

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-715, Medstar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, requesting approval 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 January 13, 2022, the Prince George’s County Planning Board finds:

1. **Request:** The applicant proposed to construct one freestanding monument sign for an institutional use (hospital) that will replace two existing signs. Lot 8 is improved with one monument sign and one pylon sign. The signs are located along the frontage of MD 5 (Branch Avenue) and along the exit lane to Surratts Road, both advertising the former Colony South Hotel. The applicant proposed to remove both existing signs, replacing them with a single, double-sided monument sign at the northwest corner of Lot 8. The sign is associated with the modernization efforts and new emergency center located on Lots 5 and 6 of the overall medical center. The proposed monument sign will be approximately 2 feet deep, 19.5 feet high, and 20 feet wide (including podium base). The signage portion will consist of an internally illuminated cabinet that is 20 feet wide and 16.5 feet tall, for a total of 333 square feet of sign area. Therefore, the applicant requested a departure from the sign design standards (DSDS) of Section 27-617(a)(1) and 27-617(a)(2) of the Prince George’s County Zoning Ordinance.
2. **Development Data Summary:** The following chart summarizes the approved development for Lot 8 of the overall Southern Maryland Medical Center, which remains unchanged by this application.

	EXISTING
Zone	R-R
Use(s)	Vacant Hotel
Total Acreage	11.12
Number of Lots	1
Parcels	0
Outlots	0

3. **Location:** The site is located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of MD 5 and Surratts Road. Furthermore, the subject property is located on Tax Map 125 in Grid F-2 and is known as Lot 8 of the Southern Maryland Medical Center, recorded in the Prince George’s County Land Records, in Plat Book MMB 237 page 36, dated November 20, 2012. The subject site is 11.12 acres of the overall 67.78-acre medical center and is zoned Rural Residential (R-R).
4. **Surrounding Uses:** The subject site is surrounded by commercial, institutional, and residential uses. The subject lot is bound by MD 5 to the west with lots in the Townhouse Zone beyond.

Surratts Road abuts the site to the north, with institutional uses in the Commercial Office (C-O) and Rural Residential (R-R) Zones, and a commercial use in the Ancillary Commercial (C-A) Zone beyond. Additional institutional and residential uses in the R-R Zone are located to the east and south.

5. **Previous Approvals:** On November 27, 1970, Special Exception SE-2403 approved a 300-bed hospital, a 23,600-square-foot ambulatory care facility, and a 47,200-square-foot administration building. A 27,500 square-foot-storage building for the hospital was approved in SE-3355 on March 22, 1982. On June 14, 1982, a conversion of the hospital and addition of a storage building to a 29.55-acre health campus was approved by the Prince George's County District Council. On January 24, 1983, 22.81 acres were added under Zoning Ordinance 2-1983. On October 7, 1991, SE-3949 was approved to enlarge the health campus by approximately 10 acres.

Since then, various revisions have occurred to the site plan. Revision of Site Plan ROSP-3949-01 was approved on May 10, 1993, to allow minor modifications to office and storage uses. ROSP-3949-02 was approved on July 25, 2002, for the relocation of the helipad and the addition of a 6,734-square-foot emergency room. ROSP-3949-03 was approved on July 12, 2004, for the addition of a 2,309-square-foot cardiac rehabilitation center. ROSP-3949-04 was approved on June 7, 2005, for the addition of a 372-square-foot concrete pad for an emergency generator. Lastly, ROSP-3949-05 was approved on October 15, 2012, to add a concrete pad, generator, fence, and landscaping.

6. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The subject property is located in Planning Area 81A and is within the limits of the 2013 *Approved Subregion 5 Master Plan* (master plan). The master plan recommends residential land uses. The 2013 *Approved Subregion 5 Sectional Map Amendment* retained the subject property in the R-R Zone (CR-81-2013, July 24, 2013). The new zone is the R-R Zone. The *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan* classifies the property in the Established Communities growth policy area intended for context-sensitive infill and low- to medium-density development. The application is located within the Military Installation Overlay Zone. Pursuant to Section 27-548.54(e)(2)(D), Requirement for Heights, the proposed development must conform to the height requirement. The subject property is within Accident Potential Zone 2, the 50:1 South End approach/departure height clearance, and within the 60 db to 74 db noise contour.

Staff finds that while this application does not impair the master plan, the applicant should be aware that the proposed sign may be in the path of a future light rail or bus rapid transit network, along the eastern side of MD 5.

7. **Zoning Ordinance Requirements for Institutional (other than temporary) Signs:** Section 27-617 provides the following institutional sign regulations that pertain to the departure request:

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).**

The applicant submitted a statement of justification with information detailing sign dimensions associated with the departure request, which includes a departure from both sign height and area. The proposed sign is 20 feet tall (approximately 17 feet for the sign itself atop a 3-foot-high base), amounting to a 12-foot increase in sign height. In addition, the proposed sign area is 333 square feet, resulting in a 285-square-foot increase in sign area. The proposed increase in dimensions is associated with a decrease in the number of signs on-site. The proposed larger sign will replace two smaller signs, thus the increase in dimensions.

Section 27-239.01(b)(7)(A) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that, in order for the Prince George's County Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

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

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;**

In general, the purposes of the sign regulations are to promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents, workers, and motorists by increasing and enhancing sign visibility and readability, to regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which

could depreciate the value of the property, to prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the attractiveness of development, and to control scale, consistent with the intended advertising purposes. The proposed sign increases visibility and readability by increasing the height and overall sign-face area. The sign is replacing two existing, nonfunctional signs, reducing the possibility of proliferation, and increasing the attractiveness of the development.

(2) To encourage and protect the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures;

The proposed sign encourages the appropriate use of land, building, and structures by providing increased visibility and wayfinding for the new emergency center located in the Southern Maryland Medical Center.

(3) To regulate unsightly and detrimental signs which could depreciate the value of property and discourage quality development in the Regional District;

The proposed sign is replacing two existing signs that advertised the former Colony South Hotel. The new sign will be composed of high-quality, enduring materials, which will not depreciate the value of property.

(4) To regulate signs which are a hazard to safe motor-vehicle operation;

The monument sign is found to be safe for motor-vehicle operation in its proposed location as it is on a hillside, out of the line of sight of motorists to and from MD 5.

(5) To eliminate structurally unsafe signs which endanger a building, structure, or the public;

The proposed sign is replacing two existing signs that no longer serve an active use on Lot 8. The new sign will be structurally sound and constructed with high-quality materials.

(6) To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development; and

The new sign is replacing two nonfunctional signs, which will reduce proliferation and will provide attractive landscaping.

(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 placement of the sign on the northwest corner of Lot 8 on a hillside will provide adequate identification and wayfinding for the new emergency center, without obstructing the sight of motorists. The subject departure to the height and sign-face area will better serve motorists by increasing visibility.

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

Two signs currently exist for a use that is no longer in service on Lot 8. The applicant is in ownership of all of the lots that comprise the Southern Maryland Medical Center and are in need of wayfinding/signage for the emergency unit located on Lots 5 and 6 as motorists exit MD 5. Therefore, the single monument sign will replace the two existing signs, reducing the current proliferation of signage. The proposed height and overall area will provide clear representation of the emergency unit and will be perched high enough on a hillside that it will not obstruct the sight of motorists exiting MD 5. Given the specific circumstances of this request, the departure is the minimum necessary.

(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.

This criterion is not applicable in this instance.

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

The use of high-quality materials such as an aluminum cabinet, polycarbonate face, and LED lighting promote the environmental quality and integrity of the surrounding neighborhood and the visibility of the emergency center. The consolidation of existing signs on the site to the corner of the intersection will improve the streetscape by reducing the number of signs.

8. Referrals: No referral agencies provided any comments or concerns that would affect the recommendation of approval for this application. The relevant comments submitted for this application were included in this technical staff report. The following referral memorandums were received, are included as backup to this technical staff report, and adopted by reference herein:

- Environmental Planning Section, dated November 3, 2021 (Kirchhof to Sievers)
- Community Planning Section, dated December 9, 2021 (Irminger to Sievers)
- Historic Preservation Section, dated November 10, 2021 (Stabler to Sievers)
- Permit Review Section, dated December 20, 2021 (Linkins to Sievers)

- Prince George’s County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement Site/Road Review Division, dated December 13, 2021 (Giles to Sievers)

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, without conditions.

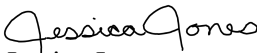
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board’s action must be filed with the District Council for Prince George’s County, Maryland within thirty (30) days of the final notice of the Planning Board’s decision.

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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 Bailey, with Commissioners Washington, Bailey, Doerner, Geraldo and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, January 13, 2022, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

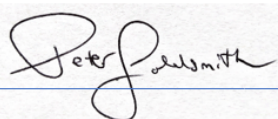
Adopted by the Prince George’s County Planning Board this 3rd day of February, 2022.

Elizabeth M. Hewlett
Chairman

By 
Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

EMH:JJ:TS:nz

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY



M-NCPPC Legal Department
Date: January 20, 2021