ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of December 12, 2009

DATE: November 24, 2009

SUBJECT: U-3226-09-1 2825 Wilson, LLC for comprehensive sign plan located at 2825 Wilson Boulevard (RPC# 15-065-001).

Applicant:
2825 Wilson, LLC

By:
Professional Permits & Municipal Solutions
Doug Merritt, Agent
113 S. Main St., 201
Mishawaka, IN 46544

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Deny the subject use permit request for a comprehensive sign plan.

ISSUE: This is a request for a use permit for a comprehensive sign plan for Walgreen's drugstore located at 2825 Wilson Boulevard. The comprehensive sign plan would include a freestanding monument sign, and window signs consisting of historic photographs. The proposed freestanding monument sign in this location, for the current use would be inconsistent with the Zoning Ordinance and current County policy; and the proposed window signs would also be inconsistent with the Zoning Ordinance because they exceed 20% of the area of the window. The window signs would also be inconsistent with the *Clarendon Sector Plan.*

SUMMARY: Walgreen's Corporation proposes a comprehensive sign plan that includes the addition of window signs and a freestanding monument sign. These signs would be added to three (3) building wall signs that have been approved and installed by-right. The proposed window signs, which would consist of historic photographs depicting the history of both Arlington County and Walgreen's, would exceed 20% of the permitted window area by covering 60% of the window. The freestanding monument sign, at 25 square feet, would be installed on an existing screening wall at the corner of North Edgewood Street and Wilson Boulevard. Freestanding signs in "C" districts per the Zoning Ordinance are only permitted in relation to

County Manager: BMD/GA

County Attorney: CWM SAP

Staff: Samia Byrd, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5411

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specific uses, such as unified shopping centers, auto-oriented uses (sales and services stations) and landscaping sales lots. In addition, current policy discourages the placement of freestanding signs in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. The proposed signs would not be consistent with the *Clarendon Sector Plan* particularly with regard to sign context and design, fenestration, and façade transparency, and the vision of an urban village that boasts an enhanced pedestrian experience. Therefore, staff recommends that the County Board deny the application for a comprehensive sign plan as proposed.

BACKGROUND: Walgreen's Corporation opened a drugstore at 2825 Wilson Boulevard in May 2009, which is a by-right use in the "C-2" zoning district. The drugstore occupies an existing building that historically had been designated for use as an automobile dealership, as well as a tire shop by special exception use permit. Signs for the previous uses on the property were approved with the special exception use permit as part of a comprehensive sign plan. With the establishment of a by-right use on the site, signs for the property and use are governed by Subsection 34 of the Zoning Ordinance and approved by the Zoning Administrator. Four (4) building wall, channel mounted letter signs were approved and permitted for the current use by-right in May 2009. These signs were installed along with photographic images in the windows of the building fronting on Wilson Boulevard. However, a Zoning Ordinance violation for window signs in excess of 20% of the window area was issued in June 2009. Further it was noted that a freestanding monument sign was not permitted on the screening wall at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Edgewood Street without County Board approval. Therefore, the applicant requests that a comprehensive sign plan include historic photographs in the windows along Wilson Boulevard and a freestanding monument sign on a four (4) foot tall screening wall at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Edgewood Street. With this request, all signs of Walgreen's Corporation, including those already permitted and approved by-right would be incorporated into a comprehensive sign plan. Following is additional information about the property and site.

Site: The property is located in Clarendon on the block bound by Wilson Boulevard to the south, North Edgewood Street to the east, North Franklin Street to the north and Fillmore Street to the west. It is comprised of a by-right drugstore and parking to accommodate the use on a transitional parking lot. The site is surrounded to the north by one-family dwellings, and to the south, east and west by service commercial development.

Zoning: "C-2" Service Commercial Community Business Districts.

General Land Use Plan Designation: "Service Commercial".

Neighborhood: Lyon Village Civic Association. In November 2009, the Civic Association requested that consideration of the use permit be deferred to December to allow for a meeting with the applicant. A meeting has been scheduled for December 7, 2009.

DISCUSSION: The following table provides additional information on the proposed comprehensive sign program for the Walgreens Corporation.

Sign ID	Sign Type	Sign Dimensions	Area (SqFt)	Text	Location	Materials	Approved	Modification to Zoning Required
A	Wall Sign	18'-4 ¼" x 4'-1"	74.87	Walgreens	South Elevation-Wilson Blvd. Frontage	LED; Illuminated script channel mounted letters; Red	Yes	No
B	Wall Sign	14'-11 ¾" x 3'-4"	49.88	Walgreens	East Elevation-N. Edgewood Frontage	LED; Illuminated script channel mounted letters; Red	Yes	No
C	Pylon Sign	16'-0" x 1'-0"	16.00	Walgreens	Southeast Elevation at the building's entrance – visible from Wilson Blvd. & N. Edgewood	Neon; Illuminated Block Letters; 3M Cardinal Red	Yes	No
D	Window Sign	24'-0" x 5'-3 ¼"	126.48	Historic Photos of Arlington & Walgreens	South Elevation – Display Windows, Spanning 6 bays – Wilson Blvd. Frontage	Red translucent vinyl backing with photograph inset	No	Yes
E	Window Sign	13'-2" x 5'-3 ¼"	69.41	Historic Photos of Arlington	South Elevation; Display Windows, Spanning 3 bays – Wilson Blvd. Frontage	Red translucent vinyl backing with photograph inset	No	Yes
F	Freestanding Sign	10'-7 ½" x 2'-4 ¼"	24.97	Walgreens	Screening Wall – Corner of Wilson Blvd. and N. Edgewood	LED; Illuminated script channel mounted letters; Red	No	Yes
G	Parking Sign Accessibility Signs (2)	1'-4 ¼" x 10 ¾" 1'-4 ¾" x 10 ¾"	1.22 1.26	Standard	Parking Lot	Standard	NA	NA
Total			361.61					

Total permitted sign area for Walgreen's as calculated in the table below is 400 square feet. This is based on calculating the linear length of the tenant's frontage where frontage is defined in Section 1 of the Zoning Ordinance as "all the property fronting on one (1) side of a street between the two (2) nearest intersecting streets, or other natural barriers".

Tenant's Frontage	Linear Feet
Wilson Boulevard	230
N. Edgewood Street	170
Total Length	**400**

The proposed signs would be consistent with the total area permitted under the Zoning Ordinance.

By right, Walgreen's would be permitted the following sign program per Section 34.G of the Zoning Ordinance.

Sign Type	Max. Permitted Sign Area	No. Permitted
Building Wall Signs	60 square feet, or one (1) square foot per linear foot of frontage	3
Blade Sign	3 square feet per face	1
Side or Rear Sign[1]	30 square feet	1
Secondary Entrance Sign	6 square feet	1
Lettered Window Signs	20% of the area of the window	

Based on the above, Walgreen's has reached its by-right capacity for building wall signs. The applicant would only be permitted, by-right, to add one blade sign and lettered window signs if the window signs fit within the prescribed area of 20% of the window.

Following is a discussion of the proposed signs for which the applicant requests a modification to the Zoning Ordinance requirements with the proposed use permit request.

Window Signs: The applicant proposes to locate historic photographs in two (2) of the store's display windows fronting Wilson Boulevard. One bay of windows directly adjacent to the sidewalk would include three (3) images depicting history significant to Arlington. Another bay of windows, set back near the entrance of the store, would include at least three (3) historic photographs relevant to Arlington and up to three (3) relevant to Walgreens. The black and white historic photographs would be imposed on a red translucent vinyl background. The proposed images would cover 60% of the window area. This is three (3) times the permitted coverage for window signs of 20% of the area of the window. In addition, the placement of photographs in the windows would decrease transparency and therefore be inconsistent with the *Clarendon Sector Plan's* Urban Design Guidelines which provides the following:

- Fenestration: Facades on the ground floor should have clear glass with minimal obstruction from windows, permanent shades, or interior displays. Elements to avoid include tinted or mirrored glass and any glazed surface that requires tinting or mirrored glass or mirror-glazing especially on the ground floor.

- Building Orientation and Frontage Types: Openings in a façade, (e.g. windows) should comprise transparent glass, as opposed to mirrored glass or the like, that permit unobstructed views to interior spaces. Blinds, fabrics, and shelving used along the outside walls of retail spaces should be limited and not diminish the pedestrian's visibility into the retail space, or other space with human activity.

[1] On the side or rear wall of a commercial building which abuts a public street or a public lot associated with the commercial building, for buildings located on corner lots or lots abutting streets at both the front and rear, or for buildings served by an abutting parking lot of no less than 60 square feet in width located to the side or rear of the main building.

- Signs and Awnings/Canopies: Elements to Avoid: Signs partially or completely covering window displays.

As proposed, the signs do not meet the intent or vision for this area of Clarendon. The store is allowed by-right and therefore does not have a transparency requirement. However, the goal should be to maintain window transparency and 75% façade transparency consistent with the *Clarendon Sector Plan*. Further, the interior layout of the store is such that windows are currently obstructed with store displays and shelving. Therefore, as the store is currently configured, façade and window transparency would be difficult to achieve.

Freestanding Sign: In 1992, with the approval of a use permit for National Tire Warehouse, a comprehensive sign plan was also approved, that included a freestanding, monument sign. The sign comprised the construction of a brick monument base at the corner of N. Edgewood Street and Wilson Boulevard, with aluminum letters no greater than 39 square feet, mounted on a five (5) foot high curved brick screening wall which extended 26 feet. It was recommended at the time of approval that the screening wall be reduced in height to four (4) feet and that the sign include directional information to encourage vehicular use of the Wilson Boulevard entrance. While a sign permit application was filed and the sign installed as approved through the use permit process, the sign permit was never obtained.

Similar to the sign approved in 1992, which remained on the site until 2007, Walgreen's proposes to install a 25 square foot monument sign on the existing curved screening wall to include channel mounted, red script letters that would be internally illuminated. The screening wall, which was previously painted in shades of blue, gray and yellow has been painted white and is covered, as the new sign was installed prior to determination that it required County Board approval. The Zoning Ordinance permits freestanding signs in "C" districts subject to specific parameters and criteria, and only for: 1) unified shopping centers in single ownership or control, 2) automobile service station uses, and 3) lots used for motor vehicle sales, landscape sales or sale of other merchandise typically displayed outdoors. This would be consistent with the history of uses and placement of a freestanding sign on the property. However, the current use does not meet any of these criteria. Additionally, a freestanding sign on a site that already provides considerable sign area, geared primarily to automobiles, is less desirable than a sign that would enhance the pedestrian experience.

Finally, while the sign area proposed is within the total area permitted for the property, the three (3) existing signs on the building wall, as currently designed and installed, are sufficient to direct attention to the presence of the drugstore. The addition of a freestanding monument sign and window signs would be in addition to the approved and permitted by-right signs. The *Clarendon Sector Plan* refers to the design context of signs and lighting as being restrained and complimentary to a building's design. While the screening wall was designed and previously approved by use permit for a sign, the previous sign was one (1) of only two (2) signs approved for the property. This limitation was imposed to further the goal of coordinating and limiting excessive signs on the site. All signs were then designed to be complimentary to the redevelopment of the site and unobtrusive to the neighborhood. The overall sign package as proposed does not further the same goal. Staff would support a comprehensive sign program for

the property that 1) minimizes the total signs on site, 2) provides a more creative design that would add to the unique character of the station area and historic features of the building on the property, and 3) enhances the pedestrian experience. Because the proposed comprehensive sign plan doesn't do these things, however, staff cannot recommend approval of the proposal.

CONCLUSION: Under Section 36.G. of the Zoning Ordinance, in order to approve the proposed comprehensive sign plan by use permit, the County Board must find that the use will not: 1) affect adversely the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the proposed use; 2) be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the neighborhood; and 3) be in conflict with the purpose of the master plans of the County. The pedestrian experience in this area of Clarendon is a key element in its success and vitality. In addition, the subject building is characterized in the *Clarendon Sector Plan* as one that should be fully preserved, historically. The goal of the comprehensive sign plan in this regard should be to minimize and coordinate signs in a way that enhances and works with the existing character of the building and looks to meet the vision and intent of the *Clarendon Sector Plan*. The window signs as proposed would be three (3) times the permitted window sign area, and reduce window and façade transparency. The proposed freestanding sign neither promotes the urban character envisioned in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor nor is it consistent with the Zoning Ordinance provision for uses whereby freestanding signs in "C" districts are permitted. Finally, the addition of both the window and the freestanding, monument signs to the property, coupled with the existing building wall signs, would be excessive even though the total sign area proposed is within the total permitted sign area for the property. Therefore the proposed sign plan does not meet the criteria required by Section 36.G. Staff recommends that the County Board deny the comprehensive sign plan as proposed and that a sign program for the property be limited such that signs are restrained, yet creative given the property's location and the historic context of the building.

However, should the County Board decide to approve the comprehensive sign plan to add the freestanding monument sign and window signs, staff recommends that one of the existing building wall signs be eliminated and that the following conditions apply.

1. The applicant agrees to remove the existing building wall sign identified on the drawings prepared by Icon Identity Solutions, entitled *Walgreens Comprehensive Sign Plan* and dated September 24, 2009, as sign "A" (74.87 sq ft). The applicant further agrees to remove the sign within 90 days (March 12, 2009) of County Board approval of the use permit of December 12, 2009 and before issuance of any new sign permits. The applicant shall submit to the Zoning Administrator a revised Comprehensive Sign Plan that shows the elimination of the sign and revisions to the total sign area.

2. The applicant agrees to limit all signs to the size, design, location, color, materials, and text of the proposed signs as revised per Condition #1. In no case shall total sign area exceed 287 square feet. The signs shall be illuminated only as shown on the subject drawings, with the hours of illumination being only from dusk, to 12 midnight, seven days a week.

3. The applicant agrees that the freestanding monument sign at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and N. Edgewood Street shall be landscaped with evergreen shrubs, perennial ground cover and seasonal flowers planted in an area not less than three (3) feet in width around the base of the sign. The applicant shall submit for review a revised landscape plan to be approved by the County Manager or designee.

4. The applicant agrees that the freestanding monument sign shall not be internally illuminated but shall be illuminated by ground floor lights only as shown on the drawings prepared by Icon Identity Solutions titled *Walgreens Comprehensive Sign Plan* dated September 24, 2009.

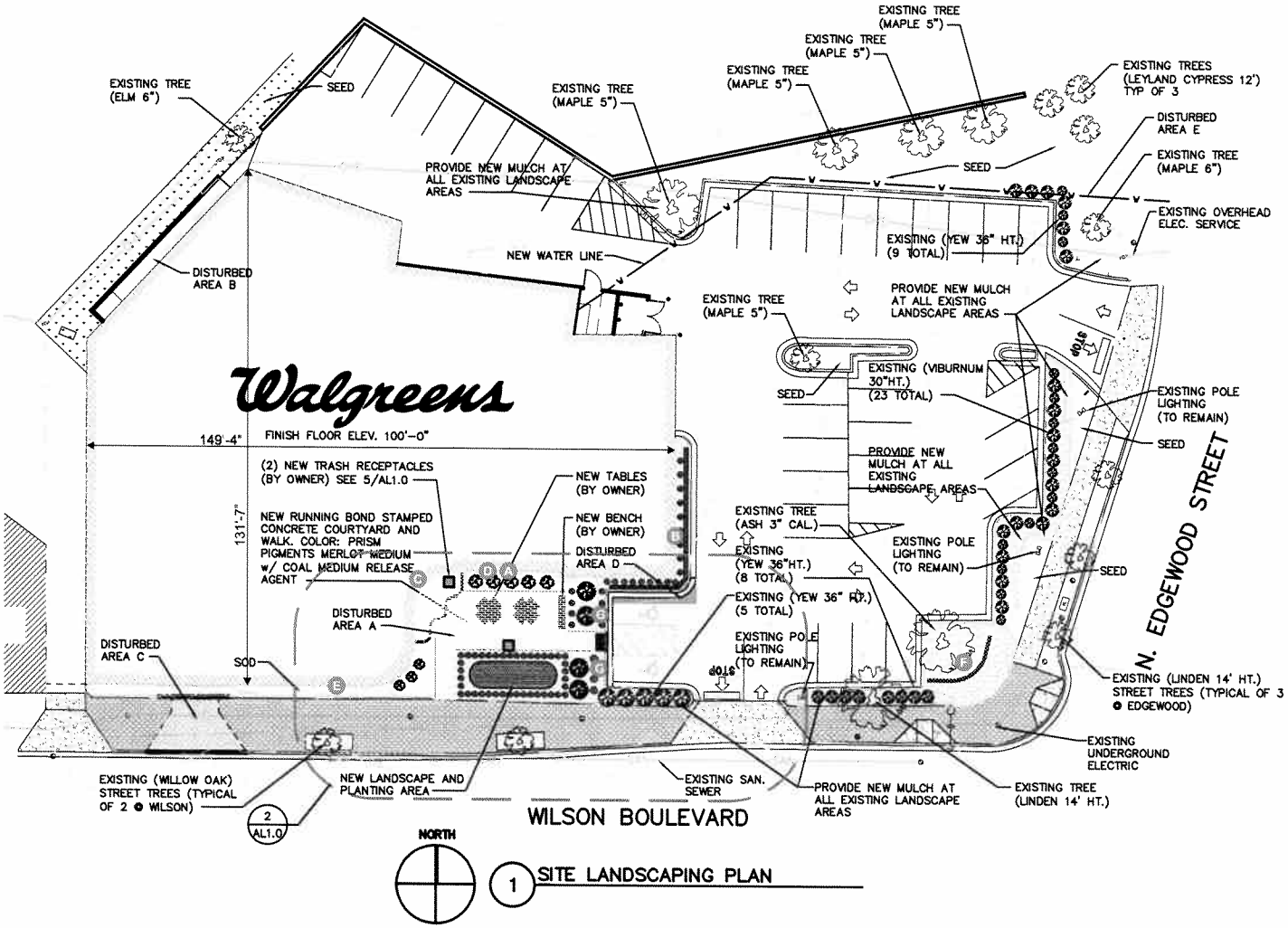
5. The applicant agrees that the window signs shall comprise photographs depicting history significant to Arlington County and that the photographs shall be changed at least two (2) times annually for the life of the use permit.

Walgreens

Comprehensive Sign Plan

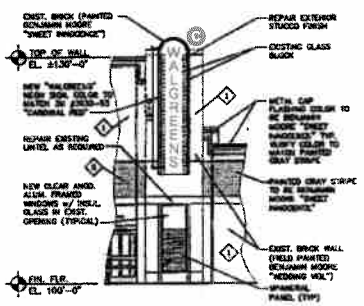
Arlington, VA
2825 Wilson Blvd
Store #11338

icon
Identity Solutions

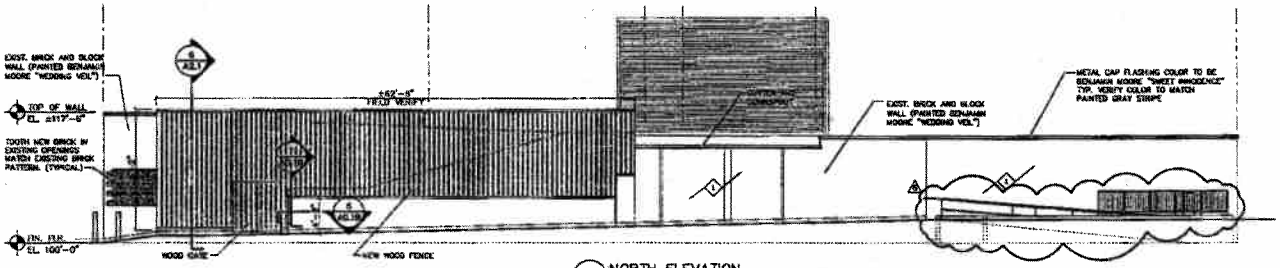


1 SITE LANDSCAPING PLAN

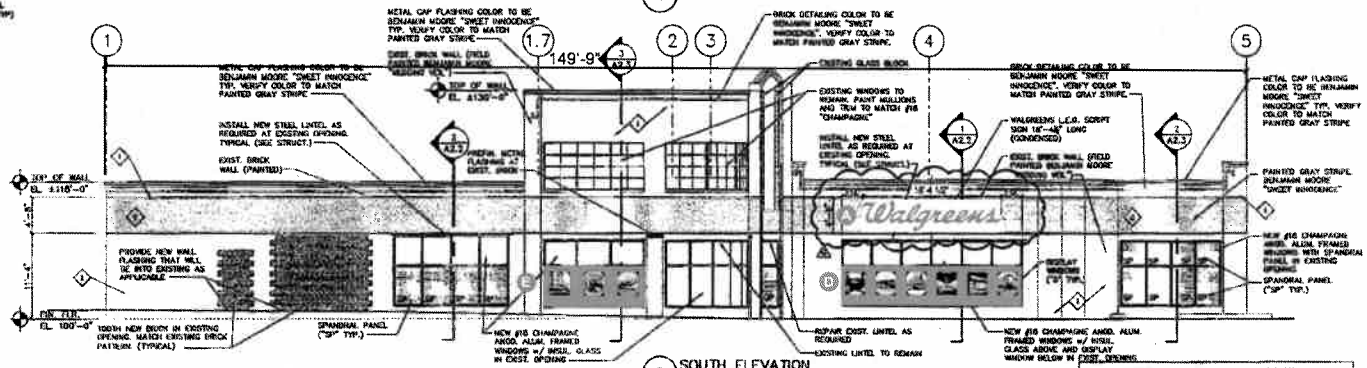
Walgreens	Site Plan/Landscape Plan	Location: Arlington, VA	Date: 9-24-09	Revised:		icon Identity Solutions
		STORE #11338	Drawn: MT			1418 Elmhurst Rd. Elk Grove Village Illinois 60007
		2825 Wilson Blvd	Page: 1 of 5			



5 PARTIAL SOUTH ELEVATION



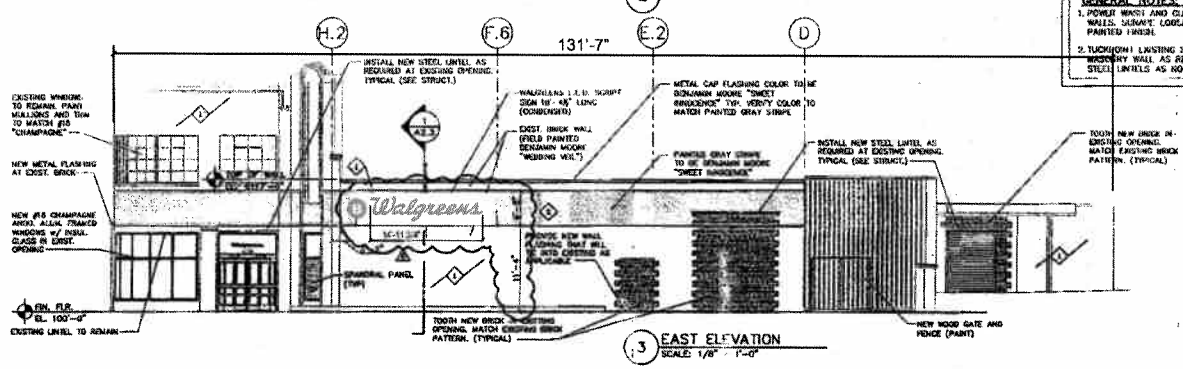
1 NORTH ELEVATION



2 SOUTH ELEVATION

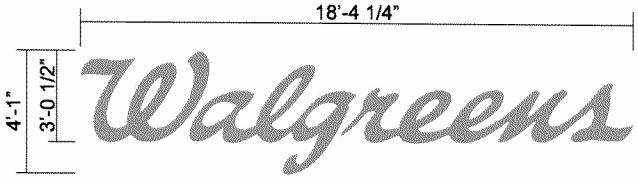
GENERAL NOTES:

1. POWER WASH AND CLEAN EXISTING EXTERIOR BRICK WALLS. SUBMIT LOOSE PAINT AND PREP FOR NEW PAINTED FINISH.
2. TUCKPOINT EXISTING SOUTH AND EAST EXTERIOR MASONRY WALL AS REQUIRED. REPLACE DAMAGED STEEL LINTELS AS NOTED.

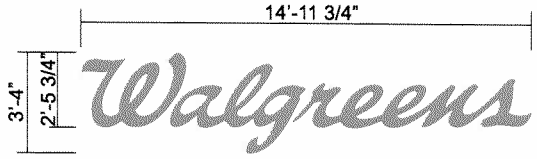


3 EAST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

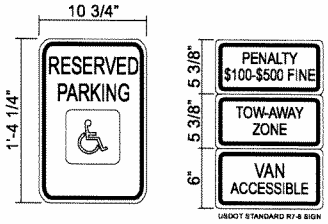
Walgreens	Building Elevations	Location: Arlington, VA	Date: 9-24-09	Revised:	icon Identity Solutions 1418 Elmhurst Rd. Elk Grove Village Illinois 60007
		STORE #11338	Drawn: MT		
		2825 Wilson Blvd	Page: 2 of 5		



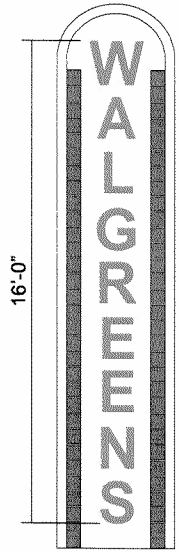
A ILLUMINATED SCRIPT LETTERS
QTY: 1 74.88 SQ FT



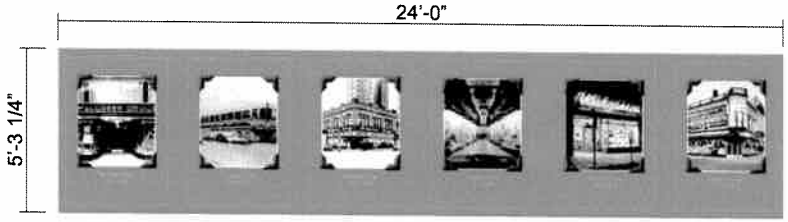
B ILLUMINATED SCRIPT LETTERS
QTY: 1 49.86 SQ FT



G ACCESSIBILITY SIGNAGE
QTY: 2 2.46 SQ FT

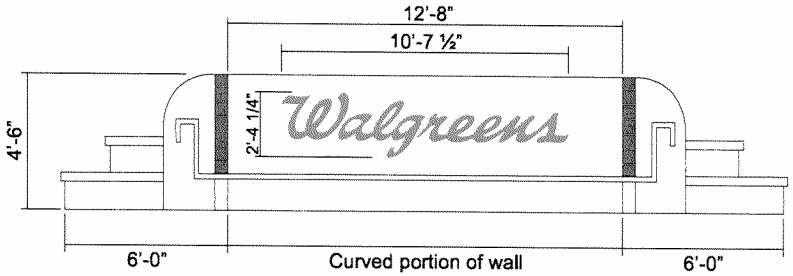


C BUILDING SIGN
QTY: 1 16 SQ FT



D WINDOW GRAPHICS - HISTORICAL PHOTOS
QTY: 1 126.5 SQ FT

E WINDOW GRAPHICS - HISTORICAL PHOTOS
QTY: 1 69.4 SQ FT



F GROUND SIGN - EXISTING SIGN PRIOR TO WALGREENS
QTY: 1 25.0 SQ FT

Walgreens	Sign Package	Location: Arlington, VA	Date: 9-24-09	Revised:	icon Identity Solutions 1418 Elmhurst Rd. Elk Grove Village Illinois 60007
		STORE #11338	Drawn: MT		
		2825 Wilson Blvd	Page: 3 of 5		

TABLE SIGN CALCULATIONS

SIGN	COMPREHENSIVE SIGN PLAN	PERMITTED	QUALIFYING FRONTAGE	WINDOW COVERAGE %	SIGN AREA
A		X	149'-9"	NA	74.87
B		X	131'-7"	NA	49.88
C		X	149'-9"	NA	16.0
D	X		149'-9"	60.8 %	126.48
E	X		149'-9"	60.8%	69.41
F	X		±230' Wilson ±170' Edgewood	NA	24.97
G	EXEMPT	EXEMPT	NA	NA	EXEMPT
TOTAL					361.61

U-3226-09-1
2825 Wilson Boulevard
RPC: 15-065-001

Note: These maps are for property location assistance only.
They may not represent the latest survey and other information.

Not To Scale

Case Location(s)

Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development

Planning Division