

Purpose

The Purpose of these Sign Guidelines is to help property owners in the City's Historic and Cultural Conservation Overlay Districts design signage that is complimentary to and enhances the character of the Historic District. All signs must meet the provisions of the City of Virginia Beach Zoning Ordinance in Article 2, Section 210, Sign Regulations, and specific signage requirements found in the applicable underlying zoning district.

The Guidelines are presented by General Standards and Sign Standards by type. A section on administrative approval follows.

General Standards

1. Design and Execution

- Should reinforce and relate to existing architectural character and era of the building
- Limit the number of permanent signs to 2 per building to promote clarity and discourage clutter
- Limit 2 sign faces per sign
- The graphic design should be simple in approach and reflect the business' logo, merchandise or service
- De-emphasize sign hardware by articulating in dark, neutral or subdued colors
- Ensure signs are readable. For longer messages, the use of uppercase and lowercase lettering is recommended since it is easier to read.
- Signs should be executed by sign professionals who are skilled at lettering and surface preparation

2. Inappropriate Treatments

- Should not obscure significant design elements of the building
- Do not cover and/or use large lettering on windows and doors
- Avoid generically used signage of franchises that are often oversized and overstated
- Do not block sidewalks with temporary/sandwich signs
- Do not obscure views of pedestrians and motorists
- Cloth or fabric signs are discouraged, except for awnings

3. Maintenance

- Signs should be kept in good repair and meet City Building Code standards
- Where appropriate, retain, protect, and repair: historic signs, stones, nameplates, owner, or building identification signs

4. Lighting

- Signs may not be illuminated from within
- Signs may be lit from an exterior source projecting light onto the face of the sign
- External lighting source should be from a white light
- Lighting should be subtle and understated, yet visible at night and in keeping with the character of the building
- Electronic signs are discouraged

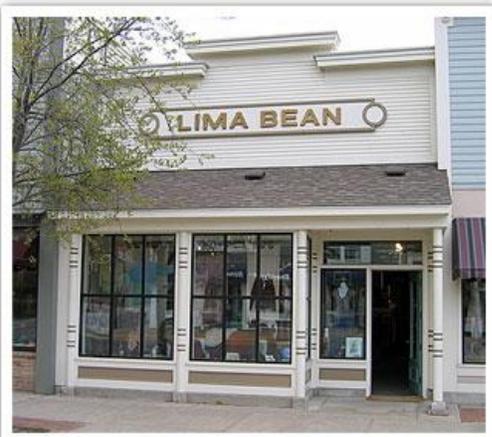
5. Color

- Use colors that complement the materials and color of the building, including accent and trim colors
- No more than 3 colors are recommended, although more colors can be used where appropriate
- Dark backgrounds and lighter colored lettering is recommended as it is more legible

Sign Standards by Type

1. Wall Mounted Sign

A wall mounted sign is either painted directly on the surface or is flat-wall mounted. It may be comprised of a panel or individual letters affixed to the building façade.



Typical Placement: Place above an entrance and/or storefront windows.

Design Standards:

- Wall signs should be scaled and sized according to the building they will be applied, no larger than one and one half square feet per linear foot of the front façade of the building, up to a limit of 40 square feet per business
- Use lettering and symbols between 10 and 16 inches in height
- Directory boards for multiple tenants are encouraged over individual signs
- A frame around the sign may not be necessary and may detract from the simplicity of the sign and architecture

2. Projecting/Blade Sign

Projecting/Blade Signs are attached to the façade of the building via supporting hardware and are oriented perpendicular to the face of the building. Projecting signs typically have 2 identical sign faces.



Typical Placement: Mount sign near the main entrance on a solid wall. Signs should be placed below the 2nd floor level, or where there is at least an 8' clearance below the sign. The sign may extend out to 4' from the vertical surface of the building.

Design Standards:

- Limit one projecting sign to each business, unless on a corner
- Hanging signs lose their effectiveness when obstructing the view of neighboring signs
- Mounting Hardware: Use materials that are scaled to the sign and building appropriately. Make sure that hardware takes cues and color from the building's architectural style
- Do not combine projecting/blade signs with hanging/porch signs

3. Hanging/Porch Sign

Hanging/porch signs are attached to the façade or porch of the building via supporting hardware. The orientation of the sign in relation to the façade may vary. This type of sign may also be used as smaller secondary signs, which may state subject matter beyond the business name.



Typical Placement: Similar to a projecting sign, a hanging/porch sign should be placed near the entrance. Signs should be placed below the 2nd floor level, or where there is at least an 8' clearance below the sign. For a covered porch, mount between the porch columns where the sign width is less than column spacing. Do not attach porch signs directly to columns.

Design Standards:

- Limit one sign per business, unless on a corner
- Hanging/Porch signs should not dominate the surfaces onto which they are attached
- Lettering should be the same style used on other signs on the building

4. Awning Sign

Awning signs are typically incorporated into the fabric of an awning. The sign should be professionally applied to the awning.



Typical Placement: Center the sign in the middle of the awning area. Lettering may be integrated into the hanging flap/valence of an awning.

Design Standards:

- Lettering style should correspond with existing signs on the building
- Avoid hand-painted or individually made fabric letters that are not professionally applied

5. Freestanding Sign

A freestanding sign stands in front of a business along the street in lieu of a wall mounted sign.

A. Pole or Post Mounted Sign

A pole or post mounted sign is a freestanding sign typically mounted off of a single pole or 2 posts.



B. Monument Sign

A monument sign typically has a substantial base below the sign that is built off of the ground. The foundational base of the sign is typically the width of sign and uses masonry and/or cladding.



Typical Placement: A freestanding sign should be perpendicular to the road or be placed accordingly for corner properties. Place close to the road front, but not near vehicle access points, as to obscure lines of sight.

Design Standards:

- Pole/Posts on freestanding signs should not be generic and should consider featuring reveals or ornate details above and below the sign panel
- A monument sign's base vertical square footage should be no more than 50% of the sign face square footage area
- Monument sign bases should be clad in red brick or clad in a dark material
- City of Virginia Beach municipal signs are typically oval shaped freestanding signs with dark brown backgrounds, and beige trim and lettering

6. Directory/Multiple Business Sign

A directory/multiple business sign is a singular sign area with individual sign elements dedicated to tenants in one building. These can be freestanding signs and/or wall mounted tenant directory signs.



Typical Placement: Wall mounted signs should be installed near main entrances. Upper floor tenants should be represented at each primary entrance by a flat, wall mounted directory sign

Design Standards:

- Each sign shall have equal space designated to tenant listing

7. Portable Sandwich/Changeable Sign

A portable sandwich/changeable sign is a two-sided sidewalk sign brought out daily to attract the attention of passersby.



Typical Placement: A portable sandwich board sign may be located on the property or in the public right-of-way (adjacent to the building that the business is located in), provided that at least 4 feet of sidewalk clearance is maintained, and a right-of-way encroachment permit from the City of Virginia Beach is obtained.

Design Standards:

- Sign should be a maximum 4 feet high and a maximum 8 square feet
- Both sides of the sign should be identical and must be securely attached to the sign faces
- Sign should be made from wood or heavy materials and constructed in a sturdy and secure manner
- Sign may be displayed during business hours only
- Colors should not be bold or fluorescent and should complement existing building signage

Administrative Approval

As per Article 13, Section 1304, the Historical Review Board recognizes the following instances that City Staff may approve signs administratively via issuance of a General Certificate of Appropriateness. Such approval may be granted when the sign was previously reviewed by the Planning Director and Historical Board within the past 5 years and/or any of the following:

- Changing company name/phone number on existing approved sign with same face
- No major overhaul to sign color(s), or graphics
- Signs with interchangeable panels will not need to be reviewed when tenants change
- Portable sandwich/changeable sign message content may be changed without additional approvals