



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/4/2025

File #: 25-1078

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

SUBJECT:

U-Haul Building 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 in order for broader community notification for public feedback and to allow the applicant to provide a presentation. A press release was issued on the Humboldt County website and notice was given to the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce, Humboldt Alerts Facebook page, and also posted on the Humboldt County website. At the time of publishing this staff report, one call and letter in support of the project was received (Attachment 5).

The original Master Sign Plan (Attachment 5) was approved by the Planning Commission in 1992 with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the development of the Mill Creek Marketplace shopping center in McKinleyville. The original Master Sign Plan states that for the Anchor Tenants (Major or Chain Store Tenants), occupants are able to have their usual identification signs on their buildings, as the same exists from time to time on similar buildings operated by them in California. Also required in the Master Sign Plan for the Anchor Tenants, is that signs are architecturally compatible and must be approved by the Landlord as well as any authorizing governmental agency. The applicant has provided evidence of similar signed buildings owned by U-Haul within the State of California (Attachment 3). The landlord (U-Haul) agrees the proposed signs are architecturally compatible and approve of the proposed project. As the governmental agency, Humboldt County's Sign Ordinance states under section 314-87.2.6.4, signs not consistent with the Appurtenant Sign Table (section 314-87.2.6.5) shall be permitted with a Conditional Use Permit. According to the Appurtenant Sign Table, Wall Signs are

limited to 100 square feet per façade, regardless of building size, and therefore a Modification to the originally approved CUP is required.

The U-Haul South building (APN 508-061-010, former Kmart building) has an approximately 450-foot-long façade on the east side, and the entire building is approximately 100,000 square feet on a 7.72-acre parcel. Approximately 2,370 square feet of additional signage is proposed with a total of 12 new signs (see Attachment 1C), 5 of which are directional in nature. Approximately 200 square feet of signage is currently existing (which includes a back lit U-Haul logo sign, lettering saying “24/7 Self-Storage”, and a directional sign for where to “Load/Unload”). Proposed new signs include one rigid 10-foot by 46-foot panel that is above the drive-in bays with the words “DRIVE-IN STORAGE” and another rigid 10-foot by 57.5-foot panel with the words, “*Your Storage Place*” with three decorative U-Haul signature waves. Both these rigid panels will be set approximately 3 feet higher than the roof line at the proposed installation location. A 2-foot by 57.5-foot metal awning (set below the 10-foot by 57.5-foot rigid panel described above) with business specific directions including driving clearance information and pick up locations is proposed. Four, 1.5 foot by 9-foot directional signs are proposed and indicate “Storage: Load/ Unload”, one of the signs over a sliding glass door entrance and three over the drive-in bays. There are three proposed metal 8-foot by 8-foot fake storage roll up door images. One rigid 76-foot by 12.5-foot panel is proposed to have two aluminum window display images of the interior storage unit’s doors, one with an enlarged set of keys image and one with a policeman image and the words “Climate Controlled”. Additionally, a 4.5-foot by 4.5-foot Cross faux window is proposed. Upon reviewing the project, the applicant removed from the application two proposed large balcony signs at the main entrance of the U-Haul South building totaling approximately 970 square feet as a response to staff concerns about visual impacts.

The U-Haul North building (APN 508-061-008, former Ray’s market) has an approximately 250-foot-long façade on the east side and 175-foot-long façade on the north side, and the building is approximately 45,000 square feet on a 5.32-acre parcel. Approximately 425 square feet of additional signage is proposed on the east side with a total of 4 new signs (see Attachment 1C) and 45 square feet of signage is currently existing (which includes one back lit U-Haul logo sign). Approximately 500 square feet of additional signage is proposed on the north side of the building with 6 new signs proposed (see Attachment 1C), and no signage currently exists. There is one 75 square foot sign on the west side of the building that was permitted 8/30/24 as a replacement “like for like”, and no other signs are requested on the west side. Proposed on the east side of the building there would be a 1-foot by 5-foot address nameplate, two 8-foot by 25-foot aluminum window display images of the interior storage unit’s doors, one with an enlarged set of keys image and one with a policeman image and the words “Climate Controlled”. Additionally, a 4.5-foot by 4.5-foot Cross faux window is proposed. Signs proposed on the north side of the building include one 5-foot by 9-foot back lit U-Haul logo sign, one 8-foot by 25-foot aluminum window display image of the interior storage unit’s doors with an image of a policeman and the words “Climate Controlled”, and four metal 8-foot by 8-foot fake storage door images.

U-Haul signature colors are orange, black and white, and all the proposed signs contain these colors. Pictures of other California U-Haul locations with similar imaging are shown in Attachment 3. Of the 22 proposed new signs on the two buildings, only one 5-foot by 9-foot U-Haul logo sign is illuminated by back lighting. No signs are proposed to be moving or audible. Two of the signs on the U-Haul South building are proposed to be 3 feet above the roof line, however this is significantly lower than the highest point of the roof as required by the Sign Ordinance. The U-Haul South building is approximately 500 feet from Central Avenue right-of-way and is not visible from most of Central Avenue due to the slope of land, vegetation, and the position of other businesses. The U-Haul North building is also approximately 500 feet from Central Avenue's right-of-way and approximately 50 feet from the right-of-way of School Road. Visibility of the U-Haul North building is obscured approximately 250 feet along Central Avenue due to the position of other businesses as well. For approximately 250 feet along Central Avenue and approximately 500 feet along School Road from the intersection of Central Avenue, the two U-Haul commercial buildings and the proposed signs would be visible from the public rights-of-way.

Due to the commercial zoning and land use designation for the Mill Creek Marketplace, the large size of each U-Haul South and U-Haul North commercial buildings which propose typical U-Haul business signage identification, and the distance of the U-Haul buildings from public rights-of-way, staff are recommending approval of the proposed modification to the original CUP.

As the proposed signage would be on existing commercial buildings and no ground disturbance is required, there are no potential impacts to biological or cultural resources. The nearest Streamside Management Area is over 500 feet away, and the project was referred to the Blue Lake Rancheria and the Wiyot Tribe and no comments were received.

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. (Attachment 6)

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 - 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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