

# Blount County

## Planning and Development Services

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### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Blount County Board of Zoning Appeals

**FROM:** Cameron Buckner  
Senior Planner

**DATE:** June 26, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Variance request at 1427 William Blount Drive, Maryville, TN  
(map 067, parcel 031.01)

**Attachments:**

1. Application
2. Tax Map
3. Location of sign
4. Sign Illustration

Please see the attached application. The applicant is requesting a variance from the maximum square footage allowed for by the zoning regulations regarding a wall sign (section 7.5.C.4.). The zoning regulations allow for a maximum of 100 square feet. The attached drawings illustrate a sign with a total square footage of 415 square feet.

The Board must either approve or deny the application for a variance by considering the criteria noted within section 11.6 below. Any approval or denial should reference the appropriate section.

*Applicable section from zoning ordinance regarding wall signs:*

***4. For commercial and industrial uses, signs on the vertical wall face of a principal structure or attached to such wall face of a principal structure with projection no greater than twelve inches from such wall face, and which do not extend more than three feet above the immediately adjacent roof line of the principal structure, shall be limited to no more than 100 square feet of total area per lot***

*The code sections pertaining to variances are included below for reference:*

**Section 11.6. Variances.** The Board of Zoning Appeals may grant variances to the strict application of regulations in this Resolution where such application of regulations would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to or exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of a parcel of property. To that end, the following shall apply.

- A. An application for a variance shall include an explanation of the specific hardship or difficulties claimed, reasons why relief should be granted, and the minimum relief that needs to be granted to overcome the hardship or difficulties, and shall be presented to the Building Commissioner at least fifteen working days prior to consideration by the Board. The Board may require additional information of the applicant in order to make a decision on the application.
- B. The Chairman of the Board shall set a date and time for hearing on the application no later than 60 days after submission of the application, or alternatively, the Board may consider the application at any appropriate regular meeting. The Building Commissioner shall publish notice of the application and hearing time, date and place in a newspaper of general circulation within the county at least five days prior to the hearing, as well as due notice to the applicant.
- C. The land or site of the variance application shall be posted by a sign set by the Building Commissioner along a fronting or adjacent public road notifying neighboring property owners of the application, date, time and place of hearing, and telephone number of the Building Commissioner for further information. Such a sign shall be posted at least five days prior to the date of the hearing.
- D. The Building Commissioner shall forward to the Board copies of all records relating to the application, along with his or her analysis and recommendation on the application.
- E. The Board shall act on the application within 60 days of the hearing, unless the applicant requests an extension of time. Upon hearing, any party or parties in interest may appear in person or by agent or attorney.
- F. The Board shall limit the granting of variances to the minimum needed to overcome hardships or difficulties based only on the following criteria:
  - 1. The hardship or difficulty is present by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property existing at the time of the enactment of this Resolution or any relevant amendment thereto; or
  - 2. The hardship or difficulty is present by reason of exceptional topographic conditions of a specific piece of property; or

3. The hardship or difficulty is present by reason of other extraordinary and exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property; or

4. The strict application of regulations would result in substantial loss of value of land, such substantial loss of value being considered in this Resolution as an extraordinary and exceptional condition of a specific piece of property, provided that a small reduction of value shall not be considered as a valid basis for granting a variance; and

5. The hardship or difficulty is not the result of or created by the actions of the applicant;

G. Notwithstanding findings under subsection F. above, the Board may deny the application for variance if it finds and concludes, based on the information submitted in the application or provided at the hearing, that one or more of the following conditions holds or will hold:

1. granting of the variance will materially endanger the public health or safety;

2. granting of the variance will substantially injure the value of adjoining or abutting property;

3. granting of the variance will not be in conformity with the purposes, intents or goals of this Resolution;

H. All conditions and requirements set by the Board shall be entered on the minutes of the hearing, and the Building Commissioner shall notify the applicant of such conditions and requirements by written letter. All conditions and requirements set by the Board shall be enforceable in the same manner and to the same extent as any other provision or requirement of this Resolution.

**Section 7.5. Signs.** It is the intent of this Resolution to allow signs identifying properties, uses of properties, and events or businesses within the community, while at the same time to provide for the conservation of natural scenic beauty along the highways and roads in Blount County, and to provide a safe and attractive environment for tourists, travelers and residents to enjoy the scenic beauty of Blount County. To this end, the following shall apply:

A. Any lot shall be permitted one property identification sign to be no greater than ten (10) square feet in area with a height no greater than four feet from the finished grade of the ground. Any such sign not part of a site plan shall not require a permit.

B. For a business use conducted in a residential structure or on a residential use lot, one business identification sign shall be permitted per lot to be no greater than ten (10) square feet in area with a height no greater than four feet from the finished grade of the ground. Any such sign not part of a site plan shall not require a permit.

C. For commercial and industrial uses not identified in subsection B above, the following shall apply:

1. Any commercial or industrial lot shall be permitted one business identification sign per 1000 feet of frontage or fraction thereof fronting a SINGLE public road, to be no greater than 100 square feet in area, with a height no greater than 20 feet.

2. Signs for lots with more than one frontage.

a. For a commercial or industrial lot or parcel with corner frontage along more than one public road, one sign no greater than 100 square feet in area with height no greater than 20 feet shall be permitted along the frontage not included in subsection 1 immediately above, provided that such sign is separated from the other sign by a distance no less than 1000 feet.

b. For frontage along a public road for a through lot (not corner frontage), one sign no greater than 100 square feet in area with height no greater than 20 feet shall be permitted along the frontage not included in Subsection 1 immediately above, provided that such sign is separated by 1000 feet from any sign permitted under 2. A above.

3. Any commercial or industrial lot or parcel shall also be permitted one ground sign to be no greater than 25 square feet in area, with height no greater than eight (8) feet above the finished grade of the ground.

***4. For commercial and industrial uses, signs on the vertical wall face of a principal structure or attached to such wall face of a principal structure with projection no greater than twelve inches from such wall face, and which do not extend more than three feet above the immediately adjacent roof line of the principal structure, shall be limited to no more than 100 square feet of total area per lot***

D. For a unified development such as a major subdivision of more than four lots, multifamily development, manufactured home park development, or a planned unit development, one development identification sign shall be permitted per road frontage to such development, such sign to be no greater than 50 square feet in area with height no greater than ten (10) feet above the finished grade of the ground. Any decorative wall or fence on which such sign is placed shall not be considered as part of the sign.

E. The following signs shall not require permit:

1. Signs relating to agricultural uses or sale of agricultural products on the site of such agricultural uses.

2. Church identification signs, church bulletin boards, and church directional signs that do not exceed one each per abutting road with area no greater than 100 square feet total per abutting road.

3. All signs required by law, required for identification of hazard, posting for no trespass, street identification, traffic control, or governmental or utility function.

4. Flags, pennants, or insignia of any governmental or non-profit organization when not displayed in connection with a commercial promotion or as an advertising device.

5. Political signs, election or referendum campaign signs, provided that such signs are no greater than 32 square feet in area.

6. Construction site identification signs, provided that there is no more than one sign each per contractor or subcontractor per lot or parcel, provided that such signs are no greater than 64 square feet in area if along arterial status roads and no greater than 32 square feet otherwise, with height no greater than 8 feet, and provided that such signs are removed within 10 days of completion of the related construction activity.

7. Signs of a temporary nature such as real estate sale signs, auction signs, special event signs, and the like, provided the area of such signs are no greater than 32 square feet, with height no greater than 8 feet, provided that any such signs are taken down no later than ten days after the sale or event relating to the signs, and provided that any special event or auction signs or the like are placed no earlier than 30 days prior to the relevant event or sale.

8. Signs designating entrance and/or exit for parking or circulation on a lot, provides that such signs are no greater than eight (8) square feet in area with height no greater than four (4) feet, and placed in such a manner that vision clearance for entering and exiting traffic shall not be hindered.

F. For the purposes of this Section, lights and other decorations relating to any holiday season shall not be considered as signs or parts of signs, provided that such lights or decorations, if placed on an existing sign, are placed no earlier than 60 days prior to the related holiday, and removed no later than 30 days after the related holiday.

G. The Board of Zoning Appeals may approve an off site directional sign for any business or industry or use of general community significance as a special exception under provisions of Article 11, provided that such sign shall be no greater than 50 square feet in area, shall have height no greater than eight (8) feet above the finished grade of the ground, shall be placed only along arterial status roads as identified in the Major Road Plan for Blount County or major road plan for any other planning region in the county, and shall be placed on a non-residential use lot or parcel. Such sign may be in addition to any other signs allowed on such nonresidential use lot or parcel.

H. Signs may be placed within the required front building setback of the districts, provided that any portion of the sign shall be no closer than ten feet to the right-of-way line. No sign shall be placed in or overhang a public road right-of-way. Signs shall be placed in such a manner to meet requirements of vision clearance in Section 7.9. No commercial use sign shall be allowed which may be confused with signs required for governmental functions or traffic control signs, including but not limited to traffic lights, stop signs, yield signs, detour signs, turn signs, and traffic caution lights and signs.

I. Unless otherwise regulated by this Resolution, signs shall be illuminated in accordance with the following provisions, and in no case may a sign be illuminated in such a way as to distract motorists or create other hazards: (Resolution 20-12-012)

1. Signs within one hundred and fifty (150) feet of a residential use shall not be illuminated between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m., unless the impact of such lighting beyond the boundaries of the lot where it is located is entirely inconsequential. To be considered entirely inconsequential, such lighting shall not cast light at the joint property line of adjacent residential use of more than 0.5 footcandles, certified as designed and installed by a licensed engineer or architect with documented experience in exterior lighting.

2. The direct lighting of signs shall be prohibited. For purposes of this Section, “direct lighting” means the use of reflective-type bulbs or incandescent lamps on the exterior surface of a sign to form the text or images of sign copy. Any lighting directed toward a sign shall be shielded so that it illuminates only the face of the sign and does not shine directly into a public right-of-way or residential premises. Such lighting shall be directed in a downward angle toward the sign. (Resolution 20-12-012)

3. Except for seasonal holiday lighting noted in subsection F above, illuminated tubings or strings of lights that outline property lines, sales areas, or similar areas are considered as signs under provisions of this Section and are prohibited.

4. No sign may contain or be illuminated by flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity, except as provided below.

a. Electronic message center signs permitted as changeable copy on premise business signs shall be permitted subject to the following.

1. Shall be allowed only in the C- Commercial zone;

2. Shall be limited to one display per parcel or lot;

3. Shall hold constant a message for a minimum of sixty (60) seconds and shall have a minimum of five (5) seconds between intervals except signs indicating time, date or weather conditions; and

4. Shall be at least one hundred (100) feet from a residential use or residential zoned property as measured on a straight line from the nearest property line of said

residential use or residentially zoned property to the electronic message center sign, whether on a building or on a monument. (Resolution 12-10-006)

J. To compute and apply regulations to sign area, the following shall apply:

1. The surface area of a sign shall be computed by including the entire area within a single, continuous, rectilinear perimeter of not more than eight (8) straight lines, or a circle or an ellipse, enclosing the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or surface against which it is placed.

2. If the sign consists of more than one section or module, all of the area, including that between sections or modules, shall be included in the computation of the sign area.

3. With respect to two-sided, multi-sided, or three-dimensional signs, the following shall

(a) The sign surface area of a double-faced, back-to-back sign shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such a sign, so long as the distance between the backs of such signs does not exceed eighteen (18) inches, provided that the opposite face of the double-faced, back-to-back sign may also have a sign of equal area facing in the opposite direction.

(b) The sign surface area of a double-faced sign constructed in the form of a "V" shall be calculated by using the area of only one side of such sign, so long as the angle of the "V" does not exceed thirty (30) degrees and at no point does the distance between the backs of such sides exceed five (5) feet, provided that the opposite face of the double-sided "V" sign may also have a sign of equal area facing in the generally opposite direction.

(c) In all other instances, the sign surface area of a multi-sided or three dimensional sign shall be calculated using the total of all surfaces of the sign that can be seen at any one time by a person from one vantage point.

K. Any sign approved as part of a site plan for building permit or as part of a site plan for a special exception under provisions of this Resolution shall not require any further permit, provided that such sign is constructed and maintained as approved. Except as exempted in this Resolution, all other signs shall require a building permit for review of conformance by the Building Commissioner.

L. In addition to provisions under subsections A thru K above, any sign which may be subject to provisions of state statutes in Tennessee Code, Title 54, Chapter 17, Part 1 Scenic Highways also shall be subject to restrictions and regulations of such statutes as administered by the State of Tennessee, and any signs proposed for permit along designated scenic highways in TCA 54-17-114 shall provide documentation that proposed signs subject to permit in this Resolution will comply with such statutes, in addition to any information required for permit in this Resolution.

M. Notwithstanding any other provisions to the contrary, any non-conforming sign or sign structure which is partially destroyed or damaged by accident or natural causes beyond 50 percent of original value shall thereafter be removed or reconstructed in conformance to the regulations applicable to new signs. Notwithstanding any other provisions to the contrary, for any non-conforming sign that is proposed for replacement, such replacement sign shall be constructed in conformance to the regulations applicable to new signs.