No More Space for Self-Storage: Atlanta Adds Permit Requirement

By Stephen B. Schrock, Taylor S. Benatar, Anthony Georgiafandis, and Melanie Tate

While investment in the self-storage market may be making a comeback[1], developers of new self-storage facilities in Atlanta now face a new obstacle. On October 5, 2026, the Atlanta City Council adopted Ordinance 26-O-1397[2], amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Atlanta to require Special Use Permits for self-storage facilities. Much like data center developers navigating the flood of new requirements,[3] self-storage developers will now need to consider and balance community interests. Atlanta decisionmakers, concerned about neighborhoods losing entire blocks to self-storage, are taking a new approach to how the city's land is utilized.

The Ordinance points to the amount of space self-storage facilities occupy and their narrow use. It reasons that "self-storage facilities often span a considerable portion of neighborhood blocks with ample driveways and parking spaces, are frequented by vehicular and truck traffic, generate very few jobs for nearby residents, and can curtail commercial vitality along key neighborhood corridors." The Special Use Permit process is meant to help ensure that new facilities align with the city's goals. It provides a way to assess whether a proposed location is appropriate, which the Ordinance describes as "critical to maintaining and encouraging vibrant and walkable communities with a diverse range of nearby goods, services, and amenities."

To implement this process, the amendments to the Zoning Code remove self-storage facilities from the lists of permitted uses in various zoning districts and reclassify them as uses only permissible by Special Use Permit. The change ends by-right approval, so each new facility will be reviewed case by case. It also applies to secured storage facilities and mixed-use storage buildings.

The Ordinance follows a temporary moratorium adopted this summer. On June 24, 2026, Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens signed an Executive Order[4] directing city staff to refuse new applications for building permits, land disturbance permits, special use permits, special administrative permits, and rezonings for self-storage, secure-storage, and mixed-use storage facilities until the July 6, 2026, City Council meeting. On July 6, the Council extended the moratorium for 180 days.[5] As Mayor Dickens explained, "In communities where families need housing, grocery stores, jobs, and gathering spaces, we cannot afford to lose critical land without

[1] Self-Storage Sector Bounces Back As Investors Move Past Market 'Trough'

[2] 26-O-1397, Z-26-46 AN ORDINANCE BY COUNCILMEMBERS DUSTIN HILLIS, JASON DOZIER, MATT WESTMORELAND, LILIANA BAKHTIARI, KELSEA BOND, WAYNE MARTIN, ANDREA L. BOONE, MICHAEL JULIAN BOND, MARY NORWOOD, ESHÉ COLLINS, ALEX WAN, ANTONIO LEWIS, JASON H. WINSTON, BYRON D. AMOS, AND THOMAS WORTHY AS SUBSTITUTED BY ZONING COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA TO REQUIRE SPECIAL USE PERMITS FOR SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. - City of Atlanta, Georgia

[3] Freeze, Study, Regulate, Repeat: Georgia's Data Center Cycle and What's Coming Elsewhere | Thompson Hine LLP

[4] Executive Order 2026-04, Office of the Mayor, City of Atlanta

[5] 26-O-1396 AN ORDINANCE BY COUNCILMEMBER DUSTIN HILLIS TO ESTABLISH A ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY (180) DAY MORATORIUM ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF ANY NEW BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS, LAND DISTURBANCE PERMIT APPLICATIONS, SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS, SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE PERMIT APPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FOR REZONING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SECURE-STORAGE FACILITIES, SELF-STORAGE FACILITIES AND MIXED-USE STORAGE FACILITIES; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. - City of Atlanta, Georgia

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asking whether that development advances our vision for a stronger, healthier Atlanta."[6]

Developers in Atlanta should be prepared for a more rigorous zoning approval process than before, with the added time and expense that comes with it. They will also need to choose sites more deliberately, weighing broader community considerations. Developers should take note and be prepared to make a clear case for their self-storage development projects when seeking a Special Use Permit.

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[6] Atlanta mayor temporarily pauses building new self-storage facilities in the city - CBS News Atlanta