

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board has reviewed a Departure from Design Standards requesting a departure from the requirements of Section 27-617, Institutional Signs, of the Zoning Ordinance, which allows one freestanding sign per street frontage; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing on October 28, 2004, the Prince George's County Planning Board finds:

**FINDINGS:**

**A. Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is located on the north side of Annapolis Road (MD 450), approximately 400 feet east of its intersection with 76<sup>th</sup> Avenue, known as 7598 Annapolis Road. The subject property comprises approximately 0.64 acres of land. Access to the property is from an entrance along Annapolis Road. The property is zoned C-M, and it has 168 feet of street frontage on Annapolis Road.

**B. Development Data Summary:**

	A. <u>EXISTING</u>	B. <u>PROPOSED</u>
Zone(s)	C-M	C-M
Use(s)	Auto dealership	Auto dealership
Acreage	0.64	0.64
Signs	1 freestanding (approved)	1 freestanding
Sign Area	60	146.25
Sign Height	25'	20'

**C. History:** On December 4, 1986, the Planning Board denied a departure from sign design standards application DSDS 327 for a 100-square-foot, 25-foot high, freestanding sign (PGCPB No. 86-493). On May 11, 1987, the District Council approved DSDS 327 with a condition of approval stating that the area of the sign shall not exceed 60 square feet in area.

**D. Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1994 Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity Master Plan retains the subject property in the C-M Zone. There are no master plan conformance issues and no specific sign guidelines that are pertinent to this property.

**E. Request:** The applicant is requesting relief from the sign ordinance to allow an area of 146.25 square feet for the proposed sign. The maximum permitted sign area is 42 square feet.

F. **Surrounding Uses:** The property is surrounded by the following uses:

North: Single-family residential uses in the R-55 Zone.

West: Gas Station in the C-2 Zone, single-family residential uses in the R-O-S Zone, and industrial office uses in the I-3 Zone.

South: Annapolis Road—commercial uses in the C-S-C Zone.

East: Auto dealership in the C-2 Zone.

G. **Sign Requirements:**

**Section 27-614(C)(3)(b), Freestanding Signs, allows a sign area of one square foot for each four (4) lineal feet of street frontage, to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet for each sign, if the business is not located in an integrated shopping center. The street frontage will be measured on the property by the use associated with the sign.**

The proposed sign has a sign area of 50 square feet. The sign will be 8 feet in length and 6 foot 3 inches in width. The base of the sign consists of two 13-foot 9-inch by 3-foot 6-inch cladded columns. The area of the base of the sign is 96.25 square feet. The total area of the sign including the base is 146.25 square feet. The maximum allowable sign area is 42 square feet. The applicant is requesting a departure for the additional 104.25 square feet of sign area.

**Section 27-589 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.**

The proposed is a freestanding sign with the corporate logo for Nissan. The sign will have light gray metal cladding. The base of the sign will consist of cladded metal posts with gray and red colors. The cladding for the base gives the appearance of a monument sign instead of a freestanding sign mounted on a pole. However, the large amount of metal cladding for the base columns is unnecessary. The proposed sign is only 50 square feet. The area of the base of the sign is 96.25 square feet. The sign can be supported by a base of lesser area. Supporting the sign with two cladded gray columns and eliminating the red colored columns will substantially reduce the overall sign area and the monolithic appearance of the sign. Conditions of approval have been added to require the above modifications to the sign. With the proposed conditions, the overall design of the sign will be subdued and compatible with the commercial use of the property. The sign will not attract undue attention, will provide for adequate identification and advertisement, and will be compatible with the overall streetscape along Annapolis Road. A condition of approval has also been added to require adequate landscaping along the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign along the street.

**H. Required Findings:**

**(A) Section 27-239.01(b)(9)** of the Zoning Ordinance provides that in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

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

The applicant is requesting relief from the maximum allowable area requirements of Section 27-614, Freestanding Signs, of the Zoning Ordinance, which allows a maximum sign area of 42 square feet. The proposed sign area for the corporate logo and lettering is only 50 square feet, which exceeds the allowable sign area by only eight square feet. The additional eight square feet for the sign is requested to accommodate the corporate logo for the sign and have a sign of adequate size that allows easy identification along Annapolis Road. An additional 96.25 square feet are requested for the cladded base of the sign. The large amount of additional sign area for the cladded base of the sign is not necessary. The sign can be supported by a base of lesser area.

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. The location, size and design of the proposed 50-square-foot

sign area will provide adequate identification and advertisement for the car dealership along Annapolis Road. The monolithic base for the sign is not necessary and will attract undue attention to itself. Conditions of approval have been added to provide a base with a smaller area.

With the proposed conditions, the purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.

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

The applicant is requesting a departure for an additional eight square feet for the sign to accommodate the corporate logo and lettering for the Nissan car dealership. The additional eight feet of sign area is necessary to provide adequate identification and advertisement for the property along a busy street like Annapolis Road. Therefore, the departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

An additional 96.25 square feet is requested for the cladded base of the sign. The large amount of additional sign area for the cladded base of the sign is not necessary. The sign can be supported by a base of smaller area. Therefore, a departure for the cladded base will be excessive and will not be necessary.

**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.**

Annapolis Road is a busy street. The proposed departure for an additional eight square feet is necessary to provide a sign of adequate size for easy identification. The sign will also help identify the entrance to the car dealership along Annapolis Road and ensure the safety of the motorists on the road. Therefore, the departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances that are unique to the site.

An additional 96.25 square feet is requested for the cladded base of the sign. The large amount of additional sign area for the cladded base of the sign is not necessary. The sign can be supported by a base with a smaller area. Therefore, a departure for the cladded base will be excessive and will not be required to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site.

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

The proposed sign is a freestanding sign with the corporate logo for Nissan. The sign will have light gray metal cladding. The base of the sign will consist of cladded metal posts with gray and red colors. The cladding for the base gives the appearance of a monument sign instead of a freestanding sign mounted on a pole. However, the large amount of metal cladding for the base columns is unnecessary. The proposed sign is only 50 square feet. The area of the base of the sign is 96.25 square feet. The sign can be supported by a base with a smaller area. Conditions of approval have been added to require modifications to the sign to reduce the area of the base. With the proposed conditions, the overall design of the sign will be subdued and compatible with the commercial use of the property. The sign will not attract undue attention, will provide for adequate identification and advertisement, and will be compatible with the overall streetscape along Annapolis Road. A condition of approval has also been added to require adequate landscaping along the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign along the street.

**I. Referral Comments:**

1. In a memorandum dated June 9, 2004, the Urban Design Review Section has stated that the design and color of the proposed sign is better than the design and color of the existing sign.
2. In a memorandum dated June 15, 2004, the State Highway Administration has stated that they have no objections to the departure from sign design standards application.
3. In a memorandum dated June 1, 2004, the Transportation Planning Section has stated that they have no comments regarding the subject application.
4. In a memorandum dated May 21, 2004, the Historic Preservation Section has stated that the proposal will have no effect on historic resources.
5. In a memorandum dated June 15, 2004, the Community Planning Division has stated that the subject proposal has no master plan issues and conforms to the land use policy of the 1994 Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity Master Plan.
6. In a memorandum dated June 3, 2004, the Environmental Planning Section has stated that there are no environmental issues associated with the proposal.

**CONCLUSION:**

The proposed additional area for the freestanding sign represents a balance between the need to provide adequate identification and the responsibility 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 Prince Georges County.

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 Departure from Sign Design Standards application DSDS 621, subject to the following conditions:

Prior to certification of the DSDS application, the site plan and sign design drawings shall be revised as follows:

1. The red colored base of the sign shall be eliminated and the area of the cladded gray colored base shall not exceed 65 sq.ft.
2. Landscaping at the base of the sign to enhance the appearance of the sign. The total area of the proposed freestanding sign shall be shown on the site plan.

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 Harley, seconded by Commissioner Vaughns, with Commissioners Harley, Vaughns, Squire, Eley voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, October 28, 2004, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 18th day of November 2004.

Trudye Morgan Johnson  
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin  
Planning Board Administrator

TMJ:FJG:LS:rmk

(Revised 8/9/01)