

Criteria & Standards for Administrative Approval of Signs within the Historic Districts

The following signs may be approved administratively pursuant to sections 10-113 and 10-213 of the Zoning Ordinance.

SECTION I: CRITERIA FOR GENERAL SIGN TYPES

1. Administrative Approval of One Sign

Two signs may be administratively approved for a commercial business and up to three signs if the building is located on a corner. The applicant may choose from the following three sign types listed below (see the attached images for an example of each sign type):

Wall sign

- A flat wall sign affixed to the building façade.
- An individual letter, pin-mounted wall sign installed on a wood frieze board or sign band but not to a masonry façade if it would permanently damage the masonry units.
- A painted wall sign, provided that it is painted on a frieze board or on an already painted building.

Hanging sign

- A one-piece, double-sided projecting hanging sign with a maximum square footage of 7 square feet. All projecting signs must be hung from an approved sign bracket and placed so that the bottom of the sign is a minimum of 8 feet above a public sidewalk and 14.5 feet above an alley used by vehicles. The hanging sign cannot project more than 4 feet from the building wall, or more than 4 feet into the public right-of-way, or within 1 foot of the curb line. The sign bracket must be constructed of metal with a black finish. Decorative scroll brackets are typical. However, other appropriate designs may be acceptable. If the bracket is being affixed to a brick building, the bracket must be installed into the mortar joints and not the masonry units.

Window sign

- A single, permanent window decal sign may be located on a door or window but may not contain repetitive language (e.g.: SHOES, SHOES, SHOES) or special advertising (e.g. coffee, tea, latte). For retail spaces with a center entrance between two symmetrical display windows, the single window sign area may be equally divided between the two windows.

2. Second Sign Option

Any two of the three different sign types listed above (Wall, Hanging or Window) may be approved administratively.

Corner businesses may have a total of three signs, with two signs on one elevation and one on the secondary elevation.

3. Size

The overall signage square footage for one sign may not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ (.5) of the linear footage of the building frontage. For example, the maximum size permitted for a single sign for a 20 foot wide building is 10 square feet. If a second sign is proposed, the aggregate signage square footage may not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ (.75) of the linear footage of the building frontage (15 square feet for a 20 foot wide building).

4. Material

The following sign materials are permitted:

- Metal, Wood, MDO (Medium Density Overlay or engineered wood) and HDU (High Density Urethane) are acceptable for flat wall signs and hanging signs.
- Aluminum and plexiglass are acceptable for pin mounted signs.
- Vinyl lettering is appropriate for window decal signs.

5. Content

Only the business name or identity, and logo or design flourish, is permitted on the sign, except as described below. No special advertising is permitted, in accordance with the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance.

Each business is allowed up to a total of one square foot (144 square inches) of window decal sign area to provide relevant contact information when the business is closed, such as a phone number, web address, QR code, or other to-be-developed technology. The one square foot will count toward the total sign area for a building but will not count toward the total number of signs permitted. Contact information may not be included on wall signs, hanging signs or awnings. Window decal signs applied to a glass door or the lower half of a window are preferred.

6. Lighting

Staff may approve the installation of targeted illumination (e.g. mini-spot lights) which are small in size, illuminate only the proposed sign(s), and do not damage the building in installation. Gooseneck lighting must be reviewed and approved by the BAR, as well as all signs which are internally illuminated, halo lit or neon.

SECTION II: CRITERIA FOR SPECIFIC SIGN TYPES

The following sign types may be installed in addition to the signs permitted under Section I. However, the aggregate signage square footage on the building may not exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ (.75) of the linear footage of the building frontage (15 square feet for a 20 foot wide building).

1. Signage for Buildings with Two or Three Tenants

As noted above, a mid-block building can have a maximum of two signs. Buildings with two or three tenants may still only have a total of two signs, but each sign could have the name/logo of more than one tenant. Staff may approve the installation of two out of the three sign types (or three signs for a corner building) with a maximum sign area of .75 of the building frontage in the following combinations:

- A combined hanging sign, with up to three tenant names, that meet the Hanging Sign criteria in Section I. The tenant names could be appropriately arranged on a single sign or be hanging plaques joined with a simple chain and hanging from the same bracket.
- A wall sign adjacent to the building entrance.
- A window or door decal.

All signage must be located at the first story or between the first and second stories. It is not necessary for all of a building's signs to accommodate all tenants. For example, a two tenant building could have a wall sign for the first floor tenant and a hanging sign for the second floor tenant. Alternately, a combined hanging sign for two tenants could be used in combination with a wall or window sign for one tenant.

It will be up to the tenants and landlord to devise an equitable distribution of sign area.

2. Directory Signs (Four or more tenants)

Staff may approve the installation of a directory sign for a building with four or more tenants which meets the following criteria:

- Only one directory sign may be installed.
- The directory sign must be located adjacent to the main entrance of the building.
- The overall size may not exceed 10 square feet.
- The removable business identification plaques must be the same size for each business and fabricated of the same material. One plaque per business.
- The directory sign may have subtle external illumination, such as small targeted lights directed at the face of the sign.

3. Menu Boards

Staff may approve the installation of a wall mounted menu board which meets the following criteria:

- Only one menu board may be installed.
- The menu board must be no larger than necessary and contain only the menu on a single color background.
- The menu board may not exceed 4 square feet.
- It must be located adjacent to the main entrance of the restaurant.
- The menu board must be constructed of either wood or metal in a single color.
- It must have a glass or clear plastic panel to ensure that the posted menu does not deteriorate from the elements.

- It may have subtle external illumination, such as small targeted lights directed at the menu.

4. Parking Identity Signs (Freestanding and Building Mounted)

Staff may approve the installation of a Parking Identity sign which meets the following criteria:

- Only one Parking Identity sign will be permitted at each parking garage or lot entrance per block face.
- The sign must conform to the Parking Identity design depicted in the Wayfinding System Design Guidelines Manual.
- The sign and bracket (or pole for a freestanding sign) must be fabricated as part of the City's Wayfinding sign order, or otherwise as part of the City's process for fabricating signs.
- The sign will be located in the field by BAR Staff and mounted so as not to damage or obscure any architectural features on any building.
- Building-mounted signs must be located so that the bottom of the sign is a minimum of 8 feet above a public sidewalk and 14.5 feet above an alley used by vehicles. Signs cannot project more than 4 feet from the building wall or within 1 foot of the curb line.
- Building-mounted signs must be installed through the mortar joints rather than through the masonry units (e.g., brick) on masonry buildings.
- Existing parking identity signs that serve the same function must be removed, as appropriate and feasible, prior to installation of the new sign.

5. Awning Replacement

Existing awnings already approved by the BAR may be replaced in the same size, style and material with a new color and new text/logo so long as the new text/logo is no larger than what the BAR previously approved.

SECTION 111: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS APPLYING TO ALL SIGNS

- Applicant must obtain a sign permit (and/or building permit) through Code Administration.
- All signs must be in conformance with Alexandria Zoning Ordinance requirements.
- Signs must be professionally made.
- A sign which meets the requirements of a coordinated sign master plan for a multi-tenant building previously approved by the Board can be administratively approved by Staff, regardless of whether the sign meets the requirement for administrative approval.
- All administratively approved sign(s) must be consistent with the *Design Guidelines* recommendation that “Signs should be designed in styles, materials, type faces, colors and lettering that are appropriate and sympathetic to the historic style of the building.”
- Prior to receiving an administrative approval for signage, BAR Staff will conduct research and visit the site to evaluate the subject property, as well as its context, to determine if the proposed signage is appropriate. Signs which are out of proportion or scale with contiguous signs on the block will be referred to the BAR for their review and approval.
- Freestanding signs (with the exception of Parking Identity Signs) and signs installed without BAR or Staff approval (after-the-fact signs) must be reviewed and approved by the BAR.
- Regardless of whether the sign meets the above Criteria, Staff may determine that the sign(s) must be approved by the BAR.
- The zoning ordinance allows for one unregulated sign, including a window sign, that is less than one square foot in area per building. This sign is typically a small plaque by the entrance or a listing of the hours of operation of the businesses.

Amended by:
Parker-Gray BAR October 24, 2012

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Old and Historic BAR October 3, 2012

Amended by:
Old and Historic BAR June 16, 2010
Parker-Gray BAR June 23, 2010

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