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# Memo

**To:** Members of the Planning & Zoning Commission  
**From:** Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Community Planning & Development  
**Date:** May 21, 2026  
**Initiated By:** Christopher Will, AICP, Senior Planner  
Zachary C. Hounshell, Planner II  
**Re:** 26-001ADMC – West Innovation District Code Amendments and  
Setback and Screening Design Manual

## Summary

This is a request for review and recommendation of approval to City Council for proposed Zoning Code amendments to Sections 153.002, 153.016 and 153.037-153.042 for the removal of data centers as permitted or conditional uses, the creation of the ID-6, Research Transition District and the amendment of design standards associated with ID-6 in the West Innovation District (WID), and the creation of the West Innovation District Screening and Setback Design Manual.

## Background

City staff began a rezoning process of approximately 370 acres of land from R, Rural District to ID-2, Research Flex District, and ID-3, Research Assembly in February 2025. Following the Planning & Zoning Commission's recommendation of approval, the rezoning application was forwarded to City Council. Throughout the review process, residents in nearby neighborhoods expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the Flex Innovation development adjacent to existing single-family homes. Key issues included building height and scale, noise and light spillover from loading and service areas, increased traffic along Cosgray Road, environmental impacts, and the adequacy of landscaping and buffering between residential areas and future development. These concerns prompted City Council to table the rezoning ordinance in August 2025 and direct staff to work with stakeholders to draft targeted zoning code amendments to address compatibility concerns while preserving the long-term vision for development within the WID and ensuring consistency with the approved Envision Dublin Community Plan.

Based on this direction and subsequent public engagement, staff's near-term focus is on the proposed ID-6 zoning district amendment and the five properties (approximately 148 acres) located east of the railroad tracks, south of the future Shier Rings Road extension, and extending to Cosgray Road. In this area more sensitive zoning standards are proposed to provide additional protections, particularly as it transitions to existing residential development.

This application does not contemplate the rezoning of any particular property, but establishes a new zoning district that addresses these concerns for future properties to zone into. The rezoning of properties would occur at a future City Council meeting.

### **May 7 PZC – Summary of Actions**

The PZC reviewed and provided non-binding feedback for the draft WID Code Amendments and Screening and Setback Design Manual. Discussion and recommendations of the Commission are provided below:

- *Use definitions:* Commissioners requested that staff further sharpen language regarding the proposed advanced manufacturing definition to ensure alignment with the district intent, regarding inputs and outputs, and ensuring consideration for mitigating environmental impacts. Consultant Greg Dale noted that numeric performance standards present drafting and enforcement challenges and that the current framework places the burden of demonstration on applicants, subject to the review process.
- *Conditional use designation:* Interest was expressed in classifying advanced manufacturing as a conditional use to provide additional oversight. Dissenting views were offered stating that doing so would be contrary to the district's economic development intent and would create a disincentive for investment. Legal counsel noted that conditional uses in the WID are generally reserved for uses that depart from its core purpose. Following discussion, a majority of the Commission determined that further refinement of the use definition would address these concerns and the addition of a conditional use process would not be needed.
- *Fleet vehicles:* Commissioners requested greater specificity regarding the location and screening of fleet vehicle parking to prevent use as de facto signage or visual clutter, consistent with standards applied elsewhere in Dublin. Staff acknowledged the concern and agreed to revisit the draft language, noting that the ART (Administrative Review Team) process could address site-specific placement.
- *Renewable energy / wind equipment:* It was noted that the blanket exclusion of wind energy equipment may be overly broad, as small rooftop turbines differ significantly from utility-scale wind towers. Staff shared this general use was raised as a concern by the residents and removed from the draft.
- *Opacity standards:* Commissioners noted that the definition and measurement of the 90% opacity requirement should be more precisely defined, including seasonal considerations and whether the mounding itself factors into the calculation. Staff and the consultant teams agreed to further refine this language in the revised draft.
- *Mounding and buffering:* Commissioners discussed the proposed mounding and buffering design standards. They expressed a desire to ensure the design and implementation of the buffer is cohesive along the Cosgray Road frontage.
- *Sustainability bonus:* The possibility was raised of applying the existing 5% buildable area bonus for sustainable practices to the required buffer landscaping, to help offset development costs. Staff indicated this could be evaluated on a project-by-project basis through the ART process and agreed to examine the concept further.

Public comment was received from numerous Ballantrae neighborhood residents, who raised concerns including: the potential health and safety impacts of advanced manufacturing and research and development uses adjacent to homes and an elementary school; the need for enforceable standards for noise, emissions, waste streams, fleet vehicle counts, and traffic; requests to reclassify advanced manufacturing and R&D as conditional uses; concerns about the

adequacy of tree sizes proposed for day-one screening; and a request for comparable transition protections for residents along Houchard Road, who noted that properties adjacent to the ID-3 district had not received similar consideration. Residents of Houchard Road were advised that the ID-3 rezoning ordinance remains tabled at City Council and was not within the scope of the evening's proceedings.

## **Updates**

Following comments and recommendations received from both the Commission and residents, Staff have made the following updates to the code amendments and design manual. Changes from the May 7 PZC meeting are highlighted in yellow in the draft code amendments:

### *ID-6 District Intent*

The ID-6 intent language was modified to include utilizing principals of clean production when considering manufacturing uses. Principals of clean production include minimizing waste, hazardous inputs, hazardous byproducts, and stormwater discharge. These changes were added to address concerns of environmental impacts from potential development within the ID-6. The district intent emphasizes the provision of flexible spaces that can accommodate evolving businesses, research, and technology needs, provided such flexibility does not compromise the District's low-intensity character, environmental responsibility, or its compatibility with adjacent residential areas.

### *Advanced Manufacturing*

After considerable discussion, Staff recommends retaining the Advanced Manufacturing use category name to avoid unintended impacts to other zoning districts in the WID and the City, keeping the code amendments targeted to ID 6 without unnecessarily modifying other sections of Code. The definition, however, has been updated to incorporate principles of clean manufacturing, emphasizing a product life cycle approach that limits toxic or hazardous raw inputs and minimizes the generation of hazardous byproducts. The updated definition focuses on the production of finished products rather than the processing of raw materials, reinforcing that both inputs and outputs associated with these uses will be minimal in nature. These changes address concerns about compatibility with adjacent sensitive uses, such as residential, and limit operations that could pose hazards to surrounding properties. Additional minor edits to the definition were made without compromising the core intent and requirements of the use.

Based on the definition of Advanced Manufacturing and the intent of the ID 6 district, the following uses could be classified as permitted:

- Prototype development labs (hardware, electronics, medical devices)
- Small batch manufacturing
- 3D printing / additive manufacturing
- Precision electronics or instrumentation manufacturing
- Biotechnology labs with small scale production
- Flexible office users combining office, lab, and light production
- Engineering firms with fabrication and testing spaces

### *Performance Standards*

The performance standards listed with Advanced Manufacturing were added to Research and Development as a use-specific standard. Additionally, noise was added to the list of performance standards.

### *Fleet Vehicles*

In response to concerns about the types of vehicles that could be parked on a site and their locations, several updates to the Fleet Vehicle use category were made. To focus the changes on ID-6, several use-specific standards originally included in the new Fleet Vehicle definition were moved to the use-specific standards of Construction and Contract Services. The standards for Fleet Vehicles were then modified to remove the reference to commercial vehicles and to limit vehicle size to that of a standard off-street parking space. This would also prohibit semi-trailers, semi-tractors, and any non-recreational trailer used for commercial purposes from being parked on the site. The Code currently requires that all fleet vehicles be maintained within appropriately screened areas and shall not be placed forward of the structure.

### *Warehousing, Wholesaling, and Distribution*

Minor modifications were made to remove conflicting and repetitive use-specific standards. The updates do not change the intent behind limiting the warehousing, wholesaling, and distribution within buildings to products and goods intended for the use of the business.

### *Building Height*

The requirements for building height were updated to include both rooftop screening and mechanical equipment under the maximum 45-foot height.

### *Public Right-of-Way Setback*

Minor improvements were made to state that the setback along Cosgray is measured from the planned future right-of-way, not the existing. This update was included as Cosgray Road is expected to widen.

### *Landscape Opacity Standards*

The proposed language was updated regarding screening requirements from residential properties along the side and rear property lines. To address the goal of 90 percent opacity throughout the year from these property lines, staff has included planting layout requirements that state "tree spacing shall vary randomly in a staggered pattern between 6' and 10' on center to achieve a naturalized appearance. A minimum of 30 trees shall be provided per 100 linear feet of setback." This language is consistent with the requirements in the Setback and Screening Design Manual and provides a clear requirement that can be applied during the development process. This is in addition to recommendations for a variety of trees and the use of mounding to aid in the screening.

### *Renewable Energy / Sustainability Standards*

A provision was added stating that properties within the ID-6 District along Cosgray Road that include the 200-foot buffer also would qualify for a 5% increase in lot coverage. This update was provided based on recommendations from the Commission. Comments were also shared about the addition of renewable energy opportunities, such as small-scale wind energy. Staff maintained the proposed limits on alternative energy sources based on prior resident feedback received.

### *Setback and Screening Design Manual*

- Pg. 16 & 18 (Cutsheets): Staff replaced the axon section with a secondary 2D section that illustrates where pavement is adjacent to the back of the setback, as well as a 45-foot building. This was intended to address comments from the Commission that pavement is more likely to be immediately adjacent to the setback than the back of a building.
- Pg. 24 (Shared-Use Paths): Staff updated the utility easement section to include opportunity for public access via a shared-use path. This update addresses comments from the Commission about allowing shared-use paths to meander into the setback.
- Pg. 45 (Tree Planting Recommendations): Staff updated the language under Installation Sizes to address comments regarding the height of trees upon installation. Since evergreen trees are measured by their height and not caliper size, staff clarified that evergreens should be planted at 12-14 feet tall. Deciduous trees are measured by caliper inch, so the manual calls for these trees to range from 2-3 inches. However, a typical deciduous tree at these sizes is typically 10-12 feet tall. Most species that are included in the Species Selection section of the manual are relatively fast growing, averaging between 2-3 inches in height per year.

### **Next Steps & Process**

The following outlines the next steps in the process.

- 1) January 22, 2026 – Planning & Zoning Commission - Status Update / Discussion (no decision)
- 2) May 7, 2026 – Planning & Zoning Commission – Code Amendments Introduction
- 3) May 21, 2026 – Planning & Zoning Commission – Code Amendments Second Review / Recommendation to City Council
- 4) June 8, 2026 (tent.) – City Council – Code Amendments First Reading
- 5) July 1, 2026 (tent.) – City Council – Code Amendments & Rezoning Second Reading / Determination

Following the Commission’s recommendation to City Council on May 21, Staff and the consultants will revise the draft amendments and proceed to the June 8 CC meeting for a first reading.

### **Recommendation**

Recommendation of approval to City Council of the proposed WID Code Amendments and Setback and Screening Design Manual.