



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of September 16, 2006

DATE: August 23, 2006

SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance Section 34. Nameplates, Signs, and Other Displays or Devices to Direct, Identify and Inform

- A. Subsection 34 F. Signs Permitted in All Districts, Unless Otherwise Specified, With Permits , to permit construction and rental/leasing signs for buildings in “C”, “M” and “RA” districts, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signs; and
- B. Subsection 34 F. Signs Permitted in All Districts, Unless Otherwise Specified, With Permits, to allow the Zoning Ordinance Administrator to approve additional signs for sites with multiple buildings, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signs.

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Zoning Ordinance Amendments to Section 34.F. to allow construction and rental/leasing signs for buildings in “C”, “M” and “RA” districts and to allow the Zoning Administrator to approve additional signs for sites with multiple buildings.

ISSUES: None.

SUMMARY: The intent of the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment is to allow one construction and one rental/leasing sign per building on a site with approved sign permits. The proposed amendments would allow additional flexibility related to construction signs and rental/leasing signs in “C”, “M”, “RA” (site plan districts) districts, unless otherwise specified, with permits. The amendment would not, however, allow any additional square footage to the total sign area currently allowed.

The current language in the Zoning Ordinance is ambiguous and has been interpreted by the Zoning Administrator to allow either a construction sign or a rental/leasing sign. The allowed sign is permitted to be 100 square feet in area and to have a maximum height of 18 feet for a freestanding sign and 35 feet for other types of signs. The proposed amendment would keep in place the limit on total sign area and height. The proposed amendment would, however, allow

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this total permissible sign area to be apportioned among a construction sign and a rental/leasing sign. The maximum height limit of 18 feet for a freestanding sign and 35 feet for other signs would continue to apply to all allowed signs individually. Permits are required for all signs.

Additionally, the proposed amendment would allow the Zoning Administrator the flexibility to approve additional construction and leasing signs for projects or developments that contain multiple buildings, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signs and sign height.

BACKGROUND: The language under Section 34. F. 5. c. permits:

One (1) construction sign for buildings in "C", "M" and "RA" Districts other than one- and two-family dwellings, not exceeding one hundred (100) square feet, listing the development team may be placed on a site. The sign may be freestanding. It shall be temporary and such sign shall be removed at the time of the issuance of the shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy. The height of the sign shall not be greater than eighteen (18) feet for a freestanding sign and thirty-five (35) feet for other signs. All other signs are prohibited.

One (1) "for rent" or "for lease" sign per project use for buildings other than one- and two-family dwellings, not exceeding one hundred (100) square feet, may be placed on a site. The sign may be freestanding. It may be permitted when a full building permit has been issued, and such sign shall be removed one (1) year following the issuance of a shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy. The height of the sign shall not be greater than eighteen (18) feet. All other signs are prohibited.

This language has been interpreted to signify that only one sign is allowed during development: one for construction by sign permit, or one for rental/leasing notification, by sign permit after a full building permit has been issued. Additionally, this section has been interpreted that a site with multiple individual buildings -- that has been approved as one project -- has been only allowed one sign for the entire site. Therefore, if a construction sign has been approved for a site, a leasing sign has not been allowed.

In some cases, the Village of Shirlington for example, multiple signs provide information on the approved individual project and for multiple construction projects and the project as a whole. Each final approved site plan has been entitled to 100 square feet of construction/leasing sign area (see Attachment A for illustrations of existing construction and leasing signs). Under the site plan option, an applicant may apply for a larger construction or leasing sign than allowed by-right. A larger sign may be allowed as a condition of the site plan approval (Section 36.H.Administration and Procedures of the Arlington Zoning Ordinance.) The option for modifications to existing sign regulations under the site plan option is also referenced in Section 34. H. Signs for Site Plan Buildings. This Section also gives the County Board discretion in modifying sign regulations by site plan approval or site plan amendment.

The intent of the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment is to allow one construction and one rental/leasing sign per building on a site with approved sign permits. These two signs

(cumulatively) per building would still be limited to the overall signage area prescribed in the existing ordinance of 100 square feet. Additionally, the maximum height would remain at eighteen (18) feet from grade for a freestanding sign and thirty-five (35) feet for other signs. All other signs would remain prohibited.

The maximum duration of time permitted for “for rent” or “for lease” sign under the current Zoning Ordinance is one year following the issuance of a shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy; this maximum time permitted would not be changed.

DISCUSSION: As Arlington County continues to pursue policies aimed at promoting an active and vibrant pedestrian realm in many areas of the County, there may continue to be an increasing number of site plan projects that contain a mixture of uses including retail. These retail uses are vital to the activation of the pedestrian environment and to maintaining an attractive street edge. To further these goals, it is important that leasing activities related to approved projects be allowed to start at a relatively early point in development, generally overlapping with construction of the project. The presence of rental/leasing signs early in the construction process will help ensure that retail areas are leased upon completion of the building. This helps avoid the presence of empty retail areas during the period following completion of construction.

In addition, it is important that information related to residential space is available to the neighborhood and potential residents on development under construction. Furthermore, construction signs should be allowed to overlap with rental/leasing signs so as to maintain an adequate level of information to enable the public to contact the developer and site contractors or obtain information regarding the project. By maintaining the current limit on the total sign area, this information can be provided without encouraging the over-proliferation of signs on any site.

Finally, complicated development sites with multiple buildings may have different contractors and rental/leasing managers. For all these reasons and in order to ensure that adequate information is available regarding all buildings, it is recommended that the ordinance be amended to allow two signs for each building, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signage and sign height.

The Zoning Ordinance Amendment was discussed at the Zoning Committee on July 18, 2000 and the Planning Commission on September 5, 2006. The Planning Commission voted to recommend County Board approval of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment.

CONCLUSION: Staff recommends that the County Board adopt amendments to Sections 34, Subsection F.5.c of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to permit one construction and one rental/leasing signs per building in “C”, “M” and “RA” Districts, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signage and sign height and to allow the Zoning Ordinance Administrator to approve additional signs for sites with multiple buildings, subject to limitations on the overall area of such signage and sign height, to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice.

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO AMEND, REENACT AND RECODIFY SECTION 34. NAMEPLATES, SIGNS, AND OTHER DISPLAYS OR DEVICES TO DIRECT, IDENTIFY AND INFORM, SUBSECTION 34 F. SIGNS PERMITTED IN ALL DISTRICTS, UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED, AT THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2006 PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2006 COUNTY BOARD MEETINGS TO PERMIT CONSTRUCTION AND RENTAL/LEASING SIGNS FOR BUILDINGS IN “C”, “M” AND “RA” DISTRICTS, SUBJECT TO LIMITATIONS ON THE OVERALL AREA AND THE HEIGHT OF SUCH SIGNAGE AND TO ALLOW THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL SIGNS FOR SITES WITH MULTIPLE BUILDINGS, SUBJECT TO LIMITATIONS ON THE OVERALL AREA AND THE HEIGHT OF SUCH SIGNAGE.

The County Board of Arlington County hereby resolves to adopt the following amendment to Section 34. Nameplates, Signs, and Other Displays or Devices to Direct, Identify and Inform, Subsection 34 F. Signs Permitted in All Districts, Unless Otherwise Specified, with Permits, of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance at the September 16, 2006 County Board meetings, to amend, reenact and recodify the proposed Zoning provisions to permit construction and rental/leasing signs for buildings in “C”, “M” and “RA” districts, subject to limitations on the overall area and height of such signage and to allow the Zoning Ordinance Administrator to approve additional signs for sites with multiple buildings, subject to limitations on the overall area and height of such signage in order to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; to encourage orderly and efficient land use development; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice:

* * *

SECTION 34. NAMEPLATES, SIGNS, AND OTHER DISPLAYS OR DEVICES TO DIRECT, IDENTIFY, AND INFORM

F. Signs Permitted in All Districts, Unless Otherwise Specified, With Permits.

5. The following regulations shall apply to signs with commercial messages allowed on a temporary basis:

* * *

- c. ~~One (1) construction sign for buildings in "C," "M," and "RA" Districts other than one- and two-family dwellings listing the development team may be placed on a site. The sign may be freestanding. It shall be temporary and such sign shall be removed at the time of the issuance of the shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy. The height of the sign shall not be greater than eighteen (18) feet for a freestanding sign and thirty five (35)~~

feet for other signs. All other signs are prohibited.

~~One (1) "for rent" or "for lease" sign per building other than one- and two-family dwellings may be placed on a site. The sign may be freestanding. It may be permitted when a full building permit has been issued, and such sign shall be removed one (1) year following the issuance of a shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy. The height of the sign shall not be greater than eighteen (18) feet. All other signs are prohibited.~~

Up to one (1) construction and one (1) "for rent" or "for lease" signs per main building may be placed in "C," "M" and "RA" Districts, other than on lots containing one or two family dwellings. The total sign area of the two (2) signs shall not exceed one hundred (100) square feet per main building. The sign(s) may be freestanding, and shall be temporary. Construction signs shall be removed at the time of issuance of the shell and core and first partial certificate of occupancy. Any "for rent" or "for lease" sign shall be removed one (1) year following the issuance of a shell and core permit. The height of a freestanding sign shall not be greater than eighteen (18) feet (from grade); thirty-five (35) feet (from grade) shall be the height limit for other signs. All other signs are prohibited.

