



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of September 16, 2006**

**DATE:** September 13, 2006

**SUBJECT:** SP #346 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT for comprehensive sign plan; 3600, 3650 South Glebe Road (Land Bay F) (RPC #34-027-030)

**Applicant:**

Comstock Potomac Yard, LC  
11465 Sunset Hills Road  
Reston, VA 20190

**By:**

Covis J. Williams

**C.M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Deny the site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan.

**ISSUES:** The location of the projecting directory signs do not comply with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* and the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*.

**SUMMARY:** Although much of the proposed comprehensive sign plan meets the requirements of the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, several signs are not compliant. The non-compliant signs are the projecting signs proposed to be located along U.S. Route 1. In meetings with the applicant to discuss these signs, the developer has been unwilling to eliminate the projecting signs to bring the sign plan into compliance. Therefore, staff recommends denial of the site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan.

**BACKGROUND:** The subject site is Land Bay F of the Potomac Yards project and is currently being constructed with two, 11-story residential towers with ground floor retail and underground parking. The 80,000 square feet of retail space, including a 50,000 square foot grocery store and other small retail spaces, lines the frontages along U.S. Route 1, South Glebe Road, and the center plaza between the two towers.

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

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

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

Staff: Lorrie Pearson, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-4449

Districts.

Land Use: The site is designated on the General Land Use Plan as 1/3 "Medium" Residential (37-72 units/acre) and 2/3 "Low" Office-Apartment-Hotel (up to 1.5 FAR for Office, up to 72 unites/acre for Apartments, and up to 110 units/acre for Hotel). The site is located in an area that references Note 18 on the GLUP.

Neighborhood: The site is not within any civic association. Aurora Highlands Civic Association is in close proximity.

**DISCUSSION:** The proposed comprehensive sign plan includes signs for the residential and retail portions of the development. This comprehensive sign plan is the second submitted for any land bay within Potomac Yard. The first, for Land Bay A (EPA), contained only 8,400 square feet of retail and no frontage along U.S. Route 1. This sign plan contains six different types of signs. Each proposed sign type is outlined below, along with a discussion of compliance with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*.

Building Name and Project Identification Signs (A, A1): Four signs totaling 113.8 square feet would identify the two residential buildings and the project as a whole. Two project identification signs would be back-lit and located on one corner of each building: one at South Glebe Road and U.S. Route 1, and one at South Glebe Road and Potomac Avenue. Two building name signs would be unlit and located on the brick planters flanking the entrance to the plaza. These types of proposed signs meet the requirements of both sets of guidelines.

Directional Signs (B1, B2): An unlit directional wall sign is proposed along South Glebe Road to identify parking for the residential buildings. Two signs would identify the parking entrance for the retail spaces. The total area of these proposed signs is 26.55 square feet. These proposed signs would comply with the guidelines.

Retail Tenant Signs (C1, C3, C4): Retail signs are proposed along U.S. Route 1, South Glebe Road, and the plaza. Specific signs for the individual retail tenants appear in the plan as wall signs, often above a proposed awning, or projecting signs.

The wall signs would include a logo "M" for Market Square and the retail tenant name or logo. According to the guidelines, one sign per tenant frontage may be approved for each retail tenant. In order to comply with this requirement, the applicant has agreed to revise two of the tenant wall signs along U.S. Route 1 to contain only tenant logos rather than the tenant's name. The areas of these logo signs would still be included in the calculations. The total area of all 19 retail tenant wall signs would be 176 square feet and would comply with the guidelines.

Window signs, which are not required to be calculated in the total sign area, are proposed for the retail spaces. Under the guidelines, each window sign cannot exceed 20% of the window area. Compliance with the guidelines would be determined for each individual tenant during the sign permit application process.

The proposed single-tenant projecting signs would total 24 square feet for two signs. These signs are proposed to be located at the far southern end of the plaza and would comply with the guidelines.

Directory Signs (C, C2): One directory wall sign listing the largest retail tenant and “Shops Cafés” and one directory wall sign identifying the Land Bay F retail area (e.g. Market Square) would be located at the corner of the building at the intersection of South Glebe Road and U.S. Route 1. These proposed signs would total 97.3 square feet and would comply with the guidelines.

Projecting signs, which identify the retail tenants within the plaza and may be classified as directory signs, are currently proposed along U.S. Route 1 and South Glebe Road. The proposed projecting signs along U.S. Route 1 meet neither the requirements nor the intent of the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* or the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*. Directory signs are designed to assist visitors in locating the retail spaces not visible from a public right-of-way. Directory signs for recent phased development site plans, such as the Market Common in Clarendon and the Village at Shirlington, have been approved to direct the pedestrian visitor in particular. According to the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*, these signs are to be located near a major building entrance, which would be where a pedestrian could access the retail spaces. The proposed signs along U.S. Route 1 would list the tenants of the retail spaces, but would not direct a pedestrian to the retail spaces. As there are no doors to that retail area near the proposed signs along U.S. Route 1, the visitor would not know how to access the retail along U.S. Route 1. The proposed signs along South Glebe Road would better orient a visitor, as both the parking garage entrance and the entrance to the interior plaza itself are accessed from South Glebe Road. The size and distance above the sidewalk of the proposed signs along Route 1 also does not lend itself to directing a pedestrian. At 24 square feet in area, the signs would be placed approximately 11.5 feet above grade, extending to approximately 19.5 feet above grade, and projecting out a total of 3.75 feet. These proposed signs along U.S. Route 1 would not be geared toward the pedestrian as much as toward the vehicle.

As proposed, the signs along U.S. Route 1 would not meet the requirements outlined in the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines* and the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. The proposed location of the signs along Route 1 would not be near a major building entrance, providing no means to access the interior plaza as required by both sets of guidelines. In addition, according to the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, the total number of signs permitted per tenant within an interior plaza is two signs: one at the tenant’s location, and one other sign. Initially, the developer had proposed three signs per interior plaza tenant: one at the tenant’s location and two projecting directory signs. The developer has since agreed to limit the number of interior tenant signs to two, as required by the guidelines. Eliminating the projecting signs along U.S. Route 1 would reduce the number of this type of sign to four for a total of 96 square feet and would be consistent with the both sets of guidelines.

The proposed projecting signs along South Glebe Road and U.S. Route 1 would also not meet the guidelines if they were classified as retail tenant signs, and not as directory signs. According

to the guidelines, retail tenant signs cannot be placed higher than the fascia above the first floor level of the building exterior. As proposed, these signs would exceed that mounting height and therefore not meet that requirement. Since these proposed signs identify the retail tenants within an interior plaza, they may be classified as directory signs, but as discussed above, do not meet the guidelines.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Wayfinding Signs (D, D1): The project proposal includes five pedestrian wayfinding signs, generally located at the corners of the development as well as the entrances to the plaza. These signs would identify the area as Potomac Yard, generally list the retail area, and provide a map. The total area of these signs would be 96.25 square feet. These proposed signs would comply with the guidelines.

Four vehicular wayfinding signs are proposed at the corners of the development and at the entrance to the plaza. The signs would identify Potomac Yard, parking, and the retail area. The total area of these signs would be 110 square feet and would comply with the guidelines.

Address Signs (E): Eight address signs are proposed at the building corners along South Glebe Road. They are not required to be calculated as part of the total sign area. Their locations would comply with the guidelines.

### **Compliance Summary**

The total area of signs, as proposed, is 835.9 square feet. The total frontage is approximately 1,195 feet, resulting in an allowable area for signs of 1,195 square feet. Therefore, the area of proposed signs complies with what would be permitted by the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Staff has requested the applicant, but the applicant has not agreed, to revise the comprehensive sign plan to bring it into compliance with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines* by removing the projecting directory signs along U.S. Route 1.

Removal of the projecting directory signs along U.S. Route 1 would result in a total sign area of approximately 739.9 square feet, within the limits permitted by the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Removal of the directory signs along U.S. Route 1 would eliminate the signs that are prohibited by the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines* and the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*.

**CONCLUSION:** The proposed comprehensive sign plan does not meet the standards presented by the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*, and the *Potomac Yard Overall Sign Guidelines*. As this is the first land bay with a significant amount of retail requesting approval of a comprehensive sign plan, its plan sets a precedent for the future Potomac Yard signs. Departures from the guidelines are likely to be requested in the future if approved as part of this application. Therefore staff recommends denial of the site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan. However, should the applicant agree to remove the projecting signs along U.S. Route 1, staff could recommend approval of the sign plan. Since the applicant has not agreed to that revision, staff recommends denial of the site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan.

Staff has included a new condition that the County Board could approve if the applicant agrees to staff's recommended revision and the County Board desires to approve the site plan amendment for a comprehensive sign plan.

New Condition:

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. The developer agrees that the projecting signs shown along U.S. Route 1 in the proposed comprehensive sign plan prepared by Mitchell & Company Graphic Design and dated September 7, 2006, have not been approved and will not be built. The developer also agrees that tenants with storefronts within the plaza located between the two buildings are permitted up to two signs, that only one tenant name sign per street on which the store fronts is permitted, and that in order to comply, two of the tenant name wall signs 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 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 739.9 square feet of sign area in:

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| 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.  |
| Wayfinding Signs                           | 206.25 s.f. |

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 6<sup>th</sup> Street South, from "Service Industry" to "Public".

Approved a General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Amendment for the area south of 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

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| 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).

## Approved Sign Condition

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.