

MEETING DATE: June 24, 2026

PREPARED BY: Otis T. Spriggs, AICP, Development Services Director

AGENDA CONTENT: Conduct a public hearing, discussion, and take possible action on a request for a variance to the Code of Ordinances, Sec. 21.5-7 (3)a.1.(ii), which prohibits the placement of a wall sign projection above a parapet wall height. The proposed signs (4)/subject property is located at 132 E. Hospital Rd. (UTMB Hospital Campus)

AGENDA ITEM SECTION: Public Hearings and Action Items

BUDGETED AMOUNT: N/A

FUNDS REQUESTED: N/A

FUND: N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The applicant filed a variance request to the Code of Ordinances, Sec. 21.5-7 (3)a.1.(ii), which prohibits the placement of a wall sign projection above a parapet wall height. The proposed signs (4 quantity) and subject property are located at 132 E. Hospital Rd. (UTMB Hospital Campus).

Due to the fact that the wall signage will project above the parapet walls of the various buildings as illustrated below, a sign variance will be required.

The code of ordinances, Zoning Chapter/ Sec. 21.5-7 (3)a.1.(ii) reads as follows:

a. Permanent signs:

1. Wall signs:

(i) Size and number. Wall signs are permitted for each individual business establishment with an allowable total sign area of 1½ square feet of signage for each linear foot of business frontage.

(ii) Location and height. A wall sign may not project above the roof line of a building except for buildings with parapet walls in which case the signage shall be flush with the wall and shall not project above the parapet. Signs placed on mansard, gambrel, and other sloping roofs must be perpendicular to the ground with all permanent structural supports covered from view. Except for wall and identification signs which are permitted elsewhere, wall signs may be placed on the front or sides but not the rear of a building.

The property consists of a large, multi-building hospital campus with expansive building facades and limited vertical sign mounting space below the parapet due to the existing architectural design. The buildings feature extended horizontal frontages and restricted sign band areas, which are not typical of standard commercial properties.

Additionally, the campus layout requires clear identification of individual buildings for patient and visitor navigation, creating a unique condition where standard sign placement below the parapet is not practical for visibility.

Most nearby commercial properties are smaller in scale and include sufficient vertical mounting space for compliant wall signage. *The subject property is different due to its large hospital buildings, extended facade widths, and limited sign band areas, which create visibility challenges not typically encountered on standard commercial sites.*

The need for this variance is unique to the specific physical and operational characteristics of this property. The site is a large, multi-building hospital campus with expansive building facades and limited vertical sign band areas below the parapet due to its architectural design. Unlike typical commercial properties, the buildings feature extended horizontal frontage and restricted areas suitable for compliant wall signage, which limits visibility when adhering strictly to code requirements.

Additionally, the size and layout of the campus require clear and highly visible building identification to effectively guide patients, visitors, and emergency responders. Standard sign placement below the

parapet does not provide adequate visibility at this scale, particularly given the setback distances and building massing.

These conditions are not generally applicable to surrounding properties, which are smaller in scale and have sufficient vertical space for code-compliant signage. Therefore, the need for the requested variance is directly tied to the unique design, scale, and functional use of their property and does not represent a general condition affecting other properties in the area.

Special conditions related to the size, design, and operational requirements of this property create a situation where strict application of the Zoning Ordinance would deprive the property of reasonable use. The property is a large multi building hospital campus with expansive building facades and limited vertical areas available for compliant wall signage below the parapet. The requested variance does not seek to expand the use of the land beyond its intended purpose but is necessary to allow the property to function effectively as a hospital campus. Without the variance the property would be deprived of reasonable use in terms of safe wayfinding and identification, which are essential components of its operation.

The proposed signage is limited to building-mounted identification signage and does not introduce any hazards or adverse impacts to the surrounding environment. The signage is designed to be consistent with the overall architectural character of the hospital campus and will not obstruct visibility, create traffic hazards, or interfere with pedestrian or vehicular circulation. In fact, improved visibility of hospital identification enhances public safety by assisting patients, visitors, and emergency responders in quickly locating the correct facilities within the campus. Additionally, the request is limited in scope and does not alter the use, density, or function of the property. Surrounding properties will not be negatively impacted, as the signage will remain

compatible with the scale and context of the site. The variance simply allows for reasonable adjustments to sign placement to accommodate the unique characteristics of the property without creating any detrimental effects.

Staff processed this application and scheduled the public hearing at the request of the applicant. Property owners within 200 ft. of the property were notified and the legal notice was posted in the local newspaper.

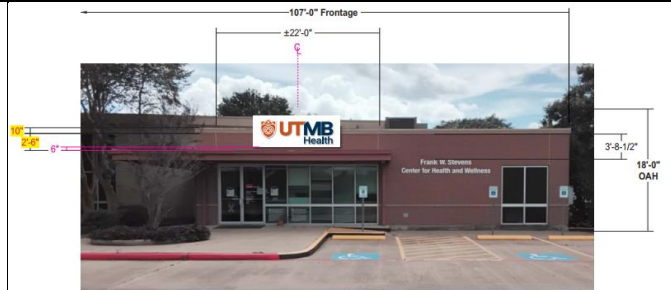
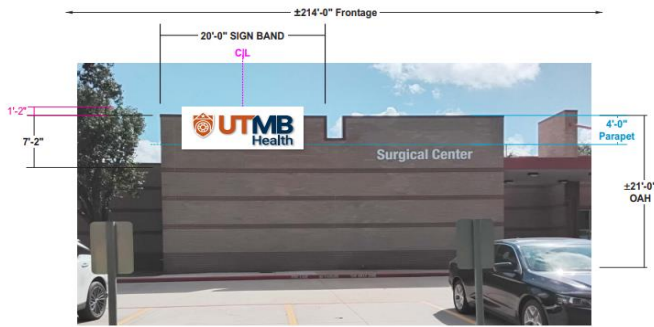
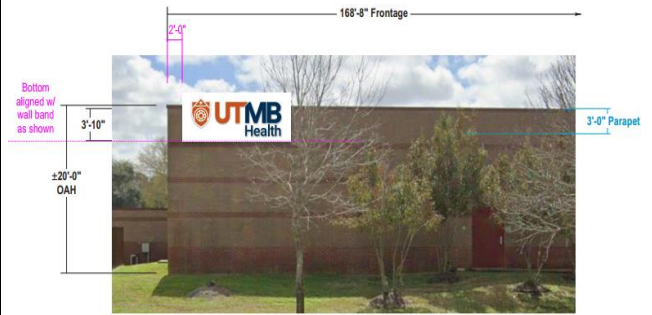


Aerial Map

Existing Conditions



Newly Proposed Wall Signs



Zoning Code / Variance Analysis:

Sec. 28-23. Board of adjustment (BOA). F. (2). No variance shall be granted without first having given public notice and having held a public hearing on the variance request in accordance with subsection (h) of this section and unless the board of adjustment finds:

- a. **That there are special circumstances or conditions affecting the land involved such that the strict application of the provisions of this chapter would deprive the applicant of the reasonable use of his/her land;** *The UTMB campus layout requires clear identification of individual buildings for patient and visitor navigation, creating a unique condition where standard sign placement below the parapet is not practical for visibility.*
- b. **That the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant;** *The campus layout requires clear identification of individual buildings for patient and visitor navigation, creating a unique condition where standard sign placement below the parapet is not practical for visibility.*
- c. **That the granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, or injurious to other property within the area;**

The proposed signage is limited to building-mounted identification signage and does not introduce any hazards or adverse impacts to the surrounding environment. The signage is designed to be consistent with the overall architectural character of the hospital campus and will not obstruct visibility, create traffic hazards, or interfere with pedestrian or vehicular circulation. In fact, improved visibility of hospital identification enhances public safety by assisting patients, visitors, and emergency responders in quickly locating the correct facilities within the campus.

- d. **That the granting of the variance will not have the effect of preventing the orderly use of other land within the area in accordance with the provisions of this chapter; and**

These conditions are not generally applicable to surrounding properties, which are smaller in scale and have sufficient vertical space for code-compliant signage. Therefore, the need for the requested variance is directly tied to the unique design, scale, and functional use of their property and does not represent a general condition affecting other properties in the area.

- e. **That a finding of undue hardship exists.**

Such findings of the board of adjustment, together with the specific facts upon which such findings are based, shall be incorporated into the official minutes of the board of adjustment meeting at which such variance is granted. Variances may be granted only when in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this chapter so that public health, safety and welfare may be secured, and that substantial justice may be done.

The signage request is limited in scope and does not alter the use, density, or function of the property. Surrounding properties will not be negatively impacted, as the signage will remain compatible with the scale and context of the site. The variance simply allows for reasonable adjustments to sign placement to accommodate the unique characteristics of the property without creating any detrimental effects.

Staff agrees the findings of undue hardship in granting this variance are properly established.

In order to grant a variance, the Board of Adjustment must make written findings that an undue hardship exists:

Staff concurs that the difficulty caused is neither financial in nature, self-imposed nor generally affecting all or most properties in the same zoning district; and the relief sought will not injure the permitted use of adjacent conforming property; and the granting of this sign variance will be in harmony with the spirit and purpose of these regulations.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment finds that a hardship exists and grants the sign variances to the Code of Ordinances, Sec. 21.5-7 (3)a.1.(ii), which prohibits the placement of a wall sign projection above a parapet wall height. The proposed signs (4)/subject property is located at 132 E. Hospital Rd. (UTMB Hospital Campus)

Sample Motion*:

*1 *The Board of Zoning Adjustments has established findings of fact and determines that a hardship has been proven for the requested variances to the Code of Ordinances, Sec. 21.5-7 (3)a.1.(ii), which prohibits the placement of a wall sign projection above a parapet wall height. The proposed signs (4)/subject property is located at 132 E. Hospital Rd. (UTMB Hospital Campus) and does hereby grant the requested variances.*

**Board of Zoning members may vote Nay to DENY the petition due to findings that hardship is not demonstrated or such variance will adversely impact the general planning area.*