



DEKALB COUNTY Data Center Text Amendment



Home / Data Center Text Amendment

Data Center Text Amendment



****Update 12/3/2025: The final version of Draft 3 has now been uploaded for review with updated format. You can download it from the "documents" section and please leave any feedback in the Questions and Comments box at the bottom of the page.**

Board of Commissioners (Decision-Only): Dec 16th

Purpose of this Regulation

Throughout the Atlanta metro area, there has been a sharp increase in data center development. While data centers provide necessary infrastructure for the modern world, DeKalb County is seeking to ensure that the significant land, energy, and water consumption by these facilities does not negatively impact the community. Staff conducted extensive research into data centers and held discussions with community partners to find a balance between economic development and the welfare of the community.

This ordinance will add data centers as a use in industrial areas and regulate their location, design, and provide supplemental review standards. You can read the draft ordinance [here](#), and a summary is provided below.

Summary

Data Centers are broken up into 4 categories based on size and energy needs:

- Data Center, Minor:** A physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications or services. Minor data centers shall be under 20,000 square feet and do not require a substation. A minor data center may include data centers as an accessory use if they are under 2,000 square feet.
- Data Center, Medium:** A physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications or services. A medium data center shall be between 20,000 square feet and 100,000 square feet.
- Data Center, Major:** A physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications or services. A major data center shall be between 100,000 square feet and 500,000 square feet.
- Data Center, Campus:** A singular development that has more than one (1) data center, or a physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications or services. A data center campus shall be a minimum of 500,000 square feet.

Please see the below table for examples of the different sizes and scales:

Data Center, Minor	Data centers under 20,000 sq ft in size. Intended to accommodate small-scale operations with minimal community impacts and accessory uses. May be located in a shared office building.	
Data Center, Medium	Data centers between 20,000 sq ft and 100,000 sq ft. Intended to accommodate medium-scale operations under the threshold of requiring substations or transmission line impacts. May be located in limited commercial areas.	
Data Center, Major	Data centers between 100,000 sq ft and 500,000 sq ft. Data centers classified as major have greater land, power, and water requirements and are intended for industrial areas.	
Data Center, Campus	Data centers above 500,000 sq ft can have significant community impacts and therefore require a greater level of review.	

Zoning:

- Office Institutional (OI):** Minor data centers as an accessory use (under 2,000 square feet); Medium data centers with a SLUP, Major data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use.
- Office Distribution (OD):** Minor data centers (permitted), Medium data centers with a SLUP, Major data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use.
- Light Industrial (M):** Minor data centers (permitted), Medium data centers (permitted), Major data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use, Campus data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use.
- Heavy Industrial (M-2):** Minor data centers (permitted), Medium data centers (permitted), Major data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use, Campus data centers with a SLUP and industrial land use.
- Major and Campus data centers will not be permitted on parcels with any Future Land Use other than Light Industrial or Industrial

Separation and Buffer Requirements

- No new data center development in a light industrial (M) or industrial (M-2) land use shall be permitted within 500 feet of the property line from any residentially zoned parcel.
- No data center development in M or M-2 zoning district shall be permitted within 500 feet of the property line from any DeKalb County parks and trails. [NEW]**
- If an interstate roadway, state highway, or major arterial road borders the property line, the required distance between a development and a residentially zoned property may be reduced to 300 feet along the property line where the roadway is located.
- Proximity to Transit: Data centers shall not be located within a half a mile (2,640 ft) of a high-capacity transit stop.**
- Transitional Buffers:** Major and Campus data centers shall maintain a minimum transitional buffer of 100 feet along all property lines abutting any properties used for or zoned non-industrial (M or M-2).
- Screening and Landscaping:** Major data centers and Campus data centers shall provide a 20-foot-wide landscaped buffer with a minimum 10-foot-high wall that shall provide a five (5) to ten (10) dB sound attenuation and a minimum of 1 canopy tree per every 30 feet of property frontage.

Site Layout and Design Requirements

- Equipment Placement:** Substations, electrical yards, mechanical yards, and any other exposed equipment shall be located in the rear yard of the primary structure and where possible in the location least visible from a public street or park.
- Building Façade:** A minimum of thirty (30) percent of the width of the front façade of the building at the ground level shall consist of fenestration.

Supplemental Standards

- All cooling and ventilation equipment within property boundaries must operate on a **closed-loop system** and must follow Watershed standards for usage and disposal.
- All applications for a data center shall provide the following plans and studies:
 - Noise Impact Assessment
 - Water Consumption and Sustainability Plan
 - Energy Consumption and Sustainability Plan
 - Lighting Plan
 - Transmission Line Impact Assessment
 - Tree Preservation and Reforestation Plan
 - Stormwater Management Plan
 - Sewer Plan

Questions and Comments

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Please submit any questions or comments regarding the data center text amendment. Your submission will be sent to Planning staff for review and consideration. Not every question or comment will be answered directly, but common submissions will be answered and posted publicly or added to the FAQ page. Please stay tuned and check back for project updates!

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Documents

- [Data Center TA Draft 3.pdf \(1.1 MB\) \(pdf\)](#)

FAQs

- [What is a data center?](#)
- [How much power do data centers use?](#)
- [How much water do data centers use?](#)
- [How do data centers support economic development and what benefits do they provide for the County?](#)
- [What are some community impacts from data center development?](#)
- [Do data centers already exist within the County?](#)
- [Why is the County regulating data centers?](#)
- [Where will data centers be permitted, and will they require any special land use permits \(SLUP\)?](#)
- [Is the water in a closed-loop cooling system for data centers chemically treated?](#)
- [How is chemically treated water discharge regulated?](#)
- [Additional Information and Resources](#)

Key Dates

- [Community Council 5
13 October 2025](#)
- [Community Council 2
14 October 2025](#)
- [Community Council 3
08 October 2025](#)
- [Community Council 4
21 October 2025](#)
- [Community Council 1
15 October 2025](#)

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