



Note: Staff reports can be accessed at www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm.

Departure from Design Standards

DDS-550

Application	General Data
Project Name: Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department Location: East side of Edmonston Road approximately 120 feet south of Tilden Road, known as 4213 Edmonston Road. Applicant/Address: Randy Kuenzli 4213 Edmonston Road Bladensburg, Maryland 20710	Date Accepted: 8/13/04
	Planning Board Action Limit: N/A
	Plan Acreage: 2.02
	Zone: R-55
	Dwelling Units: N/A
	Square Footage: 12,531
	Planning Area: 69
	Tier: Developed
	Council District: 05
	Municipality: Bladensburg
	200-Scale Base Map: 205NE04

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
DDS-550: Departure from 4.2 & 4.7 of the <i>Landscape Manual</i> and parking spaces that are smaller than required.	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: 7/7/04 (CB-12-2003)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site and Notice of Hearing Mailed: 08/23/04

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer: Laxmi Srinivas	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

September 15, 2004

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Jimi Jones, Acting Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Laxmi Srinivas, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Departure from Design Standards DDS-550**

REQUEST: **Departure from the *Landscape Manual* requirements for bufferyard.
Departure from the requirements for parking space sizes.**

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL with Conditions**

NOTE:

The Planning Board has scheduled this application for a public hearing on the agenda date indicated above. The Planning Board also encourages all interested persons to request to become a person of record in this application. Requests to become a person of record should be made in writing and addressed to the Development Review Division at the address indicated above. Please call 301-952-3530 for additional information.

FINDINGS:

A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is located on the east side of Edmonston Road approximately 120 feet south of Tilden Road, known as 4213 Edmonston Road. The property consists of 2.2 acres and is improved with an existing fire station, accessory structures, and parking. The property has 156 feet of frontage on Edmonston Road. Vehicular access to the property is from Edmonston Road.

B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	R-55	R-55
Use(s)	Fire Station	Fire Station
Acreage	2.2	2.2
Lots	NA	NA
Parcels	1	1
Square Footage/GFA	8,463	12,531

C. **History:** The building and the paving on the subject property have existed since the 1950s. A variance application, V-24-95, was granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals on March 22, 1995, for an additional 29 percent net lot coverage and the location of two accessory buildings within the required setbacks. There is an existing monopole on the rear of the property. A building permit was obtained for the monopole in 1999.

D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1993 Master Plan for Bladensburg, New Carrollton and Vicinity recommends “public/quasi-public” uses for the subject property.

E. **Request:** The applicant is adding an apparatus bay and living quarters to the existing fire station on the subject property. Since the gross floor area for the addition is greater than ten percent of the existing fire station, the proposal was subject to the following requirements of the *Landscape Manual*:

Section 4.7 (Buffering Incompatible Uses) along the eastern and southern property lines
Section 4.2 (Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip) along Edmonston Road

On June 14, 2004, the Planning Director of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) denied Alternative Compliance Application AC-04013 in conjunction with Permit No. 2830-2004-CGU. The applicant is requesting a departure from the requirements of Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*. The applicant is also requesting a departure from the requirements of Section 27-558, Parking Space Sizes, of the Zoning Ordinance to allow 47 of the 119 parking spaces (note: 100 spaces are required) to be smaller than required.

The applicant had also filed a departure from parking and loading standards application, DPLS-297, because they were of the opinion that compliance with pre-1970 standards were necessary. However, the applicant has provided 19 additional spaces according to the current parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, the DPLS application is no longer required.

F. **Surrounding Uses:** The property is surrounded with the following uses:

North— Post Office in the C-S-C Zone

East— Apartments in the R-10 Zone and single-family residential in the R-55 Zone

South— Single-family residential in the R-55 Zone

West— Edmonston Road

G. **Design Requirements:**

1. **Number of Required Parking and Loading Spaces:**

Section 27-568 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the following:

one parking space for a dispatcher

two parking spaces for emergency vehicles

one parking space for four persons in hall or auditorium

one parking space for 500 square feet of gross floor area for the trailer

one parking space for each fireman in the living quarters

Section 27-582 of the Zoning Ordinance requires one loading space for 10,000 to 100,000 square feet of gross floor area for an institutional use.

The site requires 78 parking spaces for 311 persons in the auditorium, one parking space for a dispatcher, two parking spaces for emergency vehicles, one parking space for the trailer, and 18 parking spaces for 18 firemen in the living quarters. Therefore, the site requires a total of 100 parking spaces. The applicant has provided 119 parking spaces. A loading space has also been provided.

2. **Landscape Manual Requirements:** The property is subject to the requirements of Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*. The proposed landscape plan falls short of the required minimum building setback and minimum landscape yard. The Planning Director recommended denial of the applicant's proposal for alternative compliance (see attached review comments for AC-04013) and, consequently, the applicant is requesting a departure from these requirements.

3. **Signs:** No freestanding signs are proposed with this application.

4. **Other Issues:**

(1) The Permit Review Section (memorandum dated September 8, 2004) has requested the addition of notes regarding access to the loading area, required parking for the trailer, the height of the trailer, and the specific use of the adjacent northern property. Conditions of approval have been added to require the same.

(2) The Historic Preservation Section (memorandum dated August 23, 2004) has stated that the proposal will have no impact on historic properties.

- (3) The applicant (letter dated August 31, 2004) has stated that since no landscaping was provided during the review of the alternative compliance, some landscaping will be proposed to compensate for the landscaping required by the *Landscape Manual*. Specifically, the applicant is proposing a six-foot-high board-on-board fence along the eastern and southern property lines to provide screening between the subject property and adjacent properties. Eight Leyland Cypress trees will be provided at the southeastern corner of the property (behind the cell tower enclosure) and five evergreen trees will be planted in the grass strip along the front of the property.

H. **Required Findings:**

(A) **Section 27-239.01(b)(9) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:**

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

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance are set forth in Section 27-102. They are varied in nature, but in general are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents and workers in Prince George's County. In this instance, the facts establish that granting the requested departures will in no way jeopardize these purposes.

The existing building has been on the property since the early 1950s. There is no existing landscaping on the site. The use of the property as a fire station requires clear driveways for speedy entrance and exit of emergency vehicles and fire engines. Landscaping that restricts the speedy entrance and exit of vehicles cannot be provided. Therefore, only minimum landscaping can be provided in areas where the use of the property as a fire station is not restricted. The applicant is proposing some landscaping and screening to enhance the overall appearance of the property. Although the proposed landscaping and fence are not as extensive as landscaping and screening for a commercial or office use, they are adequate to screen the adjacent residential properties and improve the overall appearance of the property along Edmonston Road. Speedy and unrestricted entrance and exit of vehicles in a fire station is essential for the overall public safety of the community. The proposed landscaping and screening ensure these requirements and enhances the visual quality of the site and projects an aesthetically pleasing appearance. An attempt to achieve full compliance with the *Landscape Manual* would be virtually impossible.

The applicant is proposing a total of 119 parking spaces. Of the 119 parking spaces, 47 will be smaller than the parking sizes required by the Zoning Ordinance. Only 100 parking spaces are required by the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, 72 of the 100 required parking spaces will meet the parking size requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Only 28 of the 100 required parking spaces and the additional 19 parking spaces will be smaller. Restriping the parking spaces would impose an economic hardship on the Fire Department. Also, accommodating the parking spaces in the existing parking area ensures that there is no encroachment of parking spaces into the areas required for proper functioning of the fire station. The proposed number of parking spaces (including the smaller spaces) will be adequate to serve the parking requirements of the fire station.

Given all of the above, the purposes of this Subtitle will be equally or better served by the applicant's proposal.

2. The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

The requested departures are the minimum necessary. Strict compliance with the *Landscape Manual* would require the creation of additional landscape bufferyards that would restrict the speedy and unobstructed entrance and exit of emergency vehicles and the use of the property as a fire station. Restriping the parking spaces to eliminate or reduce the smaller size parking spaces and/or increasing the parking area to accommodate parking spaces of the required sizes would impose an economic hardship on the Fire Department.

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

The departure is necessary to alleviate circumstances that are commonly found in older areas initially developed with residential dwellings and later converted to commercial or institutional uses. A fire station is a permitted use in the R-55 Zone. The existing size of the property is not adequate to accommodate the current landscaping requirements and the parking size requirements. Compliance with the current standards will require encroachment into areas that accommodate structures essential to the functioning of the firestation. Therefore, the departure is necessary to alleviate circumstances that are unique to the site and unique to the use of the property as a fire station.

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

The departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or the surrounding area. The departure, with the proposed minimum planting and the proposed six-foot-high board-on-board fences, will, in fact, add to the visual, functional and environmental quality or integrity of the site and the surrounding neighborhood. Only 28 parking spaces out of the total required 100 parking spaces will be of a smaller size. Nineteen additional parking spaces are also provided at a smaller size. Therefore, the total number of parking spaces will be adequate to serve the parking requirements of the fire station. Granting the departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. Granting of the departure will ensure the use of the property as a fire station for protecting the public safety of the surrounding neighborhood.

(B) For a departure from a standard contained in the *Landscape Manual*, the Planning Board shall find, in addition to the requirements in paragraph (A) above, that there is no feasible proposal for alternative compliance, as defined in the *Landscape Manual*, which would exhibit equal or better design characteristics.

Installation of landscaping according to the requirements of the *Landscape Manual* is not practical. These requirements cannot be provided without causing substantial damage to the existing building and a loss of needed parking spaces. There is no feasible proposal for

alternative compliance, as defined in the *Landscape Manual*, that would exhibit equal or better design characteristics.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the preceding analysis and findings, it is recommended that DDS-550 be APPROVED, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification of the departure from design standards application, the site plan shall be revised as follows:
 - a. Parking schedule showing proposed number of parking spaces.
 - b. A note stating that the access to the loading area will only take place through the northern driveway aisle.
 - c. Parking schedule to include required parking spaces for the existing trailer at one space for every 500 square feet of gross floor area.
 - d. Height of the existing trailer.
 - e. Specific uses of all the adjacent properties along the northern property line.