



Initial Project Review

Sign Variance: Amazon Go

Application Number: 1003751
Tax Parcel Number: 3870200321

South Hill Advisory Commission Public Meeting: March 6, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., at the Pierce County Skills Center – Bethel School District, Rainer Building (Administration), Room 323, 16117 Canyon Road East, Puyallup, WA 98375

Proposal: Applicant seeks approval of a sign variance to increase the maximum allowed wall signage for a tenant space < 20,000 square feet from 30 square feet to 90 square feet (increase of 60 square feet). The proposal is 30 square feet of signage on each of the north, east, and south building elevations.

Project Location: The site is in the Town Center (TCtr) zone classification and South Hill Community Plan area, located at 15518 Meridian East, Puyallup, WA, within the SW 1/4 of Section 21, T19N, R4E, W.M., in Council District #2.

Review Summary: County staff has reviewed this proposal for compliance with all applicable policies, codes, and regulations. The County finds, based on an initial project review, that an increase of 30 additional square feet of signage on the south building may be considered for granting of the variance.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA): The proposal is categorically exempt from SEPA environmental review in accordance with Pierce County Code, 18D, Environmental, and the State Environmental Policy Act Rules, WAC 197-11.

County Contact: Donna Rhea, Associate Planner, 253-798-3288,
donna.rhea@piercescountywa.gov

Pierce County Online Permit Information:

<https://pals.piercescountywa.gov/palsonline/#/permitSearch/permit/departementStatus?applPermitId=1003751>



Project Data

Application Complete Date: January 3, 2023 - Incomplete application was received, and the application was stopped
January 31, 2023 – Application was deemed complete

IPR Mailed Date: February 27, 2023

Property Owner: LGR 15518 Meridian LLC
477 9th Avenue, Suite 100
San Mateo, CA 94402

Amazon Retail
15518 Meridian Avenue
Puyallup, WA 98375

Applicant: Tambra Nance
7201 Baker Blvd, Suite C
Richland Hill, TX 76118
tambran@pstitan.com

Agent: Melissa Samudio
11608 North 12th Place
Phoenix, AZ 85020
samudmel@amazon.com

Public and Legal Notice

- *February 1, 2023*: Notice of Application (NOA) and Public Meeting Notice, including the South Hill Advisory Commission (SHAC) public meeting information, was sent to property owners within a radius of 300 feet, but not less than two parcels deep, around the exterior boundaries of the subject property.
- *February 20, 2023*: Legal Notice was published in the official County newspaper (*Tacoma News Tribune*), advertising the public meeting to be held by the South Hill Advisory Commission (SHAC).
- As of the date of this report, the site was not posted with a Public Notice sign.

Site Inspection

- A site inspection was completed on February 16, 2023
- Two new commercial shell buildings exist that are nearing completion.
- The main entrances of all tenant spaces face each other in a north south direction located within the interior parking lot. Amazon Go does have an additional exterior entrance that faces Meridian East.
- Staff noted when driving south on Meridian East that signage located on the northern building elevation could easily be observed by passing vehicles without any signage located on the building elevation facing Meridian East.

- Staff noted when driving north on Meridian East that without any signage on the south building elevation, vehicle traffic would not be able to identify a business. With signage on the southern building elevation, it was observed that vehicle traffic could identify a business without having any signage on the building elevation facing Meridian East.
- Site photographs were taken in two separate locations from the Meridian Village Shopping Center parking lot, located across Meridian East, and observed that if signage for Amazon Go were present on the north and south building elevations that there would be no need for signage on the building elevation facing Meridian East.

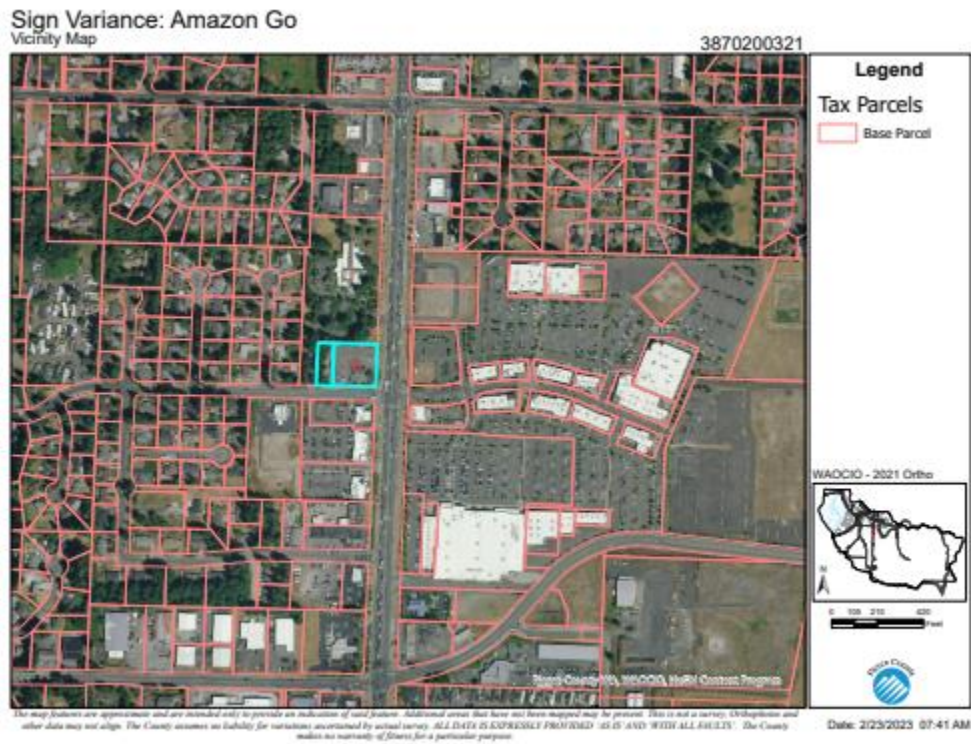
Surrounding Land Use / Zoning Designation

	LAND USE	ZONING (Title 18A)
North	Pierce County Library	Towne Center (TCtr)
South	156 th Street East	TCtr
East	Meridian East	TCtr
West	Pierce County Library	TCtr

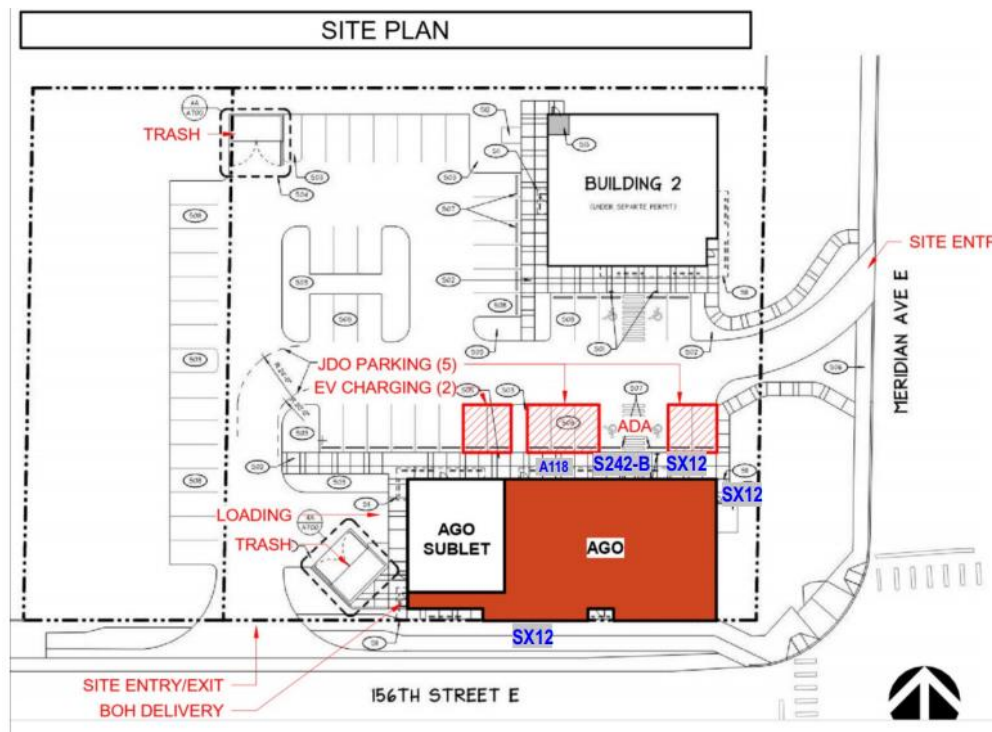
Vicinity Map



County Aerial Photo 2021



Site Plan



Building Elevations



Site Photographs – February 16, 2023



Photograph taken driving south on Meridian looking at the north and building elevation facing Meridian East.



Photograph taken driving south on Meridian looking at south building elevation and building elevation facing Meridian East.



Photograph taken looking north from most southern portion of Sunrise Village parking lot located west of Meridian

Governing Regulations

- Title 19A, Comprehensive Plan - January 1, 1995, as amended
- Title 18, Development Regulations - General Provisions
- Title 18B, Development Regulations, - Signs

Public and Agency Review Comments

Comments have been received on the Variance from the following departments and agencies. Comments received on this proposal may be found by accessing the Online Permit Information referenced on page 1:

- Nisqually Indian Tribe – The Nisqually Indian Tribe noted in their February 2, 2023, comment letter, “The Nisqually Indian Tribe’s THPO has reviewed the master application and supplemental material that you provided for the above-named project and has no specific comments or concerns at this time.”
- Squaxin Island Indian Tribe – The Squaxin Indian Tribe noted in their February 1, 2023, comment letter, “We have no specific cultural resource concerns for this project.”
- No comments have been received from the public.

Review Responsibility

The following list includes jurisdictional areas for County departments and divisions involved in the review and administration of this proposal:

- A. Planning and Public Works (PPW), Planning Division:
 - Planning verifies compliance with the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, the South Hill Community Plan, and the Pierce County Development Regulations for signage.

Initial PPW Staff Review for Consistency with Land Use Policies and Regulations

Title 19A – Pierce County Comprehensive Plan

Staff Comment: Staff could not find any specific goals for signage under the Comprehensive Plan.

Title 19A, Appendix J – South Hill Community Plan

GOAL SH D-16 Ensure that all signs undergo design review so that the design and placement of signs is consistent with the South Hill design standards and guidelines.

SH D-16.1 Ensure that signage complements, rather than dominates or intrudes upon, the character and visual amenity of an area, the buildings on which they are displayed, and the general environment.

SH D-16.2 Ensure that signage is integrated with the overall architectural framework and structural elements of the building, reinforcing the shape and proportion of the facade through such techniques as detailing, use of colors and materials, and placement.

SH D-16.6 Allow monument and wall signs.

SH D-16.8 Require consolidation of signage within commercial development to reduce visual clutter along roads.

Staff Comment: The South Hill Community Plan encourages signage that complements and is integrated with the overall architectural framework, which the subject proposal does.

Title 18, Pierce County Development Regulations – General Provisions

Chapter 18.160 - Vesting

18.160.030 Applicability.

18.160.050 Vesting of Applications.

18.160.060 Duration of Vesting

Staff Comment: A complete application for a Sign Variance was submitted to Pierce County on January 1, 2022. The Variance is subject to the development regulations in effect on that date.

Title 18B, Development Regulations – Signs

18B.30.130 – Centers and Corridors Zones

Table 18B.30.130-1. Centers and Corridors Sign Table Maximum Number, Dimensions, and Location of Signs			
Zoning Classifications			
	ECOR	TCTR, UCOR	NCOR
MONUMENT SIGNS			
Sign Area (square feet)			
Single-Tenant Building	60	60	50
Multi-Tenant/Multi-Building Complex	80	80	50
Residential Development	N/A	50	50
Sign Height (maximum height in feet)			
Single-Tenant Building	6	6	4
Multi-Tenant/Multi-Building Complex	8	8	4
Residential Development	4	4	4
BUILDING SIGNS (Wall, Awning, Marquee, Projecting, and Hanging)			
Maximum square footage of all signs for each tenant, by size of tenant's interior square footage:	0-20,000 sf (1) 20,001-80,000 sf greater than 80,000 sf	30 sf sign 50 sf sign 80 sf sign	Maximum 30 sf per tenant
(1) For a single tenant building of 20,000 square feet or less, the building sign may be increased up to 10 additional square feet provided the maximum allowed size of the monument sign shall be decreased accordingly.			

Staff Comment: The commercial shell building is 6,000 square feet and is comprised of two tenant spaces. The subject parcel is zoned Town Center (TCtr) and has a maximum monument signage square footage of 80 square feet for the multi-tenant complex and a maximum wall signage of 30 square feet for a tenant space less than 20,000 square feet. There is no monument sign proposed for the site and Amazon Go will occupy one of two tenant spaces in the shell building, which would have a total of 30 square feet of wall signage for each tenant.

18B.10.080 Sign Variance

An applicant who seeks an exception from the provisions of Title 18B PCC may pursue a sign variance.

B. Review Process.

1. An application for a sign variance may be considered administratively if such request is to deviate not more than 20 percent from a numerical regulation.
2. An application for administrative sign variance shall be decided by the Director.
3. An application for sign variance to deviate more than 20 percent from a numerical regulation, or from a non-numerical regulation, shall be decided by the Hearing Examiner.

Staff Comment: The sign variance requests to deviate more than 20 percent, so the request needs to be decided by the Hearing Examiner.

C. Review Criteria. The applicant shall demonstrate compliance with all of the following review criteria:

1. Exceptional or unusual circumstances, not resulting from any act of the applicant, apply to the project location and not generally to other properties in the vicinity;

²
Staff Comment: Staff finds that there are exceptional or unusual circumstances that exist on the subject parcel that could be considered for granting of a sign variance.

- The subject parcel has two new commercial shell buildings that were constructed with the primary entrances facing each other within the interior parking lot. Primary signage is customarily installed above the primary entrances of each tenant space which directs patrons to the business. If the applicant splits that 30 square feet of signage up between two or three building elevations, it will not provide the necessary advertisement for the business.
- The parcel would be allowed to have a monument sign of up to 80 square feet; however, no monument signage is proposed for the site. A monument sign would allow an additional 26 square feet of signage divided up between the three tenants which would help to identify businesses within the commercial complex.
- When driving south on Meridian East, less than 30 square feet of signage on the north building elevation might not provide the necessary advertisement for Amazon Go by vehicle traffic passing by. Staff agrees with the proposal to have 30 square feet of signage on the north building elevation.

- If the full 30 square feet of signage were maximized on the north building elevation, vehicles traveling north along Meridian East would not have any way of identifying what business exits. Staff agrees with the proposed 30 square feet of signage on the south building elevation.
- When driving north or south along Meridian East or looking across the street from Sunrise Village Shopping Center, staff disagrees with the 30 square feet of signage proposed on the east building elevation as the signage on the north and south building elevations can be seen.

2. The sign proposal is outstanding in design;

Staff Comment: The proposed signage is similar to other commercial signage within the immediate vicinity.

3. The variance request is the minimum necessary to serve its intended purpose;

Staff Comment: Staff agrees with the applicant that the 30 square feet of wall signage on the north and south building elevations is the minimum signage necessary for the business to be seen by vehicle traffic. Staff is not recommending approval of the proposed 30 square feet of wall signage on the east building elevation that abuts Meridian East as the signage on the north and south building elevation can be seen.

- 4. The variance request is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and the Development Regulations; and
- 5. Applicable community plan and Comprehensive Plan objectives and goals are being met through this design proposal, and no objective of the applicable community plan or Comprehensive Plan is being deviated from.

Staff Comment: Staff believes the subject proposal for 30 square feet of signage on both the north and south building elevations is consistent with the purpose and intent and goals and objective of the Comprehensive Plan and South Hill Community Plan.

Questions for SHAC Discussion and Consideration

Variance:

- Is the request consistent with the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan or South Hill Community Plan? If not, how can it be made consistent?

Other Questions or Concerns?

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