

**REVISED**  
September 10, 2003

TO: The County Board of Arlington, Virginia

FROM: Ron Carlee, County Manager

APPLICANT: Rosslyn Building East Limited Partnership, Owner

BY: Catharine Puskar, Attorney/Agent  
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, 13th Floor  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

SUBJECT: SP #66 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT AND REVIEW (CARRY-OVER) to convert retail space and review of conversion of retail space to radio station offices and studio; on premises known as 1901 North Moore Street. (RPC #16-019-005)

**RECOMMENDATION:** **Approve conversion of retail space to *office and/or school* use located in 1901 North Moore Street, including the existing retail space occupied by the public service broadcast use (WAVA radio station offices and studio), subject to all previous conditions but with deletion of Condition #1 associated with the WAVA site plan amendment.**

**ISSUE:** None.

**SUMMARY:** This site plan amendment for the Rosslyn East Building, located at 1901 North Moore Street, would permit the conversion of all retail spaces associated with the building, including the continuing use of retail space by WAVA, to be converted to office and/or school uses (a total of 45,967 square feet).

Staff supports this request. The subject space does not lend itself well to viable retail use and is located where there is no other retail use, on the above-grade first and second levels of the building, with restricted access and virtually no visibility from the street. These features make the space less than desirable space for retail use. Therefore, staff recommends that the County Board approve

STAFF: Marcia A. Smith, DCPHD, Planning Division  
Reviewed by the County Attorney's Office: \_\_\_\_\_

County Board Meeting - September 13, 2003  
PLA-3356

this site plan amendment.

**BACKGROUND:** This site plan for the Rosslyn East Building was approved in 1968. At the time of the approval, the building contained approximately 50,354 square feet of designated retail space, which was not counted toward density. The "C-O" District at that time did not count the retail Gross Floor Area (G.F.A.) toward density and had a maximum permitted density of 3.25 Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.). In 1970, the "C-O" District was amended to include the retail G.F.A. in the density calculations and increase the maximum permitted density to 3.8 F.A.R. Since the 1968 approval, the site plan has been amended several times to convert designated retail space to office use.

#### Previous Retail Space Conversions

<u>Year</u>	<u>Space</u>	<u>Use</u>
1969	9,713 s.f.	Office
1970	6,178 s.f.	Computer use
1972	1,470 s.f.	Office
1975	4,918 s.f.	Office
1991	6,042 s.f.	School
1994	7,200 s.f.	Public Service
1994	2,652 s.f.	School
2003	1,588 s.f.	School
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,761 s.f. of permanent and temporary conversions</b>	

#### The following provides additional information about the site and location:

- Site: The Rosslyn Building East is one of a three building complex located on the south side of Lee Highway between North Moore and North Lynn Streets. The original site plan was approved for 99,433 square feet of office G.F.A. (3.31 FAR), 51,102 square feet of retail G.F.A. and 280 parking spaces.
- Zoning: "C-O" Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Multiple-Family Dwelling Districts.
- Land Use: "High" Office-Apartment-Hotel (Office Density - 3.8 F.A.R. allow., Apartment Density - up to 4.8 F.A.R. allow., Hotel Density - up to 3.8 F.A.R. allow.)

- Civic Associations: North Rosslyn Civic Association and the Radnor/Fort Myer Heights Civic Association.
- Partnership: Rosslyn Renaissance

In August 1994, the applicant was granted a site plan amendment to convert 7,200 square feet of retail space (previously the China Garden restaurant) to office use on a temporary basis by WAVA (subject of the site plan amendment review). WAVA proposed to relocate its broadcast operation to the subject space. Since 1974 WAVA had operated its headquarters (radio station offices and studios) in space located at 5232 Lee Highway, a two-story building situated adjacent to North George Mason Drive. WAVA outgrew its existing facility and desired to relocate its operation to a larger space in Arlington. The County Board approved a site plan amendment request that permitted temporary conversion of the subject retail space to coincide with WAVA's lease agreement, which became effective in January 1995 for ten and one-half (10 1/2) years, with a five (5) year option. The space was to be converted back to retail use at such time as the space was no longer leased by WAVA. The site plan amendment included a condition that required that "the temporary conversion of the space shall be reviewed by the County Board every five (5) years or upon expiration of the lease or any lease extension, whichever is sooner." During the review period staff noted that WAVA was continuing to function in the subject space without complaints, however, the applicant was in the process of locating a subsidiary of WAVA into adjacent vacant retail space. Staff informed the applicant that a site plan amendment would be required to expand non-retail uses into the vacant space.

The space occupied by WAVA is located on level two of the building, above the upper lobby, and is primarily situated along the north end of the building adjacent to Lee Highway. Since the building was constructed on a slope, the subject space is located two (2) stories above street grade along North Moore Street and two and one-half (2 1/2) stories from street grade along North Lynn Street. The balance of the floor on which the space is located consists of office suites. There is no other retail located in this building.

**DISCUSSION:** Due to the location of the space above the street and away from other retailers and the closure of the skywalk access toward the approved Waterview project, attempts by the applicant to lease the space to other retailers or restaurants has proven unsuccessful. For these reasons the applicant has requested to permanently convert all retail spaces, all of which are located above grade on the first and second

levels of the building, from retail to office and or school uses. Since 1969, a total of 32,561 square feet of the approved retail space has been permanently converted to office and/or school use. The proposed conversion of 6,206 square feet with the permanent conversion of the 7,200 square feet of space currently occupied by WAVA under a temporary conversion would result in a total of 45,967 square feet converted retail space in this building.

**Staff Analysis of Site Plan Amendment Request:** When the three-building complex was developed in the 1960's, a major commercial mall, Rosslyn Alley, was established between the buildings at the pedestrian bridge level. It was envisioned that major pedestrian movement between the buildings would occur at that level. As Rosslyn redeveloped, especially with the development of Rosslyn Metro Center and other buildings located close to the Metro, retail space located at the street level became a more viable alternative for business owners. Pedestrian movement shifted from the bridges to the street level, which has had a significant adverse impact on the retail businesses located on the upper levels of the buildings, such as Rosslyn Alley. The Rosslyn Sector Plan Addendum ("Addendum"), which was approved by the County Board in 1991, contains recommendations to guide the future redevelopment of the area. The Addendum recommends that retail uses in Rosslyn be concentrated in and around the central core area of Rosslyn and along Wilson Boulevard. Areas on the periphery of Rosslyn are typically not viewed as desirable retail locations, at least at the present time. The Rosslyn East Building, at 1901 North Moore Street, is in a peripheral location and the subject space, along the building's northernmost end, is even further away from Rosslyn's central core than is much of the building. Also, the Addendum recommends that retail, wherever possible, have good access and visibility from street grade.

The Retail Action Plan proposes that Rosslyn be redeveloped as a leading technological and financial center. It recognizes Rosslyn's strong influence as a visitor destination because of its access and close proximity to high profile tourist attractions in the area and in the District of Columbia. It further acknowledges that Rosslyn is evolving as a vibrant downtown in which to live, work and be entertained. It is anticipated that as Rosslyn redevelops with an appropriately designed Central Place it should be transformed into lively pedestrian-friendly spaces. Redevelopment of many of Rosslyn's older buildings will provide the opportunities to transform the area into a high profile shopping and entertainment center. It is anticipated that once a Central Place is designed resulting in upgrades to the pedestrian environment offering outstanding views from buildings, plazas and other vantage points, the subject area will benefit and should become a part of the improvements to the area. The Plan identifies North

Moore Street as "Neighborhood Streets where consumer services are encouraged but not required."

It would be appropriate to permit the subject building which currently has no street level retail space to convert the above grade first and second level retail spaces in the building to office use until such time that redevelopment occurs and there can be an appropriate assessment of the impact of the redevelopment on the peripheral areas of Rosslyn. Currently the spaces proposed for conversion from retail to office use require access by elevator and stairs. In addition, the space is located along North Moore Street and Lee Highway in an area of Rosslyn with have limited pedestrian amenities. Therefore, foot-traffic in the area is minimal and destination oriented. To date staff has not received a response from the civic associations or the Rosslyn Renaissance regarding the site plan amendment request or the review of the site plan amendment for WAVA.

**Site Plan Amendment Review of WAVA:** Staff considers the broadcast operation, a public service, to be an appropriate use of the subject space. The use includes sales and studio operations, which generally have operational and staff needs that differ from typical office uses. The public service broadcast use is a suitable alternative to the approved retail use until the redevelopment of the area occurs and there can be an appropriate assessment of its impact on this area. The subject space is on level two (2) of the building and is accessed from the building elevator and from the skywalk system. There continues to be very little pedestrian activity at this location and virtually no visibility from street grade.

**CONCLUSION:** Staff recommends that the site plan amendment request to permanently convert the first and second level retail spaces to office use including the WAVA use be approved. The subject spaces do not lend themselves well to viable retail use and there are no existing retail uses in the building. Also, the Rosslyn Sector Plan Addendum does not encourage retail at this location. The Retail Action Plan identifies North Moore Street as a Neighborhood street and encourages but does not require consumer services. Staff believes that the applicant's proposal to use the spaces for office uses, which are destination specific, provides an appropriate alternative use of the space. Approximately, 33,000 square feet of the approved 45,961 square feet of retail space has previously been converted to office and/or school use. Therefore, it is recommended that the site plan amendment request to convert retail spaces located on the above grade first and second levels of the building located at 1901 North Moore Street be converted to office use and that WAVA be permitted to continue to occupy the retail space subject to all previous conditions, but with the deletion of Condition #1

associated with the WAVA use.

- ~~1. The developer agrees to convert the subject 7,200 square feet of space back to retail use at such time as the space is no longer leased by WAVA. The temporary conversion of this space shall be reviewed by the County Board every five (5) years or upon expiration of the present lease or any lease extension, whichever is sooner.~~

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

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|--------------------|---|
| June 1, 1968       | Approved a site plan for Rosslyn Building East for 99,433 square feet of office G.F.A. (3.31 FAR), 51,102 square feet of retail G.F.A., and 280 parking spaces. |
| July 13, 1968      | Approved a site plan amendment to increase the parking and reduce the retail G.F.A. to 50,354 square feet.  |
| April 12, 1969     | Approved a site plan amendment for 3 signs for "RCA".   |
| May 28, 1969       | Approved a site plan amendment to convert 4,496 square feet of covered penthouse space to executive offices of RCA.   |
| September 24, 1969 | Approved a site plan amendment to convert 9,713 square feet of retail G.F.A. to office G.F.A.   |
| December 17, 1969  | Approved a site plan amendment for a 2' x 19 1/2' size for El Charro Restaurant.  |
| December 5, 1970   | Approved a site plan amendment for a 2' x 20' size for Bank of Arlington.   |
| December 16, 1970  | Approved a site plan amendment to convert 6,178 square feet of retail G.F.A. to office G.F.A.   |
| May 1, 1971        | Approved a site plan amendment for the Rosslyn East and North Buildings to permit canopy and signing for the Rosslyn Ally Commercial Mall.                      |
| October 9, 1971    | Approved a site plan amendment for a sign plan for the commercial mall.   |
| February 17, 1972  | Approved a site plan amendment to convert 1,470 square feet of retail G.F.A. to office G.F.A., and 342 square feet of parking to non-office G.F.A.              |

June 6, 1973	Approved a site plan amendment for a public dance hall in the Le Chateau Restaurant and to increase the seating capacity to 200.
June 17, 1975	Approved a site plan amendment to convert 4,900 square feet of retail G.F.A. to office G.F.A.
February 13, 1979	Approved a site plan amendment to convert 3,000 square feet of penthouse area to office G.F.A.
July 9, 1994	Deferred a site plan amendment to convert 7,200 square feet of retail space to office use to the August 6, 1994 County Board meeting.
August 6, 1994	Approved site plan amendment to convert 7,200 square feet of retail space to office use subject to a condition and with a review by the County Board in five (5) years, August 1999.
June 14, 2003	Deferred site plan amendment review of conversion of retail space to radio station offices and studio to the July 19, 2003 County Board meeting.
July 19, 2003	Deferred site plan amendment request for conversion of retail space and review of conversion of retail space to radio station offices and studio to the September 14, 2003 County Board meeting.