



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 10/2/2025

File #: 25-1171

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Old Business

SUBJECT:

U-Haul Buildings Signage, Conditional Use Permit Modification
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) 508-061-010 and 508-061-008
Record No.: PLN-2024-19002
McKinleyville area

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Modification to authorize additional signage on two existing U-Haul buildings in McKinleyville. The proposed signage is allowable under the original Master Sign Plan for the development of the Mill Creek Marketplace for the Anchor Tenant, which was approved by the Planning Commission in 1992 (CUP-27-912), but requires a Modification under Humboldt County's Sign Ordinance. The U-Haul South building (APN 508-061-010, former Kmart building) is approximately 100,000 square feet on a 7.72-acre parcel and twelve (12) signs totaling approximately 2,370 square feet of additional signage are proposed. The U-Haul North building (APN 508-061-008, former Ray's market) is approximately 45,000 square feet on a 5.32-acre parcel and four (4) signs totaling approximately 425 square feet on the east façade and six (6) signs totaling 500 square feet on the north façade of additional signage are proposed.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has considered the CEQA Categorical Exemption 15311 (a), Accessory Structures including on- premises signs; and
 - b. Finds the proposed project complies with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance; and
 - c. Approves the Conditional Use Permit Modification subject to the recommended Conditions of Approval.

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project is located in the McKinleyville area, on the West side of Central Avenue, approximately .10 miles from the intersection of Central Avenue and School Road, at the property address known as 1500 Anna Sparks Way in the Mill Creek Marketplace shopping center.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: Commercial Services (CS), McKinleyville Community Plan (MCCP); Maximum Floor Ratio: 3; Slope Stability: Relatively Stable (D0).

Present Zoning: Community Commercial with combining zones for Planned Development and Noise Impact (C-2, P-N).

Environmental Review: CEQA Exemption Section: 15311(a), Accessory Structures- including on premises signs, of the State CEQA Guidelines.

State Appeal: Project is NOT appealable to the California Coastal Commission.

Major Concerns: Visual compatibility

Monitoring Required: None

Executive Summary: The proposed project is for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Modification to authorize additional signage on two existing U-Haul buildings in McKinleyville. The project was first heard before the Planning Commission on August 7, 2025, and was continued to September 4, 2025 in order for broader community notification for public feedback and to allow the applicant to provide a presentation. A press release was issued to the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce, Humboldt Alerts Facebook page, Redheaded Blackbelt which was shared on the Lost Coast Outpost, and the Humboldt County Planning Departments website. After publication of the press release, staff received two voicemails and 16 emails/ letters. The two voicemails and 10 emails/ letters were generally in support of the project or business. Five emails were generally opposed due to visual concerns, type of business and false advertisement, and one was an informational request clarifying that tree removal was not part of the project.

At the hearing of September 4, 2025, there were only four Planning Commissioners in attendance, and the Commission was split 2-2 between approving the project as is or making significant adjustments to the allowable signage, and the project was continued to the hearing date of October 2, 2025. From the Commissioners that did not support approving the signage as is, concerns were discussed about visual impacts, including the size, color and placement of the signs. Suggestions for reducing visual impacts of the signage on the U-Haul South building included removing some of the signs to stick with a percentage consistent with the intent of the Sign Ordinance (16% was proposed), replacing signs with smaller versions, lowering the signs that are proposed higher than the roof line (although not the highest point of the roof), and/ or allowing directional signs only. On the U-Haul

North building east facade, there was general agreement to approving what was proposed. On the U-Haul North building north side, there was discussion around the quantity of signage proposed being that the north side is the closest to School Road public right-of-way. One Commissioner suggested limiting the north facade to 100 square feet. The decision was made to bring the U-Haul Buildings Sign project back to the Commission when additional commissioners were able to evaluate the project. Attachment 1 is the Staff Report from the September 4, 2025, hearing.

Environmental Review: The Department has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15311(a), Accessory Structures, of the Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act because it involves the construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities including on-premises signs.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could elect to deny the project.
2. The Planning Commission could choose to modify the number, size and/or location of signs to be approved.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - September 4, 2025, Staff Report

Attachment 1- Draft Resolution

Attachment 1A - Conditions of Approval

Attachment 1B - Site Plan

Attachment 1C - List of proposed signs and visual representations

Attachment 1D - U-Haul North and South mock-ups

Attachment 2 - Resolution for Denial

Attachment 3 - Location Map

Attachment 4 - Applicant Evidence in Support of other California U-Haul Signage

Attachment 5 - Public Comment(s)

Attachment 6 - Master Sign Plan for the Mill Creek Marketplace (revised 5/14/92)

Attachment 7 - Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

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