



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 572

Application	General Data
Project Name New Carrollton Mall Location Northeast corner of Riverdale Road and Annapolis Road, known as 7780-8310 Annapolis Road & 7710-7874 Riverdale Road. Applicant Carrollton Enterprises 11785 Beltsville Drive, Suite 1600 Beltsville, Maryland 20705 ATTN: Bill Harrison	Date Accepted 12/6/00
	Planning Board Action Limit N/A
	ZHE Hearing Date N/A
	Plan Acreage 27.7544 Acres
	Zone C-S-C/R-55
	Dwelling Units N/A
	Square Footage N/A
	Planning Area 69
	Council District 03
	Municipality New Carrollton
	200-Scale Base Map 207NE7

Purpose of Application		Notice Dates	
Departure from 25' maximum height requirement, for a freestanding sign with a height of 40'; and departure from 200 square-foot area maximum for a freestanding sign with an area of 486 square feet. 27-614(a)(1) & 27-614(a)(4).		Adjoining Property Owners (CB-15-1998)	12/8/00
		Previous Parties of Record (CB-13-1997)	N/A
		Sign(s) Posted on Site	2/21/01
		Variance(s): Adjoining Property Owners	N/A
Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer Catherine H. Wallace	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

February 28, 2001

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:

TO: The Prince Georges County Planning Board

VIA: Arie Stouten, Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Catherine H. Wallace, Planner Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards Number 572**

REQUEST: **Departure from height and area requirements for a freestanding sign**

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 site is an integrated shopping center currently known as Carrollton Mall and Carrollton Shopping Center. Located in the northern quadrant of the intersection of Annapolis Road (MD 450) and Riverdale Road, it is made up of Parcels A and B of the Carrollton Shopping Center Subdivision. The proposed sign is to replace a sign located in Parcel B which is also the site of a major renovation of the Carrollton Mall.

Parcel B of the site is currently developed with a Shoppers Food Warehouse grocery store, a Meineke Muffler shop, a menswear store, two pad-site restaurants (known as Carrollton Mall), and a Staples office supply store (which is part of the Carrollton Shopping Center). A Lowe's Home Improvement store is under construction. Parcel A includes a Safeway grocery store, a bank and a discount store. There are four freestanding signs currently on the site, including three signs advertising the shopping centers and several tenants each, and one advertising a freestanding restaurant (Shoney's). Most of the signs appear to be within the 25-foot height and 200- square-foot area restrictions. The largest sign (which is the one which the proposed sign would replace) appears to be about 33 to 35 feet in height and may exceed 200 square feet in area.

A significant difference in elevation (10.8 feet) exists between the base of the sign and surrounding roadways. North and west of the site are residential uses; while commercial uses are located to the east, south and southwest.

- B. History: The subject property has been in a retail-commercial zone since the early 1960s (Parcel A-Carrollton Shopping Center) and the early 1970s (Parcel B-Carrollton Mall).

- C. Master Plan Recommendation: The Master Plan for Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity 69 recommends retail commercial uses for the site. The Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Area 69 was adopted in 1994 and placed the site in the C-S-C Zone.
- D. Request: The applicant requests a departure of 15 feet for a sign height of 40 feet, exceeding the maximum permitted height of 25 feet.. The base of the sign is actually located 10.8 feet below the grade of the intersection of Annapolis Road and Riverdale Road. Therefore, the height of the sign, as viewed from the surrounding roadway, appears to be closer to 29 feet.

The applicant also requests a departure of 286 square feet from the maximum permitted sign area of 200 square feet. The total area for the proposed sign is 486 square feet. Section 27-591(a) of the Zoning Ordinance notes that , ■[t]he area of a sign shall include the entire face of the sign and any wall work incidental to its decoration.● In this case the pediment and supporting structure are considered incidental to the decoration of the sign. They visually extend the area of the message, rather than simply supporting the face of the sign.

The applicant notes, and the letter from the City of New Carrollton concurs, that the sign contains the seal of the City of New Carrollton and functions in some ways as a gateway sign for the city. The area of the city seal (about eight square feet) was not included in the area calculations for the sign.

The site plan also notes the proposed removal of an existing freestanding sign along Riverdale Road and its replacement by another freestanding sign closest to the westernmost entrance to the site.

- E. Surrounding Uses: The site is surrounded by the following uses:

North - Residential uses in the R-55 Zone.

East - The Ramada Inn hotel in the C-S-C Zone.

South - Across Annapolis Road, commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone.

West - Commercial uses fronting on Annapolis Road (zoned C-2) and multifamily residential uses along Riverdale Road in the R-18 Zone.

F. Design Requirements:

Section 27-614(a) requires freestanding signs to be set back ten feet from the right-of-way line as proposed. Section 27-614(b) sets the maximum height for all freestanding signs in all commercial zones (except the C-O Zone) at 25 feet, thereby requiring the departure of 15 feet.

Section 27-614(c)(3)(A) provides that the area for signs for an integrated shopping center be calculated at a rate of one square foot for every two lineal feet of frontage, to a maximum of 200 square feet. Section 27-614(d)(2) permits one freestanding sign for every 100 to 1,100 feet of frontage and every additional 1,000 feet or fraction thereafter. The site has over 3,100 feet of lineal frontage and thereby is permitted to have four freestanding signs with a maximum area of 200 square feet each. The actual area of the sign, as proposed, is now 486 square feet, requiring a departure of 286 square feet.

G. Other Issues: Permits have been released recently for the reconstruction of this shopping center. Parking and loading needs and landscaping issues were addressed at that time and will not be

reviewed here. An approval of this sign departure will, therefore, not constitute approval of the submitted plans except as they pertain to the character and location of the signs proposed for the property.

H. Required Findings:

(1.) **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 this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.

The applicant's proposal will serve the purposes of the Zoning Ordinance. Due to the difference in elevation, height and bulk of the sign, it will be less visible than its dimensions indicate. The additional area allows the supporting columns of the sign to be constructed of materials which complement the main buildings, thereby promoting a beneficial relationship between this property and surrounding uses.

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

A minimum departure of 10.8 feet to offset the difference in grade between the base of the sign and the surrounding roadway is necessary, simply to offset the disadvantage of the elevation difference.

Another four to five feet in height is taken up by the proposal to include the city seal, a public sign, which is exempt from these requirements.

The proposed height of 40 feet is needed to have the information on the sign visible to traffic on the surrounding roads. The proposed sign details show that the bottom of the lowest tenant sign is about 14 feet above grade at the base of the sign, or a little over three feet above the grade of Annapolis Road.

At 250 square feet, the area of the sign panels for the six major tenants and the shopping center name exceed the permitted maximum by 50 feet. The design of the sign, including a pediment which tops the sign and surrounds the city seal, and the brick faced columns add another 236 square feet to the area calculation. This proposal is the minimum required to erect a sign that conforms in style and building materials to the new building facades of the shopping center. The attractive incorporation of the city seal in the ornamentation of the sign, also affects the overall area of the sign. This is still a large area, but is one which can be justified as the minimum necessary, given the architectural elements proposed.

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.

The significant change in elevation between the base of the sign and the surrounding roadways are a unique feature of this site, justifying a departure from the height limitation of about 11 feet. It is also noted that a portion of the sign will function as a gateway sign for the City of New Carrollton since it

will incorporate the city seal and surrounding ornamentation. This circumstance justifies the additional height of four feet which is added by the city seal and surrounding decorative elements.

The incorporation of the city seal also provides justification for the additional area created by the seal and its surrounding ornamentation. Furthermore, the difference in elevation between the roadways and the base of the sign is also justification for an increase in the area of the sign, particularly given the fact that the face of the columns must be considered part of the area of the sign and a significant portion of that area is not visible. Therefore, there are elements unique to this sign at this location which justify both the requested height and area departures.

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

There is no question that a sign with attractive design elements and materials should be an asset to a commercial area. The overall height and bulk of the sign are significant departures from the norm. However, the major portion of the additional height is not visible to passersby in the surrounding area, due to the elevation differences. Much of the additional bulk is likewise hidden from view.

These departures will allow the sign the necessary visibility, while exceeding the height above the grade of the roadway, only by enough room to allow for the city seal and surrounding ornamentation. Although the base of the sign will not be visible from the surrounding roadways, it will be very visible to pedestrians and drivers in the parking lot of the shopping center. Landscaping at the base of the sign is not shown on current approved landscape plans. Staff recommends that this departure

be conditioned upon the provision of landscaping in the form of shrubs and perennial groundcover to soften the appearance of the base of the sign.

Staff further recommends a condition requiring a corresponding *decrease* in the maximum permitted height of 25 feet for the proposed new sign along Riverdale Road. That sign, which will identify the Lowe's store, is recommended to not exceed 20 feet in height. This sign will be more visible to the residential portion of the surrounding neighborhood and therefore it is appropriate to reduce the visual impact of signage at this location. By allowing the minimum necessary increase in height and area at the commercial focal point of the center and decreasing the height of the sign closest to residential development, the proposed departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site as it relates to the surrounding neighborhood.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends approval of the requested departures limited by the following conditions:

1. The proposed freestanding sign for Lowe's along Riverdale Road shall be limited to twenty feet in height.
2. Landscaping at the base of the Shoppes at New Carrollton sign shall be provided as follows:
 - a. Twenty-five shrubs: taxus boccata hicksii (yew) or similar, 24 inches, staggered 3 feet OC; surrounded by
 - b. Thirty-five to 40 perennials: lirope big blue, or similar

