



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS
 7125 Riverwood Drive, Suite D2 ■ Columbia, Maryland 21046 ■ 410-313-1823

Robert J. Frances, P.E., Director

FAX 410-313-1861
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MEMORANDUM

MEMO TO: Hearing Examiner for Howard County

TO: Robert Frances, P.E., Director
 Department of Inspections, Licenses & Permits

THROUGH: Thomas Huskins, Division Chief
 Inspections and Enforcement Division

Brenda Saucedo, Supervising Sign Code Inspector
 Inspections and Enforcement Division

FROM: Matthew Bischoff, Sign Code Inspector
 Inspections and Enforcement Division

DATE: June 24, 2026

SUBJECT: Sign Variance Petition: BA-26012S “Encore at Turf Valley”
 Variance Package Acceptance Date: May 13, 2026. Revision May 21, 2026.
 Sign Permit Application: S26000073
 Petitioner: Harmony Hall at Howard County Health Park, LLC
 1205 York Road – Penthouse, Lutherville, MD 21093
 Counsel for Petitioner: Samuel J. Mangione
 Sign Location: 6336 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044

Request Description:

The Petitioner is requesting a variance of the Howard County Sign Code to replace their existing freestanding identification sign for “Harmony Hall” measuring at 5 by 7.1 feet or 35 square feet surface area with a new permanent monument sign including an electronic message board. The existing “Harmony Hall” sign is permitted under sign permit B00000453, issued July 21, 1988.

The proposed replacement monument sign will be an overall width of 18 feet by 9 foot 5 inches in height (from grade) for an overall square footage of 169.5 square feet (square footage includes the foundation and framing). The new proposed sign will be installed approximately 2 feet closer to Cedar Lane than the existing sign.



Figure (A): The submitted drawing of the proposed monument sign from the Petitioner. Upper section of the sign lists the "Harmony Hall" facility name, and the lower section with the company name and logo (Lorien Health Services).



Figure (B): Existing 'Harmony Hall' identification sign (B00000453) which the proposed sign would be replacing if the variance is approved.

Findings of Fact:

This technical evaluation from the perspective of the Howard County Sign Code is based upon the BA26-012S variance petition package submittal for sign permit application #S26000073 originally received on May 13, 2026, and additional revision documentation received on May 21, 2026. The information was submitted by the Petitioner and Owner of the site: Harmony Hall at Howard County Health Park, LLC, 1205 York Road - Penthouse, Lutherville, MD 21093. This proposed monument identification sign is to be located at 6336 Cedar Lane, Columbia MD 21044.

The proposed sign described within the variance petition, would be in violation of the following sections of the Howard County Sign Code, To Wit:

- **Section 3.501(c) (2)(c) – Sign Standards by District:**

***Freestanding signs:** The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply in Downtown Columbia. Where a building does not cover the full area of the property, business signs may be freestanding or ground-supported and may be located in the front yard. The height of the sign may not exceed one foot for each two feet the sign is set back from the right-of-way and shall not exceed 26 feet from the grade level to the top of the sign. Freestanding signs shall be permitting only where there is a minimum of 40 lineal feet of lot frontage. The maximum allowable area for a freestanding sign shall be one square foot for each one foot the sign is set back from the road right-of-way. The largest single face of a freestanding sign shall be considered for the purpose of computing allowable area under this section. No part of the sign shall extend beyond a property line or right-of-way line. Signs satisfying requirements for gas price posting are permitted up to an area of 32 square feet per face. Such signs may be affixed to the main freestanding sign and will not be assessed against the allowable area for the facility, nor will they be considered for the purposed of determining setback in relation to sign area.*

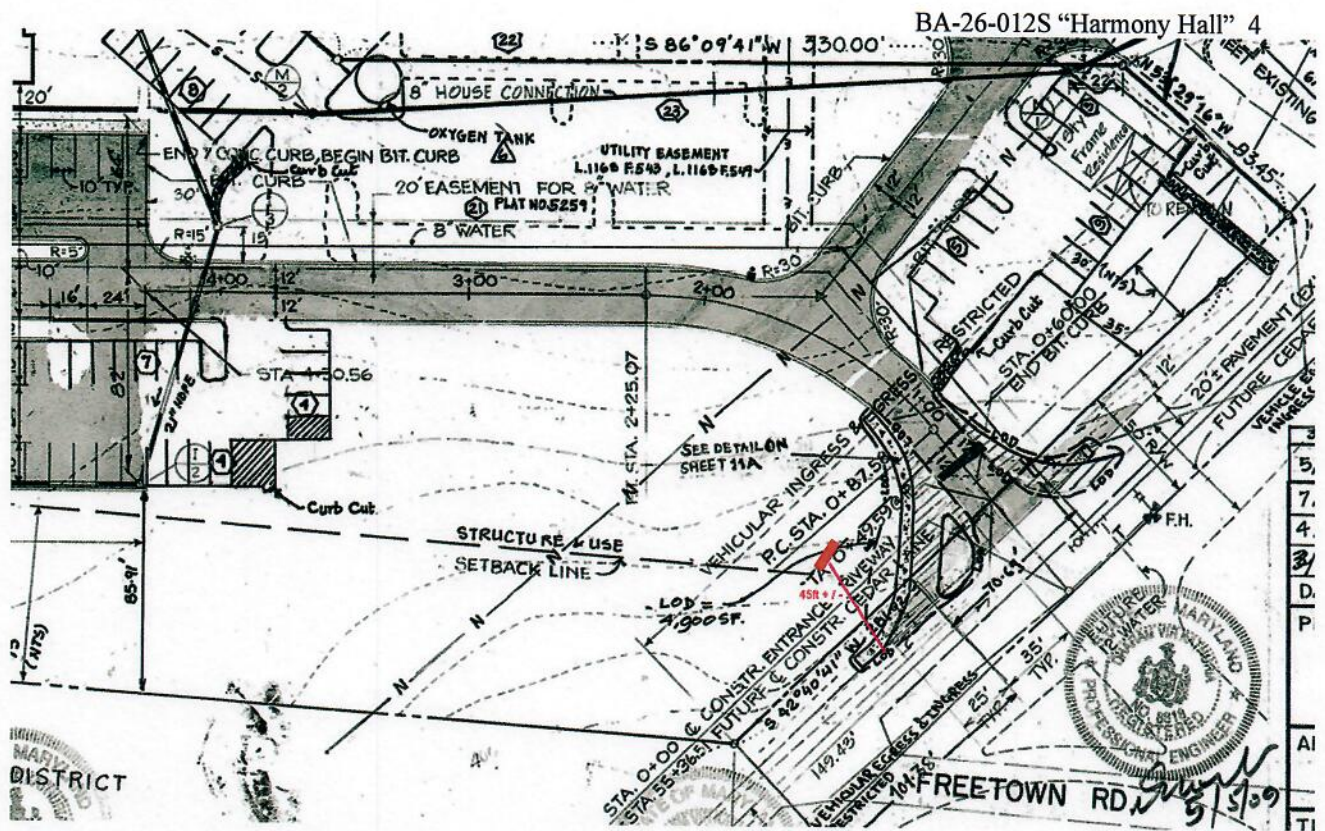


Figure (C): Per the submitted site development plan from the petitioner, the red mark above reflects the spot the sign will be installed. (~45 feet from the Cedar Lane right-of-way). Per code, the setback requirement for this size sign would be 169.5 feet from the right-of-way, putting it somewhere in the middle of the parking lot, out of any potential line of sight from the roadway.

- **Section 3.508 – Illumination:**

- (a) **Shading:** The light from any illuminated sign or billboard or from any light source, including interior of a building, shall be so shaded, shielded, or directed that the light intensity or brightness shall not adversely affect surrounding or facing premises nor adversely affect safe vision of operators of vehicles moving on public or private roads, highways, or parking areas. Light shall not shine or reflect on or into residential structures.
- (b) **Blinking or Flashing:** Except as provided in section 3.502A of this subtitle, a sign shall not have blinking, flashing or fluttering lights or other illuminating devices which have a changing light operated as to create an appearance or illusion of writing or printing. A variance may be granted by the Board of Appeals for movement showing the date, the time and the temperature exclusively. Nothing contained in this section shall, however, be construed as preventing the use of lights or decorations related to religious and patriotic festivities. Beacon lights or search lights shall not be permitted as a sign for advertising purposes.
- (c) **Strobe and Incandescent Lamps:** No exposed reflective type bulbs and no strobe lights or incandescent lamps which exceed 15 watts shall be used on the exterior surface of any sign so as to expose the face of the bulb, light or lamp to any public street or adjacent property.

In addition to the setback requirements, since the sign will feature internal illumination, the sign will have to comply with the above code requirements for illuminated signs. Additionally, an Electrical Permit must be obtained for the sign.

Variance Requirement Questions:

Are there unique physical conditions or exceptional topographical conditions peculiar to the property on which the proposed sign is to be located, including the location of existing buildings and other structures, irregularity, narrowness or shallowness of the lot, irregularity of the road right-of-way, location on a highway that has a dependency on nonlocal use?

Yes. The “Harmony Hall” facility is located at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Freetown Road. Travelling south along Cedar Lane from Little Patuxent Parkway, there is a curve in the road which prevents visibility of the intersection until nearly upon the intersection.



Figure (D): *View from the intersection of Cedar Lane and Freetown Road (looking southwest) with an existing “Gilchrist” (another medical provider) sign in the foreground and the existing “Harmony Hall” sign in the background (circled in red).*

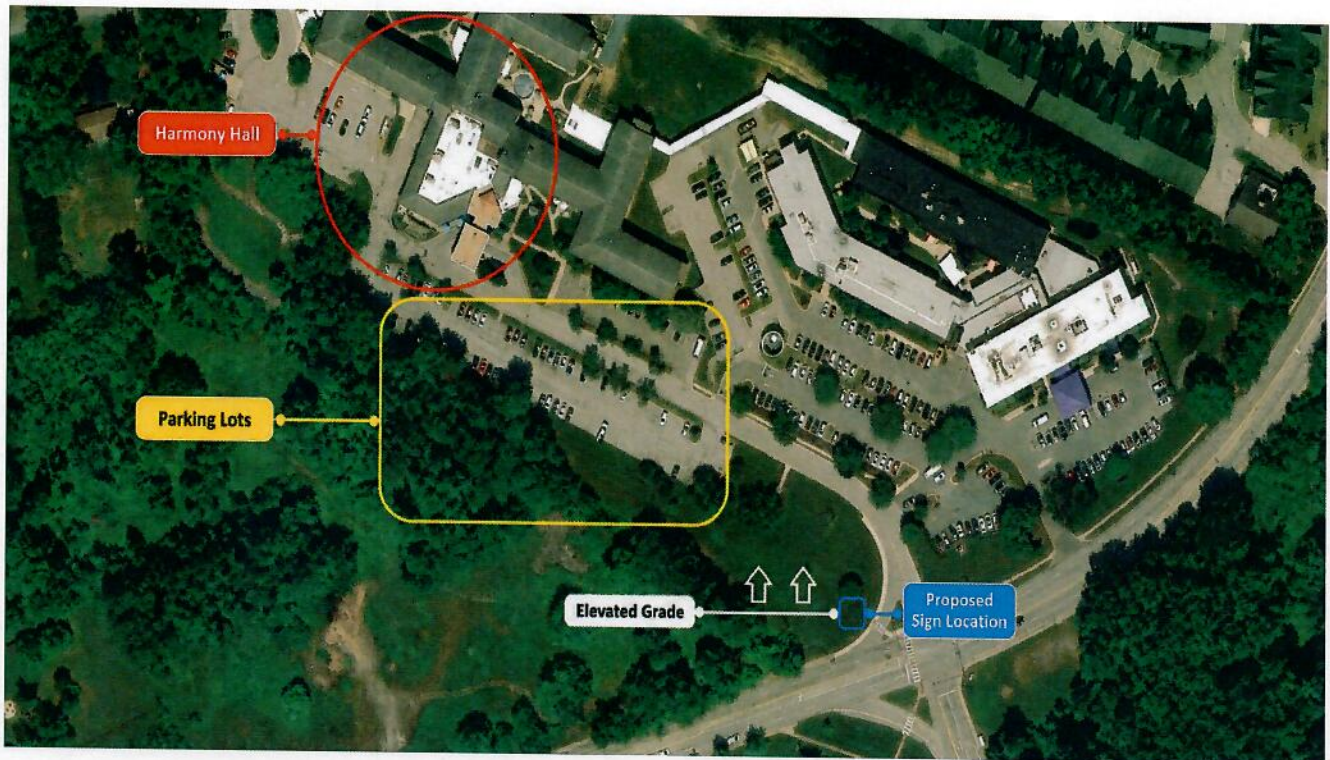


Figure (E): Google Maps view showing the Harmony Hall (red circle) building in relation to Cedar Lane. The yellow square represents parking lot area in front of the building. The blue square shows the approximate sign installation location (and where the existing sign is located, with white arrows representing the elevated grade from Cedar Lane.

Are there obstructions, such as excessive grade, building interference, structures or landscaping on abutting property or properties which seriously interfere with the visibility of a proposed sign?

Yes. In addition to the winding road noted previously, the facility is located at the top of an elevated grade (represented in the white arrows in Figure (E)) and fronted with parking lots, which mostly obscure visibility of the facility from Cedar Lane.



Figure (F): View from the shopping center (Giant grocery store) opposite of Harmony Hall, which is completely obscured along this portion of Cedar Lane.

Are there any historical, architectural, or aesthetic characteristics which shall be considered?

No.

If the variance is granted, will it adversely affect the appropriate use or development of adjacent properties, or result in a dangerous traffic condition?

No. The proposed sign's location is recessed from the roadway in a manner that does not inhibit sight lines while turning onto Cedar Lane from the parking area. In addition, there is a dedicated right-hand turn lane from the parking areas onto Cedar Lane.

Of note, the posted speed limit of Cedar Lane is 30 MPH, but most cars are observed to be travelling about 40 MPH.



Figure (G): Exit lanes from the medical campus. Dedicated right-turn lane (with a yield sign) onto Cedar Lane (marked above), and intersection with Freetown Road has a four-way stoplight.

Is the requested Variance the minimum necessary to afford relief, and can it be granted without substantial impairment of the intent, purpose, and integrity of the code?

The proposed sign's size and location do not appear to be excessive based on the conditions of the lot size and shape. The previous sign for Harmony Hall was in nearly the exact location. The new proposed sign is simply larger, adds an electronic message element, and enhances the aesthetics of the intersection.

Were the practical difficulties or hardships created by the Applicant?

No.

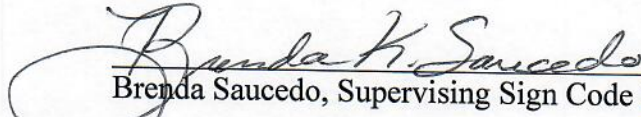
Note: Memorandum from the Department of Planning and Zoning will be sent to Hearing Examiner directly.

The hearing date for this case is scheduled for July 22, 2026, at 10:00 AM.

Report Prepared by:


Matthew Bischoff, Sign Code Inspector

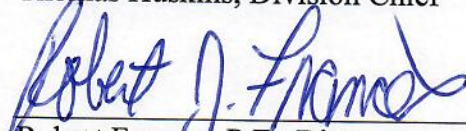
Report Reviewed by:


Brenda Saucedo, Supervising Sign Code Inspector

Report Reviewed by:


Thomas Huskins, Division Chief

Report Approved by:


Robert Frances, P.E., Director
Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING


3430 Court House Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2350

Lynda D. Eisenberg, AICP, Director

FAX 410-313-3467

Subject: BA-26-012S, Harmony Hall at Howard County Health Park
Sign Variance Petition

To: Julia Sauer, Chief
Division of Public Service and Zoning Administration

From: Jill Manion, Chief
Division of Land Development 

Date: June 25, 2026

The Division of Land Development has reviewed the above referenced Sign Variance Petition for Harmony Hall at Howard County Health Park, LLC. As a replacement sign, no site plan or redline to the SDP is required. The following are advisory comments:

- a. The proposed signage and placement will need to be in accordance with the requirements in the approved Howard County Zoning Regulations.
- b. The proposed signage will also need to comply with the requirements of the Howard County Sign Code (Title 3 – Buildings, Subtitle 5. - Signs) under the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits.
- c. Any provided landscaping with the sign project under the SDP, shall be in accordance with the applicable requirements established under the 2026 Howard County Landscape Manual.
- d. Should the site propose changes that require a redline revision to the SDP, construction details, elevations, and technical specifications for the proposed signage shall be provided with the updates to the SDP.

JM/DD
Cc: Zoning