Below please find public testimony for Ord. 251031.

Thanks,

Jennifer Reinhardt, AICP
Lead Planner, Playbook Implementation
City Planning and Development
816-513-2866

From: ellie@polklarson.com <ellie@polklarson.com>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 3:09 PM
To: Reinhardt, Jennifer <Jennifer.Reinhardt@kcmo.org>; Melissa Patterson Hazley <Melissa.Patterson-Hazley@kcmo.org>; Willett, Nathan <Nathan.Willett@kcmo.org>; Bunch, Eric <Eric.Bunch@kcmo.org>; Parks-Shaw, Ryana <Ryana.Parks-Shaw@kcmo.org>; Yearwood, DJ <Darvius.Yearwood@kcmo.org>; Williamson, Annie <Annie.Williamson@kcmo.org>; Iden, Marissa <Marissa.Iden@kcmo.org>; McCoy, Keema <Keema.McCoy@kcmo.org>
Subject: A Plea From a Software Engineer, re Data Centers

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With the committee having a hearing on how to zone data centers, I wanted to give my concerns as a citizen of the city. Data centers, specifically the "hyperscale" ones being built for use with LLMs, have had very detrimental effects on other communities across the country. People have faced higher electricity bills and drastically heightened pollution, without seeing many jobs added to their economy.

I work as a software engineer, and am familiar with the current landscape of the tech industry. I can understand the impetus to get our city more invested in the AI market, but I fear that it would be a poor investment, and one that would bring harm to our community.

A [paper](#) from MIT earlier this year found that 95% of enterprise AI initiatives fail - the market for what AI can actually accomplish is much smaller than is being advertised. While there are very impressive and incredible uses for the technology, particularly in the sciences, it simply doesn't have the transformative economic power the people selling it want to claim. Meanwhile, there have been devastating consequences for cities that have allowed large companies to go all in on the technology. In New Jersey, people saw a [17-20% increase](#) in their monthly electric bills over the summer, largely attributed to increased demand for electricity caused by hyperscale data centers in the area. In Memphis, a data center operated by xAI is running [33 methane-powered gas turbines](#), which have released horrifying amounts of pollutants into the nearby town. I worry about these sorts of consequences affecting Kansas City.

I don't know as much about zoning codes as I do the tech industry. However, some other members of the community have compiled a list of recommendations for the regulations for data centers, which I agree with.

- Environmental impact studies
  - Not just traffic impact studies, but a look at water tables, water shed, wastewater discharge, air quality, noise pollution and utility strain
    - We don't think the energy grid can support all the current data center projects
- Special use permits
  - All data centers, no matter the zone, require special use permits which have to be voted on by city council and that these permits are not "by right."
  - Other cities have this: Mesa, Arizona and Lancaster, PA for example
- No data centers near residential neighborhoods
  - They should not be zoned anywhere near residents. People in Smithville have the Meta and Google data centers in their backyards and can see and hear construction from them and have been impacted by light pollution.
- Require utility demand disclosure
  - We want projected energy and water usage figures and want to require annual public reporting on energy and water usage
- Have water usage limits
- Cooling requirements
  - Limit or ban potable water used for cooling and require water-efficient cooling
  - We want closed-loop, recycled water or non-potable supply for water cooling systems on data centers
- Data centers should have their own zoning code and should not be wrapped up in a zoning code for Large Format Uses
  - A warehouse is not as problematic as a data center because their energy and water usage are not a concern in relation to data centers

Thank you,

Ellie Larson