



Note: Staff reports can be accessed at www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm.

Departure from Sign Design Standards

DSDS-617

Application	General Data
Project Name: Integrity Church International Location: North side of Landover Road adjacent to Kent Village Drive intersection, known as 7600 Landover Road. Applicant/Address: Integrity Church International 3308 Dodge Park Road Landover, Maryland 20785-2101	Date Accepted: 3/5/04
	Planning Board Action Limit: N/A
	Plan Acreage: 3.73
	Zone: C-S-C
	Dwelling Units: NA
	Square Footage: 91.4 sign area
	Planning Area: 72
	Tier: Developed
	Council District: 05
	Municipality: N/A
	200-Scale Base Map: 204NE06

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Departure from the area and height requirements for a freestanding sign	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: (CB-12-2003)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site: 10/18/04

Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer: Laxmi Srinivas
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

November 10, 2004

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Jimi Jones, Acting Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Laxmi Srinivas, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. 617**

REQUEST: **Departure to add additional area for the proposed 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.

- A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is located on the north side of Landover Road (MD 202), between Dodge Park Road and 75th Avenue, across from Kent Village Drive, and is known as 7600 Landover Road. The subject property comprises approximately 3.73 acres of land. The applicant has obtained approvals for a church on the subject property. The property consists of two parcels that have been treated as a single building lot since 1994. Parcel A fronts on Landover Road and is improved with the worship hall portion of the church. It contains a two-pole sign support structure previously used for a freestanding commercial sign. Parcel E fronts on Dodge Park Road and is improved with an office building containing the church offices and ancillary uses, as well as retail shops. Access to the church portion of the property is from Landover Road. The property is zoned C-S-C, and it has 208 feet of street frontage on Landover Road.

B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	C-S-C	C-S-C
Use(s)	Vacant	Church
Acreage	3.73	3.73
Signs	1 freestanding (temporary)	1 freestanding
Sign Area	32 SF	91.4 SF
Sign Height	8 feet	25 feet

- C. **History:** On July 14, 1994, the Planning Board approved DDS-435 for various departures for the proposed church and retail use (PGCPB No. 94-228) and DPLS-187 for 233 of the 585 parking spaces required for the uses on the property. The subject property previously contained a bowling alley.
- D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1993 Landover and Vicinity Master Plan recommends commercial use on the subject property and retains the property in the C-S-C Zone. The subject property is located in the Dodge Park/Kent Village Activity Center. The master plan recommends that signs at activity centers should be designed and sited so as to minimize the visual impact on the surrounding area and access roads.
- E. **Request:** The applicant is requesting to use an existing sign support structure on Parcel A for identifying the church on the subject property. The sign will be set back three feet from the street line in the southeast corner of Parcel A facing Landover Road. It will have a total area of 91.4 square feet with a height of 25 feet.
- F. **Surrounding Uses:** The property is surrounded by the following uses:
- North: Post office in the C-S-C Zone
- West: Multifamily Residential in the R-18 Zone
- South: Across Landover Road is a gas station in the C-S-C zone.
- East: A gas station in the C-S-C Zone and farther east across Dodge Park Road is a shopping center also in the C-S-C Zone.

G. Sign Requirements:

1. **Subdivision 2, Signs for Specific Uses, Section 27-617 (Institutional Other than Temporary) allows a sign to be erected on the institutional property. Institutional signs shall meet the following design standards:**

- (1) **Maximum area for each sign—48 square feet**
- (2) **Maximum height—8 feet above finished grade at the base of the sign**
- (3) **Minimum setback—15 feet from adjoining land in any residential zone**
- (4) **Type allowed—freestanding or attached to a building**
- (5) **Maximum number—One per street the property fronts on**

The proposed freestanding identification sign shall have an area of 91.4 square feet and a height of 25 feet. The sign area will be 16 feet wide and 5 feet 8 inches high with a double-faced blue and white background. It is an illuminated box sign. Acrylic push-through letters with anodized gold aluminum faces are proposed to identify the name of the church, six-inch tall letters are proposed for a changeable message board, and red-colored letters are proposed for an electronic time/temperature unit. The area of the proposed sign exceeds the allowable area by 43.5 square feet and exceeds the allowable height by 17 feet.

The applicant is also proposing a building-mounted sign consisting of a red fabric entrance canopy that contains the church name and address spelled out in eight-inch white letters. The canopy is located over the church's entrance facing Landover Road. The approximate area of this sign is eight square feet. Since the building is set back more than 130 feet from Landover Road, this sign is not being used as an identification sign. It is used as a sign to identify the entrance to the church from the parking lot. The location and details of this sign are not shown on the site plan. A condition of approval has been added to require the same.

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 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 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.**

The proposed sign face design and colors are subdued and compatible with the institutional nature of the property. The sign face does not attract undue attention and will be compatible with the overall streetscape along Landover Road. However, it is an illuminated box sign with flashing components depicting time and temperature. Ground-mounted illumination with spotlights will be more suitable for the institutional use on the property. Also, the sign is supported by two posts and is 25 feet high. The proposed design is more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign will be more appropriate for the institutional use of the subject property. The proposed height of 25 feet is also more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign with a maximum height of 15 feet will be more appropriate to identify a church. Conditions of approval have been added to require a monument sign, reduce the height of the sign, and reduce the illumination of the sign. With the proposed conditions, the overall design of the proposed is subdued and compatible with the institutional use of the property. A condition of approval has been added to require landscaping along the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign along the street.

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.**

The applicant is requesting relief from Section 27-617, Institutional Signs, of the Zoning Ordinance, which allows one freestanding sign per street frontage. A 48-square-foot freestanding sign with a height of eight feet will not adequately identify the church use on the property because the subject property has a low elevation along Landover Road. Also, it would be located in the midst of numerous commercial signs, which are much taller and have a greater sign area. A building-mounted sign would hardly provide any visibility because the building is set back 130 feet from Landover Road. Therefore, a sign with a larger sign area and height is required to identify the church on the subject property. The larger sign will help identify the entrance along the road and promote safety along Landover Road.

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 proposed sign will provide adequate identification and advertisement for the church along Landover Road and ensure safety of the motorists along the road. However, the sign is supported by two posts and is 25 feet high. The proposed design is more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign will be more appropriate for the institutional use of the subject property. The proposed height of 25 feet is also more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign with a maximum height of 15 feet will be more appropriate to identify a church. The location, size and design of the recommended sign will be more appropriate for easy identification along the street.

Therefore, the purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.

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

The applicant is requesting a departure for a larger sign along Landover Road. The larger sign is necessary to provide adequate identification and advertisement for the property along Landover Road. Therefore, 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.

A building-mounted sign will not be appropriate to identify the use on the property because the building is set back 130 feet from Landover Road. A freestanding sign is, therefore, more suitable to identify the church use on the property. The proposed sign will be located in the midst of numerous commercial signs along Landover Road, which are much taller and have a greater sign area. The subject site is at a lower elevation along Landover Road. In order for the sign to be visible in the midst of the larger commercial signs, the sign has to be of an adequate size for easy identification. Due to the low elevation of the site, the sign has to be of a sufficient height for easy visibility. Therefore, a sign that meets the area and height requirements of the Zoning Ordinance will not be adequate to identify the church use on the property. A sign of larger area and height is required to easily identify the church use on the property. The proposed sign will ensure easy identification of the entrance and ensure safety of the motorists on the road. However, the overall design and height of the sign is not appropriate for the institutional use of the property. Conditions of approval have been added to require a monument sign with a maximum height of 15 feet instead of the proposed sign. The recommended sign will be appropriate for the institutional use of the property. Therefore, the departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances that are unique to the site.

4. The departure will not impair the visual quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed sign face design and colors are subdued and compatible with the institutional nature of the property. The sign face does not attract undue attention and will be compatible with the overall streetscape along Landover Road. However, it is an illuminated box sign with flashing components depicting time and temperature. Ground-mounted illumination with spotlights will be more suitable for the institutional use on the property. Also, the sign is supported by two posts and is 25 feet high. The proposed design is more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign will be more appropriate for the institutional use of the subject property. The proposed height of 25 feet is also more suitable for a commercial property. A monument sign with a maximum height of 15 feet will be more appropriate to identify a church. Conditions of approval have been added to require a monument sign, reduce the height of the sign, and reduce the illumination of the sign. With the proposed conditions, the overall design of the proposed is subdued and compatible with the institutional use of the property. A condition of approval has been added to require landscaping along the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign along the street.

I. Referral Comments:

1. In a memorandum dated March 24, 2004, the Permits Review Section have requested minor changes to the site plan. Conditions of approval have been added to require the changes.

2. In a memorandum dated May 24, 2004, the Transportation Planning Section has stated that they have no comments regarding the proposal.
3. In a memorandum dated March 16, 2004, the Department of Environmental Resources has stated that they have no objections to the freestanding sign.
4. In a memorandum dated March 12, 2004, the Historic Preservation Section has stated that the proposal will have no effect on historic resources.
5. In a memorandum dated March 29, 2004, the Community Planning Division has stated that the 1993 Landover and Vicinity Master Plan recommends commercial use on the subject property and retains the property in the C-S-C Zone. The subject property is located in the Dodge Park/Kent Village Activity Center. The master plan recommends that signs at activity centers should be designed and sited so as to minimize the visual impact on the surrounding area and access roads.
6. In a memorandum dated March 15, 2004, the Environmental Planning Section has stated that no environmental impact is anticipated due to the sign.
7. In a memorandum dated April 5, 2004, the Redevelopment Authority has stated that they have no comment regarding the proposal.
8. In a memorandum dated April 6, 2004, the Andrews Air Force Base has made a finding of no significant impact regarding the proposal.
9. In a memorandum dated May 10, 2004, the Urban Design Section has expressed concerns regarding the proposed height of the sign and the design of the sign supported on posts. The section has also expressed concerns regarding the illumination of the sign and the flashing components of the sign. The section has recommended a monument sign and conditions of approval for reducing the illumination of the sign and adding landscaping at the base of the sign.

CONCLUSION:

The recommended sign represents a balance between the need to provide adequate identification and the responsibility 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 Prince Georges County.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends APPROVAL of the requested departure from sign design standards for an additional sign DSDS-617, subject to the following conditions:

Prior to certification of the DSDS application, the site plan and sign design drawings shall be revised as follows:

1. The location, color, height and details of the building sign shall be shown.
2. The proposed sign shall be replaced by a monument sign with a maximum height of 15 feet. The illumination for the sign shall be reduced by either proposing ground-mounted illumination with spotlights or eliminating the flashing components depicting time and temperature.

3. Adequate landscaping shall be shown at the base of the sign.
4. The setback of the sign from the property line and the ultimate right-of-way line shall be shown on the site plan.