

REPORT

Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: March 24, 2025

From: Jackie Teed, Director
Planning and Development
File: File: DP001082
Doc #: 2644242

Item #: 2025-97

Subject: **Zoning Amendment to Remove Mini-storage Use from M-1, M-5 and CM-1 Industrial Districts, and to Require Storage in Multi-family Residential Districts**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *THAT Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Storage Amendments) No. 8518, 2025, that would remove mini-storage from the list of permitted uses in the M-1, M-5 and CM-1 zoning districts and to add to all multi-family and/or mixed-use residential zoning districts a requirement for storage within new multi-family residential projects, be received for information.*
 2. *THAT no Public Hearing be held for the Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Storage Amendments) No. 8518, 2025, following circulation of notice, in accordance with the Local Government Act.*
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request Council initiate consideration of proposed text amendments to the zoning bylaw related to mini-storage use in M-1, M-5 and CM-1 Zoning Districts, and to requiring storage in new multi-family residential buildings, as well as to request Council direct that no public hearing be held.

SUMMARY

At its meeting of February 24, 2025, Council directed staff to bring forward bylaws for consideration to remove mini-storage as an as-of-right use in M-1, M-5 and CM-1 industrial zones. Mini-storage use is not consistent with the City's larger objectives

regarding employment opportunities in industrial areas, or regarding urban design within Lower Twelfth and the Sapperton Green areas, both of which permit this use. In addition the use it has the potential to out-compete other, preferred uses.

Based on the City's recently updated Family Friendly Housing Policy, and given that storage is a need for residents of multi-family buildings, staff recommends adding storage as a requirement for all new such buildings at this time, in addition to the land use amendment.

As such, staff is recommending the following changes to the zoning bylaw:

Mini-storage use be removed from the list of permitted uses in the M-1, M-5 and CM-1 zoning districts. Applicants wishing to develop under this use would require a rezoning, enabling the City to ensure the use, building massing, and other urban design elements impacting city streets and other public spaces are appropriately configured.

Require 3.7 m² per dwelling for residential storage in new multi-family residential buildings, either in-suite or underground. This would ensure that residents of newer buildings still have access to storage and would also not add further demand for stand-alone mini storage as the population increases.

Both Metro Vancouver and the City of Vancouver have recently made policy/regulations addressing mini-storage to address similar concerns.

In addition to the Lower Twelfth area study, the City is undertaking studies on employment needs and industrial lands intensification approaches, the outcomes of which would be used to inform future recommendations to Council regarding locations and/or uses in industrial zoned lands. In the meantime, the currently proposed changes would prevent further multi-storey, mini-storage as-of-right, continuing to allow consideration of mini-storage proposals on a case-by-case basis through rezoning.

BACKGROUND

Current Mini-storage Developments and Zones

Three zoning districts currently permit mini-storage use as a permitted use: M-1 (located in various locations in the city), M-5 (wholly located within the Lower Twelfth study area), and CM-1 (located in Sapperton Green) (see map in Attachment 1). There are currently a number of existing mini-storage buildings in the city, with some up to three storeys in height.

Council Direction

Council, at its meeting of February 24, 2025, moved the following motions as New Business:

- 1. *THAT staff prepare a bylaw and bring forward to the next Regular Meeting for Council a Comprehensive Report to initiate Council’s consideration of the bylaw to amend Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001 by removing mini-storage as a use permitted as-of- right from the M-1, M-5 and CM-1 zoning districts.*
- 2. *THAT staff notify any current applicants whose proposal may be impacted by the change that they would need to submit a complete, zoning-compliant application prior to Council approval of the amendments*

This report responds to the adopted Council motions.

Family Friendly Housing Policy

The Family Friendly Housing Policy recognizes the need for residential storage for residents of multi-family buildings. This policy and guidelines specifically note for applicants to support the integration of creative storage solutions in building unit and design. Moreover, the policy further describes the need to consider the storage needs of families and how building design could accommodate for storage of larger seasonal items or sports gear.

DISCUSSION

Issues with Mini-Storage Use

Three key issues making the mini-storage use inconsistent with the City’s larger objectives regarding employment opportunities in industrial areas, or regarding urban design within Lower Twelfth and the Sapperton Green areas, both which extensively permit this use:

- 1) It generates very few jobs per sq.ft. compared to other employment uses, including industrial or office uses. On its own, mini-storage does very little to address the City’s employment needs.
- 2) It typically has a simple building design, with limited to no consideration of urban design principles such as fenestration, articulation and materiality, making it a poor fit for the surrounding context, particularly in urban areas seeking active streetscapes.
- 3) It is understood to be a lucrative asset that may be able to outcompete other industrial uses due to high occupancy rates, low overhead costs, and latent/growing demand. New Westminster has three existing mini-storage facilities, but recently there has been an uptick in development interest for new facilities.

Regional Scan

In 2021, Metro Vancouver completed an *Industrial Intensification Analysis* recommending that “Municipalities review the permitted use of new self-storage facilities, particularly on industrial sites well suited for intensification or in key employment areas”. In 2022, the City of Vancouver introduced new regulations for mini-storage uses with an objective of increasing employment potential by limiting storage to upper levels of the building, removing the use when located close to rapid transit stations (e.g. SkyTrain Stations), and revising design guidelines to improve building design.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Given the issues and regional scan outcomes identified above, staff recommends amending zoning districts M-1, M-5 and CM-1 to remove mini-storage as a use. Mini-storage would require a rezoning application subject to Council’s approval, and would enable the City to evaluate the application based on site context, and considering jobs generation and urban design factors.

Recognizing the storage needs of multi-family residential development, staff further recommends adding a storage space requirement to new multi-unit residential/mixed-use buildings at this time. Based on research and analysis completed through the development of the Family Friendly Housing Policy, staff proposes requiring: provision of 3.7 m² per dwelling for residential storage with a minimum 1.2 m clear horizontal dimension in all directions, and a minimum ceiling height of 2.1 m. The storage could be located either within the dwelling unit or underground, and would be exempted from floor space area calculations if located underground.

The proposed amendment bylaw is included as Attachment 2.

The City is currently undertaking studies on employment needs and industrial lands intensification approaches, including in the Lower Twelfth area. The outcomes of these would be used to inform future recommendations to Council regarding locations and/or uses in industrial zoned lands.

Impact on Current Applicants

In keeping with Council direction, staff have advised applicants who had previously made applications or enquiries for the construction of new mini-storage buildings that they must submit zoning bylaw compliant applications, including compliant building permit applications, prior to adoption of the relevant changes to the zoning bylaw. Should Council direct staff to proceed with next steps in consideration of the bylaw, it is anticipated that adoption consideration would occur in July, providing reasonable time for the existing applicants to complete their applications under the current zoning. Given that Council has directed staff to prepare the amendments, new applications or enquiries for mini-storage will not be accepted.

Existing Mini-Storage Facilities

As previously noted in this report, there are a number of existing mini-storage facilities operating within the city. Should this proposed zoning amendment be approved by Council, these facilities would still be allowed to operate as an existing, non-conforming use provided that the mini-storage use is not discontinued longer than a period of six months as per the provisions of the Local Government Act.

NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends that, in keeping with standard City practice, no public hearing be held with respect to the proposed bylaw changes, given that:

- This would be in accordance with the Local Government Act;
- Staff has notified current applicants of the change and would extend the timeline to adoption consideration, anticipated in July, to provide a reasonable time for completion of their application; and,
- Future recommendations to Council regarding locations and/or uses in industrial zoned lands will be brought forward following completion of current studies on employment needs and industrial lands intensification approaches, including in the Lower Twelfth area.

Should Council direct staff not to hold a Public Hearing, the next steps would be:

- 1) Public Notification of the Public Hearing not held;
- 2) Staff bring forward the bylaw for Council consideration of First, Second and Third Reading;
- 3) Final Adoption of the Zoning Amendment Bylaw.

Should Council direct staff to amend the Zoning Districts and hold a Public Hearing, the next steps would be:

- 1) Public Notification of the bylaw and date of Public Hearing;
- 2) Council consideration of First and Second Readings of the Zoning Amendment Bylaw (at the subsequent Council meeting);
- 3) Public Hearing for consideration of the Zoning Amendment Bylaw for Third Reading;
- 4) Final Adoption of the Zoning Amendment Bylaw.

Staff anticipate that the process would conclude by July of this year in either case.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct Financial Implications associated with this work.

OPTIONS

- 1. *THAT Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Storage Amendments) No. 8518, 2025, that would remove mini-storage from the list of permitted uses in the M-1, M-5 and CM-1 zoning districts and to add to all multi-family and/or mixed-use residential zoning districts a requirement for storage within new multi-family residential projects, be received for information.*
- 2. *THAT no Public Hearing be held for the Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Storage Amendments) No. 8518, 2025, following circulation of notice, in accordance with the Local Government Act.*
- 3. *THAT a Public Hearing be held for the Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Storage Amendments) No. 8518, 2025, following circulation of notice, in accordance with the Local Government Act.*
- 4. *THAT staff be provided with alternative direction.*

Staff recommend Options 1 and 2.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Zoning Bylaw No. 6680, 2001, Storage Amendments Bylaw No. 8518, 2025
- Attachment 2 – Map of properties that allow mini-storage use

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was reviewed by:
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This report was approved by:
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