

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2022-97: The Trading Post BP Canopy Reface and Freestanding Sign
Review Type	Certificate of Appropriateness for Canopy Reface and Freestanding Sign
Parcel Identification	087B0-00-00-00400
Location	3017 Monacan Trail Road at the southwest corner of the intersection with Taylors Gap Road (Fig. 1)
Zoned	Rural Areas (RA) / Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	North Garden LLC/TVS Food Mart Inc. (Sunil Kapoor) / Interstate Sign Company (Brittney Garren/David Slate)
Magisterial District	Samuel Miller
Proposal	To reface the existing fuel pump canopy with a 3-D fascia band, to add 3 canopy signs (‘Helios’ graphics/logos) (Fig. 2), and to install a pylon sign (Fig. 3).
Context	The character of this portion of the Entrance Corridor is largely rural and residential.
Visibility	The north, east, and west sides of the canopy are visible from the EC (Rt. 29).
ARB Meeting Date	January 3, 2023
Staff Contact	Khrist Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY RELATED TO THE FUEL PUMP CANOPY

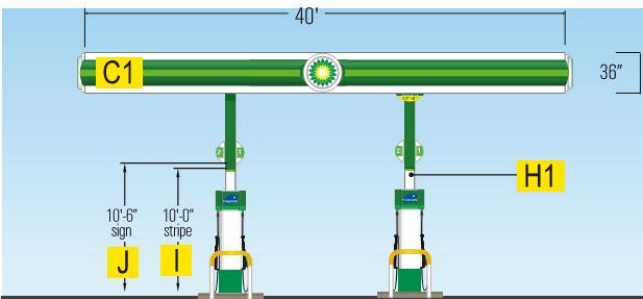
In 1990, a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued to construct a fuel pump canopy at this site with approval of signage on the canopy restricted to the name of the company providing gas service (originally Amoco) in letters not to exceed 2’ in height. In 2004, the ARB approved a refacing of the canopy to its current appearance, a black fascia with a white vinyl border along the top and bottom edges, “Trading Post” letters on the side facing Rt. 29, and “Xpressway” letters on the side facing Taylors Gap Road. There are six BP fuel stations within the County that have different canopy designs, building designs, and signage. Consistency with EC Guidelines has been achieved by limiting canopy colors and landscaping and limited illumination in the freestanding sign design.



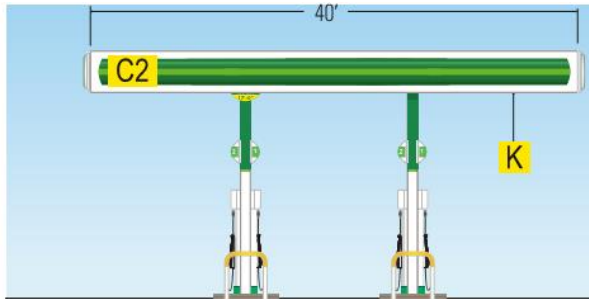
Figure 1: County GIS image showing property along the Entrance Corridor.



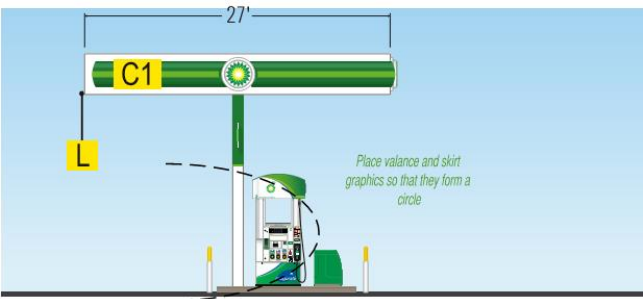
Front Elevation



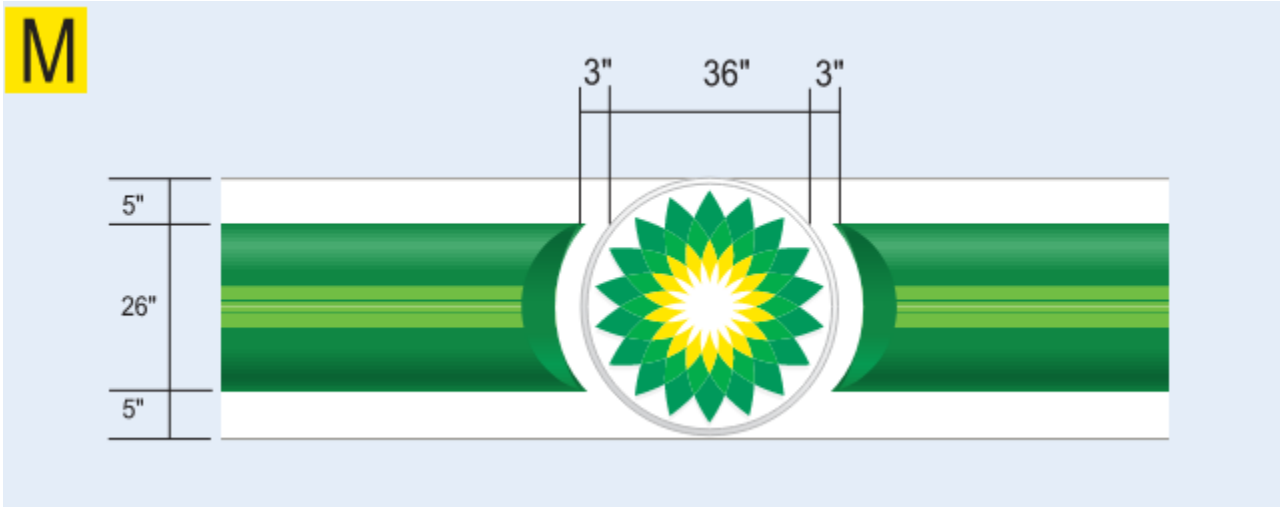
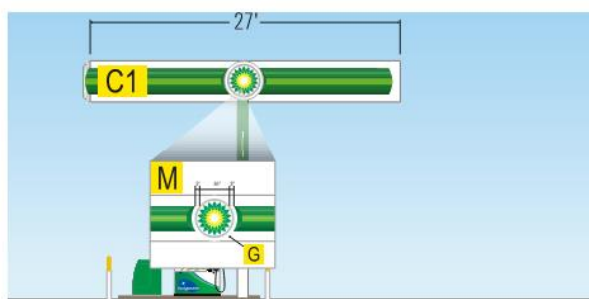
Back Elevation



Left Elevation

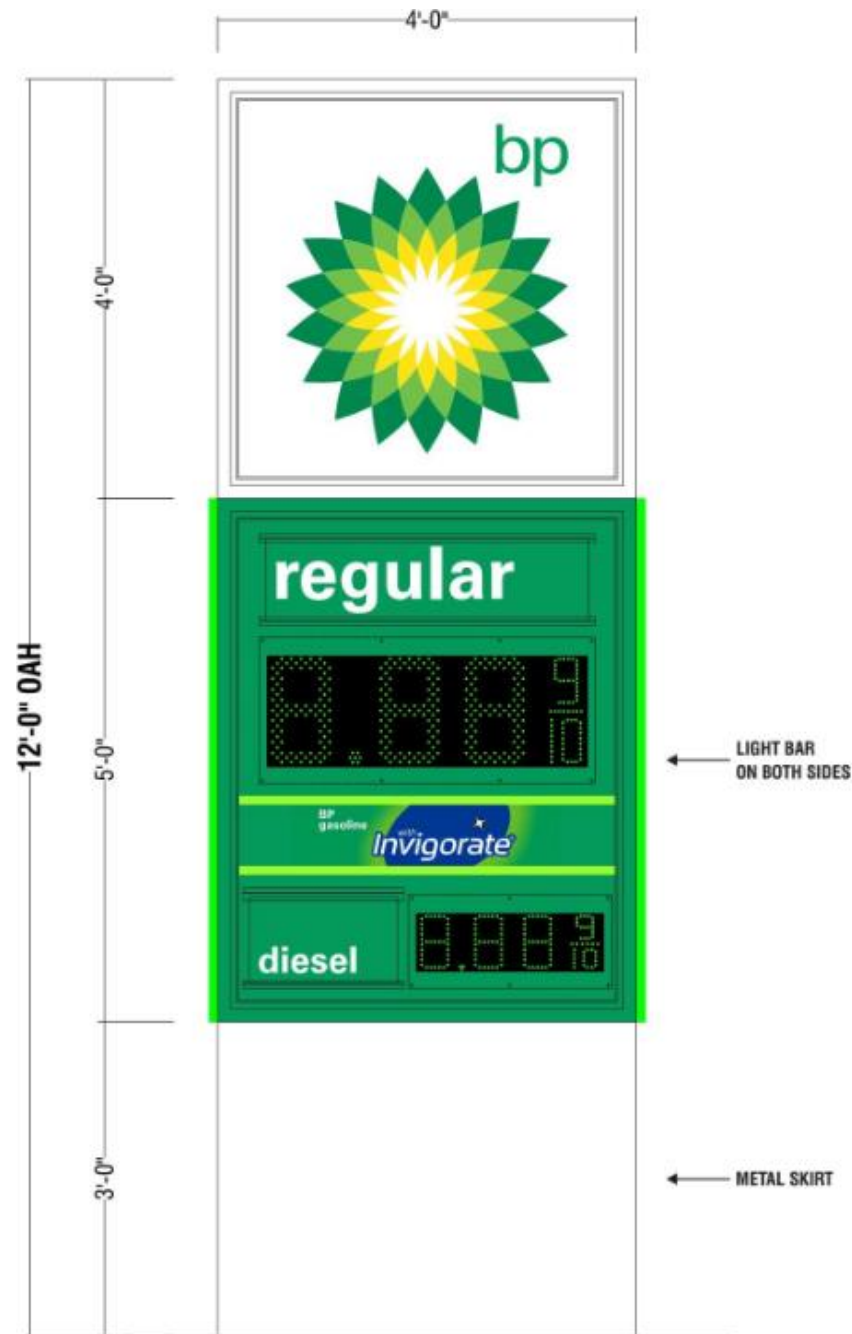


Right Elevation



	PMS 348 C BP RETAIL GREEN (PRICER)	PMS 348 GREEN SATIN FINISH
	PMS 355 C BP RETAIL GREEN (HELIOS)	NA
	PMS 368 C BP LIGHT GREEN (HELIOS)	NA
	PMS 109 C BP YELLOW (HELIOS)	NA
	BP WHITE	WHITE SATIN FINISH
	PMS 661 C INVIGORATE BLUE	NA
	PMS PROCESS BLUE INVIGORATE LIGHT BLUE	NA

Figure 2: Drawings from ARB2022-97: Trading Post BP Canopy Reface and Monument Sign Application.



	PMS 348 C BP RETAIL GREEN (PRICER)	PMS 348 GREEN SATIN FINISH
	PMS 355 C BP RETAIL GREEN (HELIOS)	NA
	PMS 368 C BP LIGHT GREEN (HELIOS)	NA
	PMS 109 C BP YELLOW (HELIOS)	NA
	BP WHITE	WHITE SATIN FINISH
	PMS 661 C INVIGORATE BLUE	NA
	PMS PROCESS BLUE INVIGORATE LIGHT BLUE	NA

Figure 3: Drawings from ARB2022-97: Trading Post BP Canopy Reface and Freestanding Sign Application.



Figure 4: Example of a refaced BP fuel pump canopy with a 3-D fascia band.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINES	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	Fuel Pump Canopies		
45a	Fuel pump canopies may be required to provide customers with protection from the elements and to provide lighting levels required for dispensing fuel. Such fuel pump canopies are functional elements of present-day gas/convenience stores and their character and appearance shall reflect a minimalist design consistent with that function.	The changes to the fascia include a 2-color, 3-dimensional band and a 4-color ‘Helios’ graphic on the north (front), east (left), and west (right) sides of the canopy (Fig. 2, Fig. 4), and a flat ACM band on the south (back) side of the canopy (Fig. 2). The background of the canopy, white, is expected to have an appropriate appearance. However, the multicolor 3-D band does not meet the “one principal color” guideline and the dimensional design of the band and color variety do not establish a minimalist design. The shift to white, green and yellow colors will emphasize the canopy and its components on site, and differentiate the canopy from the store building. In other reviews of BP fuel pump canopies in the County, the multicolored band has not been considered appropriate and the canopy face color has been limited to a single color or a principal color and an accent color with ‘Helios’ graphics/logos.  BP fuel pump canopy, 6115 Rockfish Gap Turnpike.  BP fuel pump canopy, 241 Rolkin Road.	Revise the proposal to limit the band on the fascia to a single color and remove the dimensional band design.
45h	Canopy fascias shall be limited to the use of one principal color, with ARB review.		

45f	Canopy related elements, including fuel dispensers, support columns, spandrels, planters, etc. shall be compatible with the character of the building and site and shall not be used for advertising.	The sign drawings show changes to the fuel dispensers and canopy support columns that include branding colors and graphics. These designs do not complement the character of the building and function as advertising. Revising the support columns to be more compatible with the character of the existing building could reduce the overall impact of the trademark colors.	Revise the support columns to a color that is more compatible with the existing building.
	General Sign Guidelines		
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 character of this portion of the Entrance Corridor is largely rural and residential with intermittent commercial parcels. The designs of the proposed canopy refacing and monument sign are ones that establish brand identity, but they are not reserved and do not relate to the existing building or the rural surroundings. Revisions to the canopy refacing and freestanding sign that simplify the designs could help better integrate them with the existing building and the surrounding context.	See recommendations below.
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.		
3	Encourage creative design. The County encourages imaginative and innovative signs consistent with the purposes expressed above and in conformance with the regulations of the Albemarle County Code.		
4, 9, 11	Signs		
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.	The proposed sign drawings show a logo/graphic on each of the north, east, and west sides of the canopy. Four colors are shown for the ‘Helios’ graphic: white, two shades of green, and yellow. This exceeds the guidelines recommendation. In other BP approvals within the County, however, the four colors have been allowed when the fascia color has been limited to a single color or a principal color with an accent color.	See recommendations in the canopy design (45a, 45h) guidelines above and lighting guidelines (5) below.

	For raceway-mounted channel letters, raceways shall match the wall color.		
11b	The use of three colors or less is more appropriate for canopy signs in the Entrance Corridors. Black and white are counted as colors.		
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.		
9d	The size of a wall sign shall be coordinated with the size of the architectural element on which it is placed. The sign should not overcrowd the architectural element, the wall, or the sign area. Buildings and building elements should not be used as a billboard. For example, an appropriate height for channel letters in a 30" high sign band is 18". This allows 6" of unoccupied space above and below the letters. Generally, 4" of clear space above, below, and to the sides of a channel letter sign is considered a minimum, with larger clearances required for larger sign bands. The ARB will consider the degree of visibility, the distance from the Entrance Corridor, and the architectural design of the building and the sign area in its determination of appropriate sizes and placement.	A complete sign package has been submitted for review. The proposed ‘Helios’ graphics are the same height (36”) as the fascia. This height will not allow for any clear space above and below the graphics. Revising the graphics to the 30” ‘Helios’ option shown in the checklist on page 1 of the sign drawings would allow for appropriate clear space above and below the graphics.	Revise the height of the ‘Helios’ signs for the canopy to not exceed 30”.
5, 8e, 9e	General Lighting, Wall Sign Lighting, and Freestanding Sign Lighting		
5	General Lighting: The purpose of ARB review is to ensure that new development in the Entrance Corridors is compatible with the historic architecture of the County and to promote orderly and attractive development. There is no historical precedent for internally illuminated signs. However, the ARB recognizes the need to identify businesses to help the traveling public find their destination and exit the highway safely.	Wall Sign: The canopy sign proposal shows internal illumination (face-lit) for the ‘Helios’ graphic. However, the drawing does not indicate that the background is opaque. In an online search of similar graphics, the backgrounds appear to be illuminated. Revising the background to be opaque would be consistent with EC Guidelines and other BP approvals.	See lighting recommendations for wall and freestanding signs below.
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	Freestanding Sign: The backgrounds of the ‘Helios’ cabinet and most of the fuel price area on the pylon sign have been indicated as opaque. However, the blue and green background behind ‘with Invigorate’ does not have an opaque background. Revising this background to be opaque would be consistent with EC Guidelines and other BP approvals.	

	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 goal for the Entrance Corridors.		
5b	Since external illumination does not fit every case, individual channel letters – a type of internally illuminated sign that has less visual clutter impact on the Entrance Corridors – may also be approved. Channel letters are generally the preferred type of internally illuminated wall sign because they project the total sign and are identifiable with the daytime image of the sign. When channel letters cannot be adequately accommodated, internally illuminated cabinet signs may be considered. If cabinet signs are utilized, the backgrounds of such signs must be made opaque (zero light transmission).		
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.		
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.		
5e	External Illumination: Lighting should be shielded and not create glare. All external light sources shall be white.		
	Lighting should be aimed so as not to project illumination beyond the sign.		
5f	Internal Illumination: Any internal illumination is considered to contribute to visual clutter and will be limited.		
5g	All illumination shall be non-blinking.	There is no blinking illumination proposed.	None.
5h	Exposed Light Sources: An exposed light source that forms the body of a sign, such as but not limited to signs formed of exposed neon, as opposed to a light shining on a sign, shall not be used in the Entrance Corridors.	The drawing for the pylon sign shows a light bar on either side of the sign. The night-time view does not show these bars as illuminated but eliminating them from the design would ensure consistency with EC Sign Guidelines.	Eliminate the light bar on the sides of the pylon sign.
8e, 9e	<i>i.</i> External illumination is preferred for wall and freestanding signs.		

	ii. Freestanding Sign External Illumination: Landscaping for monument and pole signs should be designed to shield ground-mounted lighting so that it is not visible from any adjacent property or right-of-way. Wall Sign External Illumination: Lighting directed toward a sign should be designed and shielded so that it illuminates the face of the sign and does not shine beyond the edge of the sign.	Wall Sign: Internal illumination (face-lit) is proposed. The ‘Helios’ graphics on the canopy appear to be constructed like a cabinet sign, but the drawings do not note which portions of the sign are opaque. A detail of the ‘Helios’ graphic would clarify the areas of illumination. Freestanding Sign: Internal illumination (face-lit) is proposed. Most of the background of the sign and fuel price areas on the freestanding sign have been indicated as opaque. However, the note is not included with the daytime view of the sign, and the nighttime view shows that the blue and green area behind ‘with Invigorate’ is illuminated. Revising this background to be opaque would be consistent with EC Guidelines.	Revise the drawings to include a detail of the ‘Helios’ canopy sign and notes to clarify that the sides, rear, and background of the signs will be opaque. Revise the daytime pylon view to note that only the white text and green LED prices shall be illuminated on the fuel price cabinet. Revise the daytime pylon view to note that only the BP in the upper right corner and the ‘Helios’ logo in the middle of the sign shall be illuminated on the sign cabinet.
8	FREESTANDING SIGNS		
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.	A pylon-style sign is proposed near the northeast corner of the site in the right-of-way. The right-of-way will need to be acquired prior to the approval of the sign permit. This section of Rt. 29 is primarily rural in character with little commercial signage. The pylon form of the proposed sign, the height, and the colored metal material are expected to result in a sign that looks out of place in the surroundings. A monument-style sign (with a lower, horizontal profile) and a darker base (brick to match the building or a dark green to blend with landscaping) could help establish a more coordinated appearance.	Consider revising the freestanding sign to a monument-style sign with a lower, horizontal profile. Revise the base of the pylon sign to brick to coordinate with the 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.		
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.		
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 Albemarle County Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines and is available on-line at www.albemarle.org .	No landscaping is proposed. A variety of plant types – ground cover, shrubs, etc., - could help integrate the sign into the overall site and help establish a more orderly and attractive appearance for the planting island where the sign is being located.	Revise the sign drawing to show landscaping to integrate the sign into the surrounding context.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Fuel pump canopy design: 3-D band, colors, illumination
2. Quantity of graphic colors
3. Freestanding sign: design and landscaping

Regarding the Fuel Pump Canopy Reface:

Staff recommends the following revisions:

1. Revise the proposal to limit the band on the fascia to a single color and remove the dimensional band design.
2. Revise the support columns to a color that is more compatible with the existing building.
3. Revise the height of the ‘Helios’ signs for the canopy to not exceed 30”.
4. Revise the drawings to include a detail of the ‘Helios’ canopy sign and notes to clarify that the sides, rear, and background of the signs will be opaque.

Regarding the Freestanding Sign:

Staff recommends the following revisions:

1. Eliminate the light bar on the sides of the pylon sign.
2. Revise the daytime pylon view to note that only the white text and green LED prices shall be illuminated on the fuel price cabinet.
3. Revise the daytime pylon view to note that only the BP in the upper right corner and the ‘Helios’ logo in the middle of the sign shall be illuminated on the sign cabinet.
4. Consider revising the freestanding sign to a monument-style sign with a lower, horizontal profile
5. Revise the base of the pylon sign to brick to coordinate with the building.
6. Revise the sign drawing to show landscaping to integrate the sign into the surrounding context.