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## Detailed Site Plan

**DSP-05044/01**

## Departure from Sign Design Standards

**DSDS-641**

Application	General Data
<b>Project Name:</b> Steeplechase 95 Business Park  <b>Location:</b> At the intersection of I-495 and Ritchie Marlboro Road  <b>Applicant/Address:</b> Atapco Ritchie Interchange, Inc. & Atapco Ritchie Interchange, LLC 10 East Baltimore Street, Suite 1600 Baltimore, MD 21202	Date Accepted: 09/18/2006
	Planning Board Action Limit: Waived
	Plan Acreage: 12.85
	Zone: I-1
	Dwelling Units: N/A
	Square Footage: 57,464
	Planning Area: 75A
	Tier: Developed
	Council District: 06
	Municipality: N/A
	200-Scale Base Map: 208SE08

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
2 sit-down restaurants; 3 fast-food restaurants; 1 service station; 2 banks; 1 multi-tenant retail building	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: 8/01/06 (CB-12-2003)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site and Notice of Hearing Mailed: 11/7/06

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer: Edward Estes	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

July 30, 2009

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Edward Estes, Planner Coordinator

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan DSP-05044/01 and Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-641 Steeplechase 95 Business Park (Retail Area)

The Urban Design staff has reviewed the detailed site plan 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

The detailed site plan was reviewed and evaluated for conformance with the following criteria:

- a. The requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the I-1 Zone.
- b. The requirements of the Zoning Ordinance Sign Requirements
- c. The requirements of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03113.
- d. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.
- e. The requirements of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance.
- f. Referral comments.

## FINDINGS

Based upon the analysis of the subject application, the Urban Design staff recommends the following findings:

1. **Detailed Site Plan Request:** The subject application requests the construction of 32,350 square feet of retail space consisting of two banks, one service station and one multi-tenant building, as well as 25,114 square feet of restaurant space consisting of three fast-food restaurants and two sit-down restaurants in the retail portion of the Steeplechase 95 Flex Industrial Park in the I-1 Zone. The current application includes the architectural elevations of three buildings, landscaping, and freestanding and building signage. The

architectural elevations for the remaining buildings will be submitted for Planning Board review at a later date.

## 2. Development Data Summary

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone	I-1	I-1
Use(s)	Vacant	Retail portion of a Flex Industrial Park
Acreage	12.85	12.85
Lots	Parcels 26, 27	Parcels 14-20, 24, 27 and D
Building Square Footage/GFA	N/A	57,464

## OTHER DEVELOPMENT DATA

	REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Total parking spaces	421	559
Of which handicapped spaces	26	27
Loading spaces	8	8

3. **Departure from Sign Design Standards Request:** The subject application requests a height departure for freestanding signs for an increase from 25 feet to 75 feet for a pylon sign; a quantity departure for freestanding signs for an increase from 4 signs to 14 signs; an area departure for freestanding signs for an increase—including the pylon sign (1,081 square feet), the retail section entry monument sign (110 square feet), the two business park entry monument signs (140 square feet) and the gateway sign (65 square feet)—totaling a combined area increase of 1,496 square feet; the area departure for building signs, which include Building 2 (12 s.f.), Building 3 (192 s.f.), Building 4a (335 s.f.), Building 4b (270 s.f.), Building 5 (124 s.f.), Building 6 (174 s.f.), and Building 7 (160 s.f.), totaling a combined area increase of 1,267 square feet; a quantity departure for freestanding gas station price signs for an increase from 1 sign to 2 signs; and an area departure for freestanding gas station price signs for an increase of 42 square feet for each sign.

## SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS DATA

### A. Freestanding Sign Height

Sign Type	Maximum Height Permitted	Height Requested	Departure Requested
Pylon	25 feet	75 feet	50 feet

### B. Freestanding Sign Quantity

Maximum Quantity	Quantity Requested	Departure Requested

4	14	10
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### C. Freestanding Sign Area

Sign Type	Maximum Area Permitted (s.f.)	Area Requested (s.f.)	Departure Requested (s.f.)
Pylon	200	1,281	1,081
Entry Monument Sign (Retail Section)	200	310	110
Business Park Monument Sign 1	200	320	120
Business Park Monument Sign 2	200	310	110
Gateway Wall Sign	200	265	65

### D. Building Sign Area

Building ID	Maximum Area Permitted (s.f.)	Area Requested (s.f.)	Departure Requested (s.f.)
Building 2	200	212	12
Building 3	208	300	192
Building 4a	203	535	332
Building 4b	200	470	270
Building 5	176	300	124
Building 6	126	300	174
Building 7	200	360	160

### E. Freestanding Gas Station Price Sign Quantity

Maximum Quantity	Quantity Requested	Departure Requested
1	2	1

### F. Freestanding Gas Station Price Sign Area

Sign ID	Maximum Area (s.f.)	Area Requested (s.f.)	Departure Requested (s.f.)
Price Sign 1	50	92	42
Price Sign 2	50	92	42

4. **Location:** The site is in Planning Area 75A, Council District 6. More specifically, it is located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of I-495 and Ritchie Marlboro Road.
5. **Surroundings and Use:** The subject property is bounded to the north by a Pepco right-of-way with utility power lines, to the west by the 85,683-square-foot Special Education Center of the Prince George's County Board of Education, to the south by Ritchie Marlboro Road and various industrial/warehouse buildings, and to the east by the Capital Beltway interstate highways I-95/I-495.

6. **Previous Approvals:** The site has also been the subject of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03113 and Type I Tree Conservation Plan TCPI/34/00, approved by the Planning Board on March 4, 2004, and formalized in PGCPB Resolution No. 04-49. The site is the subject of approved Stormwater Concept Plan 8004290-200-03, approved on April 11, 2005, and effective for three years or until April 19, 2008. The initial Detailed Site Plan DSP-05044 and Tree Conservation Plan TCP II/128/90-3 were approved on January 5, 2006. A decision of the District Council for reconsideration of SP 05044 Steeplechase 95 Business Park was ordered on July 11, 2006.
7. **Design Features:** The intent of the subject retail portion of the flex office/warehouse development is to create a recognizable image as a distinct place, varying massing to provide visual interest, ensure compatibility with surrounding developments, and use building height and massing to emphasize important corners, designated points of entry, and to differentiate Prince George's new flex office/warehouse areas from other activity nodes.

The 12.85-acre site is accessed from Steeplechase Court that leads into the property from Hampton Park Boulevard to a portion of the development dedicated to retail pad sites that will include banks, restaurants (fast-food and sit-down restaurants) and service retail that ranges from 2,599 square feet to 26,910 square feet. Each building will provide both visitor and employee parking along with service areas.

#### Architectural Design

The adjacent office/warehouse development (not part of the subject detailed site plan) integrates existing natural features and open space into the overall design and layout of the development. Existing natural features and common open spaces are sufficiently used to create site amenities and provide physical separators and buffers from adjacent development. On the subject detailed site plan, the number, location and design of the independent pad sites reinforce the identity and function of the retail portion of the flex office/warehouse development. The primary facades of all the buildings, typically the facade containing the primary customer entrance, are oriented in a variety of ways that include toward the primary access street, toward a "focal point" of the retail portion and clustered to define street edges and entries.

The heritage of the Steeplechase 95 development is an international business park. It was the developer's and designer's desire to create a complementary professional aesthetic for the "retail" buildings within the context of the business park. The proposed design aesthetic exceeds in quality what one would normally expect in a typical regional retail strip shopping center. The design uses repetitive bays with masonry finishes in a tri-part composition. The strong base water table will be finished in a ground-faced, concrete masonry block, while the middle will be a complementary running bond brick and the tops of the buildings will be capped in a contemporary aluminum cornice. The massing for all of the buildings will have a hierarchical emphasis on the end caps of the multiunit building and the entranceways to the single user pad sites. The selected materials have a direct relationship to the proposed site signage in an attempt to carry a similar design aesthetic to all architectural elements within the proposed development.

Due to the road network surrounding these sites, the designer and developer views each building as having multiple fronts. The design of each individual building was studied from all four sides. Each building is wrapped in a similar façade treatment and signage has been proposed on all sides.

#### Landscape and Streetscape

Hampton Park Boulevard/Ritchie Marlboro Road Entrance

The Hampton Park Boulevard/Ritchie Marlboro Road intersection is the grand entrance to the Steeplechase 95 International Business Park. Realizing the “front door” importance of this intersection, the applicant has been very attentive to the design quality of the buildings, signs, and landscaping. A unified design was created by the consistent application of sophisticated design techniques and building materials, to the major retail buildings, signs, landscape walls, pedestrian paving and other site features. Materials such as brick, architectural concrete, and stainless steel are carried through to establish a consistent palette.

Design features at the boulevard entrance include commercial and retail sign monuments, accent lighting, brick perimeter walls, a landscaped boulevard median, accent landscaping using groundcovers, low shrubs, flowering trees and street trees. The accent landscape design reinforces the prominence of the entrance and unifies sign monuments with the site and buildings.

#### Streetscapes—Hampton Park Boulevard and Alaking Court

A simple streetscape theme consisting of a landscape strip between the curb and sidewalk with low hedges or mass plantings on both sides of the street unify the road corridor. Large street trees are selected to provide uniform tree lines appropriately scaled to match the street cross-sections. Sidewalks connect the entire commercial and retail buildings to the pedestrian system providing a pedestrian friendly business park.

Occasional accent areas with benches provide intermediate destination points along the system. Pedestrian crosswalks strategically located on Alaking Court permit access from the commercial sites to the retail amenities.

A traffic circle (approved by DPW&T) located midway on Hampton Boulevard will feature a central planting area that will provide landscape interest within the streetscape.

#### Ritchie -Marlboro Road Street Frontage

##### Perimeter walls and Landscaping

The brick perimeter walls and landscaping provide a unified edge along the Ritchie Marlboro Road portion of the I-95/495 exit ramp and Hampton Park Boulevard. Two 3-foot-high brick walls delineate the Ritchie Marlboro Road frontage from approximately the western corner of the WAWA site (Lot 24) to the roundabout at the I-95/495 Ritchie Marlboro interchange. The walls extend north on Hampton Park Boulevard, extend north to the Alaking Court intersection and terminate at the Commerce Bank driveway entrance. Conditions for the wall design are included in the District Council order approved July 14, 2006.

The brick walls are accented with pilasters and increase in height when forming a background to identity signs and logos fastened to the walls. The perimeter walls provide a continuous spine uniting the landscape design theme. The perimeter landscaping is designed to create a rhythm along the streetscape and allow visibility to each of the retail sites. Street trees and flowering trees are grouped into patterns separated by open spaces to maintain these view corridors. The landscape pattern continues past the roundabout (where the perimeter wall terminates) and continues north along the exit ramp right-of-way. The brick perimeter walls and the landscape design are complementary to the walls and streetscape proposed on the south side of Ritchie Marlboro Road by the neighboring development. The anticipated result is a compatible streetscape theme at this prominent location.

#### Retail Pedestrian System

A pedestrian network, secondary to the Alaking Court sidewalk, connects the retail building pads and allows patrons to walk between buildings without returning to the street. The internal walk

system begins at the Commerce Bank site, with access to the Marlboro Ritchie Road /Hampton Park Boulevard intersection and connects to the sidewalk on Alaking. The walk weaves past Chick-fil-A, the multi-tenant building through the dining terrace and connects back to Alaking Court. Benches are conveniently located along the way. Handicap ramps and decorative crosswalks delineate the pedestrian system across the internal drives and parking lots.

#### Dining Terrace

A dining terrace is proposed on the street side of the multi-tenant building to provide outdoor dining experiences for restaurant patrons. The generous size of the terrace allows for assigned table areas for restaurant tenants, retailers and space for carryout patrons. The terrace provides an excellent foreground to the multi-tenant building as viewed from Alaking Court and is coordinated with the building design. Paving patterns, materials and colors emulate the building façade. Building canopies articulate the edge of the terrace. Outdoor tables and chairs and umbrellas are proposed. A raised planter and seat wall provide a focal point for the terrace. Seasonal plantings and flowering trees provide a comfortable edge between the street and the terrace.

#### Comprehensive Signage System

The applicant developed a comprehensive signage system for the business park. The system includes a hierarchy of signs that provide entrance identity for the international business park as viewed from the Ritchie Marlboro/Hampton Park Boulevard entrance and identity signage for the retail development. Individual tenant signs are provided for both the commercial development sites and the retail sites at their entrance drives along Hampton Park Boulevard and Alaking Court. The signs are to be constructed of high quality materials such as brick, pre-cast architectural concrete, and polished aluminum. Consistent use of materials, colors and style help unify the overall design character of the business park.

These materials are also incorporated into the building facades and perimeter wall so that the site and buildings complement each other. A pylon sign is proposed at the northeast boundary of the retail development along the I-95/495 right-of-way. The pylon sign is designed to provide a highly visible landmark to be viewed by travelers driving at highway speeds.

Building tenant signs are designed as integral parts of the building facades and include business logos and retail tenant names. A consistent size of the sign band above the doorways and below the building cornices is a strong unifier providing an orderly presentation of tenant identification. The nature of the retail project is that the buildings will be viewed from the interstate ramp, Ritchie Marlboro Road, Walker Mill Road, Hampton Park Boulevard and Alaking Court. Visibility from these roads is critical to the success of the retail development and therefore signage is proposed for multiple building facades. A sign departure has been submitted with the DSP application for sign area and sign height (for pylon) to allow adequate signage in the I-1 Zone.

#### Plaza Amenities

The multi-tenant building plaza provides a focal point for pedestrians and an opportunity for restaurant tenants to provide outdoor dining. The plaza will feature:

- Decorative pavers
- Planters, seat walls and potted plants
- Tables and umbrellas

- Seasonal gardens

## COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

8. **Zoning Ordinance:** The subject application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements in the I-1 Zone and the site plan design guidelines of the Zoning Ordinance.
  - a. The subject application is in conformance with the requirements of Section 27-473, which governs permitted uses in industrial zones.
  - b. The proposal is also in conformance with the requirements of Section 27-474, Regulations, regarding additional regulations for development in industrial zones.
9. **Zoning Ordinance Sign Requirements:** The subject application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements for signs:
  - a. **Section 27-589** provides the following purposes of the sign ordinance. In staff's opinion, six of those purposes (depicted in bold) pertain to the subject departure request and are discussed in Finding 9 of this staff report:
    - **To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the Regional District;**
    - **To encourage and protect the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures;**
    - **To regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which could depreciate the value of property and discourage quality development in the Regional District;**
    - **To regulate signs which are a hazard to safe motor-vehicle operation;**
    - To eliminate structurally unsafe signs which endanger a building, structure, or the public;
    - **To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development;**
    - **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.**



- b. **Section 27-613** provides the following attached to a building or canopy sign regulations that pertain to the subject application:

- i. **Section 27-613(c)(1)** requires that the maximum permissible area of building and canopy signs is dependent upon the building or canopy width, the distance between the edge of the canopy and the street line toward which the sign faces, and whether the permissible sign area is divided between the building and the canopy.

**Urban Design Comment:** Building signage exceeds the area requirements of Section 27-613(c)(1) by modest numbers. Departures are proposed for Buildings 2 through 7. The design concept is a hierarchy that essentially places the primary signage at the main entrance for each building and then smaller identification signs at points parallel with adjacent roadways where the buildings are visible. Signage is proposed along the rear of some buildings as a result of the retail park's proximity to the I-495 off-ramp and the significant "viewshed" from the exit ramp. The building design provides for an appearance in building material similar to its front.

- c. **Section 27-614** provides the following freestanding sign regulations that pertain to the subject application:

- i. **Section 27-614(a)(4)** requires that freestanding signs shall be located at least 10 feet behind the ultimate right-of-way line in all commercial and industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone).

**Urban Design Comment:** The detailed site plan conforms.

- ii. **Section 27-614(b)(1)** limits the maximum height of a sign to 25 feet from finished grade to sign top in commercial and industrial zones (except the C-O and I-3 Zone).

**Urban Design Comment:** The applicant proposes a freestanding pylon sign that is 75 feet high, and has therefore requested a departure from sign design standards of 50 feet, as discussed in Finding 9 below. The applicant provided a site analysis of what the view would be at the standard height of 25 feet, and at an increase to 50 feet. Visibility at 75 feet is such that it would provide a vehicle traveling at 60 miles per hour more of an opportunity to change lanes or make a decision to exit at the ramp. Therefore, staff supports the requested departure of 50 feet.

- iii. **Section 27-614(c)(3)(A)** provides that in all commercial zones (except the C-O Zone) and all industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone), the area of the freestanding sign shall be not more than one square foot for each two linear feet of street frontage, to a maximum of 200 square feet for each sign, if the building is located in an integrated shopping center. The street frontage shall be measured on the property occupied by the center or complex associated with the sign.

**Urban Design Comment:** The applicant proposes a departure for increases in the area of the freestanding signs visible from I-495, the business park entrance feature signs and the decorative wall. This signage and the structures on which the signage is placed help create identity and character for the park. It is also consistent with the purposes

previously highlighted. Moreover, patrons, customers and users will be able to quickly identify businesses and establishments within the park. It should be noted that significant development will occur across Ritchie Marlboro Road from Steeplechase, and some confusion may arise as a result. The signage program, inclusive of the requested departures, will help to reduce any possible confusion regarding the two developments and provide drivers direction to their desired locations.

10. **Required Findings:**

**Section 27-612 authorizes the Planning Board to approve departures from sign design standards under the procedures and requirements of Part 3, Division 5 of the Zoning Ordinance, specifically Section 27-239.01(a)(1).**

**Section 27-239.01(b)(8)(A)—In order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings.** The required findings are below, followed by a summary of the applicant's position and staff comments. Pertinent "purposes" of the sign ordinance in Section 27-589 are referenced as appropriate.

**1. The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.**

**Section 27-102 contains the general purposes of the Subtitle (Zoning Ordinance). The applicant addresses all 15 general purposes in the justification statement (attached), of which staff finds only four directly applicable to this requested departure. Also, Section 27-589 provides seven general purposes of the sign regulations, of which staff finds four applicable herein. The following are the pertinent purposes from both Sections 27-102 and 27-589:**

- a. Section 27-102(a)(1) – To protect and promote the health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience, and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the County**
- b. Section 27-589(a)(1) - To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the Regional District**

**Applicant's Position:** The purposes of the Subtitle are also better served by grant of these departures. The departures will encourage economic development activity that leads to employment and broadened tax base. A successful development—of which signage is an essential component—will assist in creating various employment opportunities within the industrial park and quality locations for businesses to locate. Concurrent with the desired job creation, the county will achieve a broadened tax base, which will benefit the immediate community and the county as a whole. The employment opportunities will improve the social and economic stability of this part of the county, promote convenience, and therefore enhance the safety, welfare and quality of life of the present and future residents of the nearby community and Prince George's County.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff agrees.

- c. **Section 27-102(a)(2)—To implement the General Plan and Area Master Plans**
- d. **Section 27-589(a)(2)—To encourage and protect the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures**

**Applicant's Position:** The signage program will support the Subtitle and Section purposes implementing the applicable land use Plans, orderly growth and encouraging the appropriate use of land. Steeplechase is an I-1-zoned property that can achieve more of the objectives desired by the community and county resulting from the interchange improvement. The signage will help the property become more than merely industrial development. Steeplechase 95 Business Park's signage package is proposed with appealing design, inclusive of the business park's symbol, and retail tenant representation will help to connect the retail and industrial/office portions of the development. The triangular set up will create a structurally sound sign, and the use of high quality material will make the sign a pleasant appearance for the users of the business park and people driving along the Capital Beltway. The design emphasizes the importance and openness of the community for the foreign trade zone component and its retail amenities, and is inviting to others who will want to also locate businesses and venues in the county's Developed Tier.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff agrees.

- e. **Section 27-102(a)(4)—To guide the orderly growth and development of the County, while recognizing the needs of...business**
- f. **Section 27-102(a)(6)—To promote the most beneficial relationship between uses of land and buildings while protecting landowners from adverse impacts of adjoining development**

Sections 27-102(a)(4) and 27-102(a)(6) above are similar to or promote the following purposes contained in Sections 27-589:

- **Section 27-589(a)(6)—To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development**
- **Section 27-589(a)(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**

**Applicant's Position:** The signage program is in many ways similar to development proposals that have been approved in areas that have significantly more development than the current location. In this manner, it is architecturally the equivalent of areas with higher existing property values. The applicant seeks to create and provide a qualitative identity and image that is previously more likely to appear in areas of the county's Developed Tier. By providing similar quality, Steeplechase will attract quality businesses and create a solid image that can be appreciated by diverse users, tenants and patrons. The requested departures assist in the overall effort to provide safe, attractive signage. The

additional number of signs, height and area provide for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner compatible with the land use. None of the departures impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the surrounding neighborhood and nearby community. By contrast, the signage fits within the overall character and identity proposed by the applicant. Building landscape and viewsheds are created which do not detract from the overall development.

**Urban Design Comment:** The comprehensive signage package has been carefully developed to balance the need to identify the gateway to the newly developed foreign trade zone of Prince George's County, as well as provide an integrated retail component that maintains a compatible quality with the existing community.

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

**Applicant's Position:** A pylon sign along I-495 needs to be visible at a safe distance of approximately 800 feet from the off-ramp to the business park. The required height would necessitate the sign be 75 feet high, a departure of 50 feet. The applicant provided a site analysis of what the view would be at the standard height of 25 feet and at an increase to 50 feet. Visibility at 75 feet is such that it would provide a vehicle traveling at 60 miles per hour more of an opportunity to change lanes or make a decision to exit at the ramp. This is 10 feet in excess of what would be allowed by the Zoning Ordinance if the applicant were to solely develop the allowable four freestanding signs.

The Departure requests an increase in the number of "freestanding signs" from the allowable number of 4 to 14. The increase is primarily the result of (1) adding Ritchie Marlboro Road wall and the 10 architectural entry features for the 10 retail amenities. This allows the concept of creating prominent identification by providing signage as (a) part of a decorative wall along the new Ritchie Marlboro Road, (b) two Architectural Entrance Features with signage, and (c) monument signage (10) at entrances into the retail amenities. The architectural elements in all the signage unite to provide identity and character.

The proposed area square feet departure for freestanding signs visible from I-495, the business park entrance feature signs and the decorative wall is the minimum necessary to help create identity and character for the business park. It is also consistent with the purposes previously highlighted. Moreover, patrons, customers and users will be able to quickly identify businesses and establishments within the business park. It should be noted significant development will be occurring opposite Steeplechase, and some confusion may occur as a result. The signage program, inclusive of the requested departures, will greatly reduce some of the confusion and provide drivers direction to their desired locations. It should be noted the retail signs are consistent with the industrial building and entrance feature signage used throughout the business park.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff agrees. Previous design alternatives were submitted for review and design alterations were provided to achieve a reasonable compromise for the final proposal.

**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.**

**Applicant's Position:** The property is situated in an area of the Capital Beltway that is among its least congested, and traffic flow allows for higher speeds to be maintained. Thus, signage identifying the location for its businesses and potential customers must do so in a manner that is safe by recognizing the speed of traffic and the time drivers have to react to this notice. An additional circumstance to the site is a grade differential between the exit ramp and the retail area. The retail area becomes obscured visually from the highway as the exit ramp begins to incline toward the roundabout. The retail area site is at its lowest point, 10 feet below the ramp elevation. The condition can only be addressed by permitting the necessary departures to alleviate this circumstance. The applicant seeks to create and provide a qualitative identity and image that is previously more likely to appear in areas of the county's Developed Tier. Lastly, Steeplechase is unique. The business park will include approximately 1 million square feet of development inclusive of businesses seeking to be within an area of the county's Foreign Trade Zone. Its retail amenities that are proposed are specifically the result of a Council Zoning Ordinance change, and are intended to serve the proximate community as well as the business park and highway consumers.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff agrees. Previous design alternatives were submitted for review and design alternatives were provided to achieve a reasonable compromise for the final proposal.

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

**Applicant's Position:** These departures assist in the overall effort to provide safe, attractive signage. The additional number of signs, height and area provide for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner compatible with the land use. None of the departures impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the surrounding neighborhood and nearby community. By contrast, it fits in with the overall character and identity proposed by the applicant. As well, the additional area is compatible with the building landscape and viewsheds being created, and thus does not detract from the overall development.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff agrees. Previous design alternatives were submitted for review and design alternatives were provided to achieve a reasonable compromise for the final proposal.

8. **Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03113:** Preliminary Plan (4-03113) was approved by the Planning Board on March 4, 2004. Resolution PGCPB No. 04-49 adopted by the Planning Board formalized that approval. Conditions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 of the approval apply to the review of the subject detailed site plan. Please see further discussion of those conditions under Finding 11, Referrals, below.

9. **Landscape Manual:** The proposed development is subject to the requirements of Section 4.2, Commercial and Industrial Landscaped Strip, and Section 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements, of the *Landscape Manual*.

The Urban Design staff reviewed the proposed landscape plan and found that the submittals are in general compliance with the applicable sections of the *Landscape Manual*.

10. **Woodland Conservation Ordinance:** The project is subject to the provisions of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance because the gross tract area is greater than 40,000 square feet and there are more than 10,000 square feet of existing woodland on-site.
11. **Referral Comments:** The subject application was referred to the concerned agencies and divisions. The referral comments are summarized as follows:

**Historic Preservation**—In a memorandum dated September 21, 2006, the Historic Preservation Planning Section stated that the proposed project would have no effects on historic resources.

**Archeology**—In a memorandum dated September 21, 2006, the Archeological staff stated that the proposed project would have no effects on identified archeological resources.

**Community Planning**—In a memorandum dated October 6, 2006, the Community Planning Division stated that the proposed project is not inconsistent with the 2002 General Plan Development Pattern policies, and that it is in conformance with the land use recommendations of the 1986 *Approved Master Plan and Adopted Sectional Map Amendment for Suitland-District Heights and Vicinity, Planning Areas 75A and 75B*.

This development is at a prominent location. The master plan (p. 188) specifically addresses:

Hampton Office and Industrial Area

Construction of the planned Beltway interchange at Walker Mill Road will create substantial opportunities for future land development in the extensive vacant area, which adjoins the future interchange site. All new development should be of a high visual quality which matches the importance of this regionally accessible location.

Future development in this key area should be compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods. Adequate natural or manmade screening should be provided between employment and fringing areas, including the Capital Beltway. Development in the Hampton Business Park should continue to have high landscaping and design standards as required by local covenants. Properties between Ritchie Road and the Business Park south of the Pepco transmission line should be developed to similar standards.

The applicant requests sign departures for height increase of 25 to 75 feet, sign departure for number increase from 4 to 14, signs for area increase of 65 to 1,081 square feet, and other signs departures. While the master plan does not provide specific design standards for signs, it does emphasize the importance of a high visual quality that should be provided by the development at this site.

**Transportation**—In a memorandum dated September 29, 2006, the Transportation Planning Section stated that there is an approved subdivision for the site, Preliminary Plan 4-03113. There are several transportation-related conditions on the underlying subdivision, and the status of these conditions are summarized below:

**Preliminary Plan of 4-03113:**

**Condition 1a(5):** Requires denial of access from Lot 25 unless the county Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) indicates that such access “would provide a better transportation design.” Although Lot 25 is not included in this

application, the right-in right-out access point is shown on this plan. This driveway access onto an arterial facility was only allowed conditionally by the Planning Board at the time of subdivision. The needed documentation from DPW&T has not been provided. If the applicant can demonstrate that DPW&T believes this access to be superior to having all traffic to Lots 24 and 25 using the Hampton Park Boulevard access, then the access may stay on this plan. Otherwise it must be removed.

As this detailed site plan covers infrastructure, and since the infrastructure for Lot 25 is very much dependent on whatever is approved on Lot 24, it is recommended that the area of this detailed site plan application be expanded to cover Lot 25.

**Urban Design Comment:** Staff has received a copy of a memorandum dated May 27, 2004, from DPW&T addressing the direct access from Walker Road and have determined that this is no longer an issue in this case.

**Condition 6:** The required transportation improvements are enforceable at the time of building permit, and this condition will be enforced at that time.

**Condition 7:** Hampton Park Boulevard is shown with a right-of-way exceeding 70 feet. DPW&T shall determine the scope of improvements to be completed within the right-of-way.

**Condition 8:** None of the lots east of Hampton Park Boulevard indicate access onto Ritchie Marlboro Road or the Capital Beltway; therefore, this condition is met.

Vehicular and pedestrian access within the site is acceptable. It needs to be stated that the transportation staff is generally averse to the circulation pattern shown without vehicular connections between neighboring commercial lots. Patrons of one commercial establishment should be able to travel to the neighboring establishment on the next lot without driving onto the main highway. A strenuous objection is not raised herein because the adjacent street is not a through roadway, but is a cul-de-sac serving a fixed group of uses. Nonetheless, it is noted that transportation staff would generally prefer to see vehicular connections between Lots 15 and 16, Lots 17 and 18, and Lots 18 and 19, and would support such connections.

The subject property was the subject of a 2003 traffic study and was given subdivision approval pursuant to a finding of adequate transportation facilities made in 2004 for Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-03113. The uses proposed on this site plan are generally consistent with the uses proposed at the time of preliminary plan, making the basis for the preliminary plan findings still valid.

**Subdivision**—In a memorandum dated October 17, 2006, the Subdivision Section offered the following:

The property is the subject of Preliminary Plan 4-03113, approved by the Planning Board on March 4, 2004. The resolution of approval, PGCPB Resolution 04-49 was adopted on March 11, 2004. The property is the subject of record plats REP 205@93 and REP 205@94. The property is known as Steeple Chase Business Park.

The final plats contain a note stating that: “This plat is subject to a Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions recorded in Liber 20656 at Folio 88.” These covenants and restrictions may

materially affect the land use types and amounts that can be built on the site. Although the Planning Board does not generally enforce such covenants (unless they are the beneficiary), the applicant should be aware that they are obligated to comply with the terms and restrictions contained therein.

**Urban Design Comment:** The site plan has been revised to match the record plat.

**Trails**—In a memorandum dated November 1, 2005, the senior trails planner stated that the Adopted and Approved 1985 Equestrian Addendum to the Adopted and Approved Countywide Trails Plan and planning work for the update to the Master Plan of Transportation recommend a master plan trail facility along Ritchie-Marlboro Road and Walker Mill Road extended. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements have been incorporated into the recent Ritchie-Marlboro Road and Capital Beltway interchange. These improvements have taken the form of wide and (in places of right-of-way constraints) standard sidewalks along the south side of Ritchie Marlboro Road.

It appears likely that these improvements will be continued along the south side of Ritchie-Marlboro Road and Walker Mill Road extended. Improvements to the north side of these roads may consist of standard DPW&T improvements, with the master plan trail facility going on the south. Staff recommends that the master plan trail facility along Ritchie-Marlboro Road be continued along the south side of the roadway in the vicinity of the subject site, in keeping with recent DPW&T road improvements in this area.

A master plan trail facility is also recommended within the Pepco right-of-way just north of the subject site. However, due to liability concerns, there are no recommendations regarding this proposal at this time.

#### **SIDEWALK CONNECTIVITY:**

Standard sidewalks are reflected along both sides of all internal roads. This includes both sides of the subject application's frontage of Hampton Park Boulevard and Alaking Court.

The senior trails planner's suggestions are included in the recommended conditions below.

**Permits**—In a memorandum dated October 9, 2006, the Permit Review Section offered numerous comments that have either been addressed by revisions to the plans or in the recommended conditions below.

**Environmental Planning**—In a memorandum dated November 6, 2006, the Environmental Planning Section offered the following:

The revised detailed site plan and TCPII were originally approved by the Planning Board subject to conditions contained in PGCPB No. 05-240 in July 2006. This was later affirmed by the District Council subject to the following conditions. The Environmental Planning Section recommends the signature approval of the revised plan because it was found to be in conformance with the TCPII.

**Department of Environmental Resources**—In comments dated August 11, 2005, DER stated that the site plan for Steeplechase 95-DSP-05044, is consistent with approved stormwater concept 15416-2005.



**Fire Department**—In comments dated September 26, 2006, the Specials Operation Command Bureau of Fire Prevention Special Hazards Section provided comments that require incorporation into the final plat and a condition of release of the use and occupancy permit.

**Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T)**—As of the completion date of this staff report, DPW&T had not provided any comments regarding this case.

**Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)**—In comments dated August 11, 2005, WSSC stated that water and sewer extension is required for the site. In addition, an on-site plan review package should be. Project No. DA3893z04 is an approved project within the limits of this proposal site.

An additional right-of-way is required. The Alaking Court cul-de-sac bulb has shifted location creating a gap between the roadway dedication and current WSSC right-of-way easement shown on the site plan. DA3893B04 must be revised, a new plat provided and additional WSSC right-of-way easement acquired to secure access for the proposed pump.

All grading and construction impacts to WSSC's existing mains and rights-of-way for this site must be reviewed by the Development Services Group. The proposed landscaping shown on the plan is not permitted within our right-of-way for the existing 54-inch water main. A public utility easement shall not be permitted to cross or overlap the existing 54-inch water main or easement. The proposed WSSC service connections should be realigned outside of special pavement and walks. Remove the excess service connections shown on plan that resulted from property line changes. Connections shown to Parcel 20 must be trimmed back to new street dedication limits. The water house connection for Parcel 18 must be realigned to avoid the storm drain inlet. The proposed storm drainage systems on parcels 15 and 16 must not preclude WSSC's use of proposed right-of-way easement for future sewer. Proposed fire hydrants may need realignment to avoid special site features such as handicap ramps, curb lines, etc. The proposed screen walls may require special designs (sleeves, pipe material changes, realignment) for individual on-site water and sewer plans.

12. As required by Section 27-285(b) of the Zoning Ordinance, the detailed site plan represents a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines of Subtitle 27, Part 3, Division 9, of the Prince George's County Code without requiring unreasonable cost and without detracting substantially from the utility of the proposed development for its intended use.

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR DETAILED SITE PLAN DSP-05044/01

Based upon the foregoing evaluation and analysis, the Urban Design staff recommend that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE Detailed Site Plan DSP-05044/01 and TCP II/128/90-03, for Steeplechase 95 Business Park (Retail Portion), subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to signature approval of the detailed site plan, provide a standard sidewalk along the subject site's entire frontage of Walker Mill Road extended and Ritchie Marlboro Road, unless modified by DPW&T.
2. Revise the detailed site plan to remove the proposed landscaping shown within the right-of -way for the existing 54" water main.

#### RECOMMENDATION FOR DEPARTURE FROM SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS DSDS-641

Based upon the foregoing evaluation and analysis, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and approve the application for the departure from sign design standards DSDS-641, Steeplechase 95 Business Park (Retail Area and Business Park), subject to the following conditions:

1. On either face of the pylon sign, there shall be no more than one business advertised on each of the nine individual sign panels.
2. On either face of the retail entry monument sign, there shall be no more than one business advertised on each of the eight individual sign panels.
3. On the face of the business park entry monument sign, there shall be no more than one business advertised on each of the six individual sign panels.
4. Prior to signature approval of the DSDS:
  - a. Identify placement and size of tenant logo or typeface proposed for the Type R—Typical Retail Tenant Sign.
  - b. Provide the illuminated sign specifications for the WaWa gas price sign.
  - c. Provide a materials sample board for the proposed signs.
    - i. Material samples shall be securely mounted on one or more lightweight boards not to exceed 8.5"x14" and shall include:
      - Color Chips
      - Manufacturers cut sheets
      - Photographs or samples for applied typeface and logos.