

July 18, 2000

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Elizabeth Whitmore, Urban Designer

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan, SP-00007  
Debre Genet Medhane Alem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church  
Alternative Compliance, AC-00027

The Urban Design Section has reviewed the Detailed Site Plan for the Debre Genet Medhane Alem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. Based on that review and the findings in this report, the Development Review Division recommends APPROVAL with conditions as stated in the Recommendation section of this report.

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

This Detailed Site Plan was reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

1. Conformance with Preliminary Plan 4-86112 (PGCPB No. 86-332).
2. Conformance with the Zoning Ordinance and the *Landscape Manual* for a church in the C-O Zone.
3. Conformance with the site design guidelines as outlined in Part 3, Division 9, Subdivision 3, of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance.
4. Referrals.

**FINDINGS**

Based on the evaluation and analysis of the subject application, the Urban Design staff recommends the following findings:

1. Detailed Site Plan SP-00007 is proposing a church for 590 members. The site is located southeast of the intersection of MD 5 and MD 414. The site consists of 4.30 acres in the C-O Zone.

The following is the site development data for this site:

Zone	C-O Zone
Gross Site Area	4.30 acres
Gross Floor Area	11,740 sq. ft.
Use	Church
Proposed Seats	590 seats
Parking Required	148 spaces
(1 space per four seats)	
Parking Provided	
Standard Spaces (9.5' x 19')	124 spaces
Compact Spaces (8' x 16.5')	16 spaces
Handicap Spaces (13' x 9')	4 space
Handicap Van Spaces (16' x 19')	4 space
Total Spaces	148 spaces
Loading Required	1 space
Loading Provided	1 space
Internal Green Required	
(8% of 87,275 sq. ft. of parking))	6,982 sq. ft.
Internal Green Provided	
(8.13% of 87,275 sq. ft. of parking)	7,102 sq. ft.

2. Preliminary Plan 4-86112 (PGCPB No. 86-332) approved on August 7, 1986 contained several conditions that warrant discussion:
  1. **Approval of a site plan by the Planning Board prior to issuance of any grading, sediment control, or building permits. The site plan shall address the following issues:**
    - a. **The appearance of development from the Gordon's Corner Subdivision to the rear of the property.**

Comment: The landscape plan provides supplemental planting along the rear of the property adjacent to the Gordon's Corner Subdivision except in the southeast corner where a stormwater management pond has been located. The applicant has applied for Alternative

Compliance (AC -00027) for this intrusion into the required bufferyard and the Director recommends approval of the AC request (See Finding 3).

**b. Ingress/egress to and from Old Branch Avenue, and Branch Avenue.**

Comment: The site plan was revised in response to the Transportation Planning Section referral comments. The Transportation Section has verbally stated that the site plan is acceptable as revised.

**c. The appearance of development from the Master Plan designated  
■Perceptually sensitive corridor along Branch Avenue.●**

Comment: The Urban Design Section has reviewed the proposed landscaping, parking lot layout, circulation and building architecture and has found that the landscaping, in particular along Branch Avenue, has been designed in a sensitive manner.

**d. Requirements of Conditions 1 and 2 of the State Highway  
Administration memorandum of July 15, 1986.**

Comment: The site plan is in conformance with the above referenced conditions of the State Highway Administration memorandum of July 15, 1986.

**e. Development of the property in an environmentally sensitive manner.**

Comment: The Environmental Planning Section has reviewed the subject application and has found the proposed site plan to be in conformance with the above-referenced condition.

3. The subject plan is proposing the construction of a church with 6,982 square feet of GFA and therefore is subject to the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*. While staff has determined that the landscape plan, as submitted, in general meets the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*, the proposed stormwater management pond encroaches into the required bufferyard along the southern property line. The applicant applied for Alternative Compliance from Section 4.7 (AC-00027). Alternative Compliance from Section 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses, was requested because the stormwater management pond encroaches into the required bufferyard reducing it from the required 30 feet to 10 feet. The Alternative Compliance Committee and the Planning Director recommend approval of AC-00027 based upon the following rationale:

■The applicant is proposing to provide the entire landscaped yard for 500 linear feet along the south property line and reduce the buffer to a minimum of 10 feet for 190 linear feet. The applicant is providing 345 additional plant units above what is required. The Committee is of the opinion that this alternative compliance proposal is equal to or better than the normal requirements set forth in Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*.●

4. The proposed building is 170 feet by 70 feet and is 23 feet in height from grade and has a standing seam metal roof. The building is enhanced with a fiberglass segmented dome with a cross and lightning rod on top. This dome is 25 feet in diameter and the height of the dome and cross with lightning rod are 12 feet from the top of the roof. The exterior of the building is red brick with cream brick horizontal bands every 24 inches on center. The exterior elevations indicate that there is one (1) door on the north side (main entrance) and one (1) door on the south side of the building. The main entrance has a brick vestibule with an arched double door. The proposed windows are arched with brick accents around the window opening for trim. The landscape plan indicates pole-mounted lighting is being proposed. A detail of the lighting should be added to the detail sheet.

Signage was not submitted with the application for review. Should the applicant wish to add signage at a later date it should be subject to a Detailed Site Plan review. Special attention should be given to the materials, colors, and landscaping of said sign. No pylon-mounted signage should be allowed.

5. The Environmental Planning Section has reviewed the Tree Conservation Plan for conformance with the Woodland Conservation Ordinance and after revised Forest Stand Delineations were submitted it was found it to be acceptable. Therefore, the Environmental Planning Section recommends approval of the Tree Conservation Plan, TCPII/01/00.
6. The site plan addresses all of the comments from the Permit Review Section except comments 9 and 13 which state, respectively:

■All required setbacks must be demonstrated on the site plan.●

Comment: The plans should be revised to demonstrate the required setbacks.

■Section 27-651 of the Zoning Ordinance requires arrows to indicate the directions of traffic movement.●

Comment: The plans should be revised to include traffic movement arrows.

7. The Department of Environmental Resources (DER) finds the plans inconsistent with the Stormwater Management Concept (#008001920), approved on January 14, 2000, and which expires January 14, 2003. The applicant should provide necessary documentation from DER stating the plans are acceptable. In the event such documentation is not provided, the plans should be revised and submitted to DER for approval. Should such a revision impact the layout of the approved subject application, the applicant should file a revision to the Detailed Site Plan.
8. The Soil Conservation Service, in a memorandum dated May 12, 2000 (Bourdon to Whitmore), made the following comments:

■It looks like the pond as proposed will have a breach problem because of the lots down slope.●

To ensure this issue is addressed, the applicant should have a Technical Stormwater Management Plan approved prior to signature approval. The approved Technical Stormwater Management Plan should be submitted prior to the issuance of any permits to the Urban Design Section to ensure conformance with the approved landscape plan.

9. Old Branch Avenue and Branch Avenue are maintained by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). Street construction should be done in accordance with both the Prince George's County and SHA standards and specifications. The applicant will be required to submit storm drainage plans and computations and a traffic study to SHA prior to the issuance of any permits.
10. The site is located in the Approved Subregion VII Master Plan (1981) that is currently under revision for Planning Area 76A, the Heights Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment. The Planning Board adopted the plan and endorsed the sectional map amendment (January 2000). Land use and zoning changes are not proposed for this property. Therefore, there are no master plan issues raised with this subject application.
11. The Gordons Corner Citizen Association, in a letter dated May 24, 2000 (Lewis to Lipford), had the following comments to offer:

■...the Gordons Corner Citizens Association does not oppose the establishment of the Ethiopian Christian Church as planned if it is constructed within the prevailing regulations and ordinances of the State and County.●

Comment: The Urban Design Section has determined that the subject application meets all the regulations and ordinances of the State and County as well as the preliminary plan conditions.

12. The plan will, if revised in accordance with the conditions of approval, represent a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines without requiring unreasonable costs and without detracting substantially from the proposed development for its intended use.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing analysis, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE SP-00007, Debre Genet Medhane Alem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, AC-00027 and TCPII/01/00, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to signature approval, the following revisions shall be made or information supplied:
  - a. A detail of the lighting shall be added to the detail sheet.

- b. The applicant shall submit an approved technical stormwater management plan to the Urban Design Section to incorporate into the file. The plan shall also be reviewed for compliance with the approved landscape plan.
  - c. The Detailed Site Plan shall be revised to reflect the required setbacks and they shall be corrected on the cover sheet.
  - d. The plans shall be revised to include traffic movement arrows.
  - e. The word vertical, describing the brick accent bands on the elevations, shall be changed to horizontal.
  - f. The applicant shall provide the Urban Design Section with appropriate documentation from DER stating that the site plans are acceptable with regard to the layout of the stormwater management concept plan. In the event DER does not find conformance with the stormwater management concept plan, the plans shall be revised and resubmitted to DER for approval. Upon approval from DER, they shall be forwarded to the Urban Design Section to review for conformance with the approved Detailed Site Plan. In the event conformance is not found, a revision to the Detailed Site Plan shall be filed.
2. The applicant shall submit all proposed signage to the Urban Design Section for approval by the Planning Board or its designee. No pylon-mounted signage shall be allowed and special attention shall be given to the materials, colors and landscaping of signs.