AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 27, ARTICLE 4, SECTION 2 OF THE CODE OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, AS REVISED 1988 TO ADD REGULATIONS FOR DATA CENTERS IN DEKALB COUNTY

Chapter 27 Article 4.2.64 DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ON DATA CENTERS IN DEKALB COUNTY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose and intent of the board of commissioners in establishing data centers as follows:

WHEREAS, to provide a definition for data centers as storage facilities housing servers for computing functions and their development in DeKalb County;

WHEREAS, to provide design and development standards for data centers to ensure that there is no discernable impact on adjacent properties or residential areas;

WHEREAS, to ensure that all data centers operate in compliance with applicable environmental standards and best practices within the M (Light Industrial) and M-2 (Heavy Industrial) Districts, and to minimize any adverse impacts on neighboring residential, office, or commercial districts, including but not limited to acoustic waste, particle pollution, water usage, and energy consumption;

WHEREAS, to ensure that data centers are located where transportation access to thoroughfares and freeways is available;

WHEREAS, to ensure that development of data centers remains compatible with all character areas and that there use fits within the appropriate character area designated in the 2050 Comprehensive Unified Plan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Authority of DeKalb County, Georgia, and be it hereby ordained by the Authority of same, that Chapter 27 of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, is hereby amended as follows:

Part I. ENACTMENT

By amending Section 27-4.1.3 (Land Use Table) to allow data centers in O-I, M, and M-2 zoning districts subject to certain supplemental regulations; and

By adding to Section 27. Article 9.1.3 – Defined Terms *of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, as follows:*

a) **Data Center, *Campus***: A singular property 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 will have a minimum large load capacity of 45 MWh, one (1) or more substations that operate within property lines and will have a minimum building complex of 500,000 square feet.
b) **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 will have a minimum load of 5 MWh, one or more substations that operate within property lines, and will be 20,000 square feet or larger. Major data centers are classified into four groups that vary in size and load:

Medium Data Centers are between 20,000 and 100,000 square feet with a load between 5 and 10 MWh; Large Data Centers are between 100,000 and 500,000 square feet with a load between 10 and 50 MWh.

c) **Data Center, *Minor***: A physical room, building, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications and services, which contains threshold of less than 20,000 square feet, does not require a substation, and operates under 5 MWh. A minor data center can include data centers as an accessory use if they are under 2,000 square feet.

d) **High-Capacity Transit Stop:** A high-capacity transit stop is a designated location where transit vehicles designed to transport large volumes of passengers operate. These stops serve major public transportation modes such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Commuter Rail Transit (CRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Heavy Rail Transit (HRT).

e) **Hyperscale Data Center**: Data center facilities that are larger than 100,000 sqft while also operating with a load greater than 100 MWh - also known as a *large load facility*.

f) **Load**: The total power consumed by servers, storage, and other networking devices that operate within a data center site.

g) **Large Load**: Defined by Georgia Power, per the *2025 Integrated Resource Plan (p.35, Footnote 26)*, as an industrial load greater than or equal to 45 MWh and commercial load greater than or equal to 115 MW.

h) **Megawatt-Hour (MWh)**: The unit of measurement for the amount of electrical energy used for one hour (Ex. 1 MWh is equivalent to one million watts of power, which is enough to power 650 homes.)

i) **Substations**: An electric system facility that converts higher voltages to lower voltages within or separate from a data center to generate sufficient power at maximize efficiency; can operate independently for dedicated site once directly connected to transmission line.

By creating Section 27-4.2.64 -Data Center Supplemental Regulations of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, as follows:

1) Permitted Locations

a. Minor data centers are permitted on parcels zoned Office-Institutional (O-I) as an accessory use if they are 2,000 square feet or smaller. Any other minor data centers up to 20,000 square feet with a load between 1 and 5 MWh is permitted outright on parcels zoned in Light Industrial (M) and Heavy Industrial (M-2) districts.

b. All major data centers are permitted in Light Industrial (M) and Heavy Industrial (M-2) districts with a special land use permit. Major data centers between 20,000 and 100,000 square feet are permitted in Office-Institutional (O-I) with a special land use permit.

c. See Use Table 4.1, Exhibit 1.

2) Buffer Requirements

a. Data centers must maintain a minimum transitional buffer of 75’ if abutting any non-industrial properties and enclosed by a freestanding wall or fence with a minimum height of 7 feet (Section 5.4.5) between land uses;

b. Data centers will follow the transitional height plane standards from Section 5.2.4.

c. Facilities must provide a 10-foot-wide landscaped buffer with a minimum seven (7) foot high wall or fence and canopy trees planted at a rate of 1 tree per 30 feet; (Preliminary Objective Standards – Alameda County, p.4)

3) Distance Requirements

a. No new data center development shall be permitted within 3,960 feet (i.e., three-fourths of a mile) of the property line of any other data center development; (Sec. 27-4.2.28)
b. There shall be no more than 4 total **major** data centers within a 2 mile radius (10,650 feet).
c. Data centers are not allowed where any part of the property line is within 2,640 feet of a high-capacity transit stop; (*Taken from the 2025 Code of Ordinances for the City of Atlanta*, SEC. 16-18U.003.)
d. Distance shall be measured from the right-of-way of the exit or entrance ramp, or street corner (middle of the radius), along the intersecting street right-of-way, to the nearest property line. (Sec. 27-4.2.28 (E))

4) Architectural Requirements

a. A data center will have a minimum of thirty (30) percent of the width of the front façade of all buildings at the ground level consist of fenestration. All windows must incorporate architectural glazing or be transparent, while maintaining appropriate security and operational standards for data center use; (Sec. 27-4.2.35.)
b. Non-primary building façades of all data center facilities, where visible from a public street or adjacent residential properties, shall not be constructed of aluminum siding, exposed metal panels, corrugated steel, vinyl siding, plywood, pressed wood products, synthetic stucco, or unfinished concrete block. A minimum of ten percent (10%) of the non-primary façade area must incorporate architectural glazing or be transparent, while maintaining appropriate security and operational standards for data center use; (Sec. 27-4.2.35.)
c. A property with more than one (1) data center will be considered as a data center campus and must follow campus style development standards with unified landscape and architectural elements.

5) Operation Requirements

a. Substations, electrical yards, mechanical yards, and any other exposed equipment shall be located in the rear yard of its associated data center and must be screened from any adjacent public street or park; (*Taken from the 2025 Code of Ordinances for the City of Atlanta*, Sec.16-36.011.)

6) Noise Assessment Requirements and Maintenance Requirements

a. Maximum permissible sound levels shall not exceed eighty 80 decibels (DB) in industrial areas and 70 decibels (DB) in commercial areas; (Sec. 16-305)
b. Generator testing will only be allowed between the hours of 5:00pm and 8:00pm, with testing not exceeding two hours daily on weekdays. (*York County, VA*, Section 24.1-489.1(e)(2))
c. Except for generator testing or commissioning activities, generator use is limited to backup/emergency use only. (*Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance*, Sec 4.6-2.D(8)(c))
d. A Noise Impact Assessment shall be required as part of the permitting process for any proposed data center development with commercial properties surrounding any major

arterial street and a major or minor arterial street, residential zones, and/or designated conservation zoned areas within 300 feet of their property line;

7) **Substation Requirements**
   a. In the O-I districts, substations associated with the operation of a data center is allowed subject to the following requirements:
      i. The substation shall be at least fifty (50) feet from the street right-of-way;
      ii. The substation shall be screened so as not to be visible at ground level from any adjoining property or public street;
      iii. The substation shall not involve the storage of vehicles or service equipment.
   b. In the M and M-2 districts, substations associated with the operation of a data center is allowed subject to the following requirements:
      i. The substation shall be at least fifty (50) feet from the street right-of-way;
      ii. The substation shall be screened so as not to be visible at ground level from any adjoining property or public street;
      iii. The substation shall not involve the storage of vehicles or service equipment;
      iv. A ten-foot-wide evergreen landscape buffer around the outside perimeter of the screened area shall be provided when adjacent to any property not zoned M or M-2.

8) **Cooling equipment**
   a. All cooling, ventilation, and other exceptional equipment used to operate facility must be enclosed or have a barrier to reduce noise levels; provide minimum screening to block view if public street facing;
   b. Mechanical and utility equipment will follow screening requirements for site and parking area landscaping. (Sec. 27-5.4.6)
   c. All cooling and ventilation equipment within property boundaries will operate on a closed-loop system. (*York County, VA*, Section 24.1-489.1(c))

9) **Application Requirements**
   a. Applicants shall submit a letter from the utility provider verifying that the applicant is in compliance with all policies, procedures, and guidelines established by the provider.

10) **Parking Requirements**
   a. See Use Table 6.2 for Off-street Parking Ratios, Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 1. Use Table 4.1, *Data Centers*

KEY:	P - Permitted use		SA - Special administrative permit from director of planning							
	Pa - Permitted as an accessory use		SP - Special land use permit from BoC (SLUP)							
Use	**RE**	**RLG**	**OI**	**OIT**	**NS**	**C-1**	**C-2**	**OD**	**M**	**M-2**
INDUSTRIAL										
Data Centers										
Data Center, Minor			Pa						P	P
Data Center, Major (in Industrial and Light Industrial Character Areas)			SP						SP	SP
Data Center, Campus (in Industrial and Light Industrial Character Areas)									SP	SP
Data Centers, Major or Campus in all other Character Areas										

Exhibit 2. Use Table 6.2, *Off-street Parking Ratios*

TABLE 6.2: Off-street Parking Ratios

Minimum and Maximum Parking Spaces

Industrial

Use	Minimum Parking Spaces Required	Maximum Parking Spaces Allowed
Heavy and light industrial, data centers		One (1) space for each two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet of floor area.