



REGULATIONS FOR LARGE-SCALE DATA CENTERS - FACT SHEET

On August 6, 2025, Mayor and Council directed City staff to develop a Unified Development Code (UDC) amendment to establish clear standards for large-scale data centers. Currently, Tucson lacks substantial specific guidance for these facilities. This proposed amendment seeks to establish standards and regulations for this land use that reflect Tucson’s community values and ensure future developments align with the City’s long-term goals.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION - PROCESS TIMELINE (AS OF MAY 28, 2026)



PROPOSED DEFINITION: LARGE-SCALE DATA CENTER

Defining these facilities is critical to their effective regulation. A Large-Scale Data Center is proposed to be defined as:

- 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

PROPOSED PUBLIC REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS

A large-scale data center would only be allowed through a rezoning or major amendment to a Planned Area Development (PAD) or Planned Community Development (PCD), which are subject to Mayor and Council review. Large-scale data centers would not be permitted by right or through a special exception in any zone. To ensure transparency, the City proposes a rigorous review procedure that exceeds standard requirements.

The proposed code would also expand notification requirements. When a neighborhood meeting or public hearing is required, notice would need to be sent to all property owners within ½ mile of the proposed site and to all Neighborhood Associations within 2 miles. This would be a significant expansion beyond the City’s standard notification requirements.



PROPOSED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: ENERGY AND WATER

Energy Requirements:

Applicants must demonstrate access to an adequate and secure energy supply at the time of application. Furthermore, developers are required to disclose their projected energy consumption and proposed energy mix, including the specific percentage of renewable energy sources utilized.

Water Requirements:

In alignment with Tucson's "One Water" approach, facilities are subject to strict conservation standards:

- Must demonstrate access to adequate water supply
- Large Quantity Water Users Ordinance: Projects projected to use 10,000 centum cubic feet (CCF) (approx. 7.48 million gallons) or more on a monthly average must submit a Sustainable Water Service Application and a Water Conservation Plan for Mayor & Council approval
- Small Facility Regulation: For facilities that fall below the 10,000 CCF threshold, the zoning code itself serves as the regulatory tool to prohibit the use of potable water for cooling

PROPOSED SITE AND SEPARATION DISTANCE STANDARDS

To protect residential integrity and commercial character, the City proposes the following:

- 2,640 feet of separation from urban residential zones and noise-sensitive uses (e.g., schools)
- 1,000 feet of separation from commercial or office zones
- Landscaping: A 40-foot enhanced landscaping border is required
- Parking: Right-sized parking standards will be enforced to reduce paved surfaces and mitigate urban heat island effects

PROPOSED OPERATIONAL MITIGATIONS: NOISE AND GENERATORS

Noise Regulation: Applicants must provide an independent noise study at the time of application. The code will establish strict decibel limits at the property line and require annual monitoring.

Generator Use:

- Only Tier IV or natural gas/dual-fuel generators are permitted
- Requirement for "battery-first" backup systems
- Prohibition of "load shifting" (using generators for non-emergency power)
- Routine maintenance testing is limited to weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL COMPATIBILITY

Future developments must comply with Plan Tucson 2025 policies and existing environmental protections:

- Full compliance with Environmental Resource Zone (ERZ) and Watercourse Amenities, Safety, and Habitat (WASH) regulations
- Strict protection of all existing arroyos
- 50% of landscape water must be sourced from on-site water harvesting