



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of November 13, 2007**

**DATE:** October 30, 2007

**SUBJECT:** U-3178-07-1 USE PERMIT for a comprehensive sign plan at 1919 S. Eads Street (RPC #36-016-003, -005)

**Applicant:**

Consumer Electronics Association

**By:**

Tara Wiedeman, Attorney  
Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich, and Walsh  
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, Thirteenth Floor  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**C.M. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Approve the use permit for a comprehensive sign plan for one (1) rooftop sign on the building's east façade and one (1) monument sign located on the southwest corner of the site, subject to conditions 1, 2, and 3 in the staff report. Deny a use permit for the rooftop sign on the building's west elevation, the nine (9) foot tall internally illuminated rooftop band signs along the building's east, south, and west elevations, and the 28 kinetic LED strips placed intermittently along the building's east, south, and west elevations.

**ISSUES:**

1. Rooftop signs facing residential neighborhood.
2. Total amount of sign area requested exceeds sign area allowed.
3. String of kinetic light signs is a prohibited type of sign.

**SUMMARY:** The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) requests approval of a use permit for a comprehensive sign plan for a by-right office building located at 1919 S. Eads Street. CEA is the owner and primary tenant of the building. Their proposal includes:

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

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

Staff: Colleen J. Connor, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-4815

1. One (1) free-standing monument sign on the southwest corner of the site;
2. Two (2) rooftop text/logo signs on the east and west elevations of the building;
3. Internally illuminated roof-top bands ranging from 29 to 131 feet that span the building's east, south, and west elevations at the penthouse level; and
4. Kinetic LED strips (28) placed intermittently along the building's east, south, and west elevations (see Attachment).

The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* and the *Zoning Ordinance* limit the total sign area, individual sign size, the location, and the types of signs allowed as part of a comprehensive sign plan. Staff supports the proposed free-standing monument sign (41.13 square feet) and the rooftop sign on the building's east elevation (105 square feet), for a total of 153.13 square feet of sign area. However, a number of the proposed signs are inconsistent with the *Guidelines* and the *Zoning Ordinance* because of several reasons including: orientation of signs facing a residential area; total sign area exceeds the square footage allowed; individual signs exceed height standards; and prohibited types of signs.

The rooftop text/logo sign on the building's west elevation faces a residential neighborhood, which is inconsistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Building*, and therefore is not supported by staff. Additionally, a number of the kinetic LED signs and portions of the internally illuminated rooftop bands are on the western elevation of the building, facing the residential neighborhood, and not supported by staff.

The 28 kinetic LED lights on all of the building's elevations are prohibited signs, as identified in Section 34.C. of the *Zoning Ordinance*, which prohibits: any moving sign or device to attract attention that has moving parts, whether or not any such device has written message content; any flashing sign or device displaying flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity; and any lighted tubing or strings of lights outlining property lines or open sales areas, doors, windows, or wall edges of any building (except for building rooflines at heights greater than 75 feet in Metro Corridors, permitted through special exception approval of the County Board).

Finally, the permitted sign area under the *Guidelines* for all signs other than rooftop signs is based on the linear feet of building wall as measured along the public right-of-way. For this building, the total sign area would be 580 square feet. The applicant proposes a total sign area of 3,900.63 square feet, which far exceeds the sign area allowed. The permitted sign area for rooftop signs is based on the linear feet of building wall as measured along the street frontage, which is 580 square feet. The proposed sign area for the two (2) rooftop signs is 210 square feet.

Therefore, it is recommended that the County Board approve one (1) rooftop sign on the building's east elevation and one (1) free-standing sign at the southwest corner of the site at the intersection of 20<sup>th</sup> Street South and South Eads Street, which total 153.13 square feet in sign area, subject to the conditions of the staff report. It is also recommended that the County

Board deny the use permit request for the rooftop signs on the building’s west elevation, the internally illuminated rooftop band signs along the building’s east, south, and west elevations, and the 28 kinetic LED strips along the building’s east, south, and west elevations.

**BACKGROUND:**

Site: The site of 46,336 square feet is located in Crystal City at 1919 S. Eads Street, bounded by Jefferson Davis Highway, 20<sup>th</sup> Street South, and the Sheraton Hotel. Immediate site boundaries are indicated below.

To the north: Sheraton Hotel

To the west: Crystal House Apartments residential towers.

To the east: Crystal Mall Marriott

To the south: Hampton Inn

Zoning: “C-2” Service-Commercial.

General Land Use Plan Designation: “High” Residential.

Neighborhood: The site is adjacent to the Aurora Highlands Civic Association.

**Existing Signs:** The building was completed in 1989 as a by-right building. The four-story building contains 99,360 square feet. CEA, the applicant, bought and moved into the building in June 2007. CEA occupies the top two (2) floors of the building, a portion of the second floor, and the first floor conference center. The building has a main entrance located off of South Eads Street through a drop-off driveway.

**Proposed Signs:** The following table sets forth the details for the proposed signs.

Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Height From A.S.E* (Feet)	Text	Location	Materials
4’ – 1 3/4” Text & 6’ Logo Height)  17’-6” length (10’5” Text & 6’ Logo)	105	58’ -6”	Consumer Electronics Board (plus logo)	Horizontally positioned on the east side upper left elevation of the building along the Jefferson Davis Highway.	Internally illuminated dimensional logo; brushed aluminum casing with translucent acrylic faces. Internally illuminated with LED. Mechanically fastened to substrate.

<b>Sign Dimensions</b>	<b>Area (Sq. Ft)</b>	<b>Height From A.S.E* (Feet)</b>	<b>Text</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Materials</b>
4' – 1 3/4" Text & 6' Logo Height)  17'-6" length (10'5" Text & 6' Logo)	105	58' -6"	Consumer Electronics Board (plus logo)	Horizontally positioned on the west side upper left elevation of the building along the South Eads Street.	Internally illuminated dimensional logo; brushed aluminum casing with translucent acrylic faces. Internally illuminated with LED. Mechanically fastened to substrate.
3'-1"Text & 3'6"Logo Height  11'-9" length (7'-9 5/8"Text & 3' -8 3/8" Logo)	41.13	Ground level	Consumer Electronics Board (plus logo)	Vertically positioned on the south side of the building along 20 <sup>th</sup> Street South	Logomark: Acrylic spherical sculpture. Letters: Stainless steel dimensional letters. Inner globe is internally lit by LED and is front lit by uplights on landscape
28 LED strips 16'6" Length)	462	Varies	NA	Varies, horizontally positioned on the west, south, and east elevations of the buildings.	LED fixture with stainless steel casing bolted to existing façade, possibly connected to solar power generator panels.
West elevation rooftop band sign 9' Height  131' Length	1,179	58'6"	NA	Horizontally positioned on west elevation rooftop extending along South Eads Street	Glowing band with LED flood uplight possibly connected to solar power generator panels.
East elevation rooftop band sign 9' Height  131' Length	1,179	58'6"	NA	Horizontally positioned on east elevation rooftop extending along Jefferson Davis Highway	Glowing band with LED flood uplight possibly connected to solar power generator panels.
South elevation rooftop band sign 9' Height  59' 7" Length	1039.5	58'6"	NA	Horizontally positioned on south elevation rooftop extending along 20 <sup>th</sup> Street South and curving around to South Eads Street and Jefferson Davis Highway.	Glowing band with LED flood uplight possibly connected to solar power generator panels.
<b>Total Sign Area</b>	<b>4,110.63</b>				

\*Note: Top of Building Parapet is 67'6"; Elevation of the site is 50 feet average grade above sea level.

**Approved Plans and Policies:** *Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, Section 34. Nameplates, Signs, and Other Displays or Devices to Direct, Identify, and Inform.* While a by-right building, staff has used the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* to determine the

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appropriateness of the proposed signs when a use permit for a comprehensive sign plan is applied for.

**DISCUSSION:** The table below calculates the allowable sign area permitted for special exception signs on the CEA project. Based on the building length at the street frontage/public right of way, the permitted sign area for this building is 580 square feet. The applicant is proposing signs with a total area of 4,110.63 square feet.

<b>Building Length @ Street Frontage/Public Right-of-Way</b>	<b>Linear Feet</b>
South Eads Street	235
Jefferson Davis Highway	235
20 <sup>th</sup> Street South	110
<b>Total Length at Street Frontage/Public Right-of-Way</b>	<b>580</b>

Staff supports the free-standing monument sign (41.13 square feet) and the rooftop sign on the building's east elevation (105 square feet), for a total of 153.13 square feet of sign area. The proposed rooftop text/logo sign on the building's east elevation will serve to alert visitors arriving via Jefferson Davis Highway. The free-standing monument sign is located at the southwest corner of the site and will serve to alert visitors arriving from the south, east, and west. Although partially facing west, the free-standing monument sign will help direct visitors to the building lobby and will have a minimal impact on the residential neighborhood. Additionally, in a letter submitted to staff, the Aurora Highlands Civic Association does not object to the free-standing monument sign (see Attachment).

There are several elements in the comprehensive sign plan application that are not labeled as signs. Staff has determined, however, that these elements would be considered signs under the *Zoning Ordinance*. Section 34.B. of the *Zoning Ordinance* defines light as a sign and provides for the inclusion of lighting in any computation of sign area. These additional signs include three (3) nine (9) feet tall internally illuminated rooftop bands along the building's east, south, and west elevations, and 28 kinetic LED strips placed intermittently along the building's east, south, and west elevations (see Attachment). Staff does not support approval of these signs because of their size, location, and type, as described below.

- **Size:** If the three (3) internally illuminated rooftop bands, the 28 kinetic LED lights, the two (2) rooftop signs, and the one (1) monument sign are included, the proposed total sign area of 4,110.63 square feet far exceeds the 580 square feet of permitted sign area for this building. In addition, the lighting of building rooflines at heights greater than 75 feet in Metro Corridors is permitted through special exception approval of the County Board, without being calculated in permitted signs or sign area. However, the height of the CEA building is only 67'6". Finally, the height of the proposed internally illuminated rooftop bands on three (3) elevations (west, east, and south) are

nine (9) feet tall, which exceeds the six (6) foot height limit for rooftop signs of the *Guidelines*.

- Location: Based on the location of the signs, staff does not support the rooftop signs (the text/logo sign, the internally illuminated rooftop bands, and the LED lights) on the building's west façade. These signs face a residential neighborhood, inconsistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Building*. The rooftop and LED signs on the building's west elevation would have an impact on the 828 rental units of the Crystal House Apartments, which fronts on South Eads Street. The signs are 115 feet from the property line of the residential parcel and 262 feet from the Crystal House Apartments northern building. Additionally, the Aurora Highlands Civic Association submitted a letter that was generally in support of the comprehensive sign plan, but opposed the rooftop sign on the west façade facing the residential neighborhoods. A limited number of rooftop signs facing residential neighborhoods have been approved by the County Board, but only with restricted hours. The current use permit request does not include any limit on the hours of illumination.
- Type: Staff does not support the 28 kinetic LED strips because of the type of sign. Under the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Building*, any flashing signs or lights of changing degrees are not permitted. Finally, the LED lights on all of the building's elevations are prohibited signs, specified in *Section 34.C. Prohibited Signs* of the *Zoning Ordinance*:

***C. Prohibited Signs.***

*The following types of signs are prohibited and shall not be permitted by variance:*

1. *Any moving sign or device to attract attention, whether or not any such device has written message content, of which all or any part moves by any means, including fluttering, rotating or otherwise moving devices, or set in motion by movement of the atmosphere including, but not limited to, pennants, propellers, discs, banners, balloons, etc.*
2. *Any flashing sign or device displaying flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity, including electronic message signs, except a sign indicating time and/or temperature.*
3. *Any lighted tubing or strings of lights outlining property lines or open sales areas, doors, windows, or wall edges of any building, provided that perimeter shielded down lighting may be used to light open sales areas. This does not preclude the use of neon tubing as a part of the area allowed for signs under this Zoning Ordinance.*

Community Process: The applicant presented the proposed comprehensive sign plan to the Aurora Highlands Civic Association on July 26, 2007. On July 31, 2007, the Civic Association submitted a letter that was generally in support of the comprehensive sign plan, but opposed the rooftop sign on the west façade facing the residential neighborhoods.

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Crystal City Business Improvement District (BID) submitted a letter of support for the comprehensive sign plan as part of the BID's effort to light the Crystal City area. The applicant will also present the plan to the wider community as part of an open house on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

The applicant met with the Public Arts Commission on October 16, 2007, to determine if the proposed lighting could be considered as public art. The PAC discussed the proposal, and while the group was impressed with the applicant's work as well as CEA's desire to improve the building's appearance, they did not feel that the project met the goals and descriptions of public art as outlined in the County's Public Art Policy and Master Plan. Staff is willing to work with the applicant to develop a proposal for public art that would contribute to a public image for the CEA building as a signature building in Arlington County.

**CONCLUSION:** The proposed text/logo rooftop sign on the building's east elevation and the free-standing monument at the southwest corner of the site are generally in compliance with the *Zoning Ordinance* and *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. However, the text/logo rooftop sign on the building's west elevation, the internally illuminated rooftop band signs along the building's east, south, and west elevations, and the 28 kinetic LED strips along the building's east, south, and west elevations face a residential neighborhood, exceed the height of signs and the total sign area allowed, and are prohibited by the *Zoning Ordinance*. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the use permit for a comprehensive sign plan to permit the rooftop sign on the building's east elevation and the free-standing monument sign on the southwest corner of the site, subject to conditions of the staff report. Staff further recommends that the use permit rooftop sign on the building's west elevation, the internally illuminated rooftop band signs along the building's east, south, and west elevations, and the 28 kinetic LED strips placed intermittently along the building's east, south, and west elevations be denied.

1. The applicant agrees to limit signs on the site to signs described below, of the design, location, and size, as approved by the County Board on November 27, 2007, and as shown on plans dated October 25, 2007, titled "Consumer Electronic Association Comprehensive Signage Package Presentation", and prepared by Gensler Brand Design. In addition, the developer agrees that signs shall be limited to one (1) rooftop sign on the east façade for the office building and one (1) monument sign on the southwest corner of the site, as depicted on the comprehensive sign plan as approved by the County Board on November 13, 2007. The applicant agrees that the total sign area permitted for all signs for the

CEA project shall not exceed 150 square feet unless by an amendment to the conditions of the use permit. This total includes 108 square feet for rooftop sign on the east rooftop façade and 42 square feet for the monument sign on the south landscaped.

2. The signs shall be of the same materials, dimensions, text, and location as presented to and approved by the County Board on November 27, 2007. Minor changes to the approved rooftop signs 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) either a minor change in the area of the sign (less than 5%) or the total sign area does not exceed 150 square feet.
3. The applicant specifically agrees not to place, or allow to be placed, signs on the site other than those two (2) signs of the comprehensive sign plan as approved by the County Board on November 27, 2007, as outlined in Condition #1.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

September 8, 2007

Deferred use permit request (U-3178-07-1) for a comprehensive sign plan for a building located at 1919 S. Eads Street to the October 13, 2007 County Board meeting

October 13, 2007

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