

What is a Moratorium?

A moratorium is a temporary suspension or halt of a specific activity or legal obligation. It is typically enacted by a governing body to pause actions—like land development, rezoning requests, and acceptance of applications —until underlying issues can be evaluated, resolved, or properly regulated.

Moratoriums remain in effect until a specific date is reached, a crisis passes, or **new ordinances are officially adopted**.

Moratoriums can be easily extended with a resolution and a motion by a Commissioner or Council Member. But they can't last forever.

Typically, a Moratorium can be enacted for 12 months, 18 months is pushing it.

Moratoriums act as a TEMPORARY pause on the approval, permitting, and construction of new development related to the industry.

A moratorium is NOT a forever ban. It is essentially a shield enacted around a community while appropriate ordinances are created, available for public review, and voted on by Commissioners or City Council members.

Driven by rapid AI and crypto growth, these pauses allow local governments to update zoning, environmental, and infrastructure regulations to manage massive power and water consumption.

Who can enact a Moratorium?

At the local level, only elected members of the governing body (e.g., City Council Members, Mayor, or County Commissioners) can officially introduce a motion to enact a zoning or development moratorium. It only needs a majority vote to pass. (That would be three votes in favor, if there were five commissioners). Private citizens cannot make the motion, but they can petition and **pressure** their local representatives to introduce one.

Your options for action depend on who you are and where you are located:

- If you are a local official: You can draft a moratorium ordinance and officially introduce a motion during a public meeting. Sowega Aquifer Alliance is happy to provide an example. There is one available on this site. (City Moratorium Resolution or County Moratorium Resolution).
- If you are a resident: You cannot make the motion, but you can lobby your local representatives, speak at public comment sessions, or file petitions to urge an elected official to introduce a moratorium. I encourage everyone to reach out to their local reps and encourage, or demand, a moratorium now.

How long they last?

Durations vary entirely based on the municipality or state. Typically, local governments impose pauses ranging from 180 days to 12 months while studying the impacts. Some counties are opting for 18-month to 24-month Moratoriums, but that can create legal challenges if Ordinances are not being actively developed.

What they do?

During the Moratorium window, local governments halt the acceptance and approval of new applications. It essentially freezes any new development outlined in the Moratorium.

However, existing data center applications or developments are usually permitted to keep operating, and some projects that were already formally approved before the freeze can often proceed.

Ordinances can, and should, be written with public comment and review. Community members deserve to have the answers to their questions fully answered.

Why is time of the essence?

As mentioned above, Moratoriums are not typically retroactive. If a data center application is submitted prior to the Moratorium enactment, it will still be considered and voted on by local officials.