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AURORA

# City's consideration of data center moratorium blocked

## Mayor vows to try again for a timeout on controversial facilities at next meeting

Translate

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Minority opposition on the Aurora City Council blocked a vote late Monday night on a proposed data center moratorium, prompting cries of "shame" from residents attending a raucous meeting.

Mayor Mike Coffman immediately said he would "be bringing back the same motion with the same resolution at the next regular meeting of the City Council." The council next meets Nov. 9.

The reconsideration motion on a data center moratorium, an earlier version of which the council narrowly rejected in August, came one vote shy of passing Monday.

To bring the moratorium back, the motion needed a seven-vote supermajority on the 11-member council, but it received only six votes in favor.

Those voting no were council members Françoise Bergen, Curtis Gardner, Rob Andrews, Angela Lawson and Stephanie Hancock.

Gary Zimmerman, an Aurora resident, told the council, "You sank my heart tonight."

"I wanted to see you helping us protect our environment, our infrastructure, our residents before the cumulative damage becomes irreversible," he said.

Dan Bergander, a resident of The Reserve at Green Valley Ranch, a community for adults 55 and older that is near where a giant data center is planned, said the city's failure to enact a moratorium on the increasingly controversial facilities "is going to be a stain on this council for years to come."

"Make yourself the city that other cities look at for best practices when it comes to installing data centers," he said.Aurora's moratorium would have halted any companies from bringing forth plans for new data centers in the city until city leaders could craft a new set of regulations for the sector.

Opposition to data centers in Aurora has been building for weeks, with residents crowding council chambers to speak out against an 860,000-square-foot facility — which could be among Colorado's largest — that's being pitched for land near hundreds of homes on the eastern edge of the city.

Coffman declared this month that Vantage Data Centers' Trident project "must be stopped."

"The city of Aurora must explore every available option, to include my calling the proposed Trident Data Center up for a public hearing and then asking the members of city council for a 'no' vote to stop it from being built," the mayor wrote on Facebook on Oct. 1.

That didn't happen Monday night, but the mayor said from the dais that there is an "ongoing discussion" with Vantage about having the company locate its project away from neighborhoods. The company has been working with the city for more than a year on its application for a data center at a 108-acre site just inside the E-470 beltway at East 48th Avenue.

Last week, Denver7 reported that Vantage told the city in a letter that it would look for a new site for its project in Aurora. It asked for 90 days to identify a new location and requested that the city not pass any data center regulations during that time.

Data centers have become notorious for their heavy water and electric power use. The centers are packed with servers and computers that run 24 hours a day, processing data and lighting up web pages and apps for consumers all around the world.

Many of the newer data centers are considered hyperscale facilities, meaning they are engineered for large-scale workloads and are at the heart of the burgeoning data-hungry artificial intelligence sector.

Several cities in Colorado, including Denver, Thornton and Commerce City, have imposed temporary bans on new data centers as residents worry about noise from the centers and impacts on water supplies and electric rates.

Local data center moratoriums continued to roll out as recently as last week, with Littleton taking a first step toward implementing a timeout of its own and Brighton finalizing a year-long data center ban.

Aurora resident Ace Winters upbraided the council Monday for not pursuing a moratorium.

"The city has made it a planning and development priority to allow the construction of a massive hyperscale data center in Aurora that stands to raise the cost of electricity and drain the already limited water resources for every person in this room and across this city," she said.

Aurora embarked on rulemaking for data centers in September. It passed an ordinance banning the use of evaporative cooling systems in the city. Those have been used in data centers to cool equipment despite their tendency to use large amounts of water.

The city is still drawing up setback distances for data centers from homes and businesses.

There are nine data centers in operation in Aurora, with an additional five working their way through the approvals process.