert Decision



Zoning Districts

- Sign Regulations oriented around zone categories
- Most regulations based on building or lot size, land use, & zone
- Certain zones are concentrated in West End (RA, RC, RCX, RD)



Legend	
	CC, CD, CDX, CG, CL, CR, CSL, KR, NR, CRMU/L, CRMU/M, CRMU/H, CRMU/X, OC, OCH, OCM (50), OCM (100), W-1, I, UT, and CDD Zones
	RA, RC, RCX, and RD zones
	RB zone
	R-20, R-12, R-8, R-5, R-2-5, RM, RT, POS and WPR zones

Content Neutrality

Temporary Signs

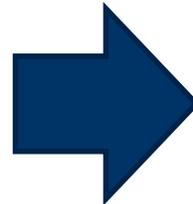
~~Real Estate Signs~~

~~Contractor Signs~~

~~Grand Opening Signs~~

~~Yard Sale Signs~~

~~Political Signs~~



Residential

- Total overall sign area allowance
- Max. size for each sign
- 6 SF sign for residential property for sale/rent

Commercial/Industrial

- 1/2 wall size commercial sign allowance

120-Day time limit w/ 30-day gap



Content Neutrality

Permanent Signs

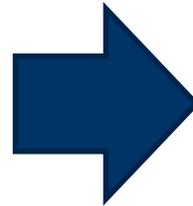
~~Church Signs~~

~~School Signs~~

~~Apartment Signs~~

~~Directional Signs~~

~~Remote Signs~~



- Location-based size regulations
- Similar size standards to existing regulations
- Max. size for each sign
- Location standards by use and by position on site



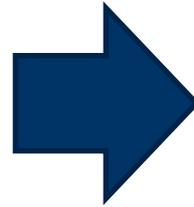
Content Neutrality

Commercial/Mixed Use Signs

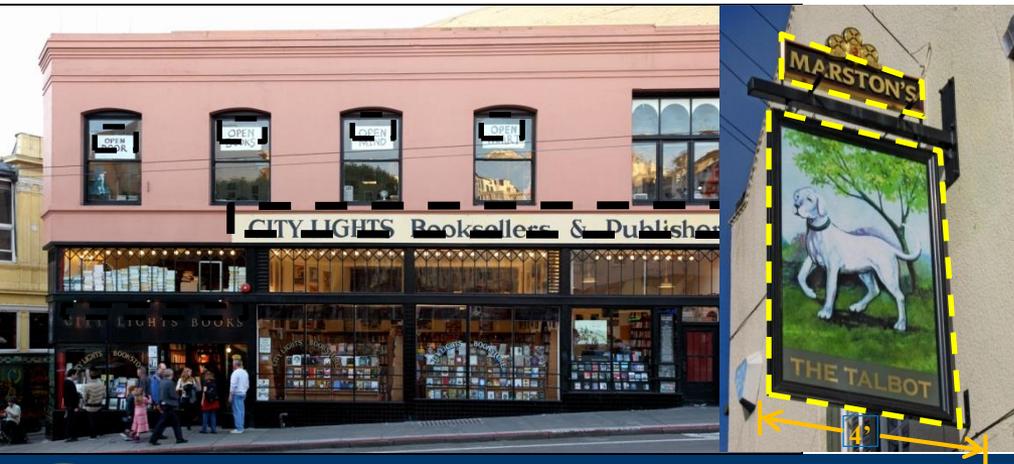
~~Special Advertising Signs~~

~~Remote Signs~~

~~Grand Opening Signs~~



- Similar size standards to existing regulations
- Wall sign allowance:
 - 1 SF/linear foot of building width for 1st floor
 - 1 SF/linear foot of building width for upper levels
- Projecting signs:
 - Area deducted from wall sign allowance
 - 16 SF for first floor
 - 24 SF for upper floor
 - Cannot project more than 4'
- Window signs:
 - Area deducted from Wall sign allowance
 - Max 20% coverage



Content Neutrality

Billboards

- Current prohibition needs amending for content neutrality
- Current regulations define a billboard as having more than 150 SF and “advertising (something) which is remote from the site...”
- Proposed definition is “Any sign that consists of a single panel surface larger than 100 square feet in size that is installed as an independent structure or is mounted on the side or top of a building, and this sign along with its location is sold, rented, or leased to a user that is not the property’s business owner.”



Content Neutrality

Board of Architectural Review Exemptions

- Current exemption for temporary signs is based on content types:
 - Real estate signs (4 SF)
 - Contractor signs (32 SF)
- Proposed exemption is for a single 6 SF temporary sign regardless of content



Content Neutrality

Additional Temporary Sign

- Revision to content-based political sign allowance to permit additional temporary signage
- “Additional temporary signs no larger than the largest temporary sign allowed on the property ... are permitted ... for no more than ninety (90) days, and there shall be a 30-day interruption between posting periods...”



A-Frame Signs

New provision for A-Frame signs on private property

- Not permitted in regulated Historic Districts
- Minimum 5' wide walkway clearance for pedestrians
- Placed within 15 feet of front of building
- One sign per business
- Max size 42" height by 24" width
- Durable materials
- Weighted and balanced for wind



Flags

Not Regulated



Regulated



Flags

- Clarification of regulations
- Flag allowance based on lot width
 - 1 Flag per 20' of width
- Maximum of 3 flags for SF/TH residential
- Size limits by zone type
 - 16 to 24 SF
- Area deducted from wall sign allowance in commercial zones



20 Foot
Wide
Commercial
Lot
= 1 Flag



20 Foot
Wide
Townhouse
Lot
= 1 Flag



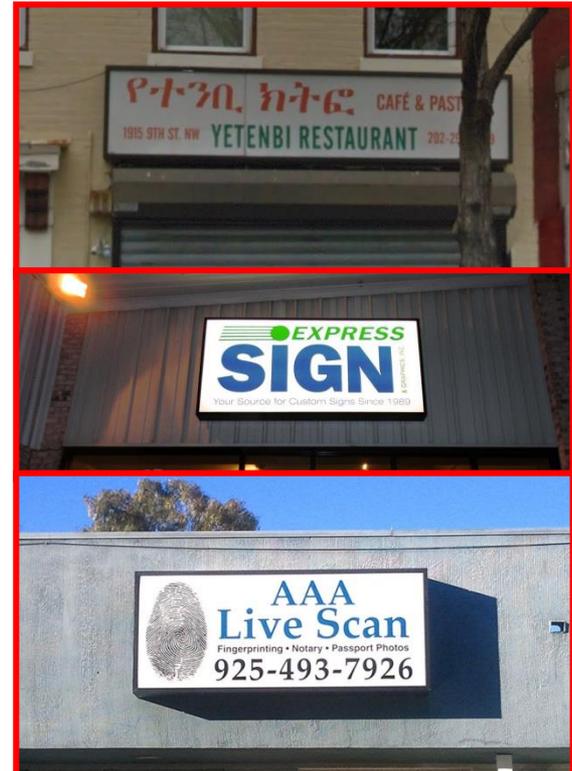
74 Foot Wide Commercial Lot
= 4 Flags



80 Foot Wide Single Family Lot
= 3 Flags (Max)

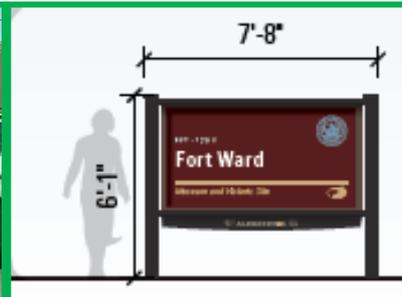
Light Box Signs

- Prohibition on rectangular light box signs
- Sign type already prohibited in many small area plans and in standard DSUP conditions
- Generally inappropriate for Alexandria context
- Allowance for channel letters



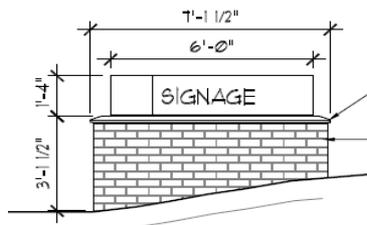
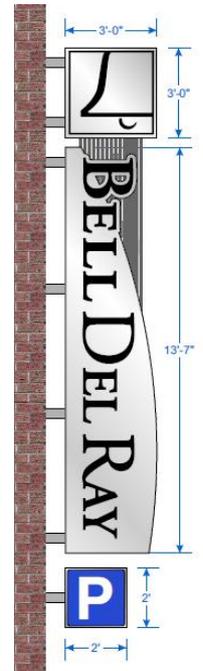
Pole Signs

- Prohibition on tall pole signs with a 7-Year moratorium
- Current regulations permit 25 to 30 foot tall signs with up to 100 square feet
- Generally inappropriate for Alexandria context
- Allowance for monument signs up to 6 feet tall with 32 to 40 square feet of area
- Gas station price sign requirements amended for shorter signs



Signs Along a Multi-Family Property's Street Frontage

- A total allowance area of no more than 60 square feet per property frontage
 - A wall mounted sign max. size is 40 square feet
 - A freestanding sign max. size is 32 square feet and 6 feet tall.



Minor Sign Allowance

For Multi-Family, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, and Open Space Zones/Uses:

Maximum of five (5) signs per property per street frontage per 100 feet of lot width with a maximum size of one (1) square foot for each sign.



SUP for Deviations from Sign Standards

9-103 (D) *Waiver of requirement by special use permit.* A special use permit may be obtained pursuant to Section 11-500, which authorizes the provision of signage otherwise not permitted by this Article IX, subject to the following:

- (1) The special use permit applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed signage would correspond with the intent of this Article IX; and
- (2) City Council finds that:
 - a. the proposed signage has an exceptional design or approach that cannot be accomplished within the existing regulations;
 - b. the proposed signage will not have an adverse impact on the nearby neighborhood, and
 - c. the signs comply with the applicable standards for approval of a Special Use Permit set forth in Section 11-504.



Signs at Dwellings For Sale or For Rent



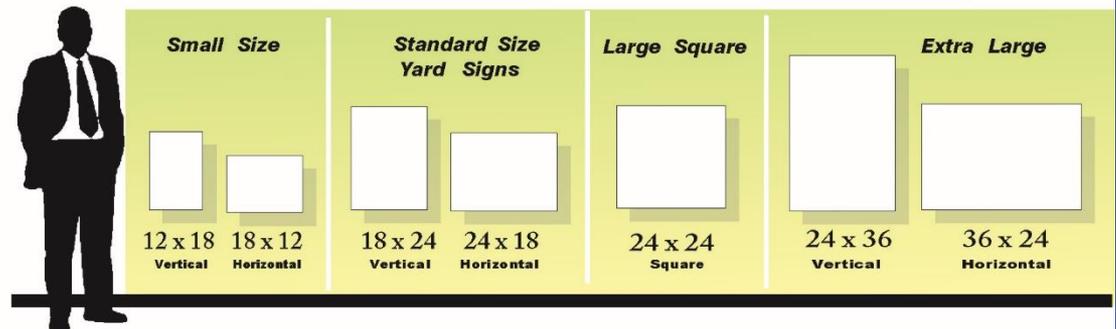
One sign *or combination of signs*

- A total allowance area of no more than 7 square feet
 - A wall mounted sign max. size is 40 square feet
 - Single sign or combination of signs.
 - Maximum height is 6 feet

6"x24"
Sign
Riders

18"x24"
Sign Plate

5-6'
Tall
Post



Conclusion

- Proposed Text amendments:
 - Article IX of the Zoning Ordinance, and
 - Sec. 9-7-7 of the City Code
- Provide content neutrality
- Addresses...
 - Pole Signs
 - Lightbox Signs
 - Flags
 - A-Frame Signs
 - Apartment & Real Estate Needs

