



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

Departure from Sign Design Standards Collingbrook at Rodenhauser

DSDS-696

REQUEST	STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Departure of 7 square feet from the required 12-square-foot sign letter area maximum for two gateway signs.	APPROVAL with conditions

Location: On the east side of Church Road, at its intersection with Youderian Drive.

Gross Acreage: 2.29

Zone: R-E

Gross Floor Area: N/A

Lots: 2

Parcels: 0

Planning Area: 74A

Council District: 04

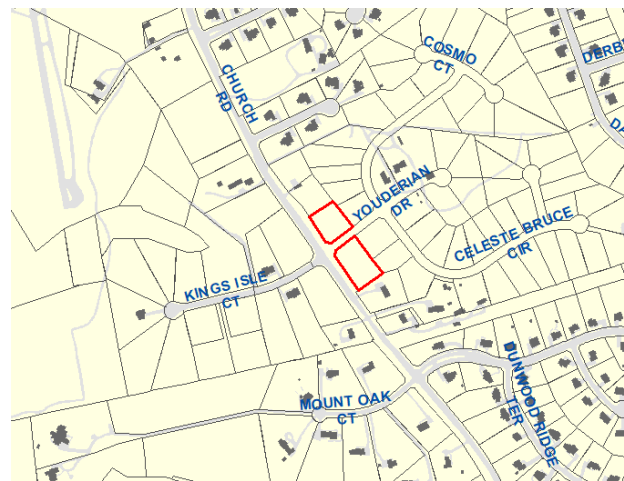
Election District: 07

Municipality: N/A

200-Scale Base Map: 205NE12

Applicant/Address:
Collingbrook Development, LLC
2252 Brightseat Road
Landover, MD 20785

Staff Reviewer: Thomas Sievers
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Planning Board Date: 03/05/2020

Planning Board Action Limit: N/A

Staff Report Date: 02/14/2020

Date Accepted: 12/16/2019

Informational Mailing: 01/09/2018

Acceptance Mailing: 11/08/2019

Sign Posting Deadline: 02/04/2020

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THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-696
 Collingbrook at Rodenhauser

The Subdivision and Zoning staff has reviewed the departure from sign design standards for the subject property and presents the following evaluation and findings leading to a recommendation of APPROVAL with conditions, as described in the Recommendation section of this report.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

This departure from sign design standards was reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

- a. The requirements of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance for gateway signs;
- b. The requirements of prior approvals;
- c. Referral comments.

FINDINGS

- 1. **Request:** The applicant is proposing to construct two gateway signs, with accompanying brick wall entrance features, at the entrance to the subdivision. The signs are located on both sides of the public right-of-way of Youderian Drive and are made of a precast stone or stucco for the sign face mounted upon a varied-height brick entry wall, with columns and seasonal landscaping at its base. Each sign is proposed to have approximately 19 square feet of lettering area, which exceeds the 12-square-foot maximum. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a departure from the sign design standards (DSDS) of Section 27-624(a)(1) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance. The signs are proposed to be mounted on the entrance wall within the 6-foot maximum sign height requirement.
- 2. **Development Data Summary:** The following chart summarizes the approved development for the overall Collingbrook subdivision, which remains unchanged by this application.

	EXISTING
Zone	R-E
Use(s)	Single-family detached Residential
Total Acreage	74.35
Number of Lots	62
Parcels	1
Outlots	1

3. **Location:** The subject site is two lots on the east side of Church Road, at the intersection of Youderian Drive; Lot 9, Block C, is on the north side of Youderian Drive and is 42,302 square feet, and Lot 34, Block F, is on the south side of Youderian Drive and is 1.32 acres. Both lots are in the Residential-Estate (R-E) Zone and are part of the subdivision known as Collingbrook recorded in Plat Book MMB 239-53.
4. **Surrounding Uses:** The subject site is surrounded by large-lot, single-family detached development and is located on Tax Map 54 in Grid D-3, in Planning Area 74A. The subject lots are bounded by Church Road to the west with single-family detached lots in the Residential-Agricultural (R-A) Zone beyond. Single-family detached lots in the R-E Zone abut the site to the north and east, which are also within the Collingbrook subdivision. Single-family detached lots in the R-E Zone, which are part of other residential subdivisions, abut the subject site to the south.
5. **Previous Approvals:** Collingbrook is the subject a preliminary plan of subdivision (PPS) known as the Rodenhauser Property, PPS 4-06063, approved by the Prince George's County Planning Board on December 7, 2006 (PGCPB Resolution No. 06-277), subject to 28 conditions of approval, for development of 62 single-family detached residential lots. In accordance with the PPS approval, a record plat was approved and recorded for the Collingbrook subdivision, specifically for the subject lots, on December 4, 2013 in Plat Book MB 239-53. The following text addresses the previously approved environmental conditions of PPS 4-06063 related to the subject application. The respective conditions are in **bold** typeface, and the associated comments and recommendations are in standard typeface.
 4. **Prior to final plat approval, a Type II Tree Conservation Plan shall be approved. All approved reforestation treatment areas on private lots, including lots with interrelated woodland preservation treatments shall be shown on the final plat as being placed in a conservation easement.**
 14. **Prior to signature approval of the preliminary plan, the TCPI shall be revised to show a reforestation treatment area in the designated 40-foot-wide scenic easement along Church Road. Large caliper trees shall be used to provide a visual buffer from the historic road and label the reforestation treatment with the corresponding symbol in the legend. Show the reforestation/buffer area to the closest 1/100th of an acre; and adjust the worksheet accordingly regarding the reforestation amount.**

16. The Type II Tree Conservation Plan (TCPII) shall include a plant schedule for the quantity of trees in the reforestation area/40-foot wide scenic easement to meet the requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance

The signs are proposed to front on Church Road, which was designated a scenic and historic road in the *Approved Countywide Master Plan of Transportation* (MPOT). Previous conditions of approval required this site to provide a 40-foot-wide scenic and conservation easement along the site's frontage on Church Road. Both the Type I and Type II tree conservation plans (TCPI and TCPII) show the required easement and reforestation. The required easement is also shown on the plat. The application is in compliance with the most recently approved TCPII, which shows the location of the proposed signs; however, given the scenic and historic nature of Church Road, the applicant should maximize the landscape planting surrounding the signs. The planting should include larger caliper native species behind the walls and native shrubs in front of the walls. This planting would allow the area to continue to serve as the buffers required by the PPS, while allowing for neighborhood signage.

- 6. Master Plan Recommendation:** The subject property is located in Planning Area 74A and is within the limits of the 2006 *Approved Master Plan for Bowie and Vicinity and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Areas 71A, 71B, 74A, and 74B* (Bowie and Vicinity Master Plan and SMA). The master plan land use recommendation is for a low-density, residential use. The subject lots were approved and platted for a low-density residential use and are, therefore, consistent with the land use recommendation of the master plan. The addition of signage has no effect on this finding of conformance.

The Bowie and Vicinity SMA retained the property in the R-E Zone. The property is also located in Aviation Planning Area 6 for Freeway Airport.

- 7. Zoning Ordinance Requirements for Gateway Signs:** Section 27-624 of the Zoning Ordinance provides the following gateway sign regulations that pertain to the departure request:

(a) A permanent gateway sign identifying a residential subdivision is permitted in any Residential Zone, and is required in any subdivision in the R-T Zone with more than twenty-five (25) dwelling units for which a Detailed Site Plan is approved after December 30, 1996, provided that maintenance is the responsibility of a Homeowners' Association, or other entity or person designated in a maintenance arrangement approved by the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement, subject to the following design standards:

(1) Maximum lettering area per sign - twelve (12) square feet;

The applicant is requesting a DSDS for the area requirements because the gateway sign exceeds these parameters. The submitted sign details show that the lettering area on the proposed gateway signs is limited to approximately 19 square feet, where the name of the community, "Collingbrook Estates," is incised into precast masonry sign face. A departure of seven square feet of lettering area is requested.

(2) Maximum height - six (6) feet above established grade;

The entrance feature is a liner-curved brick wall varying in height from 4 to 5 feet 8-inches in height, with brick accent columns that vary from 5 feet 4 inches to 7 feet 4 inches in height, capped with stone ornament. The precast stone sign is proposed to be mounted on the curved areas of the brick wall at approximately 4 feet 4 inches from the base and, therefore, meets the maximum height requirement of 6 feet.

(3) Location - at the entrance to a residential subdivision, set back from the roadway to maintain unobstructed lines of vision for five hundred (500) feet in all directions of travel;

The site plan and sign detail plans reflect that the sign and entrance feature wall are to be located more than 10 feet from the right-of-way line. The applicant's statement of justification (SOJ), dated October 16, 2019, indicates that the placement will maintain unobstructed lines of vision in all directions of travel. The applicant should submit a site distance analysis confirming this requirement, prior to certification of the departure site plan.

(4) Materials - low maintenance, durable, and in keeping with the character of the community. Plastic signs with internal illumination are prohibited; and

High-quality, durable masonry materials of brick and precast stone are proposed and contribute to the character of the scenic and historic roadway of Church Road.

(5) Landscaping which is attractive year-round shall be provided at the base of a gateway sign.

Landscape details have been submitted which demonstrate plantings to be provided at the base of the signs, with a mixture of ornamental trees, deciduous and evergreen shrubs, and annuals, to provide year-round interest.

Section 27-239.01(b)(7)(A) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that, in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

(i) The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.

Section 27-589(a) of the Zoning Ordinance 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; 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.**

In general, the purposes of the sign regulations are to promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents, workers, and motorists by increasing and enhancing sign visibility and readability, to regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which could depreciate the value of the property, to prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the attractiveness of development, and to control scale, consistent with the intended advertising purposes.

The proposed signs are sufficiently sized and located so motorists can easily find the community. The proposed signs will not impede visibility for drivers entering or exiting the community. The placement of signs on each side of the entrance road to the subdivision will create a sense of balance and will not create an appearance of proliferation. The signs will establish a sense of place, an identity for a community that is buffered from the roadway, while maintaining the scenic and historic character. The signs promote the use of enduring, high-quality materials for a large-lot residential community, which will benefit present and future inhabitants.

(ii) The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

The approach to the community will be dominated by a wooded buffer, which is required along Church Road, a scenic and historic roadway. The applicant's SOJ provides that the additional 7 square feet of sign lettering area is necessary to ensure sufficient visibility and identification, while respecting the roadway character, from Church Road. Given the specific circumstances of this request, the departure is the minimum necessary.

- (iii) **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.**

This criterion is not applicable in this instance.

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

The placement of the signs will not impair the visual or functional integrity of the surrounding neighborhood. Natural materials of brick and stone and year-round plantings proposed, surrounding the signage and entrance feature, promote the environmental quality and integrity of the surrounding neighborhood and the visibility of the neighborhood entrance.

8. **Other Issues:** The PPS for this site required a 40-foot-wide scenic easement buffer along Church Road, which is also shown on the record plat. The proposed signs and entrance features are to be located within the buffer, in order to visibly identify the subdivision. While the placement of the signs is appropriate for visibility, staff recommends installation of additional shade trees behind the sign to extend into and blend with the remaining 40-foot-wide treed scenic and historic buffer north and south of the signs.

The developer has established a sign easement recorded in Liber 40817 at folio 562, to the benefit of the Collingbrook Estates Homeowners Association, to ensure the maintenance of the signs. However, the sign easement does not extend to the right-of-way and should, in order to allow access to the sign easement area. Staff recommends that the easement agreement be amended, and the site plan revised to show an extended easement, which provides access to the signs.

9. **Referrals:** No referral agencies provided any comment or concern that would affect the recommendation of approval for this application. The relevant comments submitted for this application were included in this technical staff report. The following referral memorandums were received, are included as back-up to this technical staff report, and adopted by reference herein:

- Transportation Planning Section dated February 3, 2020 (Masog to Sievers)
- Transportation Planning Section-Trails dated January 30, 2020 (Smith to Simon)
- City of Bowie dated January 30, 2020 (Meinert to Simon)
- Environmental Planning Section, dated February 10, 2020 (Reiser to Conner)
- Permit Review Section dated December 24, 2019 (Glascoe to Simon)
- Community Planning Section dated January 28, 2020 (D'Ambrosi to Simon)
- Historic Preservation Section dated December 27, 2019 (Stabler to Simon)

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing evaluation and analysis, the Subdivision and Zoning staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-696 for Collingbrook at Rodenhauser subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification of the departure site plan, the plans shall be revised to:
 - a. Add a general note on the site plan stating that the purpose of this application is for a departure from sign design standards.
 - b. Indicate the maximum height of the sign only, versus the height of the entrance feature, on the site and landscape plan.
 - c. Indicate the standard sign lettering area required, per the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, and the sign lettering area approved with this application.
 - d. Add native, 3.5- to 4-inch-caliper, shade trees, to the maximum extent possible, behind the signs, extending to the remaining width of the 40-foot scenic and historic buffer and reforestation areas, and provide native shrubs in front of the signs on the site and landscape plan.
 - e. Indicate that the site is within Aviation Policy Area 6 in the general notes.
 - f. Remove the M-NCPPC approval block from the plan.
 - g. Provide dimensions from the sign and entrance feature to the right-of-way on the site and sign detail plans.
 - h. Add the site's property lines to the landscape detail and ensure that the plantings are located within the site's boundary.
2. Prior to certification of the departure site plan, the recorded sign easement agreement shall be amended to extend the easement to the right-of-way, to allow access to the sign area, and recorded. The departure site plan shall reflect the extended easement location and the new recordation reference.
3. Prior to certification of the departure site plan, a site distance analysis shall be submitted which demonstrates that the placement of the signs will maintain unobstructed lines of vision for 500 feet in all directions of travel.