



June 3, 2026

Large-Scale Data Center UDC Amendment Planning Commission Public Hearing

Background

- Zoning code treats smaller data centers as storage use
- Large-scale data centers not addressed in UDC – no standards
- Mayor & Council requested UDC amendment for large-scale data centers – August 6, 2025
 - Establish guardrails for their development
- Large Quantity Water Users ordinance adopted – August 19, 2025
- Initial Planning Commission study session – September 17, 2025
- Technical Advisory Committee formed to guide standards
- Community meetings held – late February to early March 2026
- Mayor and Council Study Session – April 2026
- Second Planning Commission Study Session – May 2026



Large Quantity Water Users Ordinance

- Ordinance adopted in August 2025 created a Large Quantity Water User Program for new water connections and meter upsizing requests
- Applies to any customer projected to use 10,000 ccf (7,480,000 gallons) or more average monthly average
- Applies to
 - New development with high anticipated use
 - Existing users requesting meter upsizing that enables higher demand due to change in site use
- Applicants must file a Sustainable Water Service Application and a Water Conservation Plan
- Plans must be approved by M&C

Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

- The Technical Advisory Committee is a committee providing expertise on land use, environment, and infrastructure
- Includes 13 members with local knowledge from various technical fields
- Reviewed approaches from other jurisdictions both within and outside of Arizona
- Provided input on best practices, new technologies, to advise on options for regulating large-scale data centers
- Recommended topics and standards for inclusion in a proposed UDC amendment
- Four meetings were held from late November 2025 - March 2026

Community Meeting Overview

Four public meetings were held to inform residents about potential land use regulations for large-scale data centers, share early proposal concepts, and gather feedback before drafting the code amendment.

• February 19 (In Person)

- Pueblo High School
- 6pm-8pm
- 51 attendees 230 individual comments

• March 4 (virtual)

- Zoom
- 11am-1pm
- 48 attendees 180 individual comments

• February 23 (Virtual)

- Zoom
- 5pm-7pm
- 61 attendees 300 individual comments

• March 5 (In Person)

- Rincon High School
- 6pm-8pm
- 40 attendees 250 individual comments

Community Meeting Feedback: Common Themes



1. WATER SCARCITY (MOST FREQUENTLY RAISED CONCERN)

Perception that Tucson does not have adequate water supply to support large-scale data centers.



2. ENERGY DEMANDS & UTILITY

Residents worry data centers could strain the electrical grid, require new natural gas plants, and increase utility rates.



3. OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION

Many comments oppose data centers entirely. Common refrains include: "No data centers, period," "ban hyperscale data centers," and calls for a full moratorium.



4. SETBACKS (PROPOSED: 400 FT — SEEN AS INADEQUATE)

Requests ranged from 1,000 feet to 2 miles. Concerns include noise, air quality, heat island effects, and visual impacts on Tucson's natural views.



Final TAC Recommendations

- TAC members reconvened March 9 to discuss feedback from public meetings
- TAC members stressed importance of clearly communicating role/limits of zoning
 - Unable to regulate energy and water use
 - Amendment is intended to establish land-use standards and review process
- TAC members agreed with public feedback in key areas
 - Consider of expanding public notice area beyond original proposal
 - Consider including energy consumption threshold in definition of large-scale data center
 - Consider including water quality protections, cooling technology and environmental monitoring

Mayor and Council Study Session

- April 7 study session reviewed draft large-scale data center regulations
- Summarized TAC work, community input, and proposed code changes
- Council supported staff recommendations and revisions based on public feedback
- Focused on creating clear guardrails that reflect Tucson values
- Key areas of discussion included moratorium options, energy demand, water use, heat, and environmental impacts
- Updates such as greater separation distances, expanded public notice, PAD/PCD limits, and a smaller size and power threshold for the data center definition were discussed

Planning Commission Study Session

- May 6 Planning Commission held a second study session to review draft large-scale data center regulations
- PDSD summarized TAC work, community input, and proposed code changes
- Key areas of discussion included
 - Energy demand, grid capacity and ratepayer impacts
 - Water use and sustainability
 - Noise, separation distances, and land use compatibility
 - Legal authority and risk
 - Enforcement
- Revisions made to the proposal based on Planning Commission feedback

Large-Scale Data Center Defined

Any facility, multiple facilities, or portion of a facility on a contiguous site with the same controlling ownership interest, and a **gross floor area greater than 25,000 square feet** or **uses greater than 20 megawatts (MW)** of energy, housing networked computer systems and/or telecommunications equipment used for remote storage, processing, and distribution of data.

Large Scale Data Centers are permitted through adoption or major amendment of a **Planned Area Development (PAD)** or a **Planned Community Development (PCD)** and are subject to Use Specific Standards 4.9.11.D.



Proposed Review Process

- **Public review process** include a neighborhood meeting, Zoning Examiner public hearing, and Mayor & Council decision
- **Enhanced public notice** include notice of all property owners within ½ mile, and all Neighborhood Associations within 2 miles

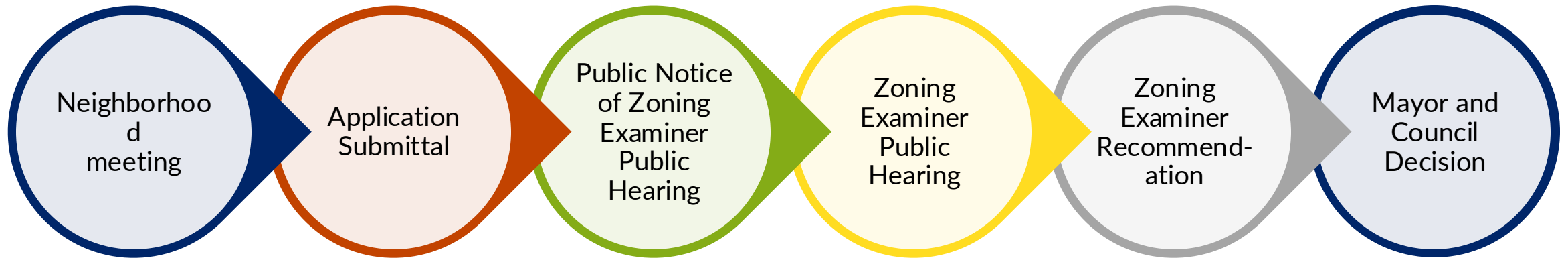


Review Process and Zoning

- Large-Scale Data Centers could only be requested through:
 - Planned Area Development (PAD) OR
 - Planned Community Development (PCD)
- **Would not be allowed anywhere by-right**, Mayor & Council review approval required in all instances subject to all proposed use specific standards
- **Require a higher level of review than most land uses in the City.** Generating systems use is the only other defined land use that is permitted only through a PAD or PCD



Proposed Procedure for Data Center Review



- A neighborhood meeting is required – property owners and Neighborhood Associations must be invited

- A pre-application meeting with staff is required

- Proposed notice to properties within ½ mile and Neighborhood Associations within two miles

Proposal Overview



NOISE

- Noise limits at property line
- Sound walls or roof screening



GENERATOR USE

- Battery backup used first during power disruptions
- No “load shifting” (no running generators instead of using grid power)



WATER SUPPLY CERTIFICATION

- Must comply with Large Quantity Water User Ordinance (if Tucson Water customer)
- Must demonstrate adequate water supply
- No potable water for cooling (if not covered by large water user ordinance)



ENERGY DISCLOSURE

- Must demonstrate adequate energy supply at application
- Must disclose energy use and mix (including renewables)



LANDSCAPING

- 40 ft enhanced landscape buffers
- Reduced parking requirements for data centers
- Max 40% lot coverage; remainder as open space
- Re-vegetate disturbed land with native plants

Proposed Changes Based on Planning Commission Feedback

- Lower energy threshold from 50 MW to 20 MW in large-scale data center definition
- Establish a maximum height limit of 50-feet
- Increase separation from residential/non-industrial uses to address concerns about noise and heat island effects
 - Doubled from 1,320 to 2,640 feet from residential zones and certain uses
 - Increased from 600 feet to 1,000 feet from commercial and office zones
- Expand landscaping and native vegetation protections
 - Expansion from 20 to 40 feet of the enhanced landscaping border
 - More specificity on environmental and plant salvage requirements

Large-Scale Data Center Ordinance Process



Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning Commission make a recommendation to Mayor and Council to adopt the Unified Development Code Amendment for Large-Scale Data Centers as proposed.



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