

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Prior Approvals

There is no record of a prior Preliminary Plan for the subject property. It consists of three recorded lots, Lots 2, 3 and 4, recorded at Plat Book 87 Plat No. 9299 in 1969.

ANALYSIS: Conformance to Development Standards

PROJECT DATA TABLE (C-1 Zone)

Development Standard	Permitted/Required	Proposed/Approved
Max. Lot Area	15 acres	9.76 acres
Max. Building Height	45 feet	30 feet
Min. Setback		
From street right-of-way established on a Master Plan	10 feet	54.5 feet
From the center line of the street (if there is no master plan showing the right-of-way)	60 feet	NA
From any other lot line adjacent to residential	10 feet	Side – 32 feet Rear – 39 feet
From any other lot line adjacent to non residential	None	25 feet
Min. Green Area	10% of the lot	12.3%
Total Parking¹	688	549
Retail	447	
Office	7	
Restaurant	223	
Auto filling station	11	
Bicycles ²	20	
Motorcycle ²	10	
Landscaping for Parking Facilities adjacent to street right-of-way		
	10-foot-wide landscape strip planted with shade or ornamental trees planted every 40 feet along the lot frontage; 3-foot-high evergreen hedge, fence or other method	4 feet wide- Lot 4 frontage. 7 feet wide- west of the main driveway entrance. 10 feet wide- east of the main driveway and Lot 3 frontage. shade trees provided every 40 feet along the Lot 2 frontage and three-foot-high evergreen hedge.
adjacent to property other than a street right-of-way	4-foot-wide landscape strip planted with shade trees every 40 feet; landscape berms if adequate space	4-foot-wide landscape strip; no trees provided along east property line and northeast property line adjacent

	available	to Layhill Shopping Center.
adjacent to residential zone or institutional property	10-foot-wide landscape strip based on adjacent R-30 Zone setback; Three-foot-high wall, fence or evergreen hedge	10-foot-wide landscape strip along the western property line; 8-foot-wide landscape strip along the northern property line adjacent to Kimberly Place; evergreen trees provided in areas without existing trees
Interior Landscaping	5% of parking lot	8.8% of parking lot

1 Section 59-E-3.7 Parking Requirements

Five parking spaces for 1,000 square feet of gross leasable area of retail; for 89,325 square feet – 447 parking spaces

Three parking spaces for 1,000 square feet of office area; for 21,541 square feet = 7 parking spaces

25 parking spaces for 1,000 square feet of gross area for patron use; 60% of restaurant area assumed to be patron area; Patron area = 60% of 14,809 square feet = 8,886 square feet; for 8,886 square feet of patron area = 223 parking spaces

One parking space for each employee and 2 parking spaces per bay for the automobile filing station; for five employees and three bays = 11 parking spaces

2 Section 59-E-2.3 Bicycle and Motorcycle Parking Requirements

One bicycle space for 20 automobile parking spaces = for 549 parking spaces = 28 bicycle spaces; a maximum of 20 bicycle spaces required

Two percent of the total number of automobile parking spaces = for 549 parking spaces = 11 motorcycle spaces; a maximum of 10 motorcycle spaces are required

ANALYSIS:

Parking Waiver Request

The applicant is requesting a waiver from the requirements of the following sections of Article 59-E of the Zoning ordinance, Parking and Loading Spaces:

The shopping center currently has 607 parking spaces. Section 59-E 3.7 of the Zoning ordinance requires a total of 688 parking spaces for the shopping center with the proposed changes. Construction of the expanded Giant Food store and provision of required parking lot landscape islands will reduce the total number of parking spaces to 549, which represents a 9.5% reduction from existing parking and a 20% reduction from the required parking.

The applicant conducted a parking survey during the weekend peak hours and found that the demand for parking was about 20% less than the required number of parking spaces. The applicant is therefore requesting a 20% waiver and providing 80% of the required spaces. To ensure that the shopping center will have adequate parking spaces, the Transportation Planning staff recommends that the applicant should enter into a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (TMAg) with the Planning Board and the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation to effectively promote alternative modes of transportation to driving alone and parking within the shopping center. The TMAg will require the applicant to install a real-time transit sign at a location visible to employees and customers in the shopping center.

Landscape Waiver

Section 59-E-2.71 requires a 10-foot-wide landscape strip adjacent to Bel Pre Road, planted with shade or ornamental trees planted every 40 feet along the lot frontage and a three-foot-high evergreen hedge, fence or other method to reduce the visual impact of the parking facility.

The applicant has not been able to provide the required width for the landscape strip along the western portion of the landscape strip due to existing conditions. The required shade trees and the three-foot-high evergreen hedge have, however, been provided. The reduction of the required landscape strip width by three feet is not significant because the required trees and evergreen hedge have been provided.

The existing four-foot-wide landscape buffer along Bel Pre Road in front of the existing gas station will remain. A waiver is requested for the landscaping and the landscape strip width because no changes are proposed to the existing curb line in this area. A significant amount of landscaping is being added to the west and north of this area to screen the parking lot from the street. Therefore, the landscape waiver in this area will not impact the overall screening of the parking lot.

The existing four-foot-wide landscape buffer along Bel Pre Road in front of the existing restaurant will remain. A waiver is requested for the landscaping and the landscape strip width because the lot is under a lease agreement and the applicant has no control over the site boundaries. A significant amount of landscaping is being added to the west and north of this area to screen the parking lot from the street. Therefore, the landscape waiver in this area will not impact the overall screening of the parking lot.

Section 59-E-2.72 requires a four-foot-wide landscape strip planted with shade trees every 40 feet along Layhill Shopping Center to the east and north of the subject property. The applicant has provided a four-foot-wide landscape strip but has not been able to provide an evergreen hedge or shade trees due to the steep grades along this property. The proposed retaining wall and the existing steep slopes will provide some screening for the property.

Section 59-E-2.81 requires that parking lots be setback the same as required for the adjacent residential zone. Section 59-E-2.9 requires a minimum three-foot-high evergreen hedge, fence or wall. The applicant has provided a ten-foot-wide landscape strip and evergreen trees along most of the property line to the west and north. In areas with existing trees, an evergreen hedge has not been provided because the existing trees provide adequate screening. An eight-foot-wide landscape strip is provided in the northwest corner due to the existing curb line. The applicant is not proposing any changes to the curb in this area. A significant amount of landscaping is being added along the west and north property lines to screen the parking lot from the adjacent residential property. Therefore, the landscape waiver in this area will not impact the overall screening of the parking lot.

The proposed improvements to the parking lot will include more green space, shade trees, planting islands, lighting, pedestrian designated walkways and adequate screening for the parking lot. The proposed number of parking spaces will be adequate to serve the peak hour demands of the shopping center. Therefore, the proposal, the parking waiver request and the

landscape waiver request will accomplish the objectives of Section 59-E-4.2 to protect the health, safety and welfare of the adjacent land and public roads, safety of pedestrians and motorists, safe circulation and adequate lighting.

Staff recommends approval of the requested parking and landscape waivers.

Conformance to Master Plan

Plaza Del Mercado Shopping Center is included in the 1994 Aspen Hill Master Plan. The site is identified as Significant Parcel # 26 in the Land Use Chapter (page 80). The Plan also includes an illustrative concept plan for redevelopment of the site (page 57), which shows improved landscaping with shade trees in the Parking lot, a vehicular connection to the adjoining Layhill Shopping Center, pedestrian connections to the adjoining townhouse community in the rear of the shopping center, and improved pedestrian access from Bel Pre Road. In particular, the Master Plan recommends 1) clear, well-lit and well-marked pedestrian circulation, and 2) a vehicular connection to the adjoining Layhill Shopping Center.

Inter-parcel Connection

The most significant Master Plan recommendation, which also affects the adjoining Layhill Shopping Center (specific parcel #10), is that a vehicular and pedestrian connection should be provided between the two shopping centers so that cars don't have to travel onto Layhill and Bel Pre Roads to go from one to the other. Since the adjoining Layhill Shopping Center is not subject to a site plan review at this time, the Plaza Del Mercado application should be approved with a condition that Plaza Del Mercado shopping Center will provide and contract for their portion of a vehicular and pedestrian connection between the two shopping centers at the time when the adjoining Layhill Shopping Center is to provide such an improvement on their property.

In addition to the proposed connector easement area located to the northeast of the existing automobile filling station, approximately 170 feet north of Bel Pre Road, an alternative connector easement area located to the east of the proposed Giant Food store should be provided. The applicant should provide necessary site improvements and modifications within one of these two inter-parcel easement areas to complete a vehicular and pedestrian connection across the east property line when the owner of Layhill Shopping Center agrees to provide an inter-parcel connector.

Pedestrian Circulation

The other specific recommendation regarding the Plaza Del Mercado property is the provision of pedestrian paths from the adjoining residential townhouse neighborhood to the north and northwest. The shopping center is currently fenced off and despite one opening in the fence the pedestrian access from the townhouse development is less than appropriate. The new access points should preferably be aligned with the existing paths in the townhouse development for a more direct line of travel.

Design Guidance

The Master Plan (page 82) has general guidance for shopping centers in the Aspen Hill area stressing the need for better urban design and landscape improvements, such as additional planting in parking lots to break up the large paved areas, screening of loading docks, large shade trees in parking areas, street trees, and bringing buildings closer to the street to create a more attractive streetscape if redevelopment of a shopping center happens.

The applicant has provided a lighting plan that provides adequate lighting for the parking lot and the pedestrian circulation areas. Additional landscaping is provided to screen the parking lot from Bel Pre Road and the adjacent properties, and to break up the large expanses of pavement. A possible location for a future pedestrian and vehicular connection to the adjacent shopping center is also proposed. With these improvements, the proposal will be consistent with the recommendations of the Aspen Hill Master Plan.

Forest Conservation

The site is exempt from forest conservation requirements according to NRI/FSD #4-05320E (Modification of Existing Developed Property) approved on June 17, 2005.

FINDINGS: For Site Plan Review

1. *The Site Plan is consistent with an approved development plan or a project plan for the optional method of development if required.*

An approved development plan or a project plan is not required for the subject development.

2. *The Site Plan meets all of the requirements of the zone in which it is located.*

The Site Plan meets all of the requirements of the C-1 Zone as demonstrated in the project Data Table above.

3. *The location of the building and structures, the open spaces, the landscaping, recreation facilities, and the pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe and efficient.*

- a. **Buildings**

The proposal is for an expansion of the existing Giant Food Store. The other existing buildings will not be altered. The overall design of the proposed Giant Food Store expansion will be compatible with the overall design of the existing buildings.

- b. **Open Spaces**

The C-1 Zone requires 10% of lot area as green area. The proposed plan provides a total of 12.3 % of the lot area as green area. The green area includes the internal landscaped islands in the parking lot and the landscape strips along the property lines.

- c. **Landscaping and Lighting**

The proposed landscaping on the site consists of a mix of shade and evergreen trees and an evergreen hedge in the landscaped strips along the property lines. The internal landscaped islands in the parking lot consist of shade trees and shrubs. The proposed landscaping is adequate to screen the existing buildings and parking lot from Bel Pre Road and the adjacent properties.

The proposed lighting plan shows pole mounted outdoor lighting fixtures throughout the parking lot and the landscape strips along the property lines. The lighting poles are a maximum of 20 feet in height. The applicant will install deflectors on the perimeter lighting fixtures to minimize potential glare or excessive illumination on adjacent residential properties.

- d. **Recreation**

This section is not applicable to this proposal because the subject property is a commercial zoned property with retail uses.

e. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

Vehicular access to the property is from three locations along Bel Pre Road. Landscaped islands throughout the parking lot help define the parking areas and the driveways.

There is an existing public sidewalk along the Bel Pre Road frontage. A five-foot-wide concrete sidewalk is proposed between Bel Pre Road and the northern wing of the retail building. A concrete walk and a fence opening will be provided near the northern property line to provide pedestrian access from the adjacent Kimberly Place townhouse development to the stores. Bike racks will be provided near the entrance of the building.

A provision has been made for a future pedestrian and vehicular connection to the adjacent Layhill Shopping Center. The applicant is required to provide necessary site improvements and modifications within one of the two inter-parcel easement areas to complete a vehicular and pedestrian connection across the east property line when the adjoining property owner to the east agrees to provide an inter-parcel connector.

The proposed vehicular and pedestrian circulation is safe, adequate and efficient.

4. *Each structure and use is compatible with other uses and other Site Plans and with existing and proposed adjacent development.*

The proposal does not alter the existing retail uses on the property. The Giant Food Store expansion and the proposed parking improvements will improve the overall appearance of the shopping center. The proposed parking improvements will provide adequate parking and safe and efficient vehicular and pedestrian circulation. The proposed landscaping will adequately screen the parking lot from the adjacent properties and Bel Pre Road. The proposed lighting will ensure that the parking areas and the pedestrian circulation areas are well-lit.

5. *The Site Plan meets all applicable requirements of Chapter 22A regarding forest conservation.*

The site is exempt from forest conservation requirements according to NRI/FSD #4-05320E (Modification of Existing Developed Property) approved on June 17, 2005. Therefore there are no forest conservation requirements for this application.

APPENDIX

- A. Site Plan Checklist
- B. Memorandums from Transportation Planning staff dated November 14, 2005.



CHECKLIST Site Plan / Project Plan Review

Plan # 8-06004 Name: PLAZA DEL MERCADO
 Zone: C-1 Tract Area: 9.76 ACRES Proposed Use: RETAIL
 Number of Units: NA Square Footage: 130,236 SQ.FT.
 Development Method: NA Other: NA

Referral Comments:

M-NCPPC

	Staff	Date
Transportation	<u>EA</u>	<u>11/14/05</u>
Environmental	<u>SF</u>	<u>08/29/05</u>
Community Planning	<u>AK</u>	<u>10/17/05</u>
Historic Planning	<u>NA</u>	_____
Park Planning	<u>NA</u>	_____
Research/Housing	<u>NA</u>	_____

Other Agencies

	Staff	Date
SHA	<u>SF</u>	<u>08/25/05</u>
DPS (SWM)	<u>RB</u>	<u>07/05/05</u>
DPS (Traffic)	<u>SN</u>	<u>09/16/05</u>
Public School	<u>NA</u>	_____
Utility	_____	<u>08/29/05</u>
Fire & Rescue	_____	_____
DPW & T	<u>NA</u>	_____

Development Standards / Requirements

- Zoning Requirements NA MPDU Calculation
- Building Restriction Lines
- Development Data Table NA TDR Calculation
- Building Height
- Recreation Calculation Timing/Phasing Conditions
- Master Plan Conformance

Prior Approvals

- Development Plan NA Preliminary Plan NA Prior Site Plan Approvals NA
- Record Plat

Community Input

- Civic Association
- Individuals Dick Kauffinger by phone, 5:42 pm on 11/21/05

Supervisor Review MM 11/21/05
 Chief Review RAK 11/23/05