

**POLK COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

DRC Date:	September 28, 2023	Level of Review:	Level 4 Review
PC Date:	January 3, 2024	Type:	LDC Text Amendment
BoCC Date:	February 20, 2024	Case Numbers:	LDCT-2023-14
	March 5, 2024	Case Name:	US 27 SAP RACX Storage & Car Wash
Applicant:	Logan Opsahl, Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster, Kantor & Reed P.A.	Case Planner:	Ian Nance

Request:	This is a request to amend Land Development Code Section 401.03, Table 4.8, to add Self-storage Facilities and Full-Service Car Washes as conditional uses in the Regional Activity Center (RACX) land use district in the US 27 Selected Area Plan (SAP).
Location:	n/a
Property Owner:	n/a
Parcel Size (Number):	n/a
Development Area:	n/a
Nearest Municipality:	n/a
DRC Recommendation:	Approval
Planning Commission Vote:	Approval 6-0

Among the changes to Section 401.03 US 27 Selected Area Plan:

- Adding “Car Washes, Full-Service” to Table 4.8, Use Table for US 27 Selected Area Plan, as a “C2” conditional use in Regional Activity Center-X (RACX) land use districts.
- Adding “Self-Storage Facility” to Table 4.8, Use Table for US 27 Selected Area Plan, as a “C2” conditional use in Regional Activity Center-X (RACX) land use districts.

Summary:

Currently, Self-Storage Facilities and Full-Service Car Washes are not allowable uses in the Regional Activity Center (RACX) land use district in the US 27 Selected Area Plan as they are in other activity centers in this SAP. The applicant is seeking to change this, making them “C2” conditional uses in the RACX.

The signature trait of this SAP is high-density residential development where self-storage facilities and car washes are considered complementary uses due to the need to compensate for smaller living areas reducing the capacity to store personal items. Water, too, is a critical consideration in this area and throughout Polk. The potable water usage that is derived from individuals washing their own vehicles is significantly more than the usage generated by commercial car washes, which utilize reclaimed water and Car Wash Recycling Systems.

Staff recommends approval of this request. In the RACX, the Comprehensive Plan allows uses compatible to those which have developed already in the area. Neither use is very intense when compared to the ones that could be allowed in the RACX, and the number of properties in which they could develop is limited.

Relevant Sections, Policies, and/or Regulations to Consider:

Comprehensive Plan Section 2.131-C: North US 27 Selected Area Plan
Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.131-C4.b: Regional Activity Center US 27 SAP
Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.109-A22: Regional Activity Center
LDC Section 401.03: North Ridge Selected Area Plan
LDC Section 303: Criteria for Conditional Uses

Findings of Fact

- *This is a request to amend Land Development Code (LDC) Section 401.03, Table 4.8, to add Self-storage Facilities and Full-service Car Washes as conditional uses in the Regional Activity Center (RACX) land use district in the US 27 Selected Area Plan (SAP).*
- *According to Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.109-A22, “The purpose of the Regional Activity Centers (RAC) land use district is to provide for the regional shopping needs of residents. The RAC land use permits special residential development, regional shopping centers, other regional attractors, and community facilities. A typical RAC is approximately sixty (60) or more acres with approximately 500,000 to 2,000,000 square feet.”*
- *According to Comprehensive Plan Section 2.131-C, the North US 27 Selected Area Plan was “adopted in recognition that this area of Polk County; bounded on the east by Osceola County, on the north by Lake County, the west by the core area of the Green Swamp Area of Critical State Concern and the south by County Road 54; will over the next twenty years experience a high degree of urbanization. This urbanization will be caused by numerous external factors, most of which are occurring in surrounding Lake, Orange, and Osceola Counties. (See the land-use support document for details.) This Selected-Area Plan is a proactive response to these forces. It represents a private-public initiative to shape this development into an organized and well-planned urban area.”*
- *Comprehensive Plan Policy 2.131-C4.b states, “In addition to the other applicable provisions, the RAC shall be governed by the following provisions:*

DESIGNATION AND MAPPING - One RAC is established as designated on the US 27 SAP Future Land Use Map. This area is located in the southeast and southwest corners of the intersection of US 27 and US 192.

PURPOSE -- It is the purpose of this RAC to encourage short-term and long-term development of this vital area for business uses, commercial, and employee housing.

PERMITTED USES - The following uses shall be permitted:

All uses permitted in the RAC including the uses listed in Section 2.110-F, and the following:

- 1. research and development facilities;*
- 2. helicopter landing facilities;*
- 3. motel/hotel;*
- 4. convenience stores, including pump islands for gasoline sales;*
- 5. service stations;*
- 6. retail commercial uses;*
- 7. other similar and compatible uses as approved by the Land Development Director or his/her designee.*

DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES - All development activity shall be coordinated so as to maximize the use of frontage roads to connect US 27 with US 192. Frontage roads may include interconnecting spine roads that can be phased with the development. Access other than through frontage roads requires a project traffic report to analyze the extra access needs. Pedestrian intermodal access shall be provided between different uses.

PROHIBITED USES - The following uses shall be specifically prohibited:

outdoor storage forward of the rear building line.

- The US 27 SAP is approximately 4,904 acres. The RACX is approximately 193.07 acres. Approximately 42.95 acres within the RACX is undeveloped.*
- Full-Service Car Washes are listed as “P” permitted uses in RAC land use districts in Table 2.1 and the Ronald Reagan SAP. It is not an allowable use in RACX districts in the North Ridge SAP.*
- In the US 27 SAP, Full-Service Car Washes are listed as “C2” conditional uses in the Neighborhood Activity Center (NACX).*

- *LDC Chapter 10 defines “Car Wash, Full-Service” as, “Any facility providing complete car washing and cleaning services. Car washing is generally automatic, with the driver leaving the car during the washing procedure. Waxing and detailing may also be provided.”*
- *LDC Chapter 10 defines “Car Wash Recycle System” as, “A method, as approved by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or other applicable regulatory authority, of recycling wash water this is captured, treated, and redirected back into the same car wash facility.”*
- *LDC Section 303 establishes the conditional use criteria for “Car Wash, Full-Service” uses:*

“In addition to the applicable district regulations in Table 2.2, the following standards shall apply:

1. The minimum distance from a car wash facility to any residentially designated property shall be 50 feet measured at the narrowest point between the property line of the residential property and either the stacking lane, car washing enclosure, or detailing area, whichever is closer. All car wash activities shall be screened from off-site residential view.

2. Land use activities, containing a car wash, located adjacent to residentially designated properties shall, at a minimum, provide a landscaped buffer equal to a Type C buffer (see Section 720) between the entire property and adjacent residential areas.

3. All car wash operations shall be required to connect to public or community sanitary sewer, a Car Wash Recycle System, or similar wastewater treatment system approved by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or other applicable regulatory agency.

4. All car wash operations shall be required to connect re-use water where and when it is available.”

- *Self-Storage Facilities are listed as “C2” conditional uses in RAC land use districts in Table 2.1; “C3” uses in the Ronald Reagan SAP; and “C2” uses in the North Ridge SAP.*
- *Self-Storage Facilities are listed as “C2” conditional uses in the Professional Institutional (PIX) and Neighborhood Activity Center (NACX) land use districts.*
- *Self-Storage facilities are defined in LDC Chapter 10 as, “A building or group of buildings that contain individual, compartmentalized and controlled separate storage spaces leased or rented on an individual basis and accessible to the lessees through individual doors (also known as mini warehouses).”*

- *LDC Section 303 states, “In addition to all applicable regulations self-storage facilities shall comply with the following requirements:*

1. Parking and travel aisle design shall be consistent with the following:

a. One-way travel aisles shall include one ten foot parking/loading lane and one 15 foot travel lane. Traffic direction and parking/loading lanes shall be indicated by either pavement marking or signage.

b. Two-way travel aisles shall include one ten-foot wide parking/loading lane and two 12-foot wide travel lanes.

c. Aisles not serving storage spaces shall not be required to provide parking/loading lanes.

2. Outdoor storage of cars, boats, or recreational vehicles, may be permitted as an accessory use to a self-storage facility, except within the BPC-1 districts. Storage of boats, RVs, and other large items may be permitted in an NAC provided all the following are met:

a. The item shall be completely screened from off-site view.

b. Storage of large items shall be prohibited within 50 feet of residential uses and residential districts.

c. All storage shall be limited to a 15-foot maximum height.

3. Plumbing shall not be extended to individual storage spaces.

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6. When outdoor storage of Recreational Vehicles is be permitted as an accessory use to a Self-Storage Facility the following criteria shall be met:

a. All recreational vehicles stored on the property shall be in operable condition.

b. All recreational vehicles shall be stored in a designated outdoor storage area which does not interfere with traffic circulation.

c. The total square footage of the designated outdoor storage area shall not exceed 30 percent of the enclosed square footage of the development.

d. The designated outdoor storage area shall be internal to the project itself and screened by buildings so that no portion of any recreational vehicle is visible from off-site.

e. Washing will be permitted in a designated area identified on the site plan.

f. The maintenance, or repair of recreational vehicles shall not be permitted in the Self-Storage Facility.”

- *LDC Section 401.03.E.7 states, “The following conditional use standards are supplementary to the conditions for self-storage facilities found in LDC Section 303. Where there may be a conflict between these standards, the following shall take precedence.*
 - *The self-storage facility shall be multi-tenant with at least three leasable storefronts. A storefront may be occupied with any use permitted within the applicable land use designation. Each storefront shall be at least 800 square feet. Only one storefront that is directly related to the self-storage facility may be counted towards the three leasable storefront requirements of this paragraph. Separate entrances to each leasable area are permitted.*
 - *Storage of hazardous materials is prohibited.*
 - *Outdoor storage is prohibited, except as otherwise provided in (d).*
 - *Storage of vehicles, boats, recreational vehicles, etc. shall only be permitted within an enclosed structure or screened entirely from offsite by the facility's buildings. Enclosed structures intended for the storage of these vehicles are not required to have a roof or ceiling.*
 - *Self-storage facility shall provide one parking space per 150 storage units, plus one parking space per employee. All other parking shall comply with LDC Chapter 7 Table 7.10. Parking Waivers may be requested on a case-by-case basis in accordance with LDC Section 709.J.*
 - *Building facades visible from the public right-of-way shall have the appearance of an office and/or retail building through the use of doors, windows, awnings, sills, shutters, reliefs, trims, columns, pilasters, quoins, reveals, cornices, horizontal banding, arches, decorative vents, faux windows, accent tile, or other appropriate building and architectural design features.*
 - *Exterior building material shall be stucco, brick, stone, split-faced block, or a combination of those materials. Building modulation shall be employed to break up long facades and create a visually unique project. Building modulation may be achieved through the use of horizontal and vertical projections or recesses, including awnings, overhangs, or other similar architectural features.*
 - *Buildings that can accommodate two or more stories shall be designed to have the appearance of a multi-story building through the use of windows, doors, canopies,*

sills, shutters, reliefs, trims, columns, pilasters, quoins, reveals, cornices, horizontal banding, arches, decorative vents, faux windows, accent tile and other appropriate architectural design features. For purposes of these design standards, these may consist of transparent windows, vehicular breezeways, or spandrel architectural elements may be used to further enhance facades.

- *Access to all storage units shall be interior to the building or an otherwise enclosed structure.”*
- *This application has been reviewed for consistency with LDC Section 907.*

Based on the information provided by the applicant, recent site visits, and the analysis conducted within this staff report, the Development Review Committee (DRC) finds that the proposed request **IS COMPATIBLE** with the surrounding land uses and general character of the area and **IS CONSISTENT** with the Polk County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code, and therefore, the DRC recommends **APPROVAL of LDCT-2023-14**

At an advertised public hearing on January 3, 2024, the Planning Commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval of this application.

Analysis:

US 27 SAP & RACX

The US 27 SAP is in what is often called the “Four Corners” where Polk County meets Lake, Osceola, and Orange counties. One RACX land use district was designated on the US 27 SAP Future Land Use Map and located in the southeast and southwest corners of the intersection of US 27 and US 192, right where the four counties meet. The US 27 SAP is approximately 4,904 acres, defined mostly by high-density residential development approved and constructed in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s as the citrus industry abandoned the area.

The RACX is approximately 193.07 acres and intended for uses that suit a regional need, such as hotels, restaurants, large retail developments, and gas stations. High-density residential development is also a goal here, providing for workforce housing in an area populated by commuters to Orlando. Given its optimal location at the corner of two busy state highways, much of the non-residential development that constitutes the RACX was constructed prior to 2002. Of the overall acreage in the RACX, approximately 42.95 acres remains undeveloped. Currently, there are five vacant parcels ranging between 2.5 to nearly five (5) acres, with a sixth 27-acre parcel located on the southeast corner of US 192 and US 27.

All of this speaks to the timeliness of the proposed uses in the RACX. There is not much land left to develop, and the properties that remain are suitable more to these uses that are less intense than for what the RACX was designed. The Comprehensive Plan allows for approval of compatible uses with those already planned for the RACX, “as approved by the Land Development Director or his/her designee.”

Self-Storage Facilities

Self-Storage Facilities units tend to be land intensive but do not have a high intensity of use. With thoughtful site design and conditional development standards they can be integrated into the community in a way that accommodates the intended uses within a RACX district. Special performance standards - in addition to standards in LDC Section 303 - are required within the US 27 SAP. These include multi-tenant storefronts, enhanced architectural standards, and requirements that access to bays are internal, rather than through multiple garage entrances visible to the public.

As noted above, the US 27 SAP is a portion of the County that has been designed for and developed with relatively high residential density. Single-family subdivisions here are characterized by lots that measure under a quarter of an acre. Many are approved for short-term rental or are seasonal homes for snowbirds. Quite a few serve both purposes, but each creates a demand for self-storage facilities.

Full-Service Car Washes

Constructing a full-service car wash is an extensive project requiring ample room for the automated washing facility, drive-thru and bypass lanes, as well as accessory parking for vacuuming and hand-detailing of vehicles. This use is generally more intense than an incidental car wash built in conjunction with a gas station, which captures internal traffic and serves as an ancillary economic benefit to the sale of fuel. There is also concern about the economic viability of these facilities and what to do with the structures if a business leaves the site. These structures are not easily repurposed into other uses, which is a strong consideration when planning on where they should be sited.

Still, the US 27 corridor is a prime location for a full-service car wash, attracting customers from surrounding subdivisions and multi-family developments. Car washes are also better for water conservation than when residents wash their vehicles at home. According to the University of Florida, most commercial car washes use 60% less water than washing at home. This is because many of them use two types of recycling systems - 100% closed-loop systems and partial recycle systems. Closed-loop systems recycle 100% of the water used to wash and rinse, and partial systems recycle only the wash water. According to UF, besides recycling the water, commercial car washes also have absorption systems that prevent the chemical-filled water from traveling into storm drains. Polk County allows the use of Car Wash Recycle systems and require the use of reclaimed water, which is available in the RACX.

Limits of the Proposed Ordinance

The scope of the amendment is limited to RACX land use districts within the US 27 SAP, its use table, and the site requirements for the proposed uses. The RACX is located on both sides of US 27 and the south side of US 192. RACX properties on the west side of US 27 are in the Green Swamp Ridge Special Protection Area (SPA); however, these properties have been developed. The US 27 SAP Use Table reflects land use districts in and out of the Ridge SPA. These uses will only be added to the RACX outside of the Ridge SPA.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan & Land Development Code

The request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code as noted before. The proposed uses are consistent with the standards of both the subject Selected Area Plan and Future Land Use District. The establishment of full-service car wash and self-storage uses here is also consistent with the Land Development Code as these uses are found elsewhere in RACX districts within Polk County, this amendment brings the US 27 SAP more in line with other SAPs.

Comments from Other Agencies: None

Draft Ordinance: Under separate attachment