



Development Services

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Cochise County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Matthew Taylor, AICP, Planning Manager
FOR: Sharon Gilman, County Administrator
THROUGH: Christine McLachlan, AICP, Director
SUBJECT: Docket R-26-04 (Impoundment Storage Yards)
DATE: October 13, 2026

I. BACKGROUND

Staff requests text amendments to Articles 2.03 (Definitions), 2.15 (Rural Zoning Districts), 2.33 (General Business Zoning District), 2.36 (Light Industry Zoning District), 2.39 (Heavy Industry Zoning District), and 2.51 (Site Development Standards) of the Cochise County Zoning Regulations to amend the definition of Impoundment Storage Yard and use regulations and establish use-specific development standards.

Proposed amendments began with a work session request from the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding vehicle impound yards. Staff followed up by facilitating work sessions with the Commission on June 10, 2026, and the Board of Supervisors on July 28, 2026, to discuss possible amendments. The Commission considered these amendments during a public hearing on September 9, 2026, rendering a favorable recommendation to the Board of Supervisors (9-0).

II. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Proposed amendments are exclusive to impound storage yards, which are currently allowed by right in GB, LI, and HI zoning districts, requiring Special Use Authorization approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission in Rural zoning districts. This use is subject to standards dictated by zoning district and Comprehensive Plan Growth Area category. Zoning districts dictate permitted principal uses and accessory uses as well as development standards applicable to uses within the district including minimum site area, maximum height, setbacks from property lines and roadways, maximum site coverage, and distances between structures. Zoning districts also specifically address screening, referring the reader to definition and growth area articles of the Zoning Regulations. Non-residential outdoor storage requires a "6-foot-high solid screen" in Growth Areas A, B, and C, but exempts this requirement in Growth Area D unless the non-residential use is next to a residential use or abuts an area designated as Rural Residential (RR). The County Zoning Inspector may defer screening if an abutting residentially zoned property is undeveloped. Other development standards applicable to non-residential land uses based on Growth Area include off-street driveway and parking surfaces and landscaping.

Impound yards are by definition a storage-oriented use that involves little on site activity beyond visits to and from the site by the owner/operator of the yard and occasional vehicle owner or other third party seeking to evaluate or retrieve an impounded vehicle; however, these uses are intense uses deserving of specific development standards given that they are allowed in non-residential zoning districts, and more importantly, in

Rural zoning districts with special use approval. Cochise County continues to see residential development in rural areas such as Hereford, Palominas, and near its incorporated cities and towns (*Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Huachuca City, Sierra Vista, Tombstone, and Willcox*). As most of the County is zoned Rural, impound yards are just one of many uses with the potential to be located just about anywhere. Impound yards are not a common use and yet are commonly deficient in meeting basic development standards, particularly those involving screening. Among the deficiencies staff is attempting to address through these amendments are:

- Stored vehicles may not actually be impounded by law enforcement (accident, traffic stop resulting in apprehension, abandonment, illegally parked, criminal activity).
- Existing operators may not be following applicable local and State requirements for impound vehicle storage and release.
- Business location and contact info is not easily identifiable without an on-premise office.
- Vehicles are stored haphazardly, resulting in unsightly appearance, public nuisance, or hazardous conditions.
- Heavily damaged vehicles are often stacked to create room for more impounded vehicles.
- Solid screening may not necessarily conceal designated vehicle storage areas from public view as required.
- Impound yards are easily established upon County confirmation the use is allowed by the zoning district.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval of the proposed amendments during its regular meeting on September 9, 2026, by a vote of 9-0.

Staff also recommends approval of the proposed amendments to Articles 2.03 (Definitions), 2.15 (Rural Zoning Districts), 2.33 (General Business Zoning District), 2.36 (Light Industry Zoning District), 2.39 (Heavy Industry Zoning District), and 2.51 (Site Development Standards) of the Cochise County Zoning Regulations.

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A