

TA26-01 Ordinance 1 – Add Definitions (Article 30-9.D)

The core reason these definition inclusions are necessary is simple: “data center” is not one thing, and the UDO needs language that cleanly separates (1) incidental IT rooms inside normal buildings from (2) data centers as a primary land use, and the further separates (3) the parts of a data center that actually drive neighborhood impacts (outdoor mechanical yards, generator operations, on-site power generation, and utility demands). The Working Group explicitly flagged that “data center” spans everything from small facilities and adaptive reuse to hyperscale campuses, and warned against treating every facility like the biggest national headline examples; it also noted that many “data-center-like” functions already exist as accessory components of other uses, while the real policy problem is data centers emerging as a principal use at major scale. The ordinance definitions operationalize that distinction so the City can regulate what actually creates externalities, without accidentally sweeping in hospitals, offices, or other uses that merely have server rooms.

The shift to the term “Telecommunications and Data Storage Facility” is doing two jobs at once. First, it anchors the use in what it physically is (servers plus the specialized mechanical/electrical infrastructure that makes them run). Second, it draws a bright line around what it is not – broadcast studios, call centers, general office buildings, and accessory IT rooms incidental to another permitted use – so applicants can’t “fit” the use into a softer category, and staff aren’t forced into case-by-case analog arguments.

The “Principal Use” definition is the legal hinge that keeps the whole framework from overreaching. It tells everyone when the data center standards are supposed to apply: when the facility is the main purpose of the building, tenant space, or site. Without this, you get constant edge cases where an applicant claims they’re “just an accessory component,” or staff feel pressured to treat a clearly data-center-driven site like a conventional industrial tenant.

The two “Accessory Telecommunications and Data Storage Facility” definitions are there because “accessory” alone is too blunt. An internal server suite inside a hospital is a fundamentally different land-use impact profile than an accessory installation that brings a dedicated chiller yard or generator yard with it. The “Internal Plant Only” accessory definition protects ordinary development by making clear that an accessory facility with no dedicated outdoor plant is not what this ordinance is aiming at. The “Accessory... with Dedicated Exterior Plant” definition captures the opposite: accessory in name, but potentially data-center-like in real-world impacts because it includes the kind of outdoor infrastructure that creates noise, visuals, and screening/setback issues.

“Dedicated Exterior Plant” exists because, in practice, the thing neighbors experience is not “server racks.” It’s cooling towers, chiller/condenser yards, fan arrays, generator yards, switchgear yards, substations, and similar outdoor installations. The definition makes those facilities legible to the code so screening, placement, setbacks, and noise compliance can be applied consistently and enforced cleanly.

“Typical Building Mechanical/Electrical Equipment” is the guardrail that prevents the Dedicated Exterior Plant definition from swallowing normal development. It clarifies that standard rooftop HVAC and customary building-serving equipment should not be treated as “Dedicated Exterior Plant” just because it sits outdoors. This is an enforceability and fairness move: it reduces over-application, avoids unnecessary compliance burdens, and limits arguments during plan review about whether ordinary equipment triggers specialized data center standards.

“Data Hall” is a precision tool. Data centers often include office, security, and support areas, but those spaces don’t function (or staff) like the server floors. Defining Data Hall creates a stable way to talk about the core IT area without conflating it with accessory office/support space, which matters whenever standards, ratios, or narratives depend on what portion of a building is actually IT floor versus conventional space.

The three noise-related definitions – “Noise-Sensitive Land Use / Noise-Sensitive Receptor,” “Adjacent to a Noise-Sensitive Land Use,” and “Generator Testing / Maintenance Operation” – exist to eliminate loopholes and “weasel words.” First, Noise-Sensitive Receptor broadens protection to the places where noise is predictably harmful or disruptive (homes, parks/open space, schools, daycare, hospitals, assisted living, and similar uses). Second, “Adjacent” is defined to include separation by a public street or right of way, because acoustics and human experience do not stop at the edge of a right of way; without this, a site could dodge adjacency-triggered standards simply by having a road between the use and a receptor. Third, “Generator Testing / Maintenance Operation” defines the activity the City is trying to manage (exercising, commissioning, reliability testing), so any hour limits or conditions can be enforced against a concrete definition instead of argued into oblivion.

“Emergency Backup Generator” is defined to preserve a clear distinction between true standby equipment and routine power production. The definition ties the generator’s intended use to outages and necessary testing/maintenance and explicitly rejects routine or continuous operation, which matters because the impacts, regulatory expectations, and community tolerance are dramatically different when generators are operating as a normal part of daily operations.

“Energy Center” is the companion definition that captures that “very different animal” the Working Group flagged: on-site power generation designed to operate beyond emergency standby (prime/continuous operation, peak shaving, microgrid operation, load management during regular service, or export). This is the ordinance’s way of acknowledging that size alone is not the only meaningful divider; operational intensity and power behavior can change the impact profile and the review needs. The “Principal Use, with Energy Center” definition then gives the code a clean trigger label for any standards or entitlement differences we attach to that higher-impact operational model.

Finally, the “Utility Impact Statement” definition is there because these projects are utility-forward developments: peak electric demand, cooling method, water consumption, wastewater flows by process, generator inventories, fuel storage, and any energy storage are things the City and PWC need early to evaluate serviceability, sequencing, and downstream infrastructure implications. By defining the UIS in the Definitions article, we hard-wire what “complete”

means so it can be consistently required, reviewed, and routed, rather than reinvented for every application.