



**Staff Report**  
**Amended General Development Plan**  
**County Commission District: 4**  
**MPC File Number P-150407-00028-1**  
**May 19, 2015**

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**Wilmington Island Kroger**  
**495 Johnny Mercer Boulevard**  
**PIN 1-0061-04-014, 021, 022, 023, 024, and 025**  
**12.31 Acres – Total Site**  
**10.85 Acres – Shopping Center including Kroger - 1.46 Acres – Kroger Fuel Center**  
**P-B-N/TC Existing Zoning District**  
**EMC Engineering, Engineer**  
**Integrated Designs International, Architect**  
**Scott Siebert, Agent**  
**BRE Tarpon Wilmington Island, LLC, Owner**  
**Gary Plumbley, Project Planner**

**Report Status: Initial Report**

**Nature of Request**

The petitioner is requesting MPC approval of a General Development Plan for an existing shopping center located at the southwest corner of Johnny Mercer Boulevard and Penn Waller Road within a P-B-N/TC (Planned Neighborhood Business/Town Center) zoning district. The petitioner is also requesting the following variances:

- A variance to allow a freestanding principal use sign for a development served by a Directory Sign; and,
- A variance to allow an increase to the maximum permitted area of principal use fascia signage.

**Findings**

1. **Notification:** A notice, in conjunction with the zoning notice, was sent to all property owners located within 200 feet of the subject site on Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>. The MPC staff has not received any calls or emails as of the date of this report.
2. **Purposes:** The purposes of the proposed Amended General Development Plan are to renovate a portion of an existing shopping center to enlarge a grocery store and to redevelop an existing outparcel from a former restaurant to a fuel station. Normally, this would be reviewed as two separate developments, each with a separate General Development Plan. However, based on the fact that they are developed sites that share elements such as drainage and access, the proposed development will be reviewed as a unified site. The one exception to this will be that the required Tree Quality Points, Landscape Quality Points, and green space will be reviewed separately for the fuel station site and the balance of the center.

3. **Site:** The subject site is 12.31 acres in size and has significant tree cover, including many mature canopy trees. The subject site is presently occupied by a retail shopping center, including the Kroger Grocery Store and a freestanding commercial structure (former fast food restaurant) on the site where the fuel station will be developed. The adjacent land uses and zoning include:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Zoning</u>
Northwest	Service Station/Convenience Store	B-N/TC
	Fast Food Restaurant	B-N/TC
	Bank	B-N/TC
	Johnny Mercer Boulevard	
	Vacant Commercial Structure	P-B-N-1/TC [1]
Southeast	Shopping Center	P-I-P/TC [2]
	Bank	P-I-P/TC
	Single Family Residential	R-1/EO [3]
Northeast	Penn Waller Road	
	Church	R-2-A/TC & R-1/EO [4]
	Single Family Residential	R-1/EO
Northwest	Single Family Residential	R-1/EO

- TC Town Center Overlay District
- EO Environmental Overlay District
- [1] P-B-N-1/TC – Planned Neighborhood Business Limited
- [2] P-I-P/TC – Planned Institutional Professional
- [3] R-1/EO – Single Family Residential
- [4] R-2-A/TC – Two Family Residential Limited

4. **Buildings/Uses:** The proposed development will primarily consist of the existing shopping center structure. The rear portion of the existing structure will be modified to increase the size by an additional 19,520 square feet. In addition, a vacant commercial structure (former fast food restaurant) located on the northwest portion of the site will be razed to accommodate a proposed fuel station.

The existing Kroger Grocery store is presently 43,962 square feet in size. The expanded Kroger Grocery Store will be 78,311 square feet in size. The additional square footage will include the 19,520 square foot addition on the rear of the existing structure and the remaining 14,829 square feet will come from existing space that is presently occupied by other uses. The proposed fuel station will consist of a small kiosk approximately 180 square feet in size and 18 fueling stations (nine pump islands). The purpose of the kiosk will be to accept

payment for fuel, the sale of various items including cigarettes, candy, beverages, etc., and a small storage area.

5. **Parking:** The required off-street parking for this development is 375 spaces based on the ratio of one space for every 200 square feet of leasable area and space for each of the 18 fueling stations. The proposed development will have 404 spaces, including 14 ADA spaces. All off-street parking spaces will be common for the entire shopping center, including the fuel station.
6. **Access:** The proposed amended development presently has and will continue to have two bi-directional curb cuts on Johnny Mercer Boulevard and two bi-directional curb cuts on Penn Waller Road (the southernmost curb cut is used primarily for delivery trucks). Also, the northernmost drive aisle that parallels Johnny Mercer Boulevard intersects with Sea Island Drive, which also parallels Johnny Mercer Boulevard. The existing drive aisles and parking layout will primarily remain unchanged. However, changes will be made to the westernmost drive aisle adjacent to the proposed fuel station site and adjacent to the existing shopping center structure.

The drive aisle located adjacent to the fuel station site presently serves as a drive aisle only with no parking. This will be modified to include sixty degree parking on each side of the drive aisle. This will be accomplished by encroaching into the fuel station site. The existing drive aisle with ninety degree parking on one side adjacent to the existing shopping center structure will be revised to eliminate the majority of the parking in favor of a one-way drive aisle and turnaround to accommodate the proposed drive through pharmacy.

7. **Traffic Generation:** The proposed 19,592 square foot addition to the Kroger Grocery Store and the fuel station will create an increase in traffic of more than 100 peak hour trips. Because of this, a traffic report is required for the proposed amended development. The developers met with staff to go over the parameters of the study and the traffic study has been completed and accepted by the MPC staff and the County Engineer. The approval of the traffic study and all recommended improvements will be a requirement of approval of a Specific Development Plan. The petitioner is also desirous of installing a traffic signal at the westernmost intersection with the drive aisle and Johnny Mercer Boulevard (between the Shell station and the McDonalds restaurant).
8. **Public Services:** The proposed development will be provided water and sanitary sewer by the City of Savannah. The site is served by the Chatham County Savannah Metropolitan Police Department, the Savannah Fire Department. The subject site is served by the Chatham Area Transit Authority, Route 10 Wilmington Island.
9. **Greenspace:** The required open space for the entire development is 2.462 acres, based on the minimum requirement of 20 percent of the 12.31 acre site. The proposed development will have 2.71 acres of green space, which is 22.02 percent of the total site area. The fuel center site will have 0.334 acres of greenspace, which is 23 percent of the 1.46 acre site, and

the remaining portion of the shopping center will have 2.36 acres of green space, which is 21.75 percent of the 10.85 acre site.

10. **Tree and Landscape Quality Points:** The entire 12.31 acre site is required to have 19,696 Tree Quality Points (TQP), based on a requirement of 1,600 points per acre, and 4,924 Landscape Quality Points (LQP), based on a requirement of 400 points per acre. The proposed development will have 48,480 TQP, based on existing trees that will be preserved and by planting additional trees.

The 1.46 acre fuel center site is required to have 2,336 TQP and 584 LQP. The 1.46 acre fuel center site will have 1,939 TQP. The retention of existing trees will account for 1,939 TQP and the remaining 780 TQP will be achieved by planting additional trees. The proposed fuel center will have a total of 2,719 TQP, which is 16.4 percent more than the minimum requirement.

The remaining 10.85 acre portion of the shopping center is required to have 17,360 TQP and 4,340 LQP. The site will have 46,361 TQP, which is 167 percent more than required. The retention of existing trees will account for 45,071 TQP and the remaining 1,290 TQP will be achieved by planting additional trees. A detailed Landscape Plan, including the Tree Quality Points and Landscape Quality Points, will be submitted as part of the required Specific Development Plan.

11. **Drainage:** A Drainage Plan has not been submitted and is not required as part of the General Development Plan. However, because the majority of the proposed expansion, including the fuel station, will be constructed on portions of the site that are presently impervious, accommodating the additional storm water should not be a problem. However, a Drainage Plan must be approved by the Chatham County Engineer in conjunction with the approval of a Specific Development Plan.
12. **Buffers:** The existing vegetative buffers, including privacy fences, established when the shopping center was built and later expanded, will not be impacted by the proposed amended General Development Plan. No additional buffering will be required.
13. **Variances:** The petitioner is requesting a variance to allow a freestanding principal use sign for a development served by a Directory Sign and a variance to allow an increase to the maximum permitted area of principal use fascia signage.

The Chatham County Zoning Ordinance, Section 4-6.57, provides that variances from the requirements of the development standards within a Planned zoning district may be approved by the Metropolitan Planning Commission at the request of the developer on a finding that such variances:

- (1) would be in keeping with the overall character of the area.

- (2) would not be contrary to the process and intent of these regulations.
- (3) would not be detrimental to existing or proposed surrounding uses.
- (4) would serve public purposes to a degree equal to or greater than the standards replaced.

The site on which the fuel center will be located is a separate lot. However, the entire development is comprised of five separate lots and will function as a unified development. Because of this, the proposed amended General Development Plan will be reviewed as a unified development. Also, the development will be served by a freestanding directory sign which thereby restricts freestanding principal use signs. The developer is requesting a variance to allow the fuel center to be served by a freestanding principal use sign. The justification for consideration of the requested variance is that the shopping center is legally entitled to construct an additional directory sign. Because of this, the requested variance, if approved, would actually result in a smaller freestanding sign at this location.

The petitioner is requesting an amendment to permit fascia signage that exceeds the maximum size permitted in the current P-B-N/TB zoning district. The proposed shopping center structure (excluding the 179 square foot kiosk) will have a total gross area of 104,476 square feet and a total 819 linear feet of building frontage. Shopping centers of this size are not typically located within a B-N zoning district. However, because the subject site is located within a P-B-N/TB zoning district, the maximum permitted fascia signage is 200 square feet. Based on this finding, the shopping center would only be allowed 0.24 square feet of fascia signage per linear foot of building frontage which is not typical or reasonably functional for fascia signage based on the distance (375 feet) between the commercial structure and the roadway the signage is intended to serve.

Staff is of the opinion that the most appropriate way to address the fascia signage for this development is to permit the maximum area for fascia signage based on the standards of a B-C (community business) zoning district. The B-C zoning classification permits a maximum of 300 square feet of fascia signage plus an additional one square foot of signage for every two linear feet of building frontage over 100 feet. This method of determining the maximum area for fascia signage is more appropriate because the length of the building determines the amount of signage permitted.

The entire shopping center structure has a frontage of approximately 824 feet. Based on this finding, the maximum permitted area for fascia signage would be 662 square feet. The petitioner is requesting approval of 396 square feet of fascia signage for the 382 foot portion of the building frontage that will be revised. It is unknown what the total area of fascia signage presently exists on the balance of the shopping center and how many vacant bays, if any, remain with no businesses. Also, the requested signage, if approved, would result in the remaining 442 linear feet of the shopping center being limited to 280 square feet of fascia signage which seems somewhat disproportionate. Based on these findings, the requested 396

square feet of fascia signage for the 382 linear feet of affected building frontage should not be approved until an evaluation is made by staff to determine the appropriateness of the total amount of fascia signage for the entire shopping center. However, a variance to allow the maximum amount of permitted fascia signage in accordance with the B-C zoning classification would be appropriate.

14. The proposed Amended General Development Plan and requested variances as amended by staff, if approved, would not be detrimental to the adjoining property owners or to Chatham County.

### **Recommendation**

The MPC staff recommends that the proposed General Development Plan be **approved** subject to the conditions listed below. The MPC staff also recommends **approval** of a variance to allow a freestanding principal use sign for a development served by a Directory Sign, a variance to allow the maximum permitted area of principal use fascia signage to be calculated based on the sign standards for a B-C zoning district instead of a B-N zoning district.

The MPC staff recommends that the requested variance to permit 396 square feet of fascia signage for the affected 382 linear feet of building frontage not be acted on at this time, based on the previous findings.

Conditions of approval:

1. Approval of the traffic plan and all recommended improvements, if any, by the County Engineer and the MPC staff.
2. Approval by the County Engineer.