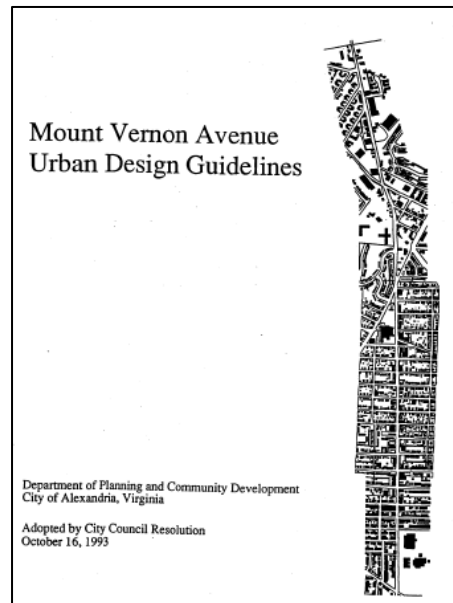
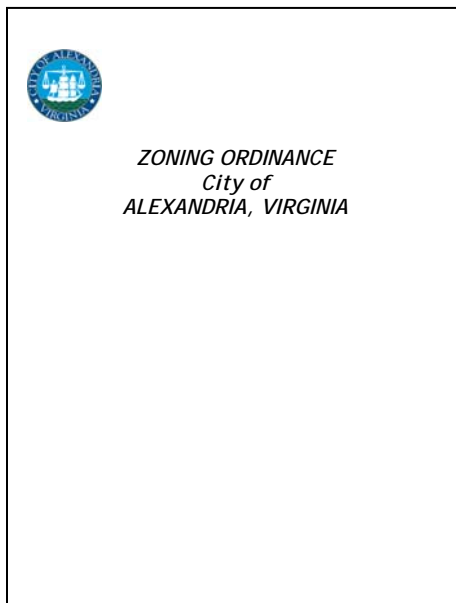




## FACADE & STREETScape IMPROVEMENT GUIDANCE\*

*A Summary of City Regulations and Guidelines for  
properties located along Mount Vernon Avenue  
from West Glebe Road to Herbert Street*



*Compiled June 2009*

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\* This document is a compilation of existing documents strictly related to façade and streetscape treatment for properties located along Mount Vernon Avenue from W. Glebe Rd to Herbert Street. The information was compiled from the *Mount Vernon Avenue Urban Design Guidelines (1993)* and the *Alexandria Zoning Ordinance*. For more comprehensive information, please contact the Department of Planning and Zoning at 703-746-4333 or refer to the full versions of each document, found on the City of Alexandria's website at [www.alexandriava.gov/planning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/planning).

# FACADE & STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT GUIDANCE\*

## *A Summary of City Regulations and Guidelines for properties located along Mount Vernon Avenue from West Glebe Road to Herbert Street*

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## **A. Zoning Ordinance for the City Of Alexandria: CSL/Commercial service low, RA/Multifamily, and CG/Commercial general zone**

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Properties that abut Mount Vernon Avenue between the intersection of Mount Vernon Avenue/Glebe Road and Herbert Street fall under three zoning categories, CSL, RA, and CG. Each of these zones is summarized very briefly below for reference, but the Zoning Ordinance does not specifically regulate façade or streetscape improvements, and therefore, properties in this area looking for guidance regarding façade and streetscape improvements should refer exclusively to the *Mount Vernon Avenue Design Guidelines* as summarized above. As noted in the design guidelines above, all signs must meet the requirements of §9-100 to 9-403 of the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance.

### **Sec. 4-300 CSL/Commercial service low zone.**

4-301 Purpose. The CSL zone is intended to provide for light service and industrial uses compatible in operations and character with nearby residential neighborhoods and properties. Proximity to residences requires that commercial operations be conducted at a scale and intensity commensurate with nearby residential development, be developed so as to be in character with such development and be of such characteristics and effect so as not to be detrimental or a nuisance to nearby residential properties.

### **Sec. 3-600 RA/Multifamily zone.**

3-601 Purpose. The RA zone is established to provide and maintain land areas for medium density residential neighborhoods in which apartments predominate and in which single-family, two-family and townhouse development is permitted. Nonresidential uses of a noncommercial nature which are related to, supportive of and customarily found in such residential neighborhoods are also permitted.

### **Sec. 4-400 CG/Commercial general zone.**

4-401 Purpose. The CG zone is intended to provide for retail and service uses, including automobile oriented businesses, in community serving shopping centers along major roads. Although office uses are permitted, the zone is not intended as an area for office centers.

## **ARTICLE IX. SIGNS, MARQUEES AND AWNINGS**

Elements applicable to retail businesses located in the CSL, RA and CG zones. For the complete ordinance, please go to [www.alexandriava.gov/planning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/planning) or call 703-746-3833

Sec. 9-200 Signs, marquees and awnings permitted in various zones.

9-201 Residence and mixed use zones – Business signs not permitted in the RA zone.

9-202 Commercial zones.

(A) *Permitted signs.* In any commercial zone, the following signs, marquees and awnings only may be erected and displayed so long as they comply with all other applicable requirements of this Article IX.

- (2) Business signs which meet the requirements of section 9-202(B).
- (4) Marquees and awnings which are permitted in the RC, RCX and RD residence zones and marquees and awnings which meet the requirements of section 9-202(D).
- (5) Signs, marquees and awnings encroaching upon a public right-of-way for which an encroachment ordinance has been enacted or which city council has expressly authorized for up to ten days.
- (6) Banners for which special permission has been obtained pursuant to section 9-104(F).

(B) *Size and location limitations.* Signs permitted within a commercial zone under section 9-202(A) may be displayed on any building wall which faces a street, alley or parking area or may be freestanding signs, and shall comply with the following provisions as to size and location.

(1) *One-story buildings.* The total area of all signs displayed on a building wall which faces a street, alley or parking area shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of building width facing the street, alley or parking area.

(2) *Multi-story buildings.*

(a) The total area of all signs displayed between the sidewalk and a height of 20 feet on any building wall which faces a street, alley or parking area shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of building width facing such street, alley or parking area.

(b) The total area of all signs displayed above the 20-foot height specified in section 9-202(B)(2)(a) above on any building wall which faces a street, alley or parking area shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of building width facing such street, alley or parking area.

(3) *Window signs.* The total area of window signs, including those advertising sales, in any one window shall not exceed 20 percent of the area of the window. The total area of window signs shall be included in determining the total area of signs erected or displayed.

(4) *Projection and height of signs.* A sign may be erected or displayed flat against a building wall or at an angle thereto, so long as the sign does not project more than four feet from the building wall or within one foot of an established curb line and the bottom of the sign is at least eight feet above a sidewalk or parking area and at least 14.5 feet above an alley.

(6) *Identification signs.* Identification signs for shopping centers consisting of five or more separate businesses and having a continuous street frontage of at least 200 feet are permitted and the area of such signs shall not be included in the total area of signs otherwise permitted by this section for the separate businesses. The total area of shopping center identification signs shall not exceed one square foot for each foot of street frontage, and the total area of such signs facing any street, alley or parking area shall not exceed 150 square feet; provided, that when the street frontage of a shopping center exceeds 300 feet, such sign areas may be increased with a special use permit.

## B. Mount Vernon Avenue Urban Design Guidelines (1993)

### HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines are intended to be used by business and property owners, builders and architects of projects along Mount Vernon Avenue, and by citizens, appointed and elected officials and city staff in evaluating these projects.

For projects requiring Site Plan approval or Special Use Permit approval, the guidelines will be incorporated into the review process. The Zoning Ordinance requires the Planning Commission to consider urban design issues such as massing, location and orientation of buildings, parking, pedestrian and site amenities, compatibility with surrounding property and character of the neighborhood. The guidelines are intended to provide assistance to applicants in addressing these issues, and will serve as part of the criteria for public review of these projects.

After the Planning Department staff reviews the application for a project, its recommendation, along with any citizen comments, is forwarded to the Planning Commission for its consideration. For any project requiring a Special Use Permit, the recommendation of the Planning Commission will then be forwarded to City Council for their consideration.

The guidelines are not intended to replace but to support and supplement other applicable codes and ordinances of the City of Alexandria.

### FAÇADE TREATMENT

This section outlines the guidelines for basic building components, such as doors, windows, awnings, and so forth. These guidelines are intended to be used for all sides of a building, but particularly those portions visible from Mount Vernon Avenue.

- Architectural elements, patterns of window openings or articulation of bays should all be used to maintain a sense of scale and add interest to a building. Large, blank facades should be avoided (Fig. 1).

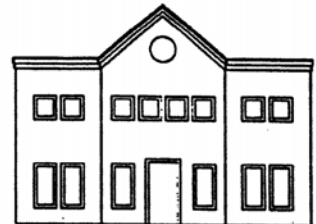


Fig. 1 Provide facades of interest

- In general, the placement and orientation of architectural elements, particularly windows, should maintain the typical horizontal or vertical emphasis of other structures along the block face (Fig.2), with these exceptions

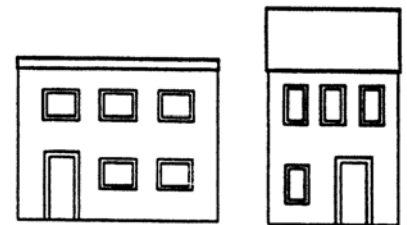


Fig. 2 Horizontal & vertical emphasis

- In general, individual "punched" or framed windows are recommended rather than strip or "ribbon" windows.

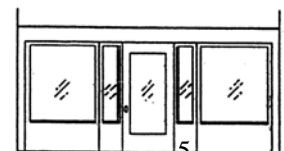


Fig. 3 Storefront windows are recommended

- Storefront openings, typically including large display windows, are highly recommended for retail uses at street level (Fig. 3).

- Awnings are encouraged for first floor retail uses to provide architectural interest and to encourage pedestrian activity. Awnings over a public way require an encroachment ordinance approved by City Council. Translucent and/or internally lit awnings are not recommended (Fig. 4).

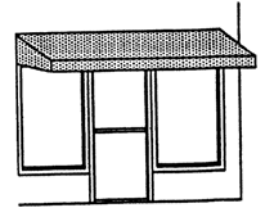


Fig. 4 First floor awnings are encouraged

- Where awnings are used, they should be designed to coordinate with the design of the building and any other awnings along the same block face (Fig. 5).

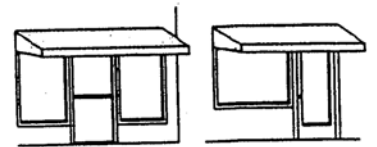


Fig. 5 Coordinate awning design

- The entry to commercial and institutional buildings should be directly from street level.

- The entry to the building should be clearly visible from the street. Prominent entries are encouraged for architectural interest and as an element of scale and orientation (Fig. 6).

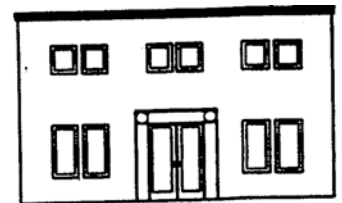


Fig. 6 Prominent entries are encouraged

- Architectural components and details, such as a change in materials, ornamentation, and the use of smaller, more human scaled elements are particularly encouraged at the pedestrian level (Fig. 7).

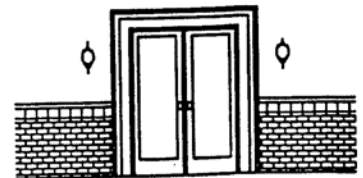


Fig. 7 Include pedestrian-scaled elements

- Attention should also be given to the top of a building. Providing architectural elements such as dormers or details at the cornice level can help to break down the apparent mass of the building, compensate



Fig. 8 Provide roof level interests 6

for changes in height and scale between existing and proposed structures, and create interests at the skyline (Fig. 8).

- Buildings should be of those colors and materials which will allow the structure to blend in with the overall fabric of the neighborhood.

## **STREETSCAPE**

The concept of streetscape generally refers to the quality and character of the public streets and sidewalks and adjacent private property. This section includes guidelines for private property only. Mount Vernon Urban Design Guidelines, Appendix E contains guidelines for the public right-of-way (See also Mount Vernon Urban Design Guidelines Appendix D: Suggested Plant List).

### **Paving Materials and Borders**

- Paved areas between the right-of-way and the building facade or entrance area should use the same materials as the right-of-way. (See Mount Vernon Urban Design Guidelines Appendix E for a list of appropriate materials by area.)

- Accent pavers can be used to emphasize the entrance or other significant areas in the streetscape (Fig. 9). Materials should be compatible with the type and color of the surrounding material.

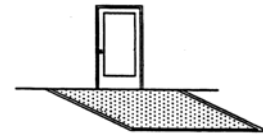


Fig. 9 Accent pavers in sidewalk

- An edge treatment is recommended where sidewalk meets grass or planting areas (Fig. 10); an edge treatment is not necessary at building facades. The edge treatment may be:

- Precast white concrete tree planter curb (same as existing ones)
- Unidecor brick edge for unidecor pavers (by Balcon manufacturing, or equal)
- Landscape timbers are strongly discouraged.



Fig. 10 Edge treatment recommended for planted areas

- Driveway aprons for parking and alley access should be poured-in-place concrete.

### **Planted Areas**

- Planting strips on private property in front of buildings are



Fig. 11 Planting strips in front of building

recommended for the area between Four Mile Run and Commonwealth Avenue for multifamily and commercial uses (Fig. 11). The minimum width should be 2 feet beyond roof overhangs.

- Ornamental deciduous shrubs, such as Meidiland Roses, are recommended at gateway corners.
- All planted areas must be maintained by the property owner.

## SIGNS

Signs play an important part in maintaining the vitality of the commercial uses along Mount Vernon Avenue. They should be designed and sited to identify individual businesses, but must not detract from the image and identity of the entire area. All signs must meet the requirements of §9-100 to 9-403 of the City of Alexandria Zoning Ordinance.

- The design of commercial signs should be incorporated into the overall design of the structure and site. The color and materials should complement the architecture and the streetscape, not compete with it. The size of the sign should be in proportion with the size of the building.
- Simple, readable designs are strongly encouraged. A maximum of three colors and two type faces is recommended.

- Building signs or ground signs (also known as monument signs) are recommended for the entire length of Mount Vernon Avenue. These types of signs provide excellent visibility for individual businesses and are more compatible with the scale and desired character of the Avenue. The recommended maximum height is 5' (Fig. 12).

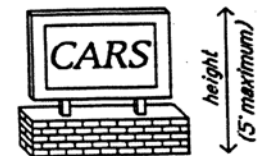


Fig. 12 Ground signs are the preferred sign type

- Where pole mounted signs are used, the recommended maximum height is 15'. The recommended maximum width is two-thirds of the height. A single pole is recommended over double poles (Fig. 13).

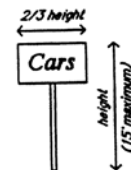


Fig. 13  
Maximum sign

- Where a development includes multiple commercial units, the sign for each unit should be of uniform character and location.

- The coordination of sign design along an entire block face is encouraged (Fig. 14).

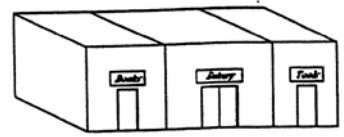


Fig. 14 Coordinate sign design

