



CITY OF DURHAM | DURHAM COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA



Date: January 3, 2018

To: Members of the Joint City-County Planning Committee

Through: Patrick O. Young, AICP, Planning Director

From: Michael Stock, AICP, Senior Planner

Subject: Self-Service Storage Facilities

Summary. Upon the recent approval of case Z1600030, Ample Storage Sandy Creek, the City Council requested staff to look into the proliferation of self-storage facilities. This report is intended to provide preliminary background and to receive policy guidance regarding such facilities.

Recommendation. The staff recommends that the Joint City-County Planning Committee (JCCPC) receive this report and provide comment and policy direction. No additional action is required.

Background. As described in paragraph 5.2.5G, Self-Service Storage, self-service storage facilities (a.k.a. “self-storage”, “mini-storage”, or “mini-warehouse” facilities) provide “separate storage areas for personal or business use designed to allow private access by the tenant for storing or removing personal property.” Within the *Unified Development Ordinance* (UDO), they are classified as a “commercial” use allowed in the Commercial General (CG), Industrial Light (IL), Industrial (I), Industrial Park (IP), Mixed Use (MU), and Downtown Design (DD) zoning districts with associated limited use standards. Those standards, within paragraph 5.3.4T, are as follows:

T. Self-Service Storage

Self-service storage shall be permitted in accordance with the use table in Sec. 5.1, Use Table, subject to the following:

1. The facility shall be screened from view from adjacent properties pursuant to Sec. 9.7, Screening, except in the DD District.
2. In the DD District, storage units shall not be visible off-site and access to individual storage units shall be from corridors internal to the building.
3. In the DD District, the ground floor shall be a use or uses other than, and not associated with, self-service storage. Those uses shall be as allowed in Sec. 5.1, Use Table. The following are exceptions:
 - a. A maximum of 400 square feet of office associated with the self-service storage use can be located on the ground floor.
 - b. Access to the self-service storage facility is allowed. However, loading access/areas shall not be located along street frontages.

These standards have been in place, with subsequent amendments, since the adoption of the UDO in 2006. The previous Merged Zoning Ordinance classified these facilities as a type of warehousing permitted in the Commercial Trade (CT), and Industrial -1, -2, and -3 (I-1, I-2, and I-3) zoning districts; and allowed with a special use permit in the Shopping Center (SC) zoning district. No supplementary standards, similar to “limited use” standards within the UDO, were adopted.

The limited use standards were amended in 2017 as part of TC1400003, Design District Updates, to limit ground floor use of these facilities in the DD district. Staff initially proposed removing the use from the DD district, consistent with the CD district; however, feedback from the JCCPC indicated that a more substantial limitation was preferable to an outright removal as an allowed use within the zoning district.

The current omnibus text amendment TC1700005 includes a proposed amendment that clarifies screening requirements are not applicable when the individual units are internal to a building. This only impacts the additional screening standards, and not any required project boundary buffers.

Issues. A general concern regarding the proliferation of these facilities in recent years, and concentration in certain geographic areas, has prompted the City Council to request the Planning Department to discuss the topic with the JCCPC.

Some general statistics obtained from the self-storage industry* are as follows:

1. In the U.S., 65% of self-storage renters have a garage in their home, 47% have an attic, and 33% have a basement.
2. Self-storage facilities in the U.S. have employed more than 170,000 persons which averages 3.5 employees per facility.
3. Occupancy rate is approximately 90%.
4. 8.96% of American households currently rent a self-storage unit. Popular renters are businesses and military personnel.
5. There are approximately 58,000 self-storage facilities in the country.
6. Approximately 4,000 of these are multi-story facilities.

In Durham, there are approximately 36 self-storage facilities. This would not include more specialized facilities such as record/data storage. Of these:

- 30 are located in industrial zoning districts, specifically IL or IP;
- Four in the CG zoning district;
- One in the DD zoning district; and
- One in the RR zoning district (a nonconforming use).

* Data obtained from <http://brutestorage.com/blog/self-storage-statistics> and <https://www.mediagrouponlineinc.com/self-storage-industry-statistics/>

Staff also looked at approvals (either re-zoning or administrative approvals) within the last four years to determine the number of units approved, with some already constructed and in operation. Dating back to 2014, there were 18 approvals for new facilities, not including expansions of existing facilities. These either only required site plan approval because the zoning was already in place, or required a re-zoning approval. Of these, eight required (with two still pending approval) a rezoning approval from City Council.

- 11 are located in or are seeking CG zoning;
- Five are located in or are seeking IL zoning; and
- Two in the DD zoning district.

Staff has not been able to determine the total number of units of the 36 existing facilities. However, of the 18 approved since 2014, with some already constructed, the unit total is estimated to be at least 8,800 storage units. This number includes estimates for the two DD-zoned facilities since the site plans did not indicate the number of units, thus typical floor plans were used. It also does not include recently approved Ample Storage or two other pending zoning map change applications, since the number of units is not required for purposes of the development plans, only building envelopes.

Other Jurisdictions. Staff has reviewed other jurisdictions within North Carolina and determined the following:

1. The use is classified generally as either commercial or industrial. Durham classifies self-storage as “commercial.”
2. Most zoning districts allowed are commercial, industrial, or certain mixed use districts. This is consistent with Durham.
3. Of the jurisdictions that prescribe supplemental standards, they consisted of:
 - a. Minimum or maximum site acreage
 - b. Prohibitions on other uses within the storage units (sales, manufacturing, repairs, storage of hazardous materials, etc.)
 - c. Limits on outdoor storage
 - d. Maximum building area
 - e. Maximum height
 - f. Allowance for a caretaker dwelling unit
 - g. Additional screening or buffers
 - h. Prescribed façade material requirements
 - i. Required other uses on first floor of multi-floor structures
 - j. Requiring a special use permit for certain zoning districts
 - k. Signage limitations.

These demonstrate a range of various supplemental requirements. Most jurisdictions, if they had supplemental requirements, maintain only some of

the standards listed above. In regards to Durham's requirements, many of the standards listed above are prescribed for self-storage facilities, even if not listed within the limited use standards. For example:

- A caretaker residence and outdoor storage is listed in paragraph 5.2.5G as allowed accessory uses.
- Outdoor Storage has additional standards within Sec. 7.5, Outdoor Display and Storage.
- Height is regulated by zoning district and Tier.
- Hazardous material storage is listed as a separate primary use (a heavy industrial use) limited to the Industrial (I) zoning district.

No examples of separation requirements between facilities have been found at this time.

In short, there is a demonstrated increase of self-storage facility development, presumably reflecting a demand for the facilities not only for individual need, but also for business storage purposes. These facilities do not generate numerous job opportunities outside of the construction phase of the project. However, the recent trend in locating within CG-zoned property may allow prime industrial land to be available for other uses. At this time, staff has not determined that additional regulation is necessary, and the governing bodies always have the right to refuse a rezoning request if there are concerns regarding the uses the rezoning would allow.

Contact. Michael Stock, AICP, Senior Planner, 919-560-4137 ext. 28227;
Michael.Stock@DurhamNC.gov.