

SIGN ILLUMINATION GUIDELINES

The ARB considers sign illumination proposals very carefully to ensure that new development within the Entrance Corridors is compatible with the historic architecture of the county. Non-illuminated or externally illuminated signs are preferred; however, internally illuminated channel letters or cabinet signs with opaque backgrounds may be considered for approval.

- **External illumination:** all external light sources shall be white. Lighting that is directed toward a sign should be designed and shielded so that it illuminates the face of the sign and does not shine beyond the edge of the sign.
- **Internal illumination:** internal illumination of signs may be limited by the ARB. When proposed, channel letters and reverse channel letters must be constructed so that no light spills outward from the top, bottom or sides. Cabinet signs are typically not appropriate for most buildings. For those buildings where cabinet signs are proposed, and for freestanding signs that include cabinets, the cabinets shall have opaque backgrounds and shall be constructed so that no light spills outward from the top, bottom, sides or back of the sign.
- **Blinking illumination:** blinking illumination is not permitted.
- **Exposed light sources:** signs using exposed light sources that form the body of the sign (e.g. exposed neon) are not permitted.



ACCESSING ON-LINE DOCUMENTS

County Code Section 4.15-Signs:

www.albemarle.org

- Pass your mouse over the main menu **Forms Center** tab. A drop-down menu will appear. Select **County Code**.
- Next, scroll downward and select **Section 4-General Regulations**.
- *Section 4.15 Signs* begins on page 37 of the PDF document.

Architectural Review Board Sign Guidelines:

www.albemarle.org

- Pass your mouse over the main menu **Departments** tab. A drop-down menu will appear. Select **Community Development**.
- Next, select **Architectural Review Board** from the *Navigation* menu on the right-side of your screen.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page. Under the heading *Where to get more help*, select **Albemarle County Sign Guidelines**.

Architectural Review Board

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Architectural Review Board *Albemarle County Virginia*

An Introduction to Sign Guidelines for the Entrance Corridors



INTRODUCTION

Signs in Albemarle County require permits. Those in the County's Entrance Corridors also require Architectural Review Board (ARB) approval. This brochure provides an overview of the ARB's guidelines for sign design. It is intended as an introduction to this subject for applicants. Before submitting a sign application, applicants should study the complete *Albemarle County Sign Guidelines* booklet, as well as County Code section 4.15, both of which are available on-line (see back of brochure for help) and at the County Office Building (McIntire Road). Failure to consider the complete guidelines and ordinance requirements will likely result in lengthier review and delayed approval.

SIGNS IN THE ENTRANCE CORRIDORS

Albemarle County has a rich heritage that is reflected in both its natural and built environments. In 1990, the county established Entrance Corridors (see map) to protect and enhance the County's wealth of natural and built resources.

Entrance Corridors are major routes through Albemarle that welcome visitors and serve as main commercial corridors. Signs are important along these corridors because they guide citizens to businesses and help establish the character of the community. When appropriately designed, signs enhance the community's physical setting.

PURPOSE OF SIGN GUIDELINES

Albemarle County's Entrance Corridor sign guidelines balance the recognized need of business identification with the Comprehensive Plan goal of protecting and enhancing the county's visual qualities. These guidelines seek to establish harmony between what we build and the natural beauty of the county by:

1. Creating a consistent and unified design approach along the Entrance Corridors by coordinating the placement, size, illumination, and colors of signs.
2. Establishing simplicity and reserve as preferred characteristics to reflect the historic character of the area and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the corridor.
3. Encouraging creative design.

GENERAL SIGN GUIDELINES

When reviewing a sign application, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) considers the following general sign guidelines to determine whether or not the proposed sign is appropriate for the Entrance Corridor.

- **Placement:** The location of a wall sign should be coordinated with the building's architecture.
- **Scale and size:** signs must meet zoning requirements (Section 4.15) and should be in proportion to the architecture and the development.
- **Materials:** sign materials should compliment materials used on the building.
- **Sign lettering and typeface:** three typefaces or fewer are recommended.
- **Color:** three colors or fewer are recommended. Overly intense colors are not permitted.
- **Trademarks, corporate logos, and graphics:** when used, these items must be incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign; standard logos may be modified by the ARB to meet the guidelines.

SPECIFIC SIGN TYPE GUIDELINES

- **Wall Signs:** wall signs shall be located so that the architectural features of the building are not obscured. The sign size shall be coordinated with the architectural element on which it is placed. For example, an appropriate height for channel letters placed on a 30" tall sign band is 18". This allows for 6" of clear space both above and below the sign. Wall signs using channel letters that are mounted on a raceway, or mounted as individual letters flush to the wall, are preferred to cabinet signs. Channel letter raceways shall be painted to match the color of the wall.
- **Wall Signs for Multiple Business Centers:** a multiple business center is a single building that houses more than one business, or it may be a group of buildings located in close proximity that

are coordinated in design. Coordination of signs in a multiple business center is required.

All wall signs in a multiple business center shall use a single sign type. Compatibility among signs shall be maintained through color, typeface, placement, and/or illumination. The ARB requires that sign design criteria be established prior to approval of the design of the multi-business building.

- **Reader Boards:** reader boards are discouraged in the Entrance Corridors. They have a temporary appearance and do not contribute to a cohesive image on site.
- **Fuel Pump Canopies:** fuel pump canopies should have a single typeface and should use three colors or less.
- **Window Signs:** the ARB regulates window signs that can be viewed from the Entrance Corridors, whether on the outside or inside of a window or storefront when the sign is within three feet of the window or storefront. Window signs must not exceed nine (9) square-feet per business frontage and must be in proportion to the window. Interior merchandise displays and signs that are 12" x 18" or smaller, and maintain the transparent quality of the window or storefront, are exempt from ARB review. Window sign illumination is discouraged.
- **Freestanding Signs:** monument signs are preferred to pole-mounted signs. Sign panels and support structures of freestanding signs must be proportional with one another. It is preferred that monument signs utilize a base material to match one of the building's primary materials unless the design of the sign represents itself as a freestanding element that complements the building. The use of plants, including ground cover, shrubs and or trees listed in the Albemarle County Recommended Plants List, may be required to integrate the sign into the site. Such plantings should be designed to shield ground-mounted external illumination.