



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

Departure from Sign Design Standards

DSDS 623

Application	General Data
Project Name: Iglesia De Dios Septimo Dia Church Location: Southwest corner of Whitfield Chapel Rd. & Howser Lane, known as 9031 Howser Lane. Applicant/Address: Iglesia De Dios Septimo Dia Church 9031 Howser Lane Lanham, Maryland 20706	Date Accepted: 10/15/2004
	Planning Board Action Limit: N/A
	Plan Acreage: 3.83
	Zone: R-55
	Dwelling Units: N/A
	Square Footage: 50
	Planning Area: 70
	Tier: Developing
	Council District: 05
	Municipality: N/A
	200-Scale Base Map: 207NE08

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Departure for increasing the allowable area of a freestanding sign by two square feet and placing the sign perpendicular to the street instead of parallel as required by the Zoning Ordinance	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: N/A (CB-12-2003)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site and Notice of Hearing Mailed: N/A

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



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

November 30, 2004

PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISION

Limited Departures and Revisions to Approved Plans

Application No: DSDS 623

Project Name: Iglesia De Dios Septimo Dia Church

Reviewer's Name: Laxmi Srinivas, Senior Planner

- A. **Nature of the Applicant's Request:** This Departure from Sign Design Standards application was filed for increasing the allowable sign area by two square feet and placing the sign perpendicular to the street instead of facing the street as required by the Zoning Ordinance.

The applicant is proposing a freestanding monument sign for identifying the church. The area of the sign will not exceed 48 square feet. The posts at the base of the sign add an additional two square feet to the total area of the sign. The sign will be placed perpendicular to the street for better visibility. If placed parallel to the street, the sign will not be very visible due to obstructions like embankments, fences and landscaping. The proposed sign will be internally illuminated and set back 15 feet from the property line.

- B. **Required Findings:**

Section 27-325 (c). Limited Minor Changes—Planning Director

- (1) The Planning Director is authorized to approve minor changes administratively, without public hearing, only if the proposed minor changes are limited in scope and nature, including an increase in gross floor area or land covered by a structure other than a building up to ten percent. The Director shall deny any administrative approval request proposing site plan changes that will have a significant impact on adjacent property.
- (2) Before approving a minor change, the Director shall make all findings the Planning Board would be required to make, if it reviewed the application.
- (3) The Director is not authorized to waive requirements in this Subtitle, grant variances, or modify conditions, considerations, or other requirements imposed by the Planning Board or District Council in any case.
- (4) The applicant's property shall be posted within ten days of the Director's acceptance of the filing of the application. Posting shall be in accordance with Part 3, Division 1. On and after the first day of posting, the application may not be amended.

- (5) The Director may waive posting after determining, in writing, that the proposed minor change is so limited in scope and nature that it will have no appreciable impact on adjacent property.
- (6) If posting is waived or a written request for public hearing is not submitted within the posted time period, then the Director may act on the application. The Director's approval concludes all proceedings.
- (7) If the Director denies the application or a timely hearing request is submitted, then the application shall be treated as refiled on the date of that event. The applicant, Director, and technical staff shall then follow the procedures for Planning Board review.

Section 27-617 (Institutional Other than Temporary Signs)

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 (must face street frontage)

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 that 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.

C. **Determinations:**

The subject property is a 3.83-acre parcel located on the southwest corner of Whitfield Chapel Road and Howser Lane, known as 9031 Howser Lane. The property is zoned R-55.

It is surrounded by the following uses:

North—Howser Lane and Lanham Methodist Church in the R-R Zone.

East—Whitfield Chapel Road

South—Whitfield Knolls single-family residential subdivision in the R-55 Zone

West—Vacant property in the R-R Zone

1. The posting requirement for this minor revision was waived because the proposed minor change is so limited in scope and nature that it will have no appreciable impact on adjacent property.
2. The subject property has frontage on Howser Lane and has vehicular access from Howser Lane. Howser Lane has sufficient capacity to accommodate the type and amount of traffic expected to be generated by the use.
3. The Permits Review Section has stated that the application correctly identifies all zoning concerns.
4. Conditions of approval have been added to require the following:
 - The area of the sign not exceed 48 square feet
 - The area of the base columns for the sign not exceed two square feet
 - Landscaping be provided at the base of the sign
5. With the proposed conditions, the Departure from Sign Design Standards application meets the criteria for a limited minor change approvable by the Planning Director because the applicant is adding less than ten percent of the allowable area of the sign. The proposed changes are minor in scope and nature and will have no appreciable effect on adjacent properties.
6. The Departure from Sign Design Standards will be consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the Approved Master Plan and SMA for Glendale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity.

Section 27-239.01 - Required Findings for granting a departure:

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 facing the street frontage. The sign will be placed perpendicular to the street for better visibility. If placed parallel to the street, the sign will not be very visible due to obstructions like embankments, fences and landscaping. 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 location of the sign will provide adequate identification and advertisement along the street. The proposed sign is a monument sign and the location, size and design of the sign are appropriate for easy identification along the street. The minor increase of two square feet to the allowable sign area is less than ten percent of the total sign area and will not significantly add to the overall sign area.

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 placing the sign perpendicular to the street instead of parallel to the street and adding two additional square feet to the allowable area of the sign for the support posts. 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.

Except for several church facilities, there has been no new development in the vicinity of the subject property. The proposed sign will help clearly identify this specific church among the other churches in the vicinity. 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 is a monument sign with subdued colors and materials that are appropriate for an institutional sign. The overall design of the sign is subdued and compatible with the institutional use of the property. The sign does not attract undue attention and will be compatible with the overall streetscape. With the proposed conditions, adequate landscaping will be proposed along the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign along the street.

D. Recommendation:

Based on the above findings, it is recommended that DSDS 623 be APPROVED. Prior to certification of the plans, the site plan shall be revised to show the following:

1. A note stating that the total area of the sign shall not exceed 48 square feet and the total area of the base of the sign shall not exceed two square feet.
2. Landscaping at the base of the sign
3. A note stating that there are no existing or proposed day care activities on the site.

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**APPROVED BY AUTHORITY OF:
Fern V. Piret, Planning Director**

By:_____ Date:_____

Jimi Jones, Acting Zoning Supervisor