CHAPTER VII
SIGNS

It is the intent of the signs section of the ***Design Review Guidelines*** to ensure that new signs enhance the visual image of the property, complement the existing conditions along the street, and are compatible with the goals for signage in Article VI Signs of the Zoning Ordinance.

The City Sign Ordinance determines the size, number, location and type of signage allowed in given sign districts throughout the City. Designs for new signs or modifications to existing signs in the **Architectural Preservation Districts** and the **Corridor Protection District** must receive the approval of the Architectural Review Board before sign permits are issued.

The following sign districts are located in the City:

Colonial Williamsburg Sign District is located in the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area and allows small historic signs of a modest scale and illumination.

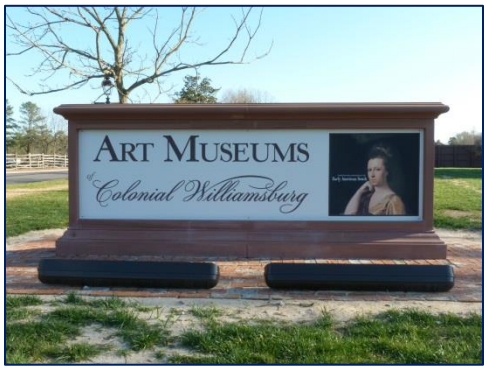
Residential Sign District includes residential neighborhoods along the entrance corridors and typical signs include subdivision identification and room rental to visitors which must be externally illuminated.

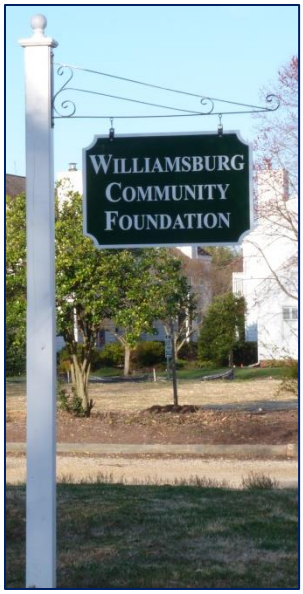
Downtown Sign District includes Merchant's Square and the surrounding areas and allows signs that are compatible with the pedestrian character of the area.

Corridor Sign District includes the major entrance corridors into the city, and allows larger signs with external and internal illumination.

Arts and Cultural Sign District is located in the Arts and Cultural District and allows more flexibility for colors and design.

In the **Architectural Preservation Districts**, it is the intent of the Guidelines to ensure that all signs maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment of the Colonial Williamsburg Historic Area and surrounding neighborhoods and commercial areas. Signs should respect the architectural features of the related building and positively contribute to the visual appearance of the streetscape.





In the **Corridor Protection District** signs should be incorporated into the site plan design and should positively contribute to the improvement of the aesthetic character of the streetscape.

DESIGN OF SIGNS

The design of signs should be compatible with the architectural character of the related building and its site. Materials, colors and lettering on all signage for the identified business should be uniform throughout the site and should be compatible with the related building.

Sign Design Guidelines:

- The graphic design should be simple in approach and generally should reflect only the business logo, and the nature of the business or service.
- Signs should not appear busy, cluttered or crowded.
- Materials and design should be compatible with the design of the building.
- No pictures, scenes or illustrations.

Monument & Freestanding Signs:

- A monument sign is a ground mounted sign mounted on a contiguous base having a minimum width of at least 90 percent of the sign and its supporting structure.
- A freestanding sign is supported by one or more columns, uprights or braces, in or upon the ground, but not attached to a building.
- For specific sizes and height requirements allowed see Article VI Signs in the Zoning Ordinance.
- The height of the base for a monument sign shall not exceed more than 50 percent of the height of the sign face.
- Sign bases should be a part of the overall sign design and should complement the sign face. Any planting must be indicated on a site plan and submitted with the sign package.

- For monument or free-standing signs both sides of a double face sign element should line up so that a blank space is not visible from the opposite side (e.g. the sign faces should line up when viewed from either side).
- If pole covers are used the width of the pole cover must be at least 90 percent of the sign width and its supporting structure. It must be simple in design and its color must coordinate with the sign face and building.
- No more than three typefaces/fonts are recommended per sign.
- For monument and freestanding signs, lettering height should be between eight and 15 inches. Exceptions may be approved on a case-by-case basis depending on the sign design, distance from the street and compatibility with the streetscape.
- Where more than one business or occupant shares a building, it is recommended that a master sign plan be submitted by the property owner. If multiple monument or freestanding signs are allowed they should be located in separate areas of the site for readability and clarity rather than grouped together in one area.
- For longer messages, the use of uppercase and lowercase lettering is recommended since it is easier to read than all uppercase lettering.
- Reader boards are only allowed in the **Corridor Sign District** and cannot exceed more than 25% of the allowable signage.
- Exposed neon tubing is not permitted.

Building Mounted Signs:

- A building mounted sign is any sign attached to, painted on, inscribed upon or deriving its major support from a building, including a wall sign, a projecting sign or an awning sign. Signs attached to or painted on a gasoline pump island or canopy shall be considered a building mounted sign. Permanent signs painted on windows or doors, attached to windows or doors, or hung behind and within three feet of windows or doors, either illuminated or non-illuminated are considered building mounted signs.
- Materials and design should be compatible with the design of the building.
- They should be designed to enhance the façade by blending with the architectural features of the building and not merely applied to the surface.
- They should not cover or obscure decorative architectural details or overwhelm the façade of the building.
- For specific sizes allowed see Article VI Signs in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Where more than one business or occupant shares a building, it is recommended that a master sign plan be submitted by the property owner.
- Exposed neon tubing is not permitted (unless allowed by the Zoning Ordinance).
- For longer messages, the use of uppercase and lowercase lettering is recommended since it is easier to read than all uppercase lettering.
- For building mounted signs, lettering should be sized for readability from the intended observer's location and consistent with other adjacent nearby signage. Unnecessarily large or small lettering is discouraged. Lettering height should be between nine and 24 inches in height.
- Sign bands should be of consistent height and size along the building façade and throughout the block if possible and where appropriate.

COLORS OF SIGNS

The color of signs plays an important part in the overall appearance and should be uniform throughout the site. Colors of architectural details on the building or site may suggest signage colors.

Sign Color Guidelines:

- The background for illuminated signs must be a dark opaque color (day and night) with light translucent lettering which allows the sign to be legible and reduce glare.
- Non-illuminated signs may have a light or dark background.
- It is recommended that no more than three colors be used for a sign unless a pictorial or logo uses additional colors which may be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Sign supports shall be made of dark, neutral or subdued colors to de-emphasize them.
- Color schemes should relate to or match the colors of the building on site.
- Day glow, metallic or fluorescent colors are not allowed.
- Colors used should be selected from the Benjamin Moore Williamsburg color palette (Chapter V, page 15) or the Avery 900 Supercast Opaque Films for backgrounds and Avery Ultimate & Premium Cast Translucent Films for lettering, graphics and logo from the list below:

Background Colors for Internally Illuminated Signs from the Avery 900 Supercast Opaque Films Palettes

Matte Black	**Black**
Imitation Gold	**Apricot**
Orange	**Tomato Red**
Cardinal Red	**Dark Red**
Apple Red	**Burgundy**
Burgundy Maroon	**Deep Purple**
Majestic Blue	**Nautical Blue**
Medium Blue	**Sapphire Blue**
Light Navy	**Dark Blue**
Dark Navy Blue	**Bright Green**
Forest Green	**Deep Green**
Dark Green	**Dark Grey**
Medium Marine Grey	**Cocoa**
Brown	

Lettering, Graphics and Logo Colors for Internally Illuminated Signs from the Avery Ultimate & Premium Cast Translucent Films Palette

White	**Yellow Pantone 116 C**
Orange	**Off-White Pantone 7500 C**
Beige Pantone 155 C	**Medium Beige Pantone 466 C**
Cardinal Red	**Red**
Poinsettia	**Burgundy**
Blue Pantone 277 C	**Blue Pantone 279 C**
Blue Pantone 285 C	**Blue Pantone 290 C**
Cobalt Blue	**Real Blue**
Real Green	**Green Pantone 7483 C**
Green Pantone 349 C	**Holly Green**
Light Gray Pantone 427C	**Gray Pantone 430C**

Colors from 800 Premium Cast Translucent Films

White	**Sultan Blue**
Black	**Royal Blue**
Sunflower Yellow	**Twilight Blue**
Cardinal Red	**Red**
Medium Green	**Wine**
Bottle Green	**Bruin Brown**

- Color approval will be based on the sign district as noted below:
  In the **Downtown** and **Residential Sign District** the use of vibrant and bright primary colors will not be allowed unless the sign design is exceptional and is approved on a case-by-case basis.
  The **Corridor Sign District** will allow a larger range of colors from the color palettes.
  Signs located within the **Arts & Cultural Sign District** will allow more colors than three and a broader color range to allow for vibrancy in the district which will be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Pictorial signs are recommended in the **Arts & Cultural Sign District**. They can be on a pole with an iron bracket at the top or on two posts.
- If colors proposed are not from the approved lists above, a specific color sample of the proposed color must be submitted with the application for review on a case-by-case basis.

ILLUMINATION OF SIGNS

When illuminated signs should be spot lighted or back lighted with a diffuse light source. Spot lighting should be shielded so it does not spill over onto adjacent properties or into motorists' eyes. Backlighting should illuminate the letters, characters or graphics on the sign but not the sign's background, even at night.

Illumination Guidelines:

- Internally illuminated signs are not permitted for the **Downtown** or **Residential Sign Districts.**
- Internally illuminated signs must contain a dark opaque background that remains opaque at night. This is required so that light shines through the lettering, logo and graphics only and reduces the "glaring" white box effect that often results when transparent light-colored plastic is used for sign backgrounds.
- Lettering, logos and graphics must use translucent colors.
- The specific fixture(s) used for external illumination must be submitted as part of the sign application for review by the Board. The application must also note the specific wattage for the fixture to help determine the amount of illumination and possible glare onto neighboring properties.