

**CITY OF SUWANEE
VARIANCE ANALYSIS**

CASE NUMBER: V-2013-002
REQUESTS: EXCEED MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SIGNS
APPLICABLE SECTION: SECTION 1612 SIGN STANDARDS
LOCATION: 1350 PEACHTREE INDUSTRIAL BLVD
DISTRICT/LAND LOT: 7-194-372
ZONING: C-2 (GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT)

APPLICANT: SIGN-A-RAMA DULUTH
OWNER: EPIPHANY CHURCH
1350 PEACHTREE INDUSTRIAL BLVD
SUWANEE, GA 30024

CONTACT: PAT BARRON PHONE: 770-831-1966

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

ANALYSIS:

The applicant seeks a variance from Section 1612 Sign Standards of the City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance to exceed the maximum number of permitted signs. The applicant has placed six (6) light pole signs throughout the church's parking lot. Approval of this variance will allow these signs to remain. The site is located at 1350 Peachtree Industrial Blvd near the entrance to the Suwanee Station neighborhood. The church recently built a large building and parking addition in 2012. The light poles with banners are located in the old and new parking areas. The new parking area is visible from the adjacent Plaza at Suwanee Station shopping center and Station Center Boulevard in Suwanee Station. The original parking area is not visible from outside of the property.

Section 1612 of the Zoning Ordinance regulates how many signs are permitted in the City of Suwanee. Section 1612 states:

Institutional uses are allowed one (1) freestanding sign per road frontage.

The proposed signs would exceed the maximum number of signs which is one (1). The religious institution is requesting that six (6) light pole banners located throughout the site's parking area are permitted to remain. The signs were installed without a permit and a notice of violation was issued on January 28, 2013. The applicant is requesting a variance in response to this notice. The existing light pole signs are 60' x 28" (140 square feet) each. The signs are constructed with vinyl material that, according to the sign installation company, is resistant to ripping and water damage. However, these signs must be maintained and replaced periodically.

The subject property is located on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard near Station Center Boulevard. The property is surrounded by a mix of commercial and residential uses. To the north of the subject property is the Plaza at Suwanee Station shopping center, zoned C-2A. To the west of the property are single family homes zoned PMUD as part of the Suwanee Station mixed-use project. To the east, across Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, is the Chattahoochee Point Subdivision zoned R-85. To the south are the Suwanee Jubilee shopping center (C-2A) and a medical building (C-2).

The subject site is located between two large shopping centers and several feet above the street level elevation of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. Only two (2) of the six (6) light pole signs are currently visible from outside of the site. The Suwanee Jubilee shopping center to the south has similar banners on their light poles. These banners were approved as part of another variance in 2005 (V-2005-010). When approved in 2005, the signs were thought to contribute to the overall theme of the development and would not negatively impact the surrounding area. They were proposed to help create a village concept that is generally consistent with city goals for such centers.

As previously stated, the existing signs are 140 square feet and are attached to six (6) light poles throughout the facility's parking area. The total additional signage on site is 840 square feet. However, this signage is distributed throughout the property and does not appear to have any negative visual impacts to the area. The banners are clearly directed towards internal users of the site and not intended to draw the attention of people offsite. The banners, that the applicant is currently proposing to remain, are substantially similar to the adjacent shopping center's existing light pole signs.

The City's Zoning Ordinance grants the Zoning Board of Appeals the authority to grant variances. According to Section 2006 of the Ordinance, the Board is authorized to grant variances when literal enforcement of the Ordinance will result in unnecessary hardship to a property owner. The zoning ordinance also states that variances may be granted when relief would not cause substantial detriment to the public good nor impair the purposes or intent of the Zoning Ordinance.

In conclusion, the subject property does not appear to have a situation which rises to the level of hardship. However, the proposed signage complements similar signage in the adjacent shopping center. Also, a limited amount of the additional signage is visible from outside of the site and is, for the most part, being used to enhance the parking areas for those attending the religious institution. As such, it is likely that approval of this variance would not cause substantial detriment to the public good nor impair the purposes or intent of the Zoning Ordinance. Therefore, staff recommends **APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS** of V-2013-001.

V-2013-001

Planning Department Recommendation:

Approval of a variance for a light pole banners subject to the following conditions:

1. The banners shall be substantially consistent with the banners shown in Exhibit C.
2. The banners shall be properly maintained at all times and shall be removed immediately and replaced when damaged in a manner that does not conform to the signs shown in Exhibit D.
3. The site shall be limited to the existing six (6) light pole signs.

Standards for Consideration

Pursuant to Section 2009A of the City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance, the City finds the following standards are relevant in considering all applications for a Variance.

- A. Will approval of the variance unreasonably increase the congestion in public streets?**

Approval of this variance would not increase the congestion in public streets.

- B. Will approval increase the danger of fire or endanger public safety?**

Approval of this variance would not increase the danger of fire or endanger public safety.

- C. Will approval unreasonably diminish or impair established property values within the surrounding area?**

Approval of the variance would not unreasonably diminish or impair property values within the surrounding area.

- D. Will approval in any other aspect impair the public health, safety, comfort, morals or welfare of the inhabitants of the City?**

Approval of the variance would not impair the public health, safety, comfort, morals or welfare of the inhabitants of the City.