



# HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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## TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

### *Planning Board Meeting of June 6, 2024*

#### **Case No./Petitioner: ZRA-207 – Normandy Venture Limited Partnership**

Request: To amend Section 131.0.O (Conditional Uses: New Conditional Use Categories) of the Howard County Zoning Regulations to add Indoor Self-Storage Facilities as a conditional use in the B-2 zoning district, subject to specific criteria.

#### **I. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF EXISTING ZONING REGULATIONS**

In the 1993 Comprehensive Zoning Plan, Self-Storage Facilities were first listed as a permitted use in the M-1 and M-2 Districts.

In 2013, CB 32-2013 (Comprehensive Zoning Plan) added a new section O. for new Conditional Use categories established after the effective date of the current Zoning Regulations (2013).

#### **II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL**

This section contains a summary of the Petitioner's proposed amendment. The Petitioner's proposed amendment text is attached as Exhibit A.

The Petitioner states that the rationale for the proposed amendment include the following:

- To increase the use options for underutilized properties located within the B-2 zoning district by permitting indoor self-storage facilities as a conditional use.
- To reduce the overall housing cost burden for Howard County residents through additional options to store personal property off-site allowing such residents to reduce the size of their dwelling units while still meeting their overall housing needs.
- To preserve industrial zoned land in the M-1 and M-2 zoning districts for industrial uses by permitting indoor self-storage facilities to be located in the B-2 zoning district as a conditional use.

#### **Sec. 131.0.O.**

This section provides for the addition of new Conditional Use Categories without re-lettering previously established conditional uses in the code.

The Petitioner proposes to add Indoor Self-Storage Facilities as a conditional use in the B-2 zoning district, subject to the following specific criteria:

- a. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is five (5) acres or larger.
- b. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is located within the planned service area for public water and public sewer services.

- c. The use adjoins and has direct access to a public road classified as a minor collector or higher in the general plan.
- d. Individual indoor self-storage units shall be located entirely within a building structure.
- e. No outdoor storage is permitted.

### III. EVALUATION OF PROPOSAL

This section contains the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) technical evaluation of ZRA-207 in accordance with Section 16.208.(d) of the Howard County Code. The Petitioner's proposed amendment text is attached as Exhibit A.

#### 1. **The compatibility, including potential adverse impacts and consequences, of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the existing and potential uses of the surrounding areas and within the same zoning district.**

##### **Sec. 131.0.O. New Conditional Use Categories**

This amendment would establish Indoor Self-Storage Facilities as a new conditional use in the B-2 zoning district, subject to 5 specific criteria. The B-2 District is established to provide for commercial sales and services that directly serve the general public. This proposed amendment is unlikely to result in adverse impacts to the surrounding areas as it restricts the use to indoor facilities.

While not an incompatibility, Indoor Self-Storage Facilities are not employment generators and are typically single-use, large buildings with windowless facades and entrances that would not activate the surrounding pedestrian environment in designated HoCo By Design Activity Centers. This will be further explained in section III.4 of this TSR.

#### 2. **The properties to which the Zoning Regulation Amendment could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.**

The proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment could potentially impact approximately 30 properties. Of those, 14 are located in approved Activity Centers, with 11 being along Route 40 and three additional parcels in the Long Gate Shopping Center Activity Center.

The following criteria were used to identify the impacted properties:

- a. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is five (5) acres or larger.
- b. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is located within the planned service area for public water and public sewer services.
- c. The use adjoins and has direct access to a public road classified as a minor collector or higher in the general plan.

(See attached map Attachment C).

**3. Conflicts in the Howard County Zoning Regulations as a result of the Zoning Regulation Amendment.**

While there are no direct conflicts within the Howard County Zoning Regulations, many B-2 zones are located along the Route 40 and Route 1 corridors, both of which have Design Manuals. Self-Storage Facility designs will need to be compatible with those standards.

**4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.**

The petitioner asserts that the intent of the proposed amendment includes the following: to increase the use options for underutilized properties located within the B-2 zoning district, to reduce the overall housing cost burden for Howard County residents through additional options to store personal property off-site while allowing such residents to reduce the size of their dwelling units while still meeting their overall housing needs and to preserve industrial zoned land in the M-1 and M-2 zoning districts for industrial uses by permitting indoor self-storage facilities to be located in the B-2 zoning district as a conditional use.

**General Plan Evaluation**

HoCo By Design (The General Plan) does not specifically mention indoor self-storage facilities. The Plan's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) divides the County into 18 different character areas and "generally depicts the intended land use for an area."

HoCo By Design takes a character-based approach that, as described on page GCF-32 "prioritizes site design, public realm, building form and massing, and architecture over general land use and density." On page QBD-30, the Plan includes a policy to "Prioritize character and design in future development, recognizing variations in Howard County's unique areas" and on page QBD-39, offers policy guidance to "Focus on creating active, walkable, and universally accessible public realms in all new development and redevelopment and include a broad range of community spaces, as appropriate to each character area." Given HoCo By Design's emphasis on character and the public realm, the design of future indoor storage facilities, relative to their respective character areas, will be important.

The demand for self-storage facilities has grown in recent years. In addition to serving a residential customer base, these facilities offer small and start-up businesses a variety of storage space options and flexible pricing plans unlike traditional warehousing. In general, indoor self-storage facilities are not employment generators themselves and do not typically include architectural elements that contribute to a vibrant street presence. While these facilities may be compatible with other established and permitted uses in B-2 Zoning Districts they may or may not be in conflict with the stated design vision for designated Activity Centers, depending on their site design, building form, and location within these centers.

Designated Activity Center character areas include a mix of different zoning districts, including B-2, and are defined in the General Plan on page QBD-6 as "places where housing and businesses are mixed together, usually in a walkable environment". Additionally, on page GCF-28 the Plan states that Activity Centers "provide key locations for new employment centers, regional shopping centers, entertainment areas, and upper-story or adjacent residential units in appropriate locations." In Activity Centers, prominently located indoor self-storage may be in conflict with HoCo By Design goals unless designed as or paired with more street activating uses to better align with the vision of Plan. There are several existing design manuals for commercial corridors in the County (including the Route 1 Manual, the Route 40 Design Manual, and the Clarksville Pike Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines) which contain B-2 zoned land that overlap with HoCo By Design Activity Centers.

The proposed change to allow indoor storage facilities in B-2 Zoning Districts throughout the County could potentially impact approximately 30 properties, of which 11 are located in HoCo By Design Activity Centers along Route 40 and three located in the Long Gate Shopping Center.

#### Conclusion

Overall, the Comprehensive and Community Planning Division finds that adding indoor self-storage facilities as a conditional use in the B-2 (Business: General) District outside of the Route 40 Corridor Activity Centers and other approved Mixed Use Activity Centers is not inconsistent with the policies and actions in the General Plan.

However, allowing indoor self-storage facilities in Activity Centers may conflict with the Plan's revitalization goal of creating vibrant, walkable places that prioritize pedestrians. Therefore, additional CU criteria should be considered that require an evaluation by the hearing authority of whether a proposed self-storage development project proposes a site design, building form, and location that contribute to a cohesive walkable place and is compatible with the envisioned Activity Center.

#### Environmental Policies and Objectives

The proposed ZRA 207 is not in conflict with the environmental policies and objectives in HoCo By Design, the County's General Plan. The proposed ZRA 207 would not change any development requirements for sensitive resource protection, stormwater management or forest conservation.

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Lynda D. Eisenberg, AICP, Director      5/23/2024      Date

**Exhibit A**

**Petitioner's Proposed Text**

(CAPITALS indicate text to be added; text in [[brackets]] indicates text to be deleted.)

Section 131.0.O.5. INDOOR SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES.

A CONDITIONAL USE MAY BE GRANTED IN THE B-2 DISTRICT FOR INDOOR SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES, PROVIDED THAT:

- A. THE USE IS LOCATED ON A LOT OR PARCEL THAT IS FIVE (5) ACRES OR LARGER.
- B. THE USE IS LOCATED ON A LOT OR PARCEL THAT IS LOCATED WITHIN THE PLANNED SERVICE AREA FOR PUBLIC WATER AND PUBLIC SEWER SERVICES.
- C. THE USE ADJOINS AND HAS DIRECT ACCESS TO A PUBLIC ROAD CLASSIFIED AS A MINOR COLLECTOR OR HIGHER IN THE GENERAL PLAN.
- D. INDIVIDUAL SELF-STORAGE UNITS SHALL BE LOCATED ENTIRELY WITHIN A BUILDING STRUCTURE.
- E. NO OUTDOOR STORAGE IS PERMITTED.

## **Exhibit B**

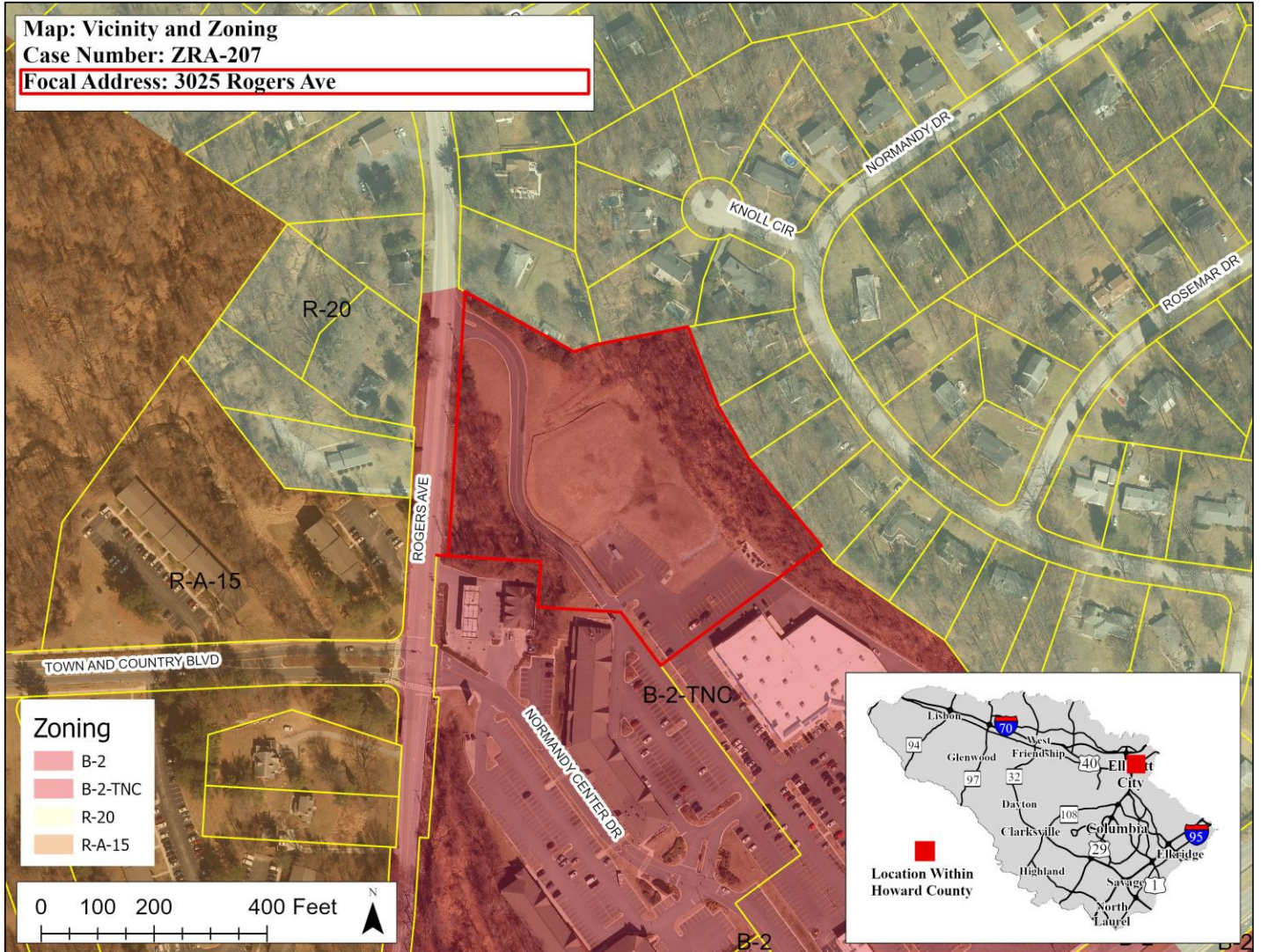
### **How the Text Would Appear Normally If Adopted**

Section 131.0.O.5. Indoor Self-Storage Facilities.

A Conditional Use may be granted in the b-2 district for indoor self-storage Facilities, provided that:

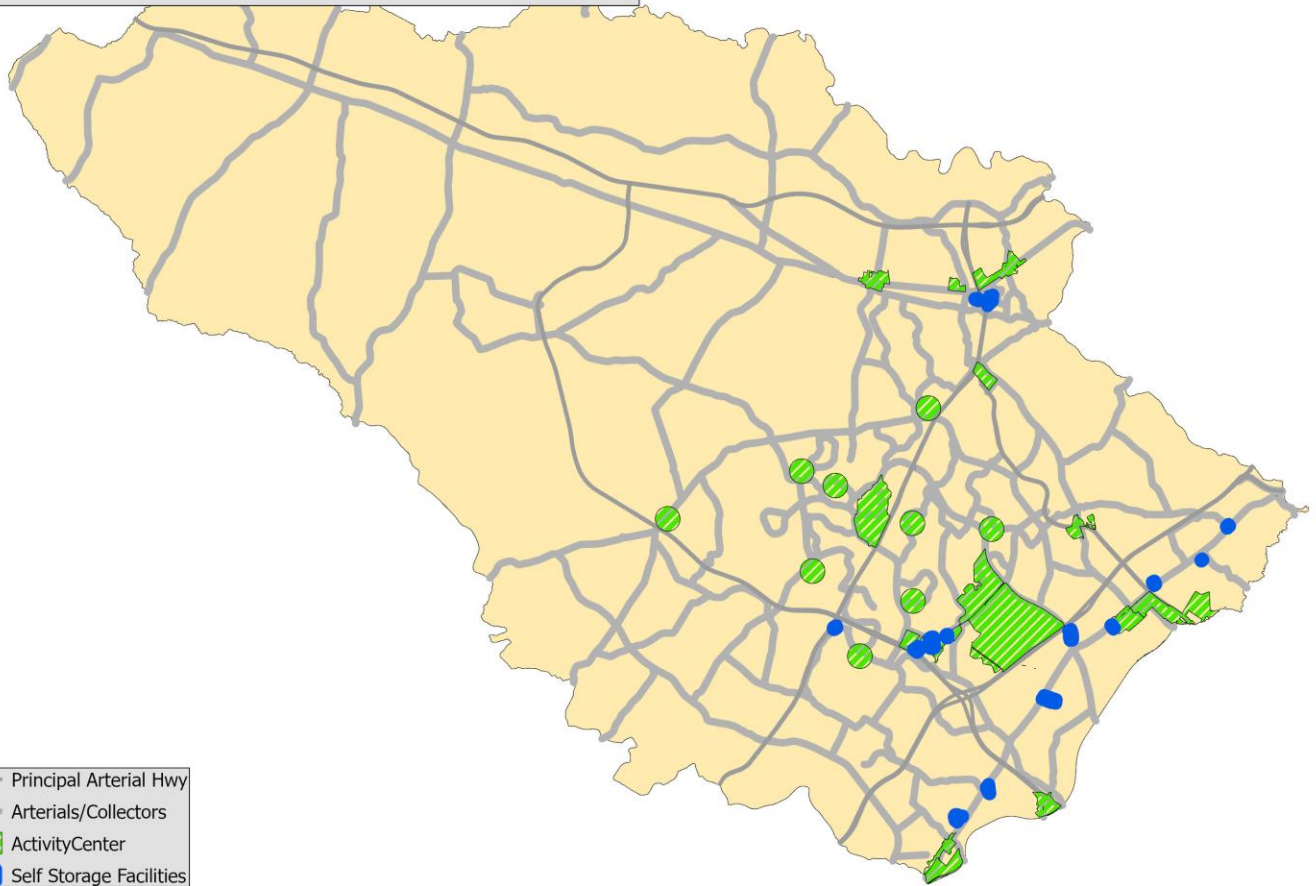
- a. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is five (5) acres or larger.
- b. The use is located on a lot or parcel that is located within the Planned service area for public water and public sewer Services.
- c. The use adjoins and has direct access to a public road classified as a minor collector or higher in the general plan.
- d. Individual self-storage units shall be located entirely within A building structure.
- e. No outdoor storage is permitted.

**Attachment A**



**Attachment B**

**Map: Existing Self Storage Facilities and Activity Centers**  
**Case Number: ZRA-207**  
**Existing Self Storage Facilities: 18**



- Principal Arterial Hwy
- Arterials/Collectors
- ActivityCenter
- Self Storage Facilities





Attachment C

