

Data Center Zoning Regulations

As recommended by the Planning Commission on June 10, 2026

HUDZ Presentation | Tuesday, June 23, 2026

City of St. Louis Planning & Urban Design Agency



CITY OF ST. LOUIS
PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN
AGENCY

Overview of the Planning Commission's Process

February 11

PC Meeting

Initial framework presented

Extensive public testimony

Accepted written comment

May 11

Webinar

Representatives from several City departments presented research and findings on key issues (e.g., water, noise, types of data centers, etc.)

May 18

PC Meeting

Updated framework presented

Extensive public testimony

Accepted written comment

June 10

PC Meeting

Final changes & refinements

Brief testimony

Discussed, voted on amendments, advanced to BOA



What staff research included

- Interviews with subject matter experts and a variety of stakeholders
- Participation in webinars & roundtables
- Review of reports, articles & literature
- Review of best zoning practices
- Visits to existing data centers in the region
- A review of precedent zoning regulations
- Conversations with other cities
- Interdepartmental coordination & conversation



Overarching Themes

A growing part of our landscape

Data centers are part of our evolving economy and technological landscape, have potential to support innovation and growth, and to provide revenue for municipalities

Environmental impacts, utility challenges, and other concerns

There are many important concerns about data centers' environmental impact, impact on place, and impact on electricity bills. There is broad -based concern about AI and its impact on employment, wealth inequality, and education.

Complex and changing fast

Data centers and the surrounding industry are exceedingly complex and rapidly evolving. Many cities are actively engaged in efforts to develop or refine their own regulations, many with pauses. An iterative approach will be needed.

Unknowns & uncertainties

There are many unknowns in the data center and AI industries and their future.



Zoning Precedent Research Takeaways

Everyone is grappling with this.

So far, most cities' regulations are not as comprehensive as those in rural or exurban places.

Most common concerns

- Noise, vibrations, and light
- Intensive utility usage
- Maintaining vibrant walkable urban spaces.

By-right allowance

- Most cities allow data centers by right in at least one zoning district

Things are evolving VERY rapidly.

There is precedent to:

- require disclosure of expected utility usage
- limit noise
- activate the ground floor or include a data center in a mixed-use development
- use renewable energy
- ban cooling systems that use an exorbitant amount of water
- requiring visual and/or acoustic buffering
- require CBAs or other agreements



Operating within the legal constraints of zoning

“89.040. Purpose of regulations. Such regulations shall be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan and designed to lessen congestion in the streets; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to promote health and the general welfare; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to preserve features of historical significance; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements. Such regulations shall be made with reasonable consideration, among other things, to the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses, and with a view to conserving the values of buildings and **encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout such municipality.** ”





Zoning Policy Components

1. New Chapter
 2. Purpose
 3. Definitions
 4. Use Table
 5. Application Requirements
 6. Site Requirements, Design Requirements & Standard Conditions
 7. Applicability
 8. Application Review Process
 9. Deadline for Review & Revision
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Definitions Overview

1. Backup Generators
 2. Baseline Noise Level
 3. Cool Roof
 4. Data Center
 5. Data Center, Major
 6. Data Center, Micro
 7. Data Center, Standard
 8. District Energy System
 9. Green Roof
 10. Local Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)
 11. Public Impact Agreement
 12. Renewable Energy
 13. Server Room
 14. Transit Center
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Data Center Classifications

MICRO < 10,000 sf and
5 MW

STANDARD > 10,000 sf or
5 MW

< 30 MW and
250,000 sf

MAJOR > 250,000 sf or
5 MW

< 500,000 sf





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Use Table Comparison

	A - E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Micro	NA	NA	NA	C	C	C	C	C
Standard	NA	NA	NA	NA	C	C	C	NA
Major	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	C	NA

- Allow small facilities Downtown, in large commercial nodes, and industrial areas
- Allow medium facilities Downtown and in industrial areas
- Limit large facilities only to the most intensive industrial districts



Use Table Comparison

	A - E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
Pre EO 92	NA	C	C	C	P	P	P	P	“warehousing / office”
With EO 92	NA	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	interim approach
Micro	NA	NA	NA	C	C	C	C	C	proposed approach
Standard	NA	NA	NA	NA	C	C	C	NA	
Major	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	C	NA	





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Application Requirements

1. For all Data Centers

Comprehensive project information, including information about their agreements with Ameren and plans for meeting renewable energy requirements

2. For Standard & Major Data Centers

More information about the project's timeline, environmental sustainability, and potential impact on the surrounding area

3. For Major Data Centers

- Extensive information about the project's end users, financing, environmental and economic impact, plans for decommissioning, and more
- Community engagement requirements





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Site Reqs, Design Reqs & Standard Conditions

Location Requirements	
Area Standards	
Noise & Vibration Controls	
Building Systems & Equipment Design & Screening	
Site & Urban Design Standards	
Water Responsibility	
Backup Power Systems	
Environment, Energy & Infrastructure Standards	
Reporting Requirements for Standard & Major Data Centers	
Public Impact Agreement - Major Data Centers	





Site Reqs, Design Reqs & Standard Conditions

Location Requirements	Tailored setbacks from residential areas & transit stations (150, 300, 600 ft)





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Area Standards	Address height & parking, avoid proliferation in Downtown areas, require ground floor activation in Downtown areas -





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Building Systems & Equipment Design & Screening	Basic green building requirements to mitigate urban heat, address on -site fuel storage, address other visual clutter





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Applicability

Explicitly address applicability of regulations for:

1. New Facilities
2. Expansions
3. Existing Nonconforming Uses and/or Structures *
4. Existing Facilities & Previously Approved Facilities

* Approach under review





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