



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

Project Name: Northwest Medical Center, Inc.

Applicant: Seda Limon, Interstate Sign and Lighting, agent for Northwest Medical Center, Inc

Project Location: 2801 North State Road 7

Hearing No. 24-00400014

Hearing Date: April 9, 2024

Board: Board of Adjustment

Application: Sign Waiver

I. RECOMMENDATION:

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Applicant intends to replace the existing main identification wall sign on the south frontage of the existing hospital and install two banner signs, one on the south and one on the east frontage. The proposed wall sign has three lines of copy and there are other existing signs on the same frontage. The Code of the City of Margate limits wall signs to two lines of copy, and not more than one sign per frontage. The Code of the City of Margate generally prohibits banner signs. Staff finds that the existing wall sign is ineffective and the proposed wall sign is compatible with the architecture of the building. Staff finds that approval of permanent installation of banners is incompatible with area aesthetics and recommends approval of similar signage that is designed for permanent installation.

III. ANALYSIS:

The subject property is located within the following:

- Activity Center land use category
- CF-1 Community Facility zoning district
- Margate CRA boundary

ADJACENT ZONING & USES

North: PRC and C

Single-family homes (Cape Sable) and single-story daycare (Alphabet Land)

South: CF-1

Multistory medical offices (across Colonial Drive)

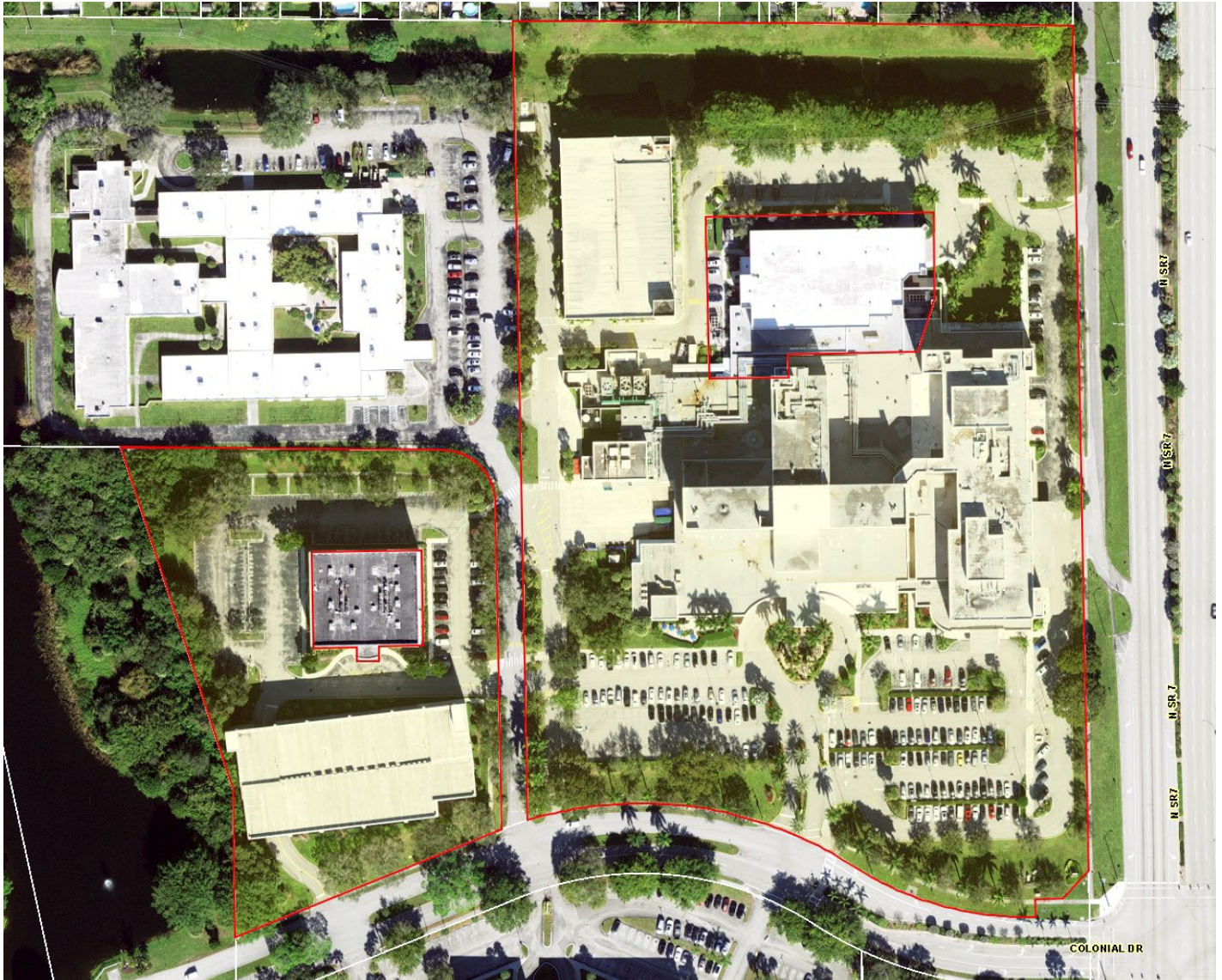
East: C and CF-1

Single story retail strip and multi-story medical offices (across State Rd 7)

West: CF-1

Multistory medical offices

The subject property is a 289-bed hospital located at 2801 North State Road 7. The hospital campus, less office condominiums, amounts to approximately 22.5 acres. The following is an aerial photo identifying the subject property of this sign waiver application.



[Subject Property – Current Condition]

On September 13, 2022 the Board of Adjustment approved a sign waiver for a campus-wide rebranding project which included approval of all wall signs and freestanding signs currently on the property. The wall sign presented in this sign waiver is a replacement of the main identification wall sign that is currently installed on the south building frontage, above the main entrance of the hospital. Section 40.706(F)2 limits nonresidential buildings to a single main identification wall sign of two lines of copy or less, and only one identification wall sign on an eligible frontage. The south frontage of the hospital currently has more than one identification wall signs previously approved by waiver, and the proposed sign has three lines of copy.

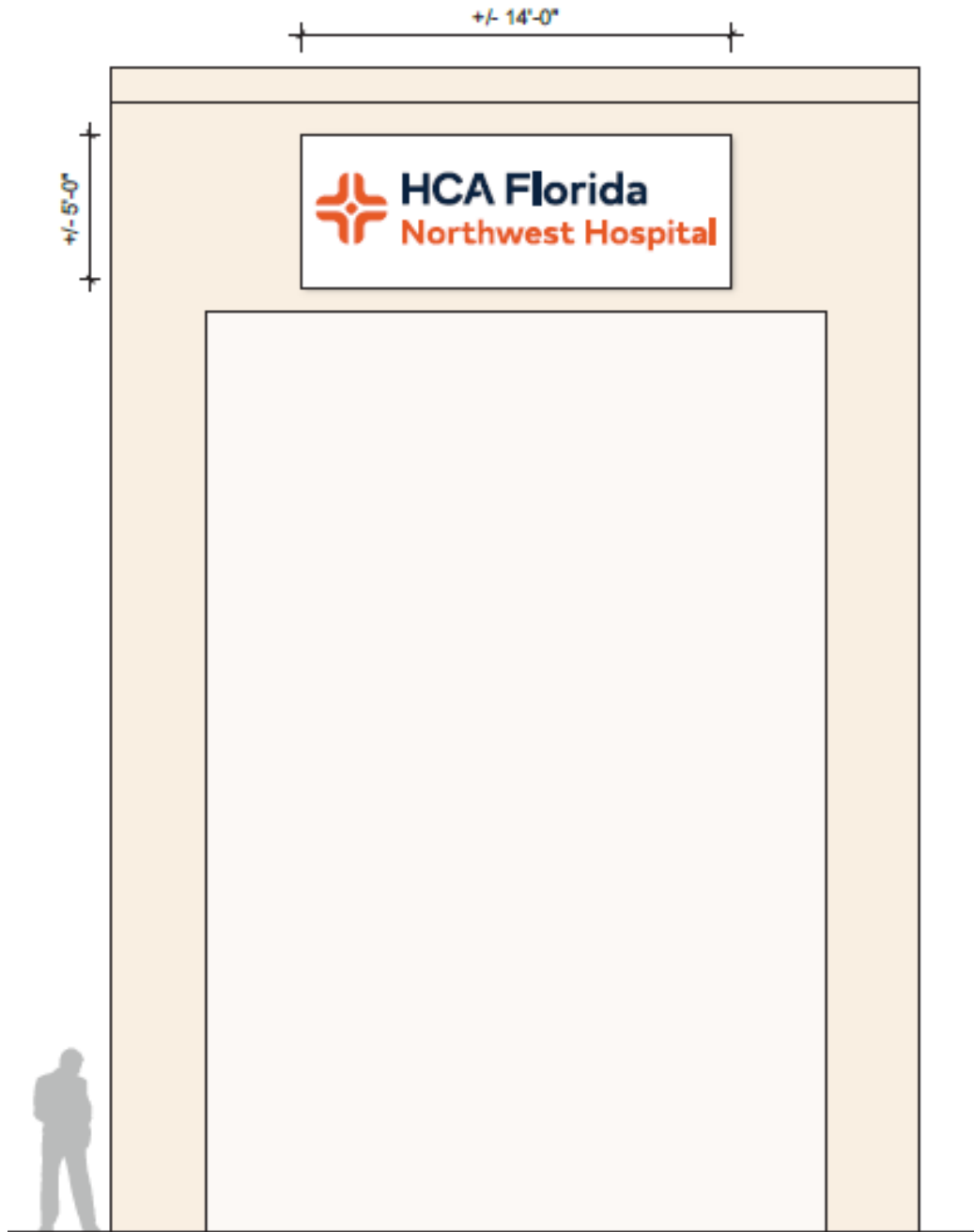


[Current Condition – South Frontage – Drone Photo]

As shown above the existing sign is not effective at identifying the use of the building. It is small and out of scale with the size of the building, making it difficult to read. The sign is mounted at nearly the highest point on the wall, leaving a large empty space below it.

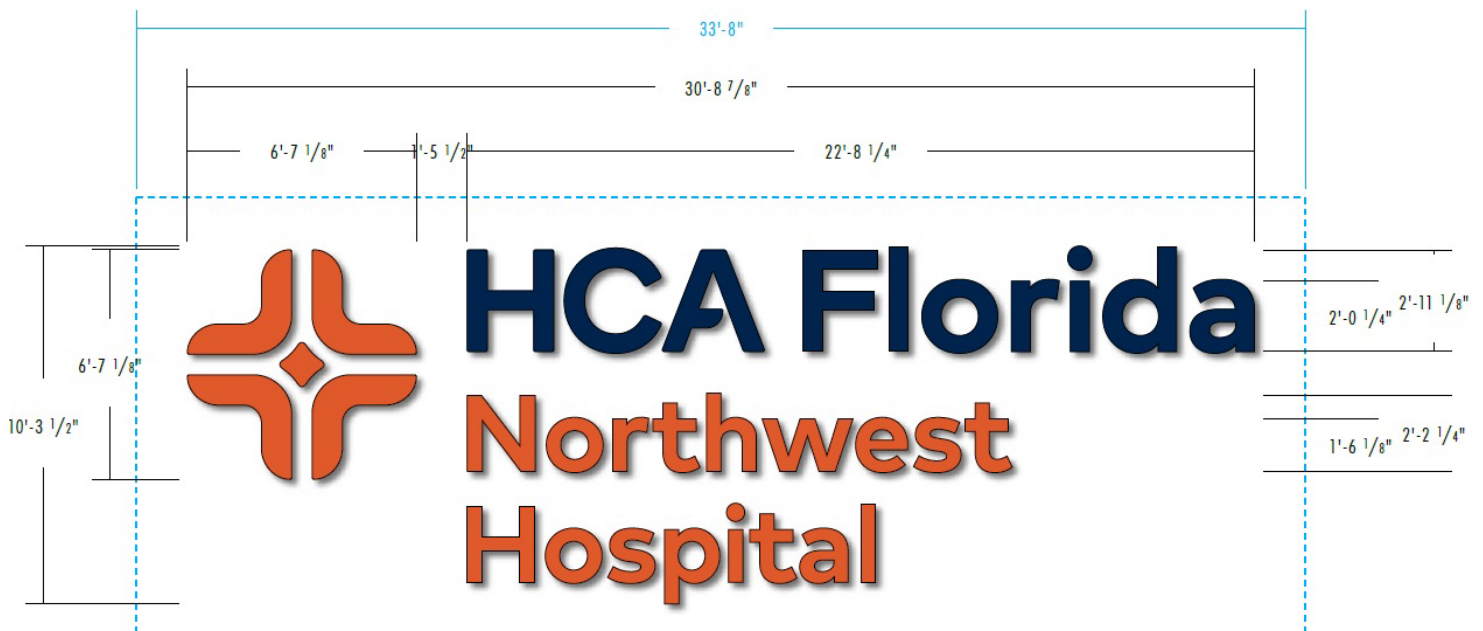


[Current Condition - South Frontage – Photo at Grade]



[2022 Wall Sign]

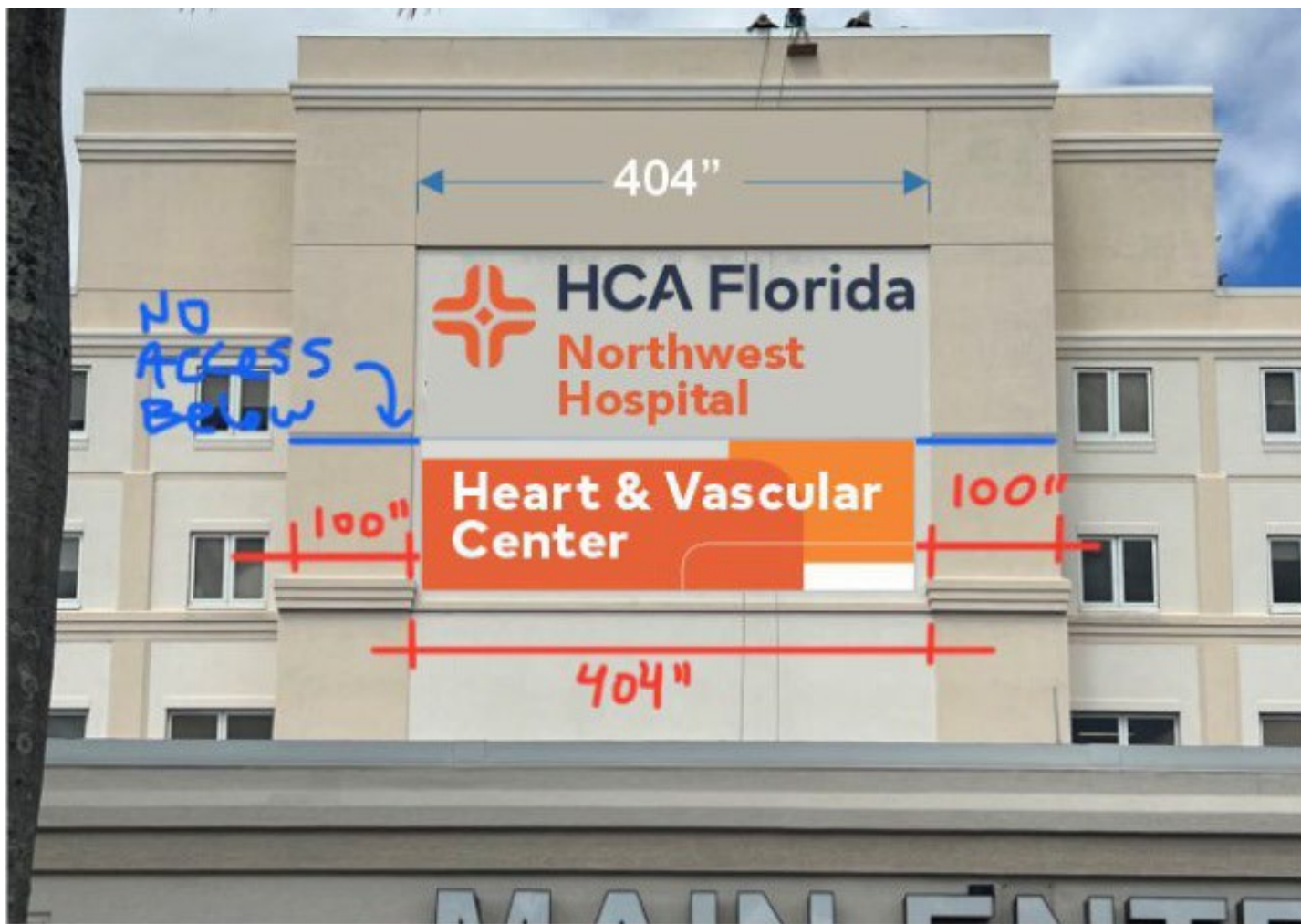
On its own merits, the above wall sign that was installed in 2022 is code compliant. It is installed on an eligible frontage, it is below the maximum size permitted, and it is two lines of copy. However, it was incorporated with a sign waiver in 2022 because at the time there were three other wall signs to be installed on the same frontage.



[Proposed Internally Illuminated Channel Letter Sign – South Frontage]

The above design utilizing three lines of copy allows the sign to utilize taller letter heights, making the sign more visible and easier to read. This design also provides additional height, and helps to fill in the large blank wall above the hospital main entrance. This sign improves the architectural aesthetic because it adds texture, color and light to an otherwise blank wall. The large number of windows on the south frontage limits the opportunity to maximize allowable sign area in a code compliant design of two lines of copy or less. The south frontage of the hospital is approximately 450 feet wide, which allows for a main identification wall sign up to 450 square feet in area. The proposed wall sign is 316.4 square feet in area, and therefore falls well below the size limitations of the Code. The architectural style of the building lends itself to a more vertical design than a sign with one or two lines of copy.

This request also includes two banner signs. Banners are generally prohibited throughout the City, with exceptions for grand openings, approved special events, non-profit sales, academic schools and religious institutions. Banners are far less durable than typical signs made of metal and/or acrylic materials. The banners are presented in the waiver application for the Board's consideration. Staff is not supportive of a waiver to permit a temporary sign material on a permanent basis, however staff would support similar signage if designed and constructed to be permanent. Similar signage has been approved in the past, but was removed as part of the most recent hospital rebranding project of 2022.



[Proposed Banner – 325 square feet – South Frontage]



[Proposed Banner – 434 square feet – East Frontage]



[Current Condition - East Frontage – Photo at Grade]

Section 40.706(S) of the Code of the City of Margate provides three criteria that should be satisfied before the Board of Adjustment grants a sign waiver. Those criteria are as follows:

- (1) There is something unique about the building or site configuration that would cause the signage permitted by this article to be ineffective in identifying a use or structure that would otherwise be entitled to a sign.
- (2) The granting of a waiver is not contrary to the intent of the signage code, the aesthetics of the area, or does not create a nuisance or adversely affect any neighboring properties.
- (3) Literal enforcement of this article would result in unreasonable and undue hardship upon the petitioner.

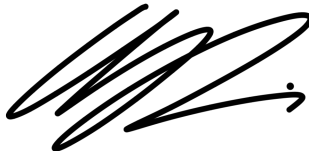
Section 40.706(A) of the Code of the City of Margate provides the following as a 'Statement of Purpose' for the City's sign regulations.

"The purpose of this article is to create the framework for a comprehensive and balanced system of sign control, thereby facilitating clear and attractive communication between people and their environment. It is the purpose of this article to control those signs which are intended to communicate to the general public and to authorize the use of signs which are:

- (a) Compatible with their surroundings.
- (b) Expressive of the identity of individual proprietors or of the community as a whole.
- (c) Legible under the circumstances in which they are seen.

- (d) Conducive to promoting traffic safety by preventing visual distraction.
- (e) Provide for the aesthetic appearance of the community and consistency with architecture.
- (f) Effectively and efficiently communicate the intent and nature of the city's business community.”

Due to the architectural design of the building, the allowable main identification wall sign for the south frontage is limited in letter height, making it ineffective at the elevation in which it is installed. The proposed sign, if approved in this waiver, would improve the legibility of the main identification wall sign on the south frontage of the building. The proposed wall sign is compatible with the building and area aesthetics. The granting of this waiver will not create a nuisance or adversely affect any neighboring properties. The wall sign concept with three lines of copy satisfies the waiver criteria of Section 40.706 of the Code of the City of Margate. Staff recommends approval of the internally illuminated channel letter wall sign as submitted. Staff is not supportive of a waiver to permit a temporary sign material, such as the proposed banner signs, on a permanent basis. Large banner signs approved for permanent display would not be compatible with the area aesthetics because this sign type and material is generally prohibited throughout the City by the sign regulations. Staff would support similar signage if designed and constructed to be permanent. If the Board is so inclined to approve the banner signs, staff recommends conditioning said approval such that the banners are maintained in a like new condition, free of any color fading, color bleeding, tears, wrinkles, or any other visible blemishes.



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