The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
Development Review Division
301-952-3530

Note: *Staff reports can be accessed at www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm.*

DETAILED SITE PLAN DSP-05099

Application	**General Data**	
Project Name: COMMERCE BANK	Date Accepted:	2/13/2006
	Planning Board Action Limit:	Waived
	Plan Acreage:	0.63
Location: East side of Baltimore Avenue (US 1) at its intersection with Guilford Road	Zone:	M-U-I /DDOZ
	Dwelling Units:	NA
	Square Footage:	5,100
Applicant/Address: Commerce Bank 9000 Atrium Way Mt. Laurel, N.J. 08054	Planning Area:	66
	Tier:	Developed
	Council District:	03
	Municipality:	College Park
	200-Scale Base Map:	209NE04

Purpose of Application	**Notice Dates**	
Construction of a 5,100-square-foot commercial bank	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: (CB-12-2003)	11/2/2005
	Sign(s) Posted on Site and Notice of Hearing Mailed:	6/13/06

Staff Recommendation		**Staff Reviewer:**	**H. Zhang, AICP**
APPROVAL	**APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**	**DISAPPROVAL**	**DISCUSSION**
	X		

June 26, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Henry Zhang, Urban Design Section, Development Review Division

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan, DSP-05099, Commerce Bank

The Urban Design staff has completed its review of the subject application and appropriate referrals. The following evaluation and findings lead 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 compliance with the following criteria:

a. The requirements of the 2002 *Approved College Park US 1Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* and the standards of the Development District Overlay Zone (DDOZ);

b. The requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the M-U-I Zone and Part 10B, Airport Compatibility;

c. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual;*

d. The requirements of the Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance;

e. Referrals.

FINDINGS

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

1. **Request:** The subject application is for approval of a 5,100-square-foot commercial bank.

2. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	M-U-I/DDOZ	M-U-I/DDOZ
Use(s)	Commercial Retail	Commercial Office
Acreage	0.63	0.63
Lots	2	2
Parcels	0	0
Square Footage/GFA	9,031	5,100

OTHER DEVELOPMENT DATA

Parking Required (Per Section 27-568(a)): One space per 250 square feet of the first 2,000 square feet of the gross floor area (GFA) and then one space per 400 square feet of GFA above the first 2,000 square feet.

	REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Total Parking Spaces	16	17
Of Which Standard parking spaces (9.5'x 19.0')	-	15
Handicapped spaces (16.0' x 19.0')	1	2
Loading space	0*	0

Note: * No loading space is required for any commercial office including banks with a gross floor area less than 10,000 square feet.

3. **Location:** The site is located on the east side of Baltimore Avenue (US 1), at its intersection with Guilford Road, within the boundary of the City of College Park, in Planning Area 66, Council District 3.

4. **Surrounding Uses:** The site is bounded on the east side by a single-family house and a parking lot; to the north by an existing two-story Zips Dry Cleaners; to the west by the right-of-way of Baltimore Avenue (US 1); and to the south by the right-of-way of Guilford Road.

5. **Previous Approvals:** The subject site was originally zoned C-S-C and improved as a furniture store and building (currently vacant). The 2002 *Approved College Park US 1Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment*, which was approved by the District Council on April 30, 2002 (CR-18-2002), rezoned the subject site into the M-U-I Zone and superimposed a development district overlay zone on the M-U-I Zone.

6. **Design Features:** The subject site is a rectangular-shaped property fronting Baltimore Avenue (US 1). The proposal is for a 5,100-square-foot bank with associated drive-through teller service. The site plan shows an access to the site from US 1, which is close to the northern boundary line and an access to the site from Guilford Road. A pedestrian walkway lined with landscaping connects the rear of the property to Calvert Road. The frontage along US 1 will be improved with a brick paver sidewalk, tree planting boxes, and street furniture per the streetscape requirements outlined in the sector plan. The brick paver sidewalk will extend from the building to the curb along US 1. The frontage along Guilford Road will be improved with a five-foot brick paver sidewalk and a six-foot landscaping strip for street trees per the approved sector plan.

The building is designed to enhance the character of the College Park neighborhood and create a landmark of architectural interest. The massing of the building clearly indicates the corner

entrance by a tower with a glass pyramid roof and with accesses from both Baltimore Avenue and Guilford Drive. A secondary entrance provides convenience for customers from the parking lot or on foot from adjacent streets. The elevations are designed in a Commerce Bank prototype that blends well with the surrounding contemporary or more traditional structures. The ratio of solid wall to glass balances the need for solid appearance with the desire for visual openness. The building is finished with quality materials including red brick, off-white cast stone, clear glass, and stainless steel accents for an interesting appearance. Architectural detail, such as brick patterns and three-part façade design, enhance visual interest. The main elevation also shows the location of signage on the corner tower.

A signage package consisting of two types of building-mounted signs, directional signs, and traffic signs has been provided with this application. A review by the Permit Review Section indicates that the proposed signs are acceptable. The primary identification signs are located at the entrance tower along both Baltimore Avenue and Guilford Road. However, no sign face area for the secondary blue identification sign has been provided. A condition of approval has been proposed in the recommendation section of this report to require the applicant to provide the sign face area to be reviewed by the Permit Section prior to certificate approval.

COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

7. **The 2002 *Approved College Park US 1 Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* and the Standards of the Development District Overlay Zone (DDOZ):** The 2002 College Park US 1 Corridor Plan defines long-range land use and development policies, detailed zoning changes, design standards, and a DDOZ for the US 1 corridor area. The land use concept of the sector plan divides the corridor into six areas for the purpose of examining issues and opportunities and formulating recommendations. Each area has been further divided into subareas for the purpose of defining the desired land use types, mixes, and development character. The subject site is in Area 1 (Town Center), Subarea 1c, on the east side of US 1. The vision for Area 1 is that of mixed-use development featuring a compact mix of retail commercial, office and multifamily uses. The sector plan also provides specific subarea recommendations for Subarea 1c such as compact development, vertical mixed-use, and shared and/or structured parking. The subject application conforms to most of the recommendations except as discussed below:

Creation of Compact, Pedestrian-Oriented Environment

Comment: In accordance with the sector plan recommendation, a traditional, front-loaded drive-through window is prohibited in this subarea. The applicant has designed the site to reduce the impact of this drive-through service by locating it at the rear of the property and situating it in a manner that it will be screened from Baltimore Avenue by the main bank building. In addition, the applicant has limited this service to two drive-through lanes, which further reduces the impact of this service. In addition, the applicant is proposing additional amenities to enhance the pedestrian environment. The applicant is proposing a pedestrian connection between the rear of the property and Calvert Road. The applicant is also proposing a plaza area and seating on the north side of the proposed building. Staff believes that the provision of these amenities further offsets the impact of the drive-through service on the site.

Section 27-548.25(b) requires that the Planning Board find that the site plan meets applicable development district standards. The detailed site plan meets most of the standards with the exception of several development district standards, for which the applicant has requested an amendment. In order to allow the plan to deviate from the development district standards, the Planning Board must find that the alternative development district standards will benefit the

development and the development district and will not substantially impair implementation of the sector plan.

The development district standards are organized into three categories: public areas; site design; and building design. The applicant has submitted a statement of justification that provides a detailed explanation on how the proposed condominium project conforms to each development district standard. The amendments that the applicant has requested are discussed below.

PUBLIC AREAS:

P1. Road Network

A. Development should, where possible, provide for on-street parking.

Comment: Baltimore Avenue (US 1) is a principal arterial, undivided five-lane section highway. The annual average daily trips passing through this section of US 1 is 32,500 vehicle trips per day. The application proposes no on-street parking. The applicant is proposing a surface parking lot containing 17 parking spaces. This parking lot will be located to the rear of the building and on the north side of the building. The Urban Design Section believes that the proposed off-street parking is better than the on-street parking for this site, because traffic volumes on US 1 as currently designed will not permit safe on-street parking.

SITE DESIGN

S1. Vehicular Circulation/Access

E. All new drive-in or drive-through windows for any use are prohibited in Subareas 1 and 3. However, any existing drive-in or drive-through windows in Subarea 3 that must be removed because of government action shall be considered a permitted use and shall be exempt from the Development District Standards and site plan review.

Comment: As indicated above, the applicant is proposing drive-through service. The Urban Design Staff believes that the site layout through site design and the provision of additional pedestrian-oriented site amenities offsets the impact of the drive-through service on this site. It is also important to note that the proposed bank is only several hundred feet north of the southern boundary of Subarea 1 and indeed of the sector plan boundary, at a point not far from conventional neighborhoods where stringent enforcement of the sector plan prohibition of drive-through windows seems less essential than further north in the heart of Subarea 1.

S3. Building Siting and Setbacks

C. Building facades shall occupy a minimum of 70 percent of a property's street facing frontage on US 1 in the main street (3a and 3b) and the town center (1b, 1c and 1d) subareas (measured in linear feet). Building facades in the remainder of the development district shall occupy a minimum of 50 percent of a property's street facing frontage on US 1. Parking may be provided in front of the building façade only if it is one parking row wide for either parallel or angle-in, short-term parking.

Comment: The proposed bank building's façade occupies 55.3 percent of the property's street frontage facing US 1. The objective of this requirement is to create a consistent street edge within a block to enliven commercial areas by encouraging window shopping and streetside activity.

The applicant is proposing a plaza area on the north side of the bank building as well as masonry walls on the north and south side of the access driveway on US 1. With the combination of bank building and the masonry wall, a minimum 70 percent of the frontage will be occupied. The staff agrees with the applicant that the design of the plaza will encourage pedestrian activity in this area of the town center and the low walls will help define a continuous street edge to the property located to the north of the subject property. However, defining the street wall only with a low masonry wall does not meet the intent of the sector plan. Additional alternative design solutions, such as an accessory landscape structure or further extension of the façade along Baltimore Avenue, should be explored in order to fulfill this frontage coverage requirement. A condition of approval has been proposed in the recommendation section to require the applicant to explore additional design solutions to define a minimum 70 percent of frontage along Baltimore Avenue.

S4. Buffering and Screening

E. The bufferyard requirements within the development district may be reduced to facilitate a compact form of development compatible with the urban character on the US 1 corridor. The minimum bufferyard requirements (landscape yard) for incompatible uses in the *Landscape Manual* (Section 4.7) may be reduced by 50 percent. The plant units required per 100 linear feet of property line or right-of-way shall also be reduced by 50 percent. Alternative compliance shall not be required for these reductions.

A six-foot-high, opaque masonry wall, or other opaque screening treatment shall be provided in conjunction with the reduced width of the bufferyard between office/retail/commercial uses and residential uses.

Comment: A "C" bufferyard is required along the east property line where the proposed bank will be adjacent to an existing single-family home. A "C" bufferyard requires a 30-foot landscape buffer and a 40-foot building setback, to be adjusted as allowed by the standard above. The sector plan allows a 50 percent reduction that will reduce the "C" bufferyard for this case to a 20-foot building setback and 15-foot-wide landscape strip. The applicant is proposing a landscape yard that varies from 5 to 10 feet in width. The applicant is also proposing an opaque masonry wall combined with a wrought iron fence on top along this section of the eastern property line. The wall will be six feet in height at its northern end and will taper down to four feet in height as it gets closer to Guilford Road. The applicant was originally proposing a six-foot high wall for this entire section of the east property line, but after consultation with staff, it was determined that a six-foot wall for the entire length could pose a security issue. In addition, the proposed drive-through canopy infringes into the proposed landscape yard. However, this canopy will be located at the northern end of the bufferyard where its impact will be reduced by the six-foot-high brick veneered wall. The proposed modified bufferyard along the eastern residential property line will contain a combination of a segment of a six-foot-high brick veneered wall and a shorter wall (four foot-high) with a see-through fence on top of it and a landscaping strip that will have 65 percent more planting units than the required quantity. The combined screening treatment will provide an attractive buffer between the existing residential property and the proposed bank, which meets the intent of the sector plan. In addition, due to the visibility of the rear of the bank building from the adjacent properties, the applicant has provided additional architectural treatments on the rear elevation in a design similar to the front elevation that will greatly improve the visual quality of the rear elevation.

8. **Zoning Ordinance:** The DSP application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements of the M-U-I Zone and Part 10B Airport Compatibility of the Zoning Ordinance*:*

a. The general purpose of the M-U-I Zone is to permit, as recommended in the 2002 *Approved College Park US 1 Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* a mix of residential and commercial uses as infill development in areas that are already substantially developed. However, given the size of the subject site (which is just over half of an acre), it is not practical to mix more types of uses while fulfilling the standards of the Development District Zone. The proposed commercial bank is a permitted use.

Section 27-546.19. Site Plans for Mixed Uses requires that:

(c) A detailed site plan may not be approved unless the owner shows:

1. The site plan meets all approval requirements in Part 3, Division 9;

2. All proposed uses meet applicable development standards approved with the Master Plan, Sector Plan, Transit District Development Plan, or other applicable plan;

Comment: The site plan meets site design guidelines in Part 3, Division 9, and Development District Overlay Zone (DDOZ) standards of the 2002 *Approved College Park US 1Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* except for those discussed in the above Finding 7.

3. Proposed uses on the property will be compatible with one another;

Comment: The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of this property with one use, due to the constraint of the size of the property and therefore this requirement is not applicable.

4. Proposed uses will be compatible with existing or approved future development on adjacent properties and an applicable Transit or Development District; and

Comment: The site plan proposes the development of the property with a commercial bank. The applicant has provided both design treatments and landscape buffering techniques to minimize the impact of this use on the adjoining property. In addition, the applicant has provided amenities such as a sitting area and landscaped pedestrian plaza to create a comfortable and inviting pedestrian-oriented environment. The proposed use on the subject property will be compatible with existing or approved future development on adjacent properties in the town center area of the US 1 corridor.

5. Compatibility standards and practices set forth below will be followed, or the owner shows why they should not be applied:

(A) Proposed buildings should be compatible in size, height, and massing to buildings on adjacent properties;

(B) Primary facades and entries should face adjacent streets or public walkways and be connected by on-site walkways, so pedestrians may avoid crossing parking lots; and

(C) Site design should minimize glare, light, and other visual intrusion into and impacts on yards, open areas, and building facades on adjacent properties;

(D) Building materials and color should be similar to materials and color on adjacent properties and in the surrounding neighborhoods, or building design should incorporate scaling, architectural detailing, or similar techniques to enhance compatibility;

(E) Outdoor storage areas and mechanical equipment should be located and screened to minimize visibility from adjacent properties and public streets;

Comment: The proposed development is in general compliance with the above requirements in terms of building design, materials, colors, impact on the adjacent properties, and parking and loading and operation, except for 5(E), because the application does not include outdoor storage. The mechanical equipment will be located on the roof of the building but will be screened from view.

(F) Signs should conform to applicable Development District Standards or to those in Part 12, unless the owner shows that its proposed signage program meets goals and objectives in applicable plans; and

Comment: The proposed signage package is in general conformance with the design standards of the DDOZ and Part 12 of the Zoning Ordinance except for the sign face area information for the secondary identification sign. The design standard (Building Design, B5. Signs) regarding signs of the DDOZ specifically prohibits any signage located above or projected from the roofline or parapet wall. Since the primary signs proposed in the application are on the entrance tower, of which one sign may be above the roofline, a condition of approval has been proposed in the recommendation to require the applicant to add a note to ensure that the primary sign on the entrance tower will be below the building roofline.

(G) The owner or operator should minimize adverse impacts on adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood by appropriate setting of:

(i) Hours of operation or deliveries;

(ii) Location of activities with potential adverse impacts;

(iii) Location and use of trash receptacles;

(iv) Location of loading and delivery spaces;

(v) Light intensity and hours of illumination; and

(vi) Location and use of outdoor vending machines. (CB-10-2001; CB-42-2003)

Comment: In order to minimize the impact on the adjacent property, the applicant has provided a schedule of operation hours that limits the drive-through service to no later than 8:00 pm on weekdays as follows:

	Main Lobby	**Drive-through**
Monday to Wednesday	8:30 am-5:00 pm	7:30 am -8:00 pm
Thursday to Friday	8:30 am -8:00 pm	7:30 am -8:00 pm
Saturday	8:30 am - 3:00 pm	7:30 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday	11:00 am- 4:00 pm	11:00 am -4:00pm

Since this development is less than 10,000 square feet in gross floor area, there is no loading required. The ATM machines will be located in the main lobby with restricted access. Only bank customers with bankcards can gain access to the ATM machines.

b. The subject application is located within the Aviation Policy Area (APA) 6 of College Park Airport as defined in Section 27-548.35.

The applicable regulations regarding APA 6 are discussed as follows:

Section 27-548.42. Height requirements

(a) Except as necessary and incidental to airport operations, no building, structure, or natural feature shall be constructed, altered, maintained, or allowed to grow so as to project or otherwise penetrate the airspace surfaces defined by Federal Aviation Regulation Part 77 or the Code of Maryland, COMAR 11.03.05, Obstruction of Air Navigation.

(b) In APA-4 and APA-6, no building permit may be approved for a structure higher than fifty (50) feet unless the applicant demonstrates compliance with FAR Part 77.

Comment: The subject application proposes a building 28 feet in height. The application complies with these requirements.

10. ***Landscape Manual:*** The 2002 *Approved College Park US 1Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment* and the standards of the Development District Overlay Zone (DDOZ) have modified the applicable sections of the *Landscape Manual.* In this case, the site plan is subject to parking lot requirements and buffering incompatible uses requirements of the *Landscape Manual.*

a. Development District Overlay Zone Standards, Site Design, S2, Parking Areas, Design Standards C, requires that landscaping, screening and buffering of all parking lots and parking garages within the development district shall comply with the provisions of the *Landscape Manual*, except as modified by the standards for the development district. Section 4.3 (c) of the *Landscape Manual* requires a minimum of one shade tree per each 300 square feet of interior landscaped area provided. The proposed low-intensity use and improvements are a significant improvement over the existing site conditions. With the proposed building site on the corner of the lot, the streetscape will have a more urban

pedestrian scale. This placement will also buffer the parking and drive through visually from Baltimore Avenue. The overall planting design meets or exceeds the requirements with an increased number of plants along the east side of the property. The use of brick pavers for the sidewalks around the site will provide additional visual appeal to pedestrians.

b. Development District Overlay Zone Standards, Site Design, S4, Buffers and screening, Design Standards E, allows a 50 percent reduction of bufferyard requirements, in terms of the width of the bufferyard and the number of the planting units, in order to facilitate a compact form of development compatible with the urban character of the US 1 corridor. A bufferyard is technically required along the east property line where the proposed bank will be adjacent to an existing single-family home. The applicant has requested an amendment to the standards. See the above Finding 7 for a detailed discussion.

11. **The Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance**: This property is exempt from the provisions of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance because the gross tract area is less than 40,000 square feet and there is no previously approved tree conservation plan. The subject property is 0.60 acre in area. The proposal is for the construction of a bank. A tree conservation plan is not required. A standard exemption for the site was approved on October 31, 2005, and it will be valid through October 31, 2007.

12. **Referral Comments:** The subject application was referred to the concerned agencies and divisions. The referral comments are summarized as follows:

a. The Community Planning Division, in a memorandum dated February 15, 2006, indicated that the application is consistent with the 2002 General Plan Development Pattern policies for corridors in the Developed Tier and does conform to the land use recommendations of the 2002 *Approved College Park US 1 Corridor Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment*. However, the application does not conform to the recommendations and standards regarding drive-in or drive-through windows and the provision of parking spaces.

Comment: The community consensus for this busy corridor was expressed along with recognition that accommodating flexibility in redeveloping this existing commercial strip may require departure from the consensus recommendations. Page 165 of the sector plan states, "Modification of the Development District Standards is permitted through the process described in Section 27-548.25 (c)…. The Planning Board shall find that the alternate Development District Standards will benefit the development and the development district and will not substantially impair implementation of the master plan, master plan amendment, or sector plan." The applicant has requested amendments to the standards as identified by the community planner pursuant to Section 27-548.25(c). The Urban Design Section has made the required findings for site plan approval, subject to certain conditions.

b. The Transportation Planning Section, in a memorandum dated June 15, 2006, concluded that the proposed development as submitted will meet the circulation requirements of the US 1 Sector Plan and Section 27-548(c)(1)(D) of the County Code provided that prior to issuance of any building permit, the applicant agrees to explore alternatives acceptable to the City of College Park that provide opportunities for the shared use of the 13 excess parking spaces with other nearby uses.

Comment: The applicant has submitted a revised detailed site plan pursuant to the feedback from the meeting with the local residents that reduces the number of excess parking spaces to only two. Given the small number of excess parking spaces, any shared arrangement would have little or no benefit to a nearby user.

c. The Subdivision Section, in a memorandum dated March 27, 2006, indicated that the property is the subject of Record Plan BB9@7, recorded April 17, 1940. Pursuant to the Subdivision Regulations, Section 24-111(c)(4), a preliminary plan of subdivision is not required for the development with more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, which constitutes at least ten percent of the total area of the site, has been constructed pursuant to a building permit issued on or before December 31, 1991.

Comment: The applicant indicates that the site can meet the subdivision tests for exemption because more than 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, which constitutes at least ten percent of the total area of the site, has been constructed pursuant to a building permit issued on or before December 31, 1991. A condition of approval has been proposed in the recommendation section of this report to require the applicant to provide the evidence and a note on the site plan prior to certificate approval of this DSP.

d. The Environmental Planning Section, in a memorandum dated March 13, 2006, recommended approval of this DSP without any environmental conditions.

e. The Permit Section, in a memorandum dated February 23, 2006, provided 13 comments and questions regarding parking, landscaping, floodplain, signage and building height.

Comment: The applicant has revised the site plan to address all relevant comments.

f. The Department of Environmental Resources, in a memorandum dated February 7, 2006, indicated that the site plan is consistent with the approved stormwater concept plan 46723-2005.

g. In a memorandum dated February 3, 2006, the State Highway Administration (SHA) identified issues related to access to the site from US 1. SHA recommends approval of the subject DSP with condition to address the issue.

Comment: The condition as noted in the SHA memorandum is an access-related condition that will be normally enforced by the SHA at the time of issuance of the access permit to the site.

h. The City of College Park had not responded to the referral request at the time the staff report was written.

j. At the time this staff report was written, the City of Berwyn Heights, the City of Greenbelt, and the Prince George's Fire Department had not responded to the referral request.

13. As required by Section 27-285(b), 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

Based upon the foregoing evaluation, analysis, and findings of this report, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE Detailed Site Plan DSP-05099 subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certificate approval of this detailed site plan, the applicant shall:

    a. Provide the sign face area calculation for the secondary blue sign.

    b. Provide a site plan note as follows:

        "The height of the primary identification sign on the entrance tower shall not exceed the roof line."

    c. Provide required evidence and a site plan note that the site is exempt from Subdivision Regulations.

2. Prior to issuance of building permit, the applicant shall explore additional design solutions, such as expansion of the front elevation or provision of a more enclosed landscape structure to define street frontage, based on the proposed elevation along Baltimore Avenue, to provide a minimum 70 percent of the frontage building coverage, to be jointly reviewed by the Urban Design Section and the City of College Park.