

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: May 6, 2026

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Jennifer Sedna, Planner I
Subject: Zoning Code Text Amendments for Personal Storage Facilities

Recommendation to Council:

Introduce and hold first reading, by title only, an ordinance amending the Town of Windsor Zoning Code to prohibit the establishment of new personal storage facilities and allow the on-site expansion of approved, existing personal storage facilities.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goals of Fiscal Health and Livability. Goal Statement: Ensure the economic health and long-term financial viability of the Town. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

The Town's Zoning Code defines a "personal storage facility" as a structure or group of structures containing generally small, individual, compartmentalized stalls or lockers rented as individual storage spaces and characterized by low parking demand, also referred to as "mini storage" or "self-storage." The Zoning Code allows personal storage facilities in the Service Commercial district with a Conditional Use Permit, and in the Light and Heavy Industrial districts by right (i.e., no use permit required). All districts require Site Plan and Design review approval for new facilities.

The Town's Zoning Code does not permit other similar inactive land use types such as RV, boat, and vehicle storage yards. Ancillary storage is allowed for business operations including vehicle sales and repair, vehicle salvage and dismantling, and general outdoor storage of supplies and materials. Recreational vehicle parks and parking facilities are allowed uses, with Town approvals, for short-term habitation and parking, respectively.

In 2001, the Town amended the Zoning Code to include a section to regulate personal storage facilities. Later that year, the Town adopted Resolution 1136-01 (Attachment 2) to establish a policy for personal storage facilities requiring:

- Design review by the Planning Commission
- Prevention of new, or expansion of existing, facilities with a walled appearance along streets, especially major connectors (e.g. Old Redwood Highway, Shiloh Road, Conde Lane, Hembree Lane, Arata Lane, etc.)
- Allowance for facilities with a walled appearance to interior lots only without street front visibility
- Design and architecture that achieve the intent of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies
- Design and architecture that encourages activation of the facility and space, including a mixed-

use component of commercial, retail, or residential, for facilities fronting a street

In November 2024 the Council adopted an updated Zoning Code which included two additional standards for Personal Storage Facilities (Section 17.40.25; Attachment 3):

- Variation of the setback to avoid a walled appearance
- A requirement that the structures be a minimum of two stories, unless within 300 feet of a residential zone

There are currently six approved personal storage facilities in Town (Table 1 on Attachment 4). This equates to one facility for every 4,270 residents. In 2017, Rohnert Park determined that its six existing facilities, which equated to 1 for every 7,000 residents, were sufficient for its community and prohibited the development of new facilities. Rohnert Park has not rescinded this prohibition in ensuing years, despite consistent population growth.

Urgency Ordinance

In the past few years, staff have responded to pre-applications and several inquiries about expanding existing facilities or for the establishment of new personal storage facilities. In other jurisdictions in Sonoma County where these facilities have not been zoned out, Santa Rosa for example, the rate of construction of new personal storage facilities has noticeably increased. There are numerous health, safety, aesthetic, community, and economic concerns associated with the establishment of additional personal storage facilities in Windsor.

On June 18, 2025, the Town Council adopted an urgency moratorium prohibiting the issuance of permits and entitlements for the establishment, expansion, or relocation of personal storage facilities, on a 4-1-0 vote (Ordinance 2025-396, Attachment 5). On July 17, 2025, the Town Council adopted an extension to the urgency moratorium, which extended the moratorium to May 31, 2026, on a 4-0-1 vote (Ordinance 2025-397, Attachment 6).

The Town of Windsor Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on April 14, 2026, and adopted Resolution No. 788-26 recommending that the Town Council adopt an ordinance amending the Town of Windsor Zoning Code to prohibit the establishment of new personal storage facilities and allow the on-site expansion of approved, existing personal storage facilities. At that meeting, the following was discussed: the number of facilities within a few miles outside of Town boundaries, the number of units per resident, the difference in revenue streams from a storage facility compared to a brewery, diverse community needs, perception of social needs, blight due to inactive use of facilities, consideration of the long-term good of established facilities, reviewing expansion of facilities with Site Plan & Design Review, clarification of the definition of on-site expansion, the highest and best use of vacant parcels, why Windsor has so many facilities for its size, that current required findings in the Zoning Code would not prevent the establishment of undesirable facilities, and Windsor's communication to prospective business owners (Attachment 7).

Community Outreach

Earlier this year, Planning staff held two industry and interested party community meetings. Outreach for these meetings included advertising on the Town's Community Calendar and Community Meeting webpages, e-notification, social media channels, and mailing invitations to existing personal storage facility property owners and all interested parties. A total of six participants attended either or both meetings and provided comments and feedback for the proposed amendments to the development of personal storage facilities. The following was discussed at the community meetings: accommodation of future demand; facilities with climate control; testimony during the public hearings for the moratorium; crime rates at storage facilities; the number of employees at storage facilities; and, architectural design

of storage facilities. All public comment received for the April 14th Planning Commission Meeting is included as [Attachment 7 \(pages 42-71\)](#).

Discussion:

Proposed Amendments

The Zoning Code is the Town's primary tool for implementing the vision, goals, and policies of the General Plan. The current provisions governing personal storage facilities have not been sufficient to ensure that new development of this use aligns with Windsor's long-term land use, economic development, and community objectives. The current regulations have allowed the establishment of facilities that do not meaningfully contribute to employment generation, fiscal sustainability, or the efficient use of limited commercial and industrial land resources.

Based on this analysis, staff recommends the following amendments to the Zoning Code:

1. Prohibit new personal storage facilities in the Service Commercial, Light Industrial, and Heavy Industrial zoning districts, as shown in Exhibit A (Attachment 1), inclusive of Shiloh Oaks Master Plan and Luzaich Planned Development. This approach would preserve remaining developable land in these districts for uses that better support job creation, economic vitality, and the Town's long-term planning objectives.
2. Allow the on-site expansion of existing, approved personal storage facilities, provided they remain in compliance with applicable Zoning Code standards (Attachment 3). As shown in Table 1 (Attachment 4), Windsor is currently well served by existing personal storage facilities. Allowing limited expansion of these established sites could accommodate operational needs without committing additional land to a use that is not aligned with broader General Plan priorities, thereby avoiding the displacement of more desirable commercial and industrial development.

The proposed amendments would result in personal storage facilities being a prohibited use in the land use section of the Zoning Code, Tables 17.12-01 Commercial Land Use Regulations and 17.14-01 Industrial Land Use Regulations. Zoning Code Section 17.40.250 Storage Facility, Personal would be deleted and replaced with 17.70.080 Nonconforming Storage Facility, Personal (Exhibit A to Attachment 1).

Analysis

This section provides a summary analysis of how the proposed amendments comply with Town goals, policies, and plans.

General Plan Goals and Policies

The section below includes the General Plan policies that could be applied to personal storage facilities and an analysis of how personal storage facilities are consistent or inconsistent with each policy.

[Windsor's 2040 General Plan](#) is the primary guiding document for growth and development in Town. Staff analysis shows that the current provisions of the zoning code applicable to personal storage facilities, particularly where they are allowed and the level of review required, do not adequately ensure that new development of this use aligns with goals and policies in the General Plan. Relevant General Plan elements include Land Use and Community Design, Economic Development, Environmental Resources, and Public Health and Safety, as outlined below.

Land Use and Community Design

Goals LU-1 and LU-5: Encourage well-designed development that preserves and enhances Windsor's

community character, and encourage a robust industrial base that provides jobs for residents, increases the tax base, and is designed and operated in a way that is compatible with surrounding uses, is supported by the following policies and implementation measure:

- Policy LU-1.10 Create Visual Interest. The Town shall encourage building design and architecture that creates visual interest and engaging spaces along streets, maintains an attractive environment, and promotes informal surveillance of public spaces by building occupants. Whenever possible, building fronts should not be dominated by garage doors, vehicle parking areas, or blank walls.

Staff analysis: Due to the passive nature of the use, personal storage facilities typically lack architectural design details, do not create engaging spaces along streets, prevent informal surveillance of public spaces by building occupants, and have building fronts dominated by blank walls, or their equivalent.

- Policy LU-3.1 Increase Local Shopping. The Town shall encourage the development of a broad range of commercial uses that reduce the need for residents to travel to nearby communities and capture a greater share of local spending.

Staff analysis: Personal storage facilities have very few employees (sometimes zero) and an extremely low rate of visitation by customers. As outlined in Policy ED-1.3 below, the majority of Windsor residents travel to other cities for work. Development that creates employment and high customer visitation increases the Town's revenue by accommodating local spending.

- Implementation Measure LU-3 Monitor Industrial Land. Starting in 2020, and biennially thereafter, the Town shall monitor the absorption and availability of industrial land to ensure a balanced supply of available land for all industrial business sectors and shall assess the possible need for amending the amount of industrially designated uses.

Staff analysis: Staff did an informal review of the undeveloped parcels in the Industrial and Service Commercial Districts. There is one undeveloped parcel in the Service Commercial District and approximately 17 undeveloped parcels in the Light and Heavy Industrial Districts ([Attachment 8](#)). These parcels total 72 acres, not all of which are presently developable. While there may be other underdeveloped or partially developed parcels that could accommodate additional development, the Town's availability of properties that could accommodate meaningful industrial or commercial development and its accompanying economic and employment benefit is limited. A prohibition on new personal storage facilities would keep the limited undeveloped or underdeveloped commercial and industrial space available for a variety of businesses and uses that advance the Town's goals and policies.

- Policy LU-5.1 Attract and Retain Industrial Jobs. The Town shall encourage development and retention of industrial uses that generate jobs as well as net sales and use tax revenues to the Town.

Staff analysis: The proposed amendments would make the limited undeveloped land available for industrial uses which contribute to employment- and revenue-generating uses. Personal storage facilities are not an employment- or revenue-generating use (see also Policy ER-5.9 below).

- Policy LU-6.1 Sustainable Land Use Pattern. The Town shall strive to provide an overall pattern of land uses that encourages sustainable development; creates a safe and attractive public realm; provides an interconnected network of streets; offers convenient alternatives to auto travel; ensures compatibility among uses; enhances livability and public health; sustains economic vitality; preserves open space and agricultural resources; and reduces air pollution, greenhouse

gas emissions, and energy consumption.

Staff analysis: Personal storage facility development typically does not create a safe, attractive public realm, enhance livability, or protect public health. This land use competes with uses that support economic vitality, including employment-generating uses that would reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

- Policies for Old Redwood Highway Community Place, especially:
- LU-12.1 Transform Old Redwood Highway. The Town shall actively seek opportunities to support the transformation of Old Redwood Highway into an attractive boulevard that has high-quality buildings with active frontages facing the boulevard, wide sidewalks, bicycle lanes, consistent landscaping, and wayfinding signs.
- LU-12.2 Encourage Revitalization of Old Redwood Highway. The Town shall encourage the upgrading, beautifying, and revitalization of existing commercial and industrial areas along Old Redwood Highway.
- LU-12.3 Mixed Use Nodes. The Town shall encourage areas designated as mixed-use along Old Redwood Highway to develop as higher-intensity nodes of activity that create visual interest along the boulevard and serve as catalyst for the revitalization of the corridor. The Town may consider expanding mixed-use land use designations along the Old Redwood Highway corridor in response to market interests.

Staff analysis: Personal storage facilities are not consistent with the General Plan policies for the Old Redwood Highway Community Place. Personal storage facilities, by their nature, typically present inactive frontages, limited customer activity, and minimal contribution to the public realm, which undermines the intended character of the corridor. In addition, Policy LU-12.3 calls for the development of higher-intensity mixed-use nodes along Old Redwood Highway that generate activity, support local-serving retail and services, and act as catalysts for corridor revitalization. Personal storage facilities do not advance these objectives and instead occupy land that could otherwise accommodate more appropriate uses aligned with these policies, including retail, service, office, or mixed-use development that contributes to employment generation and economic vitality. This issue is particularly pronounced on the remaining undeveloped parcel within the Service Commercial District along Old Redwood Highway, as well as at key locations where Old Redwood Highway intersects Starr Road and Arata Lane, which is envisioned as a walkable mixed-use node. The development of personal storage facilities in these areas would preclude development opportunities that better support the Town's long-term vision for an active, revitalized corridor.

Economic Development

Goal ED-1: Support Town economic development by increasing the tax base, creating more local jobs and retail opportunities through business attraction, retention, and expansion, is supported by the following policies:

- Policy ED-1.3 Diversified Employment. Develop a diversified economy to provide living-wage jobs for Windsor residents of all ages and skill levels and to cushion the Town's economy against a downturn in any one sector and against seasonal fluctuations and encourage Windsor residents to work in town.

Staff analysis: According to the Economic Development Strategic Plan's report from 2022, over 85% of employed Windsor residents commute out of town for work. Windsor has approximately 12,600 employed residents and only 8,100 local jobs, requiring a significant number of residents who are forced to leave town to work. A prohibition on new personal storage facilities would preserve the limited undeveloped land available for employment-generating uses (see also Policy ER-5.9).

- Policy ED-1.5 Protect Strategic Business Sites. The Town shall protect its strategic business sites from encroachment by other land uses that may preclude future economic development.
Staff analysis: As stated above, personal storage facilities generate extremely low employment and visitation. These facilities also have lower assessed value than other permitted industrial and commercial uses. Staff analysis included a comparison of the assessed value of existing personal storage facilities in Town versus nearby industrial and commercial uses and confirmed the assessed value of the properties developed with storage facilities to be lower. A prohibition on new development of these types of facilities would protect the 18 remaining undeveloped commercial and industrial sites discussed earlier in this report for future uses that promote economic development.
- Policy ED-1.6 Target industries. The Town shall proactively work to expand the following target industries in Windsor: innovative technology; high end product development and manufacturing; green services and construction; agriculture, including food, wine, and craft beer/spirits; retail/commercial; and tourism.
Staff analysis: Few parcels remain available in Windsor that can accommodate the target industries described in this policy. Personal storage facilities compete with these target industries for space.
- Policy ED-1.16 Business Expansion. The Town shall encourage industrial and point-of-sales businesses to expand in Windsor.
Staff analysis: Personal storage facilities compete for limited space with industrial and point-of-sale businesses.
- Policy ED-3.9 Wine and Craft Beverage Tourism. The Town shall strive to attract tourism centered on the wine industry, area wineries and wineries within the Russian River Valley appellation, craft beer and distilleries, such as urban wineries, tasting rooms, and beverage production tours.
Staff analysis: Windsor's Beverage District is almost completely zoned for light industrial land uses. The Town may miss out on these desired tourist-oriented businesses if the available land is instead developed for personal storage (see also Goal 3.3 below).

Environmental Resources

Goals ER-5 and ER-9: Improve the sustainability and resiliency of Windsor through compliance with local, State, and Federal policies and standards that aim to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the community, and recognize and preserve significant views and landforms along major corridors and surrounding the community, is supported by the following policies:

- Policy ER-5.1 Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction. The Town shall strive to reduce emissions by 25 percent below the 1990 community emissions level by 2020, and further reduce community emissions by: 40 percent below the 1990 level by 2030; 60 percent below the 1990 level by 2040; and 80 percent below the 1990 level by 2050.
Staff analysis: A prohibition on development of new personal storage facilities would support this goal by retaining the limited undeveloped land in Windsor for the development of employment- and retail-generating uses. Such uses allow residents to work and shop locally, which reduces the distance and duration of vehicle trips, reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Policy ER-5.4 Encourage Development Patterns that Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The

Town shall strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging compact, mixed-use, pedestrian/bicycle friendly, transit oriented development that reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT); promoting energy efficient building enhancements, construction practices, design, and site planning; improving the job-to-housing ratio; and other methods of reducing greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining a balance of housing types.

Staff analysis: Personal storage facilities generate extremely low employment and discourage the use of bicycle, walking, or transit both in the nature of the land use (storage) and the treatment of frontages (autocentric, no eyes on the street).

- Policy ER-5.9 Energy Conservation through Land Use. The Town shall promote the creation of a land use pattern that reduces operational energy requirements, especially for transportation purposes, by: a. Avoiding land use configurations and siting decisions that result in single-purpose automobile trips, and instead encouraging patterns that result in multi-purpose trips; b. Promoting land use patterns that may be easily served by local transit and linked with regional transit; c. Promoting land use patterns that provide employment opportunities for Windsor residents.

Staff analysis: The proposed amendments, which would prohibit development of new personal storage facilities, are consistent with this goal by preserving the availability of land for employment-generating and local retail uses which reduce the impact of transportation needs. Employment data from a variety of resources shows that industrial and advanced manufacturing uses generate a range of 5 to 40 times more jobs per acre than personal storage facilities.

- Policy ER-9.2 Development Guidelines along [Scenic Corridors](#). The Town shall ensure that development proposals along scenic corridors do not detract from public viewpoints, are protected, and are harmonious and subordinate to the natural features that comprise the scenic viewshed. The Town shall require developers include components of project design that shall be considered in making this assessment include building height, massing, orientation, color, building materials, rooftop appurtenances, storage areas, signage, lighting, and low-water landscaping. The purpose of detailed development review along these corridors is to ensure that development within the viewshed preserves and enhances attractive natural and man-made vistas.

Staff analysis: There are four existing and five approved personal storage facilities located on Scenic Corridors on Conde Lane, Mitchell Lane, and Old Redwood Highway ([Attachment 9](#)), and a prohibition would minimize their impact by preventing development of additional facilities. Due to their passive, interior-focused nature and security requirements, these types of facilities tend to detract from the harmonious, natural features of these Corridors.

Public Facilities and Services

Goal PFS-6: Provide high quality public safety services to ensure a safe community for all in Windsor and is supported by the following policy:

- Policy PFS-6.3 Guidelines for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. The Town shall develop guidelines for incorporating components of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design during review of new development applications to minimize opportunities for crime to occur.

Staff analysis: A prohibition of personal storage facilities would preserve developable land for businesses and uses that are more in line with CPTED policies. Storage facilities lend themselves to criminal activity due to their design and purpose:

- *Their design is internally focused with few people on site, which does not allow for the property frontage to be monitored easily from inside or outside the facility.*

- *The infrequency of tenant visits lends itself to inactivity, and thus a higher potential for crime to occur.*
- *Blank walls on the outside of facilities create an unsafe environment for pedestrians due to the lack of natural surveillance, preventing staff inside from monitoring the street and causing pedestrians to feel exposed and unobserved.*

Criminal activity at these facilities has been well documented in the County in the past 5 years.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Town's current land use regulations of personal storage facilities is also inconsistent with goals and key opportunities in the [Economic Development Strategic Plan](#), including:

- **Goal 1.7 Workforce Development:** The Town should strive to develop a diversified economy to provide living wage jobs for Windsor residents of all ages and skill levels.
Staff analysis: The proposed amendments would keep the limited Service Commercial and Industrial land available to land uses that are consistent with this goal. Allowing new personal storage uses is not consistent with this goal. According to a 2025 report from a personal storage industry media company, jurisdictions in at least 15 other states across the U.S. have passed personal storage moratoriums or bans in the past 6 years due to "concerns over aesthetics, oversupply, a lack of job creation, or all of the above" (see also Policy ER-5.9 above).
- **Goal 2.4b Strategic Fiscal Enhancement & Investment:** Increase the tax base by attracting and growing high sales tax-generating businesses such as retailers and auto sales.
Staff analysis: Retail leakage and taxable sales were identified as the main challenge that needs to be addressed to support the Town's economy and community. The proposed amendments would prohibit low-employment and low-visitor generating personal storage uses and keep land available for land uses that are consistent with this goal. The significant percentage of Windsor residents working outside of Town (see Policy ED-1.3 above) also results in an indirect loss of revenue due to the lack of sales tax generated from retail and personal services.
- **Goal 3.1 Technology and Advanced Manufacturing:** Attract companies specializing in research and development, technology and advanced manufacturing, creating quality employment opportunities for residents.
Staff analysis: The proposed amendments would keep land available for land uses that are consistent with this goal, including the creation of employment opportunities for Windsor residents (see ER-5.9 above).
- **Goal 3.3 Food and Beverage:** Encourage unique culinary and beverage experiences, by building up the Windsor Beverage District and the Town as a destination for food, beverage, and hospitality.
Staff analysis: The parcels located in the Food and Beverage District are zoned Light Industrial. There are few parcels remaining in this district that could be developed to support this goal. The proposed amendments support this goal by retaining opportunities for the development of the Food and Beverage District. Allowing additional storage facilities would detract from the experience that the Town is trying to develop in the district.

Zoning Code Land Use Amendments

This section provides a summary analysis of how the proposed amendments comply with Town policies and standards.

Findings for Approval of Amendments to the Zoning Code

Section 17.72.050.B. requires specific findings to be made to amend the Town's Zoning Code. Each of the required findings is provided below, along with how the amendments are consistent with each finding.

1. The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan, and any Specific Plan or Master Plan.

Support: The proposed amendments are consistent with the classification of land uses in the Service Commercial and the Light and Heavy Industrial land use designations. The amendments bring the Town's Zoning Code to consistency with goals and policies in the 2040 General Plan as outlined above. The amendments are consistent with the Luzaich Planned Development and the Shiloh Oaks Master Plan as they are governed by the land uses and development standards in the Light Industrial Zoning District, and the Light and Heavy Industrial Zoning Districts in the Zoning Code, respectively.

2. The proposed amendments would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the Town.

Support: The proposed amendments would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the Town. Amending the Zoning Code to prohibit new personal storage facilities, and allow expansion of existing personal storage facilities, is supportive of goals and policies in the 2040 General Plan and in the Economic Development Strategic Plan, as outlined above, which are intended to protect the public interest, health, safety, convenience, welfare, and economy of Windsor.

3. The proposed amendments are internally consistent with other applicable provisions of this Zoning Code.

Support: The land use amendments would prohibit new personal storage facilities and allow the on-site expansion of existing personal storage facilities within the Town's boundaries. These amendments are not in conflict with other definitions or development standards within the Zoning Code.

Fiscal Impact:

While difficult to quantify, staff expects that this action will be fiscally beneficial for the Town in the long term. Storage facilities generate no sales tax and generally lower property tax revenues than active commercial and industrial uses.

Environmental Review:

The proposed Zoning Code text amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), the General Rule that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment; and, 15060(c)(3) the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines, because it has no potential for resulting in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and, the Common Sense Exemption, Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed amendments do not allow for or encourage any more development than is already anticipated under the Town's 2040 General Plan and can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the amendments in question may have a significant effect on the environment.

Attachment(s):

1. [Ordinance Personal Storage Facility Zoning Code Amendments Exhibit A to Ord. Zoning Text Amendments PSF](#)
2. [TC Reso 1136-01 Policy Mini-Warehouse Facilities](#)

- 3. Storage Facility, Personal Section 17.40.250
- 4. Table 1. Approved Personal Storage Facilities in Windsor
- 5. 2025-396 Urgency Ordinance Personal Storage Facilities
- 6. 2025-397 Urgency Ord. Extending Personal Storage Facilities
- 7. 4-14-26 PC Mtg. Report & Attachments
- 8. Map of Undeveloped Parcels SC & Ind. Land Use Designations
- 9. Scenic Corridors -Figure ER-1 General Plan
- 13.1 PowerPoint (Distributed 2026.05.05)
- 13.1, 14.1 Correspondence Received (Distributed 2026.05.05)

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