



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of February 21, 2009**

**DATE:** February 2, 2009

**SUBJECT:** SP #219 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT: Jack Chester, Argosy University, rooftop sign; 1550 Wilson Blvd. (RPC #17-004-015, -016)

**Applicant:**

Argosy University  
1550 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

**By:**

Jack Chester, Director of Facilities/Project Manager for Argosy University  
1820 N. Fort Myer Dr.  
Arlington, VA 22209

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the site plan amendment for one (1) rooftop sign for Argosy University at 1550 Wilson Blvd., subject to all previously approved conditions, and amended Condition #21.

**ISSUES:** This is a site plan amendment request for one (1) rooftop sign and no issues have been identified.

**SUMMARY:** The applicant, Argosy University is requesting a site plan amendment for one (1) rooftop sign on the east façade of the building at 1550 Wilson Boulevard. The sign would display the text "Argosy University". The proposed sign's area and design is consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for the Site Plan Buildings* and Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment for one (1) rooftop sign for Argosy University at 1550 Wilson Boulevard be approved, subject to all previously approved conditions, and amended Condition #21.

**BACKGROUND:** Argosy University occupies the top three (3) floors of the six (6) story office building located at 1550 Wilson Boulevard. There are no rooftop signs currently on the building.

Site: Located at 1550 Wilson Boulevard, the site is bound as follows:

County Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

County Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff: Peter Schulz, DCPHD, Planning

PLA-5182

To the north: Wilson Boulevard, two (2) office buildings, and a fire station  
 To the west: An office building at 1560 Wilson Boulevard  
 To the east: An office building  
 To the south: A hotel

Zoning: The site is zoned “C-O” Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Multiple-family Dwelling District.

Land Use: The site is designated on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as “High Office-Apartment-Hotel, 3.8 F.A.R. allowable office density, up to 4.8 F.A.R. allowable apartment density, and up to 3.8 F.A.R. allowable hotel density”.

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic Association and across Wilson Boulevard from the North Rosslyn Civic Association. Neither civic association had responded to a request for comments. Rosslyn Renaissance will consider the sign at their February meeting, and will forward their comments before the February County Board hearing.

**DISCUSSION:** The following table sets forth the details for the proposed rooftop sign:

Sign Type (Quantity)	Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. ft)	Text	Location	Materials
Rooftop Tenant Sign (1)	1.5 ft. height x 17 ft length	26 square feet	“Argosy University”	The east façade, 69 feet above grade, on the fascia between the fifth and sixth floors	Channel letters, internally illuminated, perforated vinyl
<b>Total rooftop sign area permitted, based on linear frontage</b>		201 s.f.			

The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* classifies a rooftop sign as a sign which is located above thirty-five (35) feet. The *Sign Guidelines* further state that any building may have a maximum of two (2) rooftop signs, and that the signs should be compatible with the building architecture. In addition, the signs should not directly face a residential neighborhood or areas such as Route 66, the George Washington Parkway, the Washington D.C. Monumental Core area, or Arlington Cemetery. The proposed rooftop sign meets those criteria. The proposed sign will face office uses to the east, and is placed much lower on the building (69 feet above grade) than is typical for Rosslyn. Due to much taller office structures to the east, and the small size of the proposed sign it is highly unlikely that the sign would be seen by any residential uses or from the George Washington Parkway or the National Mall. The sign would most likely be seen only from traffic driving west on Wilson Boulevard toward the subject building.

The rooftop sign also falls within the amount of square footage permitted for rooftop signs. The *Sign Guidelines* state that the total permitted area of rooftop signs for any building will be computed on the basis of one (1) square foot of sign area for each one (1) linear foot of building wall width measured along the public right-of-way. The linear frontage along Wilson Boulevard is 201 feet, and the proposed sign area is 26 square feet, thus falling within the permitted sign

area. The sign, proposed to be approximately 1.5 feet in height, complies with the maximum six-foot height regulation for rooftop signs.

The rooftop sign will be internally illuminated with light emitting diodes (LEDs). The type of sign the applicant is installing does not have a dimmer option, but the applicant has agreed that upon the County Manager's request, if it is determined that the sign is too bright, they will add 3M "diffuser vinyl" on the back sides of the letter faces which will have the same dimming effect. Staff supports this "low-tech" dimming option because the sign is only 26 square feet in size and does not face residential uses. The applicant has also agreed that the signs will remain unlit between the hours of Midnight and 6 a.m. Staff supports the proposed rooftop sign as it will have a minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood, and therefore staff recommends approval of a site plan amendment for a rooftop sign, subject to all previously approved conditions, and amended Condition #21.

**CONCLUSION:** The proposed sign area and design of the signs are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for the Site Plan Buildings* and Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends approval of a site plan amendment for a rooftop sign, subject to all previously approved conditions, and amended Condition #21.

#### **Amended Condition #21**

21. All signs shall be part of a coordinated sign treatment and shall conform to the adopted "Sign Standards for Site Plan Buildings" and be approved by the County Manager or his designee.
  - a. The applicant agrees for the building at 1550 Wilson Boulevard to limit the rooftop signs to one (1) tenant identification sign, to be placed on the east façade at a height of sixty-nine feet (69') from the ground, consistent with the location and design as shown on the drawings submitted to the County from Royal Sign Co., Drawing #09-3245, and approved by the County Board on February 21, 2009. The total area of the one (1) rooftop sign shall not exceed 26 square feet.
  - b. The applicant agrees for the building at 1550 Wilson Boulevard, that the rooftop sign shall be illuminated only as shown on the plans from Royal Sign Co., Drawing #09-3245. The applicant agrees that the rooftop sign shall not be illuminated between the hours of Midnight and 6 a.m., seven days per week. The applicant further agrees that if the County Manager finds that the intensity of the rooftop sign's lighting has an adverse effect on the surrounding area, the applicant will, within 24 hours notice from the County Manager, reduce the intensity of the lights to a level that, in the County Manager's reasonable judgment, will no longer have such an adverse effect.
  - c. Minor changes to the approved rooftop sign may be approved administratively by the Zoning Administrator. For the purposes of the preceding sentence, minor changes shall include only the following: (i) a minor adjustment in the location of the sign to meet field conditions (less than 1 foot in any direction); or (ii) a minor change in the area of the sign (less than 5%). All other changes to the approved rooftop signs will require site plan approval or amendment.

## PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS

- May 12, 1984 Amended the General Land Use Plan (GP-160-84-1) for the northwestern portion of the block (Wilson Boulevard frontage only) bounded by Wilson Boulevard, North Oak Street, North Pierce Street and 17th Street North from "High Residential" (maximum 4.8 Floor Area Ratio [FAR] Apartment; 3.8 FAR Hotel) to "High Office-Apartment-Hotel" (up to 3.8 FAR Office/Hotel; 4.8 FAR Apartment). Approved a site plan (Z-2258-84-2) for a mixed-use office/hotel/retail project; approved a rezoning (Z-2258-84-2) from "RA6-15" and "C-3" to "C-O" and "RA-H-3.2."
- March 2, 1985 Accepted withdrawal of a site plan amendment to reconfigure the approved hotel to increase the Gross Floor Area, the number of units and the height of the building, and to add a health club and other hotel amenities.
- December 2, 1986 Approved a site plan amendment to permit an interim surface parking lot.
- July 11, 1987 Approved a site plan amendment for a rooftop sign reading "Columbia First" on the western facade of the 1560 Wilson Boulevard Building.
- November 7, 1987 Approved a site plan amendment for a freestanding project identification sign in the plaza near the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and North Pierce Street.
- February 11, 1989 Approved a site plan amendment to reconfigure the hotel by reducing the Gross Floor Area from 101,140 square feet to 98,500 square feet, reducing the Floor Area Ratio to 3.6 F.A.R., increasing the number of hotel units from 127 to 162 units, and reducing the parking ratio from 1 space per unit to .86 space per unit.
- August 12, 1989 Approved a site plan amendment to permit modifications in the approved facade and the installation of three identification signs.
- May 22, 1990 Approved a site plan amendment to reduce the clearance of the loading dock from 14 feet to 11.5

	feet, subject to a condition requiring that no delivery or loading vehicles be permitted to use Clarendon Boulevard for loading, maneuvering or servicing the hotel.
September 18, 1991	Approved a site plan amendment permitting the installation of a 2.8 meter satellite dish antenna on the hotel roof.
March 6, 1993	Deferred to April 3, 1993, a site plan amendment request for the conversion of 2,651 square feet of penthouse space to office use at 1550 Wilson Boulevard.
April 3, 1993	Deferred to May 15, 1993, a site plan amendment request for the conversion of 2,651 square feet of penthouse space to office use at 1550 Wilson Boulevard.
May 18, 1993	Denied a site plan amendment request for the conversion of 2,651 square feet of penthouse space to office use at 1550 Wilson Boulevard.
June 4, 1994	Approved a site plan amendment request for the conversion of approximately 1,992 square feet of retail space to office/retail use at 1550 Wilson Boulevard.
October 17, 1995	Approved a site plan amendment for a temporary leasing sign of approximately 210 square feet at the roof line of the west elevation for the parcel of real property known as 1560 Wilson Boulevard.
May 23, 2000	Approved a site plan amendment request for the conversion of approximately 5,462 square feet of retail space to office space at 1560 Wilson Boulevard.
September 9, 2000	Approved a site plan amendment for a sign to be placed above the height limit at 55 feet instead of 35 feet as permitted, for the parcel of real property known as 1550 Wilson Boulevard.
March 13, 2004	Approved a site plan amendment request for live entertainment and dancing at 1560 Wilson

Boulevard, with a County Board review in one (1) year (March 2005).

March 12, 2005

Renewed a site plan amendment request for live entertainment and dancing at 1560 Wilson Boulevard with a County Board review in three (3) years (March 2008).