

FOCUSED ZONING CODE UPDATE

2. Self-Storage Facilities

Background

- A. Self-storage Facilities / Mini-storage: Self-storage facilities are uses that rent space on a short-term basis (often month-to-month) to individuals (usually storing household goods) or to businesses (usually storing excess inventory or archived records). Self-storage businesses lease a variety of unit sizes to residential and business customer/tenants. The storage units are typically windowless, walled with concrete cinder blocks or corrugated metal, and lockable by the renter. Each unit is typically accessed by opening a roll-up metal door, which is usually about the same size as a one-car garage door (smaller units may be accessed by a hinged metal door). A controlled access facility may employ security guards, security cameras, individual unit door alarms, and some means of electronic gate access such as a keypad or proximity card. Self-storage facility operators frequently provide 24-hour access, climate-controlled storage, outdoor storage for RVs and boats, and lights or power outlets inside the storage unit as amenities.



The rented spaces are secured by the renters’s own lock and key. Unlike in a warehouse, self-storage facility employees do not have casual access to the contents of the space.

In rural and suburban areas, most facilities contain multiple single-story buildings with mostly drive-up units that have natural ventilation but are not climate-controlled. These buildings are referred to as “traditional” storage facilities.

Climate-controlled interior units are becoming more popular in suburban areas. In urban areas, many facilities have multi-story buildings using elevators or freight lifts to move the goods to the upper floors. These facilities are often climate-controlled since they are comprised mostly, if not totally, of interior units. Warehouses or former grocery stores are sometimes converted into self-storage facilities. Loading docks are sometimes provided on the ground floor. Urban self-storage facilities might contain only a few floors in a much larger building (i.e., self-storage businesses co-located with manufacturing plants, office tenants, and even public schools).



One in ten U.S. households now rent a self-storage unit.¹ The growing demand for self-storage in the U.S. is created by people moving and by various lifestyle transitions, such as marriage, divorce, retirement, a death in the family, etc. Over 54,000 self-storage facilities currently exist in the U.S., ranging from companies with a nationwide presence to companies with regional footprints or even stand-alone independent facilities.²

Recent surveys of self-storage companies indicate that demand for storage space remains stable.³ In many metropolitan cities where competition among storage companies is fierce, better parcels of land near residential and commercial areas are being converted into self-storage. Furthermore, companies are becoming more adept at manufacturing these modular storage units, allowing operators to get up and running quickly.

¹ Self Storage Association, 2024. <https://www.selfstorage.org/>.

² U.S. Self-Storage Industry Statistics, 2024. <https://sparefootblogs.wpenginepowered.com/self-storage/news/1432-self-storage-industry-statistics/>.

³ Self Storage Association, 2024. <https://www.selfstorage.org/>.

Analysis

- A. General: There are currently six self-storage facilities operating in Brentwood, as outlined in the following table:

Name	Address	Size
Acorn Self Storage	6900 Lone Tree Way	7.14 acres
Brentwood Self Storage	190 Sand Creek Road	3 acres
Diablo Mini Storage	8265 Brentwood Blvd.	1.45 acres
Diamond Mine Mini-Storage	175 Guthrie Lane	4 acres
StorQuest Self Storage	325 Guthrie Lane	3.99 acres
TownCentre Self Storage	345 Town Centre Terrace	2.58 acres

The facilities vary in size but generally occupy large parcels with multiple single-story structures. The newer facilities tend to provide greater aesthetic value but can still have a monolithic appearance given the expanse of walls over long, unengaging buildings.

- B. Existing Regulations: The Brentwood Municipal Code does not have citywide development standards related to self-storage facilities. And although numerous zones identify self-storage facilities within their use charts, since there is no definition within the Municipal Code for self-storage, it has left the use open to potential consideration as a warehouse classification use as well. Overall, staff has taken the stance that, unless expressly permitted by right under self-storage, then self-storage facilities can be considered in Brentwood through a conditional use permit (CUP), which provides the City with discretionary review ability. This allows staff and the Planning Commission to consider each self-storage facility application on a case-by-case basis and to apply specific conditions to a project to ensure land use compatibility with the surrounding area.
- C. Locations: Self-storage facilities are conditionally permitted in the Industrial/Commercial zone and in certain Planned Development zones. In PD-38, Subarea A (Acorn Self Storage), however, self-storage facilities are permitted by right. The table below briefly describes the intended land uses for these zoning districts:

Table 1 – Zones That Allow Self-Storage

Zoning	Requirement
IC - Industrial/Commercial	Allowed with CUP
PD-10 – Subarea B	Allowed with CUP (TownCentre Self Storage)
PD-12 – Subareas B and C	Allowed with CUP (Diamond Mine and StorQuest Self Storage)
PD-38 – Subarea A	Permitted by right (Acorn Storage)
PD-42 – Subarea A	Allowed with CUP (Brentwood Storage)
PD-55 – Subareas 1 and 2	Allowed with CUP
PD-56 – Subarea C	Allowed with CUP

D. Regulate or Prohibit: The City of Brentwood has experienced rapid population growth over the past few decades, and in conjunction, the pace of development has been one of the highest in Contra Costa County. As Brentwood now transitions to infill development and redevelopment of existing areas, there is less available open commercial land to locate any new types of businesses, including self-storage facilities.

The City’s approximately 65,000 residents are currently served by six existing self-storage facilities. Given the scarcity of remaining vacant commercial parcels, self-storage facilities may not be the highest and best use of the land, and therefore a prohibition on new self-storage facilities may be considered. Furthermore, as indicated earlier in this report, the market for self-storage facilities is very strong and there will likely be interest in Brentwood for the development of additional facilities.

Although conditionally permitted in the Industrial/Commercial zone, the focus of the IC zone is not primarily self-storage facilities. Self-storage facilities may be considered an important service, but they typically have limited aesthetic appeal, employ very few individuals, are not pedestrian oriented, and do not encourage flexibility of use in building and site design to accommodate a range of uses and business sizes. Self-storage facilities generate limited tax revenue, and thus do not enhance Brentwood’s industrial/commercial areas to attract jobs and expand the City’s tax base. Moreover, once established, such facilities usually remain in place for many years.

The City may, however, wish to continue to allow for the development of self-storage facilities, but adopt clear definitions in order to only allow them in the zones as identified in the table above or adopt development standards to ensure high-quality design of new or expanded facilities and to mitigate against any

negative impacts that could result from new or remodeled self-storage facilities. In that event, regulations could be prepared to address site and building design, lot size, setbacks, landscaping, site maintenance, storage of hazardous materials, etc.

LUD Summary and Further Discussion

Overall, LUD was supportive of drafting a better definition of a self-storage facility in order to assist in better regulating where in the City they can establish. However, LUD could not come to a consensus on whether to prohibit all new operations within the City or allow existing facilities to have the ability to redevelop or expand, and directed the item be brought before the City Council for discussion. If the City Council recommends that self-storage facilities only be considered (either by right or conditionally) in the zones that currently allow them, then LUD recommended that design regulations should be created to regulate existing facilities in the event that a facility wanted to redevelop or add on to their facilities.

Requested Council Direction

At this time, staff supports including a clear definition for self-storage in order to assist in regulating establishments within the City. However, staff does not recommend expanding or modifying zones where self-storage facilities are currently permitted; therefore, only allowing self-storage facilities in the zones identified in Table 1 in the attached.

City Council Options

The following outlines the direction that staff is requesting from the Council:

1. Support Staff Recommendation. Does the City Council support not expanding or modifying zones where self-storage facilities are permitted and clearly defining self-storage facilities? This would result in retaining the ability for self-storage facilities in the zones identified in Table 1 to continue, expand or redevelop, and would preclude new self-storage facilities in all other zones that are not identified in the zones listed in Table 1.
 - If the City Council supports this option, staff recommends that clear design criteria be established that would regulate the expansion, addition, and renovation of the existing self-storage facilities within the zones in Table 1, as well as new facilities within these zones. Potential regulations would include, but are not limited to, building design, street fronting articulation, massing, setbacks, landscaping, site maintenance, storage of hazardous materials, etc. If the City Council supports staff's recommendations, staff would draft these design criteria and bring them

to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration in early 2025.

2. Modify Staff Recommendation. Does the City Council support prohibiting all future self-storage facilities or expansions of existing facilities in all zones, including those listed in Table 1? This would cause all existing facilities to become legal non-conforming uses. They would thus be allowed to remain as they are currently constructed, but the facilities would not be able to add on or expand in the future. If the City Council supports modifying staff's recommendations, such as prohibiting all future facilities, staff would draft language to be included in the Zoning Ordinance that would be brought back to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration in early 2025.

Potential Economic Development Impacts

With limited land/space available across the City in non-residential districts to support commercial and industrial uses, the economic benefits of other commercial or industrial uses likely outweigh the economic benefits of allowing additional self-storage units in most areas of the City. However, a complete ban on self-storage units could be detrimental to the development opportunity for a few sites along Brentwood Boulevard. For example, there are some parcels along Brentwood Boulevard that are oddly shaped, which are not conducive for traditional commercial development due to the narrow street frontage and lack of overall site visibility. Since retailers and office uses tend to seek sites with frontage and views along commercial corridors where visibility is maximized, these sites have been difficult to develop. Based on the lot depth, a single or multi-story self-storage use to the rear of the property with a commercial or office use along the street frontage may be a viable option in the future through a Specific Plan amendment since self-storage is not currently listed as an allowable use in the Specific Plan.