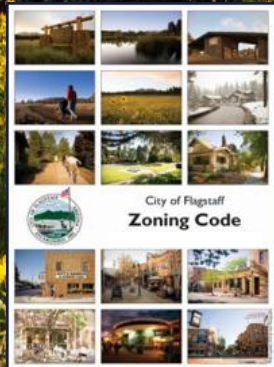


Zoning Code Amendment Resource Intensive Industrial

Tiffany Antol, AICP
Zoning Code Manager





Resource Intensive Industrial

Introduction

Earlier this year, staff identified a gap in the code that could allow data centers to be classified as Heavy General Industrial uses, a broad category that lacks tailored standards for addressing potential community impacts. To address this gap, staff introduced a proposal to define “Data Center” in the Zoning Code. This definition included core infrastructure components such as servers, cooling systems, backup power, and fire suppression.

On April 21, 2026, City staff provided the City Council with a comprehensive presentation addressing questions and concerns about data centers. Following the discussion, staff requested a continuance to refine the proposal and address the wide range of identified issues.



Resource Intensive Industrial

Recommended Approach

Staff is recommending a broader and more effective approach for regulating high-demand industrial land uses such as large-scale data centers.

Resource Intensive Industrial uses:

An industrial land use, including manufacturing, characterized by exceptionally high demands on utility and public service systems, including electric loads of 1 megawatt (MW) or more; water use exceeding 2,000 gallons per acre per day on average or 5,000 gallons per acre per day at peak; and wastewater discharge greater than 1,000 gallons per acre per day on average or 3,000 gallons per acre per day at peak. These uses typically rely on specialized infrastructure, operate continuously, and create significant, sustained pressures on electrical, water, wastewater, and communications networks. Activities in this category are defined by one or more of the following: intensive resource consumption; elevated carbon or heat emissions; specialized water or sewer needs; heightened emergency response or security requirements; hazardous materials storage; and/or nuisance noise impacts.



Resource Intensive Industrial

Feedback Request

- Does the Commission agree with taking a broader regulatory approach to resource-intensive industrial land uses?
- Where should the RII land use be allowed within the City of Flagstaff?



Resource Intensive Industrial

Feedback Request

Should RII be permitted by right in any or all existing industrial zones?

Pros:

- Predictable and straightforward for applicants.
- Minimizes procedural delays and administrative burden.
- Encourages economic development by reducing entitlement barriers.
- Aligns with traditional expectations for industrial areas.

Cons:

- Reduced ability to ensure site-specific mitigation of high-impact uses.
- Public may perceive this as too permissive given high resource demands.
- Limits Council's ability to review and condition projects on a case-by-case basis.
- High-impact facilities may locate near sensitive areas without additional scrutiny.



Resource Intensive Industrial

Feedback Request

Should RII be allowed only as a conditional use in any or all existing industrial zones?

Pros:

- Allows case-by-case review and tailored mitigation measures.
- Greater control over siting, design, and operational impacts.
- Provides transparency through public hearings.
- Balances flexibility for industry with community protections.

Cons:

- CUPs are only reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission unless appealed.
- CUPs are not as discretionary as Zoning Map Amendments.
- Findings for a CUP are less stringent and do not include conformance with the Regio Plan or community benefits.



Resource Intensive Industrial

Feedback Request

Should RII be allowed only within the Planned Community (PC) zone, requiring any proposed facility to obtain a rezoning?

Pros:

- Provides maximum control over location, design, and performance standards.
- Strongest tool for balancing community impacts and economic opportunity.
- Provides transparency through public hearings.
- Findings require conformance with the Regional Plan and an analysis of community benefits.

Cons:

- Rezoning process is lengthy and resource intensive for both applicants and staff.
- Could discourage investment due to entitlement uncertainty.
- May increase pressure on Council to negotiate complex development agreements.



Resource Intensive Industrial

Feedback Request

Should the proposed development standards be absolute, or should flexibility be provided at Council discretion?

Absolute Example:

Mechanical cooling systems shall utilize air-cooled heat rejection systems only. The use of evaporative or water-based heat rejection systems, including but not limited to cooling towers, evaporative condensers, adiabatic systems, and water-cooled chillers, is prohibited.

Flexible Example:

Mechanical cooling systems utilizing air-cooled heat rejection systems are preferred. The use of evaporative or water-based heat rejection systems may only be used when water efficiency methods are employed that significantly reduce the amount of water used for cooling as determined by the City Council.



Zoning Map Amendment Process

Questions, Comments, and Suggestions

