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City Council bans data centers in mixed-use office zones

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The Aurora City Council unanimously passed a new regulation on data centers Monday night, changing the city's zoning code to ban them in mixed-use zones.

The zoning code change will no longer allow data centers as a permitted use in the mixed-use office institutional zone district.

There are no other mixed-use zones in the city that allow data centers.

Data centers are still allowed by right in four other zone districts, including airport district, accident potential zone, business/tech and medium industrial. They are conditionally allowed in mixed-use regional activity center and mixed-use airport districts.

Areas zoned mixed-use office institutional can be used for office space, multifamily housing, schools, and "related low-impact" use near residential areas, according to city code.

During the public hearing for the zoning change, eight people spoke in support. All of them said the city needs to do more to regulate or ban data centers.

One speaker told the council to add a moratorium on data centers anywhere in Aurora, and then outright ban them.

"All this change would do is add an extra hoop for these companies to jump through. Zoning changes will not address the real problems of these data centers," he said. "A ban is the only solution to this problem."

Dozens of other people ~~spoke~~ ^{Not} during public comment Monday night in opposition to data centers, notably the Trident Data Center that is proposed to go near Green Valley Ranch if approved.

Plans for the new data center, which is proposed to sit 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, an Aurora spokesperson told The Denver Gazette.

The land where Trident is proposed to go is zoned industrial, which is a permitted-use zone for data centers, meaning they do not have to go to a public hearing.

Residents in surrounding neighborhoods have spoken out against Trident, saying they worry about noise, health impacts, and strain on utilities like water and energy.

Mark Freeman, a spokesperson for the project's company, Vantage Data Centers, 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.

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.”