

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2020-112: Pet Supplies Plus / 1240 Seminole Trail Comprehensive Sign Plan Amendment
Review Type	Amendment to a Comprehensive Sign Plan
Parcel Identification	061W0-01-0A-00400
Location	1240 Seminole Trail at the northwest corner of the intersection with Greenbrier Drive (Figure 1)
Zoned	Commercial (C1)/Entrance Corridor (EC)/Airport Impact Area (AIA)
Owner/Applicant	Chiang, Sheou-Jong OR Li Yun C/O Danielle Stark / Hightech Signs (Beth Robinson)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To amend the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) to replace cabinet signs with internally illuminated channel letters and to change sign colors.
Context	This building is currently occupied by Pet Supplies Plus and Sprint. Existing signs are cabinet style signs centered above the windows facing Rt. 29 and suspended from I-beams between the brick piers. Buildings in the vicinity typically have internally illuminated channel letter signs.
Visibility	The north, east and west sides of the building are clearly visible from the EC (Rt. 29).
ARB Meeting Date	April 5, 2021
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for this development on March 25, 2005. The approved building design included cabinet style signs centered above the windows facing Rt. 29 and suspended from I-beams between the brick piers at the southeast corner of the building. Certificates of Appropriateness have been issued for several signs meeting the original approved design over the years. Pet Supplies Plus submitted a sign application that did not meet the approved design. Rather than revise the Pet Supplies Plus sign proposal, the applicant has requested an amendment to the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan (Figure 2) for the building.

ARB COMPREHENSIVE SIGN REVIEW APPROVED CONDITIONS

PROJECT #/NAME: Pet Supplies Plus Building
1240 Seminole Trail
TAX MAP/PARCEL#: 061W0-01-0A-00400

SIGN FEATURE	APPROVED CONDITION	NOTES
SIGN TYPE	Cabinet	
LETTER FACE COLOR	White	
TRIM CAP COLOR/RETURN COLOR	n/a	
RACEWAY COLOR	n/a	
CABINET FACE COLORS	Cabinet to be dark bronze color on all sides	
SIZE LIMITATIONS	2' (h) x 11' (w)	
LOCATION(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspended from I-beam between brick piers • Centered above windows facing Route 29 	
MOUNTING DETAILS	Suspended from I beam with 4" square tube supports finished to match I-beam	
LOGO/GRAPHICS DETAILS	As per ARB guidelines	
ILLUMINATION DETAILS	Internal illumination with an opaque background Only the text to illuminate No illumination of the logo	
TEXT	Unspecified	
LETTER TYPE/FONT	As per ARB guidelines	
MATERIALS	Aluminum	

Freestanding Multi Tenant Sign

Base:

Material: Brick
 Size: 3'-9" (h) x 8' (w)

Sign Cabinets:

Material: Aluminum
 Size: 2' (h) x 8' (w)
 Cabinet Color: Dark Bronze
 Text color: White

Location: On top of brick base, 6" space between cabinets

Illumination: Internal illumination with opaque background, only the text to illuminate
 No illumination of the logo

This form outlines the specific design criteria established for signs at this location.
All standard ARB Sign Guidelines also apply.

Figure 2: 1240 Seminole Trail Approved Comprehensive Sign Plan.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINES	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
II GENERAL SIGN GUIDELINES			
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 proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) maintains consistency through the use of single sign and illumination types.	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.		
2, 4 8	FREESTANDING SIGNS		
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).	The monument sign is existing. Its brick base complements the primary building material. The size and scale of the tenant panels in the monument sign would not change with this proposal.	Revise the criteria for the freestanding sign to indicate that graphics must be fully incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign, and graphics must be balanced in size and
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.	The existing Sprint tenant panel incorporates an integrated graphic that is balanced in size and proportion. The proposed criteria for the freestanding sign allow for graphics, but there is only a general note referencing sign proportions. Graphics that are fully integrated with the text and that are balanced in size and proportion without overwhelming the text would be appropriate.	proportion without overwhelming the text.
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.		
4c	Materials: Materials used in both the sign and support structures should complement the building and/or multiple business center being served by the sign.		
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.		
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 sign proposal has no specification on the number of typefaces. With only two tenant panels, unlimited typefaces is not anticipated to have a negative impact on the sign design.	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.	One color (black) is proposed for the tenant panel background, which is different from the existing CSP color (dark bronze). However, it appears that the existing Sprint tenant panel was constructed with a black background, so consistency will not be an issue. The proposed text color is white and the proposed amendment would allow unlimited graphics colors as long as individual tenant graphics colors are limited to three and all colors have a coordinated appearance. With a single	None.

		<p>letter color and graphics that are small in comparison to the letters, multiple graphics colors is not expected to have a negative impact.</p> <p>There are no channel letters proposed for the monument sign.</p>	
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 is existing and does not visually overwhelm the signs that it supports.	None.
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 .	Landscaping for the site was approved with the final site plan. It included no landscaping at the base of the monument sign.	None.
8e	<i>Lighting</i>		
	<i>i. External illumination is preferred for freestanding signs.</i>	Internal illumination is existing and will remain for the monument sign. The proposed criteria specify opaque backgrounds and no illumination of graphics/logos.	None.
	<i>ii. External Illumination:</i> 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.		
	<i>iii. Internal illumination:</i> 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.		
	<i>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.</i>		
4, 9, 10	<i>WALL SIGNS, WALL SIGNS FOR MULTIPLE BUSINESS CENTERS</i>		
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.	A complete sign package has been submitted for review. The proposal allows for channel letters to be attached to the brick walls above the windows and to “backer panels” hung between the brick piers. The backer panels appear to be about 4½” deep, and the channel letters are 5”	Revise the CSP to include criteria requiring alignment of signs across the building for a coordinated appearance.
9a	Wall signs shall be integrated with the architecture of the building and the placement of such signs should not obscure		If the CSP is approved, the existing cabinet signs must be

	architectural features or details, including but not limited to cornices, windows, columns, pilasters and paneling.	deep. The backer panel signs are expected to have a less streamlined appearance than the existing hanging signs.	removed and the wall area repaired.
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.	The proposed amendment allows for channel letters to be attached to the brick wall above the windows along the east and south elevations and attached to backer panels suspended from the I-beams between the brick piers at the southeast corner of the building. The proposed sign areas occupy most of the available wall space. The proposal includes no alignment criteria. Signs that are aligned with each other and centered within the architectural element would help ensure a coordinated appearance across the building.	
10a	A complete sign package shall be provided as part of the submittal materials for the review of any new multiple business center. The proposal should address how compatibility among signs will be achieved, and how new signs will be coordinated with the architecture of the building(s); the first approved sign installed in a multiple business center will establish the standard for all future signs for that center. The future review of proposals for new signs in existing multiple business centers will take into consideration the character and appearance of the existing building(s) and with existing sign(s).	The proposal does not indicate that the existing sign cabinets will be removed. To achieve an orderly and attractive appearance, the existing cabinet signs will need to be removed and the wall surface repaired.	
10b	b. Multiple business centers shall use a single sign type for all wall signs.		
10d	Signs must be placed on the building in a manner that establishes a unified appearance.		
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.		
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	The sign proposal does not specify a limit on the number of typefaces. Consistency in sign type, color, and alignment can allow for greater variety in typefaces.	

	in the Entrance Corridor. Additional typefaces may be approved only if they contribute to a balanced, legible, unified sign design.		
4e	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>For raceway-mounted channel letters, raceways shall match the wall color.</p>	<p>The existing CSP limits the text color to one color (white). The amended sign proposal limits individual letters to one color but allows for a maximum of three colors (white, an unspecified red, or an unspecified green) in each sign. Limiting text to a single color but allowing for multiple graphic/logo colors has been approved in other multi-tenant buildings with successful results. Applying the same criteria here, consistent with the proposed monument sign limitation, would ensure a coordinated appearance across the building.</p>	<p>Revise the CSP criteria to limit wall sign colors consistent with the limitations on monument sign colors.</p> <p>Revise the plan to specify one attachment method for the wall signs to the brick sign areas.</p> <p>Revise the plan to limit the backer panels to a single color.</p>
10c	c. Compatibility among signs must be maintained through color or font and typeface selection.		
9c	For raceway-mounted channel letters, the raceway shall match the wall color.	<p>The proposal specifies that, if used, raceways are to match the color of the wall to which they are attached. To ensure a consistent appearance, the criteria should specify a single attachment method.</p> <p>The criteria for the backer panels specify two colors (black or painted to match I-beam). Limiting the backer panel to a single color would ensure greater coordination within the site.</p>	
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.	<p>The existing Sprint cabinet sign incorporates an integrated graphic that is balanced in size and proportion. The proposed criteria for the wall signs allow for “channel logos”, but there is only a general note referencing sign proportions. Graphics that are fully integrated with the text and that are balanced in size and proportion without overwhelming the text would be appropriate.</p>	<p>Revise the criteria for wall signs to indicate that graphics must be fully incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign, and graphics must be balanced in size and proportion without overwhelming the text.</p>

5, 9e, 10e	<i>Lighting, Lighting for Wall Signs, Lighting for Multiple Business Centers</i>		
5	<p>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.</p>	<p>The sign proposal maintains the existing illumination type (face-lit) for the channel letters. While external illumination is preferred, internal illumination, when limited to a single type, will not have a negative impact.</p>	<p>None.</p>
5a	<p>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.</p>		
5b	<p>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).</p>		
5c	<p>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</p>		

	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.	There are no exposed light sources proposed.	None.
9e, 10e	<i>i.</i> External illumination is preferred for wall signs / signs in multiple business centers.	Internal illumination (face-lit) is existing and is maintained in the amended CSP (face-lit channel letters).	None.
	<i>ii.</i> 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.		
	<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).		
	<i>iv.</i> 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.		

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Wall sign criteria: revised sign type, channel letters on backer panels, text and graphics colors, sign locations/alignment, attachment
2. Tenant panel criteria: text and graphics colors, size of graphics

Staff recommends approval with the following revisions:

1. Revise the criteria for the freestanding sign to indicate that graphics must be fully incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign, and graphics must be balanced in size and proportion without overwhelming the text.
2. Revise the CSP to include criteria requiring alignment of signs across the building for a coordinated appearance.
3. If the CSP is approved, the existing cabinet signs must be removed and the wall area repaired.
4. Revise the CSP criteria to limit wall sign colors consistent with the limitations on monument sign colors.
5. Revise the plan to specify one attachment method for the wall signs to the brick sign areas.
6. Revise the plan to limit the backer panels to a single color.
7. Revise the criteria for wall signs to indicate that graphics must be fully incorporated as an integral part of the overall sign, and graphics must be balanced in size and proportion without overwhelming the text.

ATTACHMENTS

- **Attach. 1:** [ARB2020-112: Pet Supplies Plus Amended Comprehensive Sign Plan](#)

TABLE A

This report is based on the following submittal items:

Sheet #	Drawing Name	Drawing Date/Revision Date
Pet Supplies Plus Amended Comprehensive Sign Plan		
1	Cover Sheet	2/5/2021
2	General Notes and Scope of Plan	
3	Wall Signs – Proposed Criteria	
4	Multi-Tenant Monument Sign – Proposed Criteria	
5	Wall Sign Locations – Southeast Elevation	
6	Wall Sign Locations – Southwest Elevation	