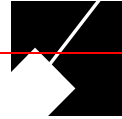


The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
 Prince George's County Planning Department  
 Development Review Division  
 301-952-3530



**Comment [1]: 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.**  
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*Note: Staff reports can be accessed at [www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm](http://www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm)*

## DEPARTURE FROM SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS NO. 587

Application	General Data
Project Name  Radio Shack	Date Accepted 4/24/02
	Planning Board Action Limit N/A
Location  Northeast corner of 77 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and Frederick Avenue, known as 7700 Frederick Avenue.	Tax Map & Grid 051 E-1
	Plan Acreage 0.30
Applicant  Radio Shack Corporation 300 W. 3 <sup>rd</sup> St., Suite 700 Fort Worth, Texas 76102	Zone C-S-C
	Dwelling Units N/A
	Square Footage N/A
	Planning Area 69
	Council District 03
	Municipality None
	200-Scale Base Map 206NE7

Purpose of Application			Notice Dates	
Departure from area of freestanding sign, location of sign and building setback from streetline.			Adjoining Property Owners (CB-15-1998)	April 30, 2002
			Previous Parties of Record (CB-13-1997)	N/A
			Sign(s) Posted on Site	11/2702
			Variance(s): Adjoining Property Owners	
Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer: Catherine H. Wallace	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS		DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X			

December 11, 2002

**TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:**

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Arie Stouten, Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Catherine H. Wallace, Planner Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. 587**

REQUEST: Departure from location and area requirements for a freestanding sign

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL with conditions**

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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.

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**FINDINGS:**

- A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is a one-third acre lot located in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Frederick Road, immediately south of Annapolis Road (MD 450). The lot is improved with a one-story brick building and a paved parking lot.

B. **Development Data Summary**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	C-S-C	C-S-C
Use(s)	Retail store	Retail store
Acreage	.30	.30

- C. **History:** The property was subdivided in 1970 and the building was constructed in 1971. Commercial zoning predates the current 1994 comprehensive zoning map by many years.
- D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1994 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity* recommends retail–commercial uses for the site.
- E. **Request:** The applicant intends to reface an existing freestanding sign. A departure from the location requirements for the sign itself, the location of the main building, and the area of the face of the sign has been requested.
- F. **Surrounding Uses:** The property is surrounded by the following uses:
- North and northeast—a car dealer, restaurants and other commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone
- South and southeast—single-family residences in the R-55 Zone
- West—the West Lanham Hills Fire Department in the C-S-C Zone

G. **Design Requirements:**

(a) **Location.**

- (1) **Section 27-614(a)(1) states: “In all Commercial and Industrial Zones (except the I-3 and U-L-I Zones), signs shall only be located on property where the main building associated with the sign is located at least forty (40) feet behind the front streetline.”**

The main building on the subject property is located approximately 40 feet from the centerline of 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This street has an existing right-of-way of 55 feet, but the Zoning Ordinance requires a proposed right-of-way of 70 feet for roads adjoining commercially zoned property. Assuming the centerline to be 35 feet from the proposed streetline, the main building would be required to be set back 75 feet from the centerline. Therefore, a departure of 35 feet is needed.

- (2) **Section 27-614(a)(4) states: “Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Subtitle addressing setbacks and yards, in all Commercial and Industrial Zones (except the I-3 Zone), signs need only be located ten (10) feet behind the**

**streetline.**

The leading edge of the sign is located on the proposed streetline for 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue (35 feet from centerline). A departure of the full ten feet is therefore required.

(b) **Area**

Section 27-614(c)(3)(B) provides that the area of a freestanding sign in a retail– commercial zone be based on: **“One (1) square foot for each four (4) lineal feet of street frontage, to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet for each sign, if the business is not located in an integrated shopping center....”**

The property has 234.5 feet of frontage on 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Frederick Road, permitting the area of a freestanding sign as large as 58.65 square feet. The proposed sign measures 81 square feet in area, requiring a departure of 22.35 square feet, or roughly 28 percent.

- H. **Right-of-way Issues:** A referral reply from Tom Masog, Transportation Planning Section, refers to the location of the proposed sign in the proposed right-of-way for 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Actually, the proposed sign is to be located in the same location as the existing sign that is located 35 feet from the centerline of 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue, providing a potential 70-foot right-of-way. If a 70-foot right-of-way is ever needed for 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue, its location would probably not be 35 feet from centerline, based upon the location of the existing right-of-way on the property to the north (the Pancake House). However, based on conversations with Hamendra Mathur, District Engineer, Department of Public Works and Transportation, it is unlikely that a right-of-way greater than 60 feet will ever be needed. Thus, the current (and proposed) location of the sign, while it does not meet the ten-foot setback from the theoretical right-of-way line, is located outside of the streetline. In the unlikely event that the county should ever require a full 70-foot right-of-way, it may become necessary for the owner to remove the sign.

I. **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:

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

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance relating to signs are found in Section 27-589:

- (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; and**
- (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 combination of location and area requirements found in the Zoning Ordinance are intended to ensure that adequate information is presented to identify locations and direct vehicular and other traffic to the site without detracting from the qualities of the landscape or attractiveness of development. Typically, a building located less than 40 feet from the streetline does not require a freestanding sign to meet these objectives.

Although the building in this case is less than 40 feet from 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue, it is about 120 feet from Annapolis Road and is partially obscured by surrounding uses. The freestanding sign is necessary to acquaint motorists on Annapolis Road with the location of the business. However, once on site, the large sign and large lettering on the building are superfluous. Freestanding signs are frequently singled out as creating sign proliferation. Often, however, it is the overall signage on the site that creates the image of sign proliferation. Since the area of the freestanding sign will be permitted to exceed regulations by 28 percent, a reduction in the building signage of roughly 28 percent is recommended.

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

The departures from the location and area regulations are the minimum necessary to permit the applicant to reface 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 site's location to the rear of commercial properties with Annapolis Road frontage is unique in this area, as most properties have direct frontage on, and therefore, better visibility from, Annapolis Road.

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

A freestanding sign has existed on this property for a number of years. There are numerous commercial uses on Annapolis Road, some with freestanding signs, others with building signs only. Given the setback from Annapolis Road, the subject freestanding sign does not add significantly to the proliferation of freestanding signs along the road. However, the reduction in the size of the building sign would bring about a more harmonious visual appearance, and reduce the clutter brought about by building and freestanding sign redundancy. Nearby residential properties are not affected by the departure in that the signs are oriented toward Annapolis Road.

**CONCLUSION:**

The proposal to reface and modernize an existing freestanding sign requires departures for building location, sign location and area. The proposal is acceptable in that the location of the site is to the rear of other commercial uses fronting along Annapolis Road, thereby reducing the overall impact of the sign on the roadway. The existing sign on the building should be reduced in area and size of lettering, consistent with the increase in the area of the freestanding sign above that permitted by the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends APPROVAL of DSDS-587, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the issuance of permits, the applicant shall demonstrate that the area of the building sign is at least 28 percent less than the maximum allowed for this site; and
2. The removal or relocation of the freestanding sign caused by any future widening of 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue shall be at the applicant's expense.