

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF MAYOR & ALDERMEN

DATE: July 27, 2026

FROM: Maria De Mesa, Planner

SUBJECT: Waiver from the Design Guidelines for Rock Mulch at 901 Bowl, Case #260765

INTRODUCTION:

The applicant and property owner, Jose Flores, is requesting a waiver from the Design Guidelines related to the use of rock mulch for this multi-tenant commercial building. The 6.259-acre property was known as the Collierville Family Funquest Entertainment Center approved in 1998 (Exhibit 1). The subject property is zoned GC: General Commercial and is surrounded by SCC: Shopping Center Commercial zoned properties to the west and south, GC zoning to the east and R-3: High Density Residential zoning to the north.

BACKGROUND:

The 1998 Landscaping Plan for FunQuest shows planters near the building's front entrances to meet planting requirements of the Design Guidelines adopted in 1994 (see Exhibit 3). During a recent site inspection, Town staff have observed use of large limestone resembling "rip rap" near the building's front entrances and sent a notice to inform the property owner of the violation (see Exhibit 5). In April 2026, a site plan modification (SPM) application was submitted for the use of rock mulch; however, staff informed the applicant the use of rock mulch requires a waiver from the Design Guidelines (see Exhibit 6). On July 9, 2026, the Design Review Commission (DRC) did not recommend the waiver for rock mulch.

DISCUSSION:

1. Chapter III of Design Guidelines states, "pervious areas shall be covered with a variety of trees, shrubs, ground cover, and sod, or with materials like mulch, not exposed gravel or rock. Mulch shall be comprised of a naturally colored and organic material (e.g. hardwood, cypress, pine straw). Pervious pavement and concrete may be considered on a case-by-case basis."

2. The applicant is requesting a waiver for the use of inorganic material (large limestones) in landscape beds near the building's front entrances for mosquito prevention purposes (see Exhibit 2).

- The applicant argues, when used correctly, rock (larger stones) in the landscape can address public health concern caused by moisture retention contributing to mosquito breeding.
- The applicant states studies have shown the moisture-retaining properties of organic mulch can create a favorable environment for mosquitoes.

3. The applicant could explore alternatives to decorative stones, such as using hardscape (concrete/decorative pavers on a slope), raising the plant beds, installing French drains in the middle of the planters to prevent moisture accumulation, pending approval from the Town Engineer. However, the applicant believes rock mulch is more manageable in terms of maintenance and safety.

4. The Town has considered similar requests before to use inorganic (rock) mulch; however, the most recent cases involved small gravel pebbles and not larger decorative stones.

- With its 2019 renovations, the Town allowed Hampton Inn to use a narrow strip of inorganic (rock) mulch at the base of the EIFS building. The Fire Marshal cited a Fire Code requirement to use non-flammable mulch where EIFS is used close to the ground to reduce fire risk.
- The DRC denied a request in August 2022 to use rock mulch at the Glide Xpress facility on Poplar Avenue. The developer installed an extensive amount of gravel mulch without prior approval from the DRC and BMA and had to remove it before the letter of credit was released. They withdrew their request and did not proceed to the BMA for a final decision.
- The DRC also denied a request to use rock mulch in October 2023 for the Southern Security Federal Credit Union (SSFCU) headquarters in the Byhalia Road Corridor Planned Development, also known as the Oak Grove PD. They requested a gravel band at the building's foundation and within the three-sided courtyards. They cited concern over water and dirt splashing onto windows used near the finished grade. They withdrew their request and did not proceed to the BMA for a final decision.
- In December 2024, the DRC recommended a waiver to allow inorganic (rock) mulch for the Water Tower District Phase 1, provided it is a higher end product to be used with decorative metal edging, limited to areas of no more than 75 square feet, and for drainage purposes (see Exhibit 4). The BMA approved this waiver.

NEXT STEPS: The SPM application shall be revised to reflect any conditions of approval. If the BMA denies the waiver, the rock must be replaced with sod or mulch, or the property owner will be cited to municipal court.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff cannot recommend approval of the waiver as proposed, unless the applicant agrees to modify the design to reduce the amount of rock mulch by using a combination of alternatives, including using drainage strips and limiting the use of rocks to areas of no more than 75 square feet, and for drainage purposes. Such an amended request would constitute an “alternative means of compliance” since the spirit and intent of the Guidelines would be met by the proposed solution.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Exhibit 1 - Vicinity Map and Contact Information - 6-26-26.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2 - Applicant Cover Letter and Photos - 6-16-26.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 3 - Funquest Family Entertainment Center Landscaping Plan - 6-1-1998.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 4 - DRC Meeting Minutes Excerpt - 12-12-24.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 5 - Courtesy Letter to Property Owner - 7-25-25.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 6 - Planning Division Comments - 4-13-26.pdf](#)

PROPOSED MOTION:

To grant a waiver of the Design Guidelines to allow for inorganic (rock) mulch for 440 US Highway 72.

Board Action: Motion By _____ Seconded By _____

Vote Total	Hall	Jordan	Robbins	Marshall	Stamps	Fraser
Yes						
No						
Abstain						