



March 5, 2026

# Community Meeting: Regulations for Large-Scale Data Centers Zoning

# Presentation Overview

- How we got here
- Existing City Policies and Regulations
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Proposed Large Scale Data Center Standards
- Opportunities for Further Input and Discussion
- Next Steps

# How We Got Here

- Mayor and Council directed staff to draft a zoning amendment regulating the development of large-scale data centers
  - Following consideration of the Project Blue proposal
- Establish standards and a review process
- Conduct research on data center impacts and regulations in other communities
- Form Technical Advisory Committee to help develop standards
- Informed by the City's *Large Quantity Water Users Ordinance*
- Proposed code amendment not related to any specific data center proposal

# Zoning regulations are one piece of a larger picture

- A number of city regulations shape where and how large-scale data centers can be developed
- State and federal policies also come into play



# Meeting Format, Feedback and Guidelines

- Your feedback will be collected in writing in these community meetings, via online survey, paper form and/or sticky notes in lobby
- All written feedback will be made publicly available and shared with the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council
- Conversation and additional written feedback are encouraged with City staff after the presentation
- FAQ on the City website to provide answers to questions
- Please respect everyone's time and refrain from disruption

# Your feedback: Where and When

In this room:

- Presentation – Learn about proposed zoning regulations
- Feedback – Submit comments and questions via survey (virtual and paper) on proposed zoning regulations

In the lobby: before/during/after the presentation

- Dialogue with City staff and share feedback about:
  - Data centers – zoning related
  - Data centers – beyond zoning

# What is a Large-Scale Data Center

- A warehouse filled with thousands of computers working 24/7 to store, process and deliver digital services
- Data centers house computer systems, networking equipment, and storage devices which power the digital world



# Key Components of Every Data Center

- Server Racks: House and organize servers
- Networking Equipment: Moves data securely and quickly
- Storage Systems: Stores data reliably
- Power Infrastructure: Keeps systems running during outages
- Cooling Systems: Removes heat from equipment



# Purpose of Regulating Data Centers Through Zoning

- Sets clear rules for location and design
- Protect sensitive areas
- Address noise, scale and other impacts early
- Ensure public input
- Proactive, not reactive planning



# How Tucson Currently Regulates Data Centers

- Existing Code designates a storage use, historically applied to smaller data centers
- The City's Zoning Administrator determined that large-scale data centers are a Utility Generating System Use only through a PAD or PCD
- Under the current code, there is no substantial guidance for data centers
- Largely up to the applicant to propose regulations
- With additional standards, Mayor & Council could provide guardrails for data centers that reflect Tucson's values

# Large-Scale Data Center Current Standards vs. Proposed Standards

## Current Standards

- Permitted as a PAD or PCD as a utility generation use

## Proposed Standards

- Establish a clear definition for large-scale data center
- Establish where and how they would be allowed
- Establish a clear, transparent public review process requiring Mayor and Council approval
- Must demonstrate access to adequate energy supply
- Must disclose proposed energy use and energy mix
- Must demonstrate access to adequate water supply
- Prohibit the use of potable water for cooling if not subject to the Large Water User Ordinance
- Require additional setbacks from sensitive uses
- Require an independent noise study
- Set clear noise limitations
- Require sound walls or screening
- Require cleaner high efficiency generators and battery backup
- Prohibit load shifting (running generators instead of connecting to the grid)
- Require enhanced landscaping and right sized parking

# Regulating Data Centers Through Zoning

State Law sets limits on what cities can regulate through zoning

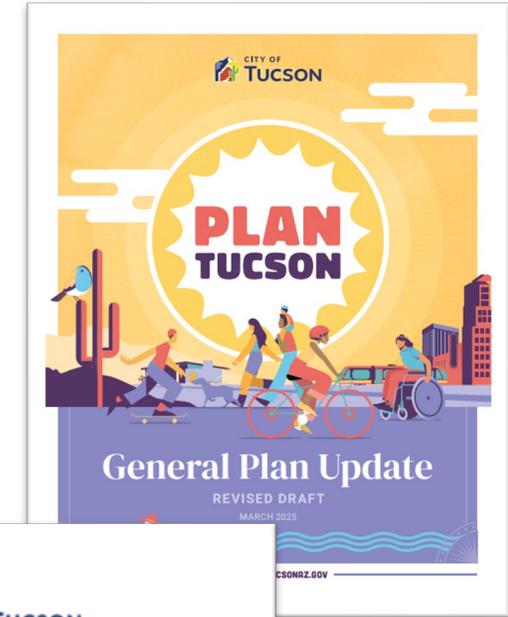
- The City can regulate:
  - Land use
  - Building size, shape, height, materials, and purpose
  - Site dimensions, setbacks, lot coverage
  - Location and use of buildings and land
- Limited in what can be regulated related to water and energy use through zoning
- How we define data centers is critical to their regulation through zoning
- Any data center proposal would need to comply with *Plan Tucson 2025*

# Large-Scale Data Center Ordinance Process



# Guidance from Existing Plans and Policies

- Plan Tucson 2025 policies
- Tucson Resilient Together Climate Action Plan
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- One Water 2100 Master Plan
- Large Quantity Water User Ordinance
- Building Codes
- Other provisions in the Unified Development Code (Zoning Code)



# 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

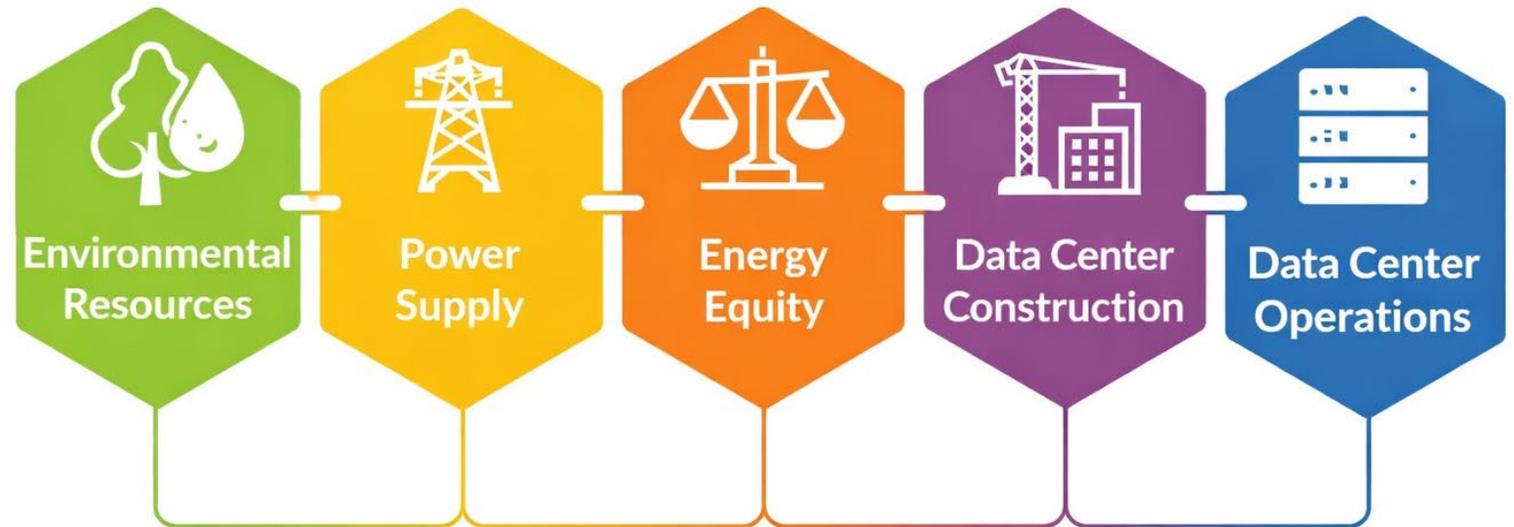
# Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

- Mayor and Council directed PDSD staff to convene the TAC
- Share knowledge and expertise
- Discuss key issues related to land use, environment, resource consumption, and infrastructure
- Learn about and provide input on best practices, new technologies, and approaches from other cities
- Advise on options for regulating large-scale data centers
- Recommend topics and standards for a proposed zoning amendment

# Technical Advisory Committee Members

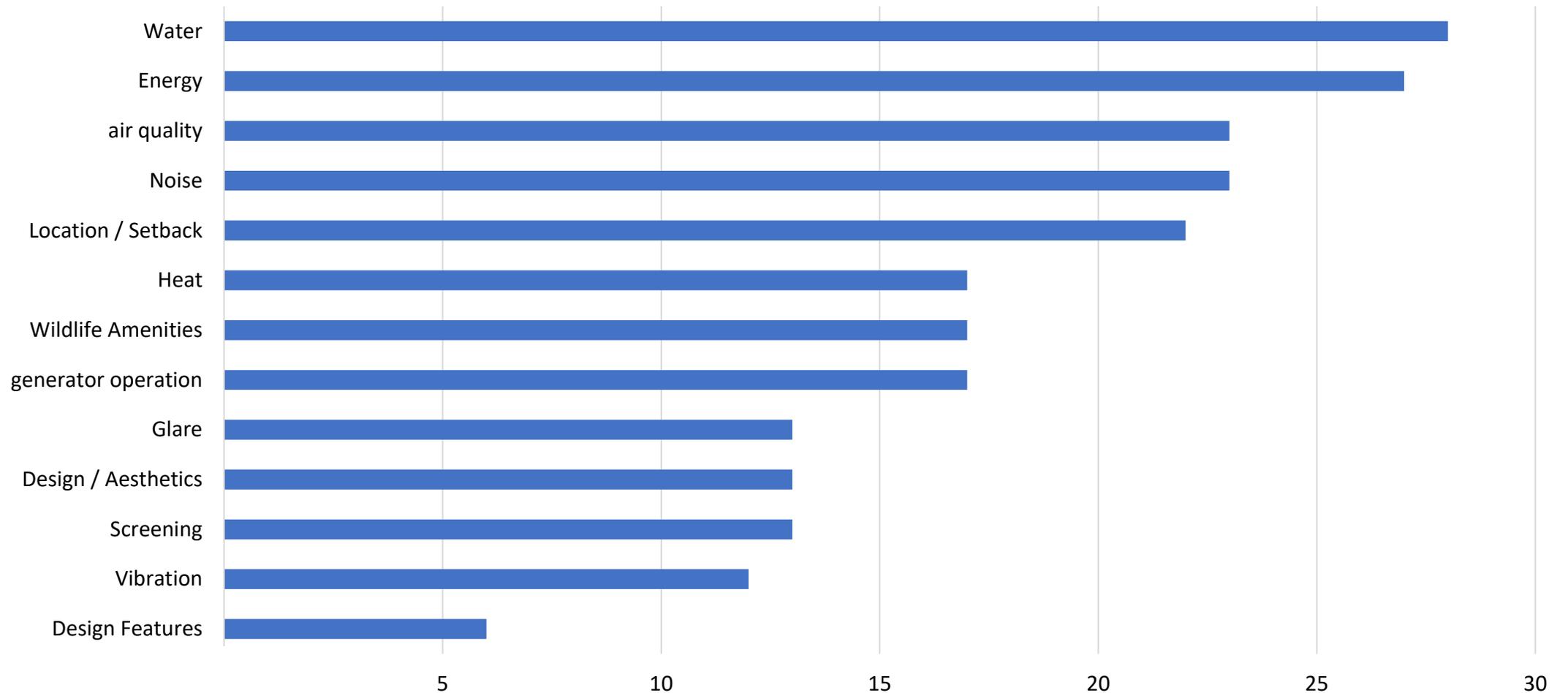
- Includes 13 members from various groups including Watershed Management Group and TEP
- Staff support from various City and County departments

## TAC Areas of Expertise



# Summary of Rankings from Previous TAC Meeting

## Most Important Regulations and Standards to Include in Code





# Proposed Standards for Large-Scale Data Centers

# Proposed Large-Scale Data Center Standards

Proposed standards developed through staff engagement with the TAC in the following areas:

- Definition, Review Process and Location
- Energy and Water Use and Sourcing
- Setbacks
- Environmental Compatibility, Landscaping, and Parking
- Noise and Generator Use

# Feedback Opportunities

- Feedback can be provided for each topic via an online poll
  - Questions 1 and 2 are optional
- All feedback posted to the PDSD website, and provided to the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council
- Additional feedback and questions of staff in the lobby following the meeting



Poll Questions 1-2  
*A: Name & Email - Optional*



# Proposed Large-Scale Data Center Definition

- Defining large-scale data centers is key to regulating them
- Size threshold of over 50,000 square feet
- General description of equipment and use

## ***Proposed Definition for a Large-Scale Data Center***

A large-scale data center is a 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 50,000 square feet, housing networked computer systems and / or telecommunications equipment used for remote storage, processing, and distribution of data.



Source: Alliedbuildings.com

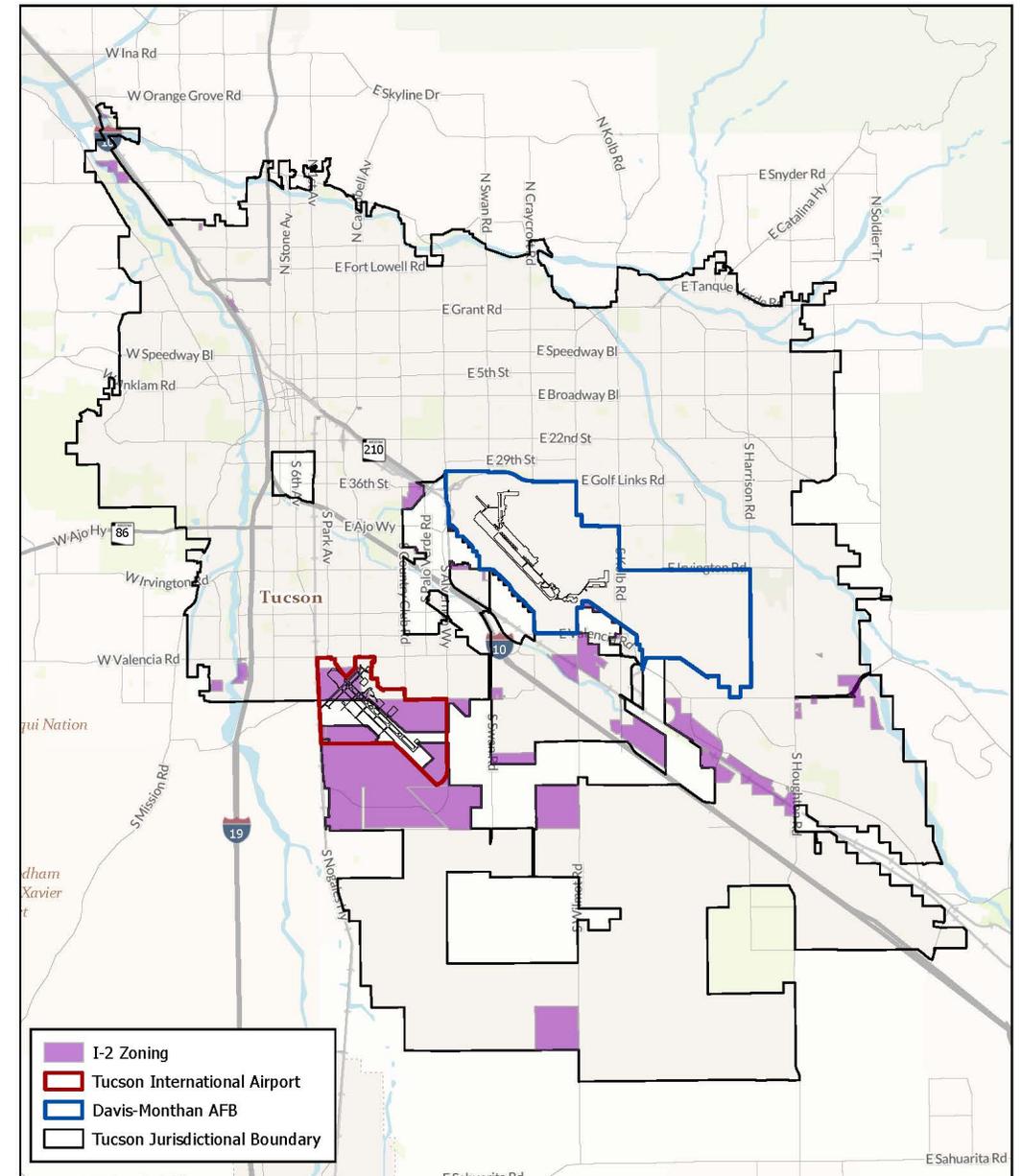
# Proposal: Allowed Zones

Data Centers proposed to be allowed in:

- Heavy Industrial (I-2) zone via Mayor & Council Special Exception
- Planned Area Development (PAD) OR
- Planned Community Development (PCD)

Would not be allowed anywhere by-right

Mayor & Council review approval required in all instances

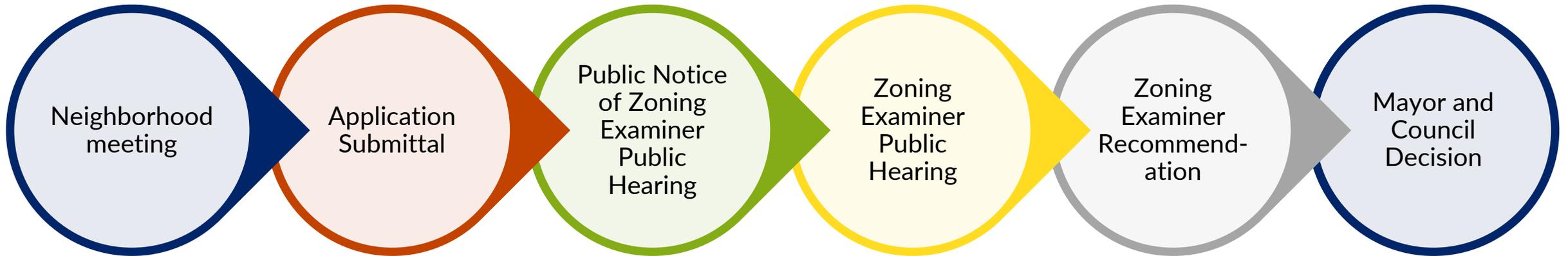


# Proposed Review Process

- **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



# 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

Poll Questions 3-5  
*B: Definition and Review Process*



# Proposed Regulation of Energy Consumption and Sourcing

- Demonstrate access to adequate energy supply at time of application
- Applicant must disclose the proposed amount of energy and energy mix, including renewables, in application materials



# Proposed Regulation of Water Use and Sourcing

- Must comply with the City's *Large Quantity Water User Ordinance* if Tucson Water customer
  - Requires a water conservation plan
  - Recycled water requirements, if possible
  - Regular monitoring and compliance
- Applicant must demonstrate access to adequate water supply
- Prohibit the use of potable water for data center cooling, if not subject to Large Water User Ordinance (through Zoning)



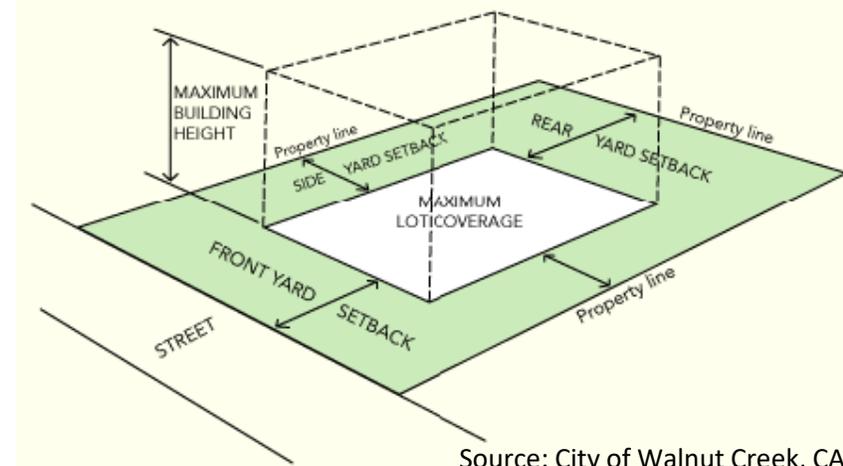
Poll Questions 6-8  
*C: Energy and Water Use*



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# Proposed Setbacks

- Require a 400-foot setback from data center use to urban residential areas and noise sensitive uses such as schools
- Require a 200-foot setback from data center use to commercial or office uses



Source: City of Walnut Creek, CA

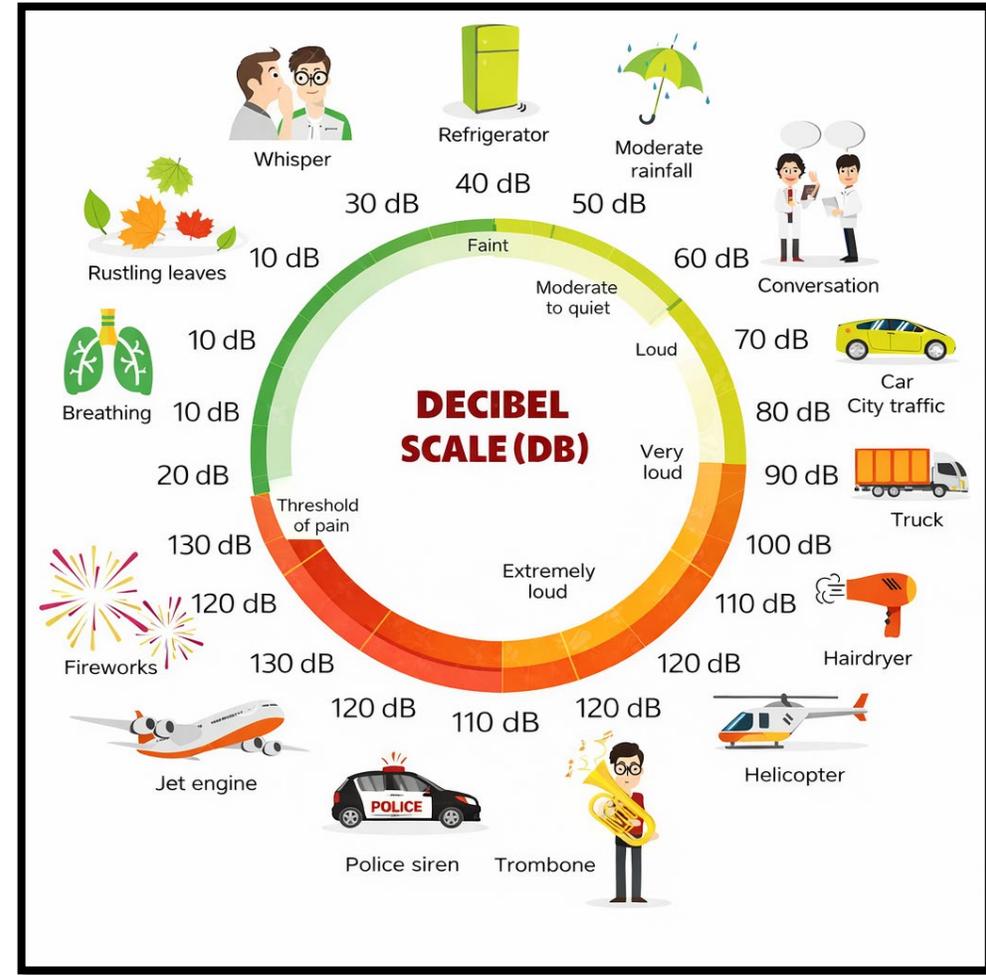
# Poll Questions 9-10

## *D: Setbacks*



# Proposed Regulation of Noise

- Require an independent noise study that measures sound levels & tone
- Set clear noise limits at the property line
- Require sound walls or roof screening around generators and other loud equipment



# Proposed Regulation of Generator Use

- Use cleaner, high-efficiency generators (Tier IV or natural gas/dual fuel)
- Battery backup used first during power disruptions
- No “load shifting” (no running generators instead of using grid power)
- Generators run only during emergencies or required maintenance
- Non-emergency maintenance limited to weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Poll Questions 11-13  
*E: Noise and Generators*



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# Proposed Landscaping and Parking Standards

- Require enhanced landscaping borders of 20 feet.
- Define minimum parking ratios for data center use based on anticipated low parking needs.



# Environmental Compatibility

Utilize Existing Standards, Including:

- Require applicants adhere to existing ERZ (Environmental Resource Zone), and WASH (Watercourse Amenities, Safety and Habitat), commercial rainwater harvesting, and hillside development standards
  - Includes protection of existing arroyos and washes
  - Use of low water and drought tolerant plants
  - Harvest 50% of total landscape water demands
- Utilize existing Airport Hazard District and Industrial Use Group standards for glare.



# Poll Questions 14-15

*F: Landscaping / Parking / Compatibility*



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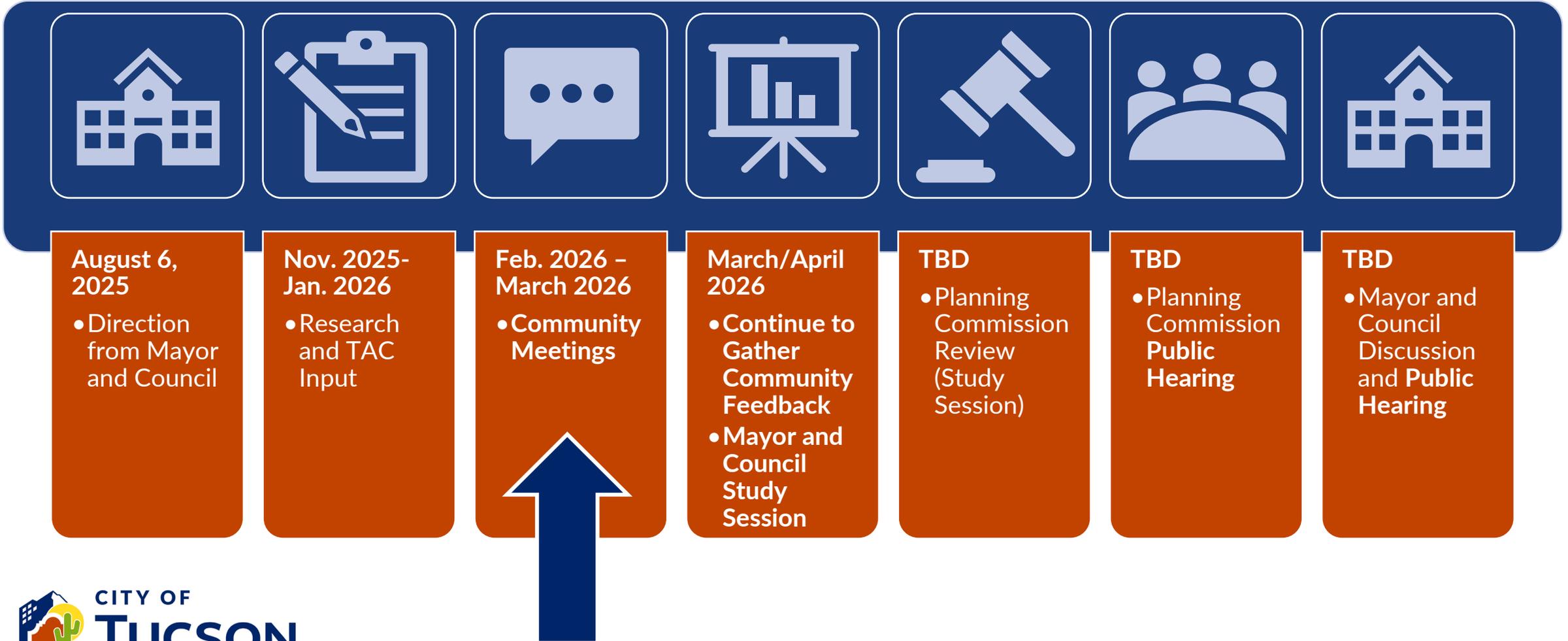
# Opportunities For Further Input and Discussion

- Now: Further discussion of topic areas in the lobby
- Additional Community Meetings
  - **Mayor and Council Study Session, (Tentative) April 7, 2026**
  - **Planning Commission Study Session, TBD**
  - **Planning Commission Public Hearing, TBD**
  - **Mayor and Council Public Hearing and Consideration, TBD**
- Proposed standards posted online
- More information on the PDSD Website, including written survey form
- The website will be updated periodically as it becomes available, including comments, and FAQ's



**PDSD Website on  
Large-Scale Data Centers  
Zoning Amendment**

# Large-Scale Data Center Ordinance Process



# Q&A Guidelines

- Line up behind the microphone to speak
- Please be succinct and speak for no more than 60 seconds.
- Your questions and comments during this Q and A session will be included in the record of public input (all other comments need to be in writing)



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