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Departure From Sign Design Standards No. 583

Application	General Data
Project Name Starlite Media Signs (Landover Hills) Location West side of Annapolis Road approximately 170 feet south of Cooper Lane, known as 4600 Cooper Lane. Applicant Ted N. Rauh, Starlite Media 7500 Cardwell Avenue Orangevale, CA 95662 Correspondent Garland H. Stillwell, Esquire Linows and Blocher LLP, Suite 1000 1010 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910	Date Accepted 3/12/02
	Planning Board Action Limit N/A
	Tax Map & Grid 051 B-3
	Plan Acreage 4.36
	Zone C-S-C
	Dwelling Units N/A
	Square Footage N/A
	Planning Area 69
	Council District 03
	Municipality N/A
	200-Scale Base Map 205NE5

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Two additional freestanding signs	Adjoining Property Owners 3/15/02 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record N/A (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site 10/4/02
	Variance(s): Adjoining Property Owners N/A
Staff Recommendation	Staff Reviewer: Elsabett Tesfaye
APPROVAL	DISAPPROVAL
APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISCUSSION
	X

10-16-02

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Arie Stouten, Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Elsabett Tesfaye, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards No. 583**

REQUEST: **Two additional freestanding signs**

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 301-952-3530 for additional information.

FINDINGS:

- A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is located on the west side of Annapolis Road (MD 450), approximately 170 feet south of Cooper Lane, known as 4600 Cooper Lane. The subject site consists of approximately 4.36 acres of land and is improved with a 42,163-square-foot Safeway grocery store. The property is located adjacent to the Capital Plaza Shopping Center. It has 538.13 feet of frontage on 66th Avenue, 315.79 feet of frontage on MD 450, 382.57 feet of frontage on Webster Street, and 285.11 feet of frontage on Cooper Lane.

- B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone	C-S-C	C-S-C
Use	Shopping Center	Shopping Center
Acreage	4.36 acres	4.36 acres
Signs	1-freestanding	3-freestanding
Sign Area	63.3 SF	171 SF (Combined)

- C. **History:** The 1994 *Approved Sectional Map Amendment for Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity* retained the site in the C-S-C Zone.

- D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** *The 1994 Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity Master Plan* recommends the property for retail–commercial use.

- E. **Request:** The applicant proposes to erect two additional freestanding signs on the property. There is currently one freestanding sign on the property.

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

North: The Capital Plaza Shopping Center in the C-S-C Zone.

South: Across Annapolis Road, commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone and townhouses in the R-18 Zone.

East: Across Cooper Lane, commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone.

West: The Capital Plaza Shopping Center.

- G. **Sign Requirements:**

1. ***Section 27-614(d)(2)(A)*** requires that freestanding signs shall only be located on property where the building associated with the sign is set back at least 40 feet from the front street line. ***Section 27-614(d)(2)(B), option B,*** allows one

freestanding sign on each street when the property has 100 to 1,100 feet of frontage on two parallel streets.

The applicant proposes three freestanding signs on the subject property. The subject property has 315.79 feet of frontage on MD 450, and 382.57 feet of frontage on Webster Street (parallel streets). The existing building is set back more than 40 feet from MD 450 and Cooper Lane, but only 18 feet from Webster street and 35 feet from 66th Avenue. Therefore, the property is allowed two freestanding signs, one along MD 450 and the second along Cooper Lane.

However, the applicant proposes two signs along MD 450 and a third sign along 66th Avenue. A departure of five feet is required for the building setback along 66th Avenue. It appears that a permit has been issued erroneously for the sign located along 66th Avenue. However, to retain this sign, the applicant must obtain validation of the permit issued in error or the requested departure. **In addition, Section 27-614 (d)(2)(B) allows one sign on each parallel street.** Therefore, a departure is also needed to allow a second sign oriented to MD 450.

2. **Section 27-614(a)(4) requires that freestanding signs shall be located at least 10 feet behind the ultimate right-of-way line.**

Review of the site plan indicates that the existing sign is located 13 feet behind the street line of MD 450. No change in location of the existing sign is proposed. The second sign along MD 450 is set back 111 feet behind the street and the sign along 66th Avenue is set back 49 feet.

3. **Section 27-614(b)(1) specifies that the maximum height of signs in the C-S-C Zone shall be 25 feet, measured from the finished grade at the base of the sign to the top of the sign.**

Each of the proposed two freestanding signs has a height of 14 feet. The existing sign has a height of 22.33 feet.

- 4 **Section 27-614(c)(3)(B) provides that in C-S-C Zone, the area of the freestanding sign shall be not more than one (1) square foot for each four (4) linear feet of street frontage, to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet for each sign.**

The applicant is proposing two additional freestanding signs, each with an area of 54 square feet. The property currently has one existing sign with an area of 63.3 square feet. Option B of **Section 27-614(d)(2)** of the Zoning Ordinance allows the property a 78- square-foot sign along Annapolis Road and a 71-square-foot sign along Cooper Lane. If the building setback along 66th Avenue and Webster Street were at least 40 feet, then the Ordinance would allow a 95.65-square-foot sign on Webster Street and a 134.53-square-foot sign on 66th Avenue.

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.**

Section 27-589 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 the scenic qualities of the landscape or attractiveness of development.**
- (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**

The applicant indicated that the proposed signs would serve to advertise products that are sold within the Safeway store. The applicant maintains that because the signs will be located within the parking lot, they will not clutter the areas near driveway entrances or along the street frontage.

The existing sign has been providing adequate identification for the Safeway store for nearly 15 years. It meets all sign requirements, is visually compatible with surrounding properties, and provides clear and practical direction for customers. In contrast, the two additional signs would advertise specific products available in the grocery store, more consistent with typical window signs accentuated with lighting. In summary, the proposed signs conflict with the purposes of the sign regulations, in particular with purposes 6 and 7.

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

Given the location of the existing building and its relation with the adjoining streets,

two freestanding signs can be placed on the property, without need for relief from current sign requirements. There is no functional or practical purpose to be served by the applicant's proposal. The requested departure is not necessary given the specific circumstances of the property, which is adequately served by the existing sign along MD 450 and by one additional sign appropriately located along Cooper Lane.

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 impair the visual, functional and environmental integrity of the site and surrounding area. The proposal is not in harmony with existing developments in the immediate area and would not be compatible with existing and future signs in the area.

The proposed signs have no other practical purpose except advertising products that may be sold in the grocery store. The proposed signs will not improve the aesthetic appearance of the property. The proposal represents excess in the number of signs for the property. In addition, with its colorful, lighted appearances in the middle of the parking lot, the proposed signs represent a proliferation of signs, conflicting with the purposes of the sign regulations.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the preceding analysis and findings staff recommends DENIAL.