



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of September 13, 2008**

**DATE:** September 3, 2008

**SUBJECT:** SP #90 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT, Battelle Memorial Institute, amend comprehensive sign plan to modify text and reduce the size of previously approved rooftop tenant identification sign on the eastern façade: 1550 Crystal Drive (Crystal Square II) (RPC # 34-020-248).

**Applicant:**

Battelle Memorial Institute

**By:**

Walsh, Colucci, Lubley, Emrich & Walsh, PC  
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**C.M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the site plan amendment request for a comprehensive sign plan to modify text and reduce the size of previously approved rooftop tenant sign on eastern façade from 131.38 square feet to 84.6 square feet, subject to all previously approved conditions, one (1) revised condition, and two (2) new conditions.

**ISSUES:** The applicant requests modification to a previously approved but never installed rooftop tenant sign for the eastern façade of Crystal Square II (SP #90). There are no issues with the proposed site plan amendment.

**SUMMARY:** The Battelle Memorial Institute (Battelle), a major tenant of the Crystal Square II office tower located at 1550 Crystal Drive, requests a site plan amendment to modify a previously approved rooftop tenant sign for the eastern façade of the building. The applicant is requesting a change in text and a reduction in size of a 131.38 square foot Lockheed Martin rooftop sign that was approved on July 19, 2003, but was not installed. Battelle is proposing the

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

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

Staff: Carol Ann Perovshek, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5045

installation of an 84.6 square foot rooftop sign on the building’s eastern façade. The sign will have aluminum channel mounted letters that will appear black by day and white when backlit by LED lights at night. Intensity of illumination will be controllable via the inclusion of a rheostat or comparable device. The proposed sign does not impact any single-family residential neighborhoods and its visual impacts on the George Washington Parkway are minimal due to the sight obstructions caused by apartment towers on the eastern side of Crystal Drive and mature trees along the Parkway. The proposed amendment will allow for a rooftop sign that accurately identifies a major tenant, has a smaller total area than that of the previously approved sign, and utilizes updated lighting technology. The proposed sign is consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* and Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment be approved, subject to all previously approved conditions, one revised condition, and two new conditions.

**BACKGROUND:** The site plan amendment is to install a rooftop sign for Battelle on the eastern façade of the Crystal Square II office building which is part of the Crystal Square site plan project (SP #90). The 14-story office building is located at 1550 Crystal Drive and contains 445,000 square feet of office GFA. Battelle occupies approximately 50,000 square feet within the building. The proposed sign is to be smaller in area and of a different design than a sign that was originally approved for the eastern façade in 2003 and therefore requires County Board approval.

Site: Approved in 1972 and amended multiple times, the Crystal Square site plan project is a mixed-use office complex comprised of four (4) office buildings, one (1) residential building, and underground retail. The site plan encompasses an 18-acre block in Crystal City. The Crystal Square II office building is located on the northeast corner of the block, and the Crystal City Metro Station entrance is adjacent to the southwest corner of the block at South 18<sup>th</sup> and Clark Streets. The Crystal Square site plan development is bound as follows:

To the north: 15<sup>th</sup> Street South  
To the west: South Clark Street  
To the east: Crystal Drive  
To the south: 18<sup>th</sup> Street South

Zoning: “C-O” Commercial Office Building, Hotel, and Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts; “RA-H-3.2” Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts.

General Land Use Plan: Designated four-sevenths (4/7) “High” Residential and three-sevenths (3/7) “High” Office-Apartment-Hotel.

Neighborhood: Crystal City; Adjacent to the Aurora Highlands Civic Association.

**Proposed Sign:** The following table sets forth statistical details for the proposed rooftop sign at the Crystal Square II office building:

Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Text	Height from Street	Location	Materials
18'-9 <sup>5/8</sup> " -- Length 4'-6" -- Height	84.6	Battelle	120 ft	Eastern façade, south end, fronting Crystal Drive	Translucent acrylic sign face. Letters black by day, white by night. White LED light source.
<b>Total Sign Area</b>	<b>84.6</b>				

The proposed rooftop sign will read “Battelle,” and will be located approximately 120 feet above grade on the southeast corner of the building’s Crystal Drive frontage. The face of the sign is proposed as translucent acrylic with a perforated black graphic film applied to the surface. The sign will have a black painted aluminum frame. It will be supported by stainless steel bolts and would be internally illuminated with white LED lights. The letters would appear black during the day and white when illuminated in the evening.

**Approved Plans and Policies:** Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance; *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*.

**DISCUSSION:** The Crystal City Comprehensive Sign Plan was approved on February 5, 1983 and defines the number and size of signs allowed for directional signage as well as commercial tenants for the Crystal City development, which includes multiple site plans (SP #11, 56, 90, 135 and 167) and related buildings. The Comprehensive Sign Plan was amended by the County Board in 1983, 1989, 1991, 2003, 2004 and 2008. The amendment to the Comprehensive Sign Plan most applicable to the current request is:

- (July 19, 2003) Site plan amendment approving two illuminated rooftop tenant identification signs on the Crystal Square II office building located at 1550 Crystal Drive. The amendment permitted one (1) 131.38 square foot sign on the western façade and one (1) 131.38 square foot sign on the eastern façade for a total of 262.76 square feet of rooftop signage. At the time of the amendment, it was proposed that both signs would read “Lockheed Martin” and include the company logo. Illumination of the signs would begin at dusk and would be turned off no later than midnight.

Two rooftop signs were approved by the County Board for Crystal Square II on July 19, 2003. Each sign was approved at 131.38 square feet in area and was to read “Lockheed Martin” and include the company logo. Currently, only one of these two signs has been installed. The installed sign is consistent with the July 2003 amendment and is located on the western façade of the building. The applicant is proposing that the remaining previously approved rooftop sign for the eastern façade be reduced in area from 131.38 square feet to 84.6 square and modified to read “Battelle.”

The following table depicts the modifications requested to the previously approved rooftop sign for the eastern façade of Crystal Square II:

Sign Type	Sign Dimensions	Area (Sq. Ft)	Text	Height from Street	Location	Materials
<u>Previously Approved</u> Rooftop Sign (July 19, 2003)	46'-8"-- Length 1'-6" to 8'-0" -- Height	131.38	"Lockheed Martin" with company logo	120 ft	East façade, southern end, fronting Crystal Drive	Translucent plastic sign face and black aluminum retainers. Letters and logo black by day, white by night. Neon tube light source.
<u>Proposed</u> Rooftop Sign (Sept. 13, 2008)	18'-9 <sup>5/8</sup> "-- Length 4'-6" -- Height	84.6	"Battelle"	120 ft	East façade, southern end, fronting Crystal Drive	Translucent acrylic sign face. Letters black by day, white by night. White LED light source.

Rooftop Sign Area. The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* states that "the total permitted area of rooftop signs for any [site plan] building will be computed on the basis of one (1) square foot of sign area for each (1) linear foot of building wall width measured along the street frontage." For purposes of reviewing the proposed sign for consistency with the *Sign Guidelines* and Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance, linear street frontage has been calculated for the Crystal Square II office building on which the sign is proposed as follows:

Building Length @ Street Frontage/Public R-O-W	Linear Feet	
East Façade building wall length – fronting Crystal Drive	250	
North Façade building wall length – fronting S. 15 <sup>th</sup> Street	159	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>409 LF</b>

Rooftop Sign Areas	Square Feet	
Existing Lockheed Martin sign – western facade	131.38	
Proposed Battelle sign – eastern facade	84.6	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>215.98</b>	<b>215.98 SF</b>

According to the frontage/sign area ratio set forth in the Sign Guidelines, 409 square feet of rooftop signage is permitted on the building. There is currently one (1) rooftop sign located on the western façade of Crystal Square II that is 131.38 square feet, accounting for approximately 32% of the total permitted rooftop sign area for the building. The rooftop sign proposed for the eastern façade at 84.6 square feet is within the permitted sign area, accounting for approximately 21% of the total permitted sign area for rooftop signs for this building. The proposed tenant identification sign, at 84.6 square feet, is within the permitted rooftop sign area limit for the building. A total of 193.02 square feet of sign area would remain for additional rooftop signs.

Proposed Rooftop Tenant Identification Signage. The proposed Battelle rooftop sign would be  
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located on the eastern elevation, fronting Crystal Drive. The proposed sign is to be 84.6 square feet in area and is within the rooftop sign area permitted for the building. The proposed rooftop sign would not impact the pedestrian experience or impose on the public right of way. Given the proposed location of the rooftop sign on Crystal Drive, there will be no impact on residential neighborhoods. There will be intermittent impeded views of the sign from the northbound and southbound lanes of the George Washington Parkway. The sign's visual impact on the Parkway is minimal due to the sight distance as well as sight obstructions produced by existing apartment towers on the eastern side of Crystal Drive and mature trees within the Parkway's right-of-way.

Materials and fabrication of the rooftop sign is typical of other rooftop signs approved in the County's urban corridors. The Battelle sign will consist of 4'-6" high individual channel letters framed in black-painted aluminum. The face of the letters will be white acrylic to which a perforated black film is applied. The letters will appear black during the day and white at night when backlit by white LED lights. The use of LED lighting is more energy efficient than neon and eliminates the halo effect often seen with signs illuminated with neon. Staff is recommending the installation of a rheostat or similar device that would allow for the light intensity to be adjusted or dimmed. In response to staff's request, the applicant has agreed that a rheostat will be installed with the rooftop sign so the lighting intensity could be reduced or dimmed in the event the sign is determined too bright by the County Manager.

Community Process: Staff notified the Aurora Highlands Civic Association regarding the proposed site plan amendment. To date staff has not received any response regarding the proposed signs.

**CONCLUSION:** The proposed modifications to the previously approved rooftop tenant identification sign for the eastern façade would allow the accurate identification of a major tenant, reduce the total sign area, and utilize upgraded lighting technologies that would result in a better quality sign. The sign would be more energy efficient, have minimal halo effect, and include a rheostat as a means to control the intensity of the lighting. The hours of illumination will be limited and consistent with previously approved condition from July 2003 allowing for operation from dusk to no later than 12 midnight, seven days a week. Finally, the proposed modifications are consistent with the parameters set forth in the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Therefore, staff recommends that the site plan amendment be approved subject to all previously approved conditions, one revised condition (#1), and the following two new conditions:

1. ~~The applicant agrees that the size, design, location and color of the proposed two (2) rooftop signs shall be as shown on the drawings prepared by Signs Unlimited and entitled "Lockheed Martin Exterior Signage Plan," and dated May 19, 2003, as attached to the staff report and approved by the County Board on July 19, 2003. The applicant further agrees that the sign illumination of all approved rooftop signs for 1550 Crystal Drive shall be turned off each day no later than midnight and shall remain off until dusk the next evening.~~
2. The developer agrees that the total sign area permitted for rooftop signs for the Crystal

Square II building at 1550 Crystal Drive (SP #90) shall not exceed 409 square feet. This includes the 131.38 square feet permitted for one rooftop level sign that reads “Lockheed Martin” on the western façade, the size, design, location and color of which shall be as shown on the drawings prepared by Signs Unlimited and entitled “Lockheed Martin Exterior Signage Plan,” dated May 19, 2003 and approved by the County Board on July 19, 2003, and the 84.6 square feet permitted for one rooftop sign that reads “Battelle” on the eastern façade of the building.

3. The developer agrees that the Battelle rooftop sign shall be of the same materials, dimensions, text and location as shown on the plans prepared by Metro Sign & Design dated August 15, 2008 (Revised), and presented to and approved by the County Board on September 13, 2008. The signs shall be illuminated only as shown on the drawings prepared by Metro Sign & Design and dated August 15, 2008 (Revised).

Minor changes to the approved Battelle rooftop sign 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) a minor change in the area of the sign (less than 5%). All other changes to the approved rooftop signs will require site plan approval or amendment.

The developer agrees to install a rheostat or other appropriate variable resistor that will allow the developer to adjust the Battelle rooftop sign’s lighting intensity from a level of 0 LUX to 500 LUX. The developer further agrees that if the County Manager finds that the intensity of the rooftop sign’s 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.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

- September 27, 1972                      Approved site plan for an office and apartment building complex (SP #90).
- September 15, 1981                      Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) to permit live entertainment and public dancing in conjunction with an existing restaurant (Amelia's) with conditions.
- February 5, 1983                         Approved site plan amendment request (SP #11, 56, 90, 135 and 167) to permit four "Crystal City" pylon signs, one "The Underground pylon sign, twenty-three pylon directional signs, four entrance canopies with signs, and one "Crystal Plaza Shopping Arcade" wall-mounted sign.
- July 8, 1989                                Deferred site plan amendment request (SP #11, 56, 90, 135 and 167) for a coordinated sign plan consisting of 60 new signs and retention of thirteen existing signs to the August 12, 1989 County Board meeting.
- August 12, 1989                         Approved a site plan amendment (SP #11, 56, 90, 135 and 167) for a coordinated sign plan consisting of 60 new signs and retention of 13 existing signs including Metro Station and Buchanan House signage.
- November 17, 1990                        Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) for food delivery service, subject to conditions and with a review in three months after the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
- February 9, 1991                         Approved a site plan amendment (SP #11, 56, 90, 135 and 167) to amend the coordinated sign plan to permit two temporary office leasing banners, at heights below 35 feet, on two office buildings until November 17, 1991, at 1225 and 2211 Jefferson Davis Highway.
- May 11, 1991                                Continued the site plan amendment (SP#90) for food delivery service, subject to all previous conditions and with a review in one (1) year.

May 16, 1992	Continued the site plan amendment (SP #90) for food service, subject to all previous conditions and with a review in three (3) years.
May 20, 1995	Continued the site plan amendment (SP #90) for food service, subject to all previous conditions and with a review in five (5) years.
May 17, 1997	Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) to convert 5,000 square feet of penthouse tenant storage space to office use (an ancillary computer room and commend center) for a term consistent with the U.S. Marshals Service lease of November 30, 2001, subject to new conditions.
April 20, 2000	Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) to convert 4,655 square feet of retail space to health club.
March 15, 2003	Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) to permit live entertainment at Potbelly Sandwich Works, subject to conditions of the site plan and with a review in one (1) year.
July 19, 2003	Approved a site plan amendment (SP #90) to comprehensive sign plan to permit one (1) 131.38 square foot sign on the western façade and one (1) 131.38 square foot sign on the eastern façade for a total of 262.73 square feet of rooftop signage at Crystal Square II.
July 10, 2004	Approved a site plan amendment to comprehensive sign plan permitting 1,288 square feet of retail sign area – ground level facades along 20th and 23 <sup>rd</sup> Streets with photographic and text panel signs identifying Underground Shops and directional signage.
June 17, 2008	Approved a site plan amendment (SP #11) to comprehensive sign plan to permit one (1) 116.4 square foot rooftop sign and one (1) 60 square foot tenant sign at 2100 Crystal Drive.