

REPORT TO THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

DATE: July 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Case #260765 – 440 US Highway 72 (901 Bowl) – Request approval of a Waiver from the Design Guidelines related to the use of rock mulch in a multi-tenant commercial center

INTRODUCTION:

- The applicant and property owner, Jose Flores, is requesting a recommendation from the Design Review Commission (DRC) for a waiver from the Design Guidelines related to the use of rock mulch in a multi-tenant commercial center at this location.
- The subject property is located on the east side of US Highway 72, just south of Harris Street (see Exhibit 1).
- The 6.259-acre property is within the Collierville Family Funquest Entertainment Center approved in 1998.
- 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 Collierville FunQuest Family Entertainment Center 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 stones 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).
- The role of the DRC for this request is to make a recommendation to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA).

KEY POINTS:

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 large limestones, 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 DRC 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 (small river 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:

- **BMA Meeting:** The DRC will provide a formal recommendation to the BMA related to the waiver request. The BMA has the final decision. The BMA is scheduled to hear the waiver at 6:00 pm on 8/10/26, at Town Hall.
- **SPM Application:** The SPM application shall be revised to reflect any BMA conditions of approval.
- **Municipal court:** 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: Having large expanses of large rock does not meet the intent of the Guidelines for the impervious areas of the site to be primarily covered with vegetation or organic mulch. Staff cannot recommend approval of the waiver as proposed, unless the applicant agrees to modify the design to significantly reduce the amount of rock mulch by using a combination of alternatives, including using concrete pavers on a slope, installing French drains, using smaller decorative stones in limited areas of no more than 75 square feet, and for drainage purposes. Such an amended request would be an example of “alternative means of compliance” since the spirit and intent of the Guidelines would still be met by the alternative design 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 - 12-12-24 DRC Meeting Minutes excerpt.pdf

Exhibit 5 - Courtesy letter to property owner 7-25-25.pdf

Exhibit 6 - Planning Division comments 4-13-26.pdf

PROPOSED MOTION:

(PER APPLICANT'S REQUEST): To recommend the BMA grant a waiver of the Design Guidelines to allow for inorganic (limestone rock) mulch.