



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of July 11, 2009**

DATE: June 30, 2009

SUBJECT: SP #173 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT for a comprehensive sign plan for Arlington Plaza located at 2000 15th Street North (RPC #17-014-005)

Applicant:

Carr Properties, LLC

By:

Nan Walsh, Esq.
Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh P.C.
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, 13th Floor
Arlington, Virginia 22201

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the site plan amendment to approve a comprehensive sign plan subject to all previous conditions, but with condition #6 as amended in this report.

ISSUES: This is a site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan. There are no issues.

SUMMARY: The applicant requests approval of a comprehensive sign plan that includes signs that do not conform to Zoning Ordinance Section 34. The proposed signs are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Three (3) of the proposed signs require County Board action for modification from Zoning Ordinance requirements: One (1) proposed parking sign needs modification relating to the permitted size of parking garage identification signs, one (1) existing projecting parking garage sign needs modification for projecting more than 42 inches from a wall, for being less than ten (10) feet above grade, and for exceeding the permitted size of a parking garage sign; and one (1) directional sign requires modification for being placed on a wall not a part of the building. The proposed modifications are in keeping with the *Sign Guidelines*, will more easily identify available parking and retail, and will improve the appearance of this older site plan building. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the site plan amendment to approve a comprehensive sign plan subject to all previous conditions, but with an amended Condition #6.

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Peter Schulz, CPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5309

BACKGROUND: The original site plan was approved in 1980 and was significantly revised in 1982. The building was completed in 1985. Condition #6 of the 1982 site plan approval required a “coordinated sign treatment” conforming to the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* subject to the approval of the County Manager. In 1985, the County Board approved two 100-square foot rooftop signs for the SRA Corporation. After a recent renovation of the building, the applicant has requested approval of a new comprehensive sign plan. By the terms of the original condition #6, the comprehensive sign plan could be approved administratively if it were consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. However, staff does not have the authority to administratively approve signs that do not conform to the Zoning Ordinance.

Site: The site is just over one (1) acre.

- To the north: Across 15th Street North is the office building at 1515 N. Courthouse Road, zoned “C-O”, a small by-right office building zoned “C-2”, a parking lot zoned “C-1”, and the private park for the Odyssey Condominium, zoned “C-O”.
- To the west: North Troy Street and the Justice Center, composed of the County’s Courthouse and Detention Facility, zoned “P-S”.
- To the east: North Taft Street and a few high-rise apartment buildings (including the Meridian at Courthouse Commons and The Prime at Arlington Courthouse Apartments), zoned “RA4.8” and “R-C”.
- To the south: The Arlington Executive Building (SP#403) zoned “C-O”.

Zoning: The subject site is zoned “C-O”, Commercial Office Building, Hotel, And Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts. The Zoning Ordinance Section 34 and the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* regulates signs in this zoning district.

The type and total area for the proposed signs are consistent with the Zoning Ordinance and the *Sign Guidelines*, with the exception of the two (2) garage entrance signs, both of which are larger than the maximum three (3) square feet permitted in Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance and one (1) of which is a projecting sign less than ten (10) feet above finished grade.

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

Neighborhood: The subject site is located in the Radnor-Fort Myer Heights Civic Association. Staff has requested comments from the association, but to date has not received any.

In addition to the signs included in the proposed comprehensive site plan, the building also has two (2) illuminated rooftop signs of 100 square feet each on the north and southwest elevations that were approved by a site plan amendment on March 16, 1985 (See attached Table 2). The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* permit one square foot of rooftop sign area for every linear foot of building frontage, and up to two (2) rooftop signs for a major tenant, or one (1) roof top sign for up to two (2) major tenants of a building. These rooftop signs are not included

in this site plan amendment request and can be changed administratively if the replacement signs are of the same size, placement, and adhere to any conditions of the site plan amendment approval imposed on the rooftop signs being replaced.

DISCUSSION: The table on the next page provides detail on the signs proposed. The applicant has proposed one sign of each type, except where noted.

Table 1

SIGNS COUNTING TOWARD OVERALL SIGN AREA:					
Sign Number	Type & Abbreviation in Sign Plan	Locations	Sign Area (Sq. ft)	Text	Material
SL-T.1*	Future tenant "A"	North elevation, ground floor	18	<i>Tenant Name</i>	Illuminated channel letters, or face-lit cabinet
SL-T.2*	Future tenant "B"	East elevation, ground floor	18	<i>Tenant Name</i>	Illuminated channel letters, or face-lit cabinet
SL-T.3*	Future tenant "C"	North elevation, ground floor	45	<i>Tenant Name</i>	Illuminated channel letters, or face-lit cabinet
SL-PK	Parking sign	North elevation, above garage entrance	45	<i>"Parking"</i>	Illuminated channel letters, or face-lit cabinet
SL-WS	Wall sign	West elevation, on building wall	20	<i>Wayfinding sign with arrow, and no more than two tenant names</i>	Illuminated, TBD
SL-WP*	Tenant plaques (2)	Main entrance, north east elevation, next to lobby doors	1.5 each (3 s.f. total)	<i>Tenant Name(s)</i>	Not illuminated, materials TBD
(no number, sign was previously installed by others without permits)	Parking sign	Projecting sign, placed vertically, next to garage entrance on north elevation	16	<i>"Parking"</i>	Illuminated cabinet
Total Sign Area Proposed (square feet)			165		
Total Building Frontage (linear feet)			260		

*Signs that staff determined can be approved administratively, and do not require County Board action.

By reference to the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, the project is allowed one (1) square foot of total project sign area (including directional signs, retail and commercial tenant signs and building, project, or major tenant identification) for every one (1) square foot of street frontage.

The building has a total frontage of 260 linear feet on the three public streets, and the applicant is proposing 165 total square feet of sign area.

Most of the signs (SL-T.1, SL-T.2, SL-T.3 and SL-WP) conform to Zoning Ordinance Section 34 with regard to placement, size, and lighting, and can be approved administratively. The following signs which are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* need County Board approval:

- The one (1) proposed parking sign (45 square feet) and one (1) existing illegally constructed parking sign (16 square feet) are larger than permitted by the Zoning Ordinance (“three (3) square feet at each vehicular entrance to and exit from a parking area”). However, they are generally consistent with the vast majority of parking garage signs on site plan buildings. In December, the County Board approved for the Courthouse Plaza Hotel signs total 24 square feet marking the parking garage entrances and exits, and in December 2007, the County Board approved 67 total square feet of parking sign area at the Hyatt Rosslyn. The applicant in this case is significantly under the permitted limit for total project sign area, and the applicant could have allocated much more than the 61 total square feet they are requesting for parking signs to tenant signs. The one (1) existing parking sign of 16 square feet also projects out from the building wall more than 42 inches and is less than 10 feet above the finished grade. However, the sign is placed above a landscaped area, not the sidewalk, so there is no obstruction to pedestrians, and because of the steep grade of 15th Street North allowing this existing sign to remain where it is allows traffic in both directions to see the location of the parking garage entrance.
- The proposed wayfinding sign (SL-WS) is placed on the side of a parking garage vent, which is attached to the building (and parking garage), but in staff’s determination not technically on the building itself as the Zoning Ordinance requires. Staff supports the sign as it would be more visible to pedestrians and motorists coming from the west (the much more active Courthouse Road area) than the main retail signs due to the descending grade along 15th Street.

CONCLUSION: The proposed signs in the comprehensive sign plan are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and with the exceptions noted above, meet the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the site plan amendment to approve a comprehensive sign plan, subject to all previous conditions but with the following amended condition #6:

6. All signs shall be a 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. The applicant agrees to limit all signs to the size, design, location, and color of the proposed signs on the drawings prepared by Jack Stone Signs, and entitled “2001 N. 15th Street, Arlington, VA,” and dated May 21, 2009 as attached to the staff report and approved by the County Board on July 11, 2009, with the exception of additional window signs which may be allowed pursuant to Section 34.G.7, and the two (2) existing rooftop signs previously permitted by the March 16, 1985 site plan amendment which may be changed

administratively in content but not size, location or design. The applicant agrees that the total sign area allowed excluding rooftop signs which are permitted to be up to 100 square feet each, and window signs as permitted in Section 34.G.7 will be no more than 165 square feet. The applicant further agrees that changes to the approved comprehensive sign that conform to Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance may be approved administratively by the Zoning Administrator. Signs which do not conform to the requirements for Section 34 will require a site plan amendment.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

- February 3, 1959 Accepted withdrawal of a request to rezone a part of the property from “RA8-18” to “C-2” (Z-1258-56-1).
- February 4, 1960 On the County Board’s own motion, denied a rezoning from “C-3” and “RA8-18” to “C-1-O” (Z-1473-60-2).
- October 13, 1979 Approved a land exchange of subject property, and approved a request to advertise a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) amendment from “Public” to “High Office-Apartment-Hotel”, a rezoning from “RA8-18” and “C-3” to “C-O”, and a site plan for an office building of up to 3.5 F.A.R. for the January 5, 1980 County Board hearing.
- December 8, 1979 Withdrew rezoning and GLUP amendment request Z-2169-80-3 and authorized advertising for public hearing at the first meeting of September 1980 a GLUP amendment from “Public” to “High Office-Apartment-Hotel” and rezoning from “RA-8-18” and “C-3” to “C-O”.
- January 5, 1980 Withdrew rezoning and GLUP amendment request Z-2169-80-3.
- September 13, 1980 Amended the GLUP from “Public” to “High Office-Apartment-Hotel”, approved rezoning Z-2184-80-4 from “RA-8-18” and “C-3” to “C-O”, and approved a site plan for an office building of 226,644 square feet with a penthouse roof elevation of 155 feet above average elevation of the site, and the existing 69,832 square foot Executive Building, and 217,278 square feet of parking area, and authorized advertising for a October 18, 1980 public hearing a site plan amendment to amend the building’s height, parking, and gross floor area.
- October 18, 1980 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-2184-80-4) to increase the number of floors for offices from 11 to 12, to increase the office gross floor area from 226,644 square feet to 257,648 square feet, to add 11,480 square feet of retail space, to increase the building height at the roofline from 137 feet to 164 feet, to increase gross parking area from 217,278 square feet (588 spaces) to 219,068 square feet (643 spaces).

March 30, 1981	Approved a site plan amendment (Z-2184-80-4) for a temporary 135-space parking lot, subject to conditions, and to expire on September 13, 1982.
May 8, 1982	Approved a site plan amendment (Z-2184-80-4) to delete the Executive Building from the site plan, and approved a 12-story office building on the remainder of the site with 194,737 square feet of gross floor area and four garage levels with a total of 335 spaces.
February 23, 1985	Authorized advertising for the March 16, 1985 public hearing a site plan amendment (Z-2184-80-4) for two rooftop signs.
March 16, 1985	Approved a site plan amendment (Z-2184-80-4) for two rooftop signs.
July 7, 1990	Approved a lease for temporary chambers for the Circuit Court judges.
February 6, 1993	Approved a site plan amendment (SP#173) for the temporary conversion of 1,821 square feet of retail space to office space for five years.
August 8, 1998	Approved a site plan amendment (SP#173) for antennae and satellite dishes on the roof.

PREVIOUSLY APPROVED CONDITIONS:

1. The developer shall submit a detailed final site development and landscaping plan at a scale of 1/16" = 1' to be approved by the County Manager prior to the issuance of a building permit. Minor changes in building, street and driveway locations and other details of design as necessitated by more detailed planning and engineering studies shall be permitted. The site development and landscaping plan shall include:
 - a. Final plans for landscaping, irrigation, plaza and deck treatment, interior walkways and lighting, and screening of mechanical equipment, trash and loading areas;
 - b. The location of sidewalks, street lighting, entrances, utility vaults, fire hydrants (or standpipes) and utility easements;
 - c. Topography at 2 foot intervals; and
 - d. Street trees in accordance with County policy for planting in' public right-of-way.
 - e. Soil depth for trees shall be a minimum of four (4) feet and three (3) feet for major shrubs.
2. Planting materials shall be of good nursery stock and guaranteed for one year. Plant materials and landscaping shall adhere to American National Standards Institute Z60.1-73 and shall meet the following minimum standards:
 - a. Major deciduous trees - 3" to 3 1/2" minimum caliper, 14 to 16 feet minimum height and a maximum height of 18 feet.
 - b. Evergreen trees - 8 to 10 feet minimum height.
 - c. Ornamental trees - 1 1/2" to 2" minimum caliper, 10 to 12 feet minimum height and a maximum height of 14 feet.
 - d. Shrubs 18" - 24" minimum spread.
 - e. All new lawn areas shall be sodded.
 - f. Exposed earth not to be sodded shall be well mulched or planted in ground cover.
3. The location of underground structures, utilities and utility vaults shall not interfere with the appropriate spacing of street trees.
4. Brick or an alternate paver approved by the County Manager shall be used in the plaza area and public sidewalks on a base as approved by the Department of Public Works.
5. The developer shall provide space inside the structure for the collection, storage and compaction of trash.
6. All signs shall be a 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.
7. The developer shall provide bicycle racks in a secure and convenient location on the following basis:

2 bike spaces for each 10,000 square feet of office floor area.

8. The developer shall provide parking on site, or on a suitable off-site location, for all construction workers without charge.
9. In order to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the County's Public Safety Communications Systems, the County reserves the right to install radio transmitters and receivers in the penthouse and antennas on the roof of the proposed building in a location and design that is mutually acceptable to both the County and the building owner. Access to electricity, separately metered, (including auxiliary electrical power) and telephone radio control lines shall be provided to the penthouse in the defined area. Any radio-transmitter/receiver equipment and antenna to be installed or used by others must be approved by the County Manager or his designee.
10. The developer shall reconstruct, as needed, all frontage curb and gutter along North Troy Street, North Taft Street and 15th Street, North, to Arlington County Standard-and Specifications
11. The developer shall construct Arlington County Standard sidewalk 14.5 feet wide along the North Taft Street frontage, the 15th Street, North, frontage and the North Troy Street frontage of this site.
12. The developer shall install Arlington County standard thoroughfare lights at locations to be shown on the approved engineering plans along all frontages of this development.
13. The Department of Public Works shall approve a street tree plan for street trees along all frontages of this development prior to the issuance of a building permit.
14. The developer shall install a twelve (12) inch water main in 15th Street, North, from North Troy Street to North Taft Street.
15. The developer shall install a twelve (12) inch water main in North Taft Street from 15th Street, North, to the south property line.
16. The developer shall install two (2) fire hydrants; one at the property line on North Taft Street and one at the intersection of North Troy Street and 15th Street, North.
17. Water mains including water meter installations and fire hydrants shall have a minimum of 5 feet horizontal clearance from other utilities and shall have a minimum of 10 feet horizontal clearance and 3 feet minimum vertical clearance from all building walls and other related structures unless otherwise approved by the Department of Public Works.
18. The developer shall construct a new sanitary sewer manhole in 15th Street, North, over the existing sanitary sewer to receive the building service line.
19. The developer shall underground all existing and proposed utilities (including cable television) on or at the periphery of this site.

20. The final engineering plans shall be approved by the Department of Public Works prior to the issuance of a building permit.
22. A surety agreement with the Department of Public Works for the construction of all facilities within the public right-of-way or easements shall be executed prior to the issuance of a building permit.
23. The developer shall remove 2,500 square feet of gross floor area from the building.
24. Street trees on 15th Street sidewalk shall be planted in tree grates.
25. The steps of the project shall be constructed so as to accept fill or bridging (at the option of the applicant) of a future plaza over North Troy Street. The proposed plaza will be at an elevation of 230 feet above sea level. Future fill or bridging cost shall be the responsibility of Arlington County, with the workmanship and quality of materials consistent with those used on the subject site.
26. At the time of utility installation, the developer shall contact all utilities including the electric company, the telephone company and the cable television company and offer them access on site to install underground cable.
27. This site plan approval expires three (3) years after the date of County Board approval if the approved plan is not under construction. Extension of this approval shall be at the sole discretion of the County Board.

ATTACHMENT --Table 2

ROOFTOP SIGNS:				
Type & Abbreviation in Sign Plan	Locations	Sign Area (Sq. ft)	Text	Material
Rooftop sign	Southwest elevation	100	SRA	L.E.D. Illuminated channel letters
Rooftop sign	North elevation	100	SRA	L.E.D. Illuminated channel letters
Total Existing rooftop signs (square feet)				200
Total Building Frontage (linear feet)				260