

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
Development Review Division
301-952-3470



Comment [COMMENT1]: WHEN INSERTING
INFORMATION AT THE @ SIGN
REMEMBER TO USE INDENT FOR SECOND
LINE - NOT TAB. ALSO, IT WILL LOOK
LIKE THE TEXT IS GOING WACKO, BUT
DON'T WORRY - IT IS FINE.

Departure from Sign Design Standards 568

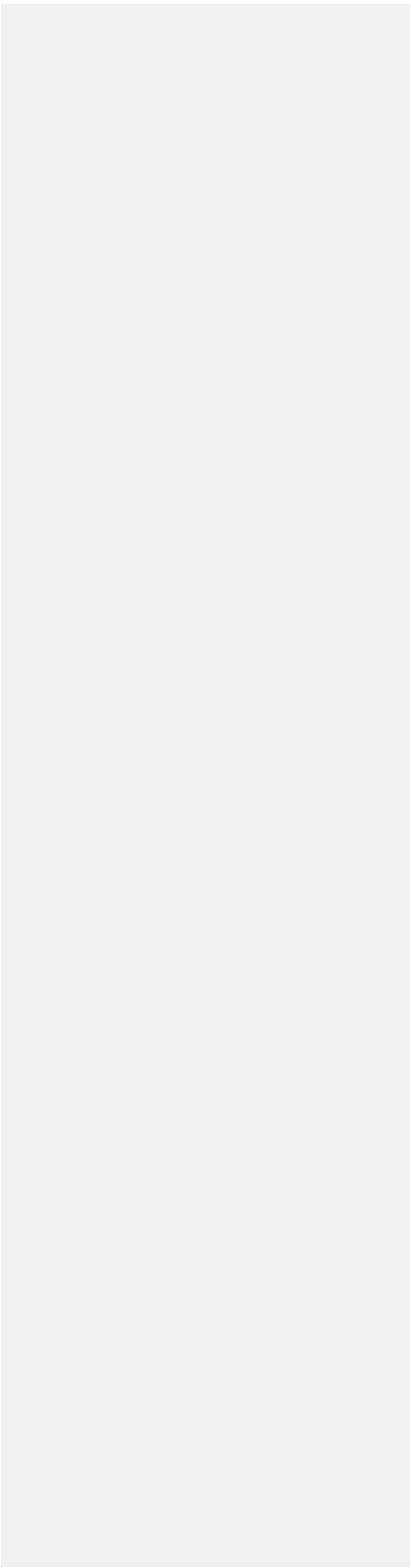
Application	General Data
Project Name: The Koco Group Location: North side of Old Silver Hill Road, 600' feet west of Silver Hill Road Applicant/Address: The Koco Group 3722 Old Silver Hill Road Suitland, Maryland 20746	Date Accepted 3/20/00
	Planning Board Action Limit N/A
	ZHE Hearing Date N/A
	Plan Acreage 15,005 sf
	Zone C-M
	Dwelling Units 0
	Square Feet N/A
	Planning Area 76 A
	Council District 7
	Municipality None
	200-Scale Base Map 205 SE 3R, 4L

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Departure from Section 27-613 to allow a canopy sign with more area than permitted.	Adjoining Property Owners 4/12/00 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record N/A (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site 6/27/00
	Variance(s): Adjoining N/A Property Owners

Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer: Joe Del Balzo
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DENIAL	DISCUSSION

		X	
--	--	---	--

NEW DATA.FRM



July 5, 2000

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:

TO: The Prince Georges County Planning Board

VIA: Arie Stouten, Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Joe Del Balzo, Subdivision Section

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards 568**

REQUEST: **Departure from Section 27-613(c)(3)(F) to permit a building sign with more area than allowed**

RECOMMENDATION: **DENIAL**

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 301-952-3280 for additional information.

FINDINGS:

- A. Location and Field Inspection: The property is located on the north side of Old Silver Hill Road. It is developed with an automobile service and detailing facility. The brick and block building is rectangular, with the short side facing the road. Customer parking is in front of the building, with outdoor storage of cars being serviced along the side behind a chain-link fence.
- B. History: The property was incorporated in the Maryland-Washington Regional District on November 29, 1949. At that time it was placed in the C-2 Zone. It was placed in the C-M Zone by adoption of the 1984 Sectional Map Amendment for Subregion VII.
- C. Master Plan Recommendation: The *1981 Master Plan for Subregion VII* recommends commercial land use for this property, recognizing the longstanding commercial use of the property. The area is currently the subject of a planning study within the Heights area.
- D. Design Requirements and Requested Departure: **Section 27-613(c)(3)(F)** sets the standard for canopy signs that are located on a building that is set back between 10 and 30 feet from the right-of-way. In such cases, canopy signs may be a maximum of 1 square foot for each lineal foot of building width, to a maximum of 200 square feet. The building on which this sign is located is 52 feet wide; therefore, the sign may be a maximum of 52 square feet. The applicant requests a departure of 156 square feet to allow a 208-square-foot sign.
- E. Surrounding Uses: The property is in the midst of a commercial strip along Old Silver Hill Road. To the east, south and west are service-commercial uses in the C-M Zone. To the north, the property abuts the Smithsonian Support Center in the O-S Zone.
- F. Required Findings: **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:**

- a. **The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.**

Comment: In general, the purposes of the Ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification of businesses, to promote the general health, safety and welfare of the residents of the County and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings and structures.

The proposed sign, while large, is not unsightly. However, it is so large that it clutters the landscape. The streetscape in the vicinity of the building is already cluttered, but the addition of one more large sign does not improve the situation. In fact, it further detracts from a landscape that is in need of restoration. Therefore, the applicant's proposal does not serve the purposes of the Ordinance.

- b. **The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.**

Comment: The departure is not the minimum necessary. The applicant is requesting approval to allow a sign that is 156 square feet larger than the 52 square feet permitted. The sign is approximately four times as large as allowed. The Zoning Ordinance sets a smaller maximum permitted area for building canopy signs when the building is located less than 30 feet from the road. This is because such buildings are more easily seen from the road and larger signs are not necessary. In addition to being rather large, the sign contains too much information. It not only indicates the business name, but it also lists at least 15 different specialty services. Reducing the amount of extraneous information would allow the business to be advertised with a smaller sign. In this case, a 52-square-foot sign is clearly enough to provide business identification.

- c. **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.**

Comment: While much of this area was developed a long time ago, with many properties developed prior to incorporation in the Maryland-Washington Regional District, this departure is not necessary to alleviate circumstances which are prevalent in the area. Since the property can be adequately identified with a smaller sign, no departure is necessary.

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

Comment: The applicant's request will impair the visual integrity of the area. The sign is not unattractive, it is simply too large for the environment in which it is located; it takes up the entire length of the building. This represents a visual form of clutter that detracts from the quality of the streetscape. The property is similar to other properties in the area, although this property has been relatively well maintained in this neighborhood. The granting of this departure will only serve as a possible precursor to a proliferation of similar applications and signs. This would run counter to efforts to enhance the visual quality of this stretch of roadway. The Community Planning Division shares this view:

■The subject property is located in a strip of haphazard commercial structures that are in various conditions of maintenance. Overall, the corridor does not present a positive character. As other properties are improved, it would be unfortunate to have the sign departure, as requested, as a precedent for other property owners in similar situations. One of the purposes of regulating signs is to control the location and size of signs, so as to provide for adequate identification and advertisement... . It is Community Planning staff's opinion that the requested departure is contrary to that purpose and that the departure is not the minimum necessary to adequately advertise the business.●

G. Other Issues ●Section 27-612(b):

No departure from Design Standards shall be permitted for any sign erected in violation of the Zoning Ordinance, and for which a sign permit was not obtained at the time the sign was erected.

The sign was erected without permit and in violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends DENIAL of the requested Departure from Sign Design Standards because the request does not satisfy the requirements for approval and because the sign was erected illegally.