

# TOWN OF VIENNA | COMMERCIAL SIGNS

The following is a summary of the Town Code relating to signage. All regulations for signs in the Town of Vienna are found within [Article 19 – Name Plates & Signs, of Chapter 18](#) of the Town of Vienna Zoning Code. Business owners are encouraged to review the town code before submitting any applications for review, purchasing, or installing signage. Signs installed without an approved review by the Board of Architectural Review constitute a zoning violation and will result in fines.

## WHAT IS A SIGN?

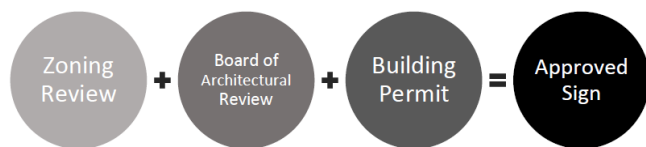
Sign refers to any object, letter, figure, design, symbol, artistic display, trademark, flag (excluding federal, state and local flags), illumination of other device intended to call attention to or identify or give direction to any place, subject, person, firm, business, public performance, article, machine or merchandise.

## SIGN REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

Any sign larger than 1.5 square feet in area and intended for permanent installation requires zoning approval from the Town of Vienna, review by the Board of Architectural Review, and potentially building permits from Fairfax County.

All signs fall into the categories of permanent or temporary. **Temporary signs must be approved by Town Staff, but do not require approval by the Board of Architectural Review.**

## BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW



The Board of Architectural Review meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30pm to review signs and other exterior modifications. The Board is comprised of community members appointed by Town Council.

Town staff will assist in submitting a complete application after confirming all zoning regulations have been met.

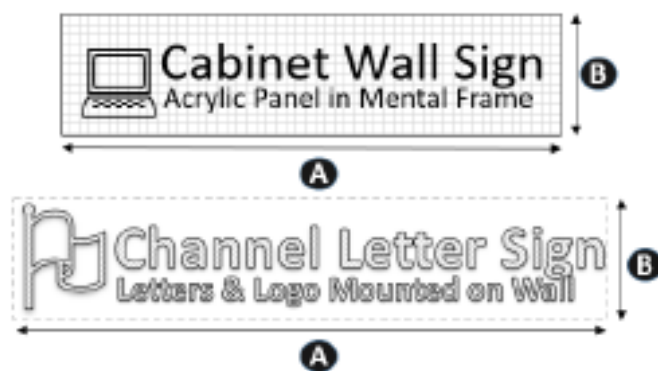
## ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The zoning code states maximum size, height, and location of signs by zoning district. **For illuminated signs, the maximum light level and correlated color temperature (CCT).** All zoning regulations for signs in the Town of Vienna are found within [Article 19 – Name Plates & Signs](#).

Town Staff reviews the signs for zoning compliance before signs are placed on the agenda of the Board of Architectural Review.

## HOW IS SIGN AREA MEASURED?

Sign area includes the entire face of the sign and also any adjacent area contributing to its decoration. In the case of an open sign made up of individual letters, figures, or designs, the space between and around such letters, figures, or designs **would be included to create a rectangular shape.**



In the above examples, the sign area is calculated by multiplying the width of the sign by the height of the sign face. The same method applies for any type of freestanding sign.



## Department of Planning & Zoning

127 Center Street South | Vienna, VA 22180

Phone: 703-255-6341 | Email: [DPZ@vienna.gov](mailto:DPZ@vienna.gov) | [www.viennava.gov](http://www.viennava.gov)

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This page explains the different types of signs allowed in the town, how to measure them, and the appropriate options for their illumination.

## WALL SIGNS

Wall sign refers to any sign which is affixed directly to or suspended from a wall, marquee, mansard roof, or parapet wall of a building, aligning with the exposed face of the wall and extending from it less than 12 inches. A wall sign may be either of one-piece construction or of individual letters or symbols. A wall sign may also be attached to an awning or canopy.

These signs may be illuminated externally by downward -directed lights, internally, backlit using white or single-color light sources, or in a marquee bulb style.

A total limit of 2 sq. ft. of wall sign area is permitted for each linear foot of commercial or industrial building frontage. If a building has multiple tenants within multiple stories, the maximum sign area for the building is based on the frontage of the ground level.

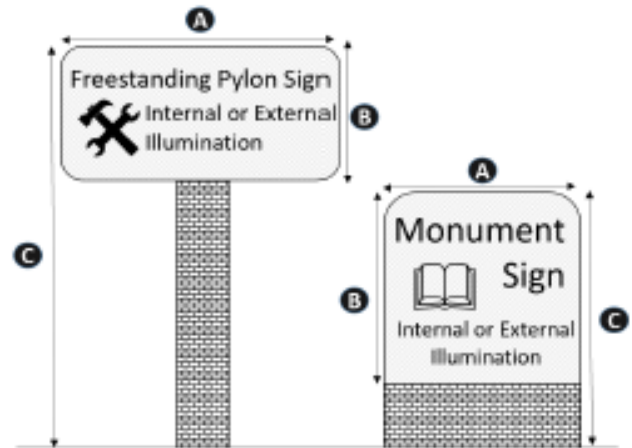
## WINDOW SIGNS

Window sign refers to signs placed over top or inside a window. Window sign area per business shall not exceed 10 sq. ft., or 25% of the window area, whichever is less.

When illuminated, text in window signs is not permitted to move or flash.

## FREESTANDING SIGNS

Freestanding signs are either pylon or monument signs. The area of freestanding signs is determined by multiplying the area of the sign face and width, A and B in the example image. The sign height is the distance between the grade at which the sign sits, and the top of the sign structure, unit C in the example image.



One freestanding sign not to exceed 36 sq. ft. in area shall be permitted for each separate building. Multi-tenant buildings must share the sign area of a single sign.

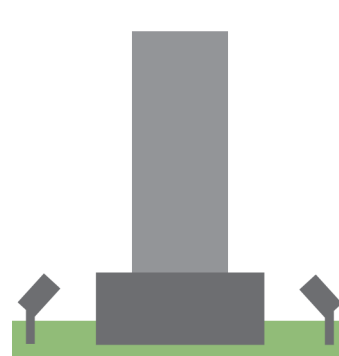
These signs may be illuminated externally by downward -directed lights, internally, or backlit using white or single-color light sources.

The location of all freestanding signs must be shown on an approved site plan before review by the Board of Architectural Review.

## APPROPRIATE EXTERNAL LIGHTING

External lighting for freestanding signs is required to use the maximum light level and CCT per its zone. For new signs and wherever possible when updating existing signs, lighting should be aimed downwards across the sign's surface.

### DISCOURAGED



### ENCOURAGED



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## FREESTANDING DIGITAL SIGNS

In addition to traditional freestanding signs, the Town allows pylon or monument digital signs that meet the light level, CCT, and rate of display change requirements of the relevant zone.

Digital signs are not permitted to flash or have animation between changes to the image or text being displayed. Single-color displays are encouraged.

## POSITIVE VS NEGATIVE CONTRAST

Sign design applications should achieve adequate positive or negative contrast in their designs to support legibility and wayfinding in the community. For internally illuminated signs, positive contrast designs are encouraged.

### POSITIVE



### NEGATIVE



## PARTS OF A SIGN PERMIT APPLICATION

When applying for signs, applicants must provide some basic information to Town staff to verify the plans for the sign meet the zoning requirements.

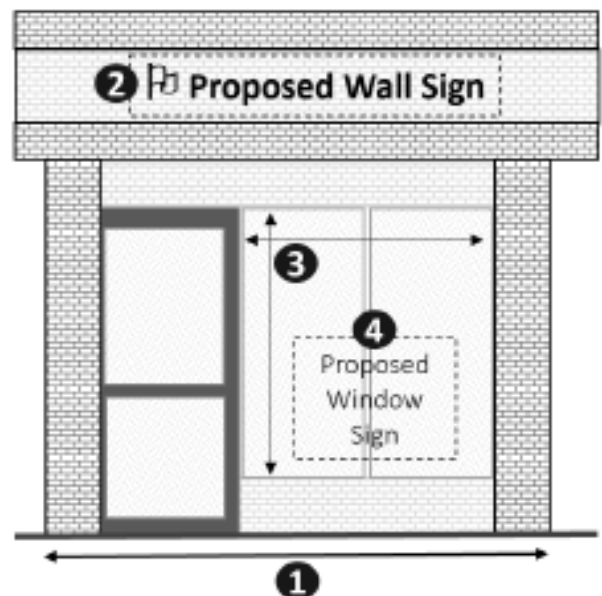
This would include:

1. The width of the tenant space or building at the ground level,

2. Location, size (height, width, depth), and design of all wall signs,
3. The height and width of the window area,
4. Location, size (height, width, depth), and design of all window signs.

For illuminated signs, applicants would also need to provide a lighting plan, lighting compliance form, or certified statement of compliance from a qualified professional. This is to verify the lighting equipment to be used and whether the maximum light level and CCT are compliant with zoning.

Town staff will assist in submitting a complete application after confirming all zoning regulations are met.



Applicants to the Board are required to provide renderings and material samples of sign colors for the Board's review. The CCT of any white lighting and any planned single-color lighting should also be included.

The Board of Architectural Review criteria can be found in Chapter 4, Section 4-15. - Design criteria.

**Questions? Contact Planning and Zoning at [DPZ@viennava.gov](mailto:DPZ@viennava.gov)**  
**To start a sign application, visit <https://vienna.idtplans.com/secure/>**



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