

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George’s County Planning Board has reviewed Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-688, Potomac Energy Holding, LLC (Dash-In/Shell Aerospace Drive), requesting a departure of five feet from the required ten-foot setback for a freestanding sign in accordance with Subtitle 27 of the Prince George’s County Code; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing on May 7, 2015, the Prince George’s County Planning Board finds:

A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is a square-shaped parcel at the northeast corner of the intersection of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. The 0.9-acre parcel is zoned Light Industrial (I-1) and is improved with an existing gas station with three service bays and a small convenience store. Additional structures on the site include two concrete pump islands, four gasoline pump dispensers, one canopy, three underground storage tanks, one freestanding sign, and 21 surface parking spaces. The property has direct vehicular access via four driveway cuts, two each on Aerospace Road and Greenbelt Road.

B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	I-1	I-1
Use(s)	Gas Station (8 fueling positions) with 3 Service Bays	Gas Station (12 fueling positions) Food or Beverage Store and Car Wash
Acreage	0.9	0.9
Parcels	1	1
Square Footage/GFA	2,188	4,524

C. **History:** The subject property was rezoned to the I-1 Zone pursuant to Zoning Map Amendment Application No. A-7677 on August 28, 1970. The existing gas station was built several years later as a permitted use in the I-1 Zone. In 1998, the District Council, pursuant to County Council Bill CB-40-1998, amended the County Ordinance to require a special exception for a gas station in the I-1 Zone. The existing gas station has remained in its current configuration since the time it was first built.

D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** *The Plan Prince George’s 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan Prince George’s 2035) was approved May 2014, and defers to the 2010 Approved Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment (Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA) for specific land use recommendations at this location. The SMA recommends commercial and light-industrial uses for the subject property. The site was retained in the I-1 Zone by the Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA.*

- E. **Request:** The applicant is requesting a Departure from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-688) from Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires freestanding signs in all commercial and industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone) to be located at least ten feet behind the street line. The existing sign, which the applicant wishes to retain, is located five feet from the right-of-way.
- F. **Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses:** The subject property, 10000 Greenbelt Road, is located in the Glenn Dale neighborhood. Nearby development has been historically linked to the NASA Goddard complex to the north and west along Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Good Luck Road. The Glenn Dale Business Campus, the Maryland Corporate Center, and Goddard Corporate Park are all found within the immediate neighborhood. Although some of this land is now planned for a mixed-use development including residences (Glenn Dale Commons), a significant number of offices, auto-related commercial, and warehouse uses remain. The general neighborhood is bounded to the north and east by Northern Avenue, to the west by Good Luck Road, and to the south by Greenbelt Road. The uses immediately surrounding the proposed special exception are as follows:
- North—** A car wash, beyond which is a large office building/warehouse, both in the I-1 Zone. To the northwest is a large apartment complex (The Glenn Dale) in the Multifamily Medium Density Residential (R-18) Zone.
- East—** Mini-storage, a church, and a credit union all in the I-1 Zone.
- West—** Across Aerospace Road is a strip-commercial center (Aerospace Plaza) in the I-1 Zone.
- South—** Across Greenbelt Road is a large multifamily apartment complex (Woodland Landing) in the R-18 Zone.
- G. **Signage:** The applicant is proposing building, canopy, and freestanding signage that are prototypical franchise-style for Dash-In and Shell. The building signs and window stickers will be the red and green Dash-In logos, while the canopy sides and canopy signage will be the red and yellow logos that are typical for Shell. The freestanding sign will be a combination of both and will include three types of gasoline price signs. The signage appears to be within the allowed square footage, although the height is shown to be 26.5 feet, which exceeds the permitted height of 25 feet. A departure for the placement of the sign, per Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance, is requested.
- H. **Required findings for Departures from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-688):** Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance requires freestanding signs in all commercial and industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone) to be located at least ten feet behind the street line. The existing sign, which the applicant wishes to retain, is located five feet from the right-of-way.

Section 27-239.01(a)(4), Required Findings, 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.**

In general, the purposes of the Sign Ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification and advertisement, to promote the general welfare of the residents of the county, and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures. Although the required ten-foot setback is not being met, the applicant's goal is to retain the existing sign, which is set back more than 18 feet from the existing edge of pavement. The sign location for the use becomes all the more important due to the realignment of the building and the applicant's proposed closing of the second driveway to Aerospace Road. The height and area of the sign meet the requirements of the Code. Retention of the existing sign would provide necessary visibility for the use in an appropriate manner.

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

The applicant wishes to simply retain the long-existing sign. It has provided appropriate identification for Shell for many years at this location. When the sign was originally placed here, it met the setback requirement. It is because of the widening of the right-of-way for Greenbelt Road (MD 193) that it is now out of compliance. If permitted to stay, the five-foot 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.**

The freestanding sign has existed on this property for many years, yet remains attractive and recognizable. It is in an older area of Prince George's County developed with old commercial uses. The applicant has come to the conclusion that a complete modernization is in order to present a new image to their customers and improve the overall character of the commercial corridor. The sign is set back more than 18 feet from the existing edge of pavement, meeting the intent, if not the letter, of the requirement. Therefore, the departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site and prevalent in older areas of the County.

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

A freestanding sign is necessary to further provide adequate identification for the use. A freestanding sign has existed on the site for many years, and the applicant is not proposing any changes. The replacement of the sign, the redevelopment of the site with a larger modern structure, and the removal of the service bays will improve the visual quality of the site. As such, the proposed departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of

the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. The Community Planning Division suggests that a monument-type sign would be appropriate for the site, although this is not discussed as a strategy in the Glenn Dale-Seabook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA. Given that the existing sign and location are proposed to be retained, staff would recommend that, at a minimum, a brick base similar to the brick used on the proposed buildings be employed at the base of the freestanding sign.

I. Further Planning Board Findings and Comments from Other Entities: The following comments were received.

1. **Transportation**—The impact of a new gas station with food and beverage service and a car wash is estimated using trip rates from the *Trip Generation Manual* (Institute of Transportation Engineers). According to surveys published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, a high percentage of trips are expected to be pass-by and diverted trips, which would be made by motorists already on the adjacent roadways of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. For this site, it was assumed that 75 percent of the trips would be pass-by or diverted trips. Using trip rates as described above, the trip impact is as follows:

Comparison of Estimated Trip Generation, SE-4757								
Zoning or Use	Units or Square Feet	(AM) Peak-Hour Trips			(PM) Peak-Hour Trips			Daily Trips
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Existing Use								
Gas Station	4 dispensers (8 vehicle positions) 2,200 sq. ft.	50	50	100	62	63	125	1,350
Total New Trips	Total trips x (0.25)	6	7	13	15	16	31	
Proposed Use								
Gas Station	6 dispensers (12 vehicle positions)	80	80	160	87	88	175	1,835
Food/Beverage	3,180 sq. ft.							
Car Wash	1,344 sq. ft.							
Total New Trips	Total trips x (0.25)	20	20	40	22	22	44	
Difference		14	13	27	7	6	13	485

The trips generated by the proposed uses pose very little change from the approved existing uses. The change does not appear to be sufficient to trigger the need for additional studies of traffic impacts. Outside of special exception cases where studies are required, traffic studies have rarely been deemed necessary, and then only for uses generating over 50 new trips. The critical intersection for this site is the intersection of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. Recent traffic counts indicate that the intersection

operates adequately. There are no apparent safety issues that would result from the expansion of the uses. It is important to remember that adequacy of transportation facilities is not an issue in the review of this use; review is strictly within the required findings of health, safety, and welfare.

The site is adjacent to MD 193. This roadway is listed in the Glenn Dale-Seabook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA as an arterial roadway with 120 to 200 feet of right-of-way.

The proposed gas station complies with Section 27-358 of the Zoning Ordinance. It has direct access to a street with adequate right-of-way, the two-way driveway on Aerospace Road is more than 30 feet wide, the driveways are curbed, a sidewalk of five feet is provided, and the gasoline pumps are more than 25 feet behind the street line.

Access and Circulation

The existing gas station has four access/egress driveways. The proposed gas station will have one two-way driveway on Aerospace Road and two one-way driveways on MD 193. The proposed car wash is located behind the food and beverage store with 295 feet of queuing space. This should prevent any vehicles from queuing onto MD 193. It is deemed that access for the proposed uses on the site is acceptable in consideration of the scope of the facility and the traffic to be generated.

2. **Urban Design**—The architecture for the proposed food and beverage store utilizes a red/brown-colored exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS) product as its primary architectural material, though brick is used on the front (south) and the right-side elevations. EIFS is not a favored material in Prince George's County due to its lack of durability. It is easily punctured and should not be used within easy reach of pedestrians on any building. The front façade includes a red painted canopy in its center topping a large area of storefront glass, in which the two front entry doors are set. A tower feature, located on the southwestern corner of the building and visible from both the front and right side elevations, includes the applicant's corporate logo signage on both sides. The tower, clad in white metal panels, scored by rectilinear grey mullion-type detailing, and topped by an angled cornice, provides a measure of visual relief from the monotonous EIFS walls and otherwise flat roof of this structure. The entire water table is clad in red split-face block which provides a measure of additional texture. Except those noted above, architectural detail is absent from the structure. Downspouts, which are not architectural features, are evident on the rear façade and light fixtures are provided on the sides and front of the building.

The architecture of the car wash is similar in color and design to the food and beverage store, though brick is utilized as the primary material on all the façades. A split or ground face block is similarly provided on the water table, though it is highlighted by a different color and textural band on the car wash. The car wash is rectilinear and flat-roofed, employing the same color brick on the elevations as on the food and beverage store, and

accented by a complementary red color on the watertable and the entry doors. The vinyl bay doors are a contrasting blue that complements a royal and light blue banner, with what appear to be pictured soap bubbles on it, that runs around the building just under the roofline. The banner includes signage on the front (west) elevation stating “Splash in Eco Car Wash” and “Enter” and “Exit” over the appropriate windowed bay doors that provide ingress and egress to the car wash. Other signage is noted on the left side (north elevation). Utilitarian access doors are provided on the front (west) elevation and the left side (north) elevation. A single band of un-mullioned windows are included above the water table of the elevation. Details have been included for the signage.

The Planning Board finds that site design and signage are generally acceptable. With respect to architecture, the Planning Board would suggest additional architectural detail and ornamentation such as faux windows or other vertical elements to break up the horizontal massing and enhance the design of the structure due to the site’s visibility from the various roadways. The specific recommendations for the upgrades to the proposed architecture are noted as conditions.

3. **Subdivision**—Pursuant to Section 24-111(c)(2) of the Subdivision Regulations, a site is exempt from the requirement of filing a preliminary plan of subdivision if the total development proposed for the final plat does not exceed 5,000 square feet of gross floor area. As previously discussed, the special exception indicates that the proposed construction will not exceed 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, which meets the requirements of the exemption. The development of more than 5,000 square feet on the subject site will require a preliminary plan and a new final plat. Failure of the site plan and record plat to match (including bearings, distances, and lot sizes) will result in permits being placed on hold until the plans are corrected.

CONCLUSION

The applicant has met its burden of proof in this instance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George’s County Code, the Prince George’s County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVED the above-noted application.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board’s action must be filed with the District Council for Prince George’s County, Maryland within thirty (30) days of the final notice of the Planning Board’s decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Washington, seconded by Commissioner Geraldo, with Commissioners Washington, Geraldo, and Bailey voting in favor of the motion, and with Commissioners Hewlett and Shoaff absent at its regular meeting held on Thursday, May 7, 2015, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 4th day of June.

Patricia Colihan Barney
Executive Director

By Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

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