


FROM	NAME & TITLE	THOMAS J. STOSUR, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET, 8 TH FLOOR		
	SUBJECT	BMZA / 1501 McCulloh Street		

TO Mr. David Tanner, Executive Director
Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals
417 East Fayette Street, 14th Floor

DATE: May 29, 2015

REQUEST

The Department of Planning has received Richard Dickens' Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) application, on behalf of the New Metropolitan Baptist Church, Inc., to install a new 36.6 square foot single-faced directly illuminated 17 feet high identification sign on the church wall. The Zoning Administrator has determined that a variance of sign regulations is needed for approval. We understand that this appeal is scheduled for hearing on June 2, 2015.

SITE

1501 McCulloh Street is located on the northeast corner of the intersection with Mosher Street. This property measures approximately 52'6" by 104' and is currently improved with a two-story detached religious institutional building covering the entire lot. This site is zoned R-8 and is located within the Druid Heights Urban Renewal Plan area and the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District.

ANALYSIS

Use: In this zoning district, religious institutions are a permitted use, and so are allowed (§4-1101). In this case, the property was last authorized for use as a church, and as a day care center which is a conditional use in this R-8 General Residence District. The proposed LED panel within the proposed sign is a type of directly-illuminated sign (§11-101.c.). In a Residence District, such as the R-8 Zoning District containing this property, signs may not have or consist of any flashing, blinking, fluctuating, or otherwise animated light (§11-305). The LED sign face, although capable of being controlled remotely to display flashing, blinking, fluctuating, or otherwise animated light, is not *per se* prohibited if it is used to provide a fixed display or message.

The proposed sign would include in its lower portion a light-emitting diode (LED) light source which can be controlled by a remote computer-activated system that allows changes in advertising copy (text, images, or both). Because of this capability of the system the LED sign could display several images or messages within a relatively short period of time. For this reason, Board approval of a change in the free-standing sign structure must be conditioned upon certain limitations intended to minimize distraction of passing motorists and protect any residences in the vicinity from excessive glare.

Urban Renewal Plan: This property is located in the Druid Heights Urban Renewal Area, where the Urban Renewal Plan does not prohibit or further restrict the proposed use in this district.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Planning has no objection to this appeal, provided that the Board requires that the approved sign meets and continues to meet these conditions:

- That the lower portion of the proposed sign is approved for installation as a light-emitting diode (LED) screen, that this must be installed in a single step, and that the LED sign adheres to the operational limits or other conditions that may be imposed by the Board;
- That the performance of the LED sign conform to all of the requirements of §11-205 and §11-305 of the Zoning Code by having a minimum dwell (uninterrupted display of message or image) time of ten seconds; that it will not increase the area of the approved sign, that it will not increase the degree of illumination, and that it will not have any flashing, blinking, fluctuating, or otherwise animated light;
- That the LED screen will not have animations, movie clips and/or sound elements;
- That the LED sign will default to black entirely in the event of a failure of its remote control system or an interruption of announcement copy (text, images, or both); and
- That the digital sign will have automatic brightness controls so that the sign will not constitute a hazard to passing motorists at night, or during inclement weather.

TJS/wya/mf

cc: Richard Dickens, Appellant