

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	February 6, 2023
Action Required:	Resolution approval
Presenter:	Read Brodhead, Zoning Administrator
Staff Contacts:	Read Brodhead, Zoning Administrator
Title:	Considering a Comprehensive Sign Plan 701 East Water Street (1 reading)

Background

The Property, located 701 E Water Street, contains several offices including its primary tenants Hantzmon Wiebel, Merkle and UVIMCO. The Property also contains a large parking garage with entrances on E Market Street and 10th Street NE. The property owner would like to erect two directory signs at each entrance to provide more visibility for all the businesses in the 85,000 square foot office building. The property is located within the Downtown (D) mixed use zoning district. Section 34-1032 of sign ordinance limits the total aggregate area of all signage to just 100 square feet for the parcel. Despite the fact that the property is permitted to have up to 6 signs per section 34-1031 of the Zoning Ordinance, clearly the aggregate size limitation stifles the ability for the Applicant to increase the amount of signage by adhering to the regulations set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

Per Sec 34-1045, applicants for a development subject to Site Plan review or within an Entrance Corridor Overlay may request approval of a Comprehensive Signage Plan (CSP). City Council may approve a CSP upon a determination that there is good cause for deviating from the sign ordinance and the CSP will serve the public purposes and objectives at least as well, or better, than signage allowed by right.

Discussion

The Applicant has submitted a Comprehensive Signage Plan (CSP) in an effort to increase the total aggregate amount of signage permitted and to allow more than one freestanding sign on the property.

The property has frontage on 4 separate streets in the Downtown zoning district, all of which are classified as primary streets. Section 34-1031 of the Zoning Ordinance states that a principal establishment may have no more than two (2) signs per primary street frontage; therefore this building is entitled to have a total of 8 signs. Two other code sections, however, limit the size and type of signage that this parcel is entitled to have. Section 34-1032 limits the total area of all signs on the parcel to no more than 100 square feet and section 34-1038(b) allows only one freestanding sign per parcel. The applicant has elected to apply for a Comprehensive Signage Plan (CSP) in order to add 4 freestanding signs to the parcel in addition to what is allowed.

Four identical directory signs are being proposed; each measuring six feet tall by 26" inches wide. Each sign will have 10 tenant panels measuring 4" x 26", which were designed so that the text can be read by passing motorists. Two signs would be placed at each exit/entrance and angled so motorists traveling in either direction will be able to read the text. The signs would not be internally or externally illuminated. Similar signs were recently approved as part of a comprehensive sign plan at the new Sentara building located at 920 E High Street.

Staff recommends that only 2 of the 4 directory signs requested be permitted - 1 for each entrance/exit into the parking garage. The signs could be installed perpendicular to the street so motorists can see both sides of the sign. This outcome would be consistent with the Sentara (920 E High Street) application that was approved by City Council on August 1, 2022.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

Approval of this CSP aligns with Council's vision for Economic Sustainability [excerpt]:

- The City has facilitated significant mixed and infill development within the City.

Community Engagement

This Application is only required to receive approval by City Council.

Budgetary Impact

Approval of this CSP will have no budgetary impact.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that only 1 directory sign be permitted for each entrance/exit into the parking garage. The sign could be installed perpendicular to the street so motorists can see both sides of the sign. This outcome would be consistent with the Sentara (920 E High Street) application that was approved by City Council on August 1, 2022.

Alternatives

City Council may approve the CSP with modification/conditions or deny the CSP. If the CSP is denied, the applicant may either revise and resubmit the CSP or proceed with all signage being subject to the strictest provisions of Section 34 of the City Code.

Attachments

1. Comprehensive Signage Plan
2. 701 E Water - rendering of site
3. Resolution_APPROVING COMPREHENSIVE SIGNAGE PLAN FOR 701