

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board has reviewed Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-710, Wawa Old Branch Avenue, requesting an increase in the height and area of the proposed freestanding sign and the area of the building and canopy mounted signage in accordance with Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code; and

WHEREAS, in consideration of evidence presented at a public hearing on February 4, 2021, the Prince George's County Planning Board finds:

- Request:** The applicant requests a departure from sign design standards (DSDS) to allow a freestanding sign that is 20 feet high and 51.65 square feet, which is 12 feet taller and 1.65 square feet larger than permitted, in the Commercial Office (C-O) Zone. In addition, a departure is requested to allow for building and canopy-mounted signage that are a total of approximately 20 square feet larger than allowed in the C-O Zone.

The subject DSDS is companion to a detailed site plan, DSP-19056, for the development of a 5,600-square-foot food and beverage store and a gas station, which was approved by the Planning Board on February 4, 2021 (PBCPB Resolution No. 2021-19).

2. Development Data Summary:

	EXISTING	APPROVED
Zone	C-O	C-O
Use(s)	Vacant	Eating and drinking establishment, food or beverage store, and gas station
Gross Acreage	1.63	1.63
Total Gross Floor Area	3,375 sq. ft.	5,600 sq. ft.

- Location:** The subject property is located southwest of MD 5 (Branch Avenue) at its intersection with Beech Road.
- Surrounding Uses:** The property to the north of the site, directly across MD 5, is zoned Commercial Miscellaneous/Development District Overlay (D-D-O). There is nearby land owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) that is zoned Reserved Open Space (R-O-S)/D-D-O. There is additional land owned by M-NCPPC in the R-O-S Zone to the southeast of the site. The property across Beech Road to the west is zoned C-O, and the property located southeast of the site is zoned Light Industrial (I-1).

5. **Previous Approvals:** The property was originally subdivided pursuant to a plat of subdivision recorded on December 19, 1969 in Plat Book WWW 73 Plat No. 10. The vacant bank building was built in approximately 1971. The site also has an approved Stormwater Management (SWM) Concept Plan, 19609-2019-00, which is valid through May 4, 2023.
6. **Design Features:** The 1.63-acre site contains a vacant Suntrust bank building. The applicant, through DSP-19056, proposes to demolish the existing building to construct a Wawa gas station with a 5,600-square-foot food and beverage store. The gas station will consist of 8 pump islands with a total of 16 fueling stations situated parallel to MD 5. There will be an enclosed dumpster to the southeast corner of the site. Access to the site will be from two driveways on Beech Road and no access is proposed from MD 5. The DSP proposes 39 parking spaces, including one employee space and two handicapped accessible spaces, and an inverted U-shaped bike rack. The loading space is located along the northwest side of the building and faces Beech Road.

Signage

The DSP proposes freestanding, canopy-mounted and building-mounted signs for the Wawa food and beverage store and gas station. There are a total of five signs being proposed. Two signs are proposed on the building to include one sign over each of the entrances. One sign is proposed on the canopy, and two spanner signs are proposed above the end pump islands.

This application is requesting a Departure from Sign Design Standards, DSDS-710, for a 20-foot-tall freestanding sign that is 51.65 square feet in area. The signage area will be composed of two separate cabinets to include the Wawa branding and the prices of gas by grade. In the C-O Zone, the maximum height of a freestanding sign is eight feet; the applicant is proposing a 20-foot-high sign and requesting a departure of 12 feet. The maximum area for a freestanding sign in the C-O Zone is 25 square feet, unless the use is located on a divided highway with a right-of-way of at least 100 feet, in which case the maximum area is 50 square feet, which applies in this case. As a result, the proposed sign is 12 feet taller and 1.65 square feet larger than freestanding signs allowed in the C-O Zone requiring a DSDS, as discussed in Finding 7 below.

The applicant is proposing a 7.67-foot-wide by 1.67-foot-high flush mount canopy sign to include the Wawa lettering and goose logo along with gas pump spanners that are 13.67 feet wide and 2 feet tall. The building-mounted signs include Wawa's logo with illuminated channel lettering and the goose image, with the front sign being approximately 68 square feet and the rear one being approximately 37 square feet. Because of the unique calculations for building and canopy mounted signage in the C-O Zone, a departure of approximately 20 square feet is also required for these signs, as discussed in Finding 7 below.

COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

7. **Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-710:** The applicant is proposing a 20-foot-tall, 51.65-square-foot freestanding sign in the C-O Zone. The applicant has requested a DSDS, in accordance with Section 27-612 of the Zoning Ordinance, to allow for a taller and larger freestanding sign. Signage provided differs from the requirements of Section 27-614 of the

Zoning Ordinance, as the proposed sign is 12 feet taller and 1.65 square feet larger than freestanding signs allowed in the C-O Zone.

Section 27-239.01(b)(7)(A) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that, in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

- (i) **The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.**

Section 27-589(a) of the Zoning Ordinance contains the following purposes for regulating signs:

- (1) **To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the Regional District;**
- (2) **To encourage and protect the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures;**
- (3) **To regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which could depreciate the value of property and discourage quality development in the Regional District;**
- (4) **To regulate signs which are a hazard to safe motor-vehicle operation;**
- (5) **To eliminate structurally unsafe signs which endanger a building, structure, or the public;**
- (6) **To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development; and**
- (7) **To control the location and size of signs, so as to provide for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner that is compatible with land uses in the Regional District.**

In general, the purposes of the sign regulations are to promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents, workers, and motorists by increasing and enhancing sign visibility and readability, to regulate unsightly and detrimental signs, which could depreciate the value of the property, to prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the attractiveness of development, and to control scale, consistent with the intended advertising purposes.

The proposed signage is appropriate and standard for gas stations and food and beverage uses along MD 5, and in locations of similar character throughout the County. The proposed signage is both sited and designed to not be a hazard to safe motor vehicle operation and will be structurally safe. The increased height of

the freestanding sign and increased lettering area of the sign face will provide for adequate identification in a manner that is compatible with land uses along this high-volume transportation route. The building contains two entrances, and it is appropriate to provide signage above both entrances. Both signs cannot be seen at the same time, ensuring that there is no proliferation of signage. The proposed building signs are appropriate in size for the building and the use proposed.

(ii) The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

The applicant provided an analysis stating that the departure is the minimum necessary to ensure that the use and the gas pricing can be safely viewed by the traveling public. The site is abutted by I-1-zoned land to the south and west, which permits a maximum height of 25 feet for freestanding signage. The proposed sign will not be out of character with heights permitted for other uses in the area. The building signage is the minimum necessary to identify the business and the two entrances. Gas stations with food and beverage uses typically employ building signage to identify the point of entry, and in this case, two signs are required for such purpose.

(iii) The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949.

The applicant has stated that the circumstance is unique because the proposed gas station and food and beverage store uses are only permitted in the C-O Zone pursuant to Footnote 74, based on specific criteria, which the subject site meets. The proposed departures relating to height and sign area would result in an identical situation if the site were in any other Commercial Zone, where the proposed uses are customarily located. This is a situation unique to the subject site, which warrants approval of the requested departures. The similar unique circumstances apply to the building signage.

(iv) The departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

The site is located along MD 5, which is a major transportation route characterized by service commercial uses and shopping centers. The proposed freestanding sign has been designed and integrated into the design of the building and gas canopy. The proposed pylon sign features quality materials that complement the design of the building. The building signage identifies the two entrances to the building and coordinates with the freestanding sign, and as noted above are not visible at the same time due to being located on the front and rear of the building. The request for the sign departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality of the site or the surrounding neighborhood.

Based on the analysis above, the Planning Board finds to approve of DSDS-710 for the proposed signage, which is designed at an appropriate scale for the size and type of development.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVED Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-710, to allow for an increase in the height and area of the proposed freestanding sign and the area of the building and canopy-mounted signage, as shown on DSP-19056.


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board's action must be filed with the District Council of Prince George's County within thirty (30) days following the final notice of the Planning Board's decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Washington, seconded by Commissioner Bailey, with Commissioners Washington, Bailey, Doerner, Geraldo and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, February 4, 2021, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

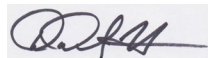
Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 4th day of March 2021.

Elizabeth M. Hewlett
Chairman

By 
Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

EMH:JJ:TB:nz

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY



David S. Warner
M-NCPPC Legal Department
Date: February 16, 2021