

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2020-75: Pantops Corner Bundle Sign
Review Type	Certificate of Appropriateness for a Sign; Advisory review for a Special Use Permit
Parcel Identification	07800-00-00-005E0
Location	On the south side of Rt. 20 across from Winding River Lane
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC)/Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Pantops Way Self Storage LLC/Rebkee Partners Pantops LLC and Kimly-Horn (Ryan Perkins)
Magisterial District	Rivanna
Proposal	To install a freestanding, off-site bundle sign measuring 42.6 square feet in size and 11' 11" tall at the entrance to the Pantops Corner development at the intersection of Rt. 20 and Pantops Corner Way for Wawa and future tenants. Bundle signs require a Special Use Permit.
Context	The sign is proposed for a location at the Route 20 entrance into the Pantops Corner development, which includes a Wawa store and gas canopy, a Storage Sense building, and a hotel. (Figure 1)
Visibility	The sign will be readily visible from the EC street.
ARB Meeting Date	July 20, 2020
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart, Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

County Code (§18-4.15.7(b) and §18-34.5, Figure 2) allows bundle signs by Special Use Permit. A "bundle sign" is a freestanding, off-site sign that identifies two or more establishments or sites that are not part of a planned development district and that share a common entrance or access road. Bundle sign provisions were established to incentivize co-location. The proposed sign will serve the Pantops Corner Development, including the Pantops Wawa and Storage Sense (previously Pantops Corner Storage), which received Certificates of Appropriateness in October 2019 and April 2020, respectively. The proposed sign can accommodate an additional tenant panel.

ANAYLSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
1	Create a consistent and unified design approach along the Entrance Corridors. The <i>placement, size, illumination</i> and <i>colors</i> of signs can create unity along the corridor, or they can create a disjointed, visually competitive environment. Consistent and unified sign design allows the businesses located along the Corridor to have equal standing in visibility. It also provides a pattern of sign placement that makes the business locations and entrances more easily recognizable to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.	The sign drawings indicate that tenant sign type and color will be consistent. This will help establish a unified appearance.	None.
8a	Monument signs are preferred to pole-mounted signs because they are often of a smaller scale and can be more fully integrated into the overall development. Pole signs may be considered for approval if existing site conditions rule out the ability to use a monument sign, and only when the pole is in proportion to the sign cabinet or panel.	The proposed sign is not pole-mounted. It is a monument style sign, with a masonry-faced base on the ground. Above the base, the sign is divided into 4 panels that advertise three establishments in the Pantops Corner development. The basic design is like other freestanding signs that accommodate multiple tenant panels. The inclusion of fuel price display with multiple tenants is not typical in the County, but the fuel price display provision is separate from the bundle sign provision.	None.
4c	Materials: Materials used in both the sign and support structures should complement the building and/or multiple business center (see page 14) being served by the sign.	The primary sign material is EIFS in “Stark White”. Simple aluminum trim pieces painted white are used to separate tenant panels and to provide a cap at the top of the sign. The sign drawing shows stone veneer for the sign base with a limestone cap, but a note on the drawing states that the base is to be brick to match the Wawa building. With a brick base, the proposed sign materials and colors will match those approved for Wawa, although this sign and the Wawa building will not likely be viewed together. The materials and colors are expected to complement the Wawa and storage buildings.	Correct the illustration of the masonry on the sign base to reflect red brick to match the Wawa building.
8b	Materials used in both the sign and support structures should be complementary. They should also support the aesthetics of the building and /or complex being served by the sign, although a direct duplication is not necessary. It is preferred that the base material match one of the primary building materials unless the design of the sign represents itself as a freestanding element complementing the building.		
4b	Scale and Size: Signs located within the Entrance Corridor may not exceed the size, height and setback requirements as outlined in Section 4.15 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance (unless the sign has received a variance).	Overall sign height is proposed at 11’-11”. This includes a 1’11-5/8”-tall base, four tenant panels, each approximately 2’ 1½” tall, and various trim and cap pieces. 12’ is the maximum allowed height	None.

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		in this zoning district. The proposed sign area is 42.6 sf, which meets ordinance requirements. This exceeds the 32 sf typically seen as the maximum for freestanding signs because additional sign area is allowed for fuel price display. The bundle sign provision does not increase the allowed sign area or height.	
8c	The structure of a monument sign shall not overwhelm the sign. The structure and the sign that it supports must be in proportion to each other.	The sign base has a low profile and does not visually overwhelm the sign that it supports.	None.
4d	Lettering and Typeface: Lettering should be in proportion to the sign and the building for visual clarity and overall balance. Proportion of lettering includes font (size) and typeface (style). The use of three typefaces or fewer is more appropriate for signs in the Entrance Corridor. Additional typefaces may be approved only if they contribute to a balanced, legible, unified sign design.	The drawings show signs for three tenant panels: Storage Sense, Wawa, and gas pricing. The letters do not appear over-scaled within the tenant panels; there is sufficient clear space above, below, and to the sides of the letters. Similar space is provided around the gas price signs. Storage Sense and Wawa use different typefaces. A third typeface will be available for the third panel.	None.
4e	Color: Colors must be harmonious with each other. Colors must not clash with other elements on the site, both when viewed in daylight and at night, whether the signs are externally or internally lit. Overly intense color, such as but not limited to dayglo or fluorescent colors, are prohibited. The use of three colors or fewer is more appropriate for signs in the Entrance Corridor. Black and white are counted as colors. Additional colors may be approved if they contribute to a balanced and unified sign design. For raceway-mounted channel letters, raceways shall match the wall color.	The overall sign uses red, green, white, grey/aluminum, and off-white (Stark White). This is a total of 5 colors. Although this exceeds the guidelines maximum, the amount of green and white is minimal, and the sign has an overall coordinated appearance. A note on the drawing states that the colors of the remaining tenant panel will be red and grey. The illustration shows that the colors are generally harmonious, and they are compatible with the colors approved for the nearby buildings. The shade of red proposed for the Wawa letters is one that has been approved for other signs in the ECs. The shade of red proposed for the Storage Sense letters is not identified on the drawing. Using the same shade as the Wawa letters would provide better coordination. Pantone equivalents are not	Indicate on the drawing the specific colors of the Storage Sense letters. Show that the red matches the Wawa letters. Provide on the drawings Pantone equivalents for the red and green gas price colors.

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		provided for the red and green colors of the gas pricing signs.	
4f	Trademarks, corporate logos and graphics: The ARB may require that the color and scale of standard templates for trademarks, service marks, corporate logos and graphics be modified. When used, trademarks, service marks, corporate logos and/or graphics should be incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign.	A red lock graphic is incorporated into the Storage Sense sign and a grey and aluminum goose graphic is located above the Wawa letters. These graphics appear as integral parts of the signs.	None.
2	Establish simplicity and reserve as preferred characteristics for sign design in these areas. This reflects the historic character of the area and enhances the aesthetic qualities of the Corridor. To this end, the overall design of a sign will be evaluated concurrently with that of the building on which it will be installed. The design of a building's walls, window locations, parapets and other architectural features will influence the Board's evaluation of appropriate signage. Likewise, a freestanding sign is evaluated in the context of the overall development in which it will be placed. Because each site is composed of a variety of elements that work together to create a unique character and appearance, ARB review of each sign proposal is guided by these sign guidelines within the context of the specific site for which the proposal is made.	The proposed sign uses internal illumination, in a mix of face-lit channel letters (Wawa), halo lit graphics (the goose) and LED gas pricing. Internal illumination of signs is common in the area. The halo lighting of the graphic is appropriate. Although internal illumination is typical for channel letters, that sign type is more typically used for wall signs. The channel letters will project forward from the main sign surface. A note on the drawing states that all tenant panels will use channel style lettering. The channel letters will produce a less streamlined appearance than a cabinet or flush-mounted letters would provide. A simpler overall appearance could result from flush-mounted signs.	Consider flush mounted signs for all tenant panels.
5a	When illumination is required, the preferred solution is to externally illuminate the sign – in other words, to shine a light on the sign. External illumination is preferred because it allows consistency with the daytime image of the sign. External lighting appears to the viewer as reflected light and allows the focus of the sign to be the original overall shape, color and complete design of the sign. Internal lighting produces a fragmented, rather than unified, sign image at night compared to external lighting and may project light that is distracting to the viewer. Similarly, exposed light sources that form the body of a sign (such as, but not limited to, exposed or bare neon) are not appropriate for the Entrance Corridors. They can produce glare and, generally, do not achieve the subtle character and compatibility that is	The plan includes the standard note regarding limits on LED gas pricing.	

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	the goal for the Entrance Corridors.		
5d	These solutions are intended to reduce glare, visual clutter and distraction along the streetscape, to provide for coordinated appearances along the Entrance Corridors, to increase visual continuity, to achieve a balance of business identification with order and continuity, and to limit negative impacts along the County's Entrance Corridors.		
8e	i. External illumination is preferred for freestanding signs.		
5c	External illumination is also preferred for approved graphics/logos; internal illumination may be considered for approval on a case-by-case basis. The Board will evaluate the specific design for size (adjusted in proportion to the accompanying lettering), balance, complexity, and distance from and relationship to the Entrance Corridor. These factors will determine the extent of internal illumination that can be approved.		
5f	Internal Illumination: Any internal illumination is considered to contribute to visual clutter and will be limited.	The sign drawings indicate that the letter returns and the face of the logo are to be opaque.	None.
8e	iii. Internal illumination: Channel letters with translucent faces shall be constructed such that no light spills outward from the top, bottom, sides or back. If back-lit (halo-lit), the faces and returns of channel letters shall be opaque.		
8e	iv. Cabinet signs shall have a non-illuminated background, or an opaque (zero light transmission) background. Cabinet signs shall be constructed such that no light spills outward from the top, bottom, sides or back. If outlines of letters are proposed, the width of the outline must be in proportion to the width of the letter. An outline width of 1/8" has been found to be an appropriate dimension for signs in the Entrance Corridors.		
8d	Landscaping: Use ground cover, shrubs and/or trees to integrate freestanding signs into the overall landscape development of the site. Refer to the Albemarle County Recommended Plants List, which is included in the <i>Albemarle County Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines</i> and is available on-line at www.albemarle.org .	The sign is situated at a slight angle to the sidewalk along Pantops Corner Way and is located within a landscape bed of Liriope. Groups of three Gro-low fragrant sumac are proposed in mulched beds at both ends of the sign.	Revise the plan to show sign and landscape locations coordinated with street tree planting on Pantops Corner Way.

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		The angled orientation of the sign relative to the sidewalk looks awkward in the plan but it may not have a big impact on drivers or pedestrians on Rt. 20. The approved landscape plan for this property shows a street tree that appears to conflict with the proposed sign/landscape locations. Coordinating the tree location with the sign placement, and considering the street trees, the sign, and the landscaping at the base of the sign as a coordinated whole could establish an appropriate, unified appearance for this particular site.	Consider the street trees, the sign, and the landscaping at the base of the sign as a coordinated whole for an appropriate, unified appearance. Revise the landscaping accordingly.

Summary of Recommendations:

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The use of channel letters on a freestanding sign
2. Position of the sign and landscaping at the base of the sign

Regarding the request for the Special Use Permit for the bundle sign:

Staff recommends that the ARB forward the following recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals:

Because the sign elements derived from the bundle sign provision do not impose negative visual impacts on the sign design, the ARB has no objection to the proposed bundle sign, with the modifications outlined in the staff report.

Regarding the sign design and the Certificate of Appropriateness:

Staff recommends approval of the proposal with the following conditions:

1. Correct the illustration of the masonry on the sign base to reflect red brick to match the Wawa building.
2. Indicate on the drawing the specific colors of the Storage Sense letters. Show that the red matches the Wawa letters.
3. Provide on the drawings Pantone equivalents for the red and green gas price colors.
4. Consider flush mounted signs for all tenant panels.
5. Revise the sign drawings to eliminate the note stating, “translucent sign panels regular, diesel illuminate from behind.”
6. Revise the plan to show sign and landscape locations coordinated with street tree planting on Pantops Corner Way.
7. Consider the street trees, the sign, and the landscaping at the base of the sign as a coordinated whole for an appropriate, unified appearance. Revise the landscaping accordingly.

ATTACHMENTS

A – [Applicant’s Sign Drawings](#)

FIGURE 1: Buildings approved in the Pantops Corner development. (Note: the image of the storage building is not the final approved design but is generally representative of approved colors and materials.)



FIGURE 2: Sec. 4.15.7 - Signs authorized by special use permit; off-site directional signs, off-site bundle signs, signs in a public right-of-way, electric message signs.

The following signs are authorized by a special use permit granted by the board of zoning appeals under section 34.5, provided that a sign permit required by section 4.15.5 is also obtained for the sign, the sign complies with all applicable requirements of this section 4.15, and the following:

- a. *Off-site directional signs.* A proposed off-site directional sign shall satisfy the following:
 1. *Eligibility.* The owner shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the zoning administrator that it has exhausted all possible locations and sign types for an on-site directional sign, and that no on-site directional sign face located at the site entrance would be visible from the street providing direct access to the site entrance within 100 feet of the site entrance.
 2. *Authorized locations.* The sign shall be located only in compliance with one of the following: (i) within one-half mile from the site entrance along a street providing direct access to the site entrance; (ii) if the owner demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the zoning administrator for off-site directional signs that are public signs or the board of zoning appeals for all other off-site directional signs, that it is unable to obtain permission from an owner within one-half mile from the site entrance as provided in subdivision (i), then within one-quarter mile from the turning decision onto a street providing direct access to the site entrance; or (iii) if the owner demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the zoning administrator for off-site directional signs that are public signs or the board of zoning appeals for all other off-site directional signs, that it is unable to obtain permission as provided under subdivisions (i) and (ii), then another authorized location.
- b. *Off-site bundle signs.* A proposed off-site bundle sign shall satisfy the following:
 1. *Eligibility.* The site whose owner is requesting the bundle sign must be located within an industrial, commercial, or residential district and share a common entrance or access road with one or more other establishments or sites.
 2. *Authorized locations.* The sign shall be located on a lot having frontage on the intersection of a street and an access road serving all establishments or sites.
- c. *Signs in a public right-of-way.* A proposed sign in a public right-of-way shall satisfy the following:
 1. *Eligibility.* The sign: (i) shall be either a subdivision sign or a sign at an entrance to a planned development authorized by sections 19, 20, 25, 25A, and 29; (ii) the subdivision or planned development shall abut the public right-of-way in which the sign will be located; (iii) the regulations applicable to freestanding signs for the subdivision or planned development, except for setback regulations, shall apply unless the Virginia Department of Transportation imposes more restrictive standards; and (iv) the applicant submits a written statement from the Virginia Department of Transportation stating that it will permit the sign to be located in the public right-of-way.
 2. *Authorized locations.* The sign shall be located only where the Virginia Department of Transportation authorizes it to be located.
- d. *Electric message signs.* A proposed electric message sign shall comply with all applicable requirements of section 4.15 and Virginia Code §§ [33.2-1216](#) and [33.2-1217](#).
([Ord. 15-18\(11\)](#), 12-9-15)

FIGURE 3

Sec. 4.15.11.a.7 - *Additional sign area for establishments at which gasoline or diesel fuel is dispensed.* Any establishment at which gasoline or diesel fuel, or both, is dispensed shall be entitled to additional sign area to display fuel prices of up to 50 percent of the primary sign area to which it is attached, or 16 square feet, whichever is less.