

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM: ^{JLS} Jennifer Steingasser,
Deputy Director, Development Review & Historic Preservation
DATE: January 17, 2020
SUBJECT: ZC Case 20-___: Setdown and Pre-Hearing Report for a Proposed Zoning Text Amendment to Require Ground Floor Uses in Self-Service Storage Establishments

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends the Zoning Commission set down for public hearing the following text amendments to the Zoning Regulations pertaining to self-storage storage establishments.

1. Under Subtitle B, define the term “self-service storage establishment;” and use the term consistently throughout the regulations; and
2. Under Subtitle U, require street activating ground floor uses in “self-service storage establishments”.

II. BACKGROUND

Self-service storage establishments are a use permitted as a matter-of-right within the PDR zones. This tends to be a use that does not employ large numbers of people, generate frequent visits, or activate the streets on which they are located.

Requiring a portion of the ground floor to be devoted to non-self-storage unit use would help to activate the street, encourage the provision of uses that provide greater employment, and provide service and retail opportunities for residents and workers in the surrounding area to the benefit of the District. Design standards for ground floor preferred uses to require a minimum of fourteen-foot floor-to-ceiling height and a minimum amount of window glazing would make these ground floor spaces more conducive to these uses.

Provisions requiring specified ground floor uses along the street exist in many zones, including the Downtown Retail Core Sub-Area, Georgia Avenue, Northern Howard Road and the Mixed-Use Uptown Arts zones, amongst others. The proposed text is based existing language in the Zoning Regulations.

III. PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends the Zoning Commission set down for public hearing text amendments to the following sections of the Zoning Regulations (deleted text shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and proposed text shown in **bold and underlined**):

a. Amend Subtitle B § 200 DEFINITIONS

100.2 When used in this title, the following terms and phrases shall have the meanings ascribed:

Self-Service Storage Establishment: A facility for the purpose of storing personal or business property and where such facility:

- (a) **Is partitioned into individual, securely subdivided spaces for lease; or**
- (b) **Consists of enclosed or unenclosed floor space subdivided by secured bins, boxes, containers, pods or other mobile or stationary storage devices; and**
- (c) **Is leased or rented to persons or businesses to access, store or remove property on a self-service basis.**

b. Amend Subtitle B § 200 INTRODUCTION

200.2 When used in this title, the following use categories shall have the following meanings:

- (aa) Production, Distribution, and Repair:

- (3) Examples include, but are not limited to: manufacturing facility, concrete plant, asphalt plant, material salvage, hauling or terminal yard, chemical storage or distribution, outdoor material storage, acetylene gas manufacturing, fertilizer manufacturing, rock quarrying, warehouse, storage, self-~~service~~ storage **establishment**, ground shipping facility, or wholesale sales; and;

c. Amend Subtitle K § 415 PROHIBITED USES IN THE HE ZONES (HE)

415.1 The following uses are prohibited within the HE zones as both the principal and accessory uses, unless otherwise noted:

- (e) Self-service storage establishment ~~that provides separate storage areas for individual or business uses;~~

d. Amend Subtitle K § 615 USES PROHIBITED (StE)

615.1 The following uses are prohibited within the StE zones as both the principal and accessory use:

- (f) Self-service storage establishment ~~that provides separate storage areas for individual or business uses;~~

e. Amend Subtitle K § 914 PROHIBITED USES (WR)

914.1 The following uses are prohibited within the WR zones as either a principal or accessory use:

- (c) Self-service storage establishment ~~that provides separate storage areas for individual or business uses;~~

f. Amend Subtitle U § 801, Matter-of-Right Use (PDR)

801.1 The following uses shall be permitted in a PDR zone as a matter of right, subject to any applicable conditions:

- (v) Production, distribution, and repair uses are permitted as a matter of right, subject to compliance with the Standards of External Effects in Subtitle U § 804, except for the following prohibited uses or activities, **or as permitted pursuant to Subsection (w), Self-service storage establishments:**

- (w) **Self-service storage establishments, subject to the following:**

- (1) Devote not less than fifty percent (50%) of the ground floor area to one (1) or more of the preferred use categories of U § 801.1(w)(3);**
- (2) Devote one hundred percent (100%) of the building's street frontage along a public street to preferred uses to a minimum depth of thirty feet (30 ft.) from the front facade, with the exception of space devoted to building entrances or required for fire control;**
- (3) Devote the ground floor to the following preferred use categories:**
 - (A) Animal sales, care, and boarding;**
 - (B) Apartment unit for the use of a caretaker, watchman, or janitor employed on the premises;**
 - (C) Arts, design, and creation;**
 - (D) Eating and drinking establishments;**
 - (E) Medical care; and**
 - (F) Office and retail-commercial or service-commercial uses.**
- (4) Not devote the ground floor within the building to vehicle parking;**
- (5) Design the ground floor with:**
 - (A) A minimum clear floor-to-ceiling height of fourteen feet (14 ft.), measured from the finished grade; and**
 - (B) Not less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the surface area of the street wall associated with the preferred uses at the ground floor to windows, which shall include:**

- (i) Clear/low emissivity glass allowing transparency to a depth of twenty feet (20 ft.) into the preferred ground level space, with bottom sills no more than four feet (4 ft.) above the adjacent sidewalk grade; and**
- (ii) Views from within the building to the street and from the street into the building.**

(X) Residential uses are limited to the following list of conditions:

IV. ANALYSIS

The proposed text amendments would continue to allow self-service storage facilities within the PDR zones as a matter-of-right but would require a diversification of uses on the ground floor of those buildings. Although self-service storage facilities are a component of the industrial landscape and a desired use by many, as evidenced by their popularity for both residents and business owners in the District, the use results in a low-intensive utilization of the land, neither generating significant employment nor activating the street with other more active uses, such as manufacturing, retail-commercial, service-commercial or office space, as anticipated by the zone.

Requiring providers of self-service storage facilities to make their ground floors available for other more intensive uses that provide a valuable service to the surrounding community, such as retail, restaurants and other eating and drinking establishments to serve employees and visitors to industrial areas, employment uses such as arts, design and creation, catering to and providing space for the artistic community, or encouraging animal related uses away from more densely occupied buildings, where they are less likely to impact adjoining uses. These uses would serve to increase foot traffic to those buildings while increasing service and/or employment opportunities available to the surrounding communities and the District as a whole.

V. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Citywide Elements

Chapter 3, Land Use Element

Policy LU-3.1.1: Conservation of Industrial Land

Recognize the importance of industrial land to the economy of the District of Columbia, specifically its ability to support public works functions, and accommodate production, distribution, and repair (PDR) activities. **Ensure that zoning regulations and land use decisions protect active and viable PDR land uses, while allowing compatible office and retail uses** and development under standards established within CM- and M- zoning. Economic development programs should work to retain and permit such uses in the future. ^{314.7} (emphasis added)

Chapter 7, Economic Development Element

Policy ED-2.2.3: Neighborhood Shopping

Create additional shopping opportunities in Washington’s neighborhood commercial districts to better meet the demand for basic goods and services. Reuse of vacant buildings in these districts should be encouraged, along **with appropriately-scaled retail infill development on vacant and underutilized sites**. Promote the creation of locally-owned, non-chain establishments because of their role in creating unique shopping experiences. 708.7 (emphasis added)

Policy ED-3.1.1: Neighborhood Commercial Vitality

Promote the vitality and diversity of Washington’s neighborhood commercial areas by retaining existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and **improving the mix of goods and services available to residents**. 713.5 (emphasis added)

Chapter 14, Arts and Culture Element

AC-3.1 Housing for the Creative Workforce 1409

According to Census 2000, the District has a higher percentage of artists in its workforce than any other state in the country. **Yet the city’s ability to sustain its artists is threatened by a lack of affordable real estate and suitable locations for studios, live-work space, and production facilities**. Some artistic enterprises have already left the city for cheaper space in the suburbs. Businesses in the cultural and non-profit sectors are particularly vulnerable to cost pressures due to their low profit margins, specialized needs, and entrepreneurial nature. 1409.1 (**emphasis added**)

Requiring a significant proportion of the ground floor of self-service storage establishments, particularly along the street, to be occupied by other uses permitted either as a matter-of-right or by special exception within the zone in which the property is located, would serve to improve the mix of goods and services available to nearby workers and residents through the introduction of retail/commercial uses within the building, and increase employment opportunities. Potential uses could be retail, expanding shopping opportunities, or service or industrial uses to increase employment opportunities.

VI. OTHER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

“Ward 5 Works, The District of Columbia Ward 5 Industrial Land Transformation Study”, August 2014. This plan examines how the District’s industrial land can be better used to create jobs, address community concerns and achieve neighborhood amenities and services, including job growth and economic diversification.

“Action 2.1: Revise the zoning code to preserve Ward 5 industrial land.

To preserve industrial land and space for neighborhood-friendly businesses, the DC Zoning Commission and the Office of Planning should refrain from rezoning industrial land, at least within designated areas of cohesive industrial use in Ward 5. The District could adopt Industrial Business Districts that strengthen the long-term protections.

More importantly, the industrial zoning categories should be amended to exclude higher value uses, particularly:

- **Stand-alone self-storage facilities without industrial uses activating the ground floor;**
- Educational institutions other than workforce training facilities; and
- Hotels outside the newly created New York Avenue PDR District (Action 2.3).

Self-storage facilities would be an appropriate use for the upper floors of a multi-story facility.”
(emphasis added)

VII. SUMMARY OF PLANNING CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The proposed text amendments to self-service storage establishment requirements would improve the mix of uses available to residents and workers in the area. Through the provision of such service-retail, service-commercial, compatible office, maker-space, and animal care uses within the PDR zones, these text amendments are intended to mitigate the consequences of self-service storage establishments on streetscape character and activation. Additionally, use of one consistent term for “self-service storage establishments” would serve to clarify and streamline the use of the Zoning Regulations, while continuing to allow the market to provide the use within the industrial zones.

JS/sjm