



Thursday, July 23, 2026
Plan Commission Meeting at 6:30 PM

PLAN COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA

1. Meeting Opening

- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call

2. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Minutes

3. Staff Reports

4. Business Items

- A. Public Hearing *Rezoning 11-16-452-005, 11-16-452-006, 11-16-452-007, 11-16-452-008 (1816 and 1818 1st Avenue) From MR-6 to Community Business with Special Use To Allow for an EMS Facility.*

5. Discussion

- A. Data Centers
- B. Battery Storage

6. Adjourn

The City of Sterling in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requests that persons with disabilities who require certain accommodations to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting or have questions about the accessibility of this meeting or facilities, contact the ADA Coordinator at (815) 632-6630 to allow the City of Sterling to make reasonable accommodations for these persons.



Agenda Item Background

Item: Public Hearing *Rezoning 11-16-452-005, 11-16-452-006, 11-16-452-007, 11-16-452-008 (1816 and 1818 1st Avenue) From MR-6 to Community Business with Special Use To Allow for an EMS Facility.*

Meeting Date: July 23, 2026

Public Content:

Recommended Action:

Attachments:

1. CGH Medical Center Application Form Proposed Amendment to Zoning Ordinance 06.23.2026
2. RZ-CGH Medical Center EMS to CB Special Use_2026 07 15



How will the amended or new Section(s) or Article(s) read: (include additional sheets if necessary)

Part IV
(Complete this Part if you are proposing to rezone a property).

Legal description of property to be rezoned:

See attached

Is the applicant the present owner of the property? Yes ☒ No ☐

If the applicant is not the present owner of the property, what is the present owner's name and complete mailing address?

Owner's Name: _____

Owner's Address: _____

Owner Signature _____

If the applicant is not present owner of the property, the applicant must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate a proper interest in having the property rezoned.

Present Zoning of affected property: MR-6

Requested Zoning change for the affected property: CB with special use

Explain the purpose or intent for rezoning the property including a description of both the present and proposed use(s) of the property.

1816 and 1818 1st Avenue currently house a single multi-family residential unit on each of the (2) properties.

Our proposal is to demolish the properties and replace with a building to house our EMS service and all its supporting functions. This includes all required staff space, including sleep accommodations for our 24 hr shift staff in addition to storage of our ambulance rigs. Moving this functionality off-site will allow us to free up critical space to re-purpose for expanded patient care needs.

Has a site plan been prepared for the proposed use of the property? Yes ☒ No ☐

IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THE SITE PLAN WITH THIS APPLICATION.

Basic layout, not full site plan

Part V

I attest and swear, to the best of my knowledge, that the information provided with this application is correct and that I have reviewed the applicable sections of the City of Sterling Zoning Ordinance prior to submitting this application.

By:  _____
Applicant Signature

Date: 06 / 23 / 26

For Office Use Only

Date Application Filed: ____/____/____

Fee Paid \$ _____ Receipt No: _____ Check # _____

Property Information

Parcel Number

11-16-452-005

Site Address

1818 1ST AVE
STERLING, IL 61081

Owner Name & Address

CGH MEDICAL CENTER
PO BOX 618
STERLING, IL 61081-0618

Tax Year

2026 (Payable 2027)

Sale Status

None

Neighborhood Code

Land Use

Property Class

0040 - Improved Lots

Tax Code

01005 -

Tax Status

Taxable

Net Taxable Value

0

Tax Rate

Unavailable

Total Tax

Unavailable

Township

Sterling

Acres

0.0000

Mailing Address

CGH MEDICAL CENTER
PO BOX 618
STERLING, IL 61081-0618

Tract Number

Lot Size

52.69 x 150

TIF Base Value

0

Legal Description

THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL LOT 25 BLK 4 539800x

Assessments

Level	Homesite	Dwelling	Farm Land	Farm Building	Mineral	Total	Partial Building
Township Assessor	6,628	53,132	0	0	0	59,760	No
Prior Year Equalized	6,628	53,132	0	0	0	59,760	No

No Billing Information

No Drainage / Special District Information

No Exemptions

No Farmland Information

No Forfeiture Information

No Genealogy Information

Owner Names

Name	Tax Bill	Address	Document #
CGH MEDICAL CENTER	Y	PO BOX 618 STERLING, IL 61081-0618	9228-06

Related Names

Name	Relationship	Status
CGH MEDICAL CENTER	Parcel Owner	CURRENT

Payment History

Tax Year	Total Billed	Total Paid	Amount Unpaid
2025	\$6,069.88	\$3,034.94	\$3,034.94
2024	\$5,865.48	\$5,865.48	\$0.00
2023	\$5,536.34	\$5,536.34	\$0.00
2022	\$5,398.44	\$5,398.44	\$0.00
2021	\$5,209.42	\$5,209.42	\$0.00
Show 20 More (20)			

No Permits

No Redemptions

Sales History

Year	Document #	Sale Type	Sale Date	Sold By	Sold To	Gross Price	Personal Property	Net Price
2006	20069228	Multiple Parcels Sale	10/27/2006			\$256,000.00	\$0.00	\$256,000.00

No Taxing Bodies Information

Disclaimer

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Land Use and Zoning Inquiry



Info



Zoom to

Parcel **1116452005** has zoning classification(s) of : **6 Multi-Family Residential**.

The county comprehensive plan marks the *future land use* of this parcel as *municipal regulated lands*..

Address: 1818 1ST AVE
STERLING IL 61081

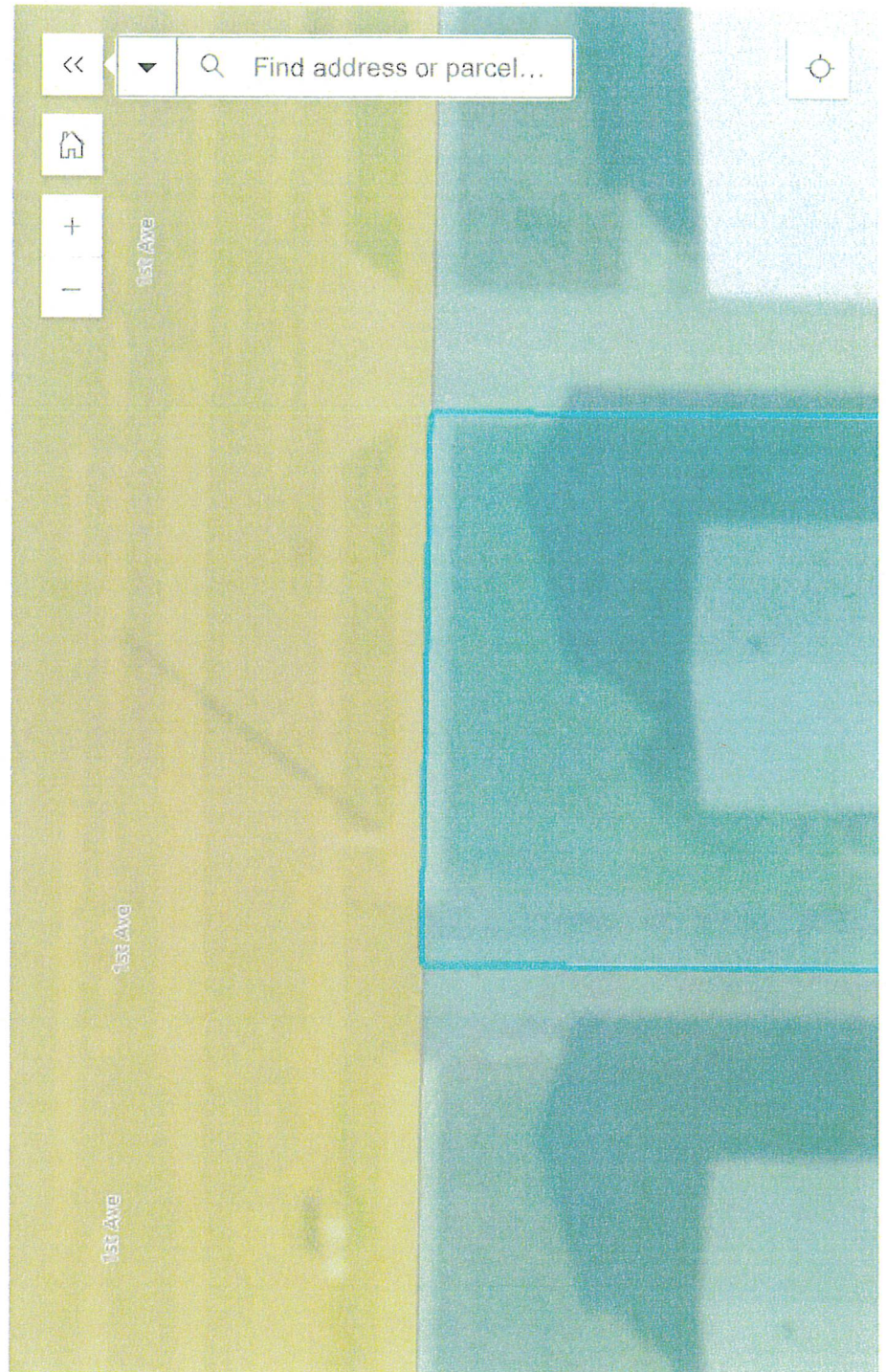
Zoning Jurisdiction: Sterling

Contact Name: Community Services

Contact Number: 815-632-6624

Variances: None

[Zoning Ordinance Information](#)



20 ft

Property Information

Parcel Number

11-16-452-006

Site Address

1816 1ST AVE
STERLING, IL 61081

Owner Name & Address

CGH MEDICAL CENTER
PO BOX 618
STERLING, IL 61081-0618

Tax Year

2026 (Payable 2027) ▼

Sale Status

None

Neighborhood Code

Land Use

Property Class

0040 - Improved Lots

Tax Code

01005 -

Tax Status

Taxable

Net Taxable Value

0

Tax Rate

Unavailable

Total Tax

Unavailable

Township

Sterling

Acres

0.0000

Mailing Address

CGH MEDICAL CENTER
PO BOX 618
STERLING, IL 61081-0618

Tract Number

Lot Size

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Legal Description

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Owner Names

Name	Tax Bill	Address	Document #
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Show 20 More (20)			

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Land Use and Zoning Inquiry



Info



Zoom to

Parcel **1116452006** has zoning classification(s) of : **6 Multi-Family Residential**.

The county comprehensive plan marks the *future land use* of this parcel as *municipal regulated lands*..

Address: 1816 1ST AVE
STERLING IL 61081

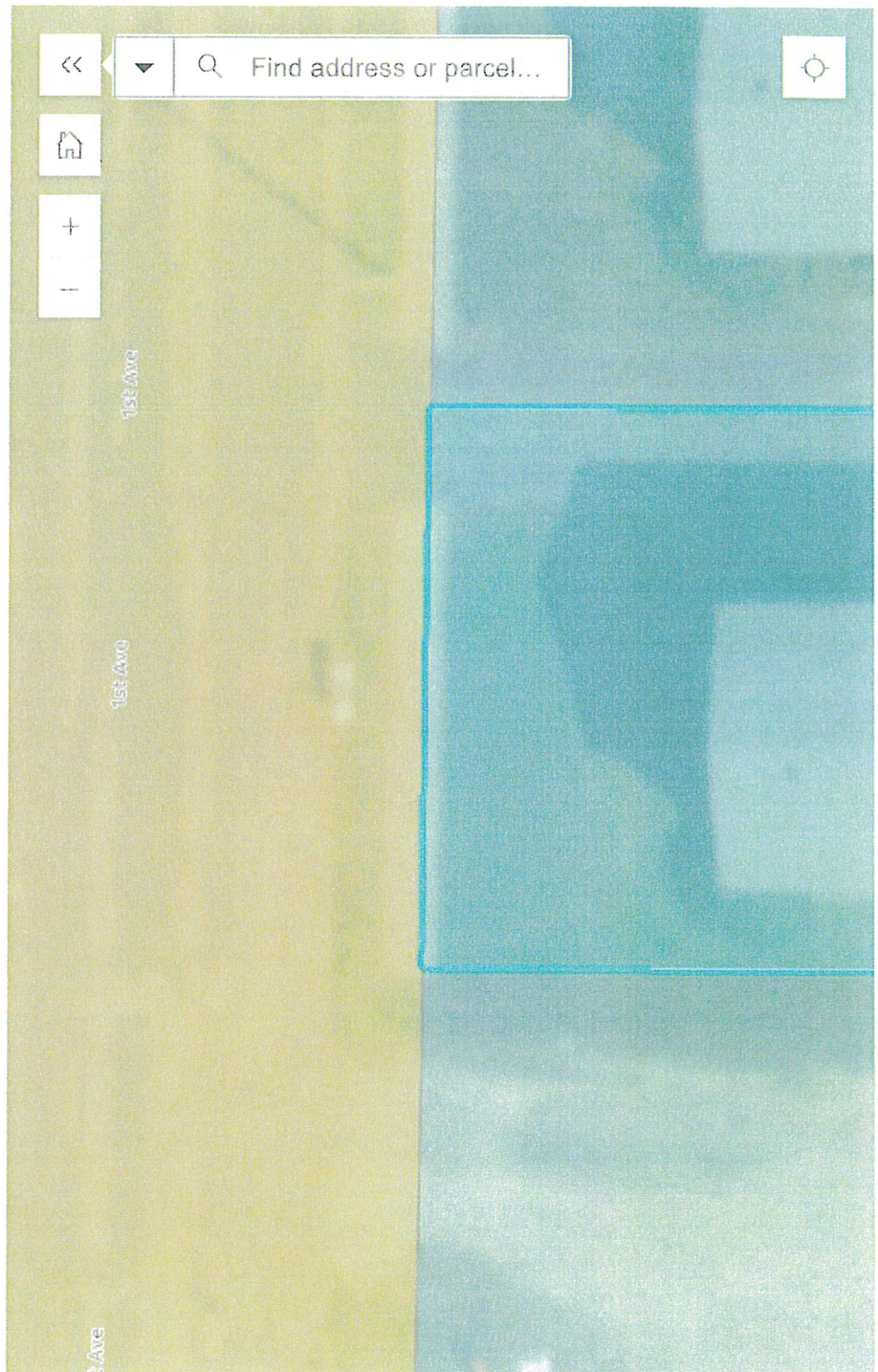
Zoning Jurisdiction: Sterling

Contact Name: Community Services

Contact Number: 815-632-6624

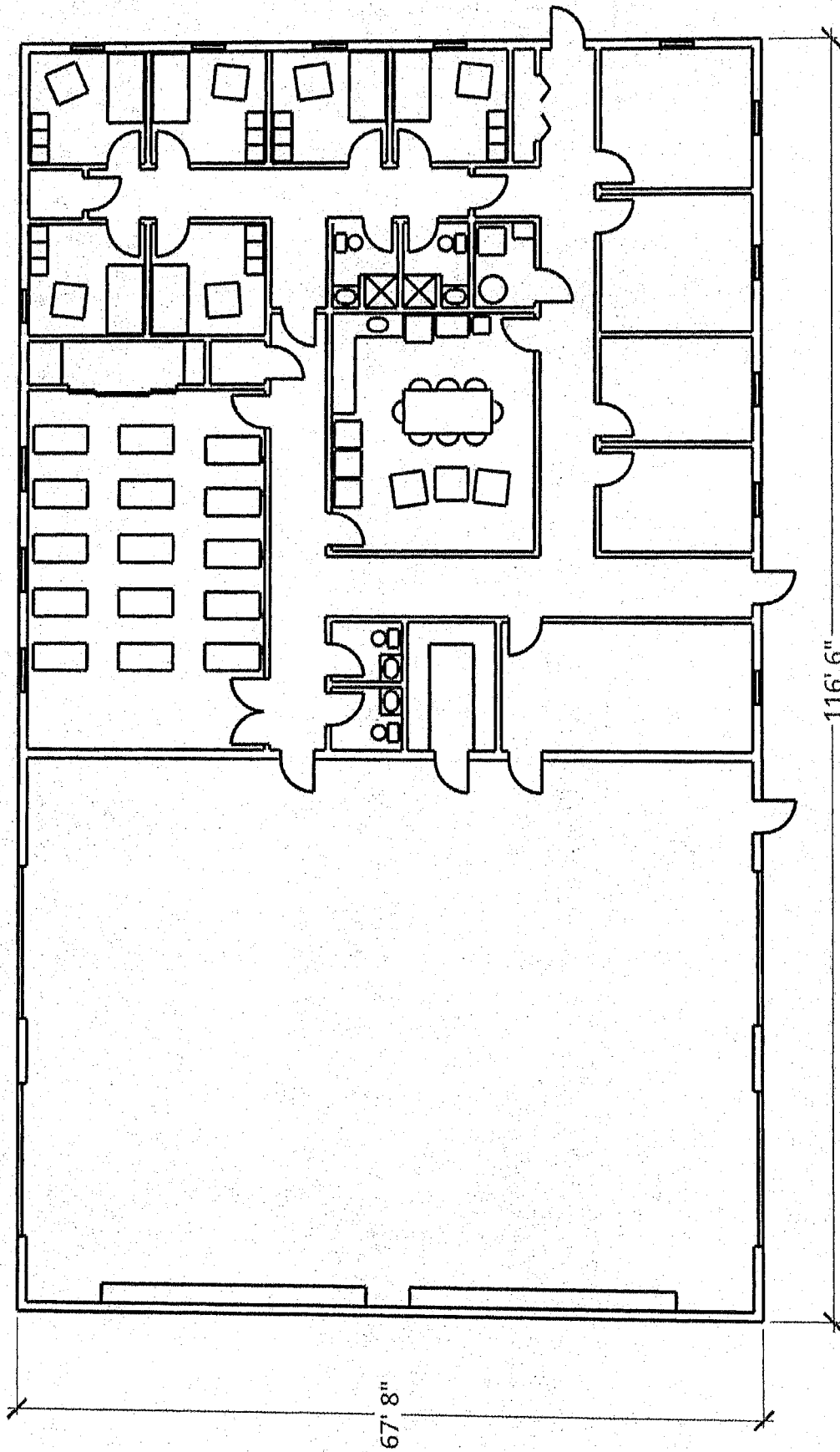
Variances: None

[Zoning Ordinance Information](#)



20 ft

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memorandum



To: Sterling Plan Commission
 From: Dustin Wolff, AICP, City Planner
 Cc: Amanda Schmidt, Building and Zoning Superintendent
 Scott Shumard, City Manager
 Tim Zollinger, City Attorney

Date: July 15, 2026

RE: Rezoning to CB Community Business District with Special Use

LOCATION: Parcels 11-16-452-005, 11-16-452-006, 11-16-452-007, 11-16-452-008 (1816 & 1818 1st Ave.) *See Figure 1.*

REQUESTED ACTION: Rezone property from MR-6, Multi-Family District to CB Community Business District with Special Use.

BACKGROUND: The petitioner is proposing the development of a new Emergency Medical Services (EMS) facility across four (4) parcels totaling approximately 0.76 acres to support CGH Medical Center.



Figure 1: Aerial of the proposed development site with zoning districts illustrated.

LAND USE AND ZONING:

Direction	Land Use	Zoning	Future Land Use
On-Site	Residential/Vacant	MR-6, Multi-Family Residential	Multi-Family Residential
North	Residential	MR-6, Multi-Family Residential	Multi-Family Residential
South	Institutional	CB, Community Business	Community Business
East	Residential/Commercial	MR-6 / CB	Community Business
West	Institutional	CB, Community Business	Community Business

Medical office or center, not including hospital is permitted by right in the CB, Community Business District. Rezoning of the lands to accommodate a new EMS facility is not incompatible with surrounding development, especially as this is adjacent to the CGH Medical Center.

Figure 2 shows the properties all contained multi-family development, and the building located on southern parcel family was razed by the petitioner. The subject properties are in the Multi-Family Residential Future Land Use category, and the surrounding properties are dominated by Community Business and Residential uses. **Figure 3** illustrates the adopted Future Land Use Map for the subject property and surroundings.



Figure 2: StreetView image showing the multi-family structure that was previously located on the now vacant parcel.

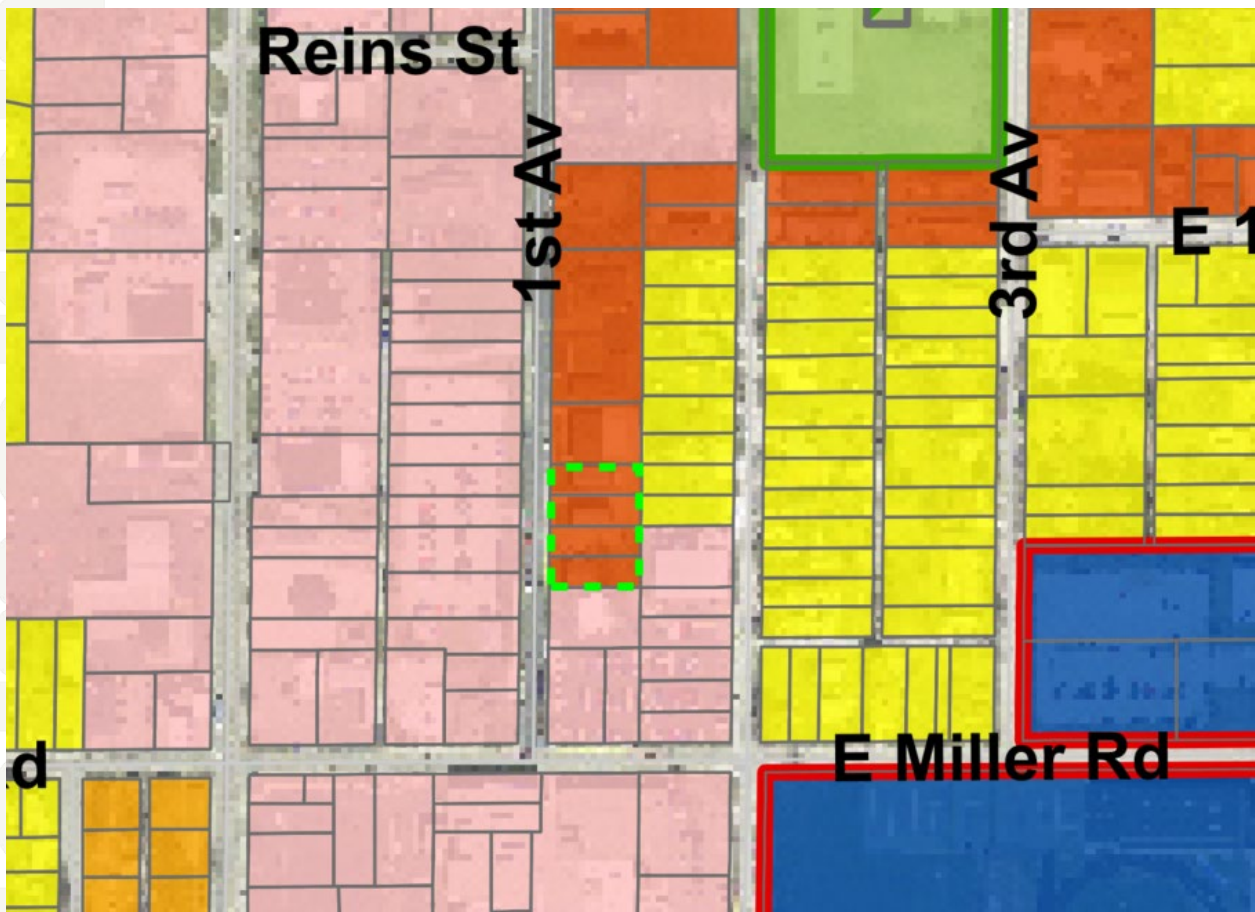


Figure 3: Clip of the adopted Future Land Use Map showing the parcels in the Multi-Family Residential use category.

REZONING EVALUATION: The following are Staff comments based on the key “findings of fact” to consider when reviewing a request to rezone a particular property, as listed in the City’s zoning ordinance:

1. *The proposed Official Zoning Map amendment furthers the purposes of the Zoning Code as outlined in Section 102-103.*

The purpose of the CB Community Business district is to accommodate a range of commercial uses that are designed to be locally established and serve the entire community, rather than adjacent residents. The proposed EMS facility will continue to work as an extension of the CGH Medical Center, providing ambulance and medical services to the community. In addition, this facility will serve as an appropriate transition from the residential uses to the north and east to the higher density of the medical center use to the south. It is staff’s opinion that the change to allow for the Community Business District furthers the purposes of the Zoning Code.

2. *The proposed amendment to the Official Zoning Map maintains the desired consistency of land uses, land use intensities, and land use impacts as related to the environs of the subject property.*

The properties that are proposed to be rezoned include two multi-family residential buildings and two vacant lots that previously contained an apartment building. An EMS facility is not incompatible with the existing development around the subject property. However, staff acknowledge that this will bring a land use intensity that is greater than what is currently there.

While exact details about the EMS facility are not fully known yet, the application states that this facility will house EMS staff and include storage for ambulances. Potential impacts to the adjacent uses may include noise from ambulances, including sirens and engine noise and increased traffic along 1st Avenue as both EMS and employee vehicles come and go.

The intensity of the facility can be mitigated with appropriate screening of the property and any outdoor storage of ambulances and other equipment. The future EMS facility will be subject to the requirements of City Code section 102-520(B)(2)(c) Bufferyard Screening, which explicitly dictates the screening requirements for when a non-residential use is adjacent to a residential use. To properly mitigate potential land use conflicts, the future development will need to provide adequate information as to the intensity of the use—the average number of daily EMS calls, frequency/number of overnight calls, policies on the use of ambulance sirens at the facility, number of employees, and shift change times.

It is staff opinion that while that the proposed rezoning would result in a more intense land use, the City Code is explicit enough in how to mitigate land use conflicts, that the increase in intensity will not necessarily negatively impact surrounding land uses with the proper measure implemented.

3. *The trend of development, if any, in the general area of the property in question, including changes if any which have taken place since the day the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification.*

The prevailing trend in this area is the development of vacant and undeveloped properties to facilitate the growth and expansion of CGH Medical Center. Recently constructed parking lots to the south and west are

intended to accommodate the needs of the medical center. The proposed zoning amendment is expected to further encourage development within the area and provide continued support for the medical center.

4. *The designations of the Official Zoning Map should be brought into conformity with the Comprehensive Plan*

The Comprehensive Plan highlights the following Goals and Objectives:

- Ensure the delivery of public safety services remains effective in the City
- Consider the need for and desirability of new community facilities that will serve the needs and desires of the residents and businesses.
- Ensure that all City development is served by adequate, efficient, cost-effective utilities and community facilities within the City's capacity to provide such services.

The proposed project is designed to meet specific objectives by ensuring the provision of adequate community facilities and public safety services. Rezoning the property to CB will facilitate the development of a new EMS facility, thereby advancing the City's goals by delivering essential community infrastructure that enhances public safety. Amending the Official Zoning Map to CB will bring it into conformity with the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: Based on an evaluation of the key "findings of fact" addressed above, Staff recommend that the Plan Commission approve this rezoning petition for the following reasons:

1. The proposed Official Zoning Map amendment will further development and investment in the area.
2. The proposed zoning map amendment is compatible with the trends for development in the area.
3. The proposed CB District zoning for the property in question conforms to the goals expressed in Element 6: Utilities & Community Facilities of the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
4. The proposed rezoning conforms to the goals expressed in the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
5. Amend Map 3.3: Future Land Use of the adopted Comprehensive Plan to change the land use category is assigned for the lands from *Multi-Family Residential* to *Community Business*.
6. Provide operational details regarding the intensity of the proposed use, specifically the average number of daily EMS calls, frequency/number of overnight calls, policies on the use of ambulance sirens at the facility, number of employees, and shift change times.

Sec. 102-115. Definitions.

Data center. A building or group of buildings used primarily for the storage, processing, management, transmission, or distribution of digital data, including servers, data storage equipment, networking equipment, cooling systems, electrical infrastructure, backup power systems, and related accessory equipment and uses.

Data center, enterprise. A data center operated primarily by a single business, institution, governmental entity, or organization for its own internal use. An enterprise data center typically has a power capacity of 1-10 MW and a building footprint of 50,000-150,000 SF.

Data center, colocation or wholesale. A data center in which server space, digital infrastructure, power, cooling, network access, or related services are leased, licensed, or otherwise provided to one or more customers or tenants. A colocation data center typically has a power capacity of 5-50 MW. Building footprint is variable based on the number of tenants served.

Data center, telecom. A data center is used by telecommunications providers to store, process, manage, and transmit digital data and signals. Unlike enterprise data centers, telecom data centers act as vital hubs in the broader network, serving multiple clients and carriers. Telecom data centers typically have a power capacity of less than 5 MW and a building footprint of less than 50,000 SF.

Data center, hyperscale. A data center designed to operate at large scale, typically supporting thousands of servers and extensive digital infrastructure to meet the demands of cloud providers or large enterprises. Hyperscale data centers are characterized by high levels of automation, efficiency, and scalability, allowing rapid expansion and optimized resource utilization. Typically, hyperscale data centers have a power capacity of great than 50 MW, a building(s) footprint of greater than 500,000 SF, or a campus style development requiring greater than 100 acres.

Maximum Designed Electrical Capacity. The maximum electrical load (in megawatts (MW)) a facility is designed to draw at full build-out, including all phases of development and supporting infrastructure.

Mechanical yard. An outdoor area containing mechanical, electrical, cooling, generator, transformer, utility, or similar equipment accessory to a principal use.

Backup power system. Equipment used to provide temporary or emergency electrical power during interruption of normal utility service, including generators, battery energy storage systems, fuel cells, switchgear, transformers, fuel tanks, and related equipment.

Brownfield. A site that was previously developed for another use, repurposing existing buildings or infrastructure. Such projects may need renovation or remediation, unlike greenfield sites, which are undeveloped land.

Greenfield. An undeveloped site or parcel of land that has not been previously used for any purpose. Greenfield projects typically involve new construction on untouched land, as opposed to brownfield sites, which are repurposed or redeveloped from prior uses.

Major Data Center. A data center which features greater than 250,000 SF of building space or consumes more than 25 MW of power. A Major Data Center is subject to all of the requirements defined in this code.

Minor Data Center. A data center which features under 250,000 SF of building space and consumes less than 25 MW of power. A Minor Data Center is subject to a less stringent set of requirements than a Major Data Center.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). An arrangement of batteries and associated electrical equipment designed to store electrical energy for later use. The system can include batteries, control systems, switchgear, and other components necessary for safe and efficient energy management.



Data Centers within the Matrix of Land Uses

	Residential							Business					Industrial			Spec.	Overlay	
Use	RH	SR-4	SR-6	SR-8	TR-6	MR-6	MR-10	NB	CB	RB	DB	BP	LM	GM	HM	MU	PIO	TBO
Data Center, Small / Telecom / Edge												P	P	P	P			
Data Center, Enterprise												S	S	S	S			
Data Center, Colocation (retail/Wholesale)													S	S	S			
Data Center, Hyperscale													S	S	S			
Data Center Hyperscale Campus (Advanced / Emerging)													S	S	S			

Sec. 102-445. Data centers.

A. Purpose.

The purpose of this section is to establish standards for the location, design, construction, and operation of data centers in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare; minimize adverse impacts on adjacent properties; ensure adequate public facilities and utilities; and promote compatibility with surrounding land uses.

B. Applicability.

- (1) No data center shall be established, constructed, enlarged, expanded, or operated except in accordance with this section and all other applicable provisions of this chapter.
- (2) A data center shall require approval as a Special Use where authorized by Sec. 102-317, Matrix of land uses.
- (3) A data center shall comply with the applicable bulk regulations, parking standards, loading standards, exterior lighting standards, stormwater management requirements, building regulations, and other applicable provisions of the Sterling City Code.
- (4) A data center shall be categorized as a Major or Minor Data Center and be subject to all of some of the provisions of this chapter.
 1. Major Data Center. Categorized as a data center that meets all or part of these requirements:
 1. Has greater than 250,000 SF in building area
 2. Consumes greater than 25 megawatts of power
 2. Minor Data Center. Categorized as a data center that:
 1. Has less than 250,000 SF in building area
 2. Consumes less than 25 megawatts of power

(5) Data Center Classification by MW Scale

Category	MW Range (Max Designed Capacity)	Typical SF Range	Typical Acreage	Operational Model
Small / Telecom / Edge	< 5 MW	< 50,000 SF	< 5 acres	Network switching, edge computing, telecom hubs
Enterprise	5 – < 10 MW	50,000 – 150,000 SF	5 – 15 acres	Single-user (corporate, institutional)
Colocation (Retail/Wholesale)	10 – < 50 MW	100,000 – 500,000 SF	10 – 50 acres	Multi-tenant leased space; phased expansion common

Category	MW Range (Max Designed Capacity)	Typical SF Range	Typical Acreage	Operational Model
Hyperscale	≥ 50 MW	500,000+ SF (or multi-building campus)	50 – 200+ acres	Cloud providers (AWS, Google, Microsoft); large-scale computing
Hyperscale Campus (Advanced / Emerging)	100 – 500+ MW (up to 1 GW+)	1M+ SF across multiple buildings	100 – 1,000+ acres	Multi-phase regional/cloud campuses; AI and high-density computing

(6) Where the provisions of this section conflict with another provision of this chapter, the more restrictive provision shall apply.

C. Special Use required.

- (1) Data centers shall be permitted only as a Special Use in those zoning districts where such use is authorized by Sec. 102-317.
- (2) In addition to the standards otherwise applicable to Special Uses, the City Council may impose conditions necessary to ensure compatibility with surrounding properties and compliance with this chapter.
- (3) Conditions of approval may include, but shall not be limited to:
 1. Increased setbacks
 2. Enhanced screening
 3. Noise mitigation
 4. Traffic management
 5. Utility coordination
 6. Limitations on generator testing
 7. Architectural modifications
 8. Phasing requirements
 9. Emergency access improvements
 10. Post-construction compliance verification.

D. Application requirements.

In addition to any information otherwise required for Special Use approval, site plan review, zoning approval, or building permit approval, an application for a data center shall include the following:

- (1) **Project narrative.** A written description of the proposed use, including the type of data center, total building area, number of buildings, proposed phasing, anticipated number of employees, hours of operation, and general operational characteristics.

- (2) **Site plan.** A scaled site plan showing all buildings, driveways, parking areas, loading areas, outdoor equipment, mechanical yards, generator areas, substations, transformers, utility infrastructure, fencing, security features, landscaping, screening, stormwater facilities, and points of access.
- (3) **Utility demand statement.** A statement describing anticipated electric, water, sanitary sewer, stormwater, and telecommunications demand, together with evidence of coordination with applicable utility providers.
- (4) **Noise analysis.** A noise analysis prepared by a qualified professional identifying anticipated noise from mechanical equipment, cooling equipment, generators, transformers, loading areas, and other operational sources.
- (5) **Backup power plan.** A plan identifying the type, number, location, fuel source, capacity, and testing schedule for generators or other backup power systems.
- (6) **Traffic and access statement.** A traffic impact assessment (TIA) describing anticipated construction traffic, operational traffic, delivery routes, employee parking, truck circulation, and access for emergency service providers.
- (7) **Landscape and screening plan.** A plan showing proposed landscaping, fencing, walls, berms, plantings, and other screening methods for buildings, equipment yards, utility areas, loading areas, and outdoor appurtenances.
- (8) **Exterior lighting plan.** A photometric plan demonstrating compliance with applicable exterior lighting requirements of this chapter.
- (9) **Stormwater management plan.** A plan demonstrating compliance with applicable stormwater management and erosion control requirements.
- (10) **Emergency response information.** Information identifying emergency access points, fire protection measures, hazardous materials or fuel storage, spill prevention measures, and emergency contact information.

E. Development Agreement

- (1) As a condition of approval for any Data Center, the applicant shall enter into a Development Agreement with the City prior to the issuance of any building permit, grading permit, site development permit, or other authorization for construction.
- (2) The Development Agreement shall be approved by the City Council and recorded against the subject property.
- (3) The Development Agreement shall be binding upon the property owner, all successors, assigns, and operators of the facility.
- (4) The City may withhold permits, occupancy approvals, utility connections, or other approvals until the Development Agreement has been executed and all required financial assurances have been provided.
- (5) Minimum Required Provisions.

The Development Agreement shall address, at a minimum, the following:

- a. Construction phasing and development schedules.
- b. Public infrastructure improvements, including roadway, utility, drainage, telecommunications, and traffic-related improvements required to serve the development.
- c. Construction traffic management, haul routes, roadway protection measures, and repair responsibilities for public facilities damaged as a result of construction activities.
- d. Water supply, wastewater service, stormwater management, and utility demand management measures.
- e. Landscaping, buffering, screening, lighting, and architectural commitments.
- f. Noise mitigation measures and compliance monitoring requirements.
- g. Emergency response coordination and access requirements.
- h. Operational performance standards and monitoring requirements.
- i. Community impact mitigation measures deemed necessary by the City based upon the scale of the development.
- j. Compliance reporting and inspection procedures.
- k. Decommissioning obligations and associated financial assurance requirements.
- l. Any other condition reasonably necessary to mitigate impacts or ensure compliance with this Chapter.

(6) Financial Assurances.

The City may require the applicant to provide one or more financial guarantees, including but not limited to:

- a. Performance bonds.
- b. Letters of credit.
- c. Escrow accounts.
- d. Cash deposits.
- e. Other forms of security determined acceptable by the City Attorney and City Engineer.

Financial assurances may be required to guarantee:

- a. Completion of public improvements.
- b. Repair of public infrastructure damage.
- c. Landscaping and buffering installation.
- d. Environmental remediation obligations.
- e. Decommissioning and site restoration requirements.
- f. Any other obligation contained within the Development Agreement.

(7) Annual Compliance Review.

The Development Agreement may require periodic reporting demonstrating compliance with approved development plans, operational standards, utility usage limitations, noise standards, maintenance obligations, emergency response requirements, and other applicable provisions of this Chapter.

The City may require annual certification by the property owner or operator that the facility remains in compliance with all applicable approvals and Development Agreement requirements.

(8) Violation.

Failure to comply with any provision of an approved Development Agreement shall constitute a violation of this Chapter and may result in permit suspension, revocation of approvals, enforcement actions, forfeitures, or any other remedy authorized by law.

Setbacks.

- (1) Data centers shall comply with the minimum setback requirements of the underlying zoning district.

- (2) In addition to the setback requirements of the underlying zoning district, the following minimum setbacks shall apply:



Facility	Setback Requirement
Principal data center building	200 feet from residential zoning district
Mechanical yard	300 feet from residential zoning district
Backup generator	300 feet from residential zoning district
Substation or major electrical equipment	300 feet from residential zoning district
Outdoor mechanical or utility equipment	100 feet from public right-of-way

- (3) The City Council may require increased setbacks as a condition of Special Use approval where necessary to protect adjacent properties or public rights-of-way.

F. Building design.

- (1) Data center buildings shall comply with the requirements of Section 102-501. Nonresidential design guidelines and regulations.
- (2) In addition to complying with Sec. 102-501, data center buildings shall be designed to avoid long, uninterrupted blank walls on elevations visible from public streets, public rights-of-way, residential zoning districts, parks, schools, or other sensitive land uses.
- (3) Building elevations visible from a public street or residential zoning district shall incorporate architectural variation through one or more of the following: variation in wall plane, variation in building materials or colors, architectural panels, windows or spandrel glass, vertical or horizontal articulation, parapets, roofline variation, decorative masonry, or landscaping adjacent to the building façade.

- (4) The City Council may require additional architectural treatment as a condition of Special Use approval.

G. Mechanical yards and outdoor equipment.

- (1) All outdoor mechanical, electrical, cooling, generator, transformer, battery, utility, and similar equipment shall be located within a mechanical yard or otherwise screened from view.
- (2) Mechanical yards shall be screened from public streets, public rights-of-way, residential zoning districts, and adjacent properties by a wall, fence, berm, landscaping, building-integrated screening, or combination thereof.
- (3) Screening shall be of sufficient height, opacity, and design to substantially obscure equipment from ground-level view.
- (4) Outdoor storage shall be prohibited, except for equipment, materials, or temporary storage specifically approved as part of the Special Use.

H. Noise.

- (1) Data center operations shall comply with all applicable noise regulations of the Sterling City Code.
- (2) Noise generated by mechanical equipment, cooling equipment, transformers, generators, or similar operational equipment shall not exceed the following levels when measured at the property line of a residential use or residential zoning district:



Time	Noise Level
7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.	67 dBA
8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.	67 dBA

- (3) Operation of backup power systems during an actual power outage, utility emergency, emergency response event, or other emergency condition shall be exempt from the limits of this subsection.
- (4) The City may require pre-construction and post-construction noise testing to verify compliance with this section and any conditions of Special Use approval.

I. Backup generators and standby power equipment.

- (1) Backup generators and standby power equipment shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
- (2) Routine testing of backup generators shall be conducted only between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, unless otherwise approved by the City or required by law, utility coordination, manufacturer specifications, or emergency conditions.
- (3) Routine testing shall not occur on Saturdays, Sundays, or federal holidays unless specifically approved as part of the Special Use.

- (4) Generators, fuel tanks, and related equipment shall be screened, secured, and located to minimize impacts on adjacent properties.
- (5) Fuel storage shall comply with all applicable fire, building, environmental, and safety requirements.

J. Lighting.



- (1) Exterior lighting shall be shielded, downward directed, and designed to prevent glare onto adjacent properties and public rights-of-way.
- (2) Security lighting shall be designed to provide safe illumination while minimizing light trespass.
- (3) Flashing, blinking, moving, or animated lighting shall be prohibited, except as required for emergency, safety, security, or aviation purposes.
- (4) All data centers must comply with the maximum horizontal foot-candle (HFC) level at the property/row line, as defined in Table 6.3: Lighting Levels at Property/Right-of-Way Lines in Sec. 102-606. Exterior lighting standards.

K. Landscaping and screening.



- (1) Landscaping shall be provided along public street frontages and adjacent to residential zoning districts or residential uses in accordance with Section 102-520.
- (2) Where a data center abuts or is located across a street from a residential zoning district, public park, school, or other sensitive use, enhanced buffering may be required.
 1. Enhanced buffering may include increased landscape yard depth, evergreen plantings, berms, masonry walls, decorative fencing, additional setbacks, or other measures approved by the City.
- (3) Landscaping is mandatory for all data centers, irrespective of their size, and must adhere to the guidelines outlined in Section 102-250 B. Landscape Requirements. Particular emphasis should be placed on Section 102-250 B (c). Bufferyard Screening.
- (4) As a requirement of the Special Use Permit, the City may require enhanced landscaping and screening beyond what is required by Section 102-250 B. Landscape Requirements.
- (5) All required landscaping and screening shall be maintained in good condition for the life of the use.

L. Parking, loading, and circulation.

- (1) Parking shall be provided based on the demonstrated operational needs of the facility, including employees, visitors, vendors, service personnel, maintenance personnel, and security personnel.
- (2) The City Council may approve a reduced parking supply where the applicant demonstrates that the proposed number of spaces is adequate for the use.
- (3) Loading, service, and delivery areas shall be located to minimize visibility from public streets and impacts on adjacent properties.

- (4) The site shall provide adequate circulation for emergency vehicles, service vehicles, utility providers, and delivery vehicles.

M. Utilities.

- (1) The applicant shall demonstrate that adequate public and private utilities are available to serve the proposed use.
- (2) Utility infrastructure shall be coordinated with applicable service providers.
- (3) New utility lines shall be placed underground where feasible, except for substations, transformers, transmission facilities, or other infrastructure that cannot reasonably be placed underground.
- (4) The City may require documentation of utility availability prior to issuance of a building permit.

N. Stormwater and drainage.

- (1) Data centers shall comply with all applicable stormwater management and erosion control requirements.
- (2) Stormwater facilities shall be designed to accommodate the intensity of the proposed development, including buildings, parking areas, driveways, equipment yards, and other impervious surfaces.
- (3) Stormwater facilities shall be maintained in good working order for the life of the use.

O. Security.

- (1) Security fencing, gates, cameras, guard stations, and similar features shall be designed to be compatible with the surrounding area to the greatest extent practicable.
- (2) Barbed wire, razor wire, concertina wire, or similar security materials shall be prohibited where visible from a public street, public right-of-way, residential zoning district, or residential use unless specifically approved by the City Council as part of the Special Use.

P. Operational standards.

- (1) The use shall be operated in substantial compliance with the approved Special Use, approved site plan, and all conditions of approval.
- (2) All buildings, fencing, screening, landscaping, stormwater facilities, mechanical equipment, and site improvements shall be maintained in good condition.
- (3) Routine deliveries, service activities, and maintenance activities shall occur during daytime hours unless otherwise approved.
- (4) Any substantial expansion of building area, mechanical equipment, generator capacity, electrical capacity, site area, or operational intensity shall require review and approval by the City.

Q. Decommissioning

(1) Purpose

The purpose of this Section is to ensure that data centers and associated facilities are safely decommissioned at the end of their useful life, that obsolete or abandoned facilities do not become a public nuisance or financial burden to the City, and that sites are restored to a safe, stable, and environmentally sound condition.

(2) Decommissioning Plan Required

Prior to issuance of a special use permit, the owner or operator shall submit a decommissioning plan for review and approval by the City. The decommissioning plan shall, at a minimum, include the following:

a. Facility Description.

A description of the data center facility and all principal and accessory improvements subject to decommissioning, including buildings, equipment yards, generators, substations, fuel storage areas, battery systems, cooling infrastructure, stormwater facilities, access drives, fencing, lighting, and other related improvements.

b. Inventory of Regulated Materials.

An inventory of materials, equipment, and systems that may require special handling, removal, recycling, or disposal, including but not limited to batteries, refrigerants, diesel fuel, fuel tanks, transformers, hazardous materials, electronic waste, and other regulated materials.

c. Equipment Removal.

Procedures for the removal, salvage, recycling, or lawful disposal of servers, racks, wiring, networking equipment, power distribution equipment, mechanical equipment, and other technology-related infrastructure.

d. Hazardous Materials and Environmental Compliance.

Procedures for the removal, disposal, remediation, or closure of all hazardous materials, regulated substances, fuel tanks, batteries, refrigerants, and other materials requiring special handling in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

e. Utility Disconnection and Infrastructure Removal.

Procedures for disconnection, removal, abandonment, or transfer of utility infrastructure, including electric, water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, fiber optic, telecommunications, gas, and other utility systems, subject to approval by the City and applicable utility providers.

f. Building Demolition or Reuse.

A description of whether buildings and structures will be demolished, secured for future reuse, or converted to another lawful use. If buildings are proposed to

remain, the plan shall identify measures to ensure that such buildings are safe, maintained, code-compliant, and suitable for reuse.

g. **Site Restoration.**

Procedures for restoring the site to a safe and stable condition, including removal of obsolete improvements, grading, stabilization of disturbed areas, erosion control, landscaping restoration, stormwater management, and repair of public or private infrastructure damaged during decommissioning.

h. **Schedule.**

A proposed schedule for commencement and completion of decommissioning activities following abandonment or permanent cessation of operations.

i. **Responsible Parties.**

The name, address, telephone number, and email address of the owner, operator, property manager, and any other party responsible for implementing the decommissioning plan.

j. **Documentation and Reporting.**

Procedures for documenting decommissioning activities, including manifests, disposal records, recycling certificates, hazardous material disposal documentation, data destruction certifications where applicable, inspection reports, and final certification of completion.

(3) Financial Assurance Required

a. **Requirement.**

Prior to issuance of a special use permit, the owner shall provide financial assurance in a form acceptable to the City to guarantee completion of decommissioning and site restoration.

b. **Acceptable Forms.**

Financial assurance may be provided in the form of a performance bond, surety bond, irrevocable letter of credit, escrow account, cash deposit, or other form approved by the City.



c. **Amount.**

The amount of financial assurance shall be sufficient to cover one hundred ten percent (110%) of the estimated cost of decommissioning and site restoration, as determined by the City based on the approved decommissioning plan and cost estimate.

d. **Salvage Value Excluded.**

The estimated salvage, resale, or recycling value of equipment, materials, or building components shall not be deducted from the required financial assurance amount unless expressly approved by the City.

e. **Review and Adjustment.**

The decommissioning cost estimate and required financial assurance shall be reviewed and updated at least once every five (5) years, or more frequently if required by the City. The owner shall increase the amount of financial assurance as necessary to account for inflation, changes in site conditions, changes in facility design, or changes in decommissioning costs.

f. **Maintenance of Financial Assurance.**

Financial assurance shall remain in effect for the life of the data center facility and until the City determines that decommissioning and site restoration have been completed in accordance with the approved decommissioning plan.

(4) Abandonment or Cessation of Operations

a. **Abandonment Defined.**

A data center shall be considered abandoned if any of the following occur:

- i. The facility ceases active data processing, computing, colocation, or related operations for a period of twelve (12) consecutive months;
- ii. Utility service necessary for operation of the facility is disconnected for a period of twelve (12) consecutive months, unless such disconnection is temporary and approved by the City;
- iii. The owner or operator provides written notice that the facility has permanently ceased operations;
- iv. The facility is not maintained in a safe, secure, and code-compliant condition; or
- v. The City determines, based on substantial evidence, that the facility has been permanently discontinued or abandoned.

b. **Temporary Suspension.**

Temporary interruptions in operations due to maintenance, upgrades, equipment replacement, casualty loss, supply chain delays, utility interruptions, or other circumstances beyond the control of the owner shall not constitute abandonment if the owner provides written notice to the City and demonstrates a good-faith intent to resume operations.

c. **Notice of Abandonment.**

Upon determining that a data center may be abandoned, the City shall provide written notice to the owner of record and operator, if known. The owner shall have thirty (30) days from the date of notice to provide evidence that the facility has not been abandoned or to submit a schedule for decommissioning.

(5) Commencement and Completion of Decommissioning

a. **Commencement.**

Decommissioning shall commence within one hundred eighty (180) days after abandonment, permanent cessation of operations, or written notice from the City requiring decommissioning, whichever occurs first.

b. **Completion.**

Decommissioning and site restoration shall be completed within twelve (12) months after commencement unless the City approves an extension for good cause.

c. **Extensions.**

The City may grant one or more extensions if the owner demonstrates that decommissioning is proceeding in good faith and that delays are due to circumstances beyond the owner's reasonable control.

(6) Minimum Decommissioning Requirements

Unless otherwise approved by the City, decommissioning shall include the following:

- a. Removal of servers, racks, storage media, networking equipment, wiring, and other technology-related equipment no longer intended for reuse at the site;
- b. Removal, recycling, or lawful disposal of electronic waste in accordance with applicable law;
- c. Removal or lawful closure of backup generators, fuel tanks, battery systems, transformers, switchgear, cooling systems, and related mechanical and electrical equipment not intended for continued lawful use;
- d. Recovery and lawful disposal of refrigerants, fuels, oils, coolants, batteries, and other regulated materials;
- e. Removal or lawful abandonment of utility infrastructure no longer needed for a lawful use of the site, subject to approval by the City and applicable utility providers;
- f. Demolition, securing, or lawful reuse of buildings and structures, subject to applicable building, zoning, fire, property maintenance, and environmental codes;
- g. Removal of obsolete fencing, lighting, signage, equipment pads, foundations, access drives, and other site improvements where required by the City;
- h. Stabilization of disturbed areas with grading, erosion control, vegetation, landscaping, or other measures approved by the City;
- i. Restoration or repair of public streets, sidewalks, utilities, drainage facilities, or other public improvements damaged during decommissioning; and
- j. Submission of documentation demonstrating proper disposal, recycling, remediation, and completion of all required decommissioning activities.

(7) Environmental Assessment and Remediation

The City may require the owner to submit an environmental assessment prepared by a qualified environmental professional prior to, during, or after decommissioning. If contamination, hazardous materials, or regulated substances are identified, the owner shall complete all required remediation in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws prior to release of financial assurance.

(8) Data Security and Electronic Waste Documentation

Where storage media, servers, or other equipment containing electronic data are removed from the facility, the owner shall ensure that such equipment is handled in accordance with applicable data security, privacy, and electronic waste disposal requirements. The City may require documentation of certified data destruction, chain of custody, recycling, or disposal where necessary to verify compliance with the approved decommissioning plan.

(9) Final Inspection and Release of Financial Assurance

a. Final Report.

Upon completion of decommissioning, the owner shall submit a final decommissioning report to the City. The report shall include documentation of work completed, disposal and recycling records, environmental remediation records, photographs of the restored site, and certification by a qualified professional that decommissioning was completed in accordance with the approved plan.

b. Inspection.

The City may inspect the site to verify completion of decommissioning and site restoration.

c. Release.

Financial assurance shall not be released until the City determines, in writing, that all required decommissioning, remediation, and site restoration activities have been satisfactorily completed.

d. Partial Release.

The City may authorize partial release of financial assurance upon completion of discrete phases of decommissioning, provided that sufficient financial assurance remains to complete all remaining work.

(10) Failure to Decommission

- a. If the owner fails to decommission the facility in accordance with this Section, the approved decommissioning plan, or any applicable approval condition, the City may take one or more of the following actions:

- I. Draw upon the financial assurance to complete decommissioning and site restoration;
- II. Enter the property, after providing such notice as may be required by law, to perform or cause the performance of decommissioning and site restoration activities;
- III. Recover all costs incurred by the City, including administrative, legal, engineering, inspection, environmental, demolition, restoration, and enforcement costs;
- IV. Place unpaid costs as a lien or special charge against the property to the extent authorized by law;
- V. Suspend, revoke, or withhold permits or approvals related to the property; and
- VI. Pursue any other remedy available at law or equity.

(11) Transfer of Ownership

The obligations of this Section shall run with the land and shall be binding upon the owner, operator, successors, assigns, and any party acquiring an ownership or leasehold interest in the property. No transfer of ownership or operation shall release the prior owner or operator from responsibility unless the City approves replacement financial assurance and written assumption of decommissioning obligations by the successor owner or operator.

(12) Recording of Decommissioning Obligations

As a condition of approval, the City may require the owner to record, against the property, a memorandum of decommissioning obligations, development agreement, restrictive covenant, or other instrument acceptable to the City identifying the decommissioning requirements applicable to the site.

(13) Continuing Maintenance Obligations

Until decommissioning is completed, the owner shall maintain the data center facility, buildings, grounds, security fencing, landscaping, stormwater facilities, lighting, and other site improvements in a safe, secure, and code-compliant condition. Vacant or partially vacant buildings shall comply with all applicable building, fire, zoning, and property maintenance codes.

(14) Conflict with Other Laws

Compliance with this Section shall not relieve the owner or operator from complying with any other applicable federal, state, county, municipal, or utility requirement, including but not limited to environmental, building, fire, electrical, stormwater, hazardous materials, solid waste, electronic waste, and occupational safety regulations.

R. Construction Impact Management Plan

a. Plan Required.

Prior to issuance of any grading permit, building permit, or land disturbance permit for a Data Center, the applicant shall submit a Construction Impact Management Plan (CIMP) for review and approval by the City.

b. Purpose.

The CIMP shall demonstrate how construction activities will avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts on public infrastructure, neighboring properties, and community services.

c. Required Components.

The CIMP shall include, at a minimum:

i. Construction Traffic Management.

1. Designated truck routes and site access points.
2. Estimated daily construction traffic volumes.
3. Measures to avoid impacts on residential streets, schools, emergency response routes, and peak traffic periods.
4. Procedures for traffic control and roadway safety.

ii. Roadway Protection.

1. Documentation of pre-construction roadway conditions when required by the City.
2. Identification of roads anticipated to be used by construction vehicles.
3. Repair or reimbursement for damage attributable to construction activities.
4. Financial assurances as determined necessary by the City.

iii. Construction Hours.

1. Construction activities shall be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, unless otherwise approved by the City.
2. No construction activities shall occur on Sundays or legal holidays, except for emergencies.



iv. Noise Mitigation.

1. Measures to reduce noise from construction equipment and activities.
2. Temporary noise barriers when determined necessary by the City.
3. Prohibition of unnecessary vehicle idling and equipment operation.

v. Dust and Air Quality Control.

1. Dust suppression measures including watering, stabilization, street sweeping, and covering of haul vehicles.
- vi. Worker Parking and Staging.
 1. Identification of construction worker parking areas.
 2. Measures to prevent parking within adjacent residential neighborhoods or public rights-of-way.
 3. Location of material storage, equipment staging, and temporary facilities.
- vii. Erosion and Stormwater Control.
 1. Compliance with all applicable erosion, sedimentation, and stormwater management regulations.
 2. Measures to protect adjacent properties, waterways, and environmentally sensitive features.
- viii. Construction Lighting.
 1. Temporary lighting shall be directed downward and shielded from adjoining properties and public roadways.
 2. Lighting shall be limited to the minimum necessary for safety and security.
- ix. Public Communication.
 1. Designation of a community contact representative.
 2. Establishment of a process for receiving and responding to complaints.
 3. Advance notice of significant traffic disruptions, roadway closures, blasting, or other extraordinary construction activities.
- x. Emergency Access.
 1. Demonstration that construction activities will not impede emergency vehicle access to adjoining properties or public roadways.
- d. Compliance.

Failure to comply with an approved Construction Impact Management Plan shall constitute a violation of this Ordinance and may result in permit suspension, stop-work orders, penalties, or other enforcement actions authorized by law.

S. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Requirement

- (1) A Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) shall be required for all proposed data center developments located on land currently zoned for agricultural use or identified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or locally significant agricultural land.

- (2) The LESA requirement is intended to:
- a. Evaluate the relative agricultural value of the subject property;
 - b. Assess potential impacts of the proposed development on agricultural resources;
and
 - c. Inform decision-making regarding the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.
- (3) The applicant shall submit a LESA report prepared in accordance with the methodology established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or an equivalent methodology approved by the City. The LESA report shall include:
1. A Land Evaluation (LE) component that rates the soil productivity and agricultural capability of the site;
 2. A Site Assessment (SA) component that evaluates factors such as surrounding land use, infrastructure availability, parcel size, proximity to urban services, and development pressures;
 3. A composite LESA score indicating the overall suitability of the site for agricultural preservation versus development; and
 4. Supporting maps, soil data, and narrative analysis sufficient to document the methodology and conclusions.
- (4) Review and Thresholds
1. The reviewing authority shall consider the LESA score as part of the special use or conditional use review process.
 2. Sites receiving a LESA score above a threshold established by the Plan Commission shall be presumed to have high agricultural value and may be subject to additional scrutiny, conditions, or denial.
 3. The Plan Commission may require mitigation measures for impacts to high-value agricultural land, including but not limited to clustering, reduced site disturbance, or preservation of a portion of the property.
- (5) The LESA requirement may be waived by the Plan Commission upon a finding that:
1. The property is not actively used for agricultural purposes;
 2. The property is fully surrounded by urban or non-agricultural development; or
 3. The preparation of a LESA would not materially inform the review of the proposed development.

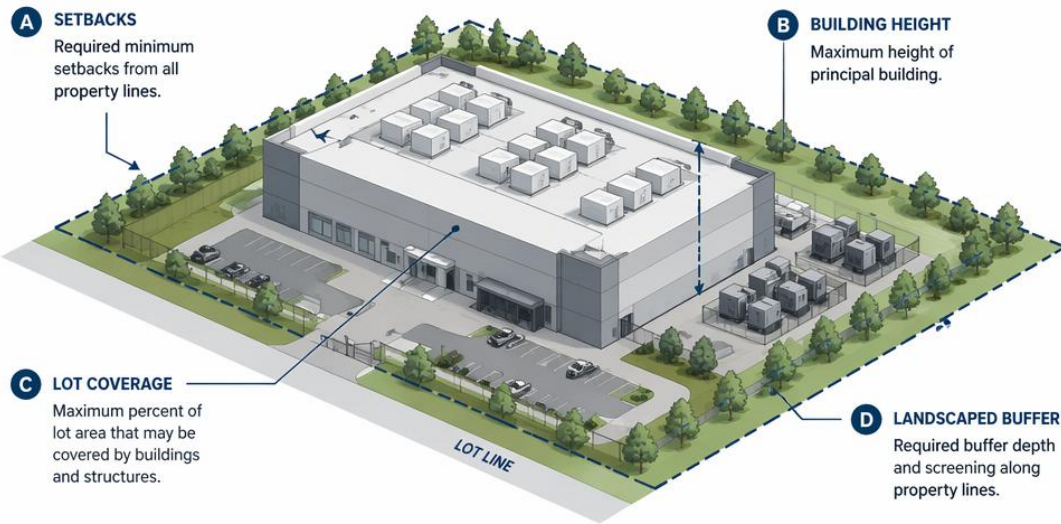
NOTES:

- Should BESS sites be subject to same restrictions?
- Should BESS be in the same section or a section of its own?

- Fire department should have larger role in review and approval of BESS sites

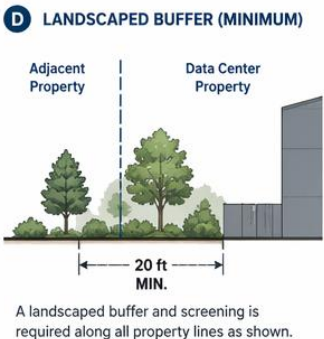
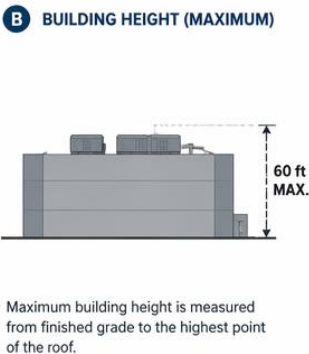
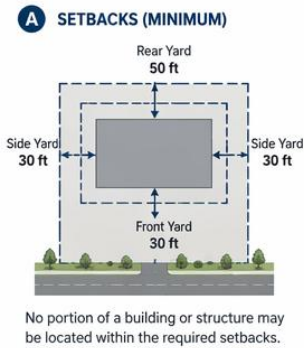
DATA CENTERS – BULK STANDARDS

Standards apply to all data center developments, including principal buildings and accessory structures.



BULK STANDARDS		
STANDARD		REQUIREMENT
A	SETBACKS (MINIMUM)	Front Yard 50 ft
		Side Yard 30 ft
		Rear Yard 50 ft
B	BUILDING HEIGHT (MAXIMUM)	60 ft
C	LOT COVERAGE (MAXIMUM)	60% of lot area
D	LANDSCAPED BUFFER (MINIMUM)	20 ft See screening standards
E	ACCESSORY STRUCTURES HEIGHT (MAXIMUM)	25 ft

Note: Mechanical equipment located on rooftops shall be fully screened from view from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way.



These standards are in addition to all other applicable requirements of this Code.

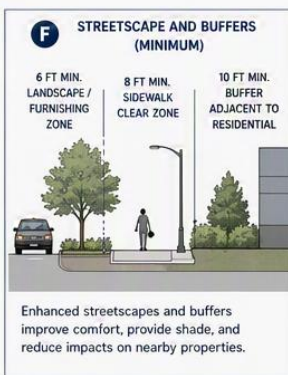
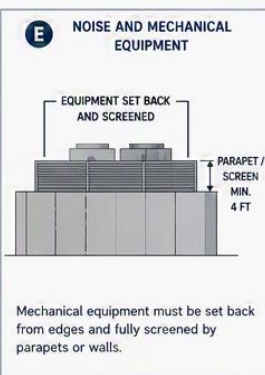
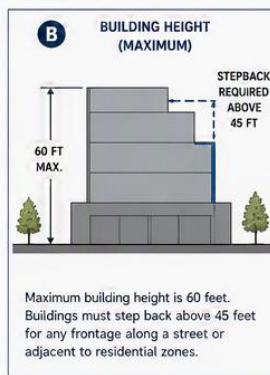
DATA CENTERS – URBAN CONTEXT STANDARDS

Standards apply to all data center developments in the Urban Context District and other mixed-use, transit-rich areas.



URBAN CONTEXT STANDARDS		
STANDARD	REQUIREMENT	
A STREET SETBACK / BUILD-TO ZONE (MINIMUM)	Primary Street (Build-To Zone)	0-10 ft
	Side Street (Build-To Zone)	0-10 ft
	Rear Street Setback (Minimum)	15 ft
B BUILDING HEIGHT (MAXIMUM)	60 ft (See stepback requirements below)	
C ACTIVE STREET FRONTAGE (MINIMUM)	60% of ground floor façade along primary street	
D SCREENING AND LOADING	Loading, service, and utility areas must be located to the side or rear and fully screened from all public rights-of-way and adjacent residential uses.	
E NOISE AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT	Mechanical equipment must be screened on all sides by parapets or walls. Noise at property line must not exceed 60 dBA day / 50 dBA night.	
F STREETScape AND BUFFERS (MINIMUM)	Street trees at 30 ft o.c. (average) 8 ft minimum sidewalk clear zone 6 ft minimum landscape / furnishing zone. 10 ft buffer required where adjacent to residential uses.	

Note: Standards are minimums unless otherwise noted. See Code for additional requirements and exceptions.



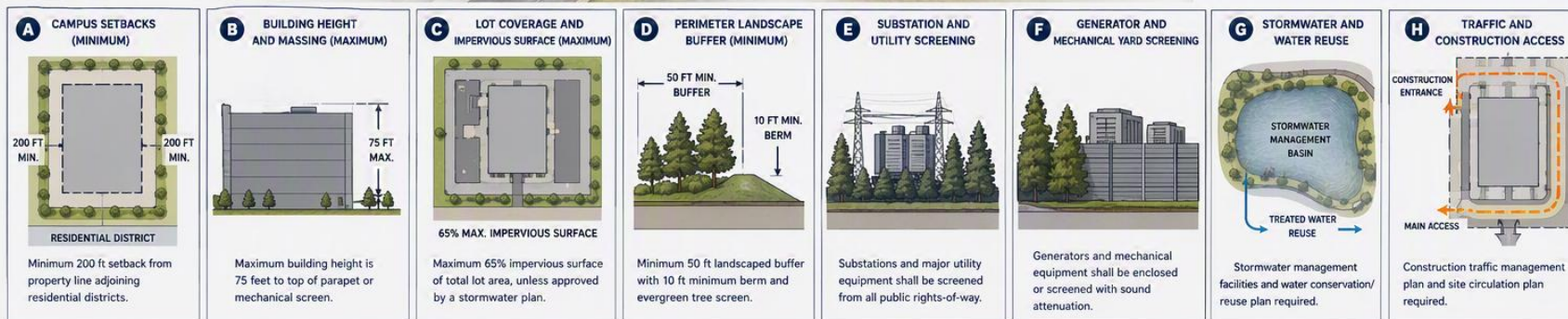
These standards are in addition to all other applicable requirements of this Code.

DATA CENTERS - HYPERSCALE CAMPUS STANDARDS

Standards apply to all hyperscale data center campus developments, including buildings, site improvements, and accessory uses.



HYPERSCALE CAMPUS STANDARDS	
STANDARD	REQUIREMENT
A CAMPUS SETBACKS (MINIMUM)	200 ft from perimeter property line adjoining residential districts.
B BUILDING HEIGHT (MAXIMUM)	75 ft to top of parapet or mechanical screen.
C LOT COVERAGE AND IMPERVIOUS SURFACE (MAXIMUM)	65% maximum impervious surface of total lot area, unless approved by a stormwater management plan.
D PERIMETER LANDSCAPE BUFFER (MINIMUM)	50 ft wide landscaped buffer with minimum 10 ft berm and evergreen tree screen.
E SUBSTATION AND UTILITY SCREENING	Electrical substations and major utility equipment shall be screened from all public rights-of-way.
F GENERATOR AND MECHANICAL YARD SCREENING	Generators and mechanical equipment shall be fully enclosed or screened and provide sound attenuation meeting Code standards.
G STORMWATER AND WATER REUSE	Stormwater management plan and water conservation/reuse plan required.
H TRAFFIC AND CONSTRUCTION ACCESS	Construction traffic management plan and site circulation plan required.



These standards are in addition to all other applicable requirements of this Code.

memorandum



To: Sterling Plan Commission
Amanda Schmidt, Building & Zoning Superintendent

From: Dustin Wolff, AICP, City Planner

Cc: Scott Shumard, City Manager
Tim Zollinger, City Attorney

Date: May 21, 2026

RE: *Data Center Research for Future Ordinance Amendment*

DATA CENTER OVERVIEW: Data centers are specialized facilities used for the storage, management, processing, and transmission of digital data. Equipment such as servers, networks, and other similar computer-based components are utilized to maintain operations. Data centers are organized into multiple types with varying needs and operators.

- *Corporate/Enterprise data centers* store and process a single organization's data, often financial, healthcare, or government institutions. These are typically larger buildings with a customized design to hold sensitive data. [DeKalb, we are online! - Meta Data Centers](#)
- *Colocation data centers* are operated by a third-party that leases out data center space to multiple companies. These buildings can be built in multiple sizes.
- *Wholesale data centers* are a type of colocation data center, typically larger in scale, that rents a large portion of the space to a single company.
- *Telecom data centers* are owned by telecommunications companies. These data centers are typically smaller and require less energy. [net_chicago_brochure-digital-1.pdf](#)



Figure 1: TOP – Corporate Data Center, MIDDLE – Colocation Data Center. BOTTOM – Hyperscale Data

- *Hyperscale data centers* are designed for a single customer with many users and large amounts of data, typically a large tech company such as Google or Meta. These are the most common type of data centers built today. [Port Washington, Wisconsin - Vantage Data Centers](#)

DIFFERENCES FROM OTHER INDUSTRIAL USES: Although data centers are often located in industrial districts, their production and design vary significantly from warehouses or factories. Once construction is complete, data centers do not produce odor and have little truck traffic. Despite additional security measures, such as full-time surveillance and controlled access points, fewer employees are hired at data centers. Data centers can be designed as single or multiple story buildings but are usually taller in comparison to other industrial uses. Less parking spaces and plumbing fixtures are required at data centers, but enhanced underground and above-ground infrastructure is necessary. This includes extensive electrical and mechanical equipment to provide continuous power and redundancy. This involves the use of transmission lines and transformers to receive power and convert voltage levels. Power distribution units and remote power panels are utilized to transport electricity throughout the building. Backup generators are necessary to prevent data loss during outages.

ADAPTIVE REUSE: To reduce construction costs and benefit from proximity, data center developers have turned to adaptive reuse of vacant industrial plants, printing presses, mills, warehouses, retail spaces, and commercial spaces. Locating in urban areas is often an easier way for developers to get access to land and power and being closer to consumers reduces latency. A successful adaptive reuse project is the Patmos AI Campus in Kansas City, which was converted from a printing press, *See Figure 2.*



Figure 2: Patmos AI Campus (former printing press building).

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

Noise: Electrical equipment in data centers can reach 85-96 decibels, exceeding safe sound levels. Strategies to reduce noise include adding screening, landscaping, fences, or walls. Locating generators away from vulnerable areas or enclosing equipment can support quieter areas. Port Washington, WI set a noise limit of 70 decibels at their Vantage Data Center. Similarly, Mesa, AZ requires annual sound studies.

Vision/Aesthetics: Data centers tend to stand out in comparison to their surroundings. To solve this problem, buildings can be designed with materials and colors that match the environment. Additionally, buffer zones can be implemented near sensitive areas.

Sustainability: A cooling system is developed to combat heat generated from equipment, using either a large amount of water or energy. Majority of data centers have transitioned to a closed-loop system which

returns water to its original source. Data centers use an abundance of energy during operations. The Vantage Data Center in Port Washington, WI is expected to use 1.3 gigawatts of power from a combination of renewable wind/solar, natural gas, batteries, and nuclear power. Renewable energy sources are inconsistent, so a data center cannot fully operate with renewable energy.

Light: Rural areas without stoplights are particularly susceptible to light pollution from data centers. Dark-sky-compliant light fixtures and an ordinance preventing light pollution were used in Emmet County, MI to mitigate this issue.

Construction: Constructing a large, complex facility is time-consuming and will present challenges for the community. In Port Washington, WI, construction is active Monday through Saturday from 6:00am to 8:00pm, resulting in complaints from residents of bright lights and constant trucks. A shortage of workers with the necessary training forces data center developers to import labor. As a result, the demand for housing, hospitality, food service, healthcare, and other services will increase rapidly. Not all locations, especially rural areas, have the resources for this influx of people.

Decommissioning: Decommissioning a data center is a difficult undertaking due to possible data exposures and the large amount of heavy equipment. Due to the unique design of the facilities, there are few opportunities for reuse, so the buildings are often abandoned. Communities are starting to utilize Decommissioning Agreements to require the removal of the facility and infrastructure.

REGULATORY APPROACHES: Municipalities in the US have taken different approaches to regulating data centers. Port Washington, WI created a zoning district that allows data centers by-right. Critical components include a maximum height of 65 feet and a 200-foot setback from residential uses. In addition, Port Washington requires a 10,000 square foot minimum lot size, a minimum lot width of 100 feet, and side and rear setbacks of 50 feet. To attract data centers, Elk Grove Village, IL developed the Innovation and Technology Center Zoning District. Key elements include an increased maximum height, permitting front yard fencing, and decreased parking requirements. Rather than creating a new district, the City of Mesa, AZ adopted an overlay district. The Planned Area Development Overlay District allows data center development if the parcel is zoned General Industry or Heavy Industry and approved by the City Council.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS

(BESS): Battery energy storage systems are devices used to collect, store, and discharge energy from the grid. Most BESS have lithium-ion batteries, which come in a variety of sizes, allowing the BESS facilities to be built on multiple scales and in almost any location. BESS facilities are predominantly found in California, Texas, and Arizona. Facilities can range from 10 kilowatt-hours (kWh) to hundreds of megawatt-hours (MWh). The largest risk of BESS facilities is fires. Consequently,



Figure 3: Crimson Storage, a BESS facility in Riverside County, California

many codes and standards have developed at the state level to ensure fire safety and prevention. Considerations to developing a BESS facility include visual, sound, odor, and environmental impacts.

Visual: Containerized systems are most common for BESS facilities, typically ranging from eight to twelve feet tall, **See Figure 4**. The National Fire Protection Association requires a seven-foot fence around the facility, also functioning as a screening technique.

Sound: The equipment and cooling system generate noise between 60 and 80 decibels. Screening and distance from the facility can reduce the sound level.

Odor: Unless a fire occurs, a BESS facility does not emit gas or odor.

Environmental: A properly functioning lithium-ion facility will not leak chemicals or contaminate local watersheds. In the event of a fire, watersheds risk contamination.



Figure 4: BESS Container