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Aurora mayor: Data center 'must be stopped'

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Developer promises jobs, tax revenue and to pay its own way for energy use

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Aurora's mayor said Thursday that a proposed data center near populated neighborhoods "must be stopped," even if it puts the city at risk of getting sued.

Mayor Mike Coffman's Facebook post came days after about a hundred Green Valley Ranch residents packed the Aurora City Council chambers to oppose the Trident Data Center, even as the city attorney reiterated that the site is an industrial zone district where data centers are, in fact, permitted.

The project, proposed in August 2025 by company Vantage Data Centers, is in the final stages of approval by the city of Aurora.

The company is promising, among other things, to pay its own way for energy use, while adding that thousands would be employed during the data center's construction, not to mention permanent jobs once it's operational.

If built, the data center would be two stories and 1.5 million square feet on 108 acres of land, according to public documents submitted by Vantage through the city's development portal.

Plans for the new data center, which is to be built at the northwest corner of the intersection of E-470 and East 48th Avenue, have already been through two formal city reviews and a third is underway, a city spokesperson told The Denver Gazette.

Coffman wrote in a Facebook post Thursday evening that the plan "must not go forward" and the city "must explore every available option" to keep it from being built.

He said he plans to call the company to request a public hearing and then ask the Aurora City Council to vote against it, adding it would be too close to homes.

"I would do this regardless of the litigation risk that the city may face by the data center developer," he wrote in the post.

Amy Wiles, the councilmember who represents the ward in which Trident is proposed, said she is glad the mayor followed her suggestions to listen to community worries and look at the site in-person.

"I hope we can agree on additional common sense regulations to make sure both families and businesses can be successful in our city," she said.

City Attorney Pete Schulte previously told The Denver Gazette that if an application meets zoning standards — which the Trident Data Center application does — the city is subject to potential liability if administrative officials deny it.

Vantage spokesperson Mark Freeman said the company is committed to working with city leaders, residents and other stakeholders to address their concerns.

The company plans to hold a neighborhood meeting later in October to hear from residents, Vantage spokesperson Misty Allen said.

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A date and location for the meeting have not yet been set, but Allen said Vantage will be in touch with neighborhood and homeowner groups.

"Vantage respects the mayor's position yet believes it is important that the project be evaluated based on verified facts," Freeman said in an email to The Denver Gazette on Friday. "Our goal is to develop infrastructure that supports economic growth while being a responsible neighbor and steward of local resources."

Freeman did not respond to The Denver Gazette's question about whether the company would take legal action against Aurora if its application was denied.

The Trident site sits next to Green Valley Ranch, a master-planned community in Aurora that includes The Reserve, a 55+ community.

Residents of The Reserve and surrounding neighborhoods said they were not informed about the plan for a data center next to them until early September, about a year after the application was submitted.

Schulte, the city attorney, said that applications like the one for Trident are public information.

The property where Trident is proposed is in an industrial zone district, where data centers are a permitted use and can be approved administratively as long as no major adjustments are requested.

Because of the zoning, Schulte said, there is no requirement for a public hearing or area resident notification.

Residents of the surrounding community worry about the potential noise, health and property value impacts of a new data center.

Carlene Embree, who is trying to sell her home in Painted Prairie, earlier said a data center feels like a threat to safety and well-being and she worries the development will tank her home's value.

At a recent open house, a potential buyer's first question and biggest concern was about the house's proximity to the proposed data center, Embree said.

Other residents, especially those who live in age-restricted community The Reserve, worry about health risks, they said in a meeting last week.

Trident would rely on at least 60 diesel backup generators that could emit between 25 and 75 tons per year of fine particulate matter, noxious fumes and more than 800 tons per year of nitrogen oxides, according to documents created by Green Valley Ranch residents. Such emissions can cause respiratory and cardiovascular risks, they said.

The residents also said they worry about noise, adding that hyperscale data centers emit low-frequency noise that will likely impact the surrounding area.

They pointed to Loudoun County, Virginia, which has become known as "data center alley" for having the world's largest concentration of data centers, according to the county's website.

Local news publications in the county, such as 7News, have reported on the impacts of those data centers, which included neighbor complaints about a constant hum at all hours and fumes that irritate people's throats and lungs.

The critics also worry about electrical demand on the Xcel Energy Denver Metro Division grid they share with Denver International Airport. DIA now uses about 45 megawatts of energy and, as the airport grows, it is anticipated to need 400 megawatts by 2045. If Trident is approved, it would use about 500 megawatts of power, according to area residents.

They also pointed to water use, as the city of Aurora and much of the state face drought conditions and restrictions.

Allen, the Vantage spokesperson, said that the data center will use about 800,000 gallons of water annually, including for 10 chiller units that use closed-loop cooling systems and other standard building water needs, such as plumbing.

Water consumption by data centers has often been criticized, but many companies — Microsoft, for example — are moving toward “zero-water” cooling techniques that use closed-loop systems and engineered fluids, reducing reliance on local resources.

Some experts have said access to energy is the real problem — water matters, but much less at scale. “(Water) is not a really big issue or constraint on data center development in a way that I think getting the energy policy right is,” Colorado Energy Office Director Will Toor earlier noted.

Vantage plans to prioritize responsible development, pay its own way for energy use, aim to return more water than it uses through reuse and sustainable landscaping, and invest in the surrounding community, Allen said.

During peak construction, the project will employ more than 3,000 people. Once the data center is operational, it will provide about 50 permanent jobs and additional indirect jobs, including security teams and electricians needed to service the site, Allen said. The company prioritizes hiring locally. Trident will also bring tax revenue into the area, Allen said.

Dan Diorio at the Data Center Coalition said data centers are a positive investment for communities, adding that data center success goes hand-in-hand with the success of the community it’s built in.

“It matters how a company responds, and overwhelmingly you’ll find good actors in this space,” he said about community concerns. “Transparency and trust matter.”

