DATE: July 1, 2005

SUBJECT: SP #241 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT for a roof top sign located at 1001 N. 19th St. (RPC #16-018-007)

Applicant:
FBR Group, Inc.

By:
Nan E. Terpak, attorney/agent
Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich and Terpak, PC
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1300
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C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the illuminated rooftop sign on the northern corner of the east façade of the building, subject to the conditions in the staff report.

ISSUES: None.

SUMMARY: This is a site plan amendment request to place a rooftop sign for a major tenant, Freidman, Billings, Ramsey Group, Inc. (FBR), on the east façade of an existing site plan building in the Rosslyn area. The sign would be visible from Arlington Ridge Road. There are no other rooftop signs on the building. The proposed 52 square foot sign is consistent with County policies and guidelines. Therefore, it is recommended that this rooftop sign be approved, subject to all previous site plan conditions and the new conditions in this staff report.

BACKGROUND: This site plan, the Potomac Towers, was originally approved by the County Board in 1986. The County Board approved a rezoning request for this site from “C-O” to “C-O-Rosslyn” in 1998. The site plan consists of a 19-story office building.

Site: The 25,657 square foot site is located on the north side of North 19th Street, in the block bounded by North Lynn Street, 19th Street North and I-66. The building has a triangle shape and is surrounded closely by high-rise office buildings to the south and the west.
**Zoning:** Existing zoning is “C-O-Rosslyn”, Commercial Office Building, Retail, Hotel and Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts.

**Land Use:** The site is designated “High” Office-Apartment-Hotel (up to 3.8 FAR office density allow., up to 4.8 FAR apartment density allow., up to 3.8 FAR hotel density allow.) on the General Land Use Plan, and is located in the “Rosslyn Coordinated Redevelopment District”.

**Neighborhood:** North Rosslyn Civic Association. The Rosslyn Renaissance was also notified of the rooftop sign application.

The applicant, FBR Group, uses the building as its headquarters. It proposes to install one (1) set of 4 foot high and 13 foot wide face-lit, internally illuminated, self-contained channel letters to read “FBR,” and a symbol of a pegasus to the left. The sign will be constructed of aluminum channel letters with special acrylic faces. The special acrylic faces permit the letters to be black during the day and white at night. The Pegasus box will be blue and white, both day and night. The sign would be located on the westernmost corner of the structure, facing I-66 and George Washington Memorial Parkway. The total signage of the proposed rooftop sign is 52 square feet.

**DISCUSSION:** The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings (Sign Guidelines)* set forth standards as to the number, location and size of rooftop signs. The guidelines state that the total permitted area of rooftop signs for any building is to be computed on the basis of one square foot of sign for each linear foot of building wall length measured along the street frontage, and that no more than two rooftop signs should be permitted per building. The rooftop sign requires County Board approval.

FBR, an international investment bank with its national headquarters in Rosslyn, occupies six full floors and scattered space throughout the building of Potomac Tower at 1001 North 19th Street, thereby occupying 50% of the building. The subject building has approximately 305 linear feet of frontage on public streets; therefore, the *Sign Guidelines* would permit a rooftop sign of up to 305 square feet. The request of 52 square feet is well within the parameters of the Sign Guidelines. Currently the proposed sign is not directly facing any residential area. The sign would be black during the day and white at night against the light gray façade. The location, size and lighting of the sign would not significantly impact residential buildings in the Rosslyn area. There are no other rooftop signs on the building. The applicant has agreed to conditions limiting the hours of the illumination of the sign, in order to further mitigate any impact.

**Civic Associations:** Staff notified the North Rosslyn Civic Association of the site plan amendment. At the time of the report, staff has not heard from the association.

**Public/Private Partnership:** The applicant presented the rooftop sign to the Rosslyn Renaissance Urban Design Committee at its meeting on June 15, 2005. The Committee finds the proposed location of the sign acceptable relative to other alternatives and appreciates the restraint by the applicant relative to overall size of the sign. The sign appears to fit well in the location it is
proposed. The Committee expressed the concern that the sign faces directly to the Potomac River Valley (see attached letter). The applicant stated that due to the triangular shape of the building and non-existence of a north façade, the only other option is to make the sign face the surrounding high-rise buildings, which does not give the proposed sign desirable visibility. The Committee recommends that the County require a night-time post-installation review of the sign. FBR has no objection to a post-installation review. However, staff considers that requiring such a review session by the County would be impractical and any potential changes resulting from this review would be difficult for the County to enforce. Furthermore, staff considers that the design of the proposed sign minimizes the brightness and would not have an adverse impact on the community.

CONCLUSION: Staff concludes that the proposed “FBR” rooftop sign is consistent with the Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings, and it will not adversely impact residential neighborhoods. The proposed size is appropriate and the type of illumination of the sign that the applicant proposes will reduce the brightness of the sign. Therefore, staff recommends the approval of a site plan amendment to permit one (1) illuminated rooftop sign located on the northern corner of the east façade of the building, subject to the following new conditions:

1. The applicant agrees to limit the rooftop signage to one tenant identification sign on the northern corner of the east façade at the location and in the design shown on the drawings submitted to the County from Signs Unlimited Inc. dated April 21 and May 12, 2005 and presented to the County Board on July 9, 2005. The total area for the rooftop sign shall be limited to no more than 52 square feet. The Zoning Administrator may approve a change to the wording of this rooftop sign provided that the sign area is not greater than 52 square feet and the location, lighting and structure of the sign remain the same.

2. The sign shall be illuminated only as shown on the drawings dated May 12, 2005, and the illumination shall be limited to the hours from 5:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m., seven (7) days a week.
PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:


December 12, 1998  Approved the advertisement of a rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008).

February 6, 1999  Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the July 10, 1999 County Board meeting.

July 10, 1999  Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the October 2, 1999 County Board meeting.

October 2, 1999  Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the December 11, 1999 County Board meeting.

December 11, 1999  Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the February 12, 2000 County Board meeting.

February 12, 2000  Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the March 11, 2000 County Board meeting.
March 11, 2000          Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the May 20, 2000 County Board meeting.

May 20, 2000            Deferred rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels (RPC #s 16018006 and 16018008) to the July 22, 2000 County Board meeting. Does not include 10,589 s.f. Crandall Mackey Park site.

July 22, 2000           Approved rezoning request (Z-2453-98-1) from “C-O” to “C-O Rosslyn” for 1001, 1111, and 1117 19th Street North, 1925 N. Lynn Street, and vacant parcels, excluding the 10,589 s.f. Crandall Mackey Park site.