



STAFF REPORT

HEARINGS: Planning & Zoning Commission: May 11, 2026
Board of County Commissioners: July 7, 2026

APPLICANT: Southeast Investments

FILE NUMBER: H-26-05

REQUEST: Master Plan Revision on parcel zoned PDP(GC)/ Planned Development Project (General Commercial)

GENERAL LOCATION: Northeast corner of the intersection of Commercial Way and Hexam Road.

PARCEL KEY NUMBER(S): 79060, 79079, 79088, 79097, 79104, 79113, 79122, 79131, 79140, 79168 79220

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

The petitioner is requesting a Master Plan Revision to the existing master plan for the 14.2-acre property located at the corner of Commercial Way and Hexam Road to include parcel Keys (79060, 79079, 79088, 79079, 79104, 79113, 79122, 79131, 79140, 79168 79220). The Subject Property was rezoned in 2007 from a mixed-use Planned Development Project (PDP) to a Planned Development Project (General Commercial) [PDP(GC)] with limited C-2 uses.

In 2013 (H-13-11, Resolution 2013-119), the master plan was revised to allow pole signs while retaining all previously approved entitlements. The property is vested for:

- All C-1 uses
- Selected C-2 uses, including:
 - Drive-in restaurants
 - Automotive-related uses
 - Veterinary clinics
 - Alcohol sales
 - Printing services
 - Plant nurseries

The 2013 resolution outlined Six (6) commercial outparcels, five of which are (5) outparcels with a minimum 1.6 acres each and one (1) larger parcel for a shopping center with the maximum development of 150,000 square feet for the site.

The applicant's current proposal is to include:

- A retail grocery store
- An accessory fueling station with convenience store
- Commercial outparcels

Deviations Requested

The requested deviations include:

- Setbacks:
 - Commercial Way: 75' (deviation from 125')
 - Hexam Road: 20' (deviation from 75' only for fuel station canopy only)
- Buffer
 - Reduce the eastern buffer adjacent to the residential subdivision across Richmond Street from 10 feet to 5 feet and install a 6-foot-tall fence within the reduced buffer to achieve greater than 80% opacity.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Site Size	14.2 Acres
Surrounding Zoning; Land Uses	North: C2/ Commercial South: ROW C2 & R1C: Hexam Road, Commercial, and Residential East: ROW & R1C: Richmond Street & Residential West: ROW, C2 and R1A: Commercial Way, Commercial and Residential
Current Zoning:	PDP(GC)
Future Land Use Map Designation:	Commercial

FIRE REVIEW

Hernando County Fire Rescue (HCFR) advises that the petitioner work closely with HCFR to remain in compliance with fire codes. An approved water supply capable of providing the required fire flow for fire protection must be available for all premises where facilities or buildings are constructed or relocated within the jurisdiction. The approved water supply shall meet the requirements of applicable code sections.

The maximum distance from the closest point on a building to a fire hydrant shall not exceed 400 feet (122 meters). Given the current fire station locations, the Fire Department does not have sufficient resources to respond to commercial development at this site. Therefore, HCFR may require that the developer execute a proportionate share mitigation agreement to offset the impacts on fire and emergency services. This will be determined at the time of site development at the discretion of the Fire Chief.

UTILITIES REVIEW

Hernando County Utilities Department (HCUD) does not currently supply water or wastewater service to these parcels. Water and wastewater are available to these parcels. HCUD has no objection to the master plan revision to modify the access points, setbacks, and concept.

Comments: The petitioner shall provide a utility capacity analysis and demonstrate connection to the central water and wastewater system at the time of site development.

ENGINEERING REVIEW

The subject site is located on Northeast corner of the intersection of Commercial Way and Hexam Road. The Hernando County Engineer has reviewed the petitioner's request and provided the following comments:

- A Traffic Access Analysis is required. Any improvements identified by the Traffic Access Analysis will be the responsibility of the developer to install.
- Richmond Street has been designated as a Reverse Frontage Road for this project. This project is required to connect to Richmond Street.
- Richmond Street will need to be paved to the Northern Property Line of parcel upon development.
- The proposed Frontage Road is required to meet Hernando County Standards. Frontage roads require a sidewalk along one side. Refer to Hernando County Facility Design Guideline IV-04/Frontage Roads.
- The placement of the frontage road, at the northern parcel, to provide future cross connectivity must align and not impede upon the existing parcel at key number 79168 and Hexam Road existing driveways alignment.
- The Parking and Layout, Driveway Entrance/Exits will be required to meet Hernando County Standards.
- The access connection to Hexam Rd. shall be right in / right out only.
- Hexam Road access shall be improved to prevent left in turning maneuvers. The petitioner shall work with the County Engineer as the time of site/building plan to address this requirement.
- A sidewalk is required the parcel length along Hexam Road.
- Sidewalk /pedestrian connectivity shall be provided from building(s) to the future sidewalk along Hexam Road and to the existing sidewalk along U.S. 19/Commercial Way.
- Access connection to Commercial Way must be authorized by Florida Dept. of Transportation/FDOT by an access management permit. This approval must be submitted with the building and site application.
- Project will have to meet the SWFWMD/South West Florida Water Management District Environmental Resource Permitting requirements: For all development properties, where the stormwater system is privately maintained, the issuance of an Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) – General, ERP Individual (not including minor stormwater system, noticed general or exemptions), by the SWFWMD and /or DEP, or a FDOT Drainage permit (for the portion of the project included in the FDOT Drainage permit) shall be deemed as confirmation of compliance with County Stormwater Standards.
 - If this condition is met the County's requirement for stormwater has been met and no additional permit or development order is required.
- The County will review to ensure there is appropriate access and ability to maintain the drainage systems, in case the county assumes maintenance in the future.
- Standard general permit for minor systems, noted general, exemptions, and any permit from SWFWMD, FDOT or DEP that does not receive a technical review by a Professional Engineer will be reviewed by the County for compliance with County stormwater requirements.

LAND USE REVIEW

The petitioner is requesting a Master Plan Revision on parcel zoned PDP(GC)/ Planned Development Project (General Commercial).

The petitioner was previously approved for the following specific C-2 uses:

- Drive-in restaurants
- Tire and automotive accessory establishments
- Automotive specialty establishments
- Veterinarian and animal clinics or hospital service establishment
- Alcoholic beverage dispensation
- Publishing and printing service establishments
- Domestic rental establishments
- Retail plant nurseries
- Automobile service establishments

No changes are being requested to the approved C-2 uses.

Residential Protection Standards:

The subject site shall be subject to the following Residential Protection Standards, in accordance with Appendix A, Article VIII, Section 6.

- There shall be no speakers or other sound equipment located within 100 feet of any single-family residential district property line.
- There shall be no buildings containing alcoholic beverage dispensation establishments, convenience stores, or automotive and truck repair establishments located within 100 feet of any single-family residential district property line.
- No commercial activities which include customer entrances, drive-up windows, ordering boxes, or loading/unloading areas shall be allowed to operate between the hours of 12 midnight and 7:00 a.m. within 100 feet of any single-family residential district property line.
- No building within 100 feet of any single-family residential district property line shall be more than 20 feet in height.
- All loading bays and loading docks must be a minimum of 100' from any single-family residential district property line. Additionally, all loading bays and loading docks must be screened from view from the public right-of-way or single-family residential district property line. Screening may include landscape plantings, berms, fences or walls.
- Air conditioning and/or other operational equipment must be oriented away from single family residentially zoned property or screened to minimize noise impacts and reduce visual incompatibility to the single family residentially zoned property. Screening may include landscape plantings, berms, fences or walls.

Building Height

The petitioner has proposed a maximum building height of 45 feet. Along any adjacent properties zoned Agriculture or Residential; to maintain compatibility with residential standards, the petitioner shall have no building exceeding a maximum building height of 20- feet. In the case the building exceeds 20 feet in height the building setback shall be 100 feet. If the master plan is approved, the petitioner shall be required to provide the following building heights:

- Maximum Building Height 45'/20' Along Residential parcels

Setbacks:**Perimeter Setbacks:**

- Commercial Way: 75' (Deviation from 125')
- North: 20'
- Hexam Road 20' (deviation from 75' only for fuel station canopy only)
- East: 35'

Comments: The proposed setbacks meet the minimum County Land Development Regulations (LDR's) required setbacks for the District. The petitioner has requested gas station canopy setbacks of 20'. The County LDRs do not have minimum canopy setbacks for a gas station; however, gas stations must meet all other commercial standards.

For any adjacent properties zoned Residential, staff recommends a building setback of one hundred (100) feet if the proposed commercial building exceeds twenty (20) feet in height, to maintain compatibility with surrounding residential standards.

Minimum Internal setbacks:

- North: 20'
- South: 20'
- East: 35'
- West: 35'

Buffers:

The petitioner has proposed the following perimeter buffers for the subject site:

- Front (Cortez Blvd): 20' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
- North: 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
- Rear (Richmond St): 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
- Hexam Road: 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer

Comments: The petitioner proposes a 5-foot-wide vegetative buffer with 80% opacity and a 6-foot wall or opaque fence along Richmond Drive. However, buffering must meet the Community Appearance Ordinance requirements wherever the property borders residential areas and along all edges next to public rights-of-way. Buffers may include berms, fences, or walls.

If approved, the petitioner must provide enough buffering to reduce noise impacts on nearby homes. In addition, a 10-foot-wide vegetative buffer with 80% opacity and a 6-foot wall or opaque fence is required along the east side of the property on Richmond Road. The wall or fence should be placed inside the buffer, with landscaping facing the residential properties.

Signs:

County LDRs require that any commercially zoned parcel(s) with less than one hundred (100) linear feet of road frontage will be allowed one (1) sign not to exceed one hundred (100) square feet in sign area. Commercially zoned parcels with a road frontage in excess of one hundred (100) linear feet will be allowed one (1) square foot of sign area per linear foot of road frontage with a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet of sign area. For commercially zoned parcels on all other roads and for parcels within any zoning district other than commercial or residential – Maximum fifty (50) square feet of sign area.

Shopping centers, malls, strip plazas and other buildings housing more than one (1) business or activity may display no more than one (1) sign for each two hundred (200) feet of frontage, provided they are at least two hundred (200) feet apart along public streets and provided each sign does not exceed the maximum allowed according to subsection (1) herein. The petitioner has requested a deviation from the sign ordinance in order to allow pole signs. The deviation is not justified, and the petitioner must provide all on-site advertising signs, including outparcels, as part of a complete signage system, and shall be limited to ground mounted monument type signs. Ground mounted monument type signs are signs where the bottom edge of the sign is no greater than ten (10) feet above grade and which otherwise meets all sign requirements in this code.

The predominant sign material shall be similar to the material (e.g., brick, stone, etc.) of the buildings developed on the subject property.

Minimum County Required Sign Setbacks (based on total sign surface area):

- Up to 75 square feet in area: 5' from property line
- 75 square feet and up to 150 square feet in area: 10' from property line
- 150 square feet or greater: 20' from property line

Large Retail Development

The petitioner is proposing a large retail project totaling 150,000 square feet, including outparcels. The plan shows five outparcels, with the remaining space used for the main shopping center.

County regulations require any development over 65,000 square feet to be approved as a Planned Development Project. Because of the project's size and intensity, the County may add conditions to make sure it fits the location.

The following items must be reviewed under the County's Large Retail Development requirements.

1. Enhanced screening and/or location of air conditioning and/or operational equipment.

Comments: All operational equipment such as A/C units will be located on the rooftops for the majority of the retail establishment. Smaller buildings must have their ground mounted units screened by enhanced landscaping and screened from view from the public right-of-way.

2. Limitations on hours of operation to ensure operational compatibility.

Comments: The petitioner has indicated one or more businesses may operate for 24 hours a day.

3. Screening and/or location of loading areas and loading docks.

Comments: The County LDRs require that all loading bays and loading docks must be screened from view from the public right-of-way. Screening may include landscape plantings, berms, fences and/or walls. Loading is intended along Richmond Drive. The petitioner has proposed a 10' wide vegetative buffer with 80% opacity and a 6' wall or opaque fence.

Lighting:

County Land Development Regulations (LDRs) require lighting that enhances the visual impact of the project on the community and to specifically address lighting intensity levels and glare accordingly. Commercial buildings and projects shall be designed to provide safe, convenient and efficient lighting for pedestrians and vehicles.

Comments: If approved, the petitioner should be required to provide full cutoff fixtures and retain all light on-site and prevent any light spillage onto neighboring properties.

Parking:

In accordance with the Hernando County Land Development Regulations, Retail uses are required to provide parking at a rate of 4 spaces per 1000 square feet. And 1 space per Point of Sale.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

The subject site is located within the Commercial Land use designation on the County's adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy 1.04A(6): The Commercial Category provides for commercial uses including products and services along major corridors and at roadway intersections to serve residents and visitors on both a localized and regionalized basis. The Commercial Category recognizes existing commercial use corridors along U.S. Highway 19 and State Route 50 and existing and planned commercial nodes at intersections of arterial and/or collector roads. The Commercial Category includes small unmapped existing commercial properties. The Commercial Category also recognizes the ability to designate infill parcels for commercial use lying in proximity to and between, but not necessarily contiguous to, other existing commercially designated properties. Publicly owned lands along the commercial use corridors that are made available for surplus may be considered to have a Commercial designation, if the agency proceeds through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment process to amend the future land use map, in accordance with Section 163.3184, F.S.

Objective 1.04G: The Commercial Category allows primarily retail, office, and commercial service uses with an overall average gross floor area ratio of 0.35 but also includes limited industrial, recreational, and institutional uses. Residential and mixed uses may be allowed subject to locational criteria and performance standards.

Strategy 1.04G(1): Commercial development as envisioned on the Future Land Use Map is intended primarily for locations at major intersections and along major corridors where service to local and regional markets are enhanced by transportation patterns. New commercial zoning is directed to these mapped areas. Commercial areas that are not mapped but are allowed under this Future Land Use Category include neighborhood commercial and specialty commercial uses as described in this Plan, commercial approved as part of mixed-use developments, commercial designated by planned development districts, the infill development of existing commercial areas, commercial areas extending from designated commercial nodes, and pre-existing commercially developed and designated areas. Frontage roads and cross-access between commercial uses is required where needed in accordance with the provisions of this Plan and adopted land development regulations.

Comments: The request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, compatible with surrounding uses, and provides adequate residential protection for existing surrounding residential developments.

FINDINGS OF FACT

A Master Plan revision on parcel zoned PDP(GC)/ Planned Development Project (General Highway Commercial to Include C-2 Uses is appropriate due to the following findings of fact:

1. The request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Strategies for the location of commercial development and the surrounding commercial uses.

NOTICE OF APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY

The rezoning process is a land use determination and does not constitute a permit for either construction on, or use of, the property, or a Certificate of Concurrence. Prior to use of, or construction on, the property, the petitioner must receive approval from the appropriate County department(s) for the proposed use.

The granting of this land use determination does not protect the owner from civil liability for recorded deed restrictions which may exceed any county land use ordinances. Homeowner associations or architectural review committees require submission of plans for review and approval. The applicant for this land use request should contact the local association or the Public Records for all restrictions applicable to this property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission recommend the Board of County Commissioners adopt a resolution approving the petitioner's request for a Master Plan revision on parcel zoned PDP(GC)/ Planned Development Project (General Commercial) to Include C-2 Uses with the following performance conditions:

1. The petitioner must obtain all permits from Hernando County and other applicable agencies and meet all applicable land development regulations, for either construction or use of the property, and complete all applicable development review processes.
2. The petitioner shall be required to comply with all applicable Southwest Florida Water Management District, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection permitting requirements.
3. The petitioner must meet the minimum requirements of Florida Friendly Landscaping™ publications and the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program for design techniques, principles, materials, and plantings for required landscaping.
4. The petitioner shall provide a utility capacity analysis and connection to the utility system(s), as required by ordinance, at time of site development.
5. A Traffic Access Analysis is required. Any improvements identified by the Traffic Access Analysis will be the responsibility of the developer to install.
6. The driveways, parking spaces, and overall site layout shall be required to meet all applicable County standards, as outlined in the facility design guidelines.

7. Richmond Street has been designated as a Reverse Frontage Road for this project. This project is required to connect to Richmond Street.
8. Richmond Street will need to be paved to the Northern Property Line of parcel upon development.
9. The proposed Frontage Road is required to meet Hernando County Standards.
10. Frontage roads require a sidewalk along one side. Refer to Hernando County Facility Design Guideline IV-04/Frontage Roads.
11. The placement of the frontage road, at the northern parcel, to provide future cross connectivity must align and not impede upon the existing parcel at key number 79168 and Hexam Road existing driveways alignment.
12. Access to Hexam Road shall be limited to right-in/right-out movements only..
13. Hexam Road access point shall be designed and improved to prevent left-turn ingress movements. Coordination with the County Engineer will be required during the site plan design phase.
14. Sidewalk required the parcel length along Hexam Road.
15. Sidewalk /pedestrian connectivity shall be provided from building(s) to the future sidewalk along Hexam Road and to the existing sidewalk along U.S. 19/Commercial Way.
16. Access to Commercial Way must be authorized by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) through an access management permit.
17. The project must comply with Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) requirements of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).
 - For development projects with privately maintained stormwater systems, issuance of one of the following shall constitute compliance with County stormwater standards:
 - ERP General Permit
 - ERP Individual Permit (excluding minor stormwater systems, noticed general permits, or exemptions)
 - FDOT Drainage Permit (for applicable project areas)
 - If one of the above permits is obtained, no additional County stormwater permit or development order will be required.
 - The County will review the project to ensure adequate access and the ability to maintain the drainage system, should maintenance be assumed in the future.
 - Any permit classified as a general permit for minor systems, noticed general permit, exemption, or any permit issued by SWFWMD, FDOT, or DEP that does not include technical review by a Professional Engineer will be subject to County review for compliance with County stormwater requirements.

18. The petitioner was previously approved for the following specific C-2 uses:
- Drive-in restaurants
 - Tire and automotive accessory establishments
 - Automotive specialty establishments
 - Veterinarian and animal clinics or hospital service establishment
 - Alcoholic beverage dispensation
 - Publishing and printing service establishments
 - Domestic rental establishments
 - Retail plant nurseries
 - Automobile service establishments
19. The maximum building height shall be 45 feet, except on parcels abutting residential properties, where the maximum building height shall be limited to 20 feet.
20. Minimum Perimeter Setbacks:
- Commercial Way: 75' (Deviation from 125')
 - North: 20'
 - Hexam Road 20' (deviation from 75' only for fuel station canopy only)
 - East: 35'
21. Minimum Internal setbacks:
- North: 20'
 - South: 20'
 - East: 35'
 - West: 35'
22. Minimum Buffers:
- Front (Cortez Blvd): 20' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
 - North: 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
 - Rear (Richmond St): 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
 - Hexam Road: 10' Undisturbed Enhanced buffer
23. The petitioner shall meet all of the Large Retail Project design standards as indicated in the County's Land Development Regulations.
24. The project shall be limited to 150,000 square feet including all outparcels.
25. The petitioner shall provide a master sign plan at the time of site development (or conditional plat if the property is to be subdivided). All on-site signage, including signage for outparcels, shall be designed as part of a unified signage system and shall be limited to ground-mounted monument-type signs. Monument signs shall have a maximum height of ten (10) feet from grade to the bottom edge of the sign and must comply with all applicable provisions of this Code. The predominant sign materials shall be consistent with the architectural materials of the principal buildings on the subject property (e.g., brick, stone, etc.).

26. The petitioner shall be required to provide full cutoff fixtures and retain all light on-site and prevent any light spillage onto neighboring properties.
27. In accordance with the Hernando County Land Development Regulations, Retail uses are required to provide parking at a rate of 4 spaces per 1000 Square feet. The applicant will be required to demonstrate compliance with all applicable parking requirements at the time of site plan review for the proposed commercial development.
28. A 10' wide vegetative buffer with 80% opacity and a six (6) foot wall or opaque fence shall be provided on the east side of the property along Richmond Road. The wall or fence shall be placed along the inside of the buffer with landscape facing residential uses.
29. The petitioner shall work closely with the Hernando County Fire Rescue to remain in compliance with fire codes.
30. The maximum distance from the closest point on a building to a fire hydrant shall not exceed 400 feet (122 meters).
31. Hernando County Fire Rescue may require that the developer execute a proportionate share mitigation agreement to offset the impacts on fire and emergency services. This will be determined at the time of site development at the discretion of the Fire Chief. Given the current fire station locations, the Fire Department does not have sufficient resources to respond to commercial development at this site.
32. The petitioner shall provide a Master Plan in compliance with all the performance conditions within 30 calendar days of receipt of Board of County Commissioners action from Development Services Staff. Failure to submit the revised plan will result in no further development permits being issued.