

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George’s County Planning Board has reviewed Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. DSDS-693, Ft. Washington Medical Center, requesting a departure for three signs in accordance with Subtitle 27 of the Prince George’s County Code; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing on September 28, 2017, the Prince George’s County Planning Board finds:

A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The property, 11701 Livingston Road, is known as Parcel A (NLP-105-90) of the Ft. Washington Medical Center, and consists of approximately 7.01 acres in the Commercial Miscellaneous (C-M) Zone. The site is located on the west side of Livingston Road, approximately 900 feet north of Swann Creek Road, with frontage on, and access via, Livingston Road. It is developed with a two-story, 51-bed hospital; a three-story medical office building; and a one-story ambulatory care facility. There are two building mounted signs identifying the Fort Washington Medical Center and the main and emergency entrances. A standard, freestanding, monument electronic sign is located at the northern entrance of the property. There is a non-illuminated directional sign located at the southern entrance of the property.

B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	APPROVED
Zone(s)	C-M	C-M
Use(s)	Hospital	Hospital
Acreage	7.01	7.01
Square Footage/GFA	99,193	99,193

C. **History:** Originally, the subject site was zoned Commercial Office (C-O) with the approval of Zoning Map Amendment Application No. 9398 in 1979. A special exception application for an ambulatory care center, filed concurrently with the rezoning application, was dismissed after it was determined that an ambulatory care center was permitted in the C-O Zone (See SE-3138). On June 22, 1989, a Special Exception (SE-3980) for a 33-bed hospital was approved for the site. On December 19, 1991, August 4, 1994, and April 24, 1997, revisions to the approved special exception, totaling 8,816 square feet, were approved by the Prince George’s County Planning Board, allowing minor building additions and landscaping changes. Revision of Site Plan ROSP-3890-05 was approved by the Planning Board on March 27, 2003 for the addition of a two-story 24,750-square-foot building addition, an increase to 51 total beds, the relocation of the two temporary trailers approved by SE-3890-03, and the redesign of the parking lot and the landscape plan. Revision of Site Plan ROSP-3890-06 is dormant. Two permits for building-mounted signs as medical office were reviewed and approved in error. A permit was approved August 2012 for one freestanding sign.

- D. **Master Plan and General Plan Recommendations:** The application is consistent with the 2006 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for the Henson Creek-South Potomac Planning Area*, which rezoned the subject property to the C-M Zone. The subject property, along with the adjacent Old Fort Village Shopping Center and lands to the west, is identified as part of the Broad Creek Transit Village and Medical Park. The Broad Creek Transit Village is envisioned as containing a mix of uses that capitalize on the proximity and potential redevelopment of the hospital.
- E. **Request:** The original request for this application was a for a departure from the size of the freestanding signs; however, it was determined through the review process that a departure for the maximum number of signs is required and not the size. Therefore, a departure for three signs from the sign design standards of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, Part 12 Signs, Division 3 Design Standards, Subdivision 2, Section 27-617, Institutional–Other than Temporary, is required to allow a total of four signs: two building-mounted signs and two freestanding signs. The Zoning Ordinance permits only one freestanding sign or building-mounted sign, which was permitted for the north entrance in August 2012. The application is for replacement of the freestanding signs at the north and south entrances along Livingston Road and to add one interior directional/regulatory sign to bring better visibility to the medical center. The directional interior sign is permitted per Section 27-620 (Directional signs for institutional uses and golf courses) and does not require a departure. A departure is required for the south entrance freestanding sign. Also, because the two building-mounted signs were permitted, the departure will validate the two building-mounted signs.
- F. **Surrounding Uses:** The neighborhood in which the property is located is described as Livingston Road to the east and Swan Creek Road to the south. The neighborhood is a mix of single-family residential subdivisions and commercial uses. The properties immediately surrounding the subject site are:
- Northwest**— Proposed Livingston Road relocated Outlot A and undeveloped Rural Residential (R-R) zoned land;
- East**— Across Livingston Road, various commercial service and retail uses in the C-M Zone;
- South**— Undeveloped land zoned C-O, owned by the applicant, and the Old Fort Village Shopping Center in the C-S-C Zone.
- G. **Zone Standards:** The approval is within the applicable development requirements and regulations set forth in Section 27-459 (C-M Zone) and Section 27-462 (Regulations) in commercial zones of the Zoning Ordinance. The subject application meets all the regulations for development in the commercial zone. Section 27-462(b), Uses Permitted in Commercial Zones, indicates that a hospital is a permitted use in the C-M Zone.

H. **Sign Requirements:** All signs (approved and existing) are consistent with the applicable sign regulations, per the Zoning Ordinance, Part 12 Signs, Division 3 Design Standards, Subdivision 1, except for the quantity allowed for institutional uses, as discussed:

1. **Section 27-617. –Institutional–Other than Temporary.**

(a) **In any zone (except Comprehensive Design and Mixed-Use Zones) where a church; library; school; hospital; fire station; community center; day care center for children; service, fraternal, or civic organizations; or other similar institution is allowed, a sign may be erected. Institutional signs shall meet the following design standards:**

- (1) **Maximum area for each sign - 48 square feet.**
- (2) **Maximum height - 8 feet above finished grade at base of sign.**
- (3) **Minimum setback - 15 feet from adjoining land in any Residential Zone (or land proposed to be used for residential purposes in a Comprehensive Design, Mixed Use, or Planned Community Zone).**
- (4) **Type allowed - freestanding or attached to a building.**
- (5) **Maximum number - 1 per street the property fronts on (must face street frontage).**

Only one sign is permitted. A departure for three signs is required. As noted earlier, the validation of two building mounted signs, and the south entrance freestanding sign is necessary for compliance. There are five existing signs (described as A–E in the chart below) that identify and provide direction at the Ft. Washington Medical Center. There are no alternations to the building mounted signage (Signs D and E). The Planning Board approved the replacement of two signs, Signs A and B, with illuminated freestanding signs along Livingston Road. The applicant previously obtained a permit for Sign B, located at the north entrance, in August 2012. Sign A, located at the south entrance, is replacing a sign that was considered directional/regulatory. Therefore, a departure for three signs is necessary.

SIGNAGE	
Sign	Type
A	FREE-STANDING Advertising (Southern Entrance) (New)
B	FREE-STANDING Advertising (Northern Entrance) (Replacement)
C	Directional (New)
D	Building Mounted (existing)
E	Building Mounted (existing)

The replacement signage along Livingston Road serves a dual purpose, as main identification and directional signage. Sign B, located at the north entrance of the property adjacent to Livingston Road, will be a 40-square-foot, internally-illuminated, blue, black, white, and red ground-mounted sign. Sign B, located at the south entrance on Livingston Road, will be 32-square-foot, internally-illuminated, blue, black, white, and red ground-mounted sign. Sign C will be a double-sided, non-illuminated directional/regulatory interior sign centrally placed. Any future signage proposed on this property will require approval of a change to the special exception site plan prior to approval of a sign permit. The site plan identifies the location of the directional/regulatory sign (one), the building-mounted signs (two), and the freestanding signs (two), in conformance with the required setbacks, height, and size for such signs.

2. **Section 27-589(a)** of the Zoning Ordinance contains the following purposes for regulating signs:
 - (1) **To promote the health, safety, and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the Regional District;**
 - (2) **To encourage and protect the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures;**
 - (3) **To regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which could depreciate the value of property and discourage quality development in the Regional District;**
 - (4) **To regulate signs that are a hazard to safe motor vehicle operation;**
 - (5) **To eliminate structurally unsafe signs that endanger a building, structure, or the public;**
 - (6) **To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development; and**
 - (7) **To control the location and size of signs, so as to provide for adequate identification and advertisement in a manner that is compatible with land uses in the Regional District.**

The existing building mounted signs will remain the same. The approved freestanding signs are designed specifically to increase and enhance both sign visibility and readability, so that motorists can identify the site and view information from a distance to adequately allow for a safe driver response. The existing signs are ineffective in aiding motorists to identify the appropriate location for the services at the medical center. The approval is to replace existing entrance signs, Signs A and B, with illuminated freestanding signs, and add a directional sign (Sign C) to better direct patrons visiting the Fort Washington

Medical Center. The approved signs are consistent with the current trends in hospital signage. The dual purpose of the signs reduces the proliferation of signage visible along Livingston Road and throughout the medical center campus. The two freestanding signs better serve the purpose for adequate identification and direction to the medical center uses as viewed from Livingston Road. The approved signs would be retained in the same locations as their predecessors, which has not interfered with adequate sight lines or otherwise pose a hazard to motorists. The freestanding signs will be illuminated for nighttime identification purposes and will not negatively impact residential communities located north of the medical center.

In regard to the existing building-mounted signs, the Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum set back of five feet from the adjoining land in any residential zone. The building-mounted signs are approximately 300 feet from the right-of-way on Livingston Road. The visibility of the building-mounted signs are not as clear from the road as the approved freestanding signs, especially in emergency situations.

I. **Required Findings:** Section 27-239.01(b)(8)(A) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that, in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

(i) **The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.**

In general, the purposes of the Sign Ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification and advertisement, to promote the general welfare of the residents of the county, and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures. The goal is to validate existing building mounted signs and replace the existing signs at the north and south entrance locations with new illuminated signs. The signs should be located to meet the 10-foot setback on Livingston Road.

(ii) **The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.**

As approved, the departure for three signs is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request. The two building-mounted signs (Signs D and E), identify the medical center and emergency area entrances and are not easily seen from Livingston Road. The main entrance is approximately 300 feet from the north entrance on Livingston Road. The freestanding signs located at the north and south property entrances provide identification and direct patrons to the correct area. Permitting all signs aids patrons seeking emergency services, so as not to miss the medical campus. Updated signage ensures visitors are aware of services, and the signs permit the hospital to maintain an appropriate and professional atmosphere throughout the campus.

(iii) **The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949.**

Livingston Road is identified in PGAtlas as a scenic road. There are no street lights at this section of Livingston Road. The building-mounted signs are not as effective as they could be, given the medical center's location being set back 300 feet from Livingston Road. The current freestanding sign located at the north entrance serves as a main identification sign. It is still functional, but not directional. The purpose of the approved freestanding signs located at the two entrances is to provide needed direction for those patrons seeking emergency services, especially at night. The signs both identify and provide direction as to where to enter the medical center for emergency services. There is also potential for efficient vehicular movement during business hours, for delivery services to the medical center campus.

(iv) The departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

The medical building is set back 300 feet from Livingston Road. Additional signs are necessary to further provide adequate site identification and campus direction for patron service use. There are existing commercial uses along Livingston Road, many of which have building-mounted signage. An electronic freestanding sign has operated on the since August 2012. The changes approved by the Planning Board will not only improve the visual quality of the signs, but provide better direction to the medical campus. The overall design of the signs is compatible with the medical use of the property and meets the regulatory requirements for height, size, and location. The signs will not attract undue attention, but will provide for adequate identification and direction, and will be compatible with the overall streetscape. The site abuts other commercial uses at the southern boundary of the property. The closest residential subdivision, just north of the medical center, will not be negatively impacted visually by the signs. For the reasons stated above, the departure for three signs will not impair the visual, functional, environmental quality, or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

J. Referrals:

1. **Permit Review**—The dimensions of the building frontage and the architectural elevation of the building must be provided where the sign is located on the building for Signs D and E. Both the site and landscape plans must comply with all prior approved Prince George's County Landscape Manual requirements. Per Section 27-624(a) of the Zoning Ordinance, a maintenance agreement approved by the Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources will be required to demonstrate maintenance of the gateway signage. Contact Bill Edelen at the Department of Environmental Resources at 301-883-6039 for a signed maintenance agreement.

- K. Determinations:** The departure of three signs is necessary for the identification of the medical campus on Livingston Road, is in conformance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The building was constructed on the subject property in 1989 and has since operated with a medical service use. The medical campus is permitted by special exception and will not alter the relationship between the subject property and the surrounding neighborhood.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVED the above-noted application, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification, a legible site plan shall be revised to provide the following:
 - a. Conformance to the 10-foot setback requirements for the two freestanding signs.
 - b. The dimensions of the building frontage and architectural elevation of the building where Signs D and E are located on the building.
 - c. Add the height of the signs to the site plan.
2. Prior to issuance of permits, the applicant shall, per Section 27-624(a) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, obtain a maintenance agreement approved by the Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources demonstrating that maintenance of the gateway sign will be the responsibility of a designated person or entity in the agreement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board's action must be filed with the District Council for Prince George's County, Maryland within thirty (30) days of the final notice of the Planning Board's decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Washington, seconded by Commissioner Geraldo, with Commissioners Washington, Geraldo, Doerner, and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion, and with Commissioner Bailey absent at its regular meeting held on Thursday, September 28, 2017, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 5th day of October 2017.

Elizabeth M. Hewlett
Chairman

By Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

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