



## PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

**FROM:** Planning & Zoning Department **DATE:** July 16, 2026  
**SUBJECT:** Discussion regarding proposed amendments to Chapter 118 (Zoning), Sections 118-631 and 118-633, regarding data center facilities and additional regulations.  
**PRESENTER:** Cori Reaume, Director of Planning

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

In early 2025, the City was approached by a possible developer of small-scale data center facilities. In researching other communities and how they were handling this newer use, we found that many communities had not yet updated their zoning ordinances/table of uses to specifically call out data centers. Of those that had included the new use, communities varied on allowance in various industrial, commercial, or even office districts.

In an effort to be proactive about the new use, City staff proposed data center-specific zoning regulations last year. Following workshop discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission, public hearings occurred with P&Z on May 15<sup>th</sup> and June 5<sup>th</sup>, followed by a final public hearing on June 9, 2025. At that time, the current regulations were adopted, which are outlined below.

- General Data Center – A data center larger than 10,000 square feet is allowed on Industrial-zoned property by right, or on C-2 Commercial property with approval of a special use permit.
- Small-Scale Data Center – A data center 10,000 square feet or less is allowed by right on property zoned Industrial or C-2 Commercial, or on C-1 Commercial property with approval of a special use permit.

All data centers must also comply with the following minimum standards:

- All equipment for cooling, ventilation, or otherwise operating the facility – including generators or other power supply equipment – must be fully enclosed, except when determined by the City Manager or designee not to be mechanically feasible. If determined that full enclosure is not mechanically feasible, all equipment for cooling, ventilation, or power generation must be screened by a wall or similar barrier and be located no closer than 100' from the nearest residential property.

- If generators are installed onsite, any regular testing must be conducted between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, or 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday through Sunday. If fuel is stored onsite for generator usage, compliance with all fire and/or building codes, as amended, shall be required.
- Additionally, parking standards were adopted that would limit the number of parking spaces due to minimal staffing within the building, and a desire not to require excess paving for unnecessary parking spaces on a site.

Following the adoption of regulations last summer, the City received a site plan and subsequently a building permit application for a 12,000 square-foot data center to be constructed at 6401 Wuliger Way. This property is zoned I-2 (Medium Industrial) so a data center is a permitted use. Throughout the concept planning and site plan review, the applicant worked closely with city staff to modify the site and building design in a way that would minimize any possible negative impacts from sound or view. Examples include –

- Moving the required masonry screening wall in from the property line to install at a higher grade that would provide more screening
- Moving the cooling equipment to the opposite side of the building to separate further from residential properties
- Designing the building structure in a way that it fully screens the cooling equipment from the residential properties
- Selecting screening wall design (to surround cooling equipment) that allows for better architectural detail/design
- Providing some required landscaping on the outside/neighborhood side of the screening wall rather than wholly on the side of the new construction

While the developer worked collaboratively with staff to make these modifications, many were done as a courtesy rather than something the City could have required.

Many nearby communities, along with North Richland Hills, have been attempting to navigate ordinance updates to ensure adequate neighborhood protections in what has been a rapidly changing landscape as additional information has been gleaned regarding these facilities and real or perceived impacts.

While the proposed revision to the Permitted Use Table would introduce a requirement that all data centers require a special use permit, it is important for the City to also introduce a core set of regulations that should be adhered to on any application that may come forward. These regulations may include additional distance requirements from residential properties, restrictions on types of cooling systems or water usage, site testing to be completed at the developer's expense, etc.



This topic is currently set only as a discussion item, and any feedback provided may be incorporated into a final draft ordinance to be considered at the upcoming public hearings on the topic. The hearings for updated data center regulations are currently set for:

- Monday, June 20, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. *and*
- Monday, June 27, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Both hearings will be held at North Richland Hills City Hall in the Council Chambers on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Those wishing to provide public input by email can do so by emailing [Planning@nrhtx.com](mailto:Planning@nrhtx.com)