

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-692, TopGolf at Potomac Business Park, Lots 6,7,8 requesting an increase in the area of building-mounted signage 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 July 27, 2017, the Prince George’s County Planning Board finds:

1. **Request:** This application includes a departure from sign design standards (DSDS).
2. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	APPROVED
Zone	I-3	I-3
Uses	Vacant	Golf Driving Range/ Eating and Drinking Establishment
Acreage	15.36	15.36
Lots	3 (Lots 6, 7, and 8)	3 (Lots 6, 7, and 8)
Square Footage/GFA	0	64,232

Other Development Data

Parking Required	349 spaces
Golf Driving Range—102 tees, 67 employees	
1 space/Tee	102 spaces
1 space/employee	67 spaces
Eating and Drinking Establishment—538 seats	
1 space/3 seats	180 spaces
 Parking Provided	 396 spaces
Standard Spaces	242 spaces
Compact Spaces	146 spaces
Handicapped Spaces	6 spaces
Van-Accessible Handicapped Spaces	2 spaces
Loading Spaces Required	1 space
64,232 sq. ft. @ 1 space for up to 100,000 sq. ft.	
Loading Spaces Provided	1 space

3. **Location:** The subject site, which consists of three noncontiguous lots, Lots 6, 7, and 8, is generally located approximately 500 feet east of Indian Head Highway (MD 210), on the south side of Oxon Hill Road (MD 414) and on both sides of Clipper Way (formerly Felker Avenue), within Planning Area 76B, Council District 8.
4. **Surrounding Uses:** Lots 6, 7, and 8 are part of the existing Potomac Business Park, which is partially graded, but developed only with a stormwater management (SWM) pond. Lot 6, where the facility is located, is located on the east side of Clipper Way and is bounded to the north by the public right-of-way of Oxon Hill Road (MD 414) and beyond it by a church in the Rural Residential (R-R) Zone; to the west by the public right-of-way of Clipper Way and beyond it by a hotel in the Commercial Shopping Center (C-S-C) Zone and Lots 7 and 8; to the south by the I-3-zoned, undeveloped, Potomac Business Park, Lot 9; and to the east by the I-3-zoned, public, John Hanson Montessori School. Contiguous Lots 7 and 8, where only parking is located, are located to the southwest of Lot 6, across Clipper Way, and are bounded to the north by the C-S-C-zoned property developed with a hotel; to the west by the public right-of-way of Indian Head Highway (MD 210); to the south by the I-3-zoned, Potomac Business Park, Parcel A, developed with a SWM pond; and to the east by the public right-of-way of Clipper Way and Lot 6 beyond it.
5. **Previous Approvals:** In November 1987, the Prince George's County Planning Board approved Conceptual Site Plan CSP-87116 for the Potomac Business Park, including this property, subject to seven conditions. In June 1988, the Planning Board approved Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 4-88054 (PGCPB Resolution No. 88-250) for the Potomac Business Park property, subject to 20 conditions. The preliminary plan was then reconsidered in January 1996, and an amended resolution was issued (PGCPB Resolution No. 88-250(A)) subject to 20 conditions. The property was recorded in Plat Book VJ 160-87 on October 30, 1991. The property was re-recorded in Plat Book VJ 178-69 on February 26, 1997, as a plat of correction. The property was again re-recorded in Plat Book MMB 233-87 on April 18, 2011 as a plat of resubdivision.

The Planning Board reviewed and approved a previous Detailed Site Plan, DSP-11011, and associated applications for a 100,779-square-foot department or variety store on the subject Lots 6 and 8 on May 24, 2012. The DSP was appealed and heard by the Prince George's County District Council on November 5, 2012. The District Council remanded the case to the Planning Board in an order issued on January 28, 2013, and the DSP was subsequently withdrawn.

County Council Bill CB-64-2012 was adopted on November 7, 2012, which changed the use requirements for a department or variety store in the I-3 Zone, making it a special exception use in certain circumstances. The District Council reviewed and denied a previous Special Exception SE-4738 on the subject property for a department or variety store over 85,000 square feet with a food and beverage component in the I-3 Zone on March 10, 2015.

The Planning Board reviewed and approved a previous Detailed Site Plan, DSP-13048, and associated applications for a 100,310-square-foot department or variety store on the subject Lots 6, 7, and 8 on May 15, 2014. The DSP was appealed and heard by the Prince George's County District Council on March 10, 2015, and the District Council reversed the decision of the Planning Board.

The larger business park site including the subject site had a previously approved SWM plan. The required SWM facilities have been constructed.

6. **Design Features:** The subject property consists of three vacant lots, Lots 6, 7, and 8, within the larger Potomac Business Park development, which is currently completely vacant. Lot 6 sits on the southeastern corner of the intersection of Oxon Hill Road (MD 414) and Clipper Way. It is roughly rectangular in shape, except along its western frontage on Clipper Way which is curvilinear, and it contains regulated environmental features along the southern end. Lots 7 and 8 sit on the western side of Clipper Way, southwest of Lot 6, and extend in a triangular shape towards Indian Head Highway (MD 210) to the west.

The submitted DSP proposes the construction of a three-story, 54.5-foot-high, 64,232-square-foot, golf-driving range, restaurant and associated parking on Lots 6, 7 and 8. The building itself sits at the southern half of Lot 6 with the main entrance facing south, with 38 parking spaces located between the building and the southern property line of Lot 6, accessed off of Clipper Way. To the north of the building, between the building and Oxon Hill Road is the driving range area where patrons hit golf balls that contain tracking chips. The range area is proposed to be surrounded by pole mounted safety net that ranges from 90 to 170 feet in height. A proposed retaining wall along the southern edge of the parking on Lot 6 accommodates the grading on-site and minimizes the disturbance to the environmental features. The loading dock and trash area are tucked into the southeastern corner of the building.

Lots 7 and 8 contain only a large 358-space parking lot set into the middle of the lots with two vehicular entrance points off Clipper Way. A retaining wall is proposed along the southern edge of the parking lot to accommodate site grading. Stormwater management is being accommodated at an off-site SWM pond that serves the entire business park.

The site plan seems to indicate well-designed pedestrian connections between the main entrance and parking area on Lot 6. A series of handicapped ramps and stairs are incorporated into an attractive planter and retaining wall system. However, pedestrian connectivity has not been provided from the parking lot on Lots 7 and 8 to the public right-of-way. Additionally, due to the majority of the patrons required to cross Clipper Way mid-block, potentially late in the evening, a raised crosswalk and hazard identification beacon can be utilized for the pedestrian crosswalk. A condition has been included in this resolution.

Architecture

The proposed TopGolf building features a modern design with a variety of materials, ornamentation, and roof levels. Much of the front elevation and side elevations of the building will be constructed of a light beige exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS), with silver trim. Additional detail is provided using neutral stone panels, dark brown EIFS, dark brown composite paneling, and a color-changing light-emitting diode (LED) metal mesh. The front elevation, facing south, has multiple windows, variations in roof heights, and multiple façade depths to accommodate the entrance vestibule. The side elevations facing west and east feature matching materials and ornamentation. The rear elevation facing the driving range to the north, and Oxon Hill Road beyond, is primarily open bays with composite-paneling-clad columns. Exterior staircases are also proposed on the west and east sides of the building.

Signage

Three freestanding signs are proposed for the development. The first sign, located at the corner of Oxon Hill Road and Clipper Way is a 42-foot-tall pylon sign. The sign itself measures approximately nine-foot 11-inches tall and 16-foot eight-inches-wide and sits atop a 32-foot one-inch clad steel pole. The sign area contains a black and brushed aluminum cabinet with face-lit blue channel lettering and a logo. Two matching monument signs are also proposed along Clipper Way at the main entrances to the parking lots. These monument signs measure nine-foot five-inch tall and 13-foot four-inch-wide, and also contain a black and brushed aluminum cabinet with face-lit blue channel lettering and a logo.

The building contains two signs on the southern face of the building. One sign, totaling 49 square feet, is comprised of the letters “TopGolf” in a blue channel letter sign mounted to the entrance canopy. Behind the channel letter sign, a 695-square-foot TopGolf shield logo is incorporated into the architectural face of the building with contrasting EIFS. Departure from Sign Design Standards DSDS-692 has been approved as a companion case with this DSP.

Site Details

Light Fixtures—Details of the parking lot and driving range light fixtures have been provided and are acceptable.

Dumpster Enclosure—The dumpster enclosure will be composed of concrete masonry unit, with a composite paneling façade and metal trim that matches materials found on the architecture. Double gates, finished in composite paneling supported by painted steel posts, provide access to the enclosure.

Retaining Walls—A series of terraced concrete masonry unit retaining walls and planters are located at the main entrance to accommodate ramps and stairs. The walls blend harmoniously with the architecture and provide additional relief to the building face. Two additional retaining walls are also proposed along the southern edges of the parking lots on Lot 6 and Lot 7 to accommodate the grading on-site and minimize the disturbance to the environmental features, however, the applicant has not provided details of these retaining walls. A condition has been included in this

resolution to require the applicant to provide details of the retaining walls prior to certification of the DSP.

COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

7. **Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance:** The subject application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

- a. The freestanding signage proposed with the DSP appears to be in general conformance with sign standards of the Zoning Ordinance in Section 27-614, which governs location, height, area, and quantity of freestanding signs.

Additionally, the proposed building-mounted signage generally conforms with the location, height, and design guidelines of building-mounted signs as set forth in Section 27-613 of the Zoning Ordinance, however, it does not meet the area requirements and therefore a Departure from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-692) has been requested with this application. The specific sign design standard in Section 27-613(c)(4)(A) is as follows:

- (A) **In the I-3 Zone, the area of all of the signs on a building wall facing a street shall be not more than one (1) square foot for each one (1) linear foot of building width facing that street.**

The front width of the proposed building is 515 linear feet, allowing for a maximum sign face area of 515 square feet. The applicant's building design incorporates a shield logo into the architecture and such a design is classified as building mounted signage based on the strict interpretation of the definition of a sign in Section 27-107.01(a) (210). The submitted signage plan indicates a maximum building-mounted signage area of 744 square feet, requiring a departure of 229 square feet. The proposed shield logo is only part of the complete logo and is not on the same elevation of the building. If one views the incomplete logo alone, it looks like a mural on the building.

Section 27-239.01(b)(7) of the Zoning Ordinance sets forth the required findings for a DSDS as follows:

- (A) **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;**

Applicant's Justification:

“The applicant believes that the purposes of Subtitle 27 will be equally served by the applicants proposed signage. First, that applicant is proposing a creative sign design that will add visual interest to the front of the TopGolf facility. The sign has been designed so that it is a decorative feature of the building architecture and adds visual interest to the front building façade. In addition, the applicant is allowed an additional 404 square feet of building mounted signage on the north side of the building. That being said, the applicant is allowed 919 square feet of building mounted signage. The applicant is proposing only 744 square feet, 175 square feet less building mounted signage than allowed by the Zoning Ordinance.”

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance set forth in Section 27-589, in general, are to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the general public and to encourage economic development activities in Prince George's County. The signage included in this application is attractive and has been creatively incorporated into the building architecture so that it adds visual interest to the front building façade. The signage will support the Subtitle purposes by implementing the applicable land use plans, guiding orderly growth, and encouraging the appropriate use of land, while also allowing for adequate identification for safe vehicular operation.

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

Applicant's Justification:

“The TopGolf logo has been designed into the overall architecture of the building and as indicated above, it is situated at a location directly behind the “TopGolf” sign so that it not only adds architectural interest to that portion of the façade, but creates a very dramatic backdrop. Any reduction in the size of the shield logo will detract from rather than add to the visual interest created by this design. Therefore, the departure requested is the minimum necessary.”

The Planning Board concurs with the applicant's justification that the departure is the minimum necessary since the sign is attractively incorporated into the architecture and that any reduction in the size of the shield logo would negatively impact the visual interest created by the design. For these reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that the departure is the minimum necessary given the specific circumstances of the request.

- (iii) The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in the areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949;**

Applicant's Justification:

“The proposed TopGolf building is located approximately 600 feet from Oxon Hill Road and the applicant is not providing any building mounted signage on the north side of the building as it will provide little, if any, identification of the use. The applicant is proposing to place all of the building mounted signage on the south side of the building since it faces Clipper Way and allows the applicant to provide better identification of the use and provide a visually interesting entranceway to the property.”

The Planning Board concurs with the applicant's justification that the departure is necessary to alleviate a unique condition to the site since all the proposed signage is located on the south side of the building and that the sign provides a more visually interesting entranceway to the property. It is only because of a strict interpretation of the definition for signage that the shield logo is counted towards the signage area. If it were not the proposed commercial uses logo for the facility, it could be considered a decorative building design element and then the signage area would fall within the allowed limit.

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

Applicant's Justification:

“The applicant believes that the design proposed will add visual interest to the southern façade of the building and create a very dramatic entryway to the facility. As indicated above, the applicant is proposing less building mounted signage than would otherwise be allowed. In addition, the actual “TopGolf” sign is only 49 square feet in size and given the building length, that sign is understated. The shield logo, although classified as signage adds more the building character rather than identity the use as is the purpose of signage. Therefore, the applicant does not believe that the departure will impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or neighborhood.”

The Planning Board concurs with the applicant's justification that the departure will not impair the visual quality of the site, but in fact add visual interest and character to the architecture. The additional signage area provides for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner compatible with the land use.

Additionally, the departure will not impair the functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. By contrast, the signage fits in with the overall commercial character of the immediate neighborhood.

8. **Further Planning Board Findings and Comments and Other Entities:** The subject application was referred to the concerned agencies and divisions. The referral comment is summarized as follows:

- a. **Community Planning**—The Planning Board found the following:

General Plan:

This application is inconsistent with the urban design principles encouraged in the *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan*.

Master Plan:

This application is consistent with the 2006 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for the Henson Creek-South Potomac Planning Area*.

General Plan

The general plan encourages creating streetscapes that include human-scaled signage that aid in creating a safe, well-connected streetscape (Principle II.4.; page 209). The large, standalone signage proposed is intended to be seen by motorists, not pedestrians. However, the type of signage encouraged by the general plan is not appropriate for the auto-centric use.

Master/Sector Plan: The 2006 *Approved Master Plan for the Henson Creek-South Potomac Planning Area* encourages “interesting signage” to promote pedestrian- and transit-oriented design principles in moderate- to high-density centers (Community Character, Urban Design Policy 1, Strategy 3; page 96), such as the Oxon Hill Regional Center where this property is located. It is unclear how “interesting signage” would achieve the stated policy. Nonetheless, Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines interesting as “attracting your attention and making you want to learn more about something.” Since both signs are large and well-lit and therefore eye catching, the master plan seems to encourage the proposed design.

Planning Issues: This application does not present any planning issues.

This application is not required to conform with the General or Master Plan, however the proposal is not inconsistent with either plan.

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 for TopGolf at Potomac Business Park to allow 229 additional square feet of building-mounted signage on the south side of the proposed building as shown on the detailed 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 Geraldo, seconded by Commissioner Bailey, with Commissioners Geraldo, Bailey, Doerner, and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion, and with Commissioner Washington absent at its regular meeting held on Thursday, July 27, 2017 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 27th day of July 2017.

Patricia Colihan Barney
Executive Director

By Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

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