



701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Community Development

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: May 4, 2026

Re: Data Center Permitting Administrative Delay

Impacted Ward: Citywide

Executive Summary

Approval of this request would establish an administrative delay on the acceptance or processing of any application or permit related to the establishment or expansion of a data center for a period of one year.

Discussion

At the April 6, 2026 City Council meeting, City Council passed an ordinance that would create a new zoning definition for data centers, which had previously been considered part of the Light Industrial use category. In addition, the new Data Center use was further classified as being a conditional use in the General Industrial (IG) zoning district, which would require all applications to be considered at a Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing and receive approval from City Council (Case #74-2026).

During the discussion of the proposed text amendments, staff reported that in addition to the current proposed amendments to define and make data center a conditional use, staff was also continuing work on evaluating the need for appropriate use-specific standards for data center uses. Use-specific standards are established conditions that a particular use must comply with in order to be permitted. Staff was also evaluating the potential for a new set of conditional use criteria, which would provide more specific guidance on the evaluation criteria that would be used to approve the conditional use. It was also discussed that additional changes to the definition could be evaluated during this time as well, to ensure that the current definition adequately describes the data center use and reflects any new research that is available at the time.

While the text amendment was passed by Council, Council members expressed concerns over the ability to effectively and efficiently evaluate any data center conditional use applications before the use-specific standards and conditional use criteria have been approved. Staff shared that in their preliminary research, potential impacts of data centers could include significant demands on electrical and water utilities for the operations and cooling of the facility. data centers could also have an impact on surrounding land uses that may need to be mitigated through, for example, setbacks or screening that is above what is currently required.

Council expressed a goal of ensuring that the all new data center applications could be properly evaluated to ensure orderly development that is consistent with the character of the City, and to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. To accomplish this,



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Council passed a motion for staff to produce an ordinance to delay the processing of applications and permits for any new data center facilities in order to allow adequate time for the discussed additional regulations to be drafted and approved. Staff recommended that a six-month delay would likely be sufficient to produce the additional text amendments for Council consideration. However, upon reflection, imposition of a one-year delay is recommended due to the length of time needed to adequately conduct community engagement and process the amendments through the regulatory bodies prior to expiration of the administrative delay.

Staff has prepared the attached ordinance that would pause the acceptance of any permitting applications for data center facilities and/or uses for one year after the adoption of the ordinance. The administrative delay will apply to any application for a permit required to be obtained from the City in order to construct or expand a data center. In addition, the ordinance establishes how primary use of a facility as a data center is determined for purposes of the administrative delay so that operating systems hosted on-site that are part and parcel of the normal operations of any business operation fall outside of the definition. To ensure the administrative delay does not inadvertently affect situations not intended to be covered by the delay, the ordinance provides opportunities for an applicant to seek relief from the administrative delay by filing a request with the City Council.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None.
Long-Term Impact: None.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Reliable and Sustainable Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Resilient Economy, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Tertiary Impact: Economic Development

Legislative History

Date	Action
04/06/2026	UDC text amendment to adopt Data Center definition and classify the use as conditional in IG. (Case #74-2026)

Suggested Council Action

Approve the ordinance to create a one-year administrative delay on the acceptance or processing of applications relating to the establishment of a data center.