

**CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
STAFF REPORT**

DOCKET: UDO-CC11
STAFF: Tiffany White

REQUEST

This text amendment is proposed by Planning and Development Services staff to amend Sections 5 and 11 of the *Unified Development Ordinances (UDO)* to revise Use-Specific Standards for Storage Services, Retail and Definitions.

BACKGROUND

As part of its 2020-2021 work program, the City-County Planning Board requested that staff evaluate UDO standards for Storage Services, Retail. This use allows self-storage buildings with units accessed either by exterior doors or internal corridors.

Over the past few years, staff has seen an increase in requests for this use, especially for multi-story self-storage buildings with internally accessed units. In fact, this concept has become the dominant self-storage model in many communities. When reviewing these projects with petitioners in the past, staff has suggested design modifications that help these uses better fit in with the character of surrounding businesses and neighborhoods.

Because of the increase in storage building requests, the Planning Board asked staff to research best practices and develop basic standards for this use, especially related to building materials and design. Inclusion of better-defined standards in the UDO would benefit self-storage projects by better reflecting staff expectations and reducing negotiation for individual projects. The changes proposed below would apply to new development, and not impact existing Storage Services, Retail uses.

ANALYSIS

Based on research of peer communities and best practices, staff recommends that the Storage Services, Retail Use-Specific Standards be divided into two categories: External Access and Internal Access. External Access facilities are traditional one-level storage buildings that are accessed by exterior doors. Internal Access facilities refer to the typically multi-story buildings where individual storage units are accessed from interior doors and corridors. Separating these uses allows for specific standards that can be applied to each use as appropriate.

Proposed External Access Storage Standards

This ordinance proposes relatively few standards for External Access Storage facilities. Staff believes this is appropriate given the other uses allowed in the zoning districts where they are found. Primarily, the proposed standards ensure that storage will be the only activity on site and

no hazardous materials will be stored. This use does allow outdoor storage, but additional standards are proposed for screening outdoor storage in the Highway Business (HB) and General Business (GB) zoning districts to minimize the impact of outdoor storage on the streetscape.

Proposed Internal Access Storage Standards

As mentioned previously, Internal Access storage buildings have become the predominant storage model locally, and these projects have often been approved via Special Use Zoning. As such, neighbors and Planning Board members have had significant discussion regarding how these uses can better relate to their surroundings, and proposed standards are more robust than those for External Access storage. These standards include requiring specific siding materials like stone, brick, and others that provide architectural detailing and help these buildings fit in with surrounding development. Additional standards state that building facades must be articulated in some way to avoid long, uninterrupted walls to improve compatibility with neighborhoods. Buildings must also include windows along public-facing facades. Because of the internally-oriented nature of this use and the additional zoning districts where it is proposed, outdoor storage, such as for RVs and boats, is NOT allowed with Internal Access projects.

Staff believes that the common design features of Internal Access storage buildings (including multi-story facades and internal corridor access) are aesthetically similar to many office buildings. Furthermore, this use requires minimal parking and generates little traffic. As such, this use can be an unobtrusive addition to zoning districts where office-style buildings are already allowed. Because of this, staff is recommending expanding the zoning districts where Internal Access Storage is allowed to include the General Office (GO), Limited Business (LB) and Major Retail and Business (MRB-S) districts.

Other Proposed Changes

The Storage Services, Retail use has been allowed in the Pedestrian Business (PB) zoning district since 2004 through Special Use Zoning. Standards were developed at that time requiring the Storage Services use to only occupy 50% of an existing building and that storage units must be accessed from interior corridors. The use was also prohibited in freestanding buildings. With the addition of expanded standards for Internal Access Storage buildings generally, staff proposes allowing Internal Access buildings in PB with Planning Board Review (*the Planning Board ultimately recommended an Elected Body special Use Permit for such buildings in PB as well as LB zoning districts*). In addition, any development of Storage Services, Retail in the district will require a mix of nonresidential uses along the street level right-of-way to promote the pedestrian, mixed-use nature of the district.

Hybrid projects that include both External Access and Internal Access storage buildings will only be allowed in zoning districts where both uses are allowed. In those instances, standards for both uses would apply to the relevant parts of the development, and placement of the external access storage is required to be to the rear or side of the internal access storage building. Additionally, any external access buildings are required to incorporate design elements and building materials which are complementary to the internal access buildings on-site.

CONCLUSION

The changing landscape in the self-storage industry has necessitated a reassessment of how these developments are regulated. Staff believes these better-defined ordinance standards will provide clarity in the project review process and safeguard the character of existing commercial and residential areas.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

**CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES FOR UDO-CC11
JUNE 10, 2021**

Tiffany White presented the staff report.

Melynda asked Tiffany to quantify the limited amount of LB zoning noted in her research.

Clarence asked if this ordinance would impact repurposing of any other types of structures. Chris Murphy stated that an existing office building, for example, will more than likely already meet the material requirements, but taking a building and modifying the exterior and adding on to it would be more like a hybrid.

Jack Steelman stated that he supported the intended goals of the text amendment but was not sure that the draft language, as written, will enable the Board to accomplish those goals. He referred to a storage facility on Robinhood Road and asked that more time be spent working on the language of the ordinance to make sure it supports the Board's intentions.

George stated that he would like to see a text amendment that centered on walkability and revitalizing retail and blocks of neighborhoods, regardless of the building use.

PUBLIC HEARING

FOR: None

AGAINST: None

WORK SESSION

After some discussion, George made a motion to approve the proposed text amendment with various revisions intended to clarify the language of the standards. It was seconded by Melynda, who stated that she appreciated staff's research on LB districts in activity centers. She also stated her appreciation for the changes that would make the externally accessed storage facilities more attractive, but she urged the Board to think about the use itself and not just its appearance. She added that she sees this as more of a warehousing use rather than an office use.

Chris Murphy noted that storage services are currently allowed in PB districts with an elected body Special Use Permit, but they are not allowed in LB districts. Staff was considering those districts because they would allow the use with higher design standards to relieve pressure from requests that would rezone property to HB or GB.

Kirk Ericson stated that staff could have revised language distributed in the next week so the Board could vote on it at Work Session.

George stated that he has heard from neighborhoods that are concerned with many issues that they do not understand. He wanted them to have the opportunity to take it to their neighborhood associations.

MOTION: Jack Steelman moved that this item be continued to the June Work Session for further discussion and input from the Board and staff.

SECOND: George Bryan

VOTE:

FOR: George Bryan, Melynda Dunigan, Walter Farabee, Jason Grubbs, Clarence Lambe, Chris Leak, Mo McRae, Brenda Smith, Jack Steelman

AGAINST: None

EXCUSED: None

Aaron King
Director of Planning and Development Services