



City of Cambridge

POR 2026-69
FIRST IN COUNCIL
March 30, 2026

COUNCILLOR NOLAN
MAYOR SIDDIQUI
COUNCILLOR MCGOVERN
COUNCILLOR ZUSY
COUNCILLOR AL-ZUBI

- WHEREAS: Data centers are facilities that house computer servers for processing and storing data, either for a single enterprise or multiple enterprises, that serve as critical infrastructure for Internet-based storage, complex software and language models, artificial intelligence (AI) functions, and other computing needs; and
- WHEREAS: The City of Cambridge has emerged as a potentially attractive location for the growing data center landscape due to favorable factors such as its [proximity to developing data center projects](#), [Massachusetts's sales and tax use exemptions](#) and the state's establishment of [51 data centers](#) thus far; and
- WHEREAS: Small data centers can be established in spaces as small as one or more floors of buildings, not requiring large parcels of land, which could be available and attractive in Cambridge in light of the concentration of commercial data users; and
- WHEREAS: Economic incentives, such as an increased demand for maintenance and operation staffing, to establish these new centers have [limited long term profitability](#) with projects often resulting in [decreased state revenue](#); and
- WHEREAS: The existence of data centers lower the City's quality of life for residents, particularly by unsafely raising [noise levels](#) as a byproduct of power generators or other power supply equipment, and cooling systems in data centers [consume substantial quantities of water](#), placing a [strain on local water resources](#) and intensifying water scarcity problems in urban jurisdictions and contributing to equity and sustainability issues; and
- WHEREAS: As a result of their considerable energy demand, these centers have a [significant impact](#) on the City's electric grid, particularly [driving rate payer increases](#), and these centers can negatively [impact the air quality](#) in commercial and residential zones, risking the lasting health and well-being of residents; and
- WHEREAS: Communities around the country have begun to take steps to limit large data centers from negatively impacting residents, ratepayers, and the environment, including [Anchorage, AK](#), [Kentucky](#), and [Mesa, AZ](#); and the [National League of Cities](#) has put together resources for local governments to understand data centers and their impacts on residents; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with relevant departments to review the current legal landscape and provide recommendations for how to regulate construction of data centers in Cambridge and protect residents and local resources and utilities from their impact; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report back to the City Council in a timely manner.

In City Council March 30, 2026.

Adopted as Amended by

Affirmative Vote of Nine Members:-

Attest:- Paula M. Crane, Interim City Clerk

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paula M. Crane".

ATTEST:-

Paula M. Crane
Interim City Clerk