

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2025-00028: Riverside Center Comprehensive Sign Plan Amendment
Review Type	Revisions to an approved Comprehensive Sign Plan
Parcel Identification	045B10600001B0
Location	2325-2335 Seminole Lane (Figure 1)
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Riverside MC Owner LLC / Gropen Inc. (Paul Kitchings)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To revise the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan criteria (Attach. 1) to accommodate more sign types, colors and locations (Attach. 2).
Context	Riverside Center is part of the commercial corridor of Rt. 29 with a hotel, big box stores and an automobile dealership across the street to the west and southwest and smaller commercial buildings to the south. The Carrsbrook neighborhood is to the southeast. The South Fork Rivanna River is to the north.
Visibility	The buildings – and signs on the buildings – are visible from the Entrance Corridor, though trees in the development reduce visibility from the street.
ARB Meeting Date	December 15, 2025
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

A Comprehensive Sign Plan was approved for this development in May 1999 (Attach. 1). Beginning in 2013 buildings in the development were renovated to accommodate medical offices. The renovations have changed the exterior architectural features such that some of the sign criteria are no longer relevant, and UVA Health would like to use its brand colors for its wall signs. (Figures 2 & 3 illustrate the buildings before and after renovation. Attachments 3 & 4 illustrate the individual sign proposals.)



Figure 1: Project location on the Route 29 North Entrance Corridor

ANAYLSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
General Sign Guidelines; Wall Signs; Wall Signs For Multiple Business Centers			
1	Create a consistent and unified design approach along the Entrance Corridors. The <i>placement, size, illumination and 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 red rectangles on Sheet 2 of Attachment 2 designate the locations for proposed signs for Building #2325. Locations include the brick walls above the canopies, the faces of the entrance features, and the wall above the entrance of the southern wing. These are typical locations for wall signs and appear appropriate. The brick sign band and entrance feature locations would also be appropriate for Building #2335, where a channel letter sign and logo cabinet were approved in 2017. (See Fig. 2b.)	The sign locations designated on Sheet 2 of Attachment 2 for Building #2325 appear appropriate. Similar brick sign band and entrance feature locations for Building #2335 would be appropriate. Limiting channel letter signs to the brick wall sign bands of both buildings and limiting panel signs to the entrance features of both buildings and the shorter southern wing of #2325 would be appropriate.
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.	This proposal would increase the number of allowable sign types, letter colors, and background colors. More sign types and colors typically do not contribute to consistent, unified, or reserved appearances. Both channel letters and panel signs are proposed. Though multiple sign types are typically not preferred, the building design here lends itself to two sign types and the length of the buildings can help the different sign types appear uncrowded. Channel letter signs are seen throughout the corridors in brick sign bands and would continue to be appropriate on the brick bands in this development. Panel signs on the brick walls would be inconsistent with the guidelines and previous approvals on the corridor. However, panel signs do seem more suited to the materials and character of the entrance features of the buildings in this development. Limiting channel letters to the brick wall sign bands, and limiting panels to the entry elements, could contribute to an organized appearance.	
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.		
9b	Channel lettering (mounted on a raceway or individual letters) is preferred to cabinet signs because cabinet signs tend to appear less integrated with the building. Channel letters overlay the wall material and allow the structure of the building to “read through” with less interruption. This results in a more coordinated overall appearance.		
9b	b. Multiple business centers shall use a single sign type for all wall signs.		
4	Design Compatibility		
4a	Placement: The design of a building’s walls, window locations, parapets and other architectural features shall influence the Board’s evaluation of appropriate signage. Wall signs can help establish rhythm, scale and proportion across the façade of a building.		
	Wall signs shall be integrated with the architecture of the building and the placement of such signs should not obscure architectural features or details, including but not limited to	Panels also appear suited to the southern wing of Building #2325, whose different size, material, and color palette, together with limited visibility from the street, set it apart from the rest of the development.	

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	cornices, windows, columns, pilasters and paneling.	Sign sizes are reviewed for consistency with code requirements with individual sign permit applications. The illustrated signs do not appear over-scaled for the locations in which they are proposed.	
10d	Signs must be placed on the building in a manner that establishes a unified appearance.		
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).		
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. (See Illustration 6 on page 26.) 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.		
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.	Proposed materials (ACM, acrylic, aluminum, vinyl) are standard throughout the corridor.	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.	Two fonts are noted in the Exterior Sign Package (Attach. 3), including one for address numbers. (Address signs up to 4 sf do not require permits.) The font for the “UVA Health” letters is not identified. The existing “Primary Care” letters at #2335 appear to be another different font. Given the distance from the EC and the sizes of the signs, multiple fonts are not expected to negatively impact the corridor. This proposal would increase the number of colors that would be allowed for signs in this development. The applicant proposes 3 letter colors and has clarified that this means 3 colors per sign. Three colors per sign with multiple signs does not support compatibility or unity in the center. Limiting letter colors to the three shown in the Exterior Sign Package – white, blue and orange – could provide a sufficient level of coordination.	Revise the CSP chart to identify the three approved letter colors as white, blue and orange; and to limit panel background colors to anodized aluminum, brushed aluminum, or a similar color.
4e, 9c	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.		
-10c	c. Compatibility among signs [in a multi-business center] must be maintained through color or font and typeface selection.		
4f	Trademarks, corporate logos and graphics: The ARB may require that the color and	Multiple colors are also proposed for the panel	

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	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.	backgrounds, including anodized aluminum, brushed aluminum, and “a color to coordinate with any sign”. The anodized and brushed aluminum are expected to have a neutral appearance that would work well with the other proposed sign features. However, “a color to coordinate with any sign” would allow an unlimited number of colors and would not support coordination throughout the center. Multiple colors for logos would continue to be allowed with this proposal. With halo illumination (see below) the multiple colors are not expected to have a negative impact. Raceway colors are proposed to match the wall color. The submittal shows that the graphics are integrated in size and placement with the sign text.	
5	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.	Halo illumination is proposed for channel letters and associated graphics. Halo illumination is consistent with other signs in the corridor and can provide a “softer” appearance than face-lit. Panel signs are proposed with no illumination. This combination is expected to have an appropriate appearance for the EC.	None.
5a, 9ei, 10ei	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 goal for the Entrance Corridors.		
5b, 10eiv	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		

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	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.		
5f	Internal Illumination: Any internal illumination is considered to contribute to visual clutter and will be limited.		
9	<i>iii.</i> Internal illumination: Channel letters with translucent faces shall be constructed such that no light spills outward from the top, bottom, sides or back. Faces and returns of channel letters shall be opaque when back-lit (halo-lit).		

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommend the following as the primary points of discussion:

- 1. Proposed sign types and locations
- 2. Proposed sign colors

Staff recommend:

Approval of the revised Comprehensive Sign Criteria outlined in Attachment 5 and copied below:

SIGN FEATURE	APPROVED CRITERIA
SIGN TYPE / LOCATION	Channel letter wall signs in brick sign bands, panel signs on entrance features or centered over entrance in southern wing. Areas available for wall signs on Building #2325 are identified in the diagram below. Similar locations are approved for Building #2335.
LETTER FACE COLOR	White, blue (Pantone 533C), orange (Pantone 158C)
TRIM CAP COLOR/RETURN COLOR	To coordinate with face color
RACEWAY COLOR	To match the color of the wall to which the sign is attached
PANEL FACE COLORS	Anodized aluminum, brushed aluminum, or similar
SIZE LIMITATIONS	As per Zoning Ordinance and EC sign guidelines
MOUNTING DETAILS	n/a
LOGO/GRAPHICS DETAILS	May include small logo boxes or graphics. Graphics may use multiple colors and must be integrated into the overall sign.
ILLUMINATION DETAILS	Channel letters and graphics: internal halo illumination; Panels: no illumination

This form outlines the specific design criteria established for signs at this location. All standard ARB Sign Guidelines also apply.
Reference: ARB-F(Sign) 99-44: Antiquer’s Mall, ARB-2015-80: Riverside Center; ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP Amendment



ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP: Original Criteria](#)

Attach. 2: [ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP: Proposed Changes and Sign Locations](#)

Attach. 3: [ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP: Exterior Sign Package](#)

Attach. 4: [ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP: Front Elevations with Proposed Signs](#)

Attach. 5: [ARB-2025-28: Riverside Center CSP: Staff Recommended CSP Changes](#)



Figures 2a & b: Google street views of Building #2335 prior to renovation for medical offices (top) and after (bottom).



Figures 3a & b: Google street views of Building #2325 prior to renovation for medical offices (top) and after (bottom).