

File No. 260030

**5825 W. Hope Av. (former Walmart)
Midtown Center DIZ Overlay
Project Narrative – Existing Building
4.13.2026 (Revised 6.17.2026)**

AFS Milwaukee, LLC acquired the approx. 15-acre site at 5825 W. Hope Ave. in June of 2022, which includes a currently vacant 160,000 sf building that was previously occupied by Walmart and a surface parking lot. The site is zoned Regional Business (RB2) and within the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) Overlay. The DIZ Overlay was established in 2000 and entails performance standards including a permitted and prohibited use list as well as design standards. Projects within the DIZ Overlay are subject to the DIZ performance standards.

AFS Milwaukee, LLC has partnered with Gorman & Company and the City of Milwaukee to propose a dynamic development for the entire parcel that entails affordable housing, community-serving space, and self-service storage.

Development of the overall site will entail interior and exterior alterations to the existing building accommodate multiple uses and construction of new residential buildings on the surface parking lot to the north of the building. Site work is also proposed around the existing building. While the various components that constitute the redevelopment of this site are proposed by several applicants, the uses, changes to the existing building and site, and the new residential plans have been coordinated to ensure a cohesive, complementary and vibrant environment for future residents, commercial space occupants, and patrons.

The overall proposed development provides a positive solution to a large critical site within Midtown Center which has sat vacant since Walmart left in January 2016. The large building size and zoning has been a challenge to find a replacement tenant, but the team of Gorman & Company, the City of Milwaukee, and AFS Milwaukee, LLC has created vibrant development which will help energize the Midtown Center neighborhood.

Exhibits for the overall development of this site as it relates to the DIZ Overlay are provided separately for the existing building and the new development within the existing surface parking lot, including a project narrative, drawings, and zoning review matrix. This exhibit relates to the land south of W. Hope Ave., inclusive of the existing building and land adjacent to it.

1. Existing building (former Walmart) – subject of this project narrative:

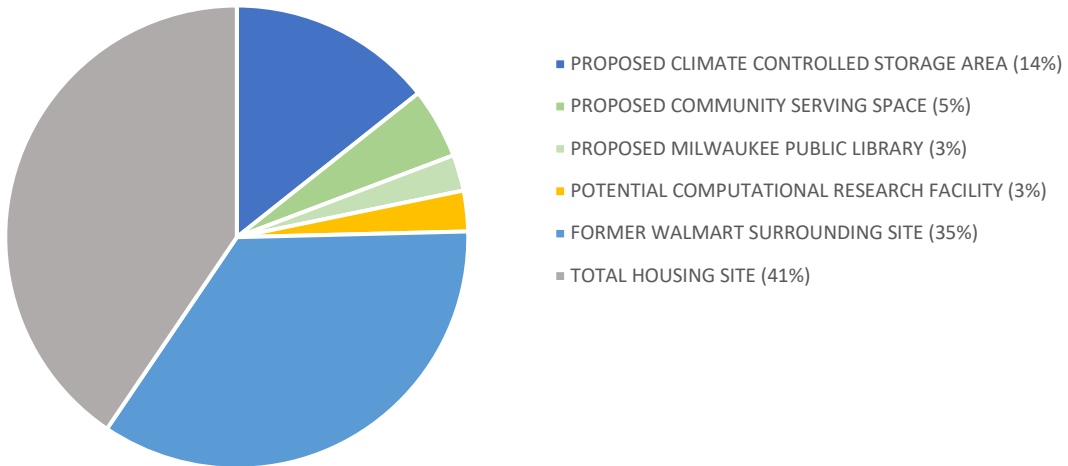
- a. North portion – approx. 51,000 sf of the building will be occupied by community-serving uses anticipated to include a Milwaukee Public Library (approx. 17,000 sf) and adjacent City of Milwaukee tenant space (approx. 33,000 sf).
 - i. Façade alterations – to accommodate new tenant spaces and modernize the aesthetic of the building; subject to future tenant preferences/needs and approval by the City Plan Commission. This includes the removal of the existing greenhouse structures.
 - ii. Site work –

1. Buildout of a new accessory surface parking lot on currently vacant land located east of the building, subject to future tenant needs and future City Plan Commission approval. Parking lot will be designed per DIZ and City of Milwaukee zoning requirements.
 2. Site work along W Hope Ave will be revised to meet the proposed tenant needs (additional drop-off or parking) as part of a future file subject to City Plan Commission approval– one possible alteration, as drawn on attached site plan, could be the addition of a reading garden for the proposed library.
 - iii. Loading zone provided along the south edge of W. Hope Av. will remain as-is (approx. 50') but may be extended if additional parking or drop-off needs are required for proposed tenants.
 - b. South portion – approx. 108,000 sf of the building will be occupied by a self-storage facility and Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility, specifically focused on High Performance Computing (HPC) (-up to 19,000 sf).
 - i. These uses require a deviation from the DIZ use list as it is currently prohibited. See deviation narrative for additional information specific to the deviation request.
 - ii. Façade alterations –Accommodate a new entrance on the west side of the building for the self-service storage office– see elevations. Some existing door openings may be widened to allow for easier access to the self-storage areas. Existing entrances on the south and west façade of the building will be utilized for the Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility.
 - iii. HVAC and emergency generator systems may be added to the south side of the building (interior rooms) to support the new proposed functions; all exterior new equipment would be screened from view with an engineered acoustic screen wall system (at existing loading dock bay) to enclosed the closed-loop dry cooler systems for the potential Computational Research Facility. Based on equipment assumptions, the exterior dry cooler area is expected to operate in the approximate range of 55–70 dBA without sound mitigation. With an engineered acoustic screening wall system, we would expect sound levels to be reduced into the approximate 45–50 dBA range at nearby property lines. With the proposed acoustic screening wall system, projected sound levels near surrounding property lines are expected to be comparable to light ambient commercial background noise or a quiet office environment. All noise is subject to the requirements of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.
 - iv. Site work – Landscaping along N 60th St. will be updated to meet Type A landscaping requirements per city of Milwaukee zoning code.
2. **(Separately Approved by CPC on 4/27/26 as File No. 252155) Multi-family development** on the existing surface parking lot north of the building – see documentation provided to the City Plan Commission.

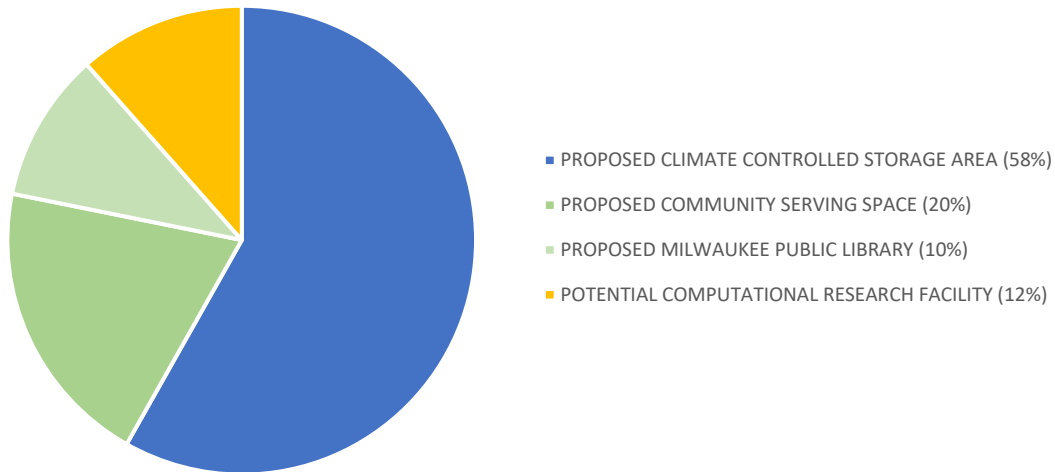
The proposed Midtown Commons development will reshape the Midtown Center, positively influencing the neighborhood while providing critical access to affordable housing in the city of Milwaukee. The proposed development perfectly complements the City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Plan Housing Element by increasing housing choice and access to affordable housing, creating a walkable neighborhood, and increasing housing density and affordability within the Midtown Center.

- a. Phased development: (2) 100-unit multi-family residential buildings along W. Hope Av.
- b. Surface parking lot in the middle of the site, between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 buildings, for residents. Guest parking is being added along W Hope Ave.
- c. A proposed play area along W. Hope Ave. provides play space for children living in the development & neighborhood, a critical element for an urban in-fill project with a development with so many 2 & 3-bedroom units.
- d. Alterations to the north side of W. Hope Ave. to add loading zones adjacent to the Phase 1 and Phase 2 building's main entrances and angled parking for guests.

FULL MIDTOWN SITE BREAKDOWN



FORMER WALMART BUILDING BREAKDOWN



Existing Building - Overall:

- Landscaping:
 - Landscaping will be added along the new self-service storage office and Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility entrance.
 - Landscaping between N. 60th St. and the existing west parking lot will be updated to comply with the DIZ standards and landscaping zoning requirements, Type 'A'. The existing surface parking lot on the west side of the building will remain paved and designed as-is. Existing landscaping within the curbed islands will be cleaned up and dead plantings will be replaced. All landscaping will be regularly maintained.
 - Landscaping within the future new east parking lot will comply with the DIZ and zoning code landscaping standards.
 - Additional plantings will be added along the modified north building frontage; determined and coordinated by tenant's improvement design.

- Lighting:
 - Existing lighting for walkways and parking areas will remain in place and operational.
 - The new east parking lot will be illuminated in accordance with the DIZ standards and any applicable provisions of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances. Lighting poles will not exceed 25' in height. Cut-off fixtures will be utilized.
 - Additional wall-pack lighting will be installed on the building to illuminate green spaces and enhance safety.

- Waste Management:

- Existing screened dumpster areas will remain as-is, located on the south side of the building
- An additional trash enclosure is being proposed for the northern tenant spaces (proposed City of Milwaukee & Milwaukee Public Library tenants) at the proposed staff parking lot on the west side of the building. The enclosure will be designed with burnished CMU block that coordinates with the existing facility exterior materials.
- Signage:
 - No additional freestanding signage is anticipated. The existing Midtown signage to remain at site entry.
 - Building wall signs will be Type A and following the DIZ Overlay standards with respect to size. Compliant building signage may be approved administratively.
 - Type B signage may be included if one of the northern tenants requires changeable messages, subject to approval of a deviation by the City Plan Commission for this sign type.
 - All other sign types, including temporary signs, will follow the general provisions of the zoning code.
- Other:
 - No outdoor storage is allowed anywhere on the site.

North Portion – Community-Serving Spaces: The north approx. 51,000 sf of the building will be occupied by community-serving uses, anticipated to include a Milwaukee Public Library (approx. 17,000 sf) and adjacent (anticipated to be) City of Milwaukee tenant space (approx. 34,000 sf). Refer to Former Capitol Court Mall (aka Midtown Center) Development Incentive Zone Exhibit A, File No. 040068, for allowable uses. As currently proposed, libraries, community centers, and offices are allowed.

The uses within the approximately 51,000 sf will serve as a hub for community/retail activities, designed to foster engagement and connection. This element of the redevelopment will align with the DIZ's original intent to create vibrant, multi-use spaces that benefit the local community.

- Partnership Opportunities: The center will collaborate with various City of Milwaukee agencies, community organizations, and local stakeholders to determine the optimal use of the space.
- Flexible Functions: Potential uses include a city-run library, a community center, voting and polling location, police substation, and retail/event spaces.
- Accessible Design: Renovated storefront windows and entrances may create a welcoming and transparent facade. Flexible interior layouts will cater to diverse programming needs, including educational workshops, public meetings, and cultural events.
- Enhanced Services: The center will serve as a centralized location for vital community resources, bridging gaps in accessibility and promoting civic engagement.

The goal is to bridge the gap between the Midtown Shopping Center and surrounding neighborhoods by

providing a central location for interaction, education, and shared experiences or extend supportive retail environments consistent with the DIZ standards and comprehensive plan.

- North façade of the building facing W. Hope Ave. will be modified to include additional entrances and windows, improving the existing condition and meeting the goals and standards of the DIZ relating to articulating building entrances and providing variety in building design. The proposed design shall enhance the existing façade and streetscape. Additional glazing and openings will be provided to support the proposed tenant experience and activate W. Hope Ave.
 - Final façade design modifications will be submitted for approval by the City Plan Commission.
- Pedestrian access along the north side of the building will be revised to enhance the proposed library and MKE space. A reading garden and library terrace are currently being suggested, but final design will be developed by the design team associated with these suites and part of a future City Plan Commission file. Additional plantings will be added along the modified north building frontage; determined and coordinated by tenant's improvement design.
- Vehicle parking for the proposed library will occur within an existing parking area along the west side of the building. See attached plans identifying parking lot layout and ADA parking locations.
- Parking for the remainder of the proposed community-serving space will be within a newly constructed parking lot on a vacant portion of the site to the east of the existing building. DIZ landscaping requirements, including providing 1 tree per 15 parking spaces, will be followed. Final design of proposed parking lot will be subject to city plan commission approval.
- Wall signage will comply with DIZ standards and be Type A. Final signs will be approved by DCD staff prior to permit issuance to ensure compliance with the DIZ.

South Portion – Self-Service Storage Facility and Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility:

The south approx. 108,000 sf of the former Walmart building will be repurposed into a state-of-the-art, secure, and climate-controlled indoor self-service storage facility and a Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility, specifically focused on High Performance Computing (HPC) (up to 19,000 sf of the 108,000 sf). See **zoning review matrix** for more detailed analysis of the proposed development alongside specific applicable DIZ overlay standards.

- These uses are prohibited by the DIZ overlay and require a deviation from the overlay use list. See deviation narrative for additional details specific to the deviation request, including limitations on permit issuance for the self-service storage facility, and responses to the 4 deviation criteria.
- Storage Access and layout:
 - Customers will access the site via the west parking lot off of N. 60th St.

- Office is located on the west façade of the building. A new entrance and pedestrian walkway leading to it will be added under the existing canopy. New storefront & door will be added. See proposed plan.
- Vehicle entrance for interior loading/unloading is adjacent to the office and will utilize existing overhead doors that had been used as automotive bays. Vehicles will not be allowed within the general storage bay areas.
- Customers will utilize the indoor unloading zone located at the existing automotive bays or the existing access doors at the south of the building. No new doors will be added, but the single panel doors on the south may be enlarged to 40"-48" wide. Customers will be allowed to temporarily park outside these entrances.
- Customer parking will occur in the existing parking lot to the west (see plan) and temporary unloading parking will occur at the south by building entrances. Employee parking is located at the south side of the building beside an existing entrance.
- Security Features:
 - 60+ high-definition cameras, tenant-specific access codes, and a staffed management office will ensure safety and peace of mind.
 - The facility will operate 7 days a week fully staffed, with tenant access from 6 am to 10 pm.

No outdoor storage will be permitted, maintaining a clean and organized appearance.
- Data Processing/Computer Services/Computational Research facility, specifically focused on High Performance Computing (HPC) (up to 19,000 sf within the 108,000sf)
 - The proposed portion of the existing approximately 160,000 square foot retail structure would be adaptively reused as a small-scale Computational Research Facility, occupying approximately 19,000 square feet of the building footprint. The facility would support advanced computational modeling, data processing, and research applications serving industries such as healthcare, engineering, scientific modeling, and other computational research activities.
 - Type of Research Conducted:

This facility is best described as a Computational Research Facility. These facilities use servers and high-performance computing equipment to process large amounts of data, run simulations, train or test models, and support research that would otherwise take significant time.

 - Potential research areas may include:
 - Healthcare modeling and medical research support
 - Drug discovery and life-science simulations
 - Imaging analysis
 - Engineering simulations
 - Financial modeling
 - Climate, logistics, or large-data analysis
 - University, institutional research workloads
 - The research is computational in nature, meaning the activity is performed through computers, software, and data processing.

- Potential Clients include:
 - Hospitals and healthcare research groups
 - Universities
 - Pharmaceutical or biotech research companies
 - Engineering firms
 - Financial institutions
 - Government or public-sector research groups

- The proposed facility would operate with an approximate 7 MW IT load, which is considered small relative to larger hyperscale computing facilities that often exceed hundreds of megawatts. The total project is 10 MW maximum utility capacity, with an anticipated IT load of approximately 7 MW.
 - This is considered a very small facility compared to large hyperscale data center campuses, which can exceed 300 MW. This project is not a hyperscale campus. It is a small, contained computational research facility with no expansion potential due to the electrical infrastructure.

- Activities conducted within the facility would involve computer-based research processes including advanced healthcare and biomedical computational modeling, such as predictive disease analysis, medical imaging processing, genomic and molecular modeling, pharmaceutical and drug discovery simulations, diagnostic research, patient outcome modeling, population health analytics, and simulation of treatment responses to improve healthcare outcomes. Additional uses may include machine learning development, large-scale data analysis, engineering simulations, and scientific research applications. The use does not involve manufacturing processes, hazardous chemical handling, industrial emissions, or material processing activities.

- The facility would utilize a fully closed-loop cooling system with dry coolers, resulting in extremely low water consumption of less than approximately 5 gallons per day under normal operations. The system does not discharge water into municipal sewer systems and does not create process wastewater streams.

- Equipment Noise Levels:
 - The sound level at the Project lot line will be in compliance with the current City of Milwaukee code of ordinances 80-64
 - Day: 60 dBA
 - Night: 50 dBA

- What noise sounds like:
 - 30 dBA - Whisper
 - 40 dBA - Soft Rainfall
 - 45 dBA - Quiet Suburban street at night
 - 50 dBA - Quiet Office
 - 55 dBA - Light traffic 100' away
 - 60 dBA - Normal Conversation an arm's length away
 - 65 dBA - Busy Restaurant
 - 70 dBA - Average 4-Lane Street Traffic / Highway traffic 50' away
 - 80 dBA - City bus interior

Equipment associated with the Computational Research Facility:

EQUIPMENT:	NOTES:
GPU Servers / Racks	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Inrow CDUs	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Liquid Cooling Pumps	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
UPS Systems	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Switchgear / Electrical Gear	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Pump Room	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Generators	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Generator Exhaust Silencers	Utilize critical-grade silencers, tested once a month
Transformers	Low-Frequency
Dry Coolers	Utilize Engineered acoustic screening system
Rooftop / Exterior HVAC	Typical commercial rooftop units, existing & new equipment

- Based on equipment assumptions, the exterior dry cooler area is expected to operate in the approximate range of 55–70 dBA without sound mitigation. With an engineered acoustic screening wall system, we would expect sound levels to be reduced into the approximate 45–50 dBA range at nearby property lines
 - With the proposed acoustic screening wall system, projected sound levels near surrounding property lines are expected to be comparable to light ambient commercial background noise or a quiet office environment.

- The facility would maintain 24-hour operational staffing with approximately 15 technical and support positions, including computational researchers, data technicians, network specialists, systems engineers, facility operators, and maintenance personnel. Typical activity levels are expected to consist primarily of employee vehicle traffic, equipment monitoring, and routine facility operations, resulting in a low-impact use profile relative to many traditional commercial or industrial uses.
- Overall, this proposed computational research use represents a modern, low-impact adaptive reuse of an existing retail structure that creates specialized technical employment while maintaining minimal impacts related to noise, water use, traffic generation, and public infrastructure demands.
- Anticipated Maximum Power Load
 - The total project is 10 MW maximum utility capacity, with an anticipated IT load of approximately 7 MW.
 - This is considered a very small facility compared to large hyperscale data center campuses, which can exceed 300 MW.
 - This project is not a hyperscale campus. It is a small, contained computational research facility with no expansion potential due to the electrical infrastructure.
- Number of Workers: The proposed facility is expected to have approximately 15 total employees. The facility would generally be monitored and staffed 24/7, with approximately 2–3 employees on site per shift, depending on operational needs.
 - Expected positions may include:
 - Facility manager
 - Operations manager
 - IT / server technicians
 - Network technician
 - Electrical/mechanical technician
 - Security / monitoring personnel
 - Maintenance support
 - Remote monitoring and technical support personnel
 - Administrative or compliance support
- Most day-to-day staffing would be focused on monitoring, equipment checks, security, maintenance coordination, and technical response. Some technical or network support may be handled remotely by bigger data centers, which is typical for this type of facility.
- Examples of Similar Facilities in Milwaukee

Milwaukee already has multiple data center and colocation facilities operating in the city. Examples include:

- 1234 N. Broadway – Milwaukee, WI - In a dense urban area of Milwaukee. Facility is within 70' from apartments, office and event center. Zoning Code C9B(A)
 - Typical characteristics of C9B(A) include:
 - High-density residential and mixed-use development
 - Apartments, condos, and some ground-floor commercial/service uses
 - Specialty uses depending on site-specific approvals
 - Urban form with reduced setbacks and downtown-style development standards

- 3701 West Burnham Street – Milwaukee, WI - This property sits 120' from high density single-family homes. Zoning Code IL2
 - Typical uses often associated with IL2 include:
 - Warehousing and distribution- Approved warehouse in the former Lowes-
 - Office and technology operations
 - Research and development- Already approved in the overlay
 - Contractor shops and flex-industrial space

- 3135 W Highland Blvd, Milwaukee, WI - In a residential neighborhood. Only 25' from the first house. Zoning Code PD

- 324 E Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI - Wells Building- Has Retail, Office and Data center within a very close proximity to other buildings. Zoning Code C9F(B)
 - Typical characteristics of C9F(B):
 - High-density urban development
 - Mixed residential and commercial uses
 - Office and business use
 - Retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses
 - Many of these facilities are located within normal urban environments and near existing commercial, residential, or mixed-use areas. Many existing examples that similar facilities can operate within an urban setting.

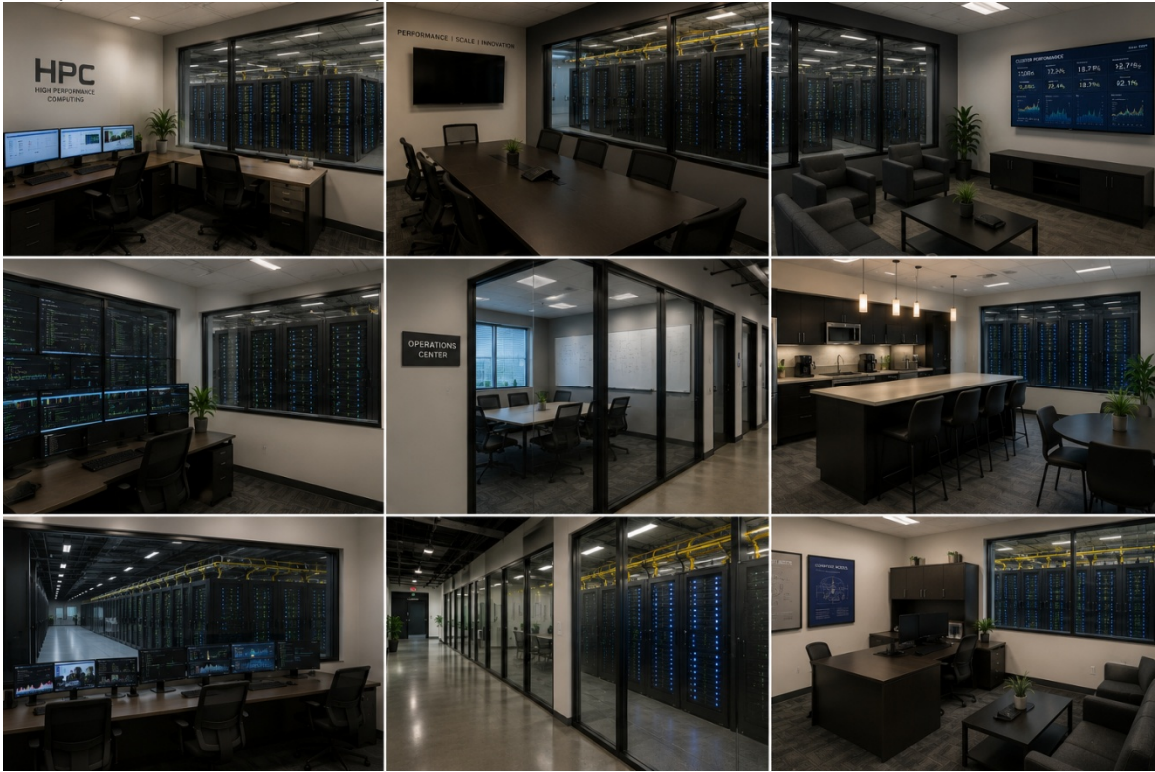
- Summary Statement: This is a small-scale Computational Research Facility intended to support server-based research and data processing. It is not a large hyperscale data center campus, does not involve chemical processing, does not use toxic materials, and is expected to operate as a secure, self-contained technology facility with limited staff and controlled operations.

The following images are examples of similar spaces described above:

Self-Storage:



Computational Research Facility:



Exterior Mechanical Equipment Screening:



- Community Impact:
 - Providing secure, climate-controlled storage meets the needs of local residents, particularly those living in smaller housing units, while contributing to the overall revitalization of the area.
 - The Climate-controlled Storage and Data Processing / Computer Services / Computational Research facility provides employment opportunities to the community, both technical and service.
 - Additionally, it will illuminate the blight within this center and install a creative use for the remaining approx. 108,000 sq ft of vacancy.