City of Statesboro Unified Development Code Amendments

Section 2.4.14 - Technological Facilities and Data Centers

A. Purposes. The purpose of the UDC, from which this Section is derived, is to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for the siting, development, and operation of **Data Centers**. Recognizing that Data Centers are a unique land use characterized by extremely high utility demands, continuous operational cycles, and specific architectural requirements, these regulations are intended to ensure the following:

1. Infrastructure Stewardship: Ensure that the extraordinary electrical and water demands of Data Centers do not compromise the reliability, capacity, or cost-stability of municipal and regional utility systems for existing residents and businesses.

2. Impact Mitigation: Protect the quality of life in surrounding neighborhoods by establishing rigorous standards for noise attenuation, particularly regarding the 24-hour operation of mechanical cooling systems and emergency backup generators.

3. Aesthetic and Character Integration: Prevent the proliferation of "windowless boxes" by requiring high-quality architectural design, screening of mechanical equipment, and landscaping that ensures compatibility with Statesboro's community character.

4. Resource Conservation: Require the use of sustainable development practices, including closed-loop cooling systems, waste-heat recapture, and on-site renewable energy integration to minimize the environmental footprint of large-scale digital infrastructure.

5. Fiscal and Economic Balance: Align the high-value private investment of Data Centers with the City's long-term economic goals, ensuring that such developments provide a net positive fiscal impact while minimizing the demand for traditional municipal services such as schools and daily traffic capacity.

B. Definitions. As used in this Section, the following terms have the meaning indicated:

1. Data Center Campus: A principal use facility primarily dedicated to housing electronic data processing equipment, such as computers, servers, network components, and related infrastructure, and requiring significant mechanical equipment for cooling, ventilation, and emergency power supply. Excludes

facilities where data processing is merely an accessory use to the primary function (e.g., a bank's internal server room), and facilities where the primary use is cryptocurrency mining.

- **Edge Facility:** A facility generally located close to the end user to reduce latency, that houses significant equipment, but shall not exceed 50 acres of property for the campus. These may vary in size, and may be developed in existing structures. If a building is considered for adaptive reuse, the lot size, setbacks and buffering requirements may be waived if within adherence to all sound and water requirements.

- **Hyperscale Facility**: A facility providing extreme scalability capabilities that is engineered for large-scale workloads with an optimized network infrastructure. Generally consisting of campuses greater than 50 acres and building structures over 10,000 square feet, but no greater than 500,000 square feet. It shall be unlawful for these facilities to be constructed in the City.

2. Sensitive Receptor: Any existing building or use on an adjacent or nearby property, including but not limited to residential dwellings, schools, hospitals, public parks, and places of worship.

3. Server Room: One or more designated areas within a principal use, except a data center, housing computer and network equipment, systems, servers, appliances, and other associated hardware components related to digital data operations for its own use.

C. Permitted Districts and Lot Requirements

1. **Primary Permitted Districts:** Data Center Campuses shall only be permitted as a **Special Use Permit (SUP)** in the following zoning districts:
    i. **Office and Business (O)**
    ii. **Highway Oriented Commercial (HOC)**
    iii. **Light Industrial (LI)**
    iv. **Mixed-Use (MX)**
2. **Accessory Use:** Small-scale Data Centers (server rooms, small modular centers) that are accessory and secondary to a primary office or institutional use shall be permitted by-right, provided the accessory area does not exceed

15% of the primary building's Gross Floor Area (GFA) and all equipment is fully contained within the principal building.

3. **Minimum Lot Area:** The minimum lot size for a Data Center Campus shall be **Ten (10) Acres**.
4. **Maximum Lot Area:** The Maximum lot size for a Data Center Campus shall be **Fifty (50) acres.**
5. **Setbacks and Buffers:** All principal buildings, accessory structures, and exterior equipment must adhere to the following minimum setbacks, regardless of the underlying zoning:
    i. Edge Facilities
        1) **From Residential Zoning Districts or Sensitive Receptors: 75 feet**.
        2) **From all other Property Lines (Non-Residential/Public Roads): 60 feet**.
        3) **Buffer Width**: A continuous, undisturbed 50-foot-wide transitional buffer is required along all property lines adjoining a residential zoning district or Sensitive Receptor. This buffer may overlap building setback requirement and may be counted towards the 35% tree canopy requirements as outlined in the UDC. The preservation of wetlands may also be counted towards canopy requirements at a 50% rate.
    ii. Hyperscale Facilities
        1) **Reserved**

D. Utility Use and Allowances

1. **Water Source:** All Data Center Campuses must connect to the **public water and sewer systems**.
2. **Water-Efficiency:** Any water-based cooling system must utilize a **closed-loop system** or employ **recycled/non-potable water systems** for cooling demand to minimize the use of municipal potable water supply.
3. **Water Management Plan:** The applicant must submit a **Water Feasibility and Management Plan**, detailing:

i. Projected monthly average and peak water consumption (gallons per day).

ii. Project guidelines to not endanger or adversely affect the quantity or quality of local groundwater or surface water supplies.

iii. Plans for the reuse, recycling, and disposal of wastewater.

4. **Natural Gas Availability:** The natural gas made available for all developments are subject to the current capacity of the area, and required draws of natural gas must be noted by a “will serve letter” from the Director of Public Utilities.

5. **Electrical Impact:** A letter of preliminary acceptance may be issued to allow for the study of a project, prior to the final acceptance of zoning. A preliminary acceptance does not guarantee approval of the associated zoning or special use. All substations related to Data Center Campuses must provide fencing in accordance with the associated electrical distributor and buffer requirements therein.

E. Sound Generation and Reduction

1. **Maximum Noise Limits:** Developer must provide a detailed noise study by a qualified consultant which accounts for existing outdoor conditions as well as project growth and surrounding land uses. Sound generated by the Data Center and all accessory equipment (excluding verified emergencies) shall not exceed existing ambient conditions or 50 dBa/70 dBc at the property line of a Sensitive Receptor, whichever is greater.

2. **Targeted Noise Management:** All Data Centers must implement noise reduction or sound masking based on the recommendations of the noise study.

3. **Emergency Generator Testing:** Routine testing and maintenance of emergency generators shall be limited to weekdays only, between the hours of **10:00 AM and 5:00 PM**, and shall not exceed **60 minutes** in duration.

F. General Environmental Requirements

1. **Site Development:** All stormwater retention and site development must follow Article 4.2 of the Unified Development Code, which under the discretion of the UDC Administrator, may require engineering using the latest edition of the GSMM (Georgia Stormwater Management Manual) to ensure water quality and runoff.

2. **Runoff Infiltration:** All facilities should be designed to increase water infiltration through the use of permeable pavers, bioswales or similar permeable surfaces on at least 20% of all parking spaces on the lot. Alternative penetration measures may be allowed via Administrative Variance.

E. Screening, and Aesthetic Standards

1. **Planting and Screening:** The buffer shall utilize **approved trees** as outlined by the Article 4.1 of the Unified Development Code and dense, native shrubs to provide a **visual screen** year-round. An opaque masonry wall or fence (minimum 8 feet in height) shall be required within the buffer on all sides facing a Sensitive Receptor, unless an existing structure does not allow for the placement of screening.

2. All ground-mounted and roof-mounted mechanical equipment, including chillers, cooling towers, and HVAC units, must be **fully enclosed within the principal building** or completely obscured from view from all public roads and Sensitive Receptors by architectural features, parapet walls, or louvers.

3. Building façades visible from public roadways or Sensitive Receptors must utilize design measures that are consistent with similarly zoned uses in the City of Statesboro. Architectural designs shall not be required with the submission of the Special Use Permit.

4. Building height shall not exceed 65 feet for all primary structures, regardless of the underlying zoning for each property. This height does not include roof mounted structures and enclosed pop-ups for roof access from internal stairs and structures such as freight elevators, which may exceed the 65-foot height if allowing accessibility by Fire Department personnel

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H. Community Investment and Infrastructure

1. **Proportional Infrastructure Contribution:** as a condition of Special Use Permit approval, the applicant/owner shall be required to demonstrate positive economic impacts to the City of Statesboro. Otherwise, the applicant/owner shall contribute funds or construct neighborhood improvements directly related to the Data Center's impact as determined by the project scale and location.

2. The applicant shall submit a **Decommissioning Plan** or financial surety (bond or escrow) to guarantee the dismantling and removal of all IT infrastructure and MEP infrastructure upon cessation of data center use.
3. The Special Use Permit for a Data Center facility shall expire in 24 months from approval if there has been no issuance of a Land Disturbance Permit or Building Permit within that time frame. Zoning for the property must remain in place for a minimum of 1 year. If the applicant/owner seeks to amend the zoning of the property, the special use permit shall expire upon a change of the zoning classification of the site. Special Use Permits shall expire 12 months after cessation, as determined by the lack of use (i.e., utility consumption).

First Reading:

Second Reading:

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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By: Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Attest: Leah Harden, City Clerk