



TOWN OF BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Agenda

Thursday, October 8th, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Bristol Town Hall, 10 Court Street, Bristol, RI 02809

- A. Pledge of Allegiance**
- B. Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2026**
- C. Agenda Items**
 - C1. Review Annual CDBG Application and action on finding of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan
 - C2. Re-Review and possible action on proposed ordinance amendment regulating AI Data Centers
 - C3. Administrative Officer and Planning Board Solicitor Update on the status of the Ramos Landscaping Minor Land Development Project
- D. Adjournment**

Date Posted: October 2, 2026

Posted By: mbw



Town of Bristol, Rhode Island

Department of Community Development

10 Court Street
Bristol, RI 02809
bristolri.gov
401-253-7000

October 1, 2026

TO: Planning Board

FROM: Diane M. Williamson, Director

RE: **Annual CDBG Application**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diane W.", is written diagonally across the right side of the letter.

The annual CDBG application is before you for a review and a finding of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The attached chart lists the projects and the relevant citations from the Comprehensive Plan to show consistency.

Proposed CDBG Projects PY2025

Organization	Project	Project Overview	Total Grant Funding Requested	Comprehensive Plan Action Items Addressed
Town of Bristol	Walley School Rehabilitation for conversion to Senior and Community Resource Center	Continuing Phase II construction of Walley School	\$500,000	SF-19 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include a new a Public Zone to allow a mix of uses (but not residential) in the decommissioned school buildings on High Street (Walley and Byfield on Town Common and Reynolds on High Street). Move forward with renovations to the former Walley School to facilitate its re-use. Consider re-use as artist space, incubator space, or shared work space. SF-22 Given the expected increase in the Town's elderly population, the Town should conduct an assessment as to the space needs at the Senior Center to determine the feasibility of either a physical expansion of the existing facility or the development of a new Center. The

Proposed CDBG Projects PY2025

				Town should also address the potential need for an expansion of the services offered at the Center. H-25 Help seniors age in place and provide programs that engage them in socialization outside of the home as well.
Town of Bristol	CDBG Home Repair Program	Make available funding to assist with the repair for LOWMOD residents to conduct needed repairs to their homes	TBD – Applications are made on a rolling basis	H-11 Continue and expand the Towns CDBG home repair and home maintenance grant and loan programs.
Looking Upwards	Property Improvements and Maintenance	Provide funding to Looking Upwards, to make upgrades to one of their homes in Bristol including kitchen upgrades, electrical, HVAC, front steps, and driveway resurfacing	\$125,000	H-11 Continue and expand the Towns CDBG home repair and home maintenance grant and loan programs.



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October 1, 2026

TO: Planning Board

FROM: Diane M. Williamson, Director

RE: **Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment to regulate
AI Data Centers**

Recall that at the September Board meeting, a motion was passed to recommend that the Town adopt a moratorium on AI Data Centers to give the Planning Board more time for study of the topic.

The Solicitor's office has done more research on the suggested moratorium. Based on recent State Law changes, the Town cannot issue a moratorium at this time. See the attached memo from the Solicitor.

The Board will need to re-review this topic and provide a recommendation to the Town Council on an ordinance amendment. The Planning Board Solicitor provided two draft amendments for consideration – one would prohibit this use in all zones and one would allow the use by Special Use Permit in the manufacturing zone with standards. I have researched other municipalities and found that Groton Connecticut updated their zoning in 2023 with Special Use Permit standards for this use. I think Groton captured a lot of the concerns that we would want to see addressed so I have included some of their standards into the draft that the Solicitor provided for your review.



Ursillo, Teitz & Ritch, Ltd.

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Amy H. Goins *[†]
Peter F. Skwirz *[†]
David Marks *[†]
Admitted in RI*, MA[†]

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bristol Planning Board
Diane Williamson, Director of Community Development

FROM: Amy H. Goins, Assistant Town Solicitor

DATE: September 30, 2026

SUBJECT: Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment re: Data Centers

As you know, our office drafted a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that would add a definition for this use and prohibit it in all zoning districts. In reviewing the draft amendment, the Planning Board suggested that enacting a moratorium on data centers might be a better approach, so that the Town would have time to study this new use further and potentially adopt a regulation that would allow data centers in some zones. We have reviewed state law governing when a municipality can enact a moratorium and it is our opinion that the law does not permit the Town to adopt a moratorium on data centers at this time.

The law governing moratoria has changed in recent years as the General Assembly has attempted to constrain municipal authority to prevent certain types of development. The law currently allows the Town to enact a moratorium under two very limited circumstance, neither of which apply here. See R.I. Gen. Laws § 45-22.2-13. The first type of moratorium that is allowed is “for the purpose of providing interim protection for a planned future land use or uses.” However, such a moratorium may only be enacted in the first 12 months after the adoption or amendment of a comprehensive plan. As you are aware, the Town Council will soon be reviewing amendments to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, so a moratorium on data centers could be an option after the amended plan is adopted, but it is not an option at this time.

The second circumstance that permits the adoption of a moratorium is “a dire emergency not reasonably foreseeable as part of the comprehensive planning process.” For example, a town could issue a limited moratorium on building permits in an area that suffered storm damage and coastal erosion from a hurricane. Data centers do not qualify as a dire emergency and in any event, this type of moratorium is limited to 120 days.

We have revised this ordinance so that data centers would be allowed by special use permit in the M (Manufacturing) zoning district. The standards for a special use permit include a buffer from adjacent residential zones or structures used for residential purposes. This would leave the door open for a data center to be established where uses of a similar industrial scale and impact are currently permitted, either by right or by special use permit. Should an applicant wish to establish a data center in another zoning district, they would be free to seek a zoning amendment from the Town Council. If an applicant proposed a data center in property located in the M zone but not meeting the special use permit requirements, relief could be available through a variance application.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

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**PROPOSED ORDINANCE
No. 2026-XX**

**AN ORDINANCE IN AMENDMENT TO
CHAPTER 28
OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE BRISTOL TOWN CODE**

* * *

CHAPTER 28 – ZONING

* * *

IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED by the Town Council of Bristol, Rhode Island, that Chapter 28 of the Ordinances of the Town of Bristol be amended as follows:

* * *

ARTICLE I. – IN GENERAL

Sec. 28-1. Definitions.

Amend as follows:

* * *

Data center, principal means a room, building, structure, facility, or group of facilities designed, constructed, or operated as a principal use for the primary purpose of housing computer systems, servers, network equipment, and associated infrastructure for the storage, processing, transmission, or management of digital data or applications, at a scale and intensity substantially greater than that customarily associated with general office, institutional, commercial, or industrial uses. This term includes facilities supporting enterprise computing, colocation services, cloud computing, artificial intelligence processing, edge computing, or similar high-intensity computing operations, whether operated for a single user or multiple users, and whether permanent, modular, or temporary in nature. This term does not include server rooms or information technology infrastructure that is customarily incidental and subordinate to another permitted principal use.

* * *

ARTICLE III. – PERMITTED USES

* * *

Sec. 28-82. Use Regulations.

Amend the Permitted Use Table as Follows:

ZONING DISTRICTS	R-80	R-40	R-20	R-15	R-10 R-10SW R-8	R-6	LB	GB	D	W†	M	OS	EI	HPC	MMU	PI
INDUSTRIAL																
<u>Principal Data center</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>

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ARTICLE V. – SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS

* * *

Sec. 28-150. Special use permit standards for various uses.

* * *

(ggg) Special use permit standards for data centers.

- (1) The size of a data center structure containing computer servers, excluding space for personnel needs and office and maintenance use, must not exceed 12,500 square feet. Equipment cabinet height must not exceed seven (7) feet.
- (2) The site shall not be less than 200' from a residential zone or residential use.
- (3) Facility cooling using water evaporation technique is prohibited.
- (4) On-site power generation using fossil fuels is prohibited except for an occurrence of unforeseen loss of off -site power.
- (5) The use must comply with the Noise Ordinance, including Table 1, "Zoning District Noise Standard - Maximum Allowable Octave Band Sound Pressure Levels" for the industrial use running at full capacity including any backup generators. This condition must be demonstrated to the Town prior the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
- (6) A written fire suppression plan acceptable to and approved by the Fire Chief shall be required demonstrating the protocol and capacity to prevent, contain, and mitigate fires. Fire suppression systems shall be installed that meet the codes and standards of the National Fire Protection Association.
- (7) No Special Use Permit granted under this section shall become effective until the applicant submits an agreement with water and electrical utilities demonstrating that the Data Centers's utility demands can be met at the proposed location for the estimated life of the system.
- (8) When adjacent to a residential zone and/or property used for residential purposes, there shall be a minimum 25' landscape buffer or a minimum of 15' landscape buffer with a 6-foot fence.

(9) * * *

Data Center, Accessory – means a data center that is collocated with a permitted principal use where such facility is accessory and is in support of the principal facility use. The size of which must be no more than 20% of the gross square footage of the principal use, or 1,000 square feet, whichever is less.

ZONING DISTRICTS	R-80	R-40	R-20	R-15	R-10 R-10S W R-8	R-6	L B	G B	D	W †	M	O S	EI	HP C	MM U	PI
INDUSTRIAL																
<u>Accessory Data center</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>N</u>

This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage.

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ARTICLE III. – PERMITTED USES

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* * *

This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage.

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