

Introduction

The proposed text amendments would allow Mini-warehouse, RV storage and RV maintenance and repair as separate land uses, allowed by conditional use permit in the Forest and Range zoning district. Currently, recreational vehicle storage is only permitted in the Rural Recreation zone, limited to the upper County above Cle Elum and in Planned Unit Developments. This indicates assumptions that this land use is solely associated with recreation and recreational user destinations.

Mini-storage (also known as self-storage, referred to as Mini-warehouse by Kittitas County Code) is permitted either outright or by Conditional Use Permit in several zoning districts, including General Commercial, Light Industrial, Limited Commercial, Rural 3 and Rural 5, but also in Forest and Range zoned areas in LAMIRDs (Local Areas of More Intense Rural Development) or designated Urban by the Comprehensive Plan.

Some RV storage is being provided in mini-storage facilities in locations outside of the Rural Recreation zone. For outdoor RV storage, this appears to be inconsistent with the definition of Mini warehouse (KCC 17.08.397) which limits the use to buildings. This amendment proposes a modification to the current definition to allow outdoor RV storage in mini storage where it isn't expressly prohibited by County Code.

Recreational vehicle maintenance and repair is not specifically listed as a permitted use in any zone. It may be allowed under the land use category "vehicle/equipment service and repair" (KCC 17.08.560A) but it does not neatly fit within the definition, which limits vehicles to those that are motorized and includes some uses that need not be included such as service stations and body shops.

We have found that demand for RV storage is much broader, not limited to recreational users at their destinations or to residents of master planned communities. We have also identified potential demand for recreational vehicle storage along major highways. There is currently a lack of RV maintenance and repair businesses in the upper County.

A. Required Attachments:

1. Site Plan of the Property. Not applicable to a text amendment.
2. SEPA Checklist. Included with the application.
3. Project Narrative responding to Questions 9 – 12. In the following narrative.

B. Project Narrative:

Question 9:

a. Why is the amendment needed and being proposed?

There is demand for RV storage at the source (i.e., permanent residence) of the owners and not limited to residents of master planned communities. Evidence of this demand includes RV storage facilities being permitted and developed in urban areas that do not have the recreational character of the upper Kittitas Valley. Demand for RV storage include owners who have limited area at home for storing the vehicles or that may be prohibited from doing so by regulations or covenants. Also, retired RV owners who have downsized and live in, for example, manufactured home parks or retirement apartments. Some simply prefer to not to have the vehicle at home when they are not using it. While most RV storage areas are outdoor open storage, there are also covered storage areas and fully enclosed climate-controlled storage units.

In addition to local residence demand, we have identified a need for RV storage in locations that are neither at owners' permanent residence nor their destination. Western Washington residents who regularly travel to eastern Washington may prefer to store their vehicles in a location en-route to their destination. The Cle Elum area is uniquely suited to this type of a facility because of its location at the point where travelers can choose whether to turn north over Blewett Pass to destinations such as Wenatchee, Chelan or the Methow or Okanogan Valleys or to continue east to the Columbia Basin, Yakima Valley, Blue Mountains and other eastern and southeastern Washington destinations.

For example, a family that stays at a variety of eastern Washington locations may want to keep their vehicle at a location where it is as close to the destination as possible but where the choice can be made which of these directions is to be taken on any given trip.

Locations for this type of demand are ideally located along Highway corridors or at interchanges because of their visibility to travelers from outside of the area. Sites for this purpose are substantially limited by the fact that most highway miles in Kittitas County are limited access, the number of interchanges is limited and properly zoned available sites on interchanges are limited even further.

Recreational vehicle maintenance and repair is a closely associated land use that can provide for customer convenience if performed at or near a storage area. However, the economics are such that it may be difficult to operate a repair facility if solely limited to providing service to the vehicles being stored on the site. If it is determined that it should

be limited to existing or newly permitted RV storage facilities, it is requested that it not be restricted entirely to vehicles being stored at the site. Allowing for at least limited availability of the service to the public would increase its economic feasibility. Means for limiting the use such as not allowing on-premise advertising signs for the maintenance and service component could be considered.

The request for reconsideration of earlier decision to not allow Mini-warehouses in the Forest and Range zone is based on the following:

1. Mini-warehouses were previously allowed by conditional use permit in the Forest and Range zone.
 2. Mini-warehouses are currently allowed in areas zoned Forest and Range in LAMIRD's and urban areas, while the intent statement is the same.
 3. This land use serves rural as well as urban residents and would benefit residents of these areas.
 4. This land use is relatively low in intensity and with appropriate standards and the review required for the conditional use permit can protect resource areas and ensure that an application does not contribute to the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- a. How [is] the proposed amendment consistent with the County-wide planning policies for Kittitas County?

The following County-wide policies are relevant to this proposal:

Policy 2.12: City services should not be extended outside 20-year UGA's [with exceptions for master planned resorts].

Policy 3.1: Commercial developments including retail, wholesale or service related activities having a gross floor area more than 4,000 square feet, with associated parking facilities, shall be located only within UGAs and Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDs) [with exceptions for master planned resorts].

Policy 7.2: Surface water runoff and drainage facilities shall be designed and utilized in a manner which protects against the destruction of property and the degradation of water quality.

Policy 9.2: Industries and commercial developments which provide for and/or compliment sales of agricultural production and agricultural tourism, or enhance recreational tourism within the County shall be encouraged within rural areas.

Policy 9.3: All economic development and population growth in the County shall be accommodated in a manner that minimizes impacts on agricultural land, forestry, mineral resources, shorelines and critical areas.

Standards proposed by the text amendments and that are already being required for conditional use permits include required findings that urban services would not be needed (Policy 2.12), protection of ground and surface water (Policy 7.2) and additional requirements for projects proposed next to designated resource lands (Policy 9.3). RV storage and RV maintenance and repair will enhance recreational tourism in the County (Policy 9.2).

Conformance to the proposed standards should not be difficult. These uses have very low water and wastewater needs. The primary utility that would be needed is electric power which is not considered to be an “urban” service. Protection of ground and surface water and additional measures necessary to resolve conflicts with resource lands should also be possible.

The only potential conflict is with Policy 3.1, which limits commercial development to 4,000 square feet or less of gross floor area along with associated parking. This policy is intended to control sprawl by reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

The land uses proposed by these amendments are somewhat different than typical commercial development. Since RV storage is usually outdoors, the measurement of gross floor area does not really apply. Vehicle storage and Mini-warehouses cover a larger area than other commercial land uses but at lower intensity. The uses proposed by these text amendments have much fewer customers overall and at any one time, and less need for water usage, wastewater disposal, etc. Consideration should also be given to how limiting this use to major highways and intersections would prevent sprawling low-density development as intended by this policy.

b. How is the amendment consistent with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan?

The policies in the comprehensive plan that are relevant to this proposal primarily deal with the level of development considered appropriate in rural areas of the County. This is encapsulated in Policy GPO 10.4 which encourages economic growth while protecting the rural character of the County. The standards and criteria proposed in the text

amendments are intended to conform to and implement this and other plan policies including requiring new development to meet standards and measures to protect existing surface and groundwater from contamination (Policy GPO 8.44C), and project design which provides a visual rural environment characteristic of the County including preservation of open space, critical areas, forested lands and adequate buffering between development and natural areas (Policy GPO 8.57).

A certain level of mixed uses that may include limited commercial, service and rural industrial uses is acceptable in rural areas (Policy GPO 8.8). RV storage and RV maintenance and repair are related to tourism and outdoor recreation, given preference in Rural designated areas by Policy GPO 8.16. These land uses will serve recreational tourists and travelers as well as residents. Standards are being proposed to ensure suitability to surrounding rural areas (Policy GPO 8.61). They are consistent with the policy of promoting tourism and tourist based businesses (Policy GPO 10.5). The proposed uses are being limited to locations that are on or near State Highways with standards to ensure compatibility with rural character (Policy GPO 8.54). This narrative supports development along highways as proposed and describes how existing business districts probably won't adequately address the need (Policy GPO 2.42). Also, not all potential locations would be accurately characterized as "new" sites. For example, the property owned by the proponent may be better described as the extension of an existing self-storage development to the west in an area that has other nearby commercial establishments.

Although the text amendment does not designate available land per se, it is consistent with Policy GPO 2.43A by allowing the siting of a specialized commercial use when demonstrated that it is compatible with residential, agricultural, recreational and other general land use types. Without the text amendment as proposed, there may not be enough available land for these specialized commercial uses.

Land use development not compatible with rural character is not allowed (GPO 8.17). Rural Character is defined as open space and visual and natural landscape that predominate over the built environment, opportunities for traditional rural lifestyle and rural based economies, spaces and development compatible with wildlife habitat, undeveloped land not converted to development of sprawl and low density, activities that generally do not require extension of urban governmental services and land use that is consistent with the protection of surface and ground water flows and recharge / discharge areas (Comprehensive Plan, p. 8-2, RCW 36.70A.030(16)).

Under Policy GPO 8.21, criteria have been established in the zoning code at KCC 17.60A .015(7) for conditional use permits to determine if land uses to be permitted in rural zoning districts preserve rural character. Since the land uses proposed by the text

amendments would require conditional use permits, these criteria would be part of their project review and have been incorporated into the proposed standards.

Rural character is retained and preserved with the proposed text amendments because the locations in which they may be permitted are limited, they are not inconsistent with rural lifestyle or rural based economies, it must be shown that they do not require the extension of urban governmental services, they are required to be compatible with surrounding rural land uses, findings are required that they do not compromise the long-term viability of designated resource lands and specific attributes such as compatibility of wildlife habitat and protection of surface and ground water flows, etc. can be evaluated and required as a part of the conditional use permit review process.

The proposed uses have low demand for water and public services and can be required to comply with water quality and water quantity regulations to protect existing surface and groundwater users from impairment and contamination. Since demand is low they can be developed in rural lands and still have adequate public services (Policy GPO 8.18).

Under the Zoning Ordinance intent statement for the Forest and Range zone, natural resource management is the highest priority and activities that are incompatible with resource management is discouraged (KCC 17.56.010). While resource management is not defined by the Zoning Ordinance, the definition of "Resource based industry" (KCC 17.08.468) includes recreation-related tourism as well as agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining. As recreational-tourist uses (in part) and being permitted in the Rural Recreation zone, the proposed uses should be consistent with the intent statement with the review and requirements being proposed to ensure their compatibility with surrounding uses.

c. How have conditions changed to warrant a comprehensive plan amendment?

In 2013 the County adopted changes to the comprehensive plan and land development ordinances to address concerns that were raised about protecting the character of rural designated areas. Before that, mini-warehouse was a permitted use in the Forest and Range zoning district (with the assumption that RV storage would be considered accessory and also allowed). The change in circumstances includes the increasing demand for RV storage that has occurred in this area in recent years. Also, while the County was probably justified in eliminating land uses that were seen as inherently incompatible with Rural designated areas, new information is being presented in this application to support the suitability of the proposed land uses. Specifics raised that should be considered as bases for considering the proposed land uses include the following:

- a. The distinction between mini-storage and RV storage as separate land uses.

- b. Current Zoning Ordinance limitations of RV storage to recreational areas and planned unit developments in light of evidence that demand for these uses is broader.
- c. Standards being proposed by these amendments to reduce the potential for adverse impacts to the character of Rural lands consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Question 10: Transfer of Development Rights Not applicable to these text amendments.

Question 11: Additional information for map amendments Not applicable to these text amendments.

Question 12: Additional information for text amendments, the sections of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance proposed for change and proposed wording.

Proposed amendments are to the Zoning Ordinance; for RV storage it is the amendment of an existing footnote under KCC 17.15.060.2 – *Footnotes Associated with Rural Non-LAMIRD Use Table*. New footnotes are proposed for RV maintenance and repair and for Mini-warehouses. Most of the language for Mini-warehouse from footnotes in other tables where it is currently allowed. Also, the addition of a new entry for RV storage in the table under KCC17.15.060.1 – *Allowed Uses in Rural Non-LAMIRD Lands*. New lines are provided for Mini-warehouse and RV maintenance and repair. The entries would be “CU” for *Conditional Use Permit* under the column for Forest and Range zoning.

The footnote for RV storage is also being added to the CU entry for the Rural Recreation zone, applying the new standards in that zoning district.

A new definition is being proposed for RV maintenance and repair and a modified definition for Mini-warehouse to be included in the Zoning Ordinance in KCC 17.08 – *Definitions*.

No amendments to the comprehensive plan are requested.

In the following new language for the text amendments, terms in brackets ([]) are substituted language, wording that will not be in the actual amendment or citations that have not yet been determined. This is for clarity.

In the text amendment attachment, new language is underlined, and language being deleted is struck out. Where language is bold faced it is as it is currently in the Zoning Ordinance and does not represent any changes.

Recreational Vehicle Storage

Recreational vehicle storage may be enclosed or outdoor storage of recreational vehicles or both.

Permitted where the use is only serving a residential PUD or [by conditional use permit] in the Rural Recreation and Forest and Range zoning districts subject to the following standards and conditions:

1. All stored vehicles must be licensed if required by law, and operational. This land use category does not include vehicle sales.
2. Unless it is limited to serving a residential PUD and otherwise permitted or authorized, recreational vehicles shall not be stored outside when the site is contiguous to a residential zoning district.
3. No commercial or manufacturing activities are permitted except when recreational vehicle / equipment service and repair has been permitted subject to the requirements of [new code standards for recreational vehicle/equipment service and repair].
4. In the Forest and Range zoning district, and when not limited to serving a recreational planned unit development, the site shall either be:
 - a. Contiguous to a State Highway, or
 - b. Contiguous to a designated urban arterial or rural collector road located near a highway intersection or freeway interchange.
 - c. It is not necessary for the site to have direct access to such arterial, collector or highway to meet this requirement.
5. Recreational vehicle storage shall be designed to be compatible with the surrounding rural character, subject to the following standards:
 - a. Storage areas shall be enclosed with a minimum five-foot-high, security fence. The applicant may be required to provide additional plans for aesthetic improvements and/or site-screening.
 - b. Additional setbacks, physical barriers or site-screening may be required on sites that border resource lands in the Commercial Agriculture or Commercial Forest zoning districts.
 - c. Buildings shall not exceed 18 feet in height.
 - d. Findings shall be made that the proposal does not require urban governmental services such as municipal sewer or water service and does not compromise the long-term viability of designated resource lands.
 - e. Measures shall be taken to protect ground and surface water.

Recreational vehicle/equipment service and repair.

Recreational vehicle/equipment service and repair is permitted by conditional use permit in the Forest and Range zoning district.

The site shall either be:

1. Contiguous to a State Highway, or
2. Contiguous to a designated urban arterial or rural collector road located near a highway intersection or freeway interchange.
3. It is not necessary for the site to have direct access to such arterial, collector or highway to meet this requirement.

Vehicles under repair shall either be kept inside buildings or visually screened from surrounding areas.

No on-street vehicle parking shall be allowed associated with the use. All vehicles, including recreational vehicles and customer and employee automobiles shall be stored or parked on-site at all times.

Maintenance and repair activities shall not take place in RV storage enclosures or spaces, except limited maintenance and minor repairs may be performed on RV's that are already being stored at the site in order to avoid having to move them, when such maintenance and repair activities can be completed in two hours or less and only in the enclosures or spaces in which the RV's are already being kept.

This use shall be designed to be compatible with the surrounding rural character, subject to the following standards:

1. Buildings shall not exceed 18 feet in height.
2. Findings shall be made that the use does not require urban governmental services such as municipal sewer or water service and does not compromise the long-term viability of designated resource lands.
3. Additional setbacks, physical barriers or site-screening may be required on sites that border resource lands in the Commercial Agriculture or Commercial Forest zoning districts.
4. Measures shall be taken to protect ground and surface water.

Definition:

This definition is the same as “Vehicle/equipment service and repair” (KCC 17.08.560A) except that it is limited to recreational vehicles, not limited to motorized vehicles and equipment and does not include gas and service stations.

Mini-Warehouses

The following standards shall apply to the approval and construction of mini warehouses in the Forest and Range zone:

- a. The site shall either be contiguous to a State Highway or contiguous to a designated urban arterial or rural collector road located near a highway intersection or freeway interchange. It is not necessary for the site to have direct access to such arterial, collector or highway to meet this requirement;
- b. Findings shall be made that the use does not require urban governmental services such as municipal sewer or water service and does not compromise the long-term viability of designated resource lands;
- c. Additional setbacks, physical barriers or site-screening may be required on sites that border resource lands in the Commercial Agriculture or Commercial Forest zoning districts;
- d. Measures shall be taken to protect ground and surface water;
- e. A mini-warehouse proposal (application) must include plans for aesthetic improvements and/or sight screening;
- f. All buildings with storage units facing property boundaries shall have a minimum setback of thirty-five (35) feet;
- g. No commercial or manufacturing activities will be permitted within any building or storage unit except for RV storage when authorized [under the new code standards for RV storage];
- h. Lease documents shall spell out all conditions and restriction of the use;
- i. Signs, other than on-site direction aids, shall number not more than two (2) and shall not exceed forty (40) square feet each in area.

Definition:

“Mini warehouse” means a building or group of buildings containing individual compartmentalized access stalls or lockers for the dead storage of customers’ goods or wares. It may also include some recreational vehicle storage, including the outdoor storage of vehicles, provided that such use is not otherwise prohibited or restricted.