

# Carroll County Zoning and Site Development Revisions

TASKS 1 & 2 – SELF-SERVICE  
STORAGE FACILITIES IN  
COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

MAY 26, 2026



# Background

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- Prior to 2019, when the C-2 and C-3 zoning districts were created as part of a comprehensive code rewrite, a self-service storage facility (“Mini Storage”) was allowed only in the Business General (BG) zoning district.
- During the County’s zoning code rewrite, “Mini Storage” use was replaced with “Self-Service Storage Facility” to reflect industry changes.
- At the time, most existing storage facilities were single-story, drive-up units, and there was no clear expectation that multi-story warehouse-style storage would be proposed.
- Accordingly, the Planning Commission recommended:
  - Permitted by Right in high-intensity commercial districts
  - Conditional Use in medium-intensity districts
  - Prohibited in low-intensity districts

**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.

# Background

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- Ultimately, the Board of County Commissioners made self-service storage facilities a permitted use by right in both the medium (C-2) and high-intensity (C-3) commercial districts, largely to avoid creating nonconforming uses.
- Self-service storage facilities are permitted as a conditional use in the I-1 district only if located in a designated Sustainable Community (currently, Finksburg is the only such area in the unincorporated parts of the county). They are also permitted by right in the I-1 district when incorporated into a Business/Industrial Park, approved as Business Parks prior to April 1, 2019.
- The use is expressly prohibited in Industrial Parks in the I-1 zoning district, per §158.156, and in Business Parks in the C-3 zoning district, per §158.159.
- The County's Department of Economic Development consistently has opposed the allowance of self-service storage facilities in zones designated for industrial and employment uses, given the relatively small number of acres available in those zones.

# Unintended Consequences

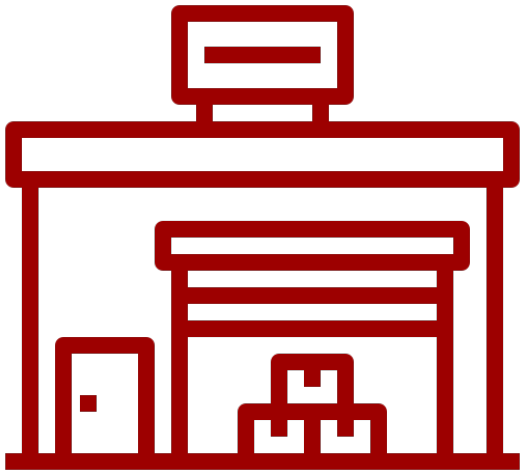
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- The Carroll Highlands Self-Service Storage Facility proposal revealed an unintended outcome, i.e., the Zoning Code permits large, multi-story buildings adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- Such proposals were not fully anticipated when the zoning changes were enacted.
- Neighboring residential property owners expressed concerns related to the project's:
  - proximity to residential districts and lack of context sensitive design;
  - building scale, bulk, and height; and
  - traffic and crime safety.

# Zoning District vs. Use Appropriateness

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- In January 2024, the Commissioners held a public hearing on changes to bulk requirements in Commercial zones and subsequently reduced the maximum height and increased the minimum side yard setback for all uses in the Commercial zoning districts when they adjoin a Residential zoning district.
- Public concern pertaining to the Carroll Highlands project led Carroll County Commissioners to implement a temporary pause on final approval of new self-service storage facilities in December 2025.



## Task 1 – Assessment of Existing Documents and Best Practices: Self-Service Storage Facilities

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# Purpose of Task 1 Assessment

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Assess how current regulations align with adopted plans

2

Evaluate consistency with contemporary best practices

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Identify opportunities for regulatory improvement

# Alignment with Adopted Plans

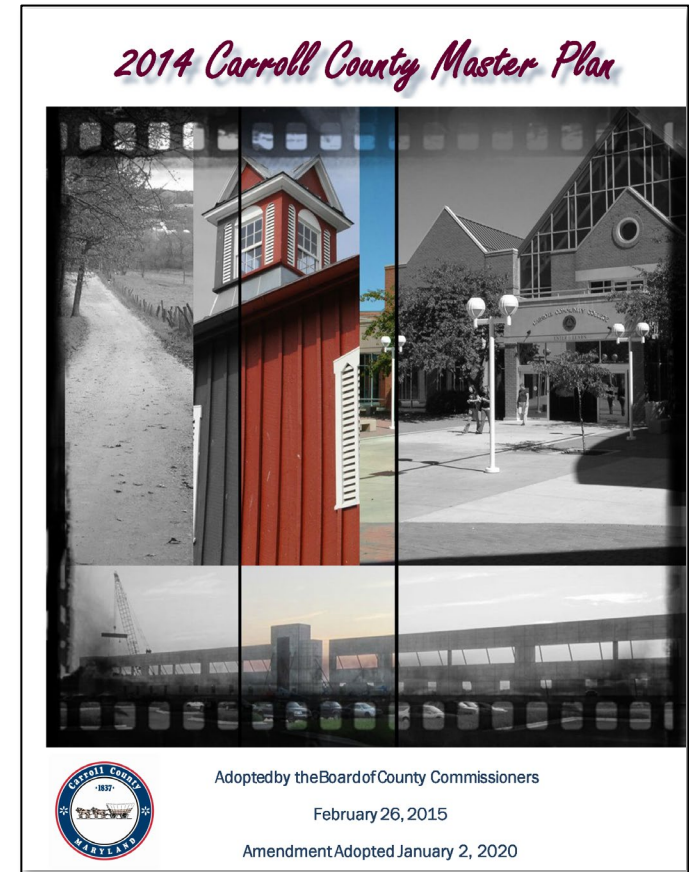
## Plans Reviewed:

- Carroll County Master Plan (2014, amended 2019)
- Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018)
- Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013)

## Key Policy Themes Identified:

- Economic development goals that prioritize employment-generating uses that provide services and goods to residents
- Desire for placemaking and connectivity along commercial corridors

*Note: Self-service storage facility use was not specifically mentioned in any of the plans.*



# Regulatory Review of Chapter 155 (Development and Subdivision of Land) and 158 (Zoning)

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## Key Findings:

- Permitted by-right in the C-2 (Commercial Medium) and C-3 (Commercial-High) zoning districts.
- “Self-Service Storage Facility” is the Code’s new defined use and is inclusive of accessory outdoor storage of vehicles.
- Regulations are largely operational and site-focused, including:
  - Unit size
  - Building height
  - Internal circulation and access
  - Lighting, screening, and landscaping
- Code regulates design through one standard (i.e., “The front building façade shall be designed, constructed, and maintained to be visually compatible with the neighborhood and surrounding properties.”)

## What does this mean?

Development outcomes are driven by basic functional standards rather than clear, context-sensitive expectations.

While the Code ensures safe and functional sites, it provides limited direction on design and form which can result in projects that meet minimum standards but do not fully support broader planning goals.

# Issues and Direction

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## **Location Compatibility Requires Stronger Design Standards:**

While generally low-intensity, the use still requires greater attention to scale, form, and neighborhood compatibility, particularly in the Commercial Medium districts.



**Gaps in Design Standards:** Existing regulations provide functional requirements (e.g., size, circulation, screening) but include limited objective design criteria to ensure consistent architectural quality and integration into commercial corridors.



**Evolving Industry Trends:** The self-storage industry is growing and shifting toward multi-story, climate-controlled, mixed-use, and adaptive reuse formats, which can better support context-sensitive and visually compatible development.

## **Overall Direction**

### **Primary Issue Identified:**

- Lack of clear, objective design standards to achieve desired form for commercial corridors
- No inconsistencies with planning documents, but there is room for better alignment (adding form to function)



## Best Practices – Self-Service Storage Facilities

# Best Practices Summary

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- Examples demonstrate that self-storage facility construction can meet local architectural design requirements (where required) and avoid "cookie-cutter" metal boxes from being built.
- Self-storage construction today focuses on specialized designs to meet specific market demands, ranging from high-end climate-controlled facilities to massive RV storage. Developers are increasingly prioritizing durability, architectural appeal, and land use efficiency.
- Facilities are being strategically placed in central, high-traffic areas within commercial and mixed-use districts.
- Urban integration has increased adaptive reuse of existing buildings such as factories, outdated office spaces, and big-box stores.
- Urban integration and adaptive reuse creates opportunities for better design to ensure uses are compatible and sensitive to the existing built environment (i.e., compact sites require concealed or indoor loading areas to avoid trucks blocking sidewalks, etc.).

# Storelocal Storage Bellevue

Storelocal Storage Bellevue is a 72,000 square foot institutional Class A self-storage facility. Located on the corner of Collins Rd. and Learning Ln. in Bellevue, TN, this facility is fully climate controlled. The project was developed under the Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Zoning Code, which includes provisions to allow for customized design and site-specific conditions, such as higher density or unique architectural standards.



# Storelocal Storage Bellevue

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- Self-storage facilities are regulated under the **Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County Zoning Code**, as Bellevue is part of the Metro Nashville government.
- The Storelocal Bellvue self-service storage facility is a permitted by right use in the Commercial Service (CS) zoning district.
- **Specific Plan (SP)**: Many modern self-storage projects in Bellevue and Nashville use SP zoning to allow for customized design and site-specific conditions, such as higher density or unique architectural standards.

# Storelocal Storage Bellevue

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- **Separation Distance:** Facilities must maintain significant distances from residential areas. For example, some ordinances require a minimum separation of 150 feet from any residential zoning district boundary or residential structure.
- **Building Height:** Standard height limits apply based on the base zone, but specific ordinances for storage have limited buildings to one-story (max 18 feet) in certain PUDs, though SP zoning can allow up to 4 stories depending on the location.
- **Landscaping & Buffering:** A Landscape Buffer Yard (often Type D) is required where the facility abuts residential or agricultural districts. This typically includes a 6-foot opaque fence or berm.
- **Operations:** All loading, unloading, and storage must take place on-site within an enclosed or fenced area. Outdoor loudspeakers are generally prohibited.
- **Glazing & Facades:** Developers may be required to use spandrel glass or similar glazing material on building elevations to improve aesthetics.
- **Environmental Protection:** Developments must comply with strict stormwater and fire protection standards, including adequate water supply and emergency vehicle access

# Storelocal Storage Gallatin

Storelocal Storage Gallatin is a 96,000 square foot institutional Class A self-storage facility. The facility's two 3-story buildings provide a total of 646 self-storage units that are 100% climate-controlled. This site is located on the Nashville Pike in the beautiful Kennesaw Farms area of Gallatin, TN. Construction was completed in March 2021. The unique barn house design pays homage to the rich history of Kennesaw Farms and the thoroughbreds who have graced its fields.



# Storelocal Storage Gallatin

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- Self-Service Storage Facilities are regulated under the Gallatin Zoning Ordinance as “Limited Warehousing” uses and by definition are regulated in maximum size and are precluded from being used for freight distribution warehouse storage facilities.
- Principal Permitted Use in the following Zoning Districts:
  - Commercial General (CG): Permitted by Right (60 ft. building height) (Storelocal Gallatin location)
  - Planned General Commercial (PGC): Conditional Use (40 ft. building height)
  - Industrial General (IG): Permitted by Right (80 ft. building height)
  - Industrial Restrictive (IR): Permitted by Right (80 ft. building height)
- The Zoning Ordinance’s Architectural Design and Compatibility Standards include applicability to the CG and PGC Districts.

# Sherlock Self-Storage

Sherlock Self Storage, an 89,407 SF facility spanning four levels with 592 storage units in rural King County. The design incorporates a basement and mezzanine within a three-story form, optimizing capacity while responding to local zoning constraints. Architectural expression draws inspiration from a nearby historic barn, aligning with community character while navigating SEPA requirements, parking, and landscape standards.



# Sherlock Self Storage

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- Self-service storage facilities are regulated under the City of Duvall Municipal Code.
- The Sherlock Self Storage facility is classified as a “Self service storage” use that is permitted by right under the City’s Light Industrial (LI) zoning district. Among its multiple purposes, the LI district promotes high-quality and well-designed business and light industrial developments that are in keeping with Duvall's small-city character.
- [Chapter 14.34](#) of the Code specifies Design Guidelines that include standards for building design including a requirement that new non-residential development should provide architectural variety, pedestrian scale, and features that enhance its connection to the natural environment.
- The Design Guidelines also include standards for building massing and composition. One requirement specifies, “A strong overall building composition, along with a clear pattern of massing changes and modulation of building forms is required to create interest and to support the buildings integration into the overall context.”

# Trindle Self-Storage

Trindle Self Storage (Carlisle, PA) is an independently owned and operated drive-up storage facility in Carlisle, PA offering over 22,000 total square feet of self-service storage space including a variety of unit sizes from 25 sq. ft. to 300 sq. ft.



# Trindle Self-Storage

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- Self-Service Storage Facilities are regulated under the South Middleton Township Zoning Ordinance as both “Mini-Storage/Self-Storage Warehouse” and “Storage Facilities”.
  - Mini-Storage/ Self-Storage Facility: A structure containing separate storage spaces of equal or varying sizes leased or rented on an individual basis.
  - Storage Facility: Area or structure designed for storage of non-hazardous materials or finished product where the same are not broken down or aggregated into smaller or larger loads for transfer. This definition shall not include those facilities that meet the definition of “Truck Terminal” contained herein or storage of trucks, trailers, or both, as defined by this ordinance.
- Both uses are permitted by right in following Zoning Districts:
  - Industrial - Light (I-1): 40 ft. building height
  - Industrial - Manufacturing (I-2): 40 ft. building height
  - Industrial – Transportation (I-3): 40 ft. building height
  - Airport Development (AD): 40 ft. building height
- Mini-Storage / Self-Storage Facility is permitted by Conditional Use in the following Zoning Districts:
  - Commercial – General (C-2): 40 ft. building height

# Self-Storage vs. Contractor Bay

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- Similar to South Middleton's prohibition on using self-storage facilities for truck terminals, self-storage facilities are also not intended to support daily contractor business operations, for the following reasons:
  - **Prohibition on business use.** Most self-storage lease agreements explicitly prohibit active business use — running power tools, receiving supplier deliveries, or performing any work on the premises. Likewise, local zoning regulations typically impose similar use prohibitions.
  - **Lack of electric power access.** Standard self-storage units provide no electrical service. Dedicated contractor storage space typically provides 100-amp or higher electrical service per unit — the minimum for running tools and charging reliably.
  - **Drive-up access limitations.** Drive-up access is intended to accommodate the loading and unloading of common household goods, not the ingress and egress of contractor supply deliveries. For example, deliveries and pick-ups may occur outside of storage facility gate access hours (typically between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.), aisles are often too narrow to accommodate larger delivery trucks and trailers, and such facilities generally lack designated delivery zones or adequate space to stage materials.

# Self-Storage vs. Contractor Bay

By definition, Self Service Storage Facilities are not intended to support daily contractor business operations.

CRITERIA	SELF-STORAGE	CONTRACTOR BAY
ACTIVE WORK PERMITTED	<b>No</b> — lease prohibition at most facilities	<b>Yes</b> — commercially zoned, hands-on work allowed
COMMERCIAL BUSINESS ADDRESS	<b>No</b> — storage use only	<b>Yes</b> — licensed business premises
ELECTRICAL SERVICE	<b>None</b> in most units	<b>100-200 amp</b> per unit, standard
DRIVE-UP ACCESS	Yes, but facility gate hours apply	<b>Yes</b> — 24/7 direct vehicle access
SUPPLIER DELIVERIES	<b>Restricted or prohibited</b>	<b>Permitted</b> — compliant delivery address
OVERSIZED VEHICLE ACCESS	Limited — aisle width varies by facility	Wide bay access for trucks and trailers
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL STORAGE	<b>Restricted</b> by lease terms	Permitted within local fire code
INSURANCE COMPATIBILITY	May void commercial liability coverage	Supports standard contractor insurance

Source: <https://workbay.com/blog/contractor-bay-vs-self-storage/>

# Prime Storage

Prime Storage is a major national self-storage operator that manages over 230 locations across 26 states. Owned and operated by Prime Group Holdings, it specializes in a wide range of storage solutions including residential, business, student, and military storage.

Prime Storage's Mechanicsburg, PA operation is a drive-up self-storage facility located at 5160 E. Trindle Rd. and offers various indoor climate-controlled and outdoor unit types and sizes, ranging from 5'x5' to 10'x30'. Its security includes gated entry, security cameras, and an on-site manager. It is particularly noted for having the largest outdoor parking lot for vehicles, boats, and RVs within a 60-mile radius.



# Prime Self-Storage

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- Self-service storage facilities are regulated under the **Hampden Township Zoning Ordinance** as a “Self-service storage facility” use.
- Self-service storage facility is defined as any real property designed and used for the purpose of renting or leasing individual storage spaces to tenants who are to have access to such space for the purpose of storing and removing personal property.
- The property is situated in the [C-L Commercial Limited](#) district, the purpose of which is to provide appropriate locations for office, limited commercial and residential usage where a proliferation of unrestricted commercial usage would be undesirable.
- Key Regulations for Self-Storage in this Zone Residential Buffers: Self-storage facilities in the C-G district are prohibited from abutting or being separated by only a public street from existing residential districts.
- **Building Height:** In the C-L district, no building shall be erected to a height in excess of 40 feet and may be increased one foot for each additional foot that the width of each yard. The maximum increased height is 45 ft. For Prime’s facility, the storage units are one story, but the office and manager’s living quarters building extends to at least 40 ft.
- **Buffer Yard:** Along any residential district boundary or when adjacent to a residential use, uses in the C-L district must have a 20 ft. wide separation buffer.
- **Off-street Parking:** All parking areas must be screened with a vegetative buffer.

# U-Haul Moving & Storage of Carlisle

U-Haul converted a former 143,485 sq. ft. Kmart property in Carlisle, PA into a 65,000 sq. ft., 700-unit, climate controlled self-storage facility. Acquisition of the building was driven by U-Haul Corporate Sustainability initiatives: U-Haul supports infill developments to help local communities lower their carbon footprint. The adaptive reuse of existing buildings reduces the amount of energy and resources required for new-building materials and helps cities reduce their unwanted inventory of unused buildings.



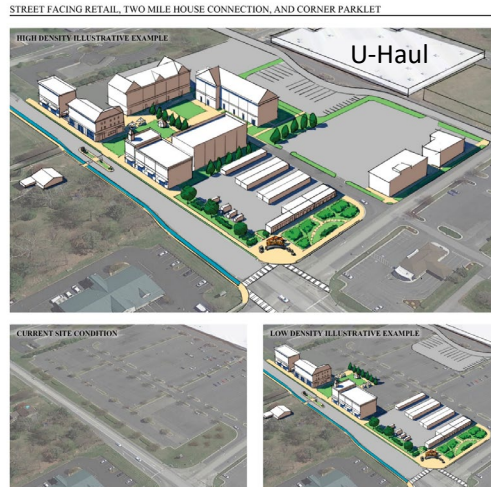
# U-Haul Moving & Storage of Carlisle

## Catalyst Site #2 – Former Walnut Bottom Town Center

### Catalyst Site #2 – Former Walnut Bottom Town Center

As proposed, the northwest corner of the catalyst site will be used for self-storage and parking with a proposed 60-foot setback from Walnut Towne Center Drive designated as public open space. The self-storage and parking area will include appropriate landscaping to mitigate its suburban-style development visual impact on the corridor. In addition, entryway signage at the corner will incorporate a focal point seating and shading for pedestrians, thus allowing U-Haul to maintain visibility while creating a pedestrian-oriented plaza space at a key corner with proximity to the other catalyst sites. Towards the northeastern side of the site, unused parking can be redeveloped as a series of small-scale mixed-use buildings that front the street or could alternatively be developed more intensely into the site with higher density.

The concept drawings depict a lower density option with 2 to 3 story buildings along Walnut Bottom Road only, and a higher density option as well as a parklet and median with midblock crossing to connect with the Two Mile House and nearby trails.

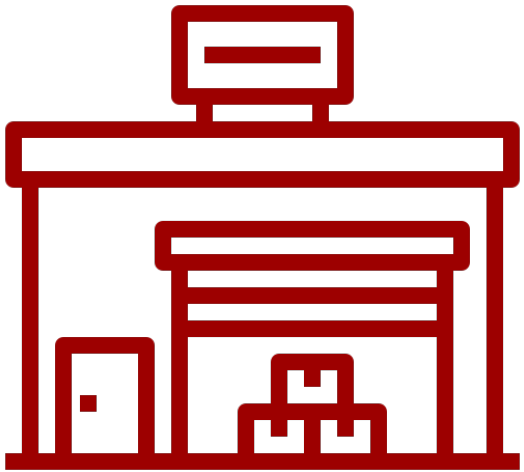


- Self-Service Storage Facilities are regulated under the South Middleton Township Zoning Ordinance as both “Mini-Storage/Self-Storage Warehouse” and “Storage Facilities”.
- The U-Haul storage facility is located in the Commercial – General (C-2) and is permitted by Conditional Use as a “Mini-Storage/Self-Storage Facility.”
- The U-Haul storage facility is integrated into a new mixed-use Town Center redevelopment master planned area of South Middleton Township in Cumberland County, PA.

# Market Trends

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- **Growth and Demand:** Self storage has grown to more than 2.1 billion square feet of space in 2026. Over the span of the last 5 years, 293.1 million square feet of storage space was built – that's equivalent to 13.8% of the total inventory. One third of Americans (33%) use self-storage currently, with a further 18% intending to rent some in the future.
- **Adaptive Reuse and Design:** Developers are converting existing vacant retail spaces (like former Kmart, etc.) into modern, secure, and attractive self-storage facilities to overcome land availability limitations.
- **Drive-up vs. Indoor Storage Development:** While drive-up storage facilities are still in demand offering high-convenience at a lower cost, developers are building more indoor, multi-story facilities, especially in urban areas, driven by high demand, higher rent potential, and space optimization.
- **Growing Preference for Climate Control:** Indoor, climate-controlled storage is increasing as consumers store higher-value items (electronics, wine, antiques) needing humidity and temperature management.
- **Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Boat Storage:** As personal investments in RVs and watercraft increase for recreation and active living lifestyles, the demand for large-scale and specialty storage demand is increasing.
- **Sustainability Trends:** Facilities are implementing sustainable practices, including solar power installations and eco-friendly lighting.
- **Strategic Location Placement and Mixed-Use:** Facilities are being strategically placed in central, high-traffic areas within commercial and mixed-use districts. For mixed use projects, self-service storage is the anchor and incorporates small retail spaces for stores, fitness centers, and co-working spaces.



## Task 2 - Recommended Amendments

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# Purpose of Recommendations

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- Developed based on Task 1 findings and best-practices research
- Intended to better align:
  - Adopted planning policies
  - Best practice research
  - Existing regulatory framework
- Subject to Planning Commission review and County Commissioners' approval
- Draft code language to be developed in Task 3

# Refine Permitted Uses and Approval Process

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**Recommendation:** Clarify where self-storage is permitted and refine approval pathways based on location and intensity.

**Examples:**

- Differentiate Drive-up (single-story) vs. Internal (multi-story) storage as separate use categories
- Require conditional use approval in C-2 zoning districts or sensitive corridors
- Establish clear limits and definitions for accessory outdoor vehicle storage

## Why Do This:

Improves alignment with the County's commercial zoning hierarchy and ensures more appropriate siting and review of different storage formats.

# Adopt Clear, Objective Design Standards

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**Recommendation:** Introduce measurable, enforceable architectural and site design standards.

**Examples:**

- Require façade articulation (changes in materials, planes, or rooflines)
- Limit blank wall lengths along public streets
- Require minimum architectural treatment on street-facing façades
- Enhance landscaping and screening near residential areas
- Expand DARC role in design review

## Why Do This:

Provides predictable expectations and improves visual quality and consistency along commercial corridors.

# Adopt Clear, Objective Design Standards

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**Recommendation:** Ensure facilities are designed and oriented to fit their surrounding context.

**Examples:**

- Require building entrances to face public streets
- Limit or prohibit roll-up doors facing roadways
- Require additional buffers/setbacks adjacent to residential zoning
- Prioritize locations on arterial and collector roads

## Why Do This:

Improves compatibility with surrounding uses and strengthens the character of commercial corridors.

# Incorporate Site Design & Access Management Standards

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**Recommendation:** Enhance site layout, circulation, and integration with surrounding development.

**Examples:**

- Require consolidated access points where feasible
- Establish minimum landscaping or streetscape standards
- Include pedestrian connections to adjacent commercial uses

## Why Do This:

Supports safer access, better site organization, and integration into existing commercial areas.

# Address Size & Scale

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**Recommendation:** Establish standards to manage the scale and intensity of development.

**Examples:**

- Set maximum building footprint or length in commercial districts
- Establish minimum lot size requirements

## Why Do This:

Prevents oversized or poorly configured developments and ensures more cohesive site design.

# Encourage Higher-Quality Development Models

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**Recommendation:** Promote more context-sensitive and economically productive development formats.

**Examples:**

- Allow incentives for climate-controlled, multi-story, or mixed-use storage developments in commercial areas
- Allow integration into mixed-use or commercial developments
- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings

## Why Do This:

Aligns with industry trends while improving land use efficiency, design quality, and compatibility with surrounding development.

# Next Steps

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## **Task 3 Code Amendments**

- Draft Code amendments (Chapters 155 and 158)
- Review with County Staff
- Present to County Planning and Zoning Commission
- Present to Board of County Commissioners
- Public hearing and discussion by the Board of County Commissioners for enactment