



Legislation Text

File #: Ord 2203, **Version:** 2

AN ORDINANCE ENACTING NEW SECTION 21-5225 OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE ALLOWING AND REGULATING COMMERCIAL INDOOR SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES, AMENDING SECTION 21-11200 TO ADD THE DEFINITION OF COMMERCIAL INDOOR SELF STORAGE, AND AMENDING TABLE V - 1 - LAND USE TABLE TO INCLUDE COMMERCIAL INDOOR SELF STORAGE

Summary and Background Information:

The Land Development Code (LDC) (Ordinance #1798) was adopted by City Council in January 2009 and went into effect on March 1, 2009. This Land Development Code was a comprehensive update to the Commerce City Zoning Ordinance, which included a wide variety of topics dealing with development and land use, such as application types, zoning districts, use standards, subdivision procedures, design standards and signs. Thousands of items are included within the Land Development Code and overall, the updated code has been a tremendous help to staff and applicants when reviewing development proposals.

The Land Development Code is a “living document” that acts as a tool to guide future development of a community, protect neighborhoods, focus development, and enhance the environment. As a part of the public review process for the LDC, it was mentioned that the code would be an “on-going work in progress,” and that this document would continually evolve to reflect the needs and desires of the city. To implement this, changes or amendments are implemented periodically.

Commercial Self-Storage Facilities:

Over the last few years, staff has received several inquiries regarding development of self-storage facilities in commercial zone districts. The proposed facilities have been all or mostly indoor-access, climate-controlled, multi-story types of facilities with exterior appearances similar to office buildings or multi-family residential buildings. Currently, the Land Development Code (LDC) only allows self-storage facilities (mini-storage) in industrial zone districts. The purpose of this ordinance is to allow commercial indoor self-storage facilities to be allowed in the C-3 zone district subject to additional potential design standards. This change would not impact most PUDs in the Northern Range, though they could opt to amend their zoning to allow this use as well.

Based on the number of inquiries, staff has researched 16 other jurisdictions to compare how Commerce City regulates self-storage facilities, and found 11 allow self-storage in at least one commercial zone district, while 5 prohibit such facilities in commercial zone districts. Of those that allow self-storage facilities in commercial zone districts, some require an enhanced level of design (such as minimum 2-story structure, restrictions on outdoor access to units, or limiting proximity to highly-visible corridors). Several adjacent jurisdictions have allowed the commercial-style facilities to be built, including Denver (Stapleton), Thornton, and Aurora.

Some of the potential benefits for allowing self-storage facilities in commercial areas include:

- Supporting residential and commercial growth. Typical users of mini-storage include households in transition due to moving, marriage, divorce, estate management, etc.; home occupations, such as pharmaceutical representatives and direct sales; businesses storing excess inventory and supplies, such as real estate signs, stock, files, and equipment; and sports leagues with seasonal equipment like balls, goals, and protective gear.
- Locating on under-used or difficult to develop sites. Self-storage has a relatively low impact for the building size due to the limited traffic and noise compared to other commercial uses, so it can fit on sites that would otherwise be undeveloped due to access, visibility, utility, or similar constraints. Allowing difficult properties to develop also adds more to the property tax base than leaving them vacant.
- Allowing people to reclaim garages. Many people with garages tend to use them for storage rather than for parking. Providing easily accessible storage units near residential areas allows people to clear the garage space for parking vehicles or to store items that otherwise might be stored outdoors, such as a lawnmower, creating an unsightly appearance and potential code violations.

Some concerns with allowing self-storage facilities in commercial areas include:

- Taking up land that could be used for higher-priority commercial uses. Economic Development staff typically seeks commercial users who create good paying jobs and generate activity in the area to support other businesses. Self-storage facilities typically only need a few employees to manage the office and sometimes provide security at night. Tenants generally do not regularly access their storage units, resulting in few trips and lower activity than a use like a retail store or a restaurant.
- Large structures may feel out of place. While design standards can help encourage a more pedestrian-scale feeling rather than a monolithic block, self-storage structures themselves are still larger than many other commercial buildings.
- Repurposing buildings for other uses. In the event that a self-storage facility closes, the opportunities for the building to house other types of uses may be limited given the size and design. Additionally, parking requirements for storage is typically lower than other commercial uses because most people only rarely need to access their units, and provided parking may not be adequate to convert to other types of uses.

To mitigate the potential concerns and maximize the potential benefits of allowing self-storage facilities in commercial areas, a list of potential supplemental regulations has been created, including use standards and design standards, which are outlined within the attached ordinance.

Study sessions were held with Planning Commission on February 5, 2019 and with City Council on March 11, 2019 to discuss the proposed amendments and provide feedback. Comments were incorporated into the proposed amendments such as utilizing units for gathering spaces, minimum percentage of glazing, encourage ground floor retail, limit hours of operation until 10 pm, and include a separation requirement between similar uses. On April 2, 2019, Planning Commission voted 5 to 0 to recommend approval to City Council. The complete final language for the proposed amendments is within the council packet.

Staff Responsible (Department Head): Chris Cramer, Director of Community Development
Staff Member Presenting: Steve Timms, Planning Manager

Financial Impact: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

Staff Recommendation:

Suggested Motion: