



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of November 13, 2007

DATE: October 30, 2007

SUBJECT: SP #86 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT to modify three rooftop signs located at the Sheraton National Hotel at 900 Orme Street (RPC # 25-024-056), to result in reduction in sign area.

Applicant:

National Hospitality Corporation
Bruce Mahen
7777 Leesburg Pike, #401N
Falls Church, Virginia 22043

By:

Richard T. Lunger/Attorney
Bean Kinney & Korman PC
2300 Wilson Boulevard, 7th Floor
Arlington, Virginia 22201

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the site plan amendment to modify three (3) existing signs, including one (1) rooftop identification signs and two (2) logo signs, subject to all previous conditions, and three (3) new conditions.

ISSUES: None.

SUMMARY: The applicant requests a site plan amendment to the Sheraton National Hotel (SP#86) located at 900 Orme Street, to upgrade and modify three (3) rooftop signs (one text and two logo signs). The request includes replacing one (1) rooftop identification sign on the east elevation of the building and two (2) logo signs. The application also includes a request to relocate the logo sign currently on the north facade to the west facade for greater visibility to

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Colleen J. Connor, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-4802

travelers. The existing signs were originally approved in 1974, prior to the many of the current *Zoning Ordinance* provisions related to signs, and prior to the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. The existing signs are not consistent with these documents in terms of height and total sign area. However, the applicant proposes to replace the existing sign on the building's east elevation with a smaller size sign, thus reducing the overall total sign area. The proposed site plan amendment also provides an opportunity to add a condition restricting the hours of illumination. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment be approved, subject to all previous conditions, and three (3) new conditions.

BACKGROUND: The owners of the Sheraton National Hotel request a site plan amendment to upgrade the three (3) existing rooftop signs and to relocate one (1) of the three (3) signs. The following table sets forth the details for the existing signs approved in 1974:

Text	Location	Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Materials	Height From A.S.E* (Feet)
Sheraton	Horizontally positioned on the east side of the hotel tower	72" (Text Length); 9' (Text Height);	648'	Backlit mounted letters in materials including red Plexiglas	144' 1"
Logo/Crest	Horizontally positioned on the south side of the hotel tower	10' (Logo Length); 10' (Logo Height)	78'6'	Backlit mounted letters in materials including red Plexiglas	148' 4"
Logo/Crest	Horizontally on north side of the hotel tower	10' (Logo Length); 10' (Logo Height)	78'6"	Backlit mounted letters in materials including red Plexiglas	148' 4"
TOTAL			805'		

Site: The 128,839 square foot site (2.97 acres) is located adjacent to Henderson Hall, the Navy Annex, and residential areas near the intersection of Columbia Pike and Washington Boulevard. Immediate site boundaries are indicated below.

To the north:	Residential townhouses, Henderson Hall and parking
To the west:	Washington Boulevard on and off ramps for Columbia Pike
To the east:	Townhouses and a vacant surface parking lot.
To the south:	Columbia Pike and on and off ramps to Washington Boulevard

Zoning: "C-O" Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Multiple-family Dwelling District.

General Land Use Plan Designation: "High" Residential.

Neighborhood: Foxcroft Civic Association and adjacent to the Penrose, Arlington View, and Arlington Ridge Civic Associations.

Proposed Signs: The following table sets forth the details for the proposed rooftop sign.

Text	Location	Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Materials	Height From A.S.E.* (Feet)
Sheraton	Horizontally positioned on the east side of the hotel tower	57'7" (Text Length); 9' (Text Height);	518'3"	Internally illuminated red translucent channel mounted letters with acrylic polyurethane finish. Letter will appear red during the day and glow red at night.	144' 1"
Logo/Crest	Horizontally positioned on the south side of the hotel tower	10' (Logo Length); 10' (Logo Height)	78'6'	Internally illuminated red translucent channel mounted letter with 4" deep crest circle mounted on 6" deep raceway, with acrylic polyurethane finish. Logo will appear red during the day and glow red at night	148' 4"
Logo/Crest	Horizontally positioned and relocated from the north side to on the west side of the projection on the hotel tower	10' (Logo Length); 10' (Logo Height)	78'6"	Internally illuminated red translucent channel mounted letter with 4" deep crest circle mounted on 6" deep raceway, with acrylic polyurethane finish. Logo will appear red during the day and glow red at night	148' 4"
TOTAL			675'3"		

Note: Bold text shows changes to the existing signs.

Approved Plans and Policies: Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance and *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* were used to evaluate the proposed site plan amendment for signs.

DISCUSSION: The applicant proposes to internally illuminate the upgraded signs using six (6) inch deep red plastic face channel letters and energy efficient LED technology. The applicant also proposes to modify the size and location of the rooftop identification signs including one on the east elevation of the building and the two (2) logo signs.

One of the logo signs will remain on the south side of the building and one is proposed to be relocated from the north side of the building to the west side of the building. The relocation of one of these logo signs to the west is consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* for the following reasons:

1. the design is compatible with other project signs;
2. it would not face Arlington Cemetery;
3. it would not face the Washington, D.C. Monumental Core; and

4. it would not face a residential neighborhood.

Additional reasons to support the relocation of the existing Sheraton crest sign from the north elevation to the west elevation are:

1. Increased visibility for customers coming from Washington Boulevard, I-395, and Columbia Pike; and
2. The current lack of visibility of the crest on the north elevation, limited to Southgate Road and Arlington Cemetery (see Attachment).

The applicant also proposes to reduce the size of the “Sheraton” text sign on the east elevation from 72’ in length to 57’7” in length

According to the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, rooftop signs should not directly face a residential neighborhood or areas such as Route 66, the George Washington Parkway, Washington DC Monumental Core, or Arlington Cemetery, where the County Board has attempted to restrict signs through policy actions. The existing and proposed replacement rooftop sign located along the site’s east elevation overlooks a residential area. However, the replacement sign is proposed to be 518’3” square feet. By reducing in size the text sign from 72’ in length to 57’7” in length, the new text sign will be smaller than the existing 648 square foot sign originally approved in 1974. Because the existing sign was approved under earlier policies, and could be kept at its current size, staff recommends approving the reduced sign size.

The table below calculates the allowable square footage permitted under the current standards for rooftop signs for the Sheraton National Hotel project.

Building Length @ Street Frontage/Public Right-of-Way	Linear Feet
South Orme Street	258’ 7”
Columbia Pike Street	243’ 0”
Total Length at Street Frontage/Public Right-of-Way	501’7”

Based on the building length at the street frontage/public right of way, the permitted sign area is 501’7” square feet. The existing signs (one text and two logo signs) total approximately 805 square feet. The proposed replacement rooftop signs total 675’3” square feet, which exceed the total permitted rooftop sign area under today’s rules, but would be less than the square footage of the existing signs. Additionally, the proposed sign heights and logos exceed the current standard of six (6) feet for rooftop signs. However, in the case of the text sign, the overall sign and the majority of the letters are of less height than the existing sign. The logo signs are the same height as the existing ones.(see Attachment).

Staff is recommending, and the applicant has agreed to, a new condition (#22) which requires the intensity of the rooftop sign’s lighting to be reduced by fifty percent (50%) if the County Manager determines that these signs have an adverse impact on the surrounding area.

CONCLUSION: The proposed site plan amendment to the Sheraton National Hotel is to upgrade and modify three (3) rooftop signs (one text and two logo signs). Although the proposals do not meet today's standards, they exceed those standards by less than the existing signs. The application also includes a request to relocate the logo sign currently on the north facade to the west façade for greater visibility. A new condition will restrict the hours of illumination, and will allow for a smaller sign on the east elevation. Therefore staff recommends approval of the site plan amendment subject to all previous Site Plan conditions and the following new Site Plan Conditions #21, #22, and #23.

21. The developer agrees that the signs shall be of the same materials, dimensions, text, and location as shown on the Exterior Sign Renovation Plan dated October 23, 2007, and presented to and approved by the County Board on November 13, 2007, and prepared by Graphic Systems International, Inc. The developer agrees to limit the rooftop signage on the Sheraton National Hotel (900 S. Orme Street) building to the 518'3" square foot text tenant identification sign on the upper right corner of the east elevation at the location and in the design shown on the drawings submitted to the County from Graphic Systems International, Inc. dated October 23, 2007, and presented to the County Board on November 13, 2007. The developer further agrees that all rooftop signs shall be illuminated only as shown on the drawings dated October 23, 2007. The total area for the second rooftop sign, located on the south elevation, shall be no more than 78.6 square feet and the total area for the third rooftop sign, located on the west elevation, shall be limited to no more than 78.6 square feet.
22. For the rooftop sign on the hotel's east elevation, the developer agrees to install LED signage designed with a two-phase system, consisting of a dual-switch circuitry system to allow the reduction of light output intensity from one hundred percent (100%) to fifty percent (50%). The Phase 1 circuitry system shall emit one hundred percent illumination from each letter unit equivalent to nine (9) foot candles. The Phase 2 circuit system shall reduce the Phase 1 illumination to emit fifty percent illumination from each letter unit equivalent to four and one half (4.5) foot candles. The developer agrees that if the County Manager finds that the intensity of the rooftop sign on the hotel's east elevation has an adverse effect on the surrounding area, the developer will, within 24 hours notice from the County Manager, reduce the intensity of the lights to the Phase 2 level.
23. The developer agrees that the rooftop sign (east elevation) hours of illumination will be from dusk to 12 midnight.

CONDITIONS

November 4, 1971

1. Dedicate to Arlington County the necessary easements for both public streets and utility purposes as indicated on the site Plan. Plats and deeds to be approved for record purposes prior to the approval of building permits.
2. Prepare plans and construct all street and storm sewer improvements in accordance with Transportation Department standards and specifications and construct sidewalks, curbs, and gutters in accordance with these approved plans. State Highway Department permits are required for all construction on Columbia Pike frontage of the site and the outfall storm and sanitary facilities.
3. Install Arlington County standard street lights as noted on the Site Plan
4. All site drainage to be collected and piped to an adequate outlet.
5. The proposed water services to be installed in back of the future curb line along Columbia Pike.
6. All required easements to be provided, including fire lane easements over all parking garage levels.
7. Landscape and deck treatment plans to be approved by the County Manager as a part of the approved Site Plan.
8. Approval of height limit required by FAA prior to Building Permit approval.
9. No free-standing signs permitted.
10. The developer should install underground wiring for all utilities on and at the periphery of the site.
11. The developer should consider fall-out shelter use of the basement areas.
12. Exterior colored panels or drapes shall be in no more than single color or hue.
13. This Site Plan approval expires one year after the date of County Board approval, if the approved building is not under construction.

May 25, 1972

14. 5/25/1972 Deletion of a portion of one level of parking in the lowest garage level, or 15 spaces of the total parking spaces and the deletion of one typical level floor of the structure, with room count unchanged.

May 4, 1974

15. Sign plan to include
- a. A formed concrete sign set within the landscaped area on Columbia Pike at its intersection with South Orme Street. This sign will identify the “Sheraton National” and the three restaurants to be located within the Hotel. The concrete form will be 11 feet by 7 feet on its low side, and 10 ½ feet on its high side.
 - b. “Enter” and “Exit” signs, 1 by 3 feet, will be set within free-standing 3 by 5 concrete forms on South Orme Street.
 - c. Two Sheraton circular logo signs, 10 feet in diameter. These logos are to be on the upper building face directed to Columbia Pike and Washington Boulevard. The signs will be bronze finished, non-illuminated logos.
 - d. One sign “Sheraton”, 8 feet by 72 feet, on the face of the building at the roof level directed towards Interstate 95 and the District of Columbia. This sign will be bronze finished, non-illuminated letters.

February 8, 1975

16. 2/8/1975 To permit dancing and entertainment in the 1st floor Commonwealth Ballroom and the 16th Floor restaurant.

February 17, 1976

17. To permit back lighting of the “Sheraton” sign subject to the following:
- a. Elimination of the existing exterior lighting of the penthouse and tower by floodlights.
 - b. Backlighting shall be of plain white illumination.
 - c. Final plans for backlighting shall be subject to approval by the County Manager.
 - d. Future changes or additions to the lighting of the building shall require site plan amendment.

April 11, 1978

18. To replace two non-illuminated trademark signs with two silhouette illuminated trademarks signs. The sign shall be made of bronze duranodic material backlighted in a manner similar to the existing “Sheraton” sign.

September 15, 1979

19. To add 97 units and 9,138 square feet of meeting space subject to the following:
- a. The developer shall widen the existing South Orme Street sidewalk to provide for a total sidewalk width of 14 ½ feet as measured from the face of curb. This will provide for the addition of street trees in tree grates.
 - b. The Department of Public Works shall approve final engineering plans for this construction prior to the issuance of any building permits.
 - c. The developer shall dedicate all necessary easements prior to the issuance of

- any building permit.
- d. 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.
 - e. The developer shall submit a detailed final landscaping and site development plan to be approved by the County Manager prior to the issuance of a building and/or grading permit. Minor changes in details of design as necessitated by more detailed planning and engineering studies shall be permitted. The site development plan shall include a street tree plan for the South Orme Street frontage of the site.
 - f. This site plan amendment approval expires one year after the date of County Board approval if the approved project is not under construction. Extension of this approval shall be at the sole discretion of the County Board.

May 8, 1982

20. Redesign of the existing freestanding sign, a Type F information sign over the garage entrance; four Type D directional signs at 2' by 4' excluding the logos at the bottom of each sign; changes to the Tape A freestanding sign but with a white face in place of the proposed stainless steel face; and a Type B sign on the south side of the building deleting the logo at the top of the sign

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

- June 1, 1971 Approved a rezoning a rezoning (Z-1986-71-2) to "C-O" on 900 South Orme Street parcel, RPC # 25-024-056.
- October 9, 1971 Approved site plan (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for the Sheraton Nation Motor Hotel, a 336 unit motel and related facilities in a 13-story hotel structure, and with restaurant seating for 600 people, 11,502 square feet of meeting area, and 531 parking spaces, subject to conditions.
- June 8, 1972 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to remove one parking level and one typical floor.
- April 4, 1974 Denied a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to relocate the VEPCO power lines along Columbia Pike above ground in-lieu of undergrounding per site plan condition.
- May 4, 1974 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for a sign plan, to permit signs #1, 2, and 3, and deny sign #4.
- February 8, 1975 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to permit dancing and entertainment in the first floor Commonwealth ballroom and 16th floor restaurant.
- February 7, 1976 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to permit back lighting of the "Sheraton" sign, subject to conditions.
- April 11, 1978 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to replace two non-illuminated trademark signs with two silhouette illuminated trademarks signs, subject to conditions.
- September 15, 1979 Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to add 97 units and 9,138 square feet of meeting space for a total of 433 units, and 21,928 square feet of meeting space, subject to conditions

December 3, 1980	Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for reinstatement of previously approved site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to add 97 units and 9,138 square feet of meeting space for a total of 433 units, and 21,928 square feet of meeting space, subject to conditions
May 8, 1982	Approved a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to redesign the existing freestanding sign, a Type F information sign over the garage entrance; four Type D directional signs at 2' by 4' excluding the logos at the bottom of each sign; changes to the Tape A freestanding sign but with a white face in place of the proposed stainless steel face; and a Type B sign on the south side of the building deleting the logo at the top of the sign.
August 7, 1982	Denied a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) to allow the lighting of the penthouse of the hotel by deleting the condition which prohibits the lighting of the penthouse.
June 24, 2002	Deferral of a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for façade renovations and signage on the hotel to the September 14, 2002, County Board meeting.
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September 14, 2002	Deferral of a site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for façade renovations and signage on the hotel to the October 19, 2002 County Board meeting.
March 15, 2004	Acceptance of withdrawal of site plan amendment (Z-1986-71-2 and/or SP #86) for 900 South Orme Street for a façade renovation and comprehensive sign plan.