

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

Applicant Todd Mathes

Request Use Subject to County Commission Approval | Amend existing conditions of Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180.080](#))

Proposed Use Master sign plan

Size 39.56± acres

Zoning Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180.080](#)), Planned Residential Development (PRD, [17.180.060](#)) and Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#))

Location **3715 Wahoo Falls Trace, 100 Treesort View, and 0 Price Road** | Tax Parcels 10100 000156B, 000158, & 000156C

Commission District Two

Planning Commission Date November 6, 2023

Staff Recommendation **Approval, with conditions** as the proposed use is consistent with the [Comprehensive Plan](#) future land use classification of Activity Center.

Planning Commission Recommendation.....**Approval, with conditions**
Vote: 5-0

Planning Commission Conditions:

1. The amended master sign plan is approved, as presented in the application documents, and shall be subject to the conditions of zoning approved by the Hall County Commission on December 9, 2021:
 - a. The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of site plan approval. This includes architectural standards and sign standards as presented in the Master Sign Development Plan.
 - b. The proposed development standards, master sign development plan and narrative are approved. Any development standards that are not addressed in the applicants project

- narrative or Master Sign Development Plan shall be governed by the standards set forth by the Official Code of Hall County.
- c. The total building square footage for the proposed development shall be limited to a maximum of 85,000 square feet.
 - d. Access to the development shall be approved by Hall County Traffic and/or the Georgia Department of Transportation, whichever applies.
 - e. Any necessary access modifications must be approved and permitted by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). All costs associated with any required improvements shall be the developer's responsibility.
 - f. Building height shall be limited to 3-stories/45 feet.
 - g. No outdoor storage shall be allowed for any use, with the exception of the grocery store and associated display of seasonal items along the front entrance of the store.
 - h. The following uses shall require a conditional use permit:
 - i. Full service car wash. Car washes associated with a gas station shall be permitted.
 - ii. Self-storage facilities.
 - i. The following uses shall not be permitted:
 - i. Tire sales, automobile repair and maintenance businesses with the exception of an autoparts and quick oil change services, which shall be allowed by right.
 - j. The applicant shall submit architectural renderings, including building materials and colors, to be approved by the Planning Director prior to any issuance of any building permits.
 - k. All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any new plat created for the property.
 - l. The development shall adhere to the Hall County Erosion Control Ordinance Best Management Practices for Large Developments, which included the 3 BMPs from the County-approved list, even if the phase of development is less than 20 acres.
 - m. Hall County supports a traffic signal on Thompson Bridge Road provided the signal is permitted and approved by GDOT, and paid for by the developers.
2. Monument signs placed within the median of any public or private street shall be constructed of a breakaway material, subject to review and approval of the Traffic Engineer. Signs located within the right-of-way of state routes shall be subject to GDOT regulations and permitting requirements.

Public Forum:

There were no comments in support or opposition.

Summary Analysis

The applicant is requesting to amend conditions of a Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180.080](#)) to modify the master sign plan on a 39.56± acre parcel. The master sign plan was approved as part of the PCD rezoning which was approved by the County Commission on December 9, 2021 and is currently under development. The applicant is requesting an amendment to the PCD standards to modify the master sign plan dated August 30, 2021, and is included as part of the application of Fuqua Acquisitions, LLC. **The requested modifications to the master sign plan to install additional signage cabinets within the primary monument signs and to adjust the location of a monument sign.**

The Hall County sign code ([17.270](#)) establishes sign standards to maintain public safety, prevent traffic hazards and promote the welfare of the County. The property falls within the Gateway Corridors Overlay District,

(GOCD, [17.420.](#)) which provides supplemental design standards for non-residential property development, including signage ([17.420.060](#)). The proposed signage standards and the existing code requirements are detailed in the table below.

Sign Type	Code Requirement	Previous Proposal	New Proposal
Monument Sign "P1"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs prohibited within any street right-of-way (17.270.100(B)) Maximum sign area of 64 square feet ((17.420.060(1)) Internally illuminated signs, automatic changeable copy signs, and externally mounted neon signs are prohibited. (17.420.050(F)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign placement outside of right-of-way Tenant sign face area of 64 square feet LED internal illumination* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign placement <i>within</i> right-of-way in the entrance median at Thompson Bridge Road* Tenant sign face <i>area of 72 square feet</i> with addition of residential cabinets* LED internal illumination*
Monument Sign "P2"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum sign area of 64 square feet ((17.420.060(1)) Internally illuminated signs, automatic changeable copy signs, and externally mounted neon signs are prohibited. (17.420.050(F)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant sign face area of 64 square feet LED internal illumination* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant sign face <i>area of 72 square feet</i> with addition of residential cabinets* LED internal illumination*
Note: items marked with an asterisk (*) do not conform to 17.270.100(B) or 17.420.			

Specifically, the GCOD guidelines state that a non-residential building with a gross floor area of 84,362 square feet (derived from the developer’s 2021 proposal) may not erect a monument sign with over 64 square feet of sign area per each side ([17.420.060\(1\)](#)). The requested amendment would permit the applicant to enlarge each principal monument sign face from 64 to 72 square feet, with the additional eight square feet to be used as residential identification cabinets towards the bottom of each monument, under the commercial cabinets.

Additionally, the applicant is proposing to relocate a monument sign (“P1”) from the entrance street corner into the median. Sign Standards ([17.270.100\(B\)](#)) prohibit commercial signage within any street right-of-way. It should be noted that the monument sign will fall within private street right-of-way. Typically, private streets are required to adhere to the standards of the Official Code of Hall County, though variances to these standards maybe granted for Planned Developments. Finally, the request for internal illumination is continued from the previous proposal, though GCOD guidelines prohibit internally illuminated signs.

The remainder of the master sign plan from the 2021 proposal remains unchanged.

As referenced earlier, the current Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180.080](#)) was approved by the Hall County Commission on December 9, 2021, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of site plan approval. This includes architectural standards and sign standards as presented in the Master Sign Development Plan.

2. The proposed development standards, master sign development plan and narrative are approved. Any development standards that are not addressed in the applicants project narrative or Master Sign Development Plan shall be governed by the standards set forth by the Official Code of Hall County.
3. The total building square footage for the proposed development shall be limited to a maximum of 85,000 square feet.
4. Access to the development shall be approved by Hall County Traffic and/or the Georgia Department of Transportation, whichever applies.
5. Any necessary access modifications must be approved and permitted by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). All costs associated with any required improvements shall be the developer's responsibility.
6. Building height shall be limited to 3-stories/45 feet.
7. No outdoor storage shall be allowed for any use, with the exception of the grocery store and associated display of seasonal items along the front entrance of the store.
8. The following uses shall require a conditional use permit:
 - a. Full service car wash. Car washes associated with a gas station shall be permitted.
 - b. Self-storage facilities.
9. The following uses shall not be permitted:
 - a. Tire sales, automobile repair and maintenance businesses with the exception of an autoparts and quick oil change services, which shall be allowed by right.
10. The applicant shall submit architectural renderings, including building materials and colors, to be approved by the Planning Director prior to any issuance of any building permits.
11. All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any new plat created for the property.
12. The development shall adhere to the Hall County Erosion Control Ordinance Best Management Practices for Large Developments, which included the 3 BMPs from the County-approved list, even if the phase of development is less than 20 acres.
13. Hall County supports a traffic signal on Thompson Bridge Road provided the signal is permitted and approved by GDOT, and paid for by the developers.

GCOD Analysis

With regard to the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#)) staff has developed a chart to summarize recommendations for establishing or bringing properties into compliance with the standards in the Corridor. Decision makers may use the assessment in developing conditions that warrant compliance based on the scale and scope of proposed development.

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Compliance</u>	<u>Notes</u>
17.420.050.C – Transitional buffers	Unknown	Applicant has not specified plans to modify proposed transitional buffers.
17.420.050.D – Other landscape and screening standards	Unknown	Applicant has not specified plans to modify proposed landscaping and screening.
17.420.050.E – Parking lot design	Unknown	Applicant has not specified plans to modify proposed parking lot design.
17.420.050.F – Outdoor lighting	Deficient	Five internally illuminated monument signs are proposed at a total of four development access points.
17.420.050.G – Interparcel access	Likely	Vehicular access throughout the commercial development shown in the site plan within the master sign package.
17.420.050.H – Architectural standards for non-residential buildings	Unknown	Applicant has not specified plans to modify proposed building or signage architecture.
17.420.060 – Signs	Deficient	Monument signs P1 and P2 exceed maximum sign area by 8 square feet per each face.

Based on the future land-use plan, staff finds the requested zoning designation is consistent with the Hall County [Comprehensive Plan](#). The [Comprehensive Plan’s](#) future land use designation for the subject parcel is “Activity Center.” The intent of this land use category is to enhance and create a concentrated mixture of uses connected by a pedestrian- and car-friendly network. As this location falls within the broader “Lake Area Residential” Character Area, future land uses include retail, offices, open space, and higher density residential uses.

Zoning Analysis

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps, the following items must be considered by Planning Commission and the Hall County Commission pursuant to [17.380.060](#):

1. Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property; **The proposed use associated with the master sign package update request is consistent with the future land use designation of Activity Center. Other shopping centers and residential subdivisions are present nearby, such as Thompson Bridge Commons, which features a monument sign along Thompson Bridge Road.**
2. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property; **No, it is not anticipated that the proposed change to the master sign package will adversely affect adjacent properties, but it is inconsistent with the vision established for the area.**

3. Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has reasonable economic use as currently zoned. **Yes, the property has economic use as currently zoned, Planned Development Conditional (PCD, [17.180.080](#)) and Planned Residential Development (PRD, [17.180.060](#)).** The master sign plan depicts the intent to construct a shopping center (within the acreage zoned PCD) anchored by a Publix supermarket.
4. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, or utilities; **Staff does not find that the proposed development will cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, or utilities. However, the relocation of monument sign "P1" into the entrance median by Thompson Bridge road may reduce driver visibility when attempting to leave the development.**
5. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the land use plan; **The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the "Activity Center" future land use designation. The Comprehensive Plan identifies retail uses (car- and pedestrian-scale retail and services serving nearby residents)" as appropriate future land uses in this area.**
6. The extent to which property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions; **Absent a market study, staff is unable to determine whether property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions.**
7. The extent to which the destruction of the subject property's value under the existing zoning promotes the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the public; **Staff is unable to comment on the impact of property values without a full market analysis. Multiple factors impact property value including construction types, proposed uses, and maintenance.**
8. The relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner; **Staff has not identified a hardship imposed on the property owner as the property is currently zoned.**
9. The length of time the property has been vacant as zoned considered in the context of land development in the area in the vicinity of the property; **The original master sign plan for this location was approved in 2021.**
10. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use or development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal; **Staff is not aware of any changing conditions that affect the use and development of the property.**
11. Whether the change would create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts; **The underlying zoning classification of Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180](#)) has already been established on the subject parcel. The requested change would result in the increase of identification cabinet area and the movement of one sign location.**
12. Whether the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn in relation to existing conditions in the area; **There is no evidence that the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn.**
13. Whether the change requested is out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole or the immediate neighborhood; **In general, the use does not appear to be out of scale with the needs of the County as a whole, as the development is located within an Activity Center. Specifically, residential signage cabinets may be beneficial for the neighborhood.**

14. Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned; **The proposed signage exceeds the maximum sign standards for properties in the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#)). As the property is a Planned Commercial Development (PCD, [17.180.080](#)) the applicant is proposing their own signage standards through the adoption of a master sign plan for the development.**
15. Whether the need for rezoning could be handled instead by a variance request to the [Planning Commission]; **The request could not be handled alternatively as a variance.**
16. Whether there would be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from major modifications to the land if the request is granted; **The proposed updates to the master sign package will not result in ecological or pollution impacts.**
17. Whether there is reasonable evidence based upon existing and anticipated land use that would indicate a mistake was made in the original zoning of the property; **There is no indication that a mistake was made in the original zoning. [17.180.080\(B\)](#) – required plans for Planned Commercial Development applications:**

All of the general and special requirements for planned developments shall be provided. The following special items shall also be addressed:

1. The site plan shall indicate the proposed size, location and number of stories of each commercial structure. **The applicant has submitted scaled renderings of the proposed signs. Aside from the proposed relocation of monument sign P1, the site layout is not proposed to change.**
2. The entrances, exits and number and location of all parking spaces shall be shown in detail, together with all loading and no parking zones. **The submitted site plan within the master sign package displays ingress, egress, parking and loading details.**
3. The proposed methods and location of all buffers shall be described. **The site layout is not proposed to change, as such this standard is not applicable.**
4. The proposed exterior lighting shall be shown. **This criteria is not applicable to the current request.**
5. All proposed signs, advertising or identification graphics shall be indicated, showing their number, size, height and location. **The purpose of the current request is to approve an amendment to a previously approved master sign package for the expansion of monument sign faces to include residential identification cabinets and to relocate monument sign P1 into the entrance median at Thompson Mill Road.**
6. The type and number of uses proposed for the commercial development shall be indicated. **This criteria is not applicable to the current request. Modifications to the type and number of uses of the commercial development have not been requested in this application.**
7. The development controls for the district shall be stated (lot coverage, setbacks, building heights, lot sizes, etc.). If standards are not specifically proposed, then the applicable standards in the suburban

shopping district (S-S) shall apply. **Modifications to the development controls have not been requested in this application.**

8. If residential uses are proposed in conjunction with the planned commercial development, then the applicable requirements of the planned residential development shall be provided. **There are no residential uses proposed in conjunction with this request aside from residential identification cabinets.**

17.350.040. - Submission requirements for a conditional use request

An application shall be submitted to the planning department at least 30 working days prior to the date of the planning commission meeting at which the application is to be considered. The completed application shall be accompanied by payment of such fee prescribed in [chapter 17.30](#) hereof to cover administrative and advertising costs. The following items of information shall be supplied by the applicant as set forth in [chapter 17.350](#). **The applicant submitted to the planning department more than 30 days prior to the meeting date and has paid the application fee.**

17.380.050. - Submission requirements for a rezoning request

- A. Any person or persons requesting a change in the official zoning map or use subject to approval of the county commission shall file an application with a plat or map of the property attached thereto, together with payment of such fees set forth in [chapter 17.30](#) to cover administrative and advertising costs, in the planning department office. Such person or persons or their authorized agent shall appear in person at the public hearing held to consider the district change. **Proposal meets the requirement. Applicant has paid the appropriate fees and understands that someone must be present at both the Hall County Planning Commission meeting and the voting meeting of the Hall County Board of Commissioners.**
- B. All applications for a change of zoning classification or use subject to approval of the county commission shall include:
 1. A narrative statement identifying the existing and proposed use of the property and addressing each of the criteria set forth in section 17.380.060.C of this section [chapter]. **Proposal does provide a narrative outlining the intent of the master sign plan; however, the applicant has not prepared a response to each of the criteria listed in [17.380.060.C](#).**
 2. A site plan drawn to scale designating the area covered by the application and identifying existing and proposed buildings and uses, adjacent existing land uses, zoning on contiguous parcels, including those across an abutting public right-of-way, and any other significant site improvements proposed to accommodate the proposed use or buffer adjacent uses, etc., or a plat of the subject property where no specific land use is proposed. In cases where only a plat or map is provided and no land use is proposed, the planning commission and county commission shall evaluate the application based on the most intense possible land use permitted in the proposed district. **The submitted master sign plan includes proposed uses within the main retail center and the broader uses to be signed within each identification cabinet.**
- C. For any application for a slow rate land treatment system (see [chapter 17.20](#)), the following additional requirements apply. **This standard is not applicable to the applicant's request.**

- D. For any application proposing the development of 100 or more residential dwelling units, a traffic impact study shall be submitted prior to consideration of the application by the planning commission. At the applicant's expense, the traffic impact study shall be prepared by a professional engineer in accordance with requirements established by the Hall County Engineering Department. The engineering department shall review the traffic impact study and forward any comments to the Hall County Planning Commission. **This standard is not applicable to the applicant's request.**

Development Support and Constraints

Hall County Environmental Health

In an email dated October 6, 2023, Emily McGahee stated “No comment.”

Hall County Fire Marshal

In an email dated October 3, 2023, John Hornick, NPQ Fire Inspector 1, Plans Review Lieutenant stated, “The Hall County Fire Marshal’s Office has no comments as proposed.”

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

In a memorandum from Public Works and Utilities dated October 5, 2023, Bill Nash, Director, stated the following:

Engineering:

This site may require a stormwater management report should the site plan indicate the proposed development meets stormwater thresholds for impervious surfaces and/or disturbed acreage.

Traffic:

No comment.

In an email dated October 24, 2023, Scott Puckett, County Traffic Engineer, stated “After review, the proposed sign in question is off public right-of-way and outside our jurisdiction, however, we would recommend that any signage within a travel way meet FHWA break-a-way standards.”

Utilities:

City of Gainesville Sewer District.

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated October 2, 2023, Veronica Chavers, D1TO Civil Engineer 3, indicated GDOT coordination would not be required.

- **Excerpts from the minutes of the November 6, 2023 meeting**

Applicant's Presentation:

Katie Greenway, Principal Planner, presented a summary of the request.

Todd Mathes, 7978 Cooper Creek Boulevard, Sarasota, FL, presented the request. The applicant stated that the signage would help inform visitors that there is a residential community nearby.

Public Forum:

There were no comments in support or opposition.

Planning Commission Comments:

No Comments.

Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by Mr. Hunt and seconded by Mr. Sosebee. Vote: 5-0

Conditions:

1. *The amended master sign plan is approved, as presented in the application documents, and shall be subject to the conditions of zoning approved by the Hall County Commission on December 9, 2021:*
 - a. *The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of site plan approval. This includes architectural standards and sign standards as presented in the Master Sign Development Plan.*
 - b. *The proposed development standards, master sign development plan and narrative are approved. Any development standards that are not addressed in the applicants project narrative or Master Sign Development Plan shall be governed by the standards set forth by the Official Code of Hall County.*
 - c. *The total building square footage for the proposed development shall be limited to a maximum of 85,000 square feet.*
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 - l. *The development shall adhere to the Hall County Erosion Control Ordinance Best Management Practices for Large Developments, which included the 3 BMPs from the County-approved list, even if the phase of development is less than 20 acres.*

