

Task 3 – Code Amendments: Self-Service Storage Facilities

Last Updated August 10, 2026

Overview

The proposed amendments respond to the findings from Task 1: Assessment of Existing Documents and Best Practices, Task 2: Recommended Amendments, and direction from the County Commissioners as they relate to self-service storage facilities.

The proposed Chapter 158 amendments modernize and clarify the County's approach to regulating self-service storage by establishing distinct use categories for Drive-Up Self-Service Storage Facilities and Internal Self-Service Storage Facilities. This distinction reflects current industry formats and differing land use impacts, while providing clearer, more intuitive standards for applicants, reviewers, and decision-makers. In addition to refining terminology, the amendments establish a predictable approval framework with defined review pathways based on zoning district, building type, and development intensity.

To improve consistency and usability, the revised use categories have been incorporated into the zoning use tables, clearly identifying where each format is permitted by right or subject to conditional use approval.

All applicable operational, architectural, site design, and buffering standards are retained within the Zoning Ordinance to ensure clarity, enforceability, and ease of reference, given their specificity to self-service storage development.

Overall, these updates are intended to improve regulatory clarity, better align self-service storage development with the County's adopted planning policies and commercial zoning hierarchy, strengthen compatibility with surrounding uses, and provide a transparent and defensible framework for reviewing future storage facility proposals.

Summary of Amended Code Sections

Code Section	Name	Notes	Associated Recommendation
§ 158.002	Definitions	Create separate definitions for Drive-Up and Internal self-service storage facilities.	Definitions
§ 158.082	Principal Uses	Specify where self-storage is permitted and refine approval pathways based on location and intensity.	Use permissions
§ 158.158	Self-Service Storage Facility	- Introduce measurable, enforceable architectural and site design standards. - Ensure facilities are designed and oriented to fit their surrounding context. - Enhance site layout, circulation, and integration with surrounding development. - Establish standards to manage the scale and intensity of development.	- Design Standards - Site Design & Access - Size & Scale

Code Amendments

§ 158.002 Definitions

~~**SELF-SERVICE STORAGE FACILITY.** A building or group of buildings divided into multiple, separate, self-contained compartments used to meet the temporary storage needs of residents and small businesses and may include climate-controlled facilities and accessory outdoor storage of vehicles. No commercial transactions are permitted other than the rental of storage units and the ancillary sale of related products.~~

SELF-SERVICE STORAGE FACILITY, DRIVE-UP. A building or group of buildings, typically single-story in design, containing multiple separate, self-contained storage units accessed through individual exterior doors that provide direct vehicular access to each unit. Such facilities are intended to accommodate the temporary storage of non-hazardous, personal property and may include climate- and temperature-controlled storage units and accessory outdoor storage of vehicles. No commercial activities or transactions shall be permitted other than the rental of storage units and the incidental sale of products related to storage and moving. In addition, the term does not include Contractor's Equipment Storage as defined in § 158.002.

SELF-SERVICE STORAGE FACILITY, INTERNAL. A fully enclosed, multi-story building in which individual storage units are primarily accessed from internal corridors and which the loading and unloading of storage items are typically conducted at a designated area within the building. Such facilities are intended to accommodate the temporary storage of non-hazardous, personal property and may include climate- and temperature-controlled storage units and accessory outdoor storage of vehicles. No commercial activities or transactions shall be permitted other than the rental of storage units and the incidental sale of products related to storage and moving. In addition, the term does not include Contractor's Equipment Storage as defined in § 158.002.

§ 158.082 Commercial, Industrial, and Employment Campus Districts: Regulation of Principal Uses.

Table of Principal Uses

Land Use Category Subcategory Description	C-1	C-2	C-3	I-1	I-2	EC
INDUSTRIAL						
Self-service storage facility	X	P	P	X	X	X
Self-service storage facility in a sustainable community	X	P	P	C	X	X
Self-service storage facility, drive-up	X	P C	P	X	X	X
Self-service storage facility, internal	X	C	P	X	X	X
Self-service storage facility in a sustainable community, drive-up	X	C	P	C	X	X
Self-service storage facility in a sustainable community, internal	X	C	P	C	X	X

§ 158.158 Self-Service Storage Facility

Drive-up and Internal Self-service storage facilities may be permitted in the C-2 and C-3 Districts, and authorized by conditional use in the I-1 District if located within a sustainable community, subject to the following requirements:

(A) **Unit Size:** Maximum area of each individual storage unit shall be 500 square feet.

(B) **Site Design Requirements:**

(1) **Minimum Lot Size:**

- (a) Drive-Up Self-Service Storage Facility: two (2) acres.
- (b) Internal Self-Service Storage Facility one (1) acre.

1. The minimum lot size of an Internal Self-Service Storage Facility can be reduced to one-half (0.5) acre if established through the adaptive reuse of an existing building if all other building and site design requirements are met.

(C) **Setbacks: Front Façade Design and Orientation:** ~~The front building facade shall be designed, constructed, and maintained to be visually compatible with the neighborhood and surrounding properties.~~

- (1) Individual storage unit doors shall face the interior of the lot.
- (2) Outdoor access drives, loading areas, and storage aisles shall not be located between the primary building façade and the public street.
- (3) Street-facing façades shall incorporate architectural detailing and transparent windows or display areas covering at least twenty (20) percent of the ground-floor façade length, or equivalent architectural treatment to avoid blank walls.
- (4) Buildings exceeding 25 feet in height shall incorporate façade articulation, including projections, recesses, or material changes, at intervals not greater than 50 feet along any public street frontage.

- (5) Blank wall segments exceeding forty (40) feet in length along public streets are prohibited.
- (6) Building walls exceeding two hundred (200) feet in length shall incorporate offsets of at least five (5) feet in depth and twenty (20) feet in width at intervals not greater than one hundred (100) feet.
- (7) Building parapets shall be designed to avoid false fronts and include the following design elements:
 - (a) Parapets and other enclosed projections on all exterior facades shall be integrated into the overall massing and design of the building.
 - (b) The back sides of parapets shall not be visible from the public realm and shall include returns and other architectural treatments to ensure their integration into the building's overall massing.
- (8) Blank Wall Treatments: Blank walls visible from a public street, common open space, plazas, courtyards, sidewalks, trails, or interior pathways, are prohibited. Design treatments to eliminate blank walls shall include:
 - (a) Transparent windows or doors;
 - (b) Windows that open into the interior of the building (poster type window frames not permitted);
 - (c) Other methods such as murals or special building material treatments that meet the intent as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- (9) Building Materials and Color: Building materials and color shall unify the overall architecture and façade detailing of the building.
 - (a) High quality, durable building materials that add visual interest, detail, and are easily maintained shall be used.
 - (b) If metal siding is used, it must have visible corner moldings and trim and shall incorporate masonry or other impact and stain resistant material at the base of the building. Height to be proportional to overall building height.
 - (c) Concrete blocks used for the façade of any building must be split or rock-faced and limited to twenty (20) percent of the façade areas. The Planning and Zoning Commission may allow a higher percentage using specialized textures and/or colors used effectively with other building materials and details in a way that meets the intent of the standards.
 - (d) Stucco and similar troweled finishes must be trimmed in wood or masonry and should be sheltered from extreme weather by roof overhangs or other methods. Weather exposed horizontal surfaces must be avoided. Masonry is required at the base of the building and shall be proportional to overall building height.
 - (e) The following materials are prohibited unless specifically approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission:
 - 1. Mirrored glass covering more than ten (10) percent of the exterior of the building;
 - 2. Textured or scored plywood (including T-111 or similar plywood);
 - 3. Stucco board.

4. Window film, unless specifically approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

- (f) Bright building or trim colors are discouraged except for decorative tile-work, artwork, and signage. Desirable colors for buildings include natural earth tones, muted, and dark saturated colors.
- (g) Color palettes for all new structures, as well as changes in color on existing buildings, coded to the building elevations, shall be submitted to the County for approval.
- (h) Neon tubing and/or linear building lighting along facades and/or rooflines shall not be permitted.
- (i) Building facades shall not be designed and/or painted to resemble a business logo and/or sign. This section does not preclude signs in accordance with §158 Sign Regulations.

(D) *Massing and Composition:* A strong overall building composition, along with a clear pattern of massing changes and modulation of building forms shall be required to create interest and to support the buildings integration into the overall context of and sensitivity to the zoning district and neighboring uses.

- (1) Buildings shall have a clearly defined base middle and top, with a well-defined cornice line and banding that differentiates the ground floor from upper floors. For buildings with ground floor retail components, awnings and other building elements or projections shall be used to emphasis this banding.
- (2) Primary building entries shall be clearly expressed in the building's overall massing.
- (3) Building massing shall be focused on the primary street front, with primary uses oriented to this frontage. Service uses, parking and utilities should be accessed from non-primary facades and fully screened.
- (4) Where a building has a double frontage to a street, primary and secondary facades shall be established.

(E) *Office and Parking:* A business office may be located on site, and the required parking spaces for employees shall be located adjacent to the business office. Required parking may not be rented, used for storage of vehicles, or other storage.

(F) *Access and Circulation:*

- (1) Areas providing access between storage units and areas designed for two-way vehicular traffic shall be 20 feet wide. One-way vehicular traffic aisles with units on one side may be 15 feet wide. Access aisles and storage units shall be designed and located to provide maneuvering space for emergency vehicles.
- (2) Internal circulation shall be designed to provide clearly defined ingress and egress and to prevent vehicle backing movements into a public street.
- (3) Cross-access easements shall be provided to adjacent commercial or industrial properties where feasible.

- (G) **Outdoor Lighting:** All outdoor lighting must be shielded and focused to direct light onto the premises and away from adjoining properties.
- (1) All outdoor lighting fixtures shall be fully downward facing fixtures.
 - (2) Maximum illumination at any residential property line shall not exceed 0.5 foot-candles.
 - (3) Freestanding light fixtures shall not exceed twenty (20) feet in height in commercial districts and fifteen (15) feet when adjacent to residential property.
- (H) **Screening:** All structures, storage units, commercial parking areas, accessory vehicle storage areas, aisles, security fences, or walls, except the front building facade, shall be screened from view off site in accordance with [Chapter 157](#) of the Carroll County Code.
- (I) **Landscaping:** Landscaping shall be provided in accordance with [Chapter 157](#) of the Carroll County Code.
- (J) **Use Limitation:** The site shall not be used for any activity or use except storage as specified herein.
- (1) Retail sales, contracting businesses, repair operations, or commercial workshops are prohibited, except for incidental retail sale of packing supplies within the on-site office.
 - (2) Outdoor public address (e.g., loud speaker) systems are prohibited.
 - (3) When adjacent to residentially zoned or used property, hours of public access shall be limited to 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- (K) **Hazardous Materials:** Toxic, or explosive materials or hazardous chemicals shall not be stored on site; provided, however, that fuel contained in standard fuel tanks of boats or vehicles which are themselves stored on site is allowed. Standard fuel tanks for purposes of this section are those tanks which were designed for the specific vehicle by the manufacturer of the vehicle.
- (L) **Signage:** Signs shall be permitted in compliance with §§ [158.110](#) through [158.114](#), except that temporary signs, signs that relate to off-premises uses, or signs which exceed 50 square feet in area are prohibited.
- (M) **Maximum Facility Size:** *In the C-2 and C-3 Districts, the maximum gross floor area of a self-service storage facility shall not exceed 100,000 square feet .*
- (N) **Development Incentives:** Internal, climate-controlled, multi-service storage facilities may exceed the maximum gross floor area by up to twenty (20) percent, provided that:
- (1) The ground floor includes active commercial frontage along the primary street; or
 - (2) The building is integrated into a mixed-use structure containing retail or office uses.
- (O) **Adaptive Reuse:** Conversion of an existing commercial, office, or industrial building to an Internal Self-Service Storage shall be permitted by Conditional Use in the C-2 and C-3 districts, provided exterior modifications comply with façade standards. To incentivize the adaptive reuse opportunities over greenfield development, the Board of Zoning Appeals may authorize certain relief from the required standards subject to conditional use approval.
- (P) **Accessory Outdoor Vehicle Storage:**
- (1) Accessory outdoor vehicle storage areas shall not exceed twenty (20) percent of the total lot area.
 - (2) Outdoor vehicle storage shall not be located between a principal building and a public street or between a principal or accessory building and any property in a residential zoning district
 - (3) Vehicles stored outdoors shall be legally registered.

- (Q) *Design Review Authority:* All Self-Service Storage facilities in the C-2 and C-3 Districts shall be subject to review and approval by the Design Advisory Review Committee (DARC) prior to approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission. The DARC shall evaluate compliance with architectural, façade articulation, materials, and site integration standards.

Appendix A: Summary of Recommendations from Task 2

Category	Recommendation	Context
Use Differentiation	Establish new and separate definitions for Drive-Up and Internal Self-Service Storage Facilities	Recognizes differing land use impacts and aligns review standards with building form and intensity.
Approval Process	Require Conditional Use approval for Drive-Up facilities in C-2 and along arterial corridors.	Ensures greater scrutiny in sensitive or highly visible commercial areas.
Zoning Alignment	Permit Internal storage by right in C-3; require Conditional Use in C-2 and I-1 (within Sustainable Communities).	Aligns storage intensity with the County's commercial zoning hierarchy.
Building Height & Transition	Establish district-based height limits and step-down height standards adjacent to residential properties.	Manages scale and improves compatibility with nearby neighborhoods.
Blank Wall Standards	Limit blank wall lengths and require façade articulation at regular intervals.	Prevents monolithic building appearance and improves streetscape design.
Architectural Materials	Require durable exterior materials and consistent architectural treatment on all visible façades.	Establishes objective, enforceable design expectations.
Site Design & Circulation	Require consolidated access points, internal circulation standards, and pedestrian connections to adjacent commercial uses.	Supports safer traffic flow and better integration with surrounding development.
Lighting Standards	Establish measurable lighting limits, including maximum fixture height and foot-candle limits at property lines.	Minimizes light spillover and protects adjacent residential properties.
Size & Scale Controls	Establish maximum gross floor area and require Planning Commission review above defined thresholds.	Prevents oversized developments and ensures appropriate review of larger projects.
Minimum Lot Size	Establish minimum lot area requirements by facility type.	Promotes cohesive site design and prevents overcrowded layouts.
Adaptive Reuse	Permit conversion of existing commercial or industrial buildings to Internal storage with design compliance.	Encourages reinvestment and reuse of underutilized properties.
Design Review	Expand DARC review authority for architectural and site design compliance.	Ensures consistent application of adopted design standards.