



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of October 18, 2008**

DATE: October 9, 2008

SUBJECT: SP #346 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT: Comstock Retail Partners LC, amend comprehensive sign plan; 3600 S. Glebe Rd. (RPC #34-027-030, -054, -067, -074)

Applicant:

Tracy Schar
Comstock Retail Partners LC
11465 Sunset Hills Road
Reston, Virginia 20190

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the proposed amendment to the comprehensive sign plan pursuant to the conditions of the staff report, and with a County Board Review in ten (10) years (October 2018).

ISSUES: This is an amendment to the Potomac Yard, Land Bay F comprehensive sign plan, and no issues have been identified.

SUMMARY: The applicant seeks an amendment to an existing comprehensive sign plan to add two (2) freestanding project identification signs in Land Bay F of Market Square at Potomac Yard. The two (2) proposed signs will replace the large, temporary freestanding signs that were placed in Land Bay F without proper approval from the County. The proposed signs are not technically consistent with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance or the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, but are consistent with the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, and will serve to guide and orient pedestrian traffic in an area with new development, where retail has not previously existed, and where retail is located along an interior courtyard. A review in ten (10) years is recommended to determine if the two (2) freestanding signs are necessary once the project is fully established. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the site plan amendment pursuant to the conditions of the staff report, and with a County Board review in ten (10) years (October 2018).

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Melanie Wellman, DCPHD, Planning Division
Robert Gibson, DES, Transportation

PLA-5082

BACKGROUND: The Potomac Yard Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) was adopted by the County Board in 2000. Coordinated efforts were made to increase development capacity in the South Tract (generally bounded by the Airport Viaduct, George Washington Parkway, Crystal Drive, Jefferson Davis Highway, and Four Mile Run) and to create opportunities for open space and recreational uses in the North Tract. The site is divided into six (6) land bay areas which will be developed in phases.

Site: The subject parcel is known as Land Bay F, the southernmost parcel of the Potomac Yard PDSP. Land Bay F is bounded by Route 1 to the west, South Glebe Road to the north, Potomac Avenue to the east, and Four Mile Run and the City of Alexandria to the south. South Park is contiguous to the south of the Land Bay. The parcel is comprised of two (2) 11-story residential buildings containing a total of 479 units and ground floor retail.

Zoning: The site is zoned "C-O-1.5", Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Apartment Districts.

Land Use: The South Tract has a striped pattern of 1/3 "Medium" Residential (37-72 units/acre) and 2/3 "Low" Office-Apartment-Hotel, with Note 18, on the General Land Use Plan.

Neighborhoods: The site is not located within a civic association area. The site is adjacent to the Aurora Highlands Civic Association. The association was notified of the site plan amendment request, and to date has not expressed any concerns regarding this request.

In December 2003, the County Board approved a final site plan for Land Bay F of the Potomac Yard PDSP. The Comprehensive Sign Plan for Land Bay F was approved in September 2006. In September 2008, the sign plan was amended to allow six (6) window signs for the Bank of America, which increased the sign area by 135.2 square feet.

DISCUSSION: The subject site plan amendment request is to add two (2) freestanding project identification signs to the existing comprehensive sign plan. These particular signs appear in the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, but were left out of the Land Bay F Comprehensive Sign Plan. Each sign would read "Market Square Potomac Yard" and would contain the tenant names and building address. One (1) of the signs would be installed at the corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue, and the other sign would be located along U.S. Route 1 at the south end of the project. The following chart provides a summary of the proposed comprehensive sign plan amendment request:

Type (Quantity)	Locations	Sign Area (Sq. ft)	Total Sign Area (Sq ft.)	Text	Materials
Freestanding Building Identification Sign (2)	Southwest corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Ave. and US Route 1 at south end of project	27.5	55	Market Square Potomac Yard, tenant names and building address 3600	Metal with an exterior grade painted finish. Non-illuminated.
Total additional sign area (proposed)			55		
Total site sign area (proposed and existing)			994.8		
Total permitted sign area based on building frontage			1,195		

The approved comprehensive sign plan states that the total building frontage is 1,195 linear feet which permits up to 1,195 square feet of sign area. The proposed comprehensive sign plan amendment would increase the total sign area to 994.8 square feet. The proposed sign area would therefore fall within the overall permitted sign area for the site.

The *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, approved on August 11, 2005, state that multi-building projects may have one (1) or more freestanding signs if there is more than one major street entrance to the project. Street entrances are defined as entrances to internal streets, which provide circulation among the different buildings of a project and are distinguished from the parking garage, loading, or visitor drop-off entrances. Land Bay F does not have such internal streets. It is currently accessed primarily via car from US Route 1 and South Glebe Road, which are where the freestanding signs are proposed. However, in the future, the project will also be accessed by public transportation along Potomac Avenue, with a transit stop located along South Glebe Road.

Staff nonetheless supports approval of the freestanding signs, as the *Potomac Overall Sign Guidelines* call for these specific type and style of freestanding signs to be approved in Potomac Yard. The existing residential and retail building on Land Bay F is the first building constructed in the new Potomac Yard development, which was formerly an undeveloped rail yard. The freestanding signs will assist pedestrians in locating retail in an area where retail has not previously existed, and where retail is currently located in an interior courtyard. In addition, the project is at a gateway to the County for those entering from the south via the trail along Route 1, and the sidewalk and future transitway along Potomac Avenue. This amendment will add signs at locations that have and will continue to experience considerable pedestrian activity. With time, and as the project is built out, the freestanding signs may no longer be needed, and, therefore, staff recommends that the continued use of freestanding signs be reviewed in ten (10) years (2018). The applicant has agreed to removal of those signs at that time if the County determines they are no longer needed.

Transportation: Staff notes that the existing temporary freestanding sign, placed at the corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue without proper approvals from the County, is in the right-of-way for the planned transitway. Therefore, the new, permanent sign cannot be placed in the same location. The applicant has agreed to place the new sign within the five-foot landscaping and utility zone near the corner. At this location the sign will not cause a visual obstruction to vehicles nor an intrusion into the clear sidewalk. As the County continues to plan and design the transitway it is expected that at the intersection of Potomac Avenue and South Glebe Road additional signal poles and equipment will be needed to support future transit operations. It is not possible to determine if the proposed sign would be in conflict with the transitway design and signalization at this time. The applicant has agreed to Condition #77C.3 to remove and relocate the sign at the sole cost and expense of the applicant, at the County's written request.

Revised Conditions Explanation: Condition # 46 of the Potomac Yard PDSP has been amended to clarify that the two freestanding signs approved with this site plan amendment are not consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, nor with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. As noted above in the "discussion," this is due to the fact that Land Bay F has no internal streets where the freestanding signs could be placed.

In addition, conditions for this site plan amendment request have been incorporated to the existing Condition # 77 for SP # 346. Condition # 77 was originally approved on September 16, 2006, and revised on December 9, 2006, and pertains solely to the comprehensive sign plan approved for Land Bay F. That condition states that "the developer agrees that the total area of permitted signage shall not exceed 839.9 square feet until December 9, 2016." That condition only applies to the signs approved on December 9, 2006. The total sign area permitted for Land Bay F is 1,195 square feet.

During the request for the current site plan amendment, staff recognized an inconsistency with a site plan amendment for the comprehensive sign plan in Land Bay F approved on September 13, 2008. A new Condition # 1 was created for that amendment, instead of amending the existing comprehensive sign plan condition for Land Bay F. Staff is taking this opportunity to correct that error, and has included that condition as Condition # 77B.

CONCLUSION: The proposed signs are within the maximum square footage allowed as part of the comprehensive sign plan for this site. The amendment will add freestanding signs at locations that will guide and orient pedestrians to a new retail area. The applicant has agreed to Condition #77.C.2 to remove the existing freestanding signs before any permits are approved. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the two (2) freestanding building identification signs, subject to all previously approved conditions, and the following amendments to Condition # 46 of the PDSP and Condition #77 specific to Land Bay F, and with a County Board review in ten (10) years:

Revised Potomac Yard PDSP Condition:

46. The developer agrees to develop and submit a comprehensive sign plan and that all exterior signs except the two freestanding signs approved by the County Board on October 18,

2008, shall be consistent with the guidelines contained in the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* and with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator shall determine whether the signs meet the standards of the guidelines and the Ordinance. No sign permits will be issued until a comprehensive sign plan is approved. The comprehensive sign plan shall be approved before the issuance of the first Certificate of Occupancy. All proposed rooftop signs, defined as all signs that are 35 feet or more above the ground, shall require a site plan approval or amendment.

Revised Land Bay F Sign Plan Condition:

77. a. The developer agrees to limit signage on the site to the comprehensive sign plan as approved by the County Board on September 16, 2006, December 9, 2006, and on October 18, 2008. Two of the tenant name wall signs located above the awnings and shown in the plans dated September 7, 2006, to be located along U.S. Route 1, shall not be erected, or shall be erected as tenant logo signs. The developer agrees that the total area of permitted signage shall not exceed ~~839.9~~ 994.8 square feet until December 9, 2016. The total area includes four (4) directory signs, not to exceed 25 square feet each, which shall be permitted along U.S. Route 1, consistent with the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, as revised on December 9, 2006, for a period up to ten (10) years after County Board approval. The developer agrees that before December 9, 2016, it will remove the four (4) directory signs and will send a letter to the Zoning Administrator stating that the signs have been removed. The developer also agrees that after December 9, 2016, the total area of permitted signs will not exceed ~~839.9~~ 994.8 square feet. A revised comprehensive sign plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the County Manager to ensure compliance with this approval within fifteen (15) days after the County Board approves this site plan amendment. Sign permits will be issued and reviewed for compliance with the approved comprehensive sign plan only after County Manager approval. The comprehensive sign plan includes:

Building Name/Project Identification Signs	113.8 s.f.
Directional Signs	26.55 s.f.
Retail Tenant Signs	200 s.f.
Directory Signs	193.3 s.f.(plus 100 s.f. of temporary signs)
Wayfinding Signs	206.25 s.f.
<u>Window Signs for Bank of America</u>	<u>135.2</u>
<u>Freestanding Project Identification Signs</u>	<u>55 s.f.</u>

- b. The following specifically applies to six (6) window signs for the Bank of America, approved the County Board on September 13, 2008. The developer agrees that all signs shall be of the same materials, dimensions, text, and location as presented to and approved by the County Board on September 13, 2008 and as shown on plans dated September 7, 2006 titled "Retail Signs." The signs shall be illuminated only as shown on the drawings with the hours of illumination limited to dusk, to 11 p.m. daily. Minor changes to the approved 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 ~~939.85~~ 994.8 square feet. All other changes to the approved signs will require site plan approval or amendment.

c. The following specifically applies to the two (2) freestanding identification signs approved by the County Board on October 18, 2008:

1. The developer agrees that all signs shall be of the same materials, design, dimensions, text, and location as presented to and approved by the County Board on October 18, 2008 and as shown on plans dated July 22, 2008 titled "Market Square at Potomac Yard Building or Project Identification Signage." The developer agrees that the signs will not be illuminated. Minor changes to the approved 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 for each sign does not exceed 27.5 square feet. All other changes to the approved signs that are not consistent with the guidelines or the Zoning Ordinance will require site plan approval or amendment.
2. The developer agrees to remove the existing temporary freestanding signs on the corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue, and along US Route 1 at the south end of the site prior to any permits being issued for the new freestanding signs.
3. The developer agrees that, upon a determination by the County Manager that the freestanding sign on the corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue will interfere in any way with the County's development of the transitway or Potomac Avenue, or other transportation improvements, and must be removed, the County may so notify the owner. The developer agrees to remove or relocate the freestanding project identification sign on the corner of South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue, as shown on plans dated July 22, 2008 titled, "Market Square at Potomac Yard Building or Project Identification Signage," with thirty (30) days after the County's written notification. Any relocation shall be to a location approved by the County Manager as not interfering with either traffic or other development plans in the area.
4. The developer agrees that the freestanding signs will be reviewed in ten (10) years to determine whether the signs should continue to be permitted after October 2018. The developer agrees that such review may include a determination that the signs shall be permanently removed at that time, and

that the developer shall remove the signs within twenty-one days after such a determination.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

October 21, 2000

South Tract: Approved a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Amendment to a striped pattern of 1/3 "Medium" Residential (37-72 units/acre) and 2/3 "Low" Office-Apartment-Hotel, with Note 18.

Approved Amendments to the Master Transportation Plan, including Part I to add public streets and designate several streets as private; Arlington Bicycle Plan to add on-street bike lanes; Arlington County Pedestrian Transportation Plan to add a pedestrian corridor; and establishment of a transitway.

Approved a rezoning from "M-1" to "C-O-1.5".

Approved a Phased Development Site Plan for a mixed use office, retail, hotel and residential development.

Adopted a resolution affirming Arlington County's commitments to developing transit facilities to provide high quality local transit service in the Jefferson Davis Corridor and facilitating traffic movements between U.S. 1 in Arlington and Potomac Avenue.

North Tract: Approved a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Amendment for the area north of 6th Street South, from "Service Industry" to "Public".

Approved a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Amendment for the area south of 6th Street from "Service Industry" to "Low" Office-Apartment-Hotel.

February 9, 2002

Deferred a site plan for a Land Bay A, for office and retail development totaling 654,000 square feet, including 6,000 square feet of initial retail, 11,784 square feet of potential retail, and 4,000 square feet of fitness center, to February 25, 2002 Planning Commission and March 23, 2002, County Board meeting.

March 23, 2002	Approved a final site plan for Land Bay A, for office and retail development totaling 654,000 square feet, including 6,000 square feet of initial retail, 11,784 square feet of potential retail, and 4,000 square feet of fitness center.
April 20, 2002	Approved a Preliminary Infrastructure Plan (PIP) for the Potomac Yard PDSP.
December 9, 2003	Approved a final site plan for Land Bay E, for a residential rental building containing 391,714 square feet of residential GFA, 386 units and 4,120 square feet of ground floor retail.
December 9, 2003	Approved a final site plan for Land Bay F, for two residential condominium buildings containing 482,000 square feet of residential GFA, 479 units and 80,000 square feet of ground floor retail, including 50,000 square feet of grocery store use.
July 10, 2004	Deferred a site plan amendment for 2805 Crystal Drive for Potomac Yard PDSP to amend condition #25 to clarify affordable dwelling unit requirement to September 18, 2004.
September 18, 2004	Deferred a site plan amendment for 2805 Crystal Drive for Potomac Yard PDSP to amend condition #25 to clarify affordable dwelling unit requirement to November 16, 2004.
November 16, 2004	Deferred a site plan amendment for 2805 Crystal Drive for Potomac Yard PDSP to amend condition #25 to clarify affordable dwelling unit requirement to January 2005.
February 1, 2005	Deferred a site plan amendment for 2805 Crystal Drive for Potomac Yard PDSP to amend condition #25 to clarify affordable dwelling unit requirement to May 7, 2005.
May 17, 2005	Deferred a site plan amendment for 2805 Crystal Drive for Potomac Yard PDSP to amend condition #25 to clarify affordable dwelling unit requirement to a County Board meeting of a later date to be determined by staff and the applicant.

July 9, 2005	Approved a minor site plan amendment for Land Bay A, to modify the first floor configuration and uses for the north and south office buildings, subject to amended Condition #57.
April 22, 2006	Approved a site plan amendment request to amend Condition #57(b) regarding a reduction in the size of the three (3) flat screen televisions (Land Bay A).
September 16, 2006	Approved a site plan amendment request for a comprehensive sign plan (Land Bay F). Staff was directed to revise the <i>Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines</i> to accommodate additional retail signs in new retail areas. Note: condition was revised at December 9, 2006 County Board meeting.
December 9, 2006	Approved a site plan amendment request for a comprehensive sign plan (Land Bay F) with a revised Condition # 77 and amended <i>Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines</i> .
January 27, 2007	Deferred a PDSP Amendment and final site plans for Land Bays D-East, D-West and E-West to the County Board meeting of March 17, 2007.
March 17, 2007	Deferred a PDSP Amendment and final site plans for Land Bays D-East, D-West and E-West to the County Board meeting of April 21, 2007.
April 21, 2007	<p>Approved a PDSP Amendment to convert office to residential in Land Bay D-West, to increase the maximum permitted residential units to 1,548 units, and to reallocate and convert densities within and between Land Bays B, C, D-East, D-West and E-West, subject to amended PDSP Condition #4.</p> <p>Approved a final site plan for Land Bay D-East, for a residential building containing 425,752 square feet of residential GFA, 360 units and 16,503 square feet of ground floor retail.</p> <p>Approved a final site plan for Land Bay D-West, for a residential building containing 398,435 square feet of residential GFA, 331 units and 15,868 square feet of ground floor retail.</p>

Approved a final site plan for Land Bay E-West, for an office development containing 374,379 square feet of office GFA and 71,418 square feet of ground floor retail.

Approved Conceptual Design Plan for Center Park.

November 13, 2007

Approved PDSP Amendment to convert 22,313 square feet of office use in Land Bay C to ground floor initial and potential retail use in Land Bay C. (RPC #34-027-071, -072)

Approved final site plan for Land Bay C for approximately 1,064,673 square feet office, approximately 23,675 square feet initial retail, 17,275 square feet potential retail, modification of use regulations for fewer loading bays than required, and to exclude approximately 5,598 square feet garage entry from GFA. (RPC #34-027-071, -072) (Potomac Yard Land Bay C)

September 13, 2008

Approved a comprehensive sign plan amendment to add six (6) window signs for the Bank of America, increasing the existing site sign area by a total of 135.2 square feet.

Approved Sign Condition for Potomac Yard PDSP:

46. The developer agrees to develop and submit a comprehensive sign plan and that all exterior signs shall be consistent with the guidelines contained in "Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings and with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administrator shall determine whether the signs meet the standards of the guidelines and the Ordinance. No sign permits will be issued until a comprehensive sign plan is approved. The comprehensive sign plan shall be approved before the issuance of the first Certificate of Occupancy. All proposed rooftop signs, defined as all signs that are 35 feet or more above the ground, shall require a site plan approval or amendment.

Approved Sign Condition for Land Bay F Comprehensive Sign Plan

77. The developer agrees to limit signage on the site to the comprehensive sign plan as approved by the County Board on September 16, 2006 and on December 9, 2006. Two of the tenant name wall signs located above the awnings and shown in the plans dated September 7, 2006, to be located along U.S. Route 1, shall not be erected, or shall be erected as tenant logo signs. The developer agrees that the total area of permitted signage shall not exceed 839.9 square feet until December 9, 2016. The total area includes four (4) directory signs, not to exceed 25 square feet each, which shall be permitted along U.S. Route 1, consistent with the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, as revised on December 9, 2006, for a period up to ten (10) years after County Board approval. The developer agrees that before December 9, 2016, it will remove the four (4) directory signs and will send a letter to the Zoning Administrator stating that the signs have been removed. The developer also agrees that after December 9, 2016, the total area of permitted signs will not exceed 739.9 square feet. A revised comprehensive sign plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the County Manager to ensure compliance with this approval within fifteen (15) days after the County Board approves this site plan amendment. Sign permits will be issued and reviewed for compliance with the approved comprehensive sign plan only after County Manager approval. The comprehensive sign plan includes:

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