



DEPARTURE FROM SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS No. 584

Application	General Data
Project Name: Starlite Media Signs Location: North side of Silver Hill Road, approximately 800 feet west of Marlboro Pike, known as 5800 Silver Hill Road. Applicant/Address: Ted N. Rauth Starlight Media 7500 Cardwell Road Orangevale, CA 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 81/B-2
	Plan Acreage 3.52
	Zone C-S-C
	Dwelling Units N/A
	Square Footage N/A
	Planning Area 75A
	Council District 7
	Municipality N/A
	200-Scale Base Map 204SE5

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Departure for two additional freestanding signs	Adjoining Property Owners 03/15/02 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record N/A (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site 6/28/02
	Variance(s): Adjoining N/A Property Owners

Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer: Elsabet Tesfaye
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION

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July 10, 2002

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 Application No. 584**

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 north side of Silver Hill Road, approximately 800 feet west of Marlboro Pike, known as 5800 Silver Hill Road. The subject property comprises approximately 3.5 acres of land and is improved with a 47,811-square-foot Safeway grocery store and associated parking lot. The property has 468 feet of frontage on Silver Hill Road from which it is accessed.
- B. History: The approved 1986 *Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) for Suitland, District Heights and Vicinity* rezoned the property from the C-2 Zone to the C-S-C Zone.
- C. Master Plan Recommendation: The 1985 *Approved Master Plan for Suitland, District Heights and Vicinity* recommends the property for a community activity center.
- D. Request: The applicant proposes to increase the number of freestanding signs on the property by adding two signs in the parking lot. There is currently one freestanding sign on the property along Silver Hill Road.
- E. Surrounding Uses: The property is surrounded by the following uses:
- North: Integrated shopping center (Penn Station Shopping Center) in the R-18 Zone.
- South: Across Silver Hill Road, commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone and townhouses in the R-18 Zone.
- East: Integrated shopping center (Silver Hill Plaza) in the C-S-C Zone.
- West: Integrated shopping center (Penn Station Shopping Center) in the C-S-C Zone.
- F. Sign Requirements:
- Section 27-614(d)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance allows one freestanding sign for a property with street frontage of 40 to 1,100 feet, and one additional sign is permitted for each additional 1,000 feet or fraction thereof.**
- The subject property has 468 feet of frontage on Silver Hill Road. Therefore, the site is allowed one freestanding sign. The applicant is proposing three freestanding signs.
- 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 at least 10 feet behind the street line of Silver Hill Road. No change in location of the existing sign is proposed. The proposed locations of the two additional signs are in the interior of the property within the parking lot, 166 feet and 140 feet, respectively, behind the street line.
- 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 freestanding signs has a height of 14 feet.

4. **Section 27-614(c)(3)(A) provides that in all Commercial Zones (except the C-O Zone) and all Industrial Zones (except the I-3 Zone), the area of the freestanding sign shall be not more than one (1) square foot for each (4) linear feet of street frontage, to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet for each sign, if the building is not located in an integrated shopping center, other commercial center with three (3) or more businesses served by common and immediate off-street parking and loading facilities, industrial center, or office building complex. The street frontage shall be measured on the property occupied by the center or complex associated with the sign.**

The applicant is proposing a total area of 54 square feet (an area of 27 square feet each) for the proposed two signs. Each of the proposed signs contains three sign panels, approximating the rough size of a commercial movie poster or household window. The existing sign has an area of 100 square feet. With 468 linear feet of street frontage, the property is allowed one sign with an area of 117 square feet. A departure is requested to allow the two additional signs.

5. **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 that are a hazard to safe motor-vehicle operation.**
 - (5) To eliminate structurally unsafe signs that 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.**
 - (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.**

G. 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.**

In general, the purposes of the sign ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification and advertisement, to promote the general welfare of the residents of the county, and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings and structures.

The applicant requests to erect two, 14-foot-high freestanding signs with an area of 27 square feet each, in the parking lot of a Safeway grocery store. The property is allowed only one sign with a maximum area of 117 feet. The existing sign has 100 square feet of area. The proposed signs would increase the total number of signs by two and the maximum sign area by 37 square feet.

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

The existing sign, with 100 square feet of area and 23.8 feet of height, provides adequate identification for the Safeway grocery store that is the sole use on the property. The existing sign meets all sign requirements, is visually compatible with surrounding properties, and provides clear and practical direction for customers. In contrast, the proposed two signs would advertise specific products available in the grocery store on the property and other places, serving a function more consistent with a billboard than a sign. Moreover, the proposed signs will be illuminated, posing a potential distraction to nighttime motorists traveling on the adjoining street.

The proposed signs would conflict with the purposes of the Subtitle, in particular with the following two:

- **To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development.**
- **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.**

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

The property, with 468 feet of frontage along Silver Hill Road, is allowed one freestanding sign with a maximum area of 117 square feet and a maximum height of 25 feet. In order to have three freestanding signs on the property, 2,101 linear feet of street frontage is required. In effect, a departure of 1,632.99 linear feet will be necessary to allow the placement of the proposed two signs on the property. There is no functional or practical purpose to be served by the proposed addition of two signs. The requested departure is not necessary given the specific circumstances of the property which is adequately served by the existing sign.

3. **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 property is currently in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance with regard to the sign regulations. Additionally, there are no unique or unusual circumstances in terms of size, shape, location or topography of the property or the nature of the existing use to warrant the additional signs.

4. **The departure will not impair the visual 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 proposed signs are not in harmony with existing developments in the immediate area and would not be compatible with existing and future signs in the area.

These signs have no practical purpose, except to allow outdoor advertising of products that may be sold in the grocery store. The signs would not provide any identification to the Safeway grocery store, which is the principal and only use on the site; nor do they promote accessibility from the street or provide directions to the parking lot. The proposed signs would only detract from the aesthetic appearance of the property and the general neighborhood.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the preceding analysis and findings, it is recommended that DSDS-584 be DENIED.