

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION  
OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ZONING  
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**APPLICANT:** Lifebridge Investment Properties      **ASSESSMENT DISTRICT:** 4th  
**CASE NUMBER:** 2023-0207-V      **COUNCILMANIC DISTRICT:** 1st  
**HEARING DATE:** February 13, 2017      **PREPARED BY:** Robert Konowal  
Planner

**REQUEST**

The applicant is requesting variances to allow three identification signs that project above the roof of a structure and to allow a greater number of identification signs than allowed in a business complex at 7566 Ridge Road in Annapolis.

**LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

The subject property has 251 feet of frontage on the west side of Ridge Road, 0 feet north of Teague Road. These lands have an area of 43,456 square feet. The site is zoned “C3-General Commercial” and is shown as Lot 5, Block H in Parcel 293 in Grid 20 on Tax Map 8. The current zoning was adopted by the Comprehensive zoning for the First Council District July 10, 2011.

The subject property is currently developed with a one-story free-standing commercial building which is part of a business complex .

**APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL**

The applicant wishes to install three identification signs on three different elevations of the building that will project above the roof of the structure.

**REQUESTED VARIANCES**

Section 18-3-303.(b)(4) of the Anne Arundel County Zoning Ordinance prohibits a sign that projects above the roof of a structure. The applicant has proposed to locate signs along three decorative parapet walls of the existing building. These “false front” walls are flush with the existing building facade. The three signs will project three feet above the roof line. A variance is required for those three signs to project as much as three feet above the roof line.

Section 18-3-308(b)(2) of the Anne Arundel County Zoning Ordinance sets forth the requirements for signs in business complexes. The ordinance allows a business complex to have identification signs for the name of a tenant on not more than two facades in a one or two story structure. The applicant has proposed signs with the name of the tenant on three facades requiring a variance to allow signage on one additional facade.

## **FINDINGS**

There is a previous variance application pertaining to this site (2002-0243-V) for a former tenant to allow an identification sign on a facade without a customer entry which was approved by the Administrative Hearing Officer.

This Office finds that the subject property does meet the requirements for a lot in a C3-General Commercial District. However, the subject site is unique in that it is developed with a freestanding structure separated from the rest of the business complex by an internal roadway. For all intents and purposes it does not have the appearance or function of a business complex. In the case of a commercial use other than a business complex identification signs are allowed on up to three facades as proposed here. Furthermore, the building has also been placed on the lot where three sides of the buildings are visible from the adjacent public and private roadways. Denial of a variance to allow three identification signs would cause an unnecessary hardship in the use of this building.

Regarding the variance to allow three signs to project above the roof of the structure we would note this application relates to an existing building whose facade was recently remodeled to provide for decorative parapet walls. Previous tenants of this structure did provide signage in accordance with the Code. Consequently, there does not appear to be sufficient justification for the requested variance. If the recent remodeling of the building's facade has created any hardship in providing signage along the facade of this structure, such hardship is considered to be self-created.

The request to allow a third identification sign is considered to be the minimum variance necessary to afford relief. Since the request to allow three signs to project above the roof of the structure is not considered to be warranted it cannot be the minimum variance necessary to afford relief.

Approval of the variances would not alter the essential character of the neighborhood nor negatively impact the use of any abutting property. There is no evidence the variance will be detrimental to the public welfare.

The **Anne Arundel County Department of Health** advised they have no objection to the request.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

With regard to the standards by which a variance may be granted as set forth under Section 18-16-305 under the County Code, the Office of Planning and Zoning recommends that a variance to allow a third identification sign be ***approved*** and that the variance to allow three signs to project above the roof of the structure be ***denied*** all as shown on the submitted plans.

**DISCLAIMER:** This recommendation does not constitute a building permit. In order for the applicant(s) to construct the structure(s) as proposed, the applicant(s) shall apply for and obtain the necessary building permits and obtain any other approvals required to perform the work described herein. This includes but is not limited to verifying the legal status of the lot, resolving adequacy of public facilities, and demonstrating compliance with environmental site design criteria.