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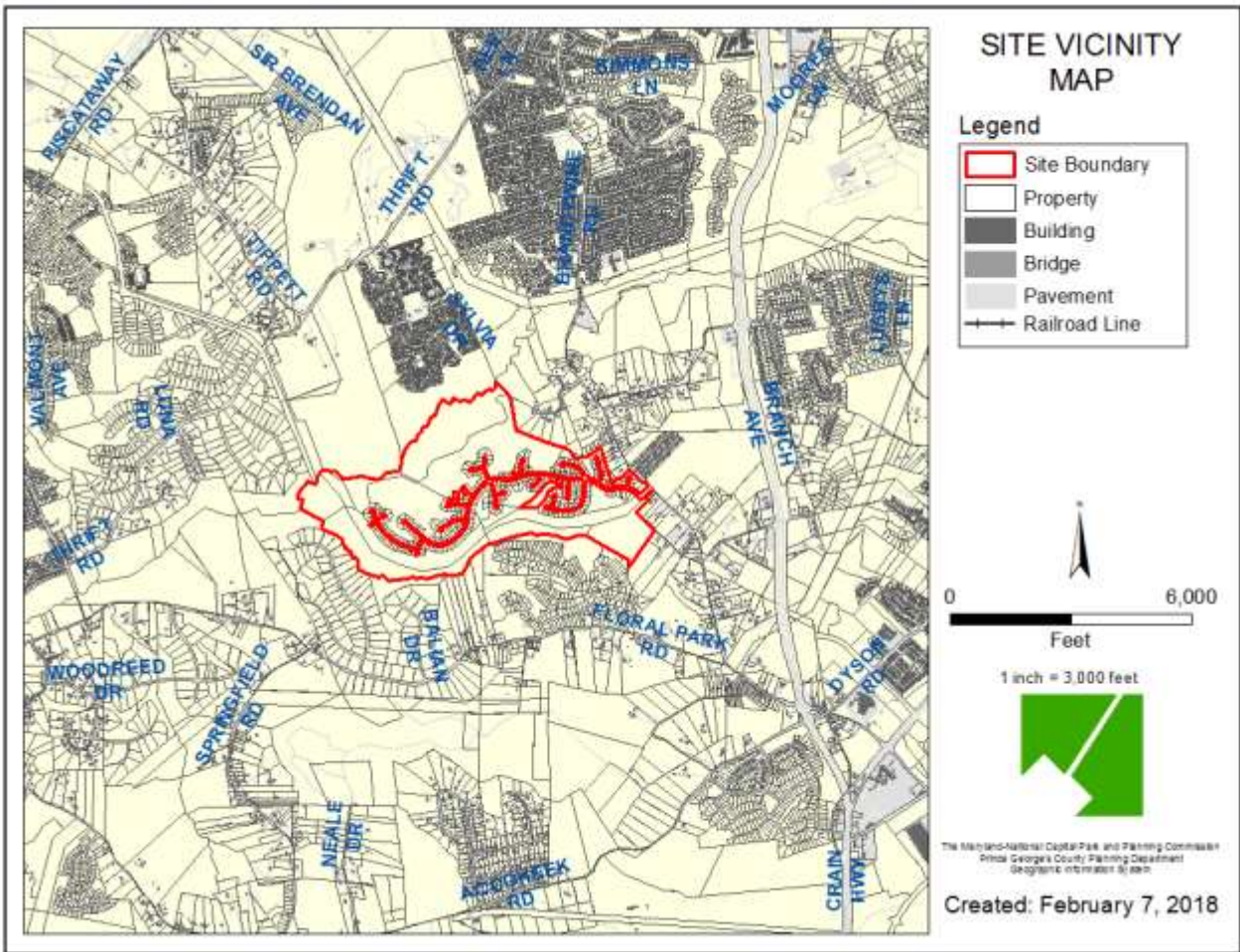
Departure from Sign Design Standards

DSDS-697

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Villages of Savannah Location: On the west side of MD 381 (Brandywine Road), approximately 5,000 feet north of the intersection of MD 381 and Floral Park Road. Applicant/Address: Mid-Atlantic Builders, Inc. 11611 Old Georgetown Road, Second Floor Rockville, MD 20852 Property Owner: Savannah Investors 5 Inc. Savannah Drive Brandywine, MD 20613	Planning Board Hearing Date:	07/26/18
	Staff Report Date:	07/19/18
	Date Accepted:	06/21/18
	Planning Board Action Limit:	N/A
	Plan Acreage:	518.16
	Zone:	R-R
	Gross Floor Area:	N/A
	Lots:	357
	Parcels:	15
	Planning Area:	85A
	Council District:	09
	Election District	11
	Municipality:	N/A
	200-Scale Base Map:	216SE05

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates	
Departure from height and area requirements for two freestanding gateway signs.	Informational Mailing	02/20/18
	Acceptance Mailing:	06/14/18
	Sign Posting Deadline:	06/26/18

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer: Taslima Alam Phone Number: 301-952-4976 E-mail: Taslima.Alam@ppd.mncppc.org	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Sherri Conner, Acting Supervisor, Subdivision and Zoning Section,
Development Review Division

FROM: Taslima Alam, Senior Planner, Subdivision and Zoning Section
Development Review Division

SUBJECT: **Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-697**

REQUEST: **Departure from height and area requirements for two freestanding gateway signs.**

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL with conditions**

NOTE:

The Planning Board has scheduled this application for a public hearing on the agenda date of July 26, 2018.

You are encouraged to become a person of record in this application. The request must be made in writing and addressed to the Prince George's County Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner, County Administration Building, Room 2184, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772. Questions about becoming a person of record should be directed to the Hearing Examiner at 301-952-3644. All other questions should be directed to the Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.

FINDINGS

1. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject 518.16-acre property is located on the west side of MD 381 (Brandywine Road), approximately 5,000 feet north of its intersection with Floral Park Road in the Rural Residential (R-R) Zone. The site is currently under construction with a few model homes.

The property has frontage on MD 381, a master plan collector facility with a planned 80-foot right-of-way (ROW). The site is accessed from MD 381 by an internal 120-foot-wide public ROW, Savannah Parkway (also known as A-65, a master plan arterial roadway), with an approximately 48-foot-wide median that is perpendicular to MD 381. Savannah Parkway traverses west from MD 381, turning north into the development, and reducing to a 90-foot-wide internal street with a 20-foot-wide median. The 90-foot-wide internal street then reduces to a 60-foot-wide street after a traffic circle and connects to the rest of the site via other internal streets, leading to approximately 16 culs-de-sac. The 357 single-family detached lots included in the subdivision are located along both sides of the internal curvilinear streets. A master plan arterial roadway, A-65, runs from east to west, parallel to the development. The section of the main entrance street, Savannah Parkway, is perpendicular to MD 381 and overlaps with the ROW of A-65. A future second access to the subject subdivision from the future A-65 ROW has been shown in the southwestern part of the site.

2. **History:** The Villages of Savannah was the subject of two separate preliminary plan of subdivision (PPS) applications and the project is being constructed in phases. The first phase (originally known as Heritage Reserve) is the subject of PPS 4-03072 (PGCPB Resolution No. 04-15), which was approved in 2004 with Type I Tree Conservation Plan TCPI/06/03 for 209 lots and 4 parcels, subject to 22 conditions, and is accessed via Flora Park Road. The second phase is the subject site that has an approved cluster PPS 4-02126 (PGCPB Resolution No. 03-100), including a Type I Tree Conservation Plan (TCPI/09/03), which was approved in 2003, subject to 39 conditions. A Detailed Site Plan (DSP-05036) was approved for the subject site in 2006 by the Prince George's County Planning Board (PGCPB Resolution No. 06-163) and was affirmed by the Prince George's County District Council in October 2006, subject to 17 conditions of approval, for the development of 357 single-family detached residential lots. Detailed Site Plan DSP-05036 has subsequently been amended, via approval at the Planning Director level, three times for minor site plan revisions. None of the previous conditions of approval impact the current application because they do not pertain to signage. However, staff notes that the DSP will have to be amended to reflect the signage associated with this application, if approved. In accordance with the approval of the PPS and DSP, record plats were approved and recorded for the Villages of Savannah on November 28, 2007, in Plat Book PM 224 at Plat No. 59 to 81. The subject signs are located on Parcels I and J and Lot 1, recorded in Plat Book PM 224 at Plat No. 59.
3. **Surroundings and Use:** The properties surrounding the subject site are primarily residential in nature. The subject site is bounded by MD 381 to the east. To the north, the site is bounded by vacant property in the Reserved Open Space (R-O-S) and R-A (Residential-Agricultural) Zones and single-family detached dwellings in the Residential-Estate (R-E) Zone. The site is also bordered by Piscataway Creek to the north. Vacant properties and single-family detached houses in the R-A, R-E, and R-R Zones border the subject site to the west and south.
4. **Request:** The applicant is proposing to construct two gateway signs, with accompanying entrance features, at the entrance to the subdivision, known as Villages of Savannah. The signs are located on either side of the public ROW of Savannah Parkway and include arched, precast concrete

signs, brick entry wall, columns, and ornamental fencing with seasonal landscaping. A decorative water feature is located in front of each sign and features a series of water fountains. Each sign is proposed to be 19 feet, 9 inches in height with 120 square feet of sign area. The proposal surpasses the permitted sign height by 13 feet, 9 inches from the allowed 6-foot maximum and sign area by 108 square feet from the allowed 12-square-foot maximum lettering area. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a departure from the sign design standards (DSDS) of Section 27-624(a)(1) and (2) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance.

A third sign is located in the median of Savannah Parkway, which coordinates with the entrance signs proposed with this application. It is also a precast concrete sign with brick columns, ornamental fencing, and seasonal landscaping at the base. The median sign is 8 feet in height and 90 square feet in area. This sign is not part of the subject DSDS because it is located within the public ROW. It is subject to approval by the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPiE) and is not subject to the Zoning Ordinance requirements. Because this sign will tie the other components of the entrance feature together, it is shown on the rendering of the entrance feature submitted with the application for information purposes only.

The following chart below specifies the height and area of each proposed sign and the amount of departure requested for each sign:

	Allowed	Proposed	Departure Requested
Wall 1A (South side of Savannah Parkway)*			
Height	6 feet, 0 inches	19 feet, 9 inches	13 feet, 9 inches
Area	12 sq. ft.	120 sq. ft.	108 sq. ft.
Wall 1B (North side of Savannah Parkway)*			
Height	6 feet, 0 inches	19 feet, 9 inches	13 feet, 9 inches
Area	12 sq. ft.	120 sq. ft.	108 sq. ft.
Wall 2 (Median sign)**			
Height (dimensions are provided for information purposes only)	6 feet, 0 inches	8 feet, 0 inches	Not the subject of this application
Area (dimensions provided for information purposes only)	12 sq. ft.	90 sq. ft. (lettering area is 19.53 sq. ft.)	Not the subject of this application

Staff notes that the proposed signs are labeled as Wall 1A, Wall 1B, and Wall 2. These should be relabeled as Sign 1A, 1B, and 2 for clarification.

**Wall 2 (Median sign) is not part of this DSDS application because the sign is located in the public right-of-way. A condition is recommended to relabel the median sign details on the chart as Sign 2 and clarify that all sign details for Sign 2 on the site plans are not part of this DSDS approval, and are provided for information purposes only.

5. **Development Data Summary:** The following chart summarizes the approved development for the subject site, which remains unchanged by this application.

EXISTING	
Zone	R-R
Use(s)	Single-family detached
Total Acreage	518.16
HOA open space	126.24 acres
Conveyed to M-NCPPC	198.23 acres
Number of Lots	357

6. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1993 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Subregion V, Planning Areas 81A, 81B, 83, 84, 85A and 85B* classified this site in the R-R Zone. The 2013 *Approved Subregion 5 Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* retained the subject property in the R-R Zone. The master plan does not contain any recommendations or provide any guidance regarding this DSDS application.

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

The applicant is requesting a DSDS for both the height and 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 the arch, where the name of the community, "Villages of Savannah," is incised into the top portion of the arch. The sign detail drawing on site plan Sheet 2B of 36 indicates the lettering area to be approximately 21.6 square feet. However, since the sign area is considered to be the entire arch panel, including the portion of the arch where no lettering exists, the entire sign area is calculated to be 120 square feet. For this reason, a departure of 108 square feet of sign area is requested.

The gateway sign, or entrance feature, includes three main components: arch, brick wall, and ornamental fence. The signature component of the sign is the arch, with the fountain in the front. The height of the arch is 19 feet, 9 inches, which constitutes the maximum height of the proposed gateway sign. Each side of the arch has stone pillars, with a precast stone ornament on top, that is approximately 10 feet, 9-inches-high, which includes the base, but not the precast stone ornaments. Extending from the stone pillars is a brick wall of varying height, from 9 feet, 6 inches to 6 feet, 7 inches, ending with 7-foot, 6-inch-high brick piers, and 6-foot-tall black ornamental fencing. Since the sign cannot exceed a maximum height of 6 feet, and the proposed height of the gateway signs

range from a minimum of 6 feet to a maximum of 19 feet, 9 inches, a departure of 13 feet, 9 inches in height is therefore requested.

Section 27-624(b) states that the design of a gateway sign, and any accompanying entrance feature, shall be reviewed concurrently, as follows:

- (1) In cluster subdivisions and other subdivisions where the approval of a Detailed Site Plan is required, the location of a gateway sign or entrance feature shall be approved concurrently with the preliminary plat of subdivision and the design shall be approved with the Detailed Site Plan.**

The previously approved DSP-05036 included signs in the same general location. In conjunction with this departure application, an amendment to Detailed Site Plan DSP 05035-03 has also been filed and is pending acceptance.

It should be noted that the gateway signage in the median is proposed with landscaping. The applicant should be aware that any landscaping placed within the median is subject to permitting by DPIE and may involve a separate maintenance agreement with the County, prior to permit.

Section 27-239.01(b)(7) 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 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.**
- (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 proliferation of signs that could detract 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. Placement of signs on each side of the road and in the median of the road will create a sense of balance and will not create an appearance of proliferation. It will establish a sense of place, an identity for a community that is far more than just a sign. It will promote an image of high quality for a large residential community, help make the community a more desirable place to live, and help to increase property values, which will benefit present and future inhabitants.

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

The main reason this departure is necessary is because the entrance of the community is unique, in that the community will be accessed from MD 381 via a 120-foot-wide ROW, with an approximately 48-foot-wide median. Such a wide ROW is not typical for a standard community roadway. A ROW of 60 feet wide is typical for public roadways accessing single-family dwellings. As such, a small gateway sign of 12 square feet in area would be out of character and scale for such a grand entrance. 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 proposed gateway sign for the Villages of Savannah will be one of the most impressive, attractive, and high-quality entrance features in Prince George's County. 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. As noted above, given the width of the ROW, the gateway signage is appropriately scaled and will not impair the visual quality or integrity of the site and/or the surrounding neighborhood.

8. **Other issues:** According to the applicant's statement of justification (SOJ) and the submitted site plan, the proposed signs will be constructed along five parcels/lots. Two of the parcels are owned by the homeowners association (HOA) and are more particularly described as Parcels I and J, recorded in Plat Book 224 at Plat No. 59, located on either side of the entrance roadway. The gateway sign is designed to frame the entrance, such that the main signage feature is angled to be visible to vehicles entering the subdivision. On the north side of Savannah Parkway, where the sign extends parallel to MD 381, it extends onto Lot 1, Block A (Plat Book 224 at Plat 59), which is approved as a single-family detached lot within the subject subdivision. On the south side of Savannah Parkway, where the sign extends parallel to

MD 381, it extends onto Parcels 42 and 98, shown on Tax Map 134, which is owned by Savannah Investors 5, LLC, but is outside the limit of the subject site. The applicant states in the SOJ that a landscape and entry feature easement has been executed and will be recorded to allow the gateway signage to be maintained by the HOA on Lot 1, Block A, and Parcels 42 and 98.

Although Parcels 42 and 98 are owned by the applicant, Savannah Investors 5, LLC, these parcels were never part of the PPS and are, therefore, considered off-site to the subdivision. Staff does not recommend that the proposed signage and required landscaping be located off-site, as an encumbrance on private property, for the HOA to maintain. The applicant has expressed the ability to adjust the lot lines of the two parcels so that an appropriate sized parcel may contain the proposed entrance feature and be conveyed to the HOA.

Prior to certification of the site plan, staff recommends that a parcel be created that is of sufficient size to contain the proposed entrance feature and all required landscaping.

9. **Referrals:** No referral agencies had 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. Referral memorandums were received, as follows, and are included as back-up to this technical staff report, and adopted by reference herein:

- Transportation Planning Section dated July 6, 2018 (Masog to Alam)
- Environmental Planning Section, dated July 6, 2018 (Shoulars to Alam)
- Urban Design Section dated July 9, 2018 (Bishop to Alam)
- Permit Review Section dated July 3, 2018 (Linkins to Alam)
- Community Planning Section email dated June 27, 2018 (Irminger to Alam)
- Historic Preservation Section dated June 27, 2018 (Stabler to Alam)

CONCLUSION

Based on the above analyses, staff recommends APPROVAL of Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-697, Villages of Savannah, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification of the departure site plan, the plans shall be revised to:
 - a. Remove the repeated data tables for the departure from sign design standards from all pages of the site plan, except page 2B of 36.
 - b. Relabel from Wall 1A, Wall 1B, and Wall 2 to Sign 1A, Sign 1B, and Sign 2 for clarification.
 - c. Add a general note on the site plan stating the proposal for this departure from sign design standards application.
 - d. Relabel the median sign details and chart to indicate that the median sign is not part of this application and is provided for informational purposes only.

- e. Pursuant to Subtitle 24 of the Prince George's County Code, the applicant shall create a parcel of sufficient size to contain the gateway signage entrance feature and all required landscaping, to be conveyed to the homeowners association. The parcel shall be reflected on the site plan prior to certification.
2. Prior to issuance of the sign permit:
- a. The detailed site plan shall be amended to reflect the signage associated with this application.
 - b. A landscape and entry feature easement, or covenant, for the gateway signage/entrance feature on Lot 1, to be maintained by the Villages of Savannah Homeowners Association, shall be recorded.