

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

Applicant FreeUp Storage Murrayville, LLC

Request **Special Use** | amend conditions of zoning

Proposed Use Self-storage facility

Size 5.79± acres

Zoning Planned Commercial Development (PCD)

Location **5162 Thompson Bridge Road** | Tax Parcel 11083
003001A

Commission District Three

Planning Commission Date June 2, 2025

Staff Recommendation **Approval, with conditions**, as the existing use is
consistent with the previous zoning approval and
complies with the “Business Nodes and
Corridors” future land use designation in the
Comprehensive Plan.

Record Number..... HZCU25-0017

Planning Commission Recommendation..... **Approval, with conditions**

Vote: 4-0 (Varner absent)

Planning Commission Conditions:

1. The previously approved conditions dated October 21, 2009, as amended and listed below, shall apply:
 - a. Development shall be limited to the descriptive narrative submitted for the subject property.
 - b. A continuous landscape strip along the frontage except for perpendicular crossing for driveways and utilities shall be planted and approved by the Director of Planning and Zoning or their designee.
 - c. The applicant shall present a drawing that locates loading and service areas, display areas, designated parking, and pedestrian access for the subject area.

- d. There shall be a pedestrian pathway connecting parking areas to the entrance of the display area. The number of required parking spaces shall be determined during the site plan review process.
 - e. Driveway locations and designs are subject to approval by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Hall County Engineering Department and will be coordinated with any known improvements of Thompson Bridge Road.
 - f. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat created for the property.
 - g. The applicant shall plant a row of Leland Cypress trees to screen both sides of the property.
2. The following statement regarding the potential impacts of agricultural operations in the area shall be made a part of any plat recorded on the property:
"Owners, occupants, and users of property shown on this plat are hereby informed of the impacts associated with normal farming practices which may take place on adjacent and nearby property including, but not limited to, noise, odors, dust, the operation of machinery of any kind, the storage and disposal of manure, and the application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Therefore, owners, occupants, and users of the property shown on this plat should be prepared to expect the effects of such practices."
3. No variances to Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards and no additional variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted herein. The development shall comply with the Hall County UDC, as well as any other agencies or reviewing departments, including, but not limited to the Fire Marshal and Hall County Engineering. Where there are discrepancies between the proposed standards and County regulations, the County regulations shall overrule unless otherwise approved.
4. A wall sign located on the "office" building as identified on the submitted site plan as well as a free-standing monument sign may be permitted. All signage shall be developed in accordance with the Hall County Unified Development Code unless otherwise specified herein.
5. The existing channel letters located on Building E, as identified on the submitted site plan, shall be allowed to remain.

Excerpts from the minutes of the June 2, 2025 meeting

Applicant's Presentation:

Katie Greenway, Planning and Zoning Administrator, presented a summary of the request.

Sara Wayne, 5162 Thompson Bridge Road, Murrayville, presented the request. The applicant is requesting to amend the zoning conditions for a combined 6.05± acre tract zoned as Planned Commercial Development (PCD) within the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD). The proposed amendment

seeks to remove condition #8 from the previous rezoning approval that states the zoning shall remain in effect as long as the applicant is the owner of the property. Additionally, the applicant is submitting a master sign plan. The subject property and adjacent property at 5172 Thompson Bridge Road were rezoned on October 21, 2009, from Highway Business (H-B) to Planned Commercial Development (PCD) to allow outside yard sales (ZON2009-00051) with 8 conditions.

Public Forum:

Sandra Dorsey, 5391 Jerry Burruss Road, Murrayville, questioned if more storage was being built or if this application only concerned signage. Mr. Braswell clarified this application was just to modify the signage.

Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Hunt asked if the application included one sign or the four signs already posted at the business. The applicant stated the application was for the reconstruction of the sign on top of the business that has fallen into disrepair. Mr. Hunt asked if the other roof sign on the office building will be changed as well. The applicant was unsure. Mr. Hunt explained the applicant's business is out of compliance with Gateway Corridor Overlay District standards so the banner signs and sign on the one-story building would need to be removed.

Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by Stan Hunt and seconded by Frank Sosebee. Vote: 4-0 (Varner absent)

Conditions:

1. The previously approved conditions dated October 21, 2009, as amended and listed below, shall apply:
 - a. Development shall be limited to the descriptive narrative submitted for the subject property.
 - b. A continuous landscape strip along the frontage except for perpendicular crossing for driveways and utilities shall be planted and approved by the Director of Planning and Zoning or their designee.
 - c. The applicant shall present a drawing that locates loading and service areas, display areas, designated parking, and pedestrian access for the subject area.
 - d. There shall be a pedestrian pathway connecting parking areas to the entrance of the display area. The number of required parking spaces shall be determined during the site plan review process.
 - e. Driveway locations and designs are subject to approval by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Hall County Engineering Department and will be coordinated with any known improvements of Thompson Bridge Road.
 - f. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat created for the property.
 - g. The applicant shall plant a row of Leland Cypress trees to screen both sides of the property.

2. The following statement regarding the potential impacts of agricultural operations in the area shall be made a part of any plat recorded on the property:
"Owners, occupants, and users of property shown on this plat are hereby informed of the impacts associated with normal farming practices which may take place on adjacent and nearby property including, but not limited to, noise, odors, dust, the operation of machinery of any kind, the storage and disposal of manure, and the application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Therefore, owners, occupants, and users of the property shown on this plat should be prepared to expect the effects of such practices."
3. No variances to Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards and no additional variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted herein. The development shall comply with the Hall County UDC, as well as any other agencies or reviewing departments, including, but not limited to the Fire Marshal and Hall County Engineering. Where there are discrepancies between the proposed standards and County regulations, the County regulations shall overrule unless otherwise approved.
4. A wall sign located on the "office" building as identified on the submitted site plan as well as a free-standing monument sign may be permitted. All signage shall be developed in accordance with the Hall County Unified Development Code unless otherwise specified herein.
5. The existing channel letters located on Building E, as identified on the submitted site plan, shall be allowed to remain.

Staff recommends APPROVAL of the applicant's request, with the following conditions:

1. The previously approved conditions dated October 21, 2009, as amended and listed below, shall apply:
 - a. Development shall be limited to the descriptive narrative submitted for the subject property.
 - b. A continuous landscape strip along the frontage except for perpendicular crossing for driveways and utilities shall be planted and approved by the Director of Planning and Zoning or their designee.
 - c. The applicant shall present a drawing that locates loading and service areas, display areas, designated parking, and pedestrian access for the subject area.
 - d. There shall be a pedestrian pathway connecting parking areas to the entrance of the display area. The number of required parking spaces shall be determined during the site plan review process.
 - e. Driveway locations and designs are subject to approval by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Hall County Engineering Department and will be coordinated with any known improvements of Thompson Bridge Road.

- f. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat created for the property.
 - g. The applicant shall plant a row of Leland Cypress trees to screen both sides of the property.
2. The following statement regarding the potential impacts of agricultural operations in the area shall be made a part of any plat recorded on the property:

“Owners, occupants, and users of property shown on this plat are hereby informed of the impacts associated with normal farming practices which may take place on adjacent and nearby property including, but not limited to, noise, odors, dust, the operation of machinery of any kind, the storage and disposal of manure, and the application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Therefore, owners, occupants, and users of the property shown on this plat should be prepared to expect the effects of such practices.”
3. No variances to Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards and no additional variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted herein. The development shall comply with the Hall County UDC, as well as any other agencies or reviewing departments, including, but not limited to the Fire Marshal and Hall County Engineering. Where there are discrepancies between the proposed standards and County regulations, the County regulations shall overrule unless otherwise approved.
4. All signage shall be developed in accordance with the Hall County Unified Development Code.

Summary Analysis

The applicant is requesting to amend conditions of zoning on a combined 6.05± acre tract zoned Planned Commercial Development (PCD) within the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) to remove condition #8 of the previously approved rezoning as well as to submit a master sign plan.

The subject property and adjacent property at 5172 Thompson Bridge Road were rezoned on October 21, 2009, from Highway Business (H-B) to Planned Commercial Development (PCD) to allow outside yard sales (ZON2009-00051) with the following conditions:

1. Development shall be limited to the descriptive narrative submitted for the subject property.
2. A landscape strip continuous along the frontage except for perpendicular crossing for driveways and utilities shall be planted as approved by the Planning Department.
3. The applicant shall present a drawing that locates loading and service areas, display areas, designated parking, and pedestrian access for the subject area.
4. There shall be a pedestrian pathway connecting parking areas to the entrance of the display area. The number of required parking spaces shall be determined during the site plan review process.
5. Driveway locations and designs are subject to approval by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Hall County Engineering Department and will be coordinated with any known improvements of Thompson Bridge Road.
6. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat created for the property.
7. The applicant shall plant a row of Leland Cypress trees to cover both sides of the property.
8. The zoning shall remain in effect as long as the applicant is the owner of the property.

A variance was approved on January 26, 2017, as part of a reconfiguration and subdivision of the property and the construction of new storage buildings subject to the following condition:

1. Allow setbacks of 10 feet on the left, 10 feet on the right and 5 feet on the front with Mr. Yamala having the final say when the survey is submitted.

The plat creating the current configuration of both parcels was approved on April 17, 2019. The owner of these properties then sold each parcel to different parties in 2019 (5162 Thompson Bridge Road) and 2022 (5172 Thompson Bridge Road) according to Hall County tax records. The subject property was then sold to the applicant, FreeUp Storage Murrayville, LLC, on December 17, 2021.

Per the submitted narrative, the applicant requests removal of condition #8 of the original rezoning conditions which states “The zoning shall remain in effect as long as the applicant is the owner of the property.” The applicant states that the self-storage facility was separated from the unrelated commercial buildings on the adjacent parcel by plat and the parcels are no longer under the same ownership.

Additionally, the applicant is proposing a master sign plan to address the signage as presented in the submitted narrative. Per the submitted site plan, there are 14 buildings on the site. The site plan shows the location of an existing freestanding sign, an existing wall sign, and two proposed wall signs.

Per a site visit by Planning staff on May 14, 2025, three wall signs are currently present on the property, one located on the office building, one on the one-story building and the other on Building E, all as identified on the site plan. Additionally, two banner signs are located on the one-story building. Measurements for these existing signs were not provided by the applicant excluding the signage on Building E, which measures 90 square feet.

The applicant has proposed to replace the wall sign on the one-story building with a 48.8 square foot wall sign. This exceeds the 30 square feet allowed per the county code. The Hall County Unified Development Code allows one wall sign per establishment which must be located along the side of the establishment that includes its public entrance with one additional wall sign allowed along each façade adjacent to a public right-of-way. The code also limits wall signs to 64 square feet per building, or one square foot per linear foot of storefront, whichever is greater.

The proposed master sign plan exceeds the allowed size and number of signs per establishment.

Below is a chart comparing the existing and proposed signage against the Hall County UDC:

Signage Type	Existing	Proposed	Compliance
Monument Sign	1 free-standing sign (height and square footage not provided)	Applicant proposes to bring the existing freestanding sign into compliance with GCOD.	Complies
Building E Wall Sign	Square footage: 90 sqft Location: Not located on primary entrance or a façade fronting right-of-way	Square Footage: 90 sqft (maintain existing sign & location)	*Deficient* Exceeds maximum square footage allowed and number of wall

			signs per establishment
One-story Building Wall Sign	1 wall sign & 2 banners (square footage not provided)	Square Footage: 48.8 sq ft (new sign proposed)	*Deficient* Exceeds the maximum square footage allowed & number of wall signs per establishment
Office Building Wall Sign	1 wall sign (square footage not provided)	Square Footage: 30 sqft maximum (new sign proposed)	*Deficient* Exceeds the number of wall signs per establishment

Zoning Analysis

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps, the Planning Commission must study the need and justification for the change based on a determination of the facts applicable to the particular case, and the following general lines of inquiry must be considered:

- a) Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use, development and zoning of adjacent and nearby property; **The commercial use of the property is suitable in view of the use, development and zoning of adjacent and nearby properties; however, no hardship is present to support deviation from the Hall County sign code.**
- b) Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property; **It is not anticipated that the proposed removal of condition #8 of ZON2009-00051 will adversely affect adjacent or nearby property; however, no hardship is present to support deviation from the Hall County sign code.**
- c) Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned; **The property has reasonable economic use as currently zoned under its development approvals with the exception of condition #8 of ZON2009-00051. Approval by the Board of Commissioners is required to amend conditions of the previous zoning.**
- d) Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection, public health facilities or emergency medical service; **The proposed removal of condition #8 of ZON2009-00051 and the addition of a master sign plan is not anticipated to cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection, public facilities, or emergency medical service.**
- e) Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the future land use plan for the physical development of the area; **The commercial use associated with the property is consistent with the future land use designation of Business Nodes and Corridors.**

- f) The extent to which property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions; **Staff is unable to determine the extent to which property values are affected by the existing zoning restrictions.**
- g) 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 values including construction types, proposed uses, and maintenance.**
- h) The relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner; **Staff has identified a hardship imposed on the property owner under its development approvals with the ownership limitation of condition #8 of ZON2009-00051 which states "The zoning shall remain in effect as long as the applicant is the owner of the property."**
- i) 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; **According to building permit records, construction of the self-storage facility began in 2005 with the last building constructed in 2020.**
- j) 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 affecting the use or development of the property; however, the lot has been subdivided into two lots and sold to two different property owners.**
- k) Whether the change would create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts; **As the property is already zoned Planned Commercial Development (PCD) within the Business Nodes and Corridors future land use designation, the request would not create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts.**
- l) 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.**
- m) Whether the change requested is out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole or the immediate neighborhood; **The proposed amendment to remove condition #8 of ZON2009-00051 is not out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole or the immediate neighborhood; however, no hardship is present to support deviation from the Hall County sign code.**
- n) Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned; **There may be other sites within Hall County that are appropriately zoned for a self-storage facility; however, no hardship is present to support deviation from the Hall County sign code.**
- o) Whether the need for rezoning could be handled instead by a variance request to the Planning Commission; **The request to amend conditions could not be handled alternatively as a variance.**
- p) Whether there would be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from major modifications to the land if the request is granted; **Any land disturbance activities on the property shall be**

required to go through the land development permitting process, and as a result are subject to local, state, and federal regulations. As a result, there are no anticipated ecological or pollution impacts resulting from any modification to the land if the request is granted.

- q) 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.**

11.2.6.E - Submission requirements

1. Any person or persons requesting a change in the official zoning map or use subject to approval of the County Commission must file an application with a plat or map of the property attached thereto, together with payment of such fees set forth in this Sec 11.2. to cover administrative and advertising costs, in the Planning and Zoning Department office. Such person or persons or their authorized agent must appear in person at the public hearing held to consider the district change. **The proposal meets the requirement. The 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.**
2. All applications for a change of zoning classification or use subject to approval of the County Commission must include:
 - a. A narrative statement identifying the existing and proposed use of the property and addressing each of the criteria set forth in this Sec. 11.2. **The proposal provides a narrative outlining the intent of the development; however, the applicant has not prepared a response to each of the criteria listed in 11.2.6.E.2.**
 - b. 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 may evaluate the application based on the most intense possible land use permitted in the proposed district. **The proposal meets the requirement.**
 - c. For any application for a slow rate land treatment system as defined in 7.6.9.D.1, 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 must be submitted prior to consideration of the application by the County Commission. At the applicant's expense, the traffic impact study must be prepared by a professional engineer in accordance with requirements established by the Hall County Engineering Department. The Engineering Department must review the traffic impact study and forward any comments to the County Commission. **This standard is not applicable to the applicant's request.**

Development Support and Constraints

Hall County Environmental Health

In an email dated May 1, 2025, Emily McGahee stated, “No comment.”

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated April 28, 2025, Nakia Nembhard, GDOT Civil Engineer 3, stated that GDOT coordination is required.

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

In a memo dated May 2, 2025, Bill Nash, Director of Public Works and Utilities, provided the following comments:

Engineering:

No comment

Traffic:

No comment

Utilities:

Not in Hall County Sewer Service Area

Hall County Fire Marshal

In an email dated April 28, 2025, John Hornick, NPQ Fire Service Plans Examiner 1, stated, “The Hall County Fire Marshal’s Office has no comments to amend condition 8 as requested by the applicant.”