

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS DIVISION I

March 3, 2026

Case Number: 2026-DV1-002
Property Address: 101 West Georgia Street (approximate address)
Location: Center Township, Council District #18
Petitioner: Capital Improvement Board of Manager of Marion County, by Sarah Peters
Current Zoning: CBD-2 (RC) (TOD)
Request: Variance of Development Standards of the Consolidated Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to provide for the placement of a primary freestanding sign within the Mile Square (not permitted) and within public-right-of-way (not permitted).
Current Land Use: Hotel Under Construction / Right-of-Way
Staff Recommendations: Staff recommends **approval** of the petition.
Staff Reviewer: Michael Weigel, Senior Planner

PETITION HISTORY

This is the first public hearing for this petition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the petition.

PETITION OVERVIEW

- 101 West Georgia Street is a parcel located at the southwest corner of Georgia Street to the north and Illinois Street to the east; it is located within the Mile Square and close to both the Convention Center to the west as well as Union Station to the south. The site falls within both the Regional Center as well as the Transit-Oriented Development Secondary Zoning district. The portion of Georgia Street to the north of the property was vacated by the petition 2024-VAC-009.
- Additionally, in 2024 approval was granted to both a Regional Center petition (2024-REG-075) and variance petition (2023-CVR-840) to allow for the construction of a 40-story tall hotel, ballroom, and parking garage structure at this site. Construction on that hotel is currently ongoing and would incorporate both outdoor seating and dining areas along Illinois Street to the east as well as a pull-through area accessed from northbound traffic on Illinois Street that would allow for vehicle access on the first floor underneath the hotel itself (see site plan exhibits below).

- An application for a sign permit was made with the Department of Business and Neighborhood Services in late 2025 to allow for placement of a monument sign oriented toward northbound traffic on Illinois, per below plans. This sign would be mounted onto a granite base wall, would have a height of seven (7) feet from grade (amended from the initially proposed height of 10 feet in response to a staff request), an area of 63 square feet, and internal illumination for some of the lettering as well as an LED strip on the eastern side oriented to pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- In addition to requiring the approval of a Regional Center petition (already filed under 2026-REG-004), legal placement of the sign as shown below would require two (2) Variances of Development Standards: **(a)** primary freestanding signs are not an allowed sign type within the Mile Square (Ordinance specifies only wall signs, awning, signs, marquee signs, suspended signs, and projecting signs are allowed); and **(b)** the proposed sign would partially encroach past the established property line of the parcel into public right-of-way (not permitted). Staff review has confirmed that no variance would be needed related to any digital display or EVMS for the LED portions of the sign, and that it would not encroach into the required clear-sight triangle that would result from the proposed private driveway to the south of the sign.
- This property is zoned CBD-2 (Central Business District Two) to allow for high-density, urban core development of the general downtown area of Indianapolis with an emphasis on pedestrian and transit accessibility and uses such as residential, retail, restaurants, entertainment, major public and convention facilities, sports venues, hotels, and memorials. Additionally, the Pattern Book and Red/Purple Line TOD Strategic Plans recommend it to the Core Mixed-Use and Central Business District typologies respectively (additional information below).
- Applicable Regional Center Guidelines for signage indicate that signs should be designed creatively and incorporated into façade designs to promote a legible Regional Center that helps people easily locate destinations with addresses clearly visible and contrast ratios of at least 80 percent. Freestanding signage is not explicitly contemplated within the Guidelines.
- Findings of Fact provided by the applicant indicate that the proposed sign would proportionate to the scale and character of downtown, Additional correspondence also indicates that the manner of construction of the hotel façade would not easily allow for the incorporation of any additional wall or projecting signage.
- Although primary freestanding signage is not typically contemplated for the Mile Square, staff would note that the petitioner was open to reducing the height of the sign by three (3) feet to address this staff concern. Additionally, the proposed sign would be mounted onto a granite base wall which would fully remove it from the path of pedestrian or bicycles and would only result in a sign extending 3.25 feet above the wall itself. The encroachment of the sign would also only be partial and would align with the proposed outdoor dining area to the north of the sign location. For these reasons, staff recommend approval of the requested variances.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Existing Zoning	CBD-2 (RC) (TOD)	
Existing Land Use	Hotel Under Construction / Right-of-Way	
Comprehensive Plan	Core Mixed-Use	
Surrounding Context	Zoning	Surrounding Context
	North: CBD-2	North: Parking Garage / Restaurant
	South: CBD-2	South: Union Station
	East: CBD-2	East: Commercial / Union Station
	West: CBD-2	West: Convention Center / Greenway
Thoroughfare Plan		
Illinois Street	Primary Arterial	88-foot existing right-of-way and 78-foot proposed right-of-way
Georgia Street	Primary Collector	94-foot existing right-of-way and 56-foot proposed right-of-way
Capitol Avenue	Primary Arterial	99-foot existing right-of-way and 78-foot proposed right-of-way
Context Area	Compact	
Floodway / Floodway Fringe	No	
Overlay	No	
Wellfield Protection Area	No	
Site Plan	01/19/2026	
Site Plan (Amended)	01/27/2026	
Elevations	01/19/2026	
Elevations (Amended)	02/12/2026	
Landscape Plan	N/A	
Findings of Fact	01/19/2026	
Findings of Fact (Amended)	N/A	

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS

Comprehensive Plan

- Marion County Land Use Plan Pattern Book
- Red/Purple Line TOD Strategic Plans
- Regional Center Design Guidelines

Pattern Book / Land Use Plan

- The Core Mixed-Use typology is intended for the core of the City's Central Business District and along logical extensions from the core. It is characterized by dense, compact, and tall building patterns and a substantial degree of activity. There is a wide range of public spaces, with some designed to accommodate events and festivals. Buildings should be designed with the pedestrian in mind, with entrances and large windows facing the street. Signage is not explicitly contemplated within the Pattern Book.

Red Line / Blue Line / Purple Line TOD Strategic Plan

- The Red and Purple Line Strategic Plans recommend this site to the Central Business District TOD typology for the densest core of the city with high-rise building and active public spaces. A high-density mix of office, entertainment, civic, retail, residential, and public space is contemplated within tall buildings, and off-street parking should be avoided. Signage is not explicitly contemplated within the TOD Strategic Plans.

Neighborhood / Area Specific Plan

- Regional Center Design Guidelines indicate that signage should be designed to promote a legible Regional Center that helps people easily locate destinations. Signs should be incorporated into façade designs with projecting signs only permitted when contextual relationships are compatible and with a maximum projection of four feet into right-of-way. Signs should be designed creatively and artistically with contrast ratios of at least 80 percent and with street addresses clearly visible. Freestanding signage is not explicitly contemplated within the Guidelines.

Infill Housing Guidelines

- Not Applicable to the Site.

Indy Moves

(Thoroughfare Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, Greenways Master Plan)

- Not Applicable to the Site.

ZONING HISTORY

ZONING HISTORY – SITE

2023CVR840, Variance of development standards of the Consolidated Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to provide for a 40-story tall hotel, ballroom and parking garage encroaching into the Sky-Exposure Plane Two for Illinois Street, Georgia Street and Capitol Avenue, **approved**.

87-HOV-147, variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations to provide size of building name sign, sign location, number of signs and height of sign for wall signs identifying the Pan American Plaza development, **approved**.

87-HOV-28, variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations to provide for two, 7-foot tall, 30-square-foot signs identifying the entrance to an underground parking area, **approved**.

86-HOV-46, variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations of Marion County to provide for a ground sign which serves as a construction barricade, 10 feet tall, located within the required setback and in excess of the maximum size permitted, **approved**.

ZONING HISTORY – VICINITY

2024DV2044, 140 S Illinois Street (north of site), Variance of development standards of the Consolidated Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to provide for the installation of two buildings signs on an existing silo within the right-of-way (not permitted), **approved**.

2017DV3007, 49 W Maryland Street (north of site), Variance of development standards of the Consolidated Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance to provide for on-premise and off-premise changeable temporary advertising signs on 100% of the north and south sides of the Illinois Street skywalk, and to provide for an on-premise and off-premise 25 by 85-foot changeable temporary advertising sign on a south façade fronting on Maryland Street, east of Illinois Street (not permitted), **approved**.

2016DV1002 ; 49 W Maryland Street (northeast of site), Variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations and the Regional Center Zoning Ordinance to provide for: (a) a 63-square foot projecting sign, with an upper-level rotating element (maximum 54-square feet permitted, upper-level projecting signs not permitted, rotating signs not permitted on projecting signs), (b) two canopy signs, with one 11.91-square foot canopy sign being 65% of the canopy (maximum 45% permitted), (c) with the second 32.55-square foot canopy sign, being attached to the columns of the canopy (not permitted), being 81.4% of the canopy, and overlapping another canopy (canopies must be separated by a minimum of 20 feet), (d) with a second 24.31-square foot lower-level sign (maximum one lower-level sign permitted), **approved**.

2015VHP051 ; 230 S Meridian Street (east of site), Variances of Development Standards of the CBD-2 Zoning Ordinance to allow less setback from the north lot line than required, and encroachment of the required Sky Exposure Plane, **approved**.



Department of Metropolitan Development
Division of Planning
Current Planning

2015DV3001 ; 49 W Maryland Street (north of site), Variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations to provide for a 25- by 85-foot temporary on-site and off-site advertising sign (not permitted) on the south façade fronting on Maryland Street, east of Illinois Street, and to provide for on-site and off-site temporary advertising signs on 100% of the north and south sides of the Illinois Street skywalk (not permitted), with both signs including signage for various events, public and semi-public institutions and non-profit organizations, and similar entities, **approved**.

2014HOV018 ; 100 S Capitol Avenue (northwest of site), Variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations to provide for temporary banners on three skywalks connecting to the Indiana Convention Center on a periodic basis (signs not permitted in the right-of-way), covering approximately 100% of the skywalk (maximum 20% permitted), **approved**.

2012HOV028 ; 49 W Maryland Street (northeast of site), Variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations to provide for a 20.25-square foot awning sign (only one lower-level sign permitted per tenant per façade), on a 16.5-foot wide awning, with a 6.42-foot horizontal projection (maximum four foot projection for an awning exceeded 10 feet in width), **approved**.

2012DV3018 ; 111 W Maryland Street (north of site), Variance of development standards of the Sign Regulations and the Regional Center Ordinance to provide for (a) a 54.925-square foot projecting sign located partially on the upper level and partially on the lower level of the building façade (maximum 54-square sign permitted, projecting signs permitted only as lower level signs, only one lower level sign per tenant permitted); (b) a 114.5-square foot projecting sign (maximum 54-square sign permitted, only one lower level sign per tenant permitted); (c) two awnings with a vertical distance of 6.5 feet (awnings greater than 10-feet in width cannot exceed a vertical distance of four feet); (d) a twelve-foot wide canopy with the highest point of the canopy being greater than four feet above the door opening (maximum ten-foot wide canopy permitted, highest point not permitted more than four-feet above the door opening); and (e) five total lower level signs (only one lower level sign permitted per tenant), **approved**.

2006VHP006 ; 202 S Meridian Street (east of site), painting of an off-premises advertising sign directly on the masonry surface on the south sidewall of the historic structure, **withdrawn**.

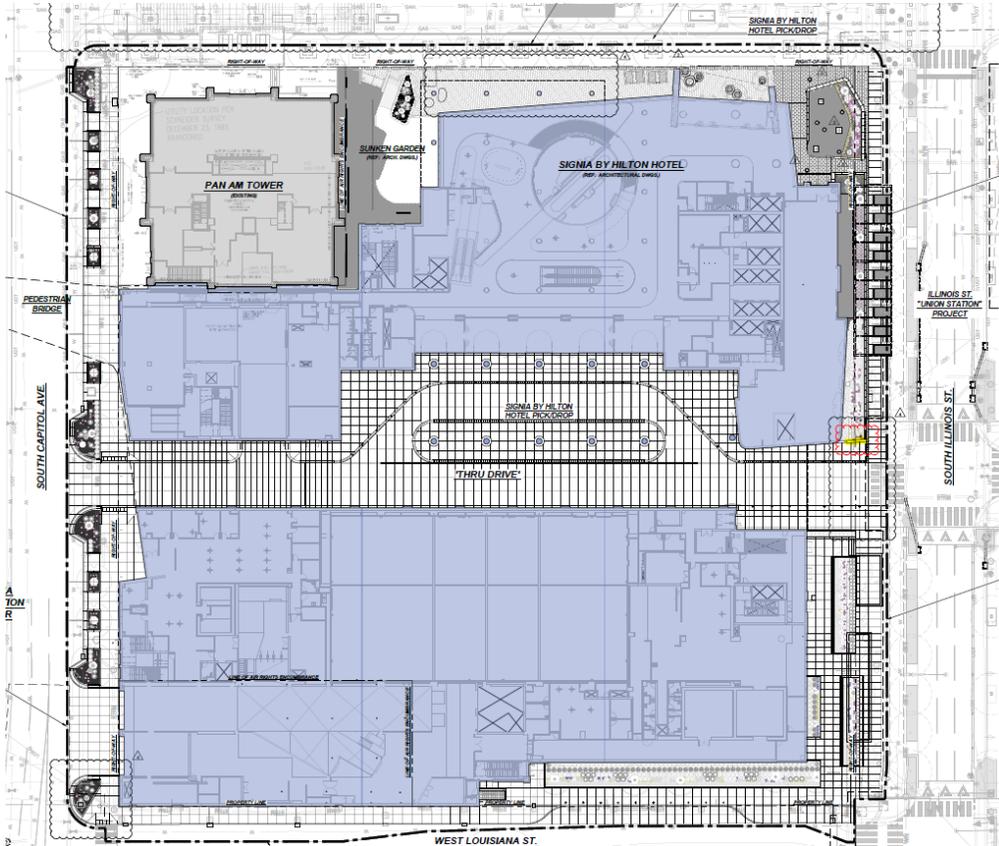
2000DV2033 ; 140 S Illinois Street (north of site), Variance of Development Standards of the Sign Regulations to provide for a 54-square foot projecting sign (maximum 24-square foot projecting sign permitted), **approved**.

EXHIBITS

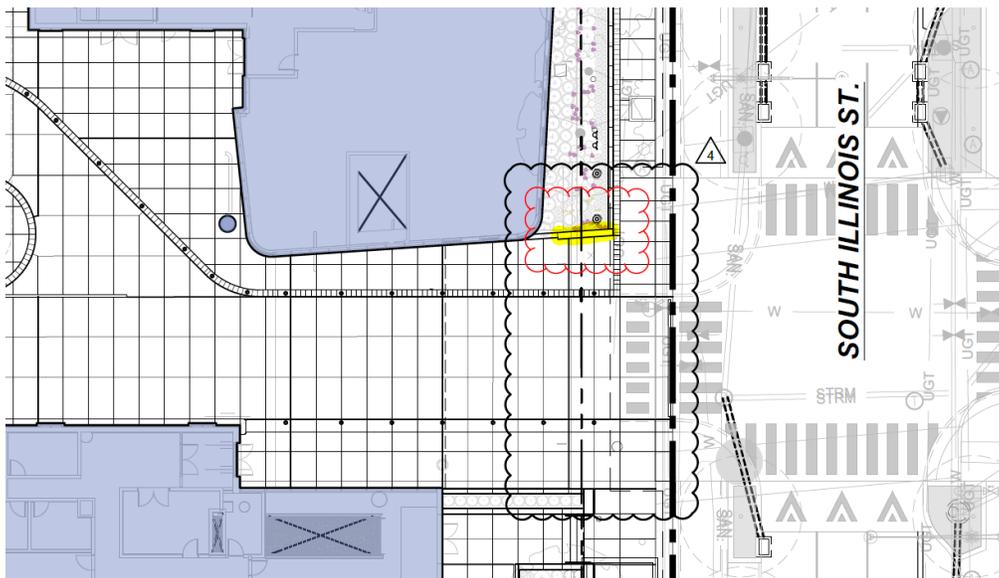
2026DV1002 ; Aerial Map



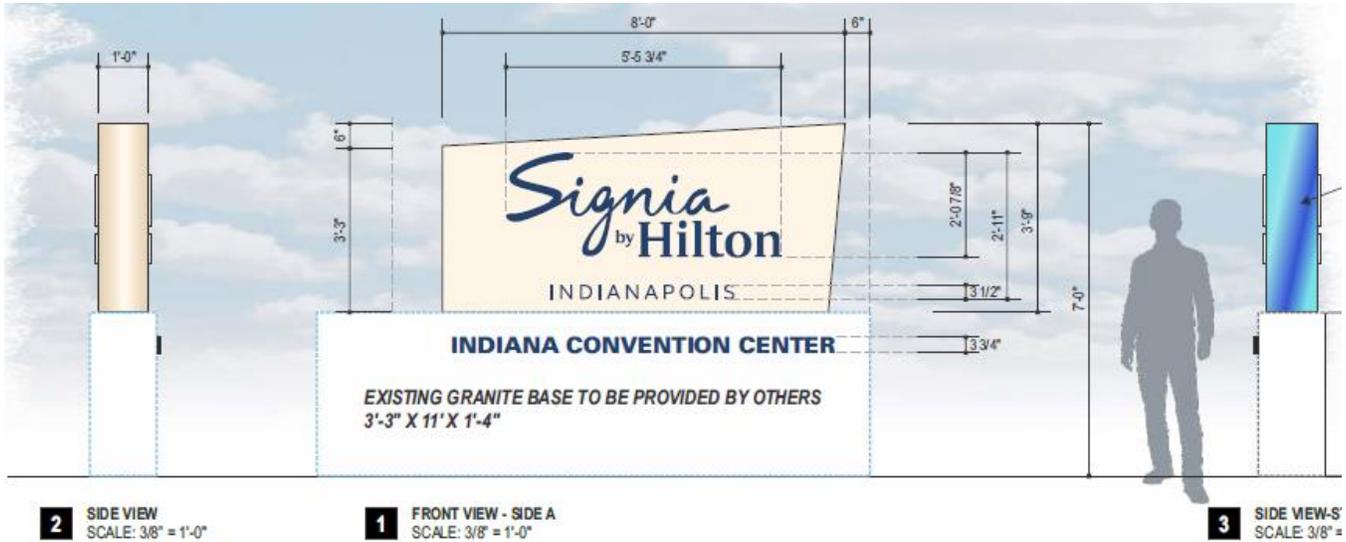
2026DV1002 ; Site Plan



2026DV1002 ; Site Plan (zoomed)



2026DV1002 ; Elevations (02/12/2026)



2026DV1002 ; Findings of Fact

1. The grant will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community because:

The proposed ground sign is designed and located to ensure clear visibility without obstructing traffic sightlines or pedestrian pathways. It complies with illumination standards to prevent glare and distraction for motorists and pedestrians. The sign enhances wayfinding and identification for visitors, contributing to a safe and organized streetscape. No adverse impacts on public health or safety are anticipated.

2. The use or value of the area adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner because:

The sign is proportionate to the scale and character of the surrounding downtown environment and complements existing architectural and signage elements. It will not obstruct views, diminish aesthetic appeal, or interfere with neighboring properties. Instead, it supports the vibrancy and economic activity of the area by improving visibility for the business, which benefits adjacent properties.

3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property because:

Due to the building's location and orientation, wall signage alone does not provide adequate visibility for vehicular and pedestrian traffic along Georgia Street. Strict adherence to the ordinance would limit effective identification and wayfinding for the property, creating operational challenges for the business and its patrons. A ground sign is necessary to ensure reasonable and practical use of the property for its intended purpose.

2026DV1002 ; Photographs



Photo 1: Subject Site from Southeast



Photo 2: Subject Site from East

2026DV1002 ; Photographs (continued)



Photo 3: Subject Site from Northeast

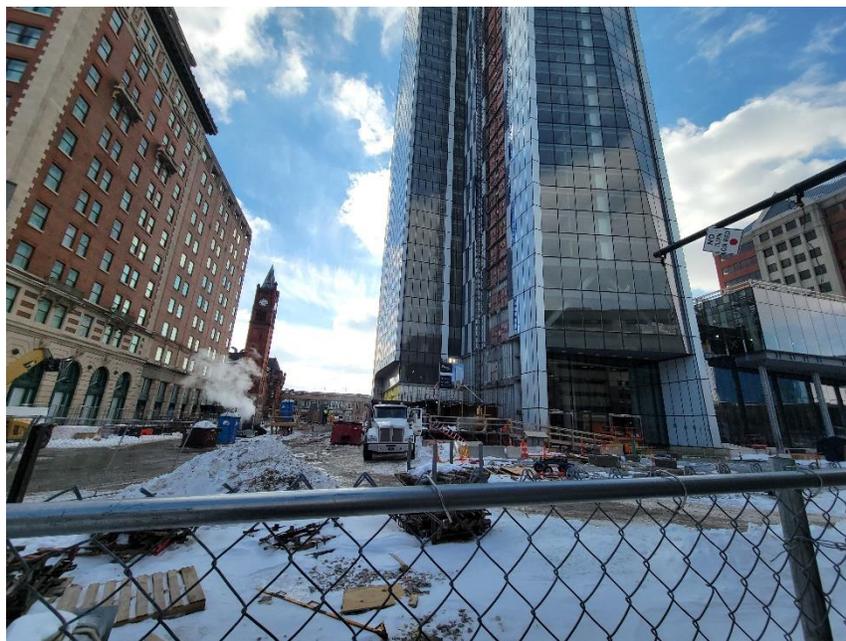


Photo 4: Subject Site from North

2026DV1002 ; Photographs (continued)



Photo 5: Subject Site Viewed from Northwest

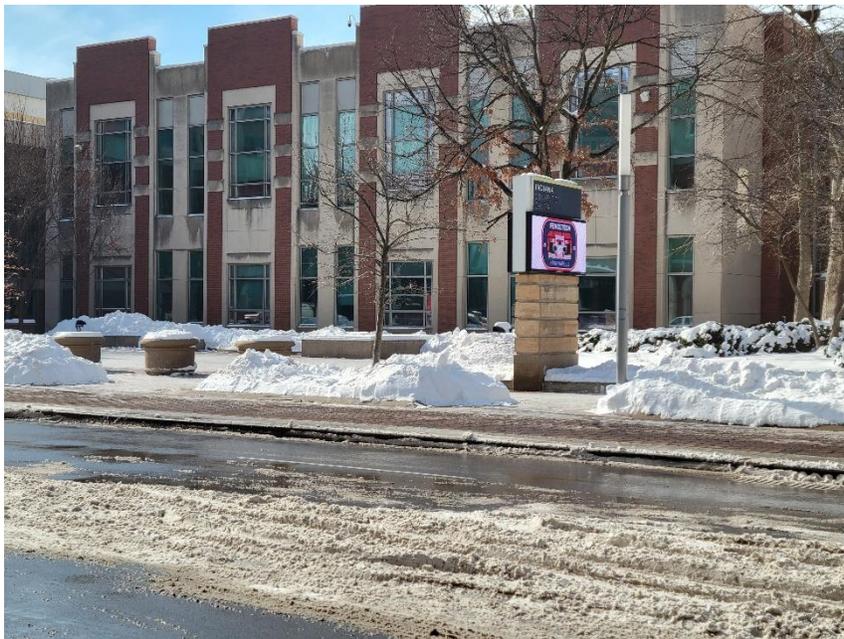


Photo 6: Existing Convention Center Signage to Northwest of Site

2026DV1002 ; Photographs (continued)



Photo 7: Adjacent Property to Northeast of Site



Photo 8: Georgia Street ROW to Northeast of Site

2026DV1002 ; Photographs (continued)



Photo 9: Adjacent Property to East of Site



Photo 10: Adjacent Property to Southeast of Site