DATA CENTER PLANNING GUIDE

Monroe County Planning Commission
July 2026

MONROE COUNTY PLANNING

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Section I: Purpose

Guide for Data Center Planning Policy

This report is intended to provide municipalities, local officials, boards and commissions, residents, and other stakeholders with a shared foundational understanding of what data centers are and why they are increasingly relevant to local land use decision-making. Because data centers can vary significantly in scale, purpose, operational intensity, energy demand, utility needs, and site design, this report provides common terminology and a basic framework for evaluating such facilities within the context of community planning.

This report is not intended to replace local ordinances or comprehensive planning documents, but instead to help understand how those tools may be used to evaluate where data centers may be appropriate, what standards may be necessary, and how impacts can be mitigated through zoning, land development, stormwater, and environmental review processes. In this way, the report provides a planning resource that supports informed decision-making, encourages regulatory consistency, and helps communities proactively address data center development.

A core purpose of this guide is to help municipalities distinguish data centers from other commercial, industrial, office, utility, or IT-related uses that may appear similar in certain respects, but differ substantially in function, infrastructure demand, site design, and potential impacts. Data centers are not defined solely by the presence of computers, servers, telecom equipment, or digital systems; rather, they are characterized by the concentration of IT infrastructure, supporting electrical and mechanical systems, security measures, utility systems, and operational needs.

Municipal Preparedness

As data centers become more common, municipalities may benefit from evaluating their comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, utility planning documents, emergency service capabilities, environmental policies, and review procedures before receiving a data center proposal. By identifying key planning considerations in advance, municipalities can better determine whether existing regulations are adequate, whether amendments may be warranted, what information should be required from applicants, and how public officials, residents, utility providers, emergency responders, engineers, solicitors, planners, and other reviewing agencies should be involved.

Therefore, the overall purpose of this report is not to advocate for or against data center development, but to provide a clear, balanced, and practical framework for local governments to evaluate such facilities in a legally defensible, technically informed, and community-specific manner.

Section II: What is a Data Center?

Data centers represent a specialized form of digital infrastructure that supports the storage, processing, management, transmission, and security of modern data and technology services. As demand for cloud computing, artificial intelligence, internet-based platforms, enterprise technology systems, low-latency digital services, and distributed-ledger operations continue to grow, communities are increasingly required to understand how these facilities function, how they differ from ordinary industrial buildings, and how their scale, purpose, and infrastructure needs may vary. This section establishes a working definition of data centers, identifies the information technology, hardware, software, building, site, utility, mechanical, electrical, communications, safety, and security components commonly associated with these facilities, and describes the principal categories of data centers by scale, operational purpose, site characteristics, power demand, server space, and potential water demand.

Definition:

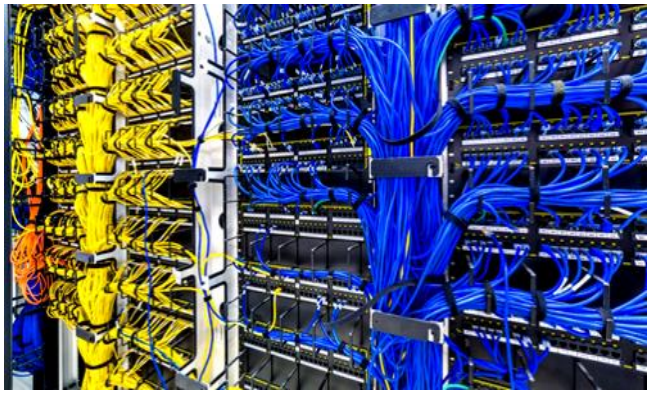
A data center is a building, group of buildings and/or structures, facility, or campus designed, constructed, operated, and/or maintained primarily to house computer systems, servers, and other related information technology infrastructure for the storage, processing, and management of digital data, cloud/ internet based services, artificial intelligence workloads, distributed-ledger operations, or other digital information services.

Hyperscale Data Center—*Source: Meta, 2026*

IT, Software, and Hardware Components:

A data center may include server halls, computer rooms, server rooms, data storage areas, network operations areas, telecommunications rooms, fiber-optic interconnection areas, equipment staging areas, control rooms, monitoring rooms, electrical rooms, battery rooms or areas, generator areas, mechanical areas, administrative or support offices, loading and maintenance areas, and other spaces customarily associated with the operation, maintenance, security, and management of digital infrastructure.

Server Halls/Racks—*Source: Maheswari Sushant, Aug 27, 2023*



Server Rack Data Cabling—*Source: Amco Enclosures, 2026*

Section II: What is a Data Center?

Site, Facility, or Campus Components

A data center may include infrastructure, equipment, systems, structures, and improvements associated or accessory to its operation; this includes power distribution equipment, substations, transformers, switchgears, uninterruptible power supply systems, batteries, energy storage systems, backup or standby generators, fuel storage or supply systems, chillers, cooling towers, dry coolers, air handlers, liquid cooling systems, heat-rejection equipment, pumps, piping, ventilation systems, humidity-control systems, monitoring systems, fire detection-suppression systems, physical security, fencing, access-controls, surveillance systems, automation systems, stormwater facilities, utility connections, water-supply systems, wastewater systems, and other mechanical, electrical, communications, safety, security, and on-site utility systems.

Electrical Substation—*Source: Vecteezy, 2026*

Cooling Towers/Water Treatment—*Source: SAMCO, 2026*

Above-ground gas storage tanks—*Source: LUTZ, 2026*

Above-ground water storage tanks and cooling towers—*Source: Yancey Dwayne, February 9, 2026*

Common Exclusions:

Ordinary developments are not considered data centers because they contain computers, telecommunications equipment, network equipment, server closets or rooms, or information technology equipment that is accessory or incidental to another principal use.

Section II: What is a Data Center?

Scale Categories of Data Centers:

Data centers can typically be categorized, by scale and service purpose, as one of the following:

Hyperscale Data Centers:

Extraordinarily large, campus-like data center facilities that may contain multiple buildings or structures of varying sizes, types, and purposes that support global-scale cloud, artificial intelligence, internet-based, enterprise, or general digital data services.

Hyperscale Data Center Example*: Fleming Construction Group, 2025*

Cloud Data Centers:

Large data center facilities that may contain one or more buildings or structures of varying size, type, or purpose; supports national or regional cloud computing, hosted computing, digital platform or service operations.

Cloud Scale Data Center Example: *Google, 2026*

Enterprise or Regional Data Centers:

Moderately sized data center facilities that primarily support the computing, data storage and processing, application, network, or digital service needs of a specific organization, institution, agency, enterprise, or regional service area.

Enterprise/Regional Scale Data Center Example*: VIPoint Solutions, 2018*

Section II: What is a Data Center?

Edge or Micro Data Centers:

Small, localized data center facilities designed to provide low-latency, real-time, and/or geographically proximate computing, data storage, data processing, networking, or digital service functions.

Micro Data Center Example*: Armag Corporation, 2026*

Cryptocurrency Mining Centers:

Structures and/or facilities, including modular, containerized, warehouse-based facilities used primarily for blockchain transaction validation, cryptocurrency mining distributed-ledger computation, or similar specialized computational operations.

Cyrpto-mining center units, Nesquehoning, PA*: Weiss Isabell, WVIA News, April 18, 2024*

Cyrpto-mining center on-site power generation, Nesquehoning, PA*: Jon Harris, The Morning Call, August 4, 2021*

Category Name	Purpose	Site Type	Property or Site	Power Demand	Size	Number of Servers	*Water Demand
"Hyperscale" Data Centers	Global-scale cloud, artificial intelligence, and general data services	Large Campus	100 – 1,000 acres	100+ MW	100,000+ SQ FT	10,000+	10,000 – 5,000,000 gallons per day
"Cloud" Data Centers	National or Regional cloud and enterprise services	Campus or Large Facility	10 – 40+ acres	10-99 MW	50,000-200,000 SQ FT	1,000+	1,000+ gallons per day
"Enterprise" or "Regional" Data Centers	Supports specific organizations, Institutions, or agencies	Moderate- Size Facility	5 – 15+ acres	1-10 MW	10,000-50,000 SQ FT	100's – 1,000's	100's – 1,000's gallons per day
"Edge" or "Micro" Data Centers	Super low latency and real-time services	Small, Localized Facility	Less than 1 acre	Less than 1 MW	Less than 10,000 SQ FT	Less than 100	Minimal
"Cryptocurrency Mining" Centers	Dedicated to blockchain transaction validation	Small, Localized Facility	Less than 5 acres	10-100 MW	**	Less than 100	Minimal

*Extremely dependent on the type, design, and scale of the cooling technology utilized.

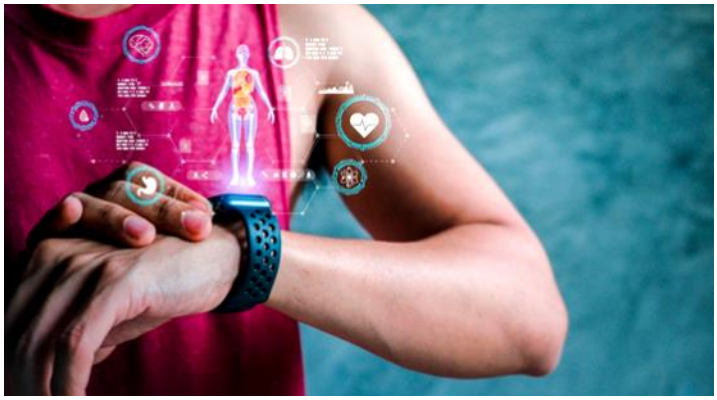
**Due to the dynamic and unique characteristics of "Crypotcurrency Mining Centers", mainly the ability to locate server equipment in temporary, mobile, modular, and other non-traditional units and/or structures, a calculation or figure could not be provided.

Section III: Why Data Centers… Why now?

Demand for data center development is being shaped by broad structural changes in the information technology economy. Businesses, governments, institutions, and households increasingly rely on cloud-based systems for data storage, software delivery, cybersecurity, financial transactions, e-commerce, streaming media, telecommunications, remote work, logistics, health care, education, and public services. As society moves from local server and desktop-based system demand to cloud platforms, the infrastructure required to support those services has shifted toward large-scale data centers. This shift correlates to demand for facilities that require reliable power, fiber connectivity, redundancy, cooling capacity, and physical security. In this context, data centers are not simply stand-alone industrial or utility facilities; they are a foundational component of the modern digital economy, supporting the continuous exchange, storage, processing, and protection of information across nearly every sector.

Source: Computer Science Degree Hub, 2026

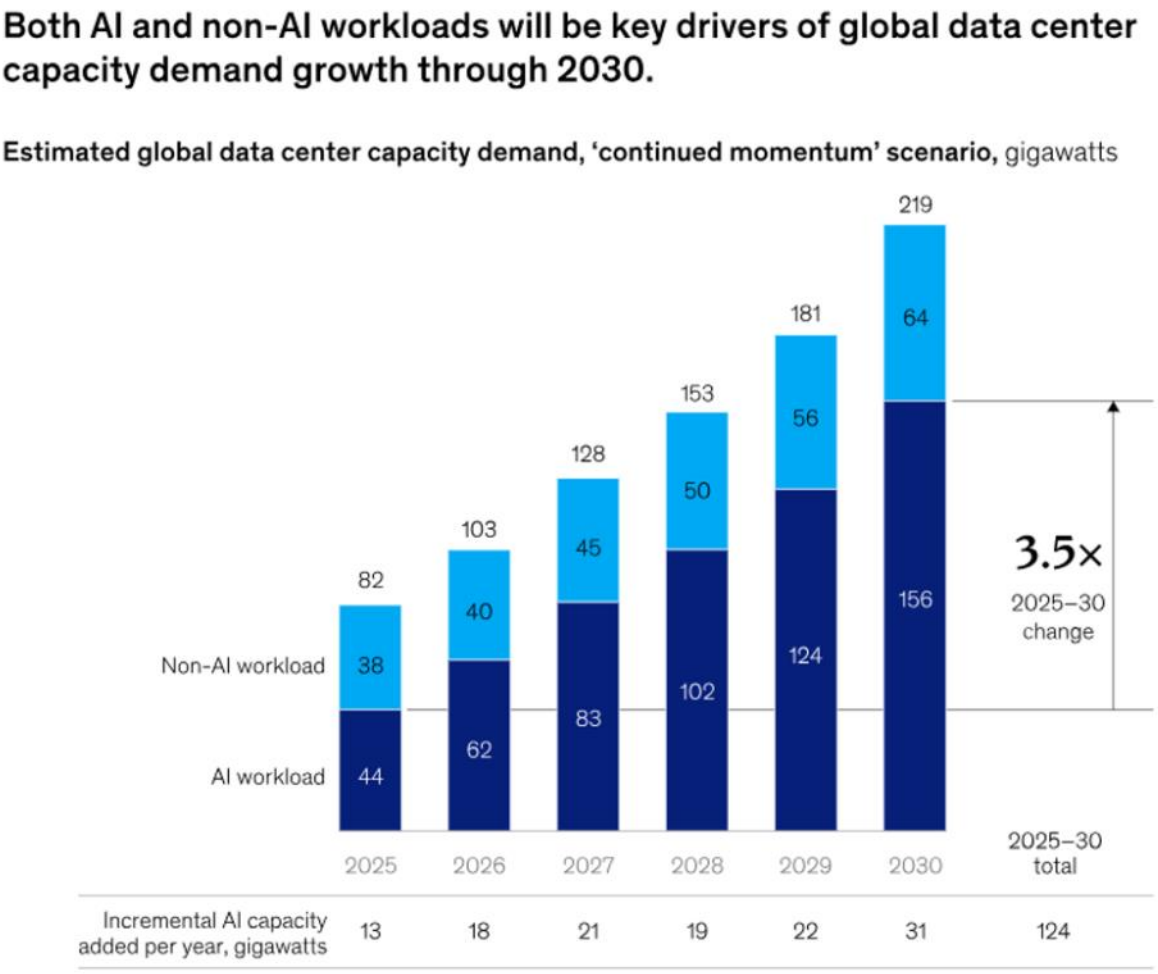
The development of artificial intelligence has further accelerated this demand by substantially increasing the amount of computing capacity required to train, operate, and deploy advanced digital systems. Generative AI, machine learning, automated analytics, language processing, image and video generation, robotics, and other AI-enabled services rely on specialized high-performance computing infrastructure. Unlike many traditional computing functions, AI workloads can be especially energy-intensive, particularly where models are trained on large datasets or are deployed at scale for real-time user interaction. As AI transitions from research and experimentation into commercial, governmental, and consumer applications, the demand for data center capacity is increasingly tied to the growth of AI Infrastructure, cloud computing, data centers, and high-performance computing markets.



Source: Tech-Mag, 2026

At the same time, data center demand is also driven by everyday social and cultural habits that continuously create, transmit, and consume digital information. Routine activities such as using smartphones, streaming video and music, posting on social media, sending messages, uploading photos and videos, using navigation apps, gaming online, shopping through e-commerce platforms, participating in video meetings, using smart-home devices, and relying on wearable technologies all generate or depend upon data that must be processed, stored, routed, backed up, and secured. These habits have made digital connectivity a normal expectation of daily life, with users often assuming that data-intensive services will be immediate, uninterrupted, personalized, and available from any device. As a result, the cultural demand for constant connectivity, rapid content delivery, digital convenience, and AI-enabled services directly translates into economic demand for the physical infrastructure that makes those services possible, including new and expanded data center development.

Section III: Why Data Centers… Why now?



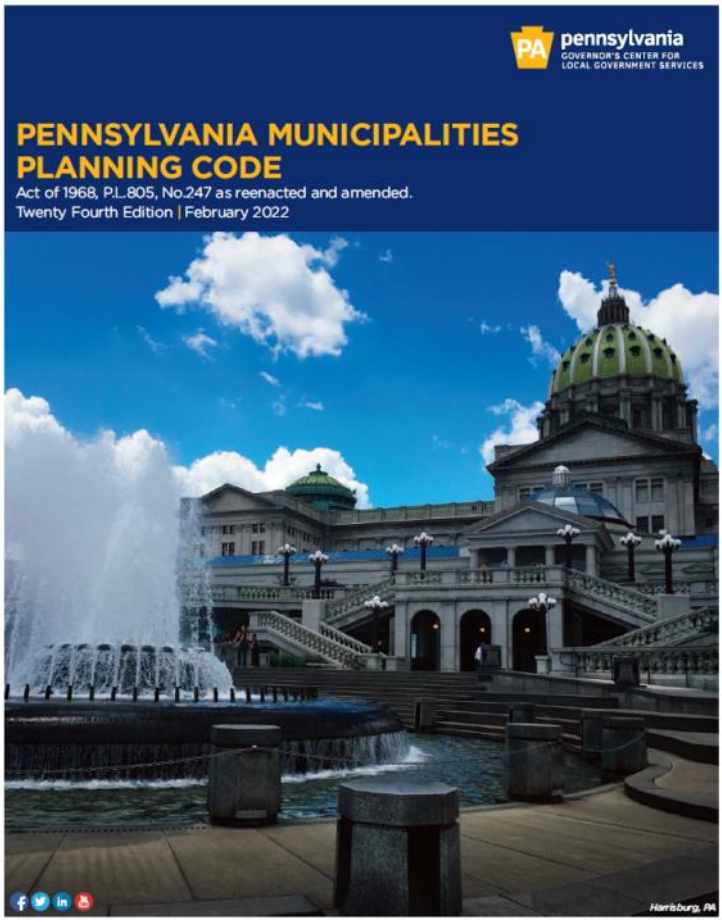
Source: McKinsey & Company, April 28, 2025

AI Workloads: Computing tasks that use artificial intelligence systems to analyze information, identify patterns, generate content, make predictions, or support automated decisions. Examples include training an AI model, operating a chatbot, recognizing images or speech, translating languages, generating videos, and processing large amounts of data for machine-learning applications. AI workloads often require many high-performance computer processors to operate at the same time and may therefore use substantially more electricity, cooling, and computing capacity than many traditional digital activities.

Non-AI Workloads: Computing tasks that do not primarily rely on artificial intelligence or machine-learning models. These include traditional activities such as hosting websites, storing and backing up files, processing business transactions, managing email, running databases, streaming media, supporting online banking, and operating standard business software. Although non-AI workloads may still require significant computing resources, they generally involve more predictable and established forms of data processing and often require less concentrated computing power than large-scale AI training or advanced AI applications.

Section IV: Planning in PA

The PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as amended, is PA's central enabling statute for municipal, multi-municipal, and county planning; it establishes the legal framework through which communities are empowered to prepare planning documents, create planning agencies, adopt official maps, enact land use regulations, coordinate growth, and administer development-related review processes. In this role, the MPC serves as the foundational planning authority in the Commonwealth, defining the powers, procedures, duties, and limitations that guide how local governments plan for and regulate land use and development.



The comprehensive plan is the MPC's primary policy-planning instrument. Article III provides that a municipal, multi-municipal, or county comprehensive plan consists of maps, charts, and textual matter and includes related basic elements such as objectives for future development, land use, housing, transportation, community facilities, natural and historic resources, and other matters affecting the long-term growth and development of the community. Accordingly, the comprehensive plan is intended to establish the factual, policy, and geographic basis for future municipal decision-making related to land use and development.

The MPC also establishes the relationship between comprehensive planning and implementation tools, while reserving the detailed standards of those tools for locally adopted ordinances. Section 303 provides for municipal actions, including adoption or amendment of an ***Article IV Map**, subdivision and land development ordinance, zoning ordinance, planned residential development provisions, capital improvements program, and certain public infrastructure actions. The MPC also states that municipal zoning and subdivision and land development regulations shall generally implement the comprehensive plan. This language establishes the comprehensive plan as the guiding policy document and positions zoning, subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO), official mapping, capital improvements planning, and related ordinances as implementation mechanisms.

For purposes of evaluating data center development or any other emerging land use, the MPC should therefore be understood as the legal foundation for local planning authority. It creates the planning process, authorizes the creation of planning agencies, defines the comprehensive plan's role, requires coordination with county and neighboring planning interests, and provides the statutory basis for later implementation through zoning, subdivision and land development regulation, official mapping, capital improvements programming, and intergovernmental planning.

***Article IV Map (Official Map):** *A map adopted by a municipality through ordinance that identifies the location of existing/ proposed public lands, facilities, and infrastructure that the municipality may seek to preserve, acquire, construct, widen, extend, or otherwise implement. It may depict, among other eligible features, existing/proposed streets, public rights-of-way, watercourses, flood-control facilities, parks, playgrounds, open-space reservations, pedestrian ways, transit facilities, and other public grounds or facilities. Its purpose is to provide public notice of the municipality's long-term intentions regarding designated land and infrastructure and to temporarily protect mapped locations from development that could interfere with their planned public use. An Official Map is a land-use ordinance and an implementation tool; it is not itself a zoning map, comprehensive plan, or automatic acquisition of the mapped property, nor does its adoption alone require the municipality to purchase or condemn the land shown.*

Section V: Land Use & Zoning Law Precedent

In PA, municipal zoning authority is broad, but it is not unlimited. Zoning is delegated through the MPC and must be used to promote legitimate public purposes such as public health, safety, morals, coordinated community development, adequate public facilities, environmental protection, and general welfare. Within that framework, a municipality may regulate where and how land uses occur through zoning districts, dimensional standards, performance standards, conditional use procedures, special exception criteria, and related development controls. However, zoning may not be used simply to eliminate otherwise lawful and legitimate land uses from the municipality merely because the use is unpopular, intensive, unfamiliar, or locally undesirable.

PA courts have long recognized that a zoning ordinance may be invalid if it is exclusionary. Exclusionary zoning can occur in two principal ways: (1) A zoning ordinance may be exclusionary on its face when it totally prohibits a lawful and legitimate land use throughout the municipality; or (2) It may be exclusionary in practical effect when the ordinance technically allows the use but permits it only in a token, illusory, or impracticable manner, such that there is no realistic opportunity for the use to locate within the municipal jurisdiction. In either circumstance, the key question is not simply whether the ordinance mentions the use, but whether the ordinance provides a reasonable and meaningful opportunity for that legitimate use to occur somewhere within the zoning jurisdiction.

This doctrine is especially important because zoning is intended to guide the location, scale, compatibility, and impacts of development—not to function as a municipal veto over lawful categories of land use. A municipality may impose reasonable standards to address legitimate planning concerns including traffic, access, buffering, utilities, stormwater, environmental constraints, dimensional compatibility, and public health and safety. However, those standards must remain regulatory in nature. If the combined effect of zoning district limitations, dimensional requirements, separation distances, approval criteria, or other restrictions leaves no practical site or only a nominal amount of unusable land available for the use, the ordinance may be vulnerable to a substantive validity challenge.

The MPC reinforces this principle by requiring zoning ordinances to accommodate reasonable community growth and opportunities for a variety of land uses. For nonresidential uses, the MPC recognizes that zoning must accommodate reasonable opportunities for development, while allowing municipalities to regulate the location, intensity, and impacts of those uses through appropriate zoning tools.

Accordingly, the general PA rule is that a municipality may regulate legitimate land uses, but it may not totally exclude them or make them functionally unavailable through zoning. A zoning ordinance should therefore be structured to identify appropriate districts for lawful uses, establish reasonable standards to manage land use impacts, and preserve a realistic pathway for legitimate uses to receive zoning approval when they satisfy applicable ordinance requirements. This approach allows municipalities to protect community character, public infrastructure, environmental resources, and neighboring properties while remaining consistent with Pa's constitutional and statutory limitations on exclusionary zoning.

Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Pursuant to the PA MPC, local regulatory instruments provide the foundation for determining where land uses may be located, how development applications are reviewed, and what design, infrastructure, environmental, transportation, and public health and safety standards may be applied to proposed development.

This section provides practical strategies that may be considered when municipalities seek to address data centers in a clear, consistent, and legally defensible manner. Additional background information regarding the MPC, local zoning and SALDO authority, and related planning and regulatory tools is provided in the appendix for reference.

Use Classification and Typology

Data Centers should be defined as a principal use and distinguished from smaller accessory IT facilities incidental to other principal uses. Because data centers vary significantly in size, purpose, operational intensity, power demand, cooling needs, land area, and infrastructure impacts, municipalities should differentiate among “hyperscale”, “cloud”, “enterprise” or “regional”, “edge” or “micro”, and cryptocurrency mining data centers; this allows municipalities to calibrate dimensional standards, district eligibility, conditional-use criteria, utility documentation, noise controls, screening requirements, emergency-management expectations, and other performance standards to the actual scale and intensity of the proposed facility. The municipality should also clarify which support activities are accessory to the principal data center use, which require separate approval, and which may be prohibited.

Physical Location

Municipal zoning ordinances should determine where data centers are permitted, conditionally permitted, or prohibited (provided the ordinance offers a reasonable opportunity for lawful land uses and is grounded in comprehensive planning, infrastructure capacity, and compatibility considerations). Larger hyperscale, cloud, and cryptocurrency mining facilities are generally most appropriate in industrial areas with access to power transmission, fiber connectivity, water and sewer capacity, and limited proximity to sensitive residential, institutional, conservation, or village-scale areas. Medium sized to smaller scale “enterprise” or “regional”, and “edge” or “micro” data centers may be appropriate in industrial, heavy commercial, institutional, or technology-oriented districts depending on their scale and impact. Location strategies should be foundationally tied to the comprehensive plan, future land use map, Article IV Map, and/or multi-municipal planning objectives.

Lot, Dimensional, and Intensity Standards

Zoning and conditional-use standards should regulate the lot, dimensional, and intensity characteristics of the use. Relevant standards may include: minimum lot area and frontage, maximum building coverage and impervious coverage, floor area ratios, maximum building size and height, maximum campus size, building and equipment setbacks, enhanced buffer yards, open-space preservation, and expansion thresholds. These standards should apply to both principal buildings/structures, as well as accessory generator yards, electrical substations, transformers, switchyards, cooling equipment, battery systems, utility pads, loading areas, parking lots, security fencing, stormwater facilities, and other support infrastructure. For larger campuses, the municipality may also require phasing limits or amended conditional-use approval when approved thresholds for floor area, electrical demand, equipment count, generator capacity, impervious coverage, or utility infrastructure are exceeded.

Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Architecture, Structures, and Visual Character

Zoning and conditional-use standards should address the exterior form, architecture, and visual character, particularly where facilities are located near visually sensitive locations. Although data centers often require secure, windowless, and highly functional building forms, municipalities may still require architectural offsets, articulation, varied rooflines, pilasters, recesses, panels, changes in materials, or other design treatments. Public-facing components may warrant higher design standards than rear or internal campus elevations, especially where buildings are visible from streets, parks, residential districts, or community gateways. Standards may also address exterior materials, reflectivity, rooftop equipment screening, mechanical yard enclosures, facade improvements for adaptive reuse projects, and cohesive architectural treatment across multiple buildings, guardhouses, utility buildings, and accessory structures. These requirements should balance security and operational needs with the municipality's interest in reducing visual impacts and maintaining community character; they should also be specific to avoid being challenged on vagueness and/or ambiguity.

Accessory Structures and Support Facilities

Data centers frequently include a wide range of accessory structures and support facilities that can create land-use, safety, visual, noise, lighting, and emergency-service impacts independent of the principal building. These may include electrical substations, switchyards, transformers, backup generators, generator yards, battery energy storage systems, uninterruptible power supply systems, cooling towers, chillers, condensers, pump houses, water treatment systems, fuel tanks, security buildings, fencing, walls, antennas, fiber huts, satellite dishes, microwave equipment, and other communications infrastructure. Conditional-use standards should identify which facilities are permitted as accessory components, which require additional review, and how they must be located, screened, fenced, accessed, buffered, and maintained; attention should be given to setbacks, fire access, acoustic treatment, spill containment, security, lighting, landscaping, maintenance access, and separation from sensitive uses. Outdoor storage of equipment, containers, trailers, spare generators, construction materials, fuel, or replacement components should be prohibited or carefully regulated to prevent the site from becoming visually or operationally incompatible with surrounding land uses.

Noise and Vibration

Noise and vibration are among the most important conditional-use issues for data centers because cooling systems, utility infrastructure components, and other mechanical equipment may operate continuously or intermittently. Zoning standards should establish measurable nuisance limits at property lines or receiving properties, with stricter standards near dwellings, schools, hospitals, parks, or other sensitive receptors. The ordinance may also address low-frequency, tonal, impulsive, or continuous mechanical noise; generator testing days, hours, duration, frequency, and simultaneous testing limits; construction noise; and vibration associated with generators, pumps, chillers, or heavy mechanical equipment. An acoustic study prepared by a qualified professional should be required for larger or more intensive facilities, and post-construction verification testing should be required after occupancy, after major equipment changes, or in response to documented complaints. Mitigation may include sound walls, acoustic louvers, generator enclosures, increased setbacks, berms, building orientation, and strategic equipment placement.

Lighting, Glare, and Nighttime Operations

Zoning and conditional-use standards should regulate exterior lighting, glare, and nighttime impacts. Standards should require full-cutoff or fully shielded fixtures, maximum illumination levels at property lines, appropriate pole heights, glare control, and lighting designs that minimize spillover onto roads, residences, conservation areas, and adjoining properties. Security lighting should be sufficient to protect the facility while using shielding, dimming, motion activation, and targeted illumination where feasible. The municipality may also regulate parking lot lighting, building-mounted lighting, substation and equipment-yard lighting, construction lighting, sign illumination, and emergency lighting. These standards should balance public safety and site security with the need to reduce ambient skyglow, glare, nuisance impacts, and visual intrusion into nearby residential, rural, scenic, or environmentally sensitive areas.

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Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Landscaping, Screening, Buffers, and Aesthetic Mitigation

Landscaping, screening, buffers, and aesthetic mitigation are essential tools for reducing the visual and compatibility impacts of data center buildings and equipment-intensive campuses. Zoning and conditional-use standards should require perimeter landscape buffers, berms, evergreen screening, street frontage landscaping, parking lot landscaping, equipment-yard screening, wall and fence landscaping, preservation of existing vegetation, replacement of dead plantings, and long-term landscape maintenance obligations. Enhanced buffers should be considered where data centers abut residential, agricultural, conservation, institutional, public, scenic, or historic areas. Viewshed-protection standards and screening should be designed to address principal buildings, generators, substations, cooling equipment, loading areas, service yards, fuel tanks, fencing, walls, and utility structures.

Security and Access Control

Data centers have unique security needs because they house critical IT, telecommunications systems, utility infrastructure, and business-continuity assets. Zoning and conditional-use standards should allow appropriate security measures while ensuring that those measures remain compatible with surrounding development, emergency access needs, and public infrastructure. Regulated components may include perimeter fencing, walls, anti-climb features, security gates, guardhouses, controlled access points, crash-rated barriers, internal security roads, surveillance equipment, lighting, queuing areas, and emergency-access systems such as Knox boxes. Standards should address fence and wall height, materials, opacity, landscaping, setbacks, gate placement, vehicle stacking, emergency turnaround areas, and access for fire, police, EMS, and mutual-aid responders. Where public roads, sidewalks, trails, easements, or other public-access facilities intersect or adjoin a data center campus, the ordinance should clarify how security requirements interact with public access, circulation, and emergency-service obligations.

Traffic, Access, Parking, and Loading

Data centers may generate traffic impacts during construction, equipment delivery, maintenance, generator replacement, operations, and emergency-response events. Conditional-use and SALDO-related standards should require traffic impact studies where appropriate, along with traffic plans addressing haul routes, staging areas, worker parking, delivery timing, road protection, and restoration. Site design should address driveway spacing, sight distance, internal circulation, truck turning movements, emergency vehicle access, gatehouse queuing, loading areas, heavy-haul access for transformers and generators, snow storage, and separation of employee, service, and emergency circulation. Parking requirements should be right-sized to reflect actual staffing, maintenance, contractor, and security needs rather than conventional office or industrial ratios that may overstate demand.

Utility Capacity and Infrastructure Coordination

Conditional-use and land development submissions should require an electrical service narrative, projected critical IT load, phasing information, utility provider coordination, interconnection approach, identification of proposed substations or transmission extensions, and documentation of distribution upgrades or private utility systems. Applicants should also provide will-serve letters or equivalent documentation for water, sewer, electric, natural gas, telecommunications, fiber, and other utilities, together with plans showing utility easements, routing, access, maintenance responsibilities, and phasing. For water and sewer service, the municipality may require projections for domestic demand, cooling demand, fire-flow needs, process water, wastewater flows, pretreatment, reclaimed water opportunities, and long-term service capacity. Utility coordination standards should ensure that building phases, occupancy permits, and infrastructure improvements are tied to confirmed service availability and site-specific land development impacts.

Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Energy Systems and Backup Power

Energy systems and backup power are central to data center operations and should be addressed through zoning, conditional-use standards, SALDO, building-code, and applicable state or federal permitting. Regulated components may include backup generators, generator yards, fuel storage, battery energy storage systems, uninterruptible power supply systems, solar arrays, microgrids, renewable energy systems, on-site power generation, emergency shutoffs, and electrical distribution infrastructure. The ordinance should require disclosure of generator number, type, capacity, fuel source, location, enclosures, setbacks, testing practices, acoustic treatment, emissions-permitting status, spill containment, and emergency-response coordination. Battery systems should be reviewed for location, setbacks, ventilation, thermal runaway risk, fire suppression, monitoring, emergency planning, and responder access. Where applicants propose solar arrays, microgrids, turbines, engines, fuel cells, or other on-site energy systems, the municipality should clarify whether those systems are accessory uses, conditional uses, or separate principal uses, and should coordinate local requirements with applicable renewable-energy, building-code, fire-code, and environmental regulations.

Water Use, Cooling Systems, and Thermal Management

Conditional-use submission requirements should identify the proposed cooling system type, projected average and peak water demand, seasonal variations, drought-condition demand, cooling tower locations, chiller locations, heat rejection equipment, refrigerant or coolant use, liquid-cooling systems, and any chemical storage or discharge implications. If private wells are proposed, a hydrogeologic study may be warranted to evaluate aquifer capacity, recharge, wellhead protection, and impacts to neighboring wells and water supplies. Standards should also address drift, plume, sound, screening, setbacks, discharge coordination, leak management, and protection of wells, aquifers, streams, and groundwater recharge areas.

Environmental, Natural Resource, and Site Constraints

Municipal standards should require identification and protection of wetlands, streams, riparian buffers, floodplains, steep slopes, woodlands, prime agricultural soils, groundwater recharge areas, habitat areas, historic resources, brownfields, contaminated sites, ridgelines, scenic areas, and other site constraints. Applicants should be required to demonstrate avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or regulatory coordination for sensitive resources, including erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, floodplain compliance, wetland permitting, threatened and endangered species review, and brownfield remediation where applicable. In areas with karst geology, steep slopes, aquifer sensitivity, or high-value natural resources, additional geotechnical, hydrogeologic, stormwater, or environmental studies may be appropriate. These standards should connect the proposed development to broader municipal goals for public health, safety, general welfare, natural resource protection, infrastructure capacity, and community character.

Air Quality, Emissions, and Odors

Municipalities should be careful not to duplicate or conflict with state or federal air-quality permitting, but zoning and conditional-use review may require disclosure, documentation, and site-design coordination for equipment or activities that could create air-quality, odor, or nuisance impacts. The municipality should also address construction dust, haul-road stabilization, equipment idling, fuel odors, chemical storage odors, exhaust discharge locations, and spill-prevention practices. Conditional-use approval should require applicants to provide copies of relevant permit applications, approvals, or status updates where applicable, without using local zoning to replace the jurisdiction of environmental regulators.

Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Hazardous Materials, Chemicals, and Emergency Management

Data centers may involve diesel fuel, fuel tanks, coolants, refrigerants, battery chemicals, water-treatment chemicals, cleaning agents, and other materials that require careful coordination with fire, emergency-management, building-code, environmental, and public-safety officials. Conditional-use standards should require identification of hazardous or regulated materials, quantities, storage locations, containment systems, signage, handling practices, safety data sheets, spill prevention, emergency shutoffs, fire access, and inspection protocols. Applicants should prepare an emergency response plan addressing fire, EMS, police, hazmat incidents, power failure, fuel spills, battery incidents, severe weather, security events, and other foreseeable emergencies. The plan should be coordinated with local fire departments, EMS, police, emergency-management officials, municipal staff, and mutual-aid responders, and should include 24/7 emergency contacts, annual updates, site tours, fire pre-plans, Knox boxes, fire-flow analysis, hydrant locations, and emergency access routes.

Signs and Identification

Zoning standards should address monument signs, directional signs, security signs, building identification, emergency contact signs, internal wayfinding signs, restricted-area signs, and campus building-numbering systems. Signage requirements should regulate size, height, location, illumination, materials, brightness, visibility, and compatibility with surrounding development. Electronic, animated, or dynamic signs should be prohibited or limited unless necessary for safety, security, or emergency communication. Because large campuses may contain multiple buildings, access points, utility yards, fire lanes, and restricted areas, signage should also be coordinated with the fire department and emergency responders to ensure that addresses, building numbers, hydrants, Knox boxes, and emergency access points are clearly visible and logically organized.

Operations, Maintenance, and Performance Standards

Data centers typically operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week; therefore, zoning standards should distinguish between continuous internal data operations and external activities that may affect surrounding properties. The municipality should regulate delivery hours, construction hours, generator testing, outdoor maintenance, waste collection, truck routes, loading activities, equipment replacement, security operations, lighting practices, snow removal, landscaping maintenance, and complaint-response procedures. Applicants should provide an operations and maintenance plan describing anticipated staffing, shift patterns, deliveries, maintenance activities, generator testing logs, noise compliance procedures, equipment replacement protocols, landscape maintenance, stormwater maintenance, waste management, emergency contacts, and campus management responsibilities. The municipality should also require annual reporting or periodic certifications related to emergency contacts, generator testing, landscape maintenance, noise compliance, stormwater maintenance, and other approved conditions where legally supportable.

Decommissioning, Vacancy, and Reuse

A zoning ordinance should require a decommissioning or reuse plan for larger facilities, particularly where specialized outdoor equipment, fuel systems, battery systems, or private utility infrastructure would need to be removed, secured, or repurposed. The plan should address abandonment thresholds, removal of obsolete equipment, closure of fuel tanks, battery removal, environmental closeout, spill remediation, security of vacant structures, maintenance of landscaping and stormwater systems, and potential adaptive reuse of large buildings. Where legally authorized and reviewed by the municipal solicitor, financial security may be considered for required public improvements or specific removal obligations. Decommissioning standards help protect the municipality from long-term visual, environmental, safety, and economic impacts if a data center becomes inactive or obsolete. Incorporating bond or escrow requirements is also recommended.

Section VI: Regulatory Strategies for Data Centers

Phasing and Overall Project Coordination

Municipalities should require a formal phasing and project coordination plan that identifies the anticipated sequence of demolition, remediation, grading, utility extension, road improvements, building construction, equipment installation, commissioning, occupancy, and future expansion. As a condition of approval, the municipality should prescribe regular coordination meetings between the applicant/project representatives and appropriate municipal officials throughout each major phase of the project. These meetings should be scheduled at key milestones, such as pre-construction, prior to major earth disturbance, prior to utility or road work, prior to equipment delivery or generator testing, prior to issuance of occupancy permits, and before commencement of each subsequent phase. The purpose of these meetings should be to maintain municipal awareness of project status, construction timing, traffic and haul-route impacts, emergency access conditions, utility-service coordination, stormwater and erosion-control performance, noise and lighting issues, public-safety needs, complaint response, and any changes to approved plans or conditions. This coordination process should not replace formal zoning, SALDO, permitting, inspection, or enforcement procedures; rather, it should provide an organized mechanism to ensure that municipal officials, emergency responders, utility providers, and community resources remain informed and appropriately prepared throughout the life of the project, from initial site work through full buildout and long-term operations.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

Do emergency response entities have the resources to respond to emergency response incidents associated with Data Centers?

Emergency response capacity depends on the size of the data center, the hazards present on-site, and the staffing/equipment levels of local fire, EMS, police, emergency management, and hazardous materials responders. Data centers may contain specialized risks such as large electrical systems, backup generators, batteries, fuel storage, cooling systems, and restricted-access areas. A municipality should not assume that existing emergency services are automatically prepared for every scenario without reviewing the site design, emergency access, fire protection systems, water supply, and response plans. The best practice is to require early coordination between the developer and emergency response agencies so that staffing, equipment, training, site access, and mutual-aid needs can be identified and addressed prior to facility approval and development.

Are emergency response entities trained to respond to emergency response incidents associated with Data Centers?

Some emergency responders may already be familiar with electrical, generator, battery, fuel, and building fire incidents, but data centers can combine these hazards in ways that require site-specific training. For example, responders may need to understand high-voltage equipment, lithium-ion battery systems, diesel or natural gas backup power systems, fire suppression systems, and secure building access procedures. Lithium-ion batteries are emerging as a safety concern because they can present special fire and emergency response challenges. Conditional use approval may require a written emergency operations plan, site tours, annual training opportunities, contact lists, lockbox/key access procedures, and pre-incident planning with the local governmental and emergency services entities.

Can Data Centers affect the power grid?

Data Centers often require large, steady amounts of electricity, especially the larger hyperscale, cloud, and artificial intelligence facilities/campuses. The effect depends on the size of the facility, the available utility capacity, the condition of the local transmission and distribution system, and whether new substations, transmission lines, or generation resources are needed. For local governments, the key question is whether the electric utility can serve the project without (1) reducing reliability; (2) shifting unreasonable costs to other customers; or (3) creating the need for major off-site infrastructure upgrades.

Can Data Centers affect electric rates for residential and commercial consumers?

Data Centers can potentially affect electric rates, but the impact is highly dependent on utility rate structures, state utility regulation, infrastructure needs, and whether the developer pays its “fair share” of upgrades. If new substations, transmission lines, transformers, or generation resources are needed, regulators and utilities must determine how those costs are assigned. Municipalities should ask utilities and regulators to clearly explain who pays for required improvements and whether protections exist for current residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial ratepayers.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

Can energy be produced on-site?

Data centers may produce or support energy on-site through solar panels, battery storage, fuel cells, natural gas generation, diesel backup generators, or other energy systems. However, on-site energy does not automatically mean the facility is independent from the electric grid, because many facilities still need grid power for reliability, backup, or peak demand. Backup generators are common at data centers, but they may create air quality, noise, fuel storage, and testing-related concerns. Municipal review should consider the type of on-site energy system(s), how it is classified in the ordinance, whether it is a principle or accessory use, when it operates, emissions, noise, fuel delivery, safety, permitting, and emergency response needs.

How are Data Centers cooled and how much water is used?

Cooling may involve air cooling, chilled water systems, evaporative cooling, liquid cooling, cooling towers, dry coolers, or a combination of technologies. Water use varies greatly: some facilities use very little water with dry or closed-loop systems, while others may use significant water through evaporative cooling, especially during hot weather. A municipality should ask for estimated average-day and peak-day water demand, the proposed water source, conservation measures, drought operations, and whether the system can serve the project without harming other users; this also includes a fire suppression supply plan.

How much waste is associated with cooling and how is it removed?

Cooling systems may produce different types of byproducts depending on the technology used, including heated air, blowdown water from cooling towers, used filters, treatment chemicals, or maintenance-related waste. The amount and type of waste depends on the cooling method, water quality, operating schedule, and chemical treatment approach. Municipalities should require detailed information about what wastes will be produced, how they will be stored, how they will be removed, and whether public sewer, private treatment, or hauling systems have enough capacity to safely and efficiently serve the facility at average and peak operation conditions.

Can Data Centers affect groundwater availability?

Yes, data centers can affect groundwater availability if they rely on groundwater wells for cooling, domestic water, fire protection, irrigation, or other operational needs. The scale of the impact depends on the amount of water withdrawn, local aquifer conditions, drought sensitivity, nearby wells, and whether withdrawals are continuous or seasonal. A small facility using minimal water may have little impact, while a large water-cooled facility could require a more detailed hydrogeologic review. Groundwater impacts are often local. Municipalities should require a water supply assessment, well testing, drought contingency planning, and documentation that nearby users will not be adversely affected; such an assessment should be produced by a licensed professional hydrogeologist.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

Can Data Centers affect nearby on-lot residential or commercial wells and/or community/public water systems?

Nearby wells or public water systems could be affected if the data center requires substantial water withdrawals from the same aquifer or water supply system. Potential concerns include reduced well yield, lower water pressure, increased pumping costs, seasonal shortages, or the need for public system upgrades. These impacts are not automatic, but they should be evaluated before approval, especially in areas with known water supply limitations or many private wells. A municipality should ask for written confirmation from the water supplier, hydrogeologic analysis where appropriate, and safeguards for existing residents and businesses.

Can Data Centers have stormwater and/or surface water quality impacts?

Data Centers can have stormwater and surface water impacts because they often include large buildings, parking areas, access roads, equipment yards, substations, and other impervious surfaces. Construction activity can also create sedimentation risks if earth disturbance is not properly controlled. These impacts can usually be reduced through stormwater management facilities, erosion and sediment controls, infiltration practices, riparian buffers, spill prevention measures, and long-term maintenance. Municipal review should focus on whether the stormwater design protects downstream properties, wetlands, streams, floodplains, and existing drainage systems.

What noise is associated with Data Centers?

Data center noise may come from cooling equipment, rooftop units, chillers, cooling towers, fans, transformers, substations, backup generators, loading areas, and construction activity. During normal operations, the most common concern is continuous mechanical or electrical equipment noise. Backup generators may also create short-term noise during testing or emergency use. Noise impacts depend heavily on distance from adjacent uses, topography, building orientation, equipment placement, sound walls, landscaping, and operational limits. Municipalities should require a noise study, clear decibel limits, testing and reporting obligations, screening, equipment enclosures, and post-construction verification where near by residents or sensitive uses may be affected.

What traffic patterns are associated with Data Centers?

Data centers usually create the most traffic during construction, when workers, contractors, equipment deliveries, concrete trucks, materials, and utility crews may be on-site daily. Once operational, many data centers have fewer employees than other large industrial or office uses, so routine daily traffic may be relatively modest. Traffic impacts depend on project size, construction duration, road access, truck routing, and proximity to homes, schools, or congested intersections.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

What types of jobs are created by Data Center?

Data centers typically create a large number of temporary jobs during construction, including laborers, electricians, equipment operators, engineers, concrete workers, steel workers, utility contractors, and specialized trades; these jobs may last months or years depending on the scale and phasing of the project. Permanent jobs may include facility managers, security staff, IT technicians, network specialists, electricians, mechanical technicians, maintenance workers, environmental health and safety staff, and administrative personnel. The total job benefit depends on whether workers are hired locally, whether training programs are available, and whether the facility supports secondary local business activity.

How many employees would work at a data center?

The number of employees varies widely depending on the size, type, security model, automation level, and operational needs of the data center. A small edge or enterprise facility may have only a limited number of employees on-site, while a large hyperscale campus may support many more direct and contract workers. Even large data centers may have fewer permanent employees than a similarly sized office, warehouse, hospital, or manufacturing facility because much of the operation is automated and equipment-focused. Staffing may occur in shifts because facilities often operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Municipalities should ask the applicant to provide estimated construction employment, permanent employment, shift schedules, contractor use, and expected local hiring or workforce training commitments.

Can Data Centers affect the tax base?

Data Centers can affect the tax base, often by increasing the assessed value of the site, buildings, and certain taxable improvements. A large facility may generate significant local real estate tax revenue for municipalities, counties, and school districts, depending on assessment practices, tax rates, and any incentive agreements. However, the net fiscal benefit depends on the public costs created by the project, such as road impacts, emergency service needs, utility upgrades, staff review time, and long-term infrastructure maintenance. Municipalities should evaluate both revenue and cost impacts before assuming that a data center is automatically a major financial benefit.

Should municipalities enter "Community Benefits Agreement" with data center developers? What could be included?

A Community Benefits Agreement may be useful when a data center creates community impacts that are not fully addressed through ordinary zoning, land development, utility, or permitting processes. These agreements may include commitments related to road improvements, emergency service funding, work force training, local hiring, noise controls, water conservation, environmental monitoring, public reporting, open space preservation, broadband improvements, or community infrastructure contributions. However, the agreement should be carefully reviewed by the municipal solicitor to ensure it is lawful, enforceable, transparent, and consistent with municipal authority. A Community Benefits Agreement should not be used as a substitute for required ordinance compliance or objective land use review.

Section VII: Frequently Asked Questions

Can a municipality enter into a non-disclosure agreement with a data center developer?

Municipalities should be very cautious about entering into a non-disclosure agreement with a data center developer because public agencies have transparency obligations and are often subject to public meetings and public records laws. In general, municipalities should favor public disclosure and transparency wherever possible and refrain from entering into non-disclosure agreements.


MONROE COUNTY
PLANNING

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Attachment 2: Regulatory Citations

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247 of 1968, 53 P.S. §§ 10101 et seq., is the enabling statute through which Pennsylvania municipalities exercise zoning authority.

- **§ 603, 53 P.S. § 10603 — Ordinance Provisions.**
  - Authorizes zoning ordinances to "permit, prohibit, regulate, restrict and determine" uses of land, structures, areas and dimensions of land, density, intensity of use, and protection of natural, historic, and agricultural resources; the statutory source of municipal zoning power, but it must be read together with constitutional limitations and the MPC's zoning purposes.

- **§ 603.1, 53 P.S. § 10603.1 — Interpretation of Ordinance Provisions.**
  - Where there is doubt about the intended meaning of a zoning restriction, the ordinance is interpreted in favor of the property owner and against implied extensions of the restriction.

- **§ 604, 53 P.S. § 10604 — Zoning Purposes.**
  - Section 604 requires zoning ordinances to be designed to promote public health, safety, morals, general welfare, coordinated community development, adequate public facilities, and other public requirements. It also requires zoning to provide for various dwelling types and to accommodate reasonable overall community growth, including population and employment growth and opportunities for residential and nonresidential development.

- **§ 609.1, 53 P.S. § 10609.1 — Landowner Curative Amendments.**
  - A landowner may challenge a zoning ordinance or map on substantive grounds where it prohibits or restricts the use or development of land in which the landowner has an interest, and may submit a curative amendment to cure the alleged defect.

- **§ 916.1, 53 P.S. § 10916.1 — Validity of Ordinance; Substantive Questions.**
  - This section establishes the procedural pathway for substantive validity challenges to ordinances or maps that prohibit or restrict the use or development of land.

- **§ 1006-A, 53 P.S. § 11006-A — Judicial Relief.**
  - In a land use appeal, the court may declare an ordinance or map invalid and set aside or modify municipal action. Where municipalities have adopted a joint municipal comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances consistent with that plan, the court reviews the zoning ordinance or ordinances as applied to the entire region, rather than only within one municipality's boundaries.

- **Article VIII-A, 53 P.S. §§ 10801-A et seq. — Joint Municipal Zoning.**
  - The MPC authorizes municipalities to cooperate in enacting joint municipal zoning ordinances to implement joint municipal comprehensive plans. Joint zoning ordinances may contain the same zoning elements authorized for individual municipal zoning ordinances and must serve the same zoning purposes for the joint area.

- **§ 1103, 53 P.S. § 11103 — County or Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans.**
  - A county or multi-municipal comprehensive plan may plan for accommodation of all categories of uses within the plan area, and the statute expressly provides that all uses need not be provided in every municipality so long as they are planned and provided for within a reasonable geographic area of the plan.

- **§ 1104, 53 P.S. § 11104 — Implementation Agreements.**
  - Implementation agreements must establish processes for consistency between the multi-municipal comprehensive plan and implementing zoning, subdivision, land development, and capital improvement plans. Reports must evaluate provision for all categories of use and housing for all income levels within the region of the plan.

Attachment 3: Case Law

- **National Land & Investment Co. v. Easttown Township Board of Adjustment, 419 Pa. 504, 215 A.2d 597 (1965).**
  - The Pa Supreme Court invalidated large-lot zoning that unreasonably restricted development and emphasized that zoning must bear a substantial relationship to public health, safety, morals, or general welfare. This case is a foundation for Pennsylvania's substantive due process review of exclusionary or unduly restrictive zoning. Discussed and relied upon in later exclusionary zoning cases including Surrick and Hopewell. 419 Pa. 504 (Nov 9, 1965)

- **Appeal of Girsh, 437 Pa. 237, 263 A.2d 395 (1970).**
  - The Pa Supreme Court held that a township could not totally fail to provide for apartments. The case stands for the principle that a municipality cannot use zoning to freeze out a basic legitimate form of housing while allowing only single-family development. Fernley later summarized Girsh as part of the total-exclusion line of cases. 437 Pa. 237 (Feb 13, 1970)

- **Township of Willistown v. Chesterdale Farms, Inc., 462 Pa. 445, 341 A.2d 466 (1975).**
  - The Court held that token provision for multifamily housing may still be exclusionary. In Surrick, the Supreme Court described Willistown as extending the prohibition against total exclusion to partial exclusion or "selective admission" where only a disproportionately small amount of land is realistically available. 341 A.2d 466, 462 Pa. 445 (Jul 18, 1975)

- **Surrick v. Zoning Hearing Board of Upper Providence Township, 476 Pa. 182, 382 A.2d 105 (1977).**
  - A leading Pa Supreme Court case on de facto exclusionary zoning and the "fair share" doctrine. The ordinance permitted multifamily dwellings only in a small business district comprising approximately 1.14% of the township, much of which was already substantially developed and shared with many other uses. The Court held the township had not provided its fair share of land for multifamily dwellings. 382 A.2d 105, 476 Pa. 182 (Dec 24, 1977)

- **Fernley v. Board of Supervisors of Schuylkill Township, 509 Pa. 413, 502 A.2d 585 (1985).**
  - The Pa Supreme Court distinguished total exclusion from partial exclusion. Where a challenger proves that an ordinance totally prohibits a legitimate use, the burden shifts to the municipality to show that the prohibition promotes public health, safety, morals, and general welfare. The Court held Schuylkill Township's total prohibition of multifamily dwellings impermissibly exclusionary. 502 A.2d 585, 509 Pa. 413 (Dec 27, 1985)

- **Hopewell Township Board of Supervisors v. Golla, 499 Pa. 246, 452 A.2d 1337 (1982).**
  - The Pa Supreme Court reaffirmed that zoning restrictions must be substantially related to public health, safety, morals, or general welfare and that unduly restrictive zoning implicates substantive due process and property rights. 452 A.2d 1337, 499 Pa. 246 (Nov 5, 1982)

- **Overstreet v. Zoning Hearing Board of Schuylkill Township, 152 Pa. Commw. 90, 618 A.2d 1108 (1992).**
  - The Commonwealth Court explained the distinction between total exclusion and de facto exclusion. A challenger may rebut the presumption of ordinance validity by showing complete exclusion of a legitimate use; if the ordinance only partially allows the use, the challenger must satisfy the Surrick fair-share analysis. The court also recognized mobile home parks as a legitimate land use distinct from individual mobile homes on individual lots. 152 Pa. Commw. 90, 618 A.2d 1108 (Dec 3, 1992)

- **In re Appeal of Shore, 573 A.2d 1011 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1990).**
  - The Commonwealth Court held that mobile home parks are a legitimate residential land use and may not be wholly barred absent proof that allowing the use anywhere in the municipality would be injurious to public health, safety, or welfare. Site-specific concerns may justify denial or regulation of a particular proposal, but they do not justify a municipality-wide exclusion of the use. 524 Pa. 436, 573 A.2d 1011 (Apr 26, 1990)

- **Exton Quarries, Inc. v. Zoning Board of Adjustment, 425 Pa. 43, 228 A.2d 169 (1967).**
  - The Pa Supreme Court addressed a total ban on quarrying and is frequently cited for the principle that total prohibitions on legitimate uses receive close scrutiny. The case is also important because it cautions that not every municipality must necessarily provide for every conceivable use in all circumstances, particularly where a use may be incompatible with the municipality's character or public welfare; later cases refine this into the modern distinction between legitimate regulation and impermissible exclusion. 425 Pa. 43 (Mar 14, 1967)

Attachment 4: Ongoing Litigation in the News

- **Tobyhanna Township, Monroe County (Glacial Till Data Center proposal)**
  - There is an active Tobyhanna Township Zoning Hearing Board substantive validity challenge to Ordinance No. 580. The public notice identifies the applicants as Mark and Joan Lippi, Jennifer Beardsley, Dolores Ruppel, Jim Millington, the Stoddartsville Association, and Ray Laytham, challenging the Board of Supervisors' enactment of Ordinance No. 580. The notice states that the applicants allege the ordinance is unlawful spot zoning, contradicts the purpose of the rural residential district, benefits a single landowner, and is arbitrary or unrelated to public health, safety, morals, or welfare.

- **Clifton Township / Covington Township, Lackawanna County (1778 Rich Pike LLC data center campus)**
  - Developer 1778 Rich Pike LLC challenged Clifton Township's zoning laws, arguing they were exclusionary to data centers and related uses, including power generation. WVIA reported that the developer appealed the zoning hearing board decision in Lackawanna County Court and that Judge Mark Powell later held a hearing on challenges to a settlement agreement. News Report (Jan 28, 2026)

- **Archbald Borough, Lackawanna County (Archbald 1 LLC / Provident Realty Advisors — "Project Scott")**
  - Archbald Borough Council denied a proposed **18-building data center campus** in March 2026. The Washington Post reported that Provident appealed the denial. WNEP also reported that Valley View School District joined the legal battle over the proposed project. News Report (Jun 2, 2026 - Updated Jun 7, 2026)

- **Olyphant Borough, Lackawanna County (Triboro Commerce Park LLC / DeNaples-linked property dispute)**
  - A firm connected to Charles DeNaples filed both a land-use appeal and an emergency injunction petition challenging Olyphant Borough's decision to declare its zoning ordinance invalid for excluding data centers. The filings reportedly asked the Lackawanna County Court of Common Pleas to overturn the borough's action and honor an earlier vote on a data center zoning amendment. News Report (Apr 30, 2026)

- **Lancaster City, Lancaster County (Greenfield Road data center / zoning appeal and developer lawsuit)**
  - WGAL reported that a resident appealed Lancaster City's zoning determination allowing a large data center project on Greenfield Road, and that developers filed a lawsuit to stop or halt that zoning appeal. News Report (Sep 23, 2025)
  - WITF separately reported that the zoning appeal was on hold while a judge considered the developers' lawsuit challenging the appeal's validity. News Report (Sep 28, 2025)

- **Montour County (Talen Energy / proposed data center rezoning)**
  - Montour County commissioners denied Talen Energy's rezoning request for a data-center-related project in February 2026. I found news of the denial, but **did not find a confirmed court appeal or lawsuit** from Talen in the sources reviewed. News Report (Feb 11, 2026)

- **Hazle Township, Luzerne County (NP Hazleton / NorthPoint Development — "Project Hazelnut")**
  - Appeal/challenge following Hazle Township's denial of land development approval for a proposed 15-building data center campus near Humboldt Industrial Park. A Luzerne County judge reportedly denied the developer's appeal in late May/early June 2026, finding the matter should proceed through the township zoning hearing board because the ordinance contains a special-exception pathway for uses not specifically addressed. A separate PUC filing identifies Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas Case No. 202513744 and states the appeal was filed December 12, 2025. News Report (Jun 8, 2026)

- **Hazle Township, Luzerne County (PPL Electric Utilities — Sugarloaf 500/230 kV transmission line proceedings)**
  - PUC eminent-domain / public-utility approval proceedings associated with transmission infrastructure reportedly tied to serving a proposed data center customer. A May 2026 PUC filing asked the PUC to deny PPL's applications/petition without prejudice because of "ongoing, active land-use and zoning litigation" in Luzerne County Court involving NP Hazleton Holdings and Hazle Township.

- **Sugarloaf Township, Luzerne County (LBT Investment Group LLC curative amendment / land-use appeal)**
  - Developer challenge alleging Sugarloaf Township's zoning ordinance was defective because it did not address data centers. Times Leader reported that Sugarloaf supervisors initially did not accept LBT's curative amendment, after which **LBT appealed to Luzerne County Court**. The article stated the case was ongoing while the parties worked on a possible zoning amendment. News Report (Feb 17, 2026)

- **Hollenback Township, Luzerne County (Rezoning request by 31 property owners / proposed data center area)**
  - Request to rezone roughly 460 acres from rural/open space/agricultural-residential classifications to industrial to allow data centers. Times Leader reported that the rezoning request would "move to court" after a disputed/cancelled hearing, including issues over hearing notice, agenda posting, and Sunshine Act concerns. News Report (Mar 1, 2026)

- **Dorrance Township, Luzerne County (Brewster Land Company validity challenge)**
  - Challenge alleging the township zoning ordinance unlawfully excluded data centers; possible site-specific relief for six data center buildings. FOX56 reported this was a two-step process before the zoning hearing board: first, determine whether the ordinance unlawfully excluded data centers; second, decide whether site-specific relief should be granted. If denied, the developer could appeal to Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas. News Report (Mar 30, 2026 - Updated Mar 31, 2026)