

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. A four square foot non-illuminated window sign and a temporary sign no greater than six square feet are exempted from Certificate of Appropriateness approval; however, the area of these signs is counted toward the maximum allowable signage allowed by the underlying zone.

SECTION I: CRITERIA FOR GENERAL SIGN TYPES

1. Administrative Approval of Signs (up to 20' in building height)

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 sign types listed below:

Wall sign

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

Flag sign

A flag sign which relates to the commercial business, product or service. A flag sign does not represent a nation, state or other geopolitical entity. Flag signs are typically installed flat against a wall or projecting from a wall on a pole.

Projecting sign

A projecting sign is a one-piece, double-sided sign with a maximum square footage of 7 square feet and located such 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 projecting sign cannot project more than 4 feet from the building wall, more than 4 feet into the public right-of-way, or within 1 foot of the curb line. 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. When feasible, hang new signs from existing sign brackets previously approved by the BAR so as not to cause additional damage to the building wall.

Window/Door graphic sign

A sign which is visible from outside of a building, either permanently affixed to a window or door, or within four feet of the window or door.

2. 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).

3. 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 halo lit or neon. Internally illuminated light box signs, as well as animated, electronic or digital text and graphic signs are prohibited in the City.

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 be used for multiple tenants. The two signs can contain all of the business names, or each business may have its own sign. For example, one tenant could have a wall sign, which the upper level tenant could have a projecting sign. Alternately, a combined projecting 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 Style Signs for Buildings with Four or More Tenants

Staff may approve the installation of a directory style 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 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. Changeable Sign Case

Staff may approve the installation of a wall mounted sign case which allows for changeable content and meets the following criteria:

- The sign case should be located where it does not damage the building or encroach or hide building features, respecting the building's solid-to-void ratio.
- Only one sign case, not to exceed four square feet, may be installed.
- It must be constructed of either wood or metal in a single color and may be no more than 4" deep.
- The sign case may have subtle external illumination, such as a small targeted light of LED rope, but may not be back lit or internally illuminated.

4. Awning Signs

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

5. Temporary Signs

A temporary sign is one that is intended to be displayed for a short time period based on a property condition. Reasons why temporary signage might be installed include: when a property is listed for sale, when there is an active building permit associated with the property, or when there is a time-limited event or activity at the property. No Certificate of Appropriateness is required for up to 6 square feet of temporary signage. Staff can approve temporary signage in excess of six square feet, but no more than 20 square feet. All temporary signage must otherwise meet the signage allowances in this document. Temporary signage in excess of 20 square feet requires approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness at a public hearing.

SECTION 111: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS APPLYING TO ALL SIGNS

- Applicant must obtain a sign permit (and/or building permit) through Code Administration, if required.
- All signs must be in conformance with Alexandria Zoning Ordinance requirements.
- Flags of any nation, state, or other geopolitical entity not related to a commercial business, product or service are not considered a sign. All other flags are considered signs.
- Previously approved signs and awnings may be replaced with new signs and awnings provided that they have the same, or less, square footage.

- A sign which meets the requirements of a BAR-approved coordinated sign master plan for a multi-tenant building can be administratively approved by Staff, regardless of whether the sign otherwise meets the requirement for administrative approval.
- Prior to receiving an administrative approval for signage, BAR Staff will conduct research and/or visit the site to evaluate the subject property and its context, to determine if the proposed signage is appropriate. Signs which are out of proportion or scale with the subject property or with contiguous signs on the block face will be referred to the BAR for their review and approval.
- Freestanding 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.

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Old and Historic BAR October 3, 2012

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