

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board has reviewed DSDS-625 requesting a departure of sign area to permit 22 additional square feet and one additional 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 Thursday July 21, 2005 the Prince George's County Planning Board finds:

A. Location and Field Inspection: The subject property is located on the south side of Merrimack Drive between 15th Avenue and 16th Place, directly across the street from the Langley Park Community Center and Langley Park McCormick Elementary School. The property is currently developed with a one-story brick building containing a gymnasium and a ball field. A sign on the building indicates that the Langley Boys and Girls Club is headquartered at this location.

B. Development Data Summary:

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	R-18 Zone	R-18 Zone
Use(s)	Gymnasium	Church, gym, youth center, clinic
Acreage	2.97± ac.	2.97± ac.
Lots	1	2
Parcels	1	1
Square Footage/GFA	16,000	42,440
Dwelling Units:	N/A	N/A

C. History: The 1990 sectional map amendment for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt (Planning Areas 65, 66 ad 67) retained the subject property in the R-18 Zone.

D. Master Plan Recommendation: The 1989 approved master plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt and vicinity indicates that roughly half the site is recommended for public or quasi-public land use, while the balance is recommended for medium-suburban residential land uses at up to 5.7 dwelling units per acre.

E. Request: The applicant requests approval of a special exception (SE-4526) for an eleemosynary or philanthropic institution. The use would include a 16,387-square-foot youth center, a 15,750-square-foot “health and human services” building, and an 8,000-square-foot gymnasium. The proposed 24,000-square-foot Mother Teresa Chapel, which is permitted by right in the R-18 Zone, would seat 580 persons. A variance is requested to address deficiencies in setback for the required front and rear yards as well as for building height.

A total of 273 parking spaces and 4 loading spaces are required and the applicant is providing 72 parking and no loading spaces. A departure from parking and loading standards application (DPLS-303) has been filed to address this deficiency. The subject departure from sign design standards application (DSDS-625) was filed to permit two 70-square-foot freestanding signs. The

maximum number of freestanding signs permitted is one and sign area must not exceed 48 square feet for this property

F. Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses: The applicant defines the neighborhood as being bounded by East West Highway to the south, the Prince George’s County line (New Hampshire Avenue) to the west, and Adelphi Road is to the east. The applicant has defined an extremely large neighborhood that crosses the Northwest Branch and Adelphi Road to the north and University Boulevard to the south and includes numerous subdivisions. In planning, neighborhoods are considered to be units of a larger community. Neighborhoods are defined by the nearest major roads, streams or natural features or railroad rights-of-way. The applicant in this case, by extending the neighborhood north to the Beltway, includes such major roads as Metzerott and Adelphi Roads, the Northwest Branch, and University Boulevard to the south. Staff recommends the following neighborhood based on the nearest major roads and streams:

- North - Northwest Branch
- East - Riggs Road
- South - University Boulevard
- West - New Hampshire Avenue

The property is surrounded by the following uses:

- North - Across Merrimack Drive is the Langley Park Community Center and Langley Park McCormick Elementary School in the O-S and R-55 Zones. Single-family detached homes are located to the northwest at 15th Avenue and northeast at 16th Place.
- East - Single-family detached homes in the R-55 Zone.
- South - The Willowbrook and Villages at Langley apartment complexes in the R-18 Zone
- West - The Victoria Station Apartments in the R-18 Zone.

The neighborhood contains of mixture of older apartment complexes and single-family detached homes on small lots, with commercial uses along the southern and western boundaries.

J. Sign Regulations: The applicant requests a departure from sign design standards (application DSDS-625) to permit two 70-square-foot freestanding signs. The maximum number of freestanding signs permitted is one and sign area must not exceed 48 square feet for this property. Section 27-239.01(b)(7) provides the following findings to be made when approving a sign departure:

(i) The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal;

The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal. The applicant proposes one additional freestanding sign. Both signs have been designed to serve a practical function of clearly identifying the various buildings and uses

on the property. The additional sign is necessary due to the shape of the property. The site plan indicates that each sign would be situated at the east and west entrances to this crescent-shaped property.

The size of each sign would be 70 square feet. The applicant provides that, due to the number of uses involved in the proposed eleemosynary/philanthropic institution (youth center, gymnasium, church and clinic), a larger sign is necessary. The Planning Board agrees that given the shape of the property and number of uses involved, the proposed 70-square-foot signs would provide for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner that is compatible with land uses in the Regional District in accordance with the purposes of the Sign Regulations.

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

The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request. The signs were designed to clearly identify all of the uses on the property, as well as properly label the buildings as to the chapel and the non-chapel uses. The signs are no larger than necessary, given the amount of information/wording provided on them. The function of the signs would be impaired if they were any smaller, as they would not be legible from the street.

(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 departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site. The Planning Board believes the unusual shape of the property makes the additional sign and sign area necessary. The use will have driveways at the eastern and westernmost corners of the site. Strict compliance with Sign Regulations would restrict the property to one 48-square-foot sign. It would be difficult for motorists negotiating this winding road to see the sign in time to turn into the driveway.

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

The departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has submitted drawings of the proposed signs (attached). The signs have a monumental appearance and are consistent with the style of the building. The Board has not, however, reviewed information regarding how the signs would be illuminated. The applicant will be required to provide the type and location of lighting for the signs.

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 recommends APPROVAL of the above-noted application, subject to the following conditions:

1. A sign plan shall be submitted showing the dimensions of the proposed signs.
2. The site plan shall include the location and type of illumination to be used for the sign

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 Eley, seconded by Chairman Hewlett, with Commissioner Squire absent, and with Commissioner Vaughns voting in opposition of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, July 21, 2005, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 8th day of September 2005.

Trudye Morgan Johnson
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin
Planning Board Administrator

TMJ:FJG:JJ:rmk

(Revised 8/9/01)