



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2014-226: To authorize the special use of the property known as 707 East Main Street for the purposes of the installation of two roof signs, upon certain terms and conditions.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: November 3, 2014

PETITIONER

Dominion Resources, Inc.

LOCATION

707 East Main Street

PURPOSE

To authorize two roof signs on the building at 707 East Main Street

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The subject property consists of a 0.697 acre (30,361 sq ft) parcel of land improved with a 20-story office building constructed, per tax assessment records, in 1976. The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of East Main Street and South 8th Street, in the City Center district of the City of Richmond's Downtown Plan.

The property is zoned in the B-4 district, which does not allow roof signs. Although the B-4 district does not permit roof signs, it does permit wall mounted signs not exceeding 300 square feet identifying the name of a building or an occupant thereof on each face of a building above a height of 100 feet. The two proposed signs would be mounted on the roof, above a height of 100 feet, and would be under the normally permitted 300 square feet.

The proposed signs are identical in content and dimensions. Each would contain a 12 foot high Dominion logo and the word "Dominion" in letters that are approximately four feet in height. The total area for the signs would be approximately 250 square feet per sign. Both signs would be mounted three feet from the building's edge in front of a mechanical enclosure on the roof of the building.

Staff finds that size of the signs are consistent with the B-4 regulations. Staff finds that despite being technically located on the roof, they would appear to be wall mounted signs when viewed from the street given the mechanical enclosure located behind the proposed signs. Staff finds that overall the intent of the B-4 district sign regulations regarding large identification signs located at the top of tall buildings in the City Center is met. In addition, staff finds that the safeguards contained in the City Charter relative to the granting of special use permits are met. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Site Description

The subject property consists of a 0.697 acre (30,361 sq ft) parcel of land improved with a 20-story office building constructed, per tax assessment records, in 1976. The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of East Main Street and South 8th Street.

Proposed Use of the Property

The special use permit would authorize two roof top signs that would be adjacent to the mechanical enclosure on the roof. The proposed signs are identical in content and dimensions. Each would contain a 12 foot high Dominion logo and the word "Dominion" in letters that are approximately four feet in height. The total area for the signs would be approximately 250 square feet per sign. One sign would be mounted on the roof above the south elevation of the building, replacing the existing sign that was authorized by the BZA. The second sign would be mounted on the roof above the west elevation and would be an additional sign not replacing an existing sign. Both signs would be mounted three feet from the building's edge in order to be more visible from the street.

Master Plan

The Downtown Plan designates the subject property as being in the "Urban Core Area." This area is characterized by high density, an intense mix of uses, and civic buildings of regional significance, distributed along urban blocks with wide sidewalks, regular street tree plantings, and buildings that front the street. City Center is an example of the urban core condition in Downtown Richmond, with tall buildings that contain a range of office, residential and retail space (p. 3.27).

Zoning & Ordinance Conditions

The property is zoned in the B-4 district, which does not allow roof signs. A variance was issued by the Board of Zoning Appeals in 1998 (Case Nos. 39-98 & 74-98) to allow an oversized sign at the top of the southern face of the building. The variance did not contemplate signage pertaining to the western face of the building.

Although the B-4 district does not permit roof signs, it does permit wall mounted signs not exceeding 300 square feet identifying the name of a building or an occupant thereof on each face of a building above a height of 100 feet. The two proposed signs would be mounted on the roof and would be under the normally permitted 300 square feet.

Surrounding Area

The subject property and adjacent properties are part of the larger B-4 district that encompasses much of the City Center district. A mix of office, commercial, multifamily residential, and governmental land uses are present in the vicinity.

Neighborhood Participation

Staff has received letters of support from the Downtown Neighborhood Association and the operator of a building located diagonally across East Main Street from the subject property.

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