



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 06/09/2026

REQUESTER: Rickey J. Knighton II

PRESENTER: Rickey J. Knighton II, City Attorney

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2526-70 UPON FIRST READING BY TITLE: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, DECLARING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF REZONING OR ADMINISTRATIVE REQUESTS, APPROVALS AND PERMITS, INCLUDING BUILDING PERMITS, THAT WOULD ALLOW CONSTRUCTION ON, EXPANSION OF, OR USE OF PROPERTY FOR A DATA CENTER LOCATED IN THE CITY OF NORMAN; PROVIDING FOR AN APPEAL PROCESS; PROVIDING FOR EFFECTIVE AND EXPIRATION DATES; PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

BACKGROUND

Historically, data centers located within Norman have generally been small-scale facilities serving individual businesses, institutions, or office uses. These facilities have not presented the unique land use, infrastructure, and environmental issues associated with the larger industrial-scale data centers that have recently been proposed and developed in communities throughout the United States.

Modern data centers often require substantial electrical service, significant water consumption for cooling systems, backup power generation equipment, battery storage systems, specialized infrastructure improvements, and extensive mechanical equipment. Depending on their size and design, such facilities may also create concerns related to noise, heat generation, air quality, utility capacity, and compatibility with surrounding land uses.

The City's current Zoning Ordinance does not contain a specific use classification or regulatory framework for data centers. As a result, the City's existing regulations do not adequately address the unique characteristics and impacts of these facilities.

The City has retained Clarion Associates to comprehensively update the City's development-related codes, including Chapter 36, the Zoning Ordinance. The update is intended to implement the goals and policies of AIM Norman and modernize the City's land development regulations. Staff anticipates that this process will result in recommendations regarding appropriate zoning

districts, development standards, operational requirements, buffering standards, utility considerations, and other regulations applicable to such uses.

DISCUSSION

The proposed moratorium is intended to preserve the status quo while the City evaluates and develops an appropriate regulatory framework for data centers.

Without a temporary moratorium, applications for data center development could be submitted and potentially approved under zoning regulations that were not designed to address the unique impacts associated with these facilities. Once permits are issued and development rights vest, the City's ability to implement new regulations for those projects may be significantly limited.

The moratorium would:

- Temporarily suspend acceptance and processing of rezoning applications and permits associated with new or expanded data centers;
- Allow staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council time to evaluate the impacts of data centers;
- Permit consideration of infrastructure, utility, environmental, and land-use compatibility issues;
- Allow public participation through future hearings regarding proposed zoning regulations;
- Support implementation of AIM Norman and the ongoing zoning code update.

The ordinance includes an appeal process through the Board of Adjustment for parties aggrieved by determinations of the Planning and Community Development Director. The Board of Adjustment would also have authority to grant variances where an applicant demonstrates unnecessary hardship and where doing so would remain consistent with the purpose and intent of the ordinance.

The moratorium applies only to applications filed after the effective date of the ordinance and does not affect previously filed applications.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance declaring a temporary moratorium through June 9, 2027, on the acceptance, processing, and issuance of rezoning requests and permits associated with the construction, expansion, or use of property for data centers within the City of Norman.