



## Addressing Common Objections to Self-Storage Developments: A White Paper

### Introduction

Self-storage developments often face opposition during zoning and planning public hearings. Concerns are typically raised by community members, board members, and elected officials. This white paper addresses several common objections raised against self-storage developments and provides responses based on industry standards, project plans, and supporting evidence. The goal is to clarify misconceptions and demonstrate the responsible planning and operation of self-storage facilities.

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### Objection 1: Fire Safety Concerns

**Objection:** Concerns have been raised about the potential fire hazards in self-storage facilities, particularly due to uncertainty about what items may be stored. This can make firefighting more challenging and determining the cause of fires difficult.

**Response:** Self-storage facilities are designed to meet stringent fire safety standards. Proposed facilities are typically fully sprinklered, connected to municipal water systems, and achieve code-compliant fire flow. Operators establish and enforce regulations regarding permissible storage materials. The developer is often required to obtain the approval of the local fire department and incorporate their comments into the final plan, and if not required, a willingness to meet with the local fire department is recommended. Fire codes mandate safeguards such as **New York State Fire Code (2020 FCNYS), Section 503**, which sets standards for Fire Apparatus Access Roads, including a minimum width of 20 feet and all-weather surface capabilities to ensure emergency vehicle accessibility.

Additional safeguards include Central Alarm Systems, BDA radio relay systems, Fire Walls, and fire sprinklers. Leases prohibit flammable materials and firearms, and loading areas are monitored by managers and video cameras to ensure compliance.

Operators also establish and enforce regulations regarding permissible storage materials. The developer is often required to obtain the approval of the local fire department and incorporate their comments into the final plan. If this is not a requirement and this objection is posed, it is recommended to offer a willingness to meet with the local fire department.

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### **Objection 2: Unmanned Facilities Attracting Unwanted Activity**

**Objection:** Unmanned storage facilities have been known to attract people looking for a place to stay and, in some instances, engage in illicit activity.

**Response:** Self-storage facilities are often staffed by full-time employees who oversee operations. Additionally, robust security measures are implemented, including:

- 24-hour surveillance cameras
- Alarms
- Personalized key code access
- Downward-directed, dark-sky-compliant nighttime lighting

These security measures are designed to deter unauthorized access and address concerns related to illicit activities.

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### **Objection 3: Illegal Drug Storage and Unauthorized Living in Units**

**Objection:** Concerns have been raised about the storage of illegal drugs in facilities and people living in storage units without the operator's knowledge.

**Response:** The security measures mentioned in the response to Objection 2 also address these concerns. Regular staff presence, surveillance, and access controls allow for active monitoring of the facility. Operators implement strict policies and procedures for tenant screening and storage compliance, including periodic unit inspections, to ensure that the facility is not misused.

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#### **Objection 4: Decreased Property Values**

**Objection:** The development can only decrease property values for homes adjacent to the storage facility.

**Response:** While some perceive self-storage facilities as detrimental to property values, market studies often show otherwise. Access to storage facilities can be a positive selling point for nearby properties, particularly for homeowners and small business owners seeking convenient storage solutions. A market analysis can further substantiate this claim by demonstrating the demand for self-storage and its neutral or positive impact on property values.

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#### **Objection 5: Facility Failure and Future Vacancy**

**Objection:** If the facility fails due to oversaturation in the market, it will leave a large, unused building in the community.

**Response:** The viability of self-storage facilities is supported by market studies that evaluate local demand and competition. Current trends indicate consistent demand for self-storage, driven by population growth, urbanization, and the needs of small businesses. Furthermore, facility designs often allow for adaptive reuse, ensuring that the building retains value and functionality should its primary use change in the future.

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#### **Objection 6: Traffic Concerns**

**Objection:** Large trucks utilizing the facility will disrupt traffic patterns.

**Response:** Self-storage facilities generate significantly less traffic compared to other types of developments, making them a low-impact option. According to the **Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual (11th Edition)**, self-storage facilities (categorized as **Land Use Code (LUC) 151 – Mini-Warehouse**) produce far fewer trips per day than other common land uses. Key points include:

- **Low Traffic Volumes:** Self-storage facilities generally attract fewer visitors than other types of developments. For instance, the study of an 81,198 square foot self-storage facility found that peak hour traffic volumes added only 0.5% to 0.6% to existing road traffic.
- **Comparison to Alternative Uses:**
  - **Retail (LUC 820 – Shopping Center):** Generates **10–40 times more daily trips** than self-storage facilities.

- **Office (LUC 710 – General Office Building):** Produces **4–8 times more traffic** than self-storage.
- **Industrial (LUC 110 – Light Industrial):** Typically generates **3–6 times more daily trips** than self-storage.
- **Hotel (LUC 310 – Hotel):** Creates **5–10 times more traffic** due to guest arrivals and departures.
- **Multifamily Residential (LUC 220 – Apartment):** Generates significantly higher traffic throughout the day compared to self-storage, as residents have daily travel needs.
- **Minimal Impact on Roadway Operations:** Intersections near self-storage facilities typically maintain acceptable levels of service even during peak hours, showing no significant operational impact on surrounding roadways. This contrasts with high- traffic uses, such as retail or restaurants, which often lead to congestion or increased delay times.
- **Vehicle Types and Size:** Most visitors to self-storage facilities use passenger vehicles or small box trucks, as opposed to larger delivery trucks commonly seen with retail or industrial uses. Site layouts often accommodate these vehicle types by providing sufficient turning radii.
- **Parking Utilization:** Parking demand for self-storage facilities is minimal, with peak usage significantly below the capacity provided on-site. For example, parking studies at similar facilities indicated peak demand requiring only 5 to 9 spaces, compared to the higher demands associated with retail or office developments.

In summary, self-storage facilities generate far fewer trips compared to other common land uses, making them a low-impact and compatible development choice for most communities.

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## Conclusion

The objections raised during public hearings reflect common concerns about self-storage developments, but these concerns can be effectively mitigated through thoughtful design, rigorous security measures, and adherence to local regulations. By addressing fire safety, operational oversight, market demand, and traffic impacts, self-storage facilities can integrate seamlessly into communities while providing valuable services to residents and businesses.

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