

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Planning Commission

SUBJECT: Planning Commission Recommendation on Zoning Text Amendment TXT2012-00232, Federal Realty Investment Trust, applicant

At its meeting on May 9, 2012 the Planning Commission reviewed zoning text amendment application TXT2012-00232, to amend Article 18 for the purpose of allowing off-premises signs and rooftop signs in certain Planned Development zones. The Commission received a presentation from the planning staff, and from representatives of Federal Realty Investment Trust, the applicants. Testimony was also received from citizens.

After extensive discussion, the Commission voted 4-1 to recommend disapproval of the text amendment as a whole. However, the Commission recognizes that some aspects of the proposed signs may have some merit. This highlights the Commission's strong recommendation that the Mayor and Council embark on a thorough revision and update of the sign regulations for the City.

Commissioner Hadley suggests that consideration be made on allowing some of the signs but with a time limit on their implementation, especially regarding the large free-standing off-premises sign and the rooftop sign.

Commissioner Callistein is concerned about the fairness issue, in that neighboring businesses won't have the same opportunity for different signs. He could support the rooftop sign, though perhaps it should have a time limit also. He is concerned about the number of signs proposed through this amendment will overwhelm the property.

Commissioner Ostell is also concerned about the fairness issue and strongly recommends that the sign regulations be revised in the very near future. She would support the single free-standing sign with a time limit.

Commissioner Tyner supports the proposed amendment in general. The rooftop sign makes sense to aid in identifying the Town Square for traffic coming south on Hungerford Drive. The proposed monument sign may make some sense, especially if it is not really a sign but rather a landmark piece.

He also agrees that after more than 30 years the sign regulations need to be updated. The applicant should consider allowing merchants elsewhere in the City to purchase advertising within the garages, rather than just the Town Square tenants.

Commissioner Trahan notes that the signs should be specific and limited to the town center. He is concerned about sign pollution, especially as regards the proposed 18 light post signs. He could support the rooftop signs, and additional signs along Hungerford Drive, but not within the Town Square project.

Therefore, on a motion by Commissioner Ostell, seconded by Commissioner Hadley, the Planning Commission recommends disapproval of Text Amendment TXT2012-00232 with the comments noted above, with Commissioners Ostell, Hadley, Callistein, and Trahan voting in favor of the motion, Commissioner Tyner voting against the motion, and with Commissioner Hill absent, at its meeting on May 9, 2012.