

Proposed FBC Amendments/Interpretations
Revised 2-9-2012

Map Amendment _____

Text Amendment _____

Topic: Comprehensive Sign Regulations Update (Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance, with update to the Form Based Code for compatibility purposes)

Issues:

1. Staff has undertaken a comprehensive update and reformat of the County's sign regulations (Section 34 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance), the goals of which are to improve usability of the ordinance, incorporate best practices and Arlington-specific practices, ensure compliance with all Virginia Code and other requirements, and to reduce the frequency with which issues require County Board attention. The Form Based Code sign regulations reference several subsections in Section 34, which regulates signs throughout the County.
2. Staff's draft proposal for revised sign regulations would not allow the County Board to consider modifications to sign regulations. If approved, all sign permits and all Comprehensive Sign Plans would be issued administratively by the Zoning Administrator; and there would be no option for an applicant to request modifications to regulations.
3. The County Board has approved modifications to FBC Sign Regulations for all completed FBC projects. Under the revised ordinance, this would no longer be an option.

Purpose (Why is a change to the FBC needed?) (Examples: Constructability; Change in vision; Precedent; Avoid future results of unintended circumstances):

1. **SUBJECT OF FEBRUARY 15, 2012 MEETING:** Continue discussion of the six Form Based Code sign types that are currently allowed only by Special Exception approval. Staff's proposal would codify standards for these six sign types such that they could be administratively approved.
2. **DISCUSSED AT OCTOBER 12 and NOVEMBER 9, 2011 MEETINGS:** All references in the Form Based Code Sign Regulations will become outdated should a revised Section 34 be adopted as drafted, due to a comprehensive reformat. A proposed FBC amendment would update those references to accurately reflect the revised Section 34.

FBC References (section/page #; text;) Section VI. Architectural Standards, F. Signage (see end of this document for text of this subsection)

Impact of Proposed Solution (i.e., additional height, more coverage, more gfa, less open space, better architecture, etc) Compatibility with comprehensive update of Zoning Ordinance Section 34 (sign regulations)

Table 1: Steps to Updating the Form Based Code for compatibility with proposed revised Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance

Step 1	Minimum updates for compatibility with ZO Section 34	Discussed at October 12 and November 9 meetings. Update references, as shown in Table 2 below
Step 2	Additional updates that would continue to allow the types of signs that have been approved for Form Based Code projects	Subject of February 15 meeting: a) Decide whether those sign types currently allowed only by special exception should be permitted or not permitted for FBC Projects b) Continue discussion of standards for FBC projects for six sign types currently allowed only by special exception.

For February 15, 2012 meeting discussion:

The Form Based Code currently permits certain signs only through special exception approval by the County Board. Those signs include canopy signs, marquee signs, signs located above a height of 35 feet, freestanding signs, painted window signs and signs painted on exterior walls.

Potential options for updating standards for certain signs in the FBC

Canopy Signs

Defined: a sign affixed to the vertical surface of or placed on the top of a canopy.

Proposal to consider: Permit as an alternative to a wall sign. Currently FBC projects are allowed a total of 3 wall or window signs per tenant; proposal would be to allow a total of 3 wall, window or canopy signs per tenant.

Proposed standards:

- Canopy signs may only be affixed to the portion of the canopy parallel to the building wall
- If affixed to the vertical front of the canopy, may not exceed the height of the vertical surface of the canopy.
- If placed on top of the canopy, sign may not exceed 2 feet in height (same as currently permitted for wall signs)
- Letters on canopy signs may not exceed 18" in height or width and 3" in relief (same as currently permitted for wall signs)



Marquee signs

Defined: Currently defined by the Zoning Ordinance as “any permanent, roofed structure projecting from a building façade when such structure is supported by the building.” The Zoning Ordinance also defines wall signs as including signs affixed to a marquee.

Proposal to consider:

- Allow as an alternative to a wall sign for a tenant, IF the marquee is shown on the approved plan or use permit.
- Maximum size of the marquee sign would be the size of the vertical face(s) of the marquee, and may include all faces of the approved marquee.



Freestanding signs

Defined: A sign affixed to the ground, a wall not part of a building or to a fence, or mounted on a monument-style foundation or pole (paraphrased)

Proposal to consider: Not permitted. Freestanding signs are not consistent with the building form in the Form Based Code, and the Advisory Working Group has continued to suggest in recent meetings, that freestanding signs should not be permitted.

Proposed standards: n/a

Signs placed above a height of 35 feet

Defined: n/a

Proposal to consider: All sign types would have specific placement standards. Signs would be allowed to be placed above 35 feet in height where explicitly allowed (e.g. the currently permitted masonry/bronze plaque has placement standards at the building’s cornice/parapet wall or underneath the eaves; no other FBC signs currently include placement standards above 35 feet in height)

Proposed standards: n/a

Signs painted on the exterior wall of building

Defined: n/a

Proposal to consider: As drafted in proposed revisions to Section 34 (Zoning Ordinance sign regulations), allow murals/art either approved by the public art committee, or including no text, commercial symbols or other elements related to the business inside.



Painted window signs

Defined: n/a. Painted window signs may refer to art painted on windows, but do not refer to signs otherwise meeting the window sign provisions in the Form Based Code.

Proposal to consider: Staff continues to consider this issue as part of the drafting of proposed revisions to Zoning Ordinance section 34. If provisions were to be included in Section 34, they would apply countywide, similar to provisions for signs painted on walls.

New sign standards for consideration and discussion at 2/15/12 meeting

Alternative to masonry/bronze plaque:

Background:

- Form Based Code projects are currently permitted 1 masonry or bronze plaque per building, bearing the owner's name or street address. This sign may be placed in the building's cornice/parapet wall or under the eaves and may be 8 sf.
- This sign regulation has frequently been modified by the County Board, to permit building signs that are not tenant signs. Modifications to this sign have included:
 - Penrose Square projecting sign (68 sf)
 - Siena Park projecting sign (54 sf)
 - 55 Hundred canopy sign (33 sf)
 - Halstead sign (138 sf)
 - Arlington Mill (34 sf)

Proposal to consider: Allow this sign to be substituted, only on MAIN STREET or AVENUE buildings, where no more than 50% of the sign may be placed above the top of the 3rd floor on a 5 story building, 4th floor on a 6 story building, and if additional stories are approved for the façade on which the sign is placed, not above the 5th floor on a 7 story building and 6th floor on an 8 story building, as follows (note: some of the bullets below are the same as signs described above, but the following would be for a sign in addition to already permitted tenant signs):

- A sign placed on an approved architectural element and no larger than such element (this would include a marquee sign placed on an approved marquee element); or
- A wall sign up to a maximum of area of 75 sf; or
- A projecting sign up to a maximum area of 75 sf; or
- A sign placed on top of a canopy with a maximum height of 2 feet and no longer than the length of the canopy; or
- Other?



Summary of Previous Meeting Information

The following references are included in the FBC Signage Regulations:
“Signs that are permitted in Section 34.A.1, 34.A.4, 34.D.4, 34.E, 34.F.1, 34.F.5 and 34.J of the Zoning Ordinance are permitted on property developed under the Form Based Code.”

Table 2: Cross-reference between the current and proposed Section 34, showing updates to existing FBC references that would be necessary in order to retain compatibility with the revised proposal for Section 34:

Current Reference in FBC (and subsection heading)	Proposed Reference (and subsection heading)
34.A.1 Permits	34.12 Permits
34.A.4 Substitution of Message	34.15.A Substitution of message
34.D.4 Sign Removal, Accessory Use	34.2-Applicability 34.3-No Modifications
34.E Signs permitted in all districts without permits (which includes official notices; small signs such as “no trespassing”, “entrance”, hours of operation, etc.; historical markers; flags; temporary for sale/lease signs; temporary window signs; and political and real estate signs in the ROW)	34.9-Signs in the public ROW 34.14-Temporary Construction and Leasing Signs 34.7L (signs permitted in mixed-use districts without permits) L – flags N – incidental signs (as wall or projecting signs only) Q – sidewalk signs S – traffic control signs U – window signs (temporary only)
34.F.1 Neighborhood Signs	34.9.A.12 Neighborhood signs
34.F.5 Temporary Signs	34.14 Temporary Construction and Leasing signs
34.J Signs Placed by Public Authority in the Public Right of Way	34.9 Banner Systems in the Public ROW
34.C Prohibited Signs	34.4 Signs prohibited in all districts

Table 2-A, New regulations proposed for Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance that could potentially be referenced to regulate signs in the Form Based Code.

Include Reference ?	Proposed Reference (and subsection heading)	Preliminary Recommendation and Rationale for including (or not including) in the FBC
No	34.8 Institutional signs	The option for development with underlying zoning remains and such developments would be subject to sign regulations in Section 34. However, if an institutional use were to develop under the FBC, it would be in the form required by the FBC BES, for which the sign regulations established for the FBC are more consistent.
Yes	34.10 Standards for lighted signs	The proposed amendment to Section 34 will establish maximum illumination levels that should be applicable to lighted signs on FBC projects.
Yes/No	34.11 Changeable copy signs	<p>The proposed amendment would allow automatic changeable copy elements. Such signs are typically used for institutional uses, gas stations, Nextbus technology and similar programs.</p> <p>Consider allowing either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of changeable copy elements on size smaller than 4 sf; or ▪ Ensure that signs installed meeting Arlington way finding standards and signs installed by transit operators operating in the County may use automatic changeable copy elements.
Yes	34.15 General provisions	The provisions in this section—sign maintenance, replacement and repair; and abandonment should be included to ensure that FBC signs are maintained.
Yes	34.16 Nonconforming signs	New projects developed under the FBC would not have nonconforming signs, however, future changes to the sign ordinance could result in nonconforming signs and currently there are no regulations in the FBC to address nonconforming signs.
Yes	31.18 historic signs/34.16.B. nonconforming historic signs	Include these provisions to address signs for identified historic buildings/frontages/facades that may be incorporated into FBC projects, and allow signs consistent with the historic character of the preserved structure to be approved with a CoA from the Historical Affairs and Landmarks Review Board.

FBC AWG Comments

ZOCO Comments

PC/CB Comments/Recommendation

Result: Interpretation ____ FBC Amendment ____

From Form Based Code Section VI. Architectural Standards, F. Signage

2. STANDARDS FOR SIGNAGE (WHERE CLEARLY VISIBLE FROM THE STREET)

Signs that are permitted in Section 34.A.1, 34.A.4, 34.D.4, 34.E, 34.F.1, 34.F.5 and 34.J of the Zoning Ordinance are permitted on property developed under the Form Based Code.

In addition, Form Based Code projects may have the following number of signs, provided they comply with the standards set forth below:

AWNING signs, 1 masonry or bronze plaque per building bearing an owner's or building's name and STREET address signs. In addition, 1 blade sign, 1 graphics sign and up to a total of 3 wall or window signs per tenant. One additional wall or window sign and 1 additional blade sign are permitted for tenants occupying retail or office spaces with more than one STREET FRONTAGE. **6**

Signage Standards:

- Wall signs (placed against a wall) are permitted only within the area above the GROUND STORY windows and below the second STORY windows, within a horizontal band not to exceed 2 feet in height. This band shall not be located higher than 18 feet or lower than 12 feet above the adjacent sidewalk.
- Letters on wall signs shall not exceed 18 inches in height or width and 3 inches in relief. Wall signs shall not come closer than 2 feet to an adjacent COMMON LOT LINE or the boundary of the area permitted to be used by the retail or office tenant and shall not exceed 20 feet in length.
- Window Signs are permitted to be placed or painted within GROUND FLOOR or second STORY office and retail windows and the entire window sign shall fit within a rectangle of 8 square feet.
- One masonry or bronze plaque bearing an owner's or building's name may be placed in the building's cornice/PARAPET wall or under the eaves, and above the upper STORY windows. Any such plaque shall be no larger than a rectangle of 8 square feet.
- STREET address signs may be placed at STREET entry doors using 6 to 8 inch tall, non-cursive type lettering. Such letters shall be located between 6 feet and 10 feet above grade.
- Blade type shop signs are encouraged, and shall be permitted for retail and office tenants. They shall be not more than 6 square feet and shall be located so that there is a minimum of 9 feet clear height above the sidewalk and below the blade type sign. Blade signs may be hung from an overhang or AWNING. Blade signs shall not be internally illuminated and the company name or logo may occupy no more than one-half of the square footage within the blade sign. Creative art, graphics or materials are encouraged in the area of the blade sign not containing the company name or logo. Only one blade sign shall be permitted per tenant per STREET FRONTAGE and only for tenants occupying the GROUND FLOOR or second STORY
- One graphics sign (a graphics sign is a sign designed to be read only from a distance of less than 3 feet away), such as, but not limited to restaurant menus or building directories, may be displayed in a permanently mounted display box of not more than 3 square feet on the surface of the building adjacent to the entry. Graphics signs shall not be exposed to the elements.

Prohibited Signs: The following signs are prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the County Board by Special Exception: canopy signs, marquees, signs located above a height of 35 feet except of masonry or bronze plaques as permitted above, freestanding signs, painted window signs other than described above, and signs painted on the exterior walls of buildings. Under no circumstances shall flashing, traveling, animated, or intermittent lighting be on the exterior of any building whether such lighting is of temporary or longterm duration, and under no circumstances shall the County Board permit portable or wheeled signs and advertising devices located outside any building, billboards, any kind of animation or signs specified in Section 34.C. of the Zoning Ordinance.

External lighting directed towards signage that is not internally illuminated is permitted. The energy efficiency of lighting should be considered.

AWNINGS/Overhangs:

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when an AWNING or overhang is incorporated into a building, the following requirements must be met:

- Minimum 10 feet clear height above sidewalk, minimum 6 feet depth out from the building façade (maximum to curb or tree-planting strip/furniture zone, whichever is closer).
- Canvas cloth or equivalent (no shiny or reflective materials), metal or glass.
- No internal illumination through the AWNING/Overhang.
- Lettering and/or logo on AWNING limited to 5 inches tall on vertically hanging fabric at curb side of AWNING.
- No one-quarter cylinder configurations.