

# Data Centers

Planning & Zoning Commission &  
Board of Supervisors

Work Session:

February 11, 2026





# Why Now



## Rapid Growth

Driven by cloud computing and artificial intelligence data centers are rapidly expanding across Arizona.



## Major Infrastructure Impact

Significant demands on power grids, water resources, and fire safety.



## Balancing Act

The County must weigh substantial economic benefits against community concerns and environmental impacts.


# Recent Examples



- **EdgeCore – Mesa**  
450 MW+, ~3.1 million sq ft  
Hyperscale/AI expansion, 2025
- **Novva – Mesa**  
300 MW campus, ~1.3 million sq ft  
Phased buildout starting 2026
- **NTT – Mesa**  
173 acres, ~1.7 million sq ft across 7 buildings  
First availability 2028
- **Aligned Data Centers – Glendale**  
72 MW, part of PHX13 facility  
Groundbreaking 2025
- **Edged – Mesa**  
36 MW sustainable data center  
Topped out 2025
- **Project Blue – Tucson / Pima County**  
290 acres, ~2.25 million sq ft  
Phase 1 opening 2027, full build 2029
- **Beale Infrastructure – Marana**  
600 acre proposed campus  
Planning 2025
- **Beale Infrastructure – Pima County (multiple sites)**  
Air-cooled, multiple campuses  
Planning 2025
- **Involta / Ark – Tucson**  
~38,000 sq ft expansion  
Completed 2023–2024

# The Good

## Property Tax Revenue

- Generates millions annually from high assessed value per acre
- Supports schools, infrastructure, and public services 
- Provides stable, long-term local government funding

## Employment

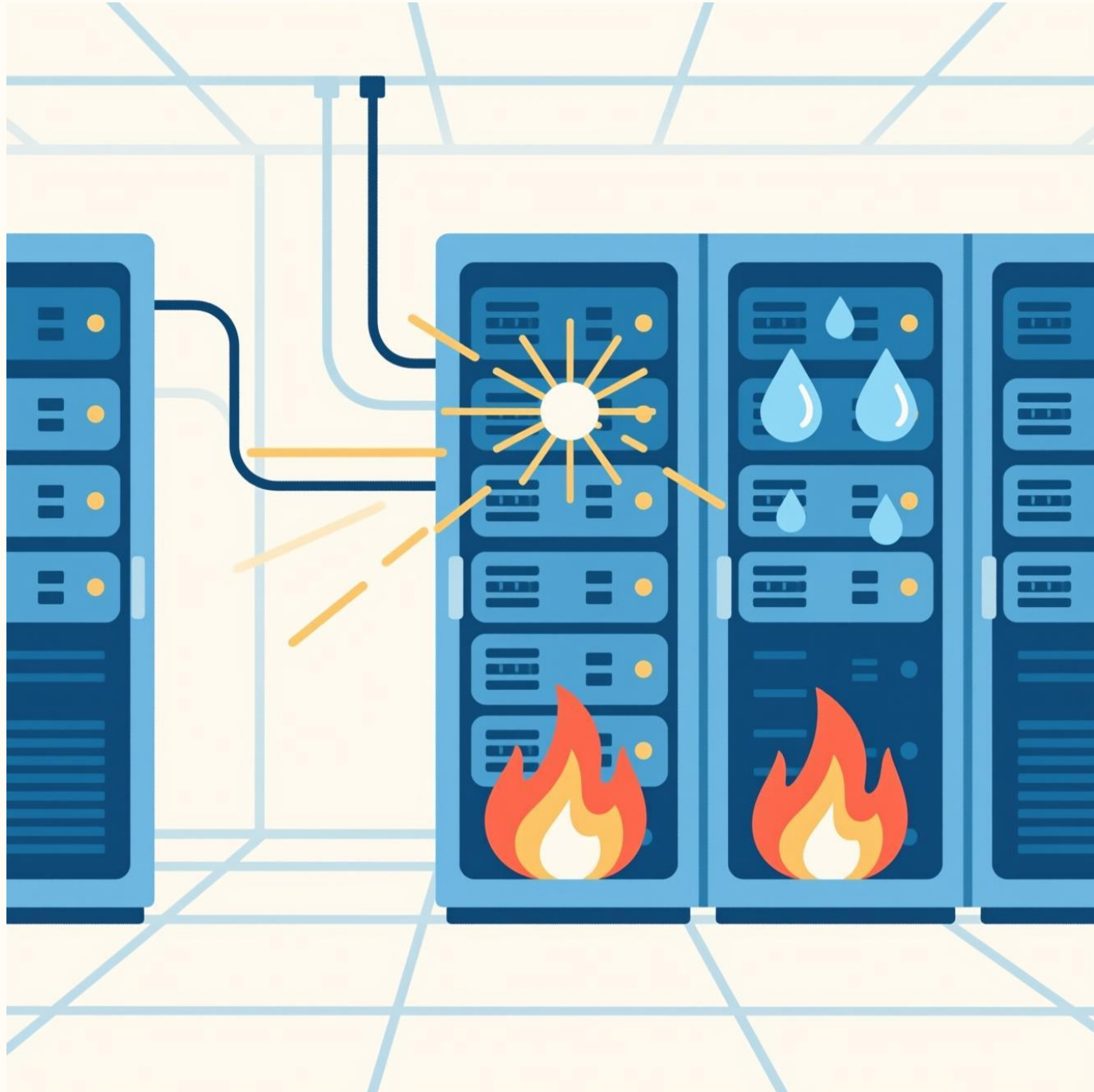
- Construction: hundreds of temporary high-paying jobs
- Operations: 20-50 skilled, high pay permanent positions per facility, on average
- Indirect jobs in local services, maintenance, and utilities

## Economic Growth & Investment

- Attracts technology and cloud-related companies to the region
- Encourages utility and infrastructure upgrades that benefit other businesses



# The Bad



## Power Demand (Hyper Facility)

- High electricity use: 100–400 MW per facility
- Equivalent to the annual electricity use of ~75,000–300,000 homes
- Can strain local grids and require new transmission infrastructure

## Water Demand (Hyper Facility)

- Water-based cooling can use 100–200 million gallons/year
- Equivalent to the annual water use of ~1,000–2,000 households
- Mitigation: air-cooled systems, recycled water, closed loop conservation measures

## Fire Safety

- Dense electrical and backup power equipment increases fire risk
- Potential hazards: electrical fires, generators, battery storage
- Requires robust suppression systems and coordinated emergency planning

# Arizona's Regulatory Framework for Data Centers



01

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## County Authority

Counties authorized under Arizona's Zoning Enabling Act (§11-817) to establish zoning standards.

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## Industrial Classification

Data centers are typically classified as industrial uses – not explicitly included in Cochise County Zoning Regulations.

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## Minimal State Oversight

State policies remain minimal, making local zoning ordinances the primary regulatory mechanism.

# Key Considerations



## Zoning Compatibility

Determine which existing zoning districts can appropriately accommodate data centers and what standards ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses



## Environmental & Community Impacts

Noise, heat island effects, visual character, light pollution, community character disruption, vegetation and wildlife habitat impacts.



## Infrastructure Capacity

Evaluate power grid capacity, water supply adequacy, and fire protection capabilities to support high-demand facilities



## Clear Regulatory Language

Need clear, unambiguous zoning text that provides certainty for applicants while protecting community interests

# Text Amendment: What the Ordinance Does

- 1 — Creates a new land use definition for “Data Center”
- 2 — Requires all data centers obtain a Special Use Authorization (SUA)
- 3 — Limits where Data Centers can locate: HI, LI, GB, and RU districts only
- 4 — Adds a new section (2.51.040) with site development and operational standards
- 5 — Purpose: ensure compatibility, adequate services, and long-term site management



# Special Use Review: Key Application Submittals



Applicants must provide information needed to evaluate impacts, including:

- Site Plan: Buildings, equipment yards, access, lighting, fencing, generators, fuel storage
- Operations narrative: cooling type, emergency power, hours/intensity of operations
- Utility capacity documentation: projected electrical demand + utility/service provider documentation (or acceptable correspondence)
- Water-use plan if water-based cooling is proposed (including non-potable feasibility)
- Fire protection narrative if outside a fire district/service area (access, response, water supply, hazards)
- County may request additional studies, proportional to impacts (traffic, drainage, wildfire risk, screening)

# Development & Operational Standards (How Impacts Are Managed)

## Construction Standards

Dust, noise, lighting, haul routes, limited work hours,  
emergency access maintained

## Noise & Lighting Limits

Minimize off-site impacts

## Utilities:

Applicant must show adequate service without harming  
existing users

## Site Design Standards

Setbacks per district + screening of equipment/generators  
from roads and residential uses

## Traffic/Access:

Designed for deliveries, construction, and emergency  
access; conditions possible near residential

# Water, Electricity, Fire, and Long-Term Accountability

- 1 — Potable water restriction: no routine potable water cooling unless non-potable is not feasible/  
County may require non-potable/reclaimed use, metering, and reporting
- 2 — Fire protection: facility must meet applicable building/fire codes/ County may require on-site measures where  
hydrants/municipal fire-flow are unavailable
- 3 — Approval runs with the land (transferability)
- 4 — Abandonment: 1-year cessation may trigger abandonment determination with notice
- 5 — Decommissioning plan required with building permit; financial assurance only if abandoned

# Special Use Authorization Approval Process

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## Current Process – SUP approved by PnZ Commission

- Process: Pre-app + citizen review; application/concept plan submitted; Planning Commission holds noticed public hearing and may approve/deny with conditions/modified standards.
- Appeal: **Commission decision is final** unless appealed; **Board of Supervisors** hears the appeal and may affirm, reverse, modify, or remand.
- Modification: Staff may approve insubstantial changes; substantial changes require a new Planning Commission hearing with notice.

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## Alternative – SUP Approved by the SUP

- Process: Pre-app + citizen review; application/concept plan submitted; Planning Commission holds noticed public hearing and will provide a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors (BOS)
- The BOS approve/deny with conditions/modified standards.
- Appeal: Court
- Modification: Staff may approve insubstantial changes; substantial changes require a new Planning Commission hearing and BOS hearing with notice.

# Comprehensive Plan Link (CP2045)

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## Policy Guardrails

### Land Use Goal: Smart Growth, Right Places

Policy 4: High-intensity uses requiring County discretionary approval should be located where water and infrastructure capacity can support them without adverse impacts to domestic wells.

Category D Purpose: Outlying rural lands with low-density development and extensive open space.

Non-residential uses are limited to local services, tourism, or intensive uses unsuitable for urban areas that can be accommodated by existing or planned infrastructure capacity and reliable water availability (e.g., power plants, feedlots).

### Land Use Goal: Investing in People, Powering Industry

Policy 3: Target key industry sectors—including defense, aerospace, agriculture, viticulture, and healthcare—through land use planning, infrastructure investments, and marketing initiatives, prioritizing industries that can be accommodated by existing or planned infrastructure and water availability and that provide long-term community benefits.



# County Protections/ Best Practices

## Clear Definition & Special Use Review



- Special Use review in limited districts (HI/LI/GB/RU) to ensure compatibility case-by-case

## Required Upfront Information



- Utilities/capacity assessment
- Operations details
- Noise evaluation (if needed)
- Water plan (if water cooling)
- Fire/access requirements (when outside service areas)

## Protects Public Services



- Applicant must show utility availability

## Protects Resources & Safety



- Prioritizes non-potable water for routine cooling
- Allows fire/access conditions where hydrants/fire-flow are unavailable

## Adds Accountability



- Abandonment/decommissioning framework
- Financial assurance if abandoned

# Questions/Suggestions/Discussion

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Strike-Through Underline Draft Provided

Text Amendment requires 2 public hearings: March 11, 2026 (PnZ)/  
April 7, 2026 BOS – effective date May 7, 2026