

## City Council Communication

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|--|-----------------------------|--|
| <p>Department: Community Development</p> <p>CASE #PI-24-001(M)</p> <p>Applicant/Property Owner:<br/>EDC Omaha Landco LLC<br/>30 Old Kings Highway South #1005<br/>Darien, CT 06820</p> <p>Representative:<br/>John Dolan<br/>30 Old Kings Highway South #1005<br/>Darien, CT 06820</p>   | <p>Resolution No. _____</p> | <p>City Council: 6/9/2025</p> <p>Planning Commission: 4/8/2024</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Subject/Title</b></p> <p><b>Request:</b> Public hearing on the request of EDC Omaha Landco LLC, represented by John Dolan, to amend the adopted planned industrial development plan for a new ‘data center’ on property legally described as being a parcel of land located in part of the SE ¼ of Section 21-75-43 and part of the NE ¼ of Section 28-75-43, all lying south of East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa.</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Undeveloped land at the southeast corner of the intersection of College Road and East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6)</p>   |                             |  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Background/Discussion</b></p> <p>The Community Development Department has received a request from EDC Omaha Landco LLC, represented by John Dolan, to amend the adopted planned industrial development plan for a new ‘data center’ on property legally described as being a parcel of land located in part of the SE ¼ of Section 21-75-43 and part of the NE ¼ of Section 28-75-43, all lying south of East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa.</p> <p>The subject property consists of several undeveloped parcels of land located east of the Iowa Western Community College campus. A planned industrial development plan was previously adopted at this site for a logistics park via Resolution No. 21-308 (resolution approved by City Council on October 25, 2021). The project did not move forward and the land remained undeveloped. The City of Council Bluffs received a new proposal in April 2024 from EDC Omaha LLC to develop the subject property as a data center. The proposal from EDC Omaha LLC consisted of two 80-foot tall buildings, each containing 450,000 square feet in ground floor area, and a MidAmerican Energy substation to service the proposed data center. On June 10, 2024, City Council passed Resolution No. 24-166 to adopt a planned industrial development plan for the proposed data center. The new development plan superseded and replaced the previous development plan adopted for the logistics park.</p> <p>The developer is proposing to alter the adopted development plan. The following components of the project will be modified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) The ground floor area of each data center building (reduced from 450,000 square feet to 285,444 square feet);</li><li>(2) The height of the data center buildings (reduced from 80 feet to 36 feet 3 inches);</li><li>(3) The location of the proposed data center buildings on the subject property;</li></ol> |                             |  |

- (4) The configuration of the outdoor electrical/mechanical yards; and
- (5) The required landscaping along the perimeter of the site.

Additionally, the developer is proposing to: (1) construct a 24,310-square foot office/administrative building, (2) install two owner-operated substations (each substation will service one of the proposed data center buildings; the MidAmerican Energy substation shown on the original proposal has been replaced with a switchyard), and (3) install additional overhead electric facilities to service the proposed substations. The proposed modifications will substantially alter the design and layout of the proposed ‘data center’ and thus must be reviewed by the City Planning Commission and approved by City Council.

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** *This request was originally scheduled for public hearing by the City Planning Commission on April 8, 2025. However, the developer requested the Commission to continue the public hearing to the May 13, 2025 meeting after providing more information to the Community Development Department about the outdoor electrical/mechanical yards associated with the project. The schematics provided by the developer showed that the mechanical yards located east of the north data center building will consist of a row of modular cooling towers and two makeup water tanks that will measure 60 feet in height and thus exceed the height of the data center building. The Community Development Department and the developer subsequently met to discuss how to properly screen the outdoor electrical/mechanical yards from view and enhance the aesthetics of the project. Following those discussions, the developer submitted a revised site plan and new architectural renderings. New components incorporated into the project include a 35-foot tall decorative metal wall that will screen the proposed cooling towers and water tanks on the northeast corner of the north mechanical yard, a 35-foot tall decorative wall that will screen the southeast corner of the south mechanical yard, and an enhanced façade design on the north elevation of the north data center building.*

The developer intends to subdivide the subject property into at least two lots (one lot for the data center and one lot for the substation) at a later date. The proposed subdivision should be completed prior to the commencement of any construction associated with this project; however, the final plat may be executed after to the construction is completed provided the necessary access easements are conveyed during the platting process.

**Land Use and Zoning** – The subject property is currently zoned P-I/Planned Industrial District. The following zoning and land uses surround the subject property:

| Direction | Zoning District(s)  | Land Uses   |
|-----------|---|---|
| North     | C-2/Commercial District and R-3/Low-Density Multifamily Residential District                      | East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6) and undeveloped land       |
| South     | P-I/Planned Industrial District   | An office building (Black Hills Energy)                               |
| East      | A-2/Parks, Estates and Agricultural District  | Interstate 80 and undeveloped land                                    |
| West      | A-2/Parks, Estates and Agricultural District and R-3/Low-Density Multifamily Residential District | A college campus (Iowa Western Community College) and student housing |

The Future Land Use Plan of the Bluffs Tomorrow: 2030 Plan (Comprehensive Plan) designates the subject property as ‘Office/Industrial’ and ‘Local Commercial.’

**City Departments and Utilities** – All appropriate City departments and utilities were notified of the planned industrial development plan request. The following comments were received:

- A. The Council Bluffs Parks and Recreation Department stated that they have no comments on the request.
- B. The Council Bluffs Police Department stated that they have no comments or objections to the request.
- C. The Iowa Department of Transportation stated that they have no conflicts with the request.
- D. Council Bluffs Water Works stated that they have no comments on the request.

### **Development Plan**

The developer is proposing to amend the adopted planned industrial development plan for the proposed 'data center.' Amendments to the adopted development plan reflecting the proposed modifications to this project are highlighted in gray or crossed out below. All other development standards outlined in the adopted development plan will remain in effect.

#### **A. Site Development**

1. All principal and accessory structures shall have a minimum perimeter setback of 25 feet.
2. The maximum height allowed for ~~principal~~ all structures, exclusive of any utility poles and associated equipment, shall be ~~80 feet~~ 40 feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the parapet wall.
  - a. The revised architectural renderings (see page 2 of Sheet A200, Attachment 'C') show each proposed data center building will measure 36'-3" in height.
  - b. The revised architectural renderings (see page 1 of Sheet A200, Attachment 'C') show the proposed office/administrative building will measure 14'-4" in height.
  - c. The mechanical yards located east of the north data center building will consist of a row of modular cooling towers and two makeup water tanks that will measure 60 feet in height. The proposed cooling towers and water tanks shall be allowed to exceed the maximum building height allowed as per the adopted development plan as said equipment is necessary for the operation of the data center. The developer will also install a 35-foot tall decorative metal wall along the northeast corner of the north mechanical yard to lessen the visual impact of the proposed cooling towers and water tanks as viewed from East Kaneshville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6) and Interstate 80.
- ~~3. The maximum height allowed for accessory structures shall be 50 feet, as measured from finished grade to the peak of the roof.~~
3. The maximum combined lot coverage for all structures shall not exceed 60% of the lot area.
  - a. The combined area of all buildings proposed to be constructed at this site will be 595,198 square feet, which is approximately 15% of the lot area.
  - b. Including the outdoor mechanical/electrical yards, the total lot coverage for all structures at this site will amount to approximately 36.3% of the lot area.
4. All fences/walls shall be installed in accordance with Section 15.24.040, Fence Regulations, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance).

- a. The submitted site plan (Attachment 'C') shows an anti-climb Ameristar fence will be installed around the perimeter of the data center. The maximum height allowed for the proposed fence shall be 10 feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the fence structure.
  - b. The submitted site plan (Attachment 'C') shows a 20-foot tall masonry wall will be installed along the north and west sides of the MidAmerican Energy substation switchyard. ~~A 20-foot tall masonry wall shall also be installed~~ will extend along the northerly 20 feet of the east side of the substation in order to adequately screen all ground-mounted equipment from public view. The two owner-operated substations that will service the proposed data center will also be partially screened from view along College Road using a 20-foot tall masonry wall.
    - i. ~~The proposed masonry wall shall have a minimum height of 10 feet and a maximum height of 20 feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the wall.~~
  - c. The submitted site plan (Attachment 'C') shows a 35-foot tall decorative metal wall will be installed to screen the northeast corner of the north mechanical yard. A 35-foot tall decorative metal wall will also be installed to screen the southeast corner of the south mechanical yard. The proposed walls feature the use of various colors in rectangular patterns that match the design of the north elevation of the north data center building (see Sheet A200, Attachment 'C').
    - i. The proposed decorative metal walls are intended to lessen the visual impact of the mechanical yards associated with this project as viewed from East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6) and Interstate 80. As such, the installation of the 35-foot tall decorative metal walls shall be allowed as proposed.
  - d. No barbed wire shall be allowed on the proposed fence or masonry wall.
5. Any solar energy conversion systems installed at this site shall be subject to Section 15.34.030, Solar Energy Conversion Systems, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance).
  6. All exterior lighting shall conform to Section 15.24.050, Lighting Controls, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance). All outdoor light poles shall be limited to a maximum height of 40 feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the pole structure. All light poles shall be painted or finished aluminum or steel. Wood poles shall not be allowed.
  7. Outdoor storage of materials, products, equipment, or packaging shall not be permitted. This includes the semi-permanent and/or permanent placement of inter-modal storage/shipping containers.
    - a. Power generators, cooling towers, water tanks, and other mechanical/electrical equipment ~~installed to service~~ required for operation of the proposed data center shall be allowed to be stored outdoors.

## **B. Utilities**

1. All utilities shall be installed underground. Any cost to remove, relocate, modify, and/or extend utilities to this site shall be at the sole cost of the developer and not the City.
  - a. Overhead facilities shall only be allowed to service the proposed MidAmerican substation switchyard and the owner-operated substations adjacent to each data center building. No other overhead facilities shall be allowed to be installed at this site.
    - i. According to MidAmerican Energy, the height of the power poles to service the proposed substations may range between 60 and 90 feet to meet clearance regulations. To ensure the proposed utility poles do not overwhelm the appearance of the data center, the height of the poles shall not exceed the minimum height required to meet clearance requirements. Additionally, said

utility poles shall be designed and/or painted in such manner as to lessen their visual impact on the aesthetics of the site. The applicant and/or MidAmerican Energy shall provide schematics and/or renderings of the proposed poles to the City prior to installation.

- As per an update provided by the developer on May 5, 2025, the power poles that will distribute power to the south substation will measure 60 feet in height. The developer also noted that the peak of all poles will be maintained at the same elevation.
- The developer is proposing to paint the proposed poles a bark color, but stated that they will continue to work with the City to find the right color to ensure the poles do not have an adverse impact on the aesthetics of the site as viewed from College Road and East Kaneshville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6). The Community Development Department recommends using a color that allows the proposed power poles to blend in with the surrounding environment.

2. All grading and drainage activity for this development shall be completed in accordance with Public Works standards.
3. Water, power, and gas service shall be coordinated with the appropriate utility provider.

### C. Off-Street Parking

1. The minimum number of off-street parking spaces is typically calculated using the parking requirements in Section 15.23.060, Parking Spaces Required, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance). For a data center, the number of required parking spaces would be calculated using Schedule A in Section 15.23.060 of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance). The warehousing component of the data center would require one (1) space per 5,000 square feet and the office/administrative activity component would require one (1) space per 300 square feet. ~~This would result in approximately 200 parking spaces being required for the proposed data center.~~ The submitted site plan (see Sheet CS100, Attachment 'C') shows ~~80~~ 201 parking spaces will be provided at this site. City staff and the developer have discussed establishing site-specific parking standards for this project to ensure the off-street parking needs for the proposed development are adequately satisfied while not requiring an excessive amount of parking to be provided. In this regard, the developer shall submit a parking demand memo prior to building plans being finalized for building permit review to verify the amount of parking provided for the proposed development will be sufficient. ~~Shared parking between the two lots that will contain the proposed data center buildings shall be allowed.~~
2. All off-street parking areas, driveways and drive aisles shall comply with the standards in Chapter 15.23, Off-Street Parking, Loading and Unloading, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance), and Iowa's Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) manuals for public improvements.
  - a. The ground surface for the proposed MidAmerican Energy substation may be constructed out of gravel.
3. All off-street parking lots shall comply with Chapter 661-18, Parking for Persons with Disabilities, of the Iowa Administrative Code.
4. Bicycle parking shall be incorporated into the overall layout of each lot.
  - a. Designated bicycle parking areas shall be located within a reasonable distance of, and clearly visible from, the main entrance of each building. Bicycle parking may alternatively be provided in a publicly accessible indoor location within a convenient distance of the main building entrance.
  - b. Bicycle racks shall be secured to the pavement in a location that does not conflict with pedestrian or vehicular circulation routes.

- c. Bicycle parking shall be provided at a rate of one bicycle parking space per 45,000 square feet of ground floor area. Using this calculation, a minimum of 20 bicycle parking spaces shall be provided for this project. Bicycle parking shall be distributed evenly between the two lots containing the data center buildings.
  - d. Bicycle parking shall be installed prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the proposed project.
5. A parking lot permit shall be submitted with the building permit application for the proposed data center, and shall include the number, location, and dimension of all drive aisles and spaces, bicycle parking, pedestrian ways, islands, landscaped areas, loading areas and lighting.
6. The submitted site plan in Attachment 'C' shows the proposed data center will be accessed via two driveways on College Road, which includes the shared driveway with the Black Hills Energy facility at 2287 College Road. The developer shall be subject to the terms and conditions in the shared access easement agreement at all times.

#### **D. Architecture**

1. ~~Architectural renderings/elevations for the proposed data center are shown in Attachment 'J.'~~ Architectural renderings/elevations for the proposed data center buildings and the office/administrative building are shown in Sheet A200, Attachment 'C.' The submitted renderings show the exterior of all buildings being constructed primarily out of insulated precast concrete panels. This material is acceptable and shall be painted in a pattern generally consistent with the submitted renderings.
  - a. The north elevation of the north data center building features the use of various colors in rectangular patterns to enhance the aesthetic of the proposed development as motorists enter the city from the I-80/Highway 6 interchange. This design will extend and create a continuous façade with the decorative metal wall that will screen the proposed cooling towers and water tanks from view.
2. All rooftop mounted mechanical equipment that is visible from an adjacent public street right-of-way shall be screened from view using architectural design features.
  - a. The rooftop mounted mechanical equipment on the proposed office/administrative building shall be screened from public view along College Road, East Kaneshville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), and Interstate 80 using a parapet wall or individually using architectural features.
3. All ground-mounted mechanical equipment that is visible from an adjacent public street right-of-way shall be completely screened from view using architectural design features, fencing, masonry wall, landscaping, or a combination thereof.
  - a. The landscape buffer proposed to be planted along the perimeter of the project site shall be acceptable provided it is sized and planted to adequately screen all ground-mounted equipment from public view.
4. All trash receptacles visible from a public right-of-way shall be enclosed on three sides with a masonry, wood, or vinyl fence and shall have a lockable gate that, when closed, completely eliminates view of the dumpster.

#### **E. Landscaping**

1. A landscaping plan shall be part of every building permit application. The plan shall clearly identify plant materials, quantity, and size and shall show dimensions of all areas to be landscaped.

2. A minimum of one evergreen tree and/or deciduous shade tree shall be planted every 30 linear feet along the frontages abutting College Road, East Kaneshville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), and Interstate 80, exclusive of any area containing a utility easement granted to accommodate the overhead facilities that will service the proposed switchyard and/or substations.
  - a. ~~The submitted landscaping plan (Attachment 'G') shows a double row of deciduous and evergreen trees will be planted on a 3 to 4 foot tall landscape berm along the perimeter of the project site.~~ The revised landscaping plan (see Sheet CS900, Attachment 'C') shows a row of deciduous and evergreen trees will be planted on earthen berms along the frontages abutting East Kaneshville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6) and Interstate 80. Trees will also be planted along the northerly and southerly ends of the frontage abutting College Road; however, a significant portion of said frontage will remain unplanted as to not encumber the easement granted to MidAmerican Energy to accommodate the overhead electrical facilities that will service the proposed development. Additionally, a row of shrubs will be planted along the northern edge of the MidAmerican Energy switchyard in lieu of trees to ensure power lines connecting into the switchyard are not obstructed. The Community Development Department finds the proposed amount of landscaping will sufficiently screen the data center from public view.
  - b. All tree species planted along the frontage of a public right-of-way shall comply with the Council Bluffs Street Tree Guide and shall be reviewed and approved by the City prior to installation.
3. Not more than 10% of the landscaped area shall be of inorganic material such as brick, stone, aggregate, river rock, metal or artificial turf. Organic mulch may be used around trees and/or shrubs.
4. A minimum five foot-wide strip of landscaping, planted with trees, shrubs, and/or grass, shall be installed between the edge of all parking lot areas and any abutting property line. The five-foot wide strips may be included in the 10% requirement.
5. All parking lot islands shall be planted with a minimum of one canopy shade tree and ground cover vegetation (e.g., shrubs, sod, mulch, or river rock, etc.). Trees planted on along parking lot islands shall consist of drought resistant species native to Iowa.
6. All disturbed areas without a specific landscape design shall be seeded with sod, turf, and/or prairie grass.
7. All trees shall have a minimum caliper width of two inches at the time of planting.
8. Landscaping shall not impede the vision of any pedestrian and/or automobile traffic entering/exiting or circulating on the subject property.
9. All landscaping shall be appropriately maintained and dead plant material replaced at a time appropriate to planting seasons but in all cases shall be replaced within one year.

#### **F. Signage**

1. The total maximum amount of signage allowed shall be based on a calculation of one and one-half (1 ½) square feet of signage per each lineal foot of street frontage along a public street right-of-way or private drive. The easterly property line abutting Interstate 80 right-of-way shall be excluded from the calculation to determine the maximum amount of signage allowed for this project.
2. The total amount of attached signage shall be limited to 15% of the building façade to which it is attached. Attached signage can be placed at any location on the building but shall not extend beyond any building wall or above the peak of the roof.

- a. One attached wall sign is proposed to be installed above the main entrance of each building. Sign dimensions were not provided at the time of application submittal.
3. A maximum of one ground/monument sign shall be allowed per street frontage and shall be limited to a maximum height of 10 feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the sign structure. The entire monument sign shall be counted as signage as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the monument and from one side of the monument structure to the other. The maximum sign area shall not exceed 100 square feet of signage per face.
  - a. One 5' × 6' monument sign is proposed to be installed near the south driveway entrance along College Road. The proposed monument sign is acceptable.
4. On-site directional/wayfinding signage shall count toward the overall amount of signage permitted on the subject property. Each sign shall be limited to a maximum height of six feet, as measured from finished grade to the highest point of the sign structure. The maximum sign area shall not exceed six square feet of signage per face.
5. No sign listed in Section 15.33.070, Prohibited Signs, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance) shall be permitted.
6. A sign permit shall be submitted with every building permit application for any attached, detached and/or on-premise directional signage proposed to be installed on the subject property.

#### **Recommendation**

The Community Development Department recommends approval of the request to amend the adopted planned industrial development plan for a new 'data center' on property legally described as being a parcel of land located in part of the SE ¼ of Section 21-75-43 and part of the NE ¼ of Section 28-75-43, all lying south of East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, subject to the comments stated above and the following conditions:

- A. Any modifications to the approved development plan which substantially alter the design, layout, configuration, and/or appearance of the project shall be reviewed the City Planning Commission and approved by City Council prior to such changes being made. All minor modifications to the adopted development plan may be administratively approved by the Community Development Director.

#### **Public Hearing**

Staff speakers for the request:

1. Moises Monrroy, Planner, City of Council Bluffs, 209 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs IA, 51503

Speakers in favor:

1. None

Speakers against: None

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the request of the request to amend the adopted planned industrial development plan for a new 'data center' on property legally described as being a parcel of land located in part of the SE ¼ of Section 21-75-43 and part of the NE ¼ of Section 28-75-43, all lying south of East Kanesville Boulevard (U.S. Highway 6), City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, subject to the comments stated above and the following conditions:



Any modifications to the approved development plan which substantially alter the design, layout, configuration, and/or appearance of the project shall be reviewed the City Planning Commission and approved by City Council prior to such changes being made. All minor modifications to the adopted development plan may be administratively approved by the Community Development Director.

VOTE: AYE – Freund, Knauss, Rater, Rew, Stroebele, VanHouten, and Watson. NAY – None.  
ABSTAIN – None. ABSENT – Hutcheson. VACANT - Three Motion: Carried.

**Attachments**

Attachment A: Location/Zoning Map  
Attachment B: Project Lola/Edged Preliminary Plans – Original  
Attachment C: Project Lola/Edged Preliminary Plans – Revised  
Attachment D: Preliminary Plans Comparison Exhibit  
Attachment E: Conceptual Street View Illustrations

Prepared by: Moises Monrroy, Planner, Community Development Department