

CHATHAM COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

MPC STAFF REPORT

PETITIONER: SHAN POLLACHI
11 GATEWAY BLVD EAST
SAVANNAH, GA 31419

FILE NO: B-140904-00078-1

ADDRESS: 11 GATEWAY BLVD EAST

DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

Nature of Request

The petitioner, Carl Barry, for Wingate Hotels is requesting a sign area and height variance in conjunction with a pending hotel rebranding. The proposed announcement sign is 26 feet 11 inches in height and approximately 85 square feet in sign area.

Findings

1. The existing Wingate hotel, located at 11 East Gateway Boulevard immediately east of the Interstate 95 northbound on ramp at Highway 204, is in the process of rebranding to a Holiday Inn hotel. The subject property as well as the adjoining properties are zoned P-B-C (Planned Community Business) and the development pattern consists of hotels, restaurants and service oriented retail stores.
2. The petitioner is requesting to replace an existing announcement sign near the primary vehicular entrance for the hotel with a new freestanding sign. The existing sign is a modified monument style approximately 13 feet in height and includes a reader board. In addition to the monument sign, a principal use freestanding pole sign and fascia signage also serve the hotel. The presence of the existing principal use pole sign requires that the proposed sign meet the requirements of an announcement sign. All other signage on site is being replaced in kind and within the sign requirements of the ordinance.
3. Under the current regulations, an announcement sign in the B-C zoning district can be freestanding but shall not exceed 5 feet in height or 60 square feet in area. The proposed sign exceeds these maximums. Although the current sign exceeds the allowed height, a new sign of similar dimensions is likely to have no more impact than that which has existed at the site since 2001.
4. The Zoning Board of Appeals may authorize a variance in an individual case upon a finding that:
 - (a) There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property in question because of its size, shape, or topography.
There are no extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property in question because of its size, shape, or topography.

- (b) The application of this chapter to this particular piece of property would create an unnecessary hardship.
No unnecessary hardship is created by the application of the standards of the ordinance.
- (c) Such conditions are peculiar to the particular piece of property involved.
There are no conditions peculiar to this property.
- (d) Relief, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to the public good, or impair the purposes and intent of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance.
The requested variance is a substantial increase over the allowed dimensions. The intent of an announcement sign is to serve as an identifier to users of a given property not to be the principal signage for a business or other use. The proposed sign is contrary to that intent.

Summary of Findings

The petitioner is requesting to replace an existing monument sign near the primary vehicular entrance of a hotel with a new freestanding pylon sign. The proposed sign is 26 feet 11 inches in height and approximately 85 square feet in sign area. An announcement sign in the B-C zoning district can be freestanding but shall not exceed 5 feet in height or 60 square feet in area. All other signage on site is being replaced in kind as the hotel is rebranding from the existing Wingate hotel to a Holiday Inn hotel. Although the current sign exceeds the allowed height, a sign of similar dimensions is likely to have no more impact than that which has existed at the site since 2001.

Recommendation

Staff recommends **denial** of the proposed sign height variance of 21 feet 11 inches and 15 square foot area variance and **approval** of an alternate variance to allow a maximum height of 13 feet 6 inches, the height of the existing monument sign.