



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of June 17, 2008**

DATE: June 6, 2008

SUBJECT: SP #293 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT, Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association, amend comprehensive sign plan to include two rooftop signs; 3601 Wilson Boulevard (RPC # 14-037-001, -005)

Applicant:

Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association, Owner

By:

Bob Biroonak
Art Display Co.
401 Hampton Park Blvd.
Capitol Heights, MD 20743

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Comprehensive Sign Plan for two rooftop signs, subject to all previously approved conditions, one (1) amended condition, and one (1) new condition.

ISSUES: The applicant requests a site plan amendment to amend the Comprehensive Sign Plan to add rooftop signs, and there have been no issues identified.

SUMMARY: The Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association requests a site plan amendment to amend its comprehensive sign plan to include two rooftop signs at 3601 Wilson Boulevard, also known as One Virginia Square. It is proposed that the two (2) signs would display the name and logo of System Planning Corporation, the major tenant at One Virginia Square. The proposed sign area and the design are generally consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment to allow two 73 square foot signs as proposed be approved, subject to all previously approved conditions and one (1) amended condition.

BACKGROUND: The applicant requests a site plan amendment to include two rooftop signs in the Comprehensive Sign Plan for the One Virginia Square site plan project in Virginia Square.

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Roberto Ruiz, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-4985

Site: Located at 3601 Wilson Boulevard, the site is bound as follows:

- To the north: 9th Street North and The Gallery at Virginia Square, a highrise residential building, designated “High Residential” on the General Land Use Plan and zoned “RA-H-3.2.”
- To the west: North Nelson Street and Oakland park. Across from the park sits a highrise residential building under construction, the Amelia Residences at Virginia Square (SP #108), designated “High-Medium Residential Mixed-Use” on the General Land Use Plan and zoned “R-C.”
- To the east: North Monroe Street and the Virginia Square Plaza Apartments, a component of SP #293, designated “High-Medium Residential Mixed-Use” on the General Land Use Plan and zoned “R-C.”
- To the south: Wilson Boulevard and a neighborhood designated “Low-Medium Residential” on the General Land Use Plan and zoned “RA8-18.”

Zoning: The site is zoned “R-C” Apartment Dwelling and Commercial District. Approved plans and policies that apply to the site are Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance and the Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings.

Land Use: The site is designated on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as High-Medium Residential Mixed-Use (3.24 FAR including associated office and retail activities).

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association and is proximate to the Ashton Heights Civic Association. Staff notified the Ballston-Virginia Square and Ashton Heights Civic Associations, as well as the Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership. To date staff has received a response of no objection to the proposed rooftop signs from the Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association and the Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership (letters attached).

Existing Development: The site plan associated with the One Virginia Square office building was approved by the County Board in 1991. The site plan includes the subject office building with 121,002 square feet of office gross floor area and a 225-unit apartment project, the Virginia Square Plaza Apartments, located across North Monroe Street from the subject property. The office building was completed in 1999 and the residential building was completed in 2000. The major tenant of One Virginia Square is System Planning Corporation with 75,814 square feet of office space or about 65% of the total 116,077 square feet of rentable space.

Proposed Signs: The following table sets forth statistical details for each of the two identical signs.

Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Text	Materials	Location
3'-0" – Height 4'-9" – Length	14.25	SPC	Logo shaped internally illuminated neon channel mounted letter with 3/16" white acrylic face and vinyl graphics.	The logo and text sign components will be horizontally positioned on the east and west façades of the office building.
21 3/4" – Height 32'-4 1/2" – Length	58.68	System Planning Corporation	Internally illuminated neon channel mounted letters with 1/8" white acrylic faces with day/night vinyl.	
Total Sign Area	72.93 per sign			

DISCUSSION: The two proposed rooftop signs for One Virginia Square would be the first of their kind for the office building. Currently, the only sign permitted at One Virginia Square is a pylon sign identifying office tenants that was approved administratively in 2000. This sign is situated in a landscaped planting bed off the building’s main entrance on North Monroe Street. The pylon sign is 2.50’ in width and 6.11’ in height and has an area of 15.25 square feet. The pylon sign is of a restrained design with metal and silver metallic finishes and tenant logos in black copy.

The rooftop signs are to be located on the eastern and western façades of the office building, fronting North Monroe and North Nelson Streets respectively. Each of the proposed signs totals about 73 square feet, approximately 59 square feet for text reading “System Planning Corporation” and 14 square feet for an oval logo with the “SPC” abbreviation. The two portions of each sign will be back lit with neon, with the oval logo consisting of white acrylic and light blue vinyl and the text made of “day/night” vinyl that appears black during the day and white at night.

Under the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, allocation of rooftop signs for site plan projects is based on a ratio of one (1) square foot of sign area for each one (1) linear foot of building wall length fronting onto a public right of way. The table below provides the total amount of square footage permitted for rooftop signs for the One Virginia Square site plan as well as indicating the amount of rooftop sign area that is proposed.

Street Frontage	Linear Feet of façade	Permitted Rooftop Sign Area	Rooftop Sign Area Proposed (Rounded)	Proposed Sign Area as Percent of Total Allowable Sign Area
North Monroe Street façade	167 ft	167 sq ft	72.93 sq ft	12.0%
North Nelson Street façade	167 ft	167 sq ft	72.93 sq ft	12.0%
9th Street façade	136 ft	136 sq ft	0 sq ft	0.0%
Wilson Boulevard façade	136 ft	136 sq ft		
Total	606 ft	606 sq ft	145.86 sq ft	24.1%

As indicated above, the proposed sign areas are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan*

Buildings since their combined sign area is only 24% of the maximum allowed. When the area of the pylon sign is added to that of the two rooftop signs, the total sign area associated with the subject site plan project would be 161.11 square feet or approximately 26.6% of the total allowable rooftop sign area.

The proposed design of the rooftop sign is also consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. The Guidelines provide that “signs should be designed to be compatible both with the architectural style of the building and with other project signs. Restrained design of letterforms and subdued colors of illumination (blue, green and white as opposed to red or yellow, for instance) are strongly encouraged.” The channel mounted letters will appear black during the day and black at night and are of a simple text style. The oval logo that accompanies the text is also of subdued colors, white and light blue. The proposed sign does not conflict with the architectural style of the building or its sand color.

The applicant has also agreed to condition the hours of illumination for the two proposed sign from dusk to 11 p.m. In addition, the applicant also agreed to an amendment to Site Plan Condition #50 to dedicate the ground floor spaces facing Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street to retail use when the lease of the current office tenant expires or vacates the ground floor space.

The two (2) proposed rooftop signs would face existing and future highrise residential buildings. The proposed North Monroe Street rooftop sign faces the Virginia Square Plaza Apartments, which is also part of Site Plan #293. The proposed North Nelson Street sign faces Oakland Park, across from which the Amelia Residential site plan (SP #108) project is currently under construction. Both residential buildings are zoned “R-C”, Apartment Dwelling and Commercial Districts. Staff has raised concerns regarding the impact of illuminated signs during evening hours on residents in neighboring high rise buildings. In response to these concerns the applicant has agreed to include dimmers on the two (2) rooftop signs to allow their lighting intensity to be reduced should the signs be deemed by the County Manger to be too bright. The applicant has also agreed to condition the hours of illumination for the two (2) proposed sign from dusk to 11 p.m.

CONCLUSION: The two (2) proposed rooftop signs for System Planning Corporation are generally consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. The combined sign area of the two (2) signs is below that which is allowable and their design and colors are consistent with those of neighboring signs. In response to staff concern, the applicant has agreed to limit the impact on neighboring residents by providing a means to control the intensity of the lighting and to limit the hours of illumination. In addition, the applicant has also agreed to dedicate first floor tenant space facing Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street to retail use when the lease of the current office tenant expires or vacates the ground floor space. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment for two (2) 73 square foot rooftop sign be approved subject to all previously approved conditions, and amended Condition #50 and one (1) new Condition #61.

REVISED CONDITION:

50. ~~The applicant shall make the best efforts possible to provide retail space in the office building on the ground floor facing Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street. The~~

applicant shall dedicate all ground floor space fronting Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street to retail use upon expiration of the lease with System Planning Corporation or upon vacation of the tenant space by System Planning Corporation. The ground floor spaces fronting Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street will subsequently only be leased to retail tenants.

The applicant further agrees that when the ground floor space is converted to retail use, that the windows along Wilson Boulevard and North Monroe Street shall have an overall minimum transparency of 50% as measured from floor to ceiling. In addition, the portion of the retail storefront that is located between two and eight feet from grade shall be at least 80% transparent. The purpose of this condition is to allow pedestrians to view the activity within the retail establishment and to allow patrons and employees of the retail establishments to view the activity on the sidewalk and street. "Transparency" shall mean using glass or other transparent exterior material offering a view into an area of the retail establishment where human activity normally occurs and shall not be satisfied by views into areas blocked by display cases, the rear of shelving, interior walls, blinds, hallways, or the like.

NEW CONDITION:

61. Two rooftop signs shall be permitted and located on the eastern and western façades of the building at 3601 Wilson Boulevard. Each sign shall be no larger than 73 square feet. The building owner and building management company agree to limit the rooftop signage for 3601 Wilson Boulevard to two signs at the locations shown on drawings submitted to the County by Art Display Co. and dated February 27, 2008. The building owner and building management company agree that the signs shall be of the same materials, dimensions, text, and location as shown on the plans dated February 27, 2008, prepared by Art Display Co., and the sign shall be illuminated only as shown on the drawings dated February 27, 2008, prepared by Art Display Co.

The developer agrees to install dimmers on both signs that will allow the developer to adjust the rooftop signs' lighting intensity. The building owner and building management company further agrees that if the County Manager finds that the intensity of the rooftop signs' lighting 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 a level that, in the County Manager's reasonable judgment, will no longer have such an adverse effect.

The developer agrees that the rooftop sign hours of illumination shall be from dusk to 11 PM, seven (7) days a week.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

- September 10, 1983 Approved a rezoning and site plan Z-2240-83-1 from “R-5”, One-Family Restricted Two-Family Dwelling District and “RA8-18”, Apartment Dwelling District to “R-C” Apartment Dwelling District and Commercial District to permit a temporary parking lot.
- July 8, 1989 Deferred a site plan request for a mixed-use office/residential/hotel project on a five block area adjacent to the Virginia Square Metro Station.
- September 9, 1989 Accepted a withdrawal of a site plan request for a mixed-used office/residential/hotel project in a five block area adjacent to the Virginia Square Metro Station.
- December 9, 1990 Continued site plan amendment Z-2240-83-1 permitting the operation of a temporary parking lot subject to all previous conditions with a review in five (5) years.
- January 5, 1991 Deferred site plan SP #293 and rezoning Z-2396-90-1 request for a mixed use office/residential project to the February 9, 1991 meeting.
- February 9, 1991 Deferred a site plan and rezoning Z-2396-90-1 request for a mixed use office/residential project to the March 2, 1991 meeting.
- March 2, 1991 Approved a rezoning request Z-2396-90-1 to rezone parcels of land from “RA8-18” and “C-2” to “R-C” and an accompanying mixed use site plan SP #293 containing 121,002 square feet of office G.F.A. and 195,164 square feet of residential G.F.A.
- July 13, 1993 Deferred a site plan amendment request SP #293 to permit construction of the office building to precede construction of the residential building to the September 11, 1993 County Board meeting.
- September 11, 1993 Accepted withdrawal of a site plan amendment request SP #293 to permit construction of the office building to precede the residential building.
- January 8, 1994 Approved site plan amendment request SP #293 to amend condition #61 to extend the term of the site plan to March

2, 1997.

March 8, 1997

Approved site plan amendment request SP #293 to amend conditions #53 regarding the timing of construction of the residential building, condition #59 to extend the site plan approval term from March 2, 1997 to March 2, 2000, and deletion of condition #61 which was redundant of condition #59.

July 15, 1998

Deferred rezoning request Z-2445-98-1 to rezone a 6,774 square-foot lot from "RA8-18" to "R-C" incorporating the lot into the existing site plan and site plan amendment request SP #293 to amend the approved site plan for a 9-story residential building (226 units) and associated parking to the September 12, 1998 County Board meeting.

September 12, 1998

Approved rezoning request Z-2445-98-1 for a change in land classification from "RA8-18" Apartment Dwelling District to "R-C" Apartment Dwelling and Commercial District and site plan amendment request SP #293 to amend conditions #1, #3.h., #29, #47; approve new condition #61; and delete conditions #40 and #49.