# Agenda Item

**File ID: 2025-0972** **Substitute 1/27/2026**

**Public Hearing: YES ☒ NO ☐** **Department:** Planning and Sustainability

**SUBJECT:**

**Commission District(s): All Districts**

**Application of the Director of Planning and Sustainability to amend Chapter 27 to Establish a Definition, Regulatory Guidelines, and Development Standards for Data Centers in M (Industrial), M-2 (Heavy Industrial), O-I (Office-Institutional), and O-D (Office-Distribution) zoning districts. This text amendment is County-wide.**

**Petition No.:** **2025-0972 TA-25-1247647**

**Proposed Use:** **Data Centers in M, M-2 & O-I zoning districts.**

**Location:** County-wide.

**Parcel No.:** N/A

**Information Contact:** Eva Chauveau, Long Range Planner

**Phone Number:** 404-371-2155

**PURPOSE:**

Application of the Director of Planning and Sustainability to amend Chapter 27 to Establish a Definition, Regulatory Guidelines, and Development Standards for Data Centers in M (Industrial), M-2 (Heavy Industrial), O-I (Office-Institutional), and O-D (Office-Distribution) zoning districts.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL: (October 2025) CC-1:** Approval; **CC-2:** Deferral; **CC-3:** Full-cycle deferral; **CC-4:** Full-cycle deferral; **CC-5:** Full-cycle deferral. **(August 2025) CC-1:** Full-cycle deferral; **CC-2:** Deferral; **CC- 3:** Full-cycle deferral; **CC-4:** Denial; **CC-5:** Denial.

**PLANNING COMMISSION: (Nov. 2025)** Approval. **(Sept. 2025)** Full-cycle deferral.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Approval.

**PLANNING STAFF ANALYSIS:** Planning staff has collaborated with DeKalb County's Watershed Department, Georgia Power, the Atlanta Regional Commission, data center developers, and the public to develop a clear and effective land-use framework for data center development. The proposed ordinance addresses core zoning and development considerations, such as location, compatibility of adjacent uses, noise, water use, and energy consumption, within the County's established land-use authority. The ordinance establishes a necessary regulatory structure to guide where and how data centers may locate and operate within DeKalb County. In the absence of such standards, these facilities could be developed in locations that are incompatible with surrounding uses or community objectives. This framework ensures that data centers are directed to appropriate areas and evaluated using consistent, predictable criteria. The ordinance includes targeted land-use measures to ensure compatibility with adjacent development, including distance requirements from residential zoning districts, parks, and trails. While the ordinance does not regulate matters within the jurisdiction of other agencies or departments, it is designed to complement those authorities by clearly defining the County's zoning role in data center siting and development. As development patterns evolve and additional data becomes available through future

applications and real-world experience, the County may consider refinements to these standards. At this time, staff finds that the proposed ordinance represents sound land-use regulation and recommends the application for *"**Approval"***.

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: (November 6, 2025) Approval 5-0-1.** Commissioner Costello moved, Commissioner Patton seconded for approval, per Staff recommendation. Commissioner Cooper abstained. **(September 9, 2025) Full-cycle deferral 9-0-0.** Commissioner West moved, Commissioner Cooper seconded for a full-cycle deferral to the November 2025 zoning agenda.

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOTE/RECOMMENDATION: (October 2025) CC-1:** Approval 6-0-0; **CC-2:** Deferral 9-0-0; **CC-3:** Full-cycle deferral (5-3-0) due to the community council not having a final draft to review; **CC-4:** Full-cycle deferral 8-0-0; **CC-5:** Full-cycle deferral 6-0-0 until final report has been completed. **(August 2025) CC-1:** Full-cycle deferral 6-0-0; **CC-2:** Deferral 8-0-0; **CC-3:** Full-cycle deferral 10-0-0. Discussion included but not limited to that the text amendment needed to be tweaked to address potential noise concerns, should not allow near residential areas, consider requiring use of renewable resources such as solar and rainwater catchments, simplify distance calculation; **CC-4:** Denial 6-1-1. Council cited not enough regulation for proposed data centers; **CC-5:** Denial 8-0-0.

DeKalb County Government Services Center
178 Sams Street
Decatur, GA 30030
404-371-2155

www.dekalbcountyga.gov/planning
https://www.dekalbcountyga.gov/planning-and-sustainability/public-hearing-agendas-info

# Board of Commissioners Hearing Date: January 27, 2026

# STAFF ANALYSIS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **CASE NO.:** TA-25-1247647 | | **File ID #:** 2025-0972 |
| **Address:** | County-Wide | **Commission District:** ALL **Super District:** ALL |
| **Request:** | Application of the Director of Planning and Sustainability to Amend Chapter 27 To Establish a Definition, Regulatory Guidelines, and Development Standards for Data Centers in M (Industrial), M-2 (Heavy Industrial), O-I (Office Institutional), and O-D (Office Development) zoning districts. This text amendment is County-wide. | |
| **Applicant/Agent:** | DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability Department | |
| **Sections of the Zoning Ordinance Affected by the Amendment:** | Chapter 27 of the Zoning Ordinance, to amend Section 4.1.3 (Use Table) to allow data centers in O-I, M, and M-2 zoning districts subject to certain supplemental regulations; and by adding to Article 9.1.3 – Defined Terms *of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988*. | |

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval.**

The DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability Department is seeking to adopt an ordinance for regulations on data center developments, consisting of 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 service. The proposed ordinance defines data centers in four capacities of **accessory, minor**, **medium**, **major**, and **campus** - which is dependent on square footage, load capacity, and/or whether a substation is required for operation.

Major and campus data centers shall only be permitted in **Light Industrial (M)** and **Industrial (M-2)** zoning districts with a Special Land Use Permit due to their scale, limited employment generation, and lack of public accessibility. These facilities are not compatible with Activity Centers or residential neighborhoods.

Minor and medium data centers will be permitted in **Office Institutional (O-I)** and **Office-Development (OD)** zoning districts with a Special Land Use Permit to accommodate small-scale operations in higher intensity areas. Minor and medium data centers shall be permitted by right in **Light Industrial (M)** and **Industrial (M-2)** zoning districts.

Accessory data centers will be permitted by right in **Office Institutional (O-I)** and **Office-Development (OD)** zoning districts.

Medium, major, and campus data centers are permitted by right under the condition that it follows all application requirements for data centers on redeveloped industrial sites and limited exemptions from Special Land Use Permit requirements.

The proposed ordinance includes permitted locations, buffer requirements, architectural standards, operational requirements, noise and maintenance regulation, and supplemental assessments, such as water consumption,

energy consumption, lighting design, stormwater management, sewer updates, transmission line impacts, and tree preservation.

The purpose for these regulations ensures that any new and/or existing developments do not impose upon the health, wellbeing, and welfare of DeKalb County Residents. The proposed ordinance considers the impacts of data center development on the economic, social, and environmental aspects of DeKalb County.

*Background*

Over the last 10 years, the United States has seen a dramatic increase in data center development. Atlanta has seen major changes in the real estate market to prepare for the incoming demand. A study done with CBRE Research for North America Data Center Trends H1 2024 showed that Atlanta led all the primary markets for data centers with a 26% year-over-year increase in pricing, based on strong demand from AI providers, such as Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and X (CBRE Report).

Due to the High-Tech Data Center Equipment Tax Exemption (O.C.G.A. § 48-8-3(68.1)) allowed under House Bill 696 in 2018, many companies have been incentivized to build new data centers in Georgia. More recently, however, House Bill 528 passed through Georgia legislation placing more restrictions on larger development, requiring that "high resource use facilities to provide disclosures regarding community impact and energy and water usage" prior to engaging with any local government or jurisdiction for tax incentives.

There are currently two data centers located within DeKalb County. The first is a data centered owned by DC Blox Atlanta located at 6 West Druid Hills Dr. NE, Atlanta, GA 30329. The facility is 3,350 sq ft and has been occupied since 2010. The second is INAP Data Center owned by Lincoln Rackhouse located at 40 Perimeter Center East, Atlanta, GA 30338. The facility is 88,000 sq ft and has been occupied since 2019.

The primary community concerns regarding data centers are the energy and water consumption, environmental impacts, land-use impacts, and noise pollution, particularly for campus and hyperscale facilities (>500,000 sq ft). In 2023, data centers consumed about 4.4% of total US electricity and are expected to consume 6.7 to 12% of total US electricity by 2028 (US Department of Energy). In understanding the basic capacity necessary to support data centers in populated areas, it is important to evaluate their impact on the surrounding community. Municipalities worldwide will have to learn how to adapt to the significant intelligent investments and the pressure from cloud and AI providers for space.

*Sustainability in the Data Center Industry*

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into everyday processes has allowed for a rapid evolution of AI processing within a multitude of sectors, with Nvidia leading the charge for smaller, more efficient chip production. With the increase in the production of semiconductors, the ability to regularly process and cool the chips has become a concern. As more companies begin to focus on sustainable building and operation practices, it is imperative that regulation reflect these structural improvements.

Many of the pollutants from data centers come from diesel-powered backup generators. A diesel generator that operates with a load of 2kW to 5 kW can emit up to 4,456 kg of carbon dioxide per year (Jakhrani et al., 2012). An 80,000-square-foot data center can consume up to 150 watts per square foot to process information, resulting in a total power demand of 12 megawatts. To support this, backup diesel generators - typically four units handling a 2.5 MW load each - may be required. If not properly regulated, each generator can emit over 25,000 pounds of toxic emissions per hour. (US EPA). The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has created four tiers to manage generators and reduce the emission of primary pollutants such as carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons (Power Secure). Tier 4 is the current

emissions standard for diesel generators, requiring the strictest regulations through intentional design using diesel oxidation catalysts (DOCs), diesel particulate filters (DPFs), selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems, and are optimized for fuel efficiency (Worldwide Power Products).

*Water Consumption*

An important site selection criterion for data center locations is access to water, primarily through municipal or regional water utilities. For ideal high-density and high-performance computing, data centers can request 100,000 gallons to 3 million gallons of water per day, depending on the type of cooling system in place. Water cooling, consisting of an evaporative and closed-loop cooling, is a preferred method among hyperscale facilities because it more efficient in absorbing and expelling heat from high-density centers. Hyperscale data centers can consume 550,000 gallons per day, while wholesale and retail data centers consume an average of 180,000 gallons per day (Water Usage in DCs). Although data centers can use a large amount of water daily many facilities have opted to find alternatives that consume less water, such as immersion cooling (Yañez-Barnuevo, 2025). Despite these efforts, data centers still require a lot of energy and water to function effectively - even more so at larger scales. To increase water-efficiency, data centers can employ three different methods based on air or liquid cooling: closed-loop cooling systems, free cooling, direct air cooling, or immersion cooling.

Closed-loop cooling systems are the most common systems in new builds, recycling wastewater and freshwater that is chemically treated to prevent corrosion, microbiological issues, and freezing. Closed-loop systems require a large initial fill that can range in volume depending on the size of the data, however, it can reduce water use by 70% (Yañez-Barnuevo, 2025). These systems typically require more energy to circulate the water continuously between servers and chillers. Despite this, many developers are working towards zero water use for cooling as the industry continues to evolve.

Free cooling is used when development is located in a specific environment that maintains consistent cooler temperatures as cold air is drawn from the outside into the building to circulate and cool the equipment.

Direct air cooling requires no water, but instead much more energy. This system pulls heat away from the chips and filters it through air conditioning vents and tubes. An example of an air-cooling system is computer room air conditioning (CRAC), which uses a single pass air flow design through a refrigerant and then is immediately returned to the room to cool the air. This type of cooling system is ideal for areas with minimal water resources and cheaper access to power (Chang et al., 2024)

An immersion cooling system is much more complex, requiring servers, chips, and any other data equipment to be completely submerged in a specialized dielectric fluid that absorbs the heat from the chips. In this instance, the hardware must be specifically designed to withstand the submersion. Immersion cooling is a much more recent technique that few developers have implemented into data centers due to initial costs that are much higher than installing a closed-loop system. Albeit the steep initial cost, immersion cooling can lead to significant space-optimization benefits and may have significant energy-saving benefits (Yañez-Barnuevo, 2025).

*Architectural and Safety Standards in Data Centers*

Data centers are maintained with extremely strict standards in place due to sensitive data information, high-density equipment, and overall, extremely complex infrastructure (Data Bank, 2024). Data centers are susceptible to heat, electrical hazards, fire, air quality, and chemical exposure, often all regulated through appropriate on-site employee management, temperature and humidity regulation, air filtration systems, and data center design.

Data center design has become a concern for community members as more and more data centers spread to urban areas, specifically near densely populated cities or neighborhoods. As a result, it is important that data centers reflect similar architectural styles that remain relatively sustainable and are not incongruous with its surroundings. The basic design of these facilities should consider scalability and flexibility of building layout, power and cooling efficiency with equipment storage, high availability and redundance of power, and 24/7 security and physical protection. Any kind of fenestration is typically discouraged in design as it presents an opportunity to physically access data center resources. Protocols, such as two-factor authentication, biometric screening, and video surveillance, must be put in place to ensure that any data within the building remains secure (Pacheco, 2024). Faux fenestration, applied decorative murals, or decorative windows can provide an alternative to the potential security risk that real windows present, while also maintaining a similar building envelope to the surrounding building environment.

The Atlanta Regional Commission is currently looking into releasing a Community Desing Guide, in partnership with a noted design firm, to illustrate data center projects that can be integrated into local communities. This will help developers contribute to placemaking in building publicly accessible edges, shared amenities, and appealing facades. A key point is to lead developers away from green-fields and focus on regenerative redevelopment (Atlanta Regional Commission).

*Data Center Clustering for Efficiency*

The data center industry tends to grow in geographic clusters, often influenced by the cost and availability of land, power, and connectivity. Initially, data centers were typically located in remote areas to take advantage of lower land prices and cheaper energy. However, increasing customer expectations for low-latency services and the rising demand for bandwidth have driven a shift. Today, more data centers are being built closer to urban centers and along major transmission corridors to minimize latency and ensure faster, more reliable access to data.

For DeKalb County, which relies on a single water source, clustering could have more negative impacts on the existing water infrastructure. In implementing distance requirements, specifically from residentially zoned parcels, clustering of high-demand water users can be prevented in areas with limited infrastructure capacity, as well as reduces the risk of localized pressure drops in areas with older water infrastructure.

Although data centers can improve latency in closer proximity to each other, it is important to understand that clustering also concentrates water demand. As high demand users, data centers can place additional strain on DeKalb County's water infrastructure, potentially outpacing current capacity and impacting long-term sustainability.

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Planning Staff has collaborated with DeKalb County's Watershed Department to address water consumption concerns. Staff has also relied on key information from Georgia Power, Atlanta Regional Commission, Data Center developers, and the public, to ensure that regulations are conducive to the development goals of the County and the community to address issues of noise and energy consumption. While the proposed ordinance may not address every potential issue at this time, it establishes a necessary regulatory framework to guide the location and operation of data centers within DeKalb County. In the absence of such regulations, these facilities could locate in areas where they may be incompatible with surrounding uses or community expectations. The County has taken the appropriate measures to ensure compatibility between proposed land uses and zoning, such as strengthening distance requirements between parks and trails. As the County gains experience administering these provisions, refinements can be made to address any emerging challenges or unforeseen impacts. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Planning & Sustainability Department that the application be for "Approval".

# AN ORDINANCE

# AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 27, ARTICLES 4, 6, 7, AND 9 OF THE CODE OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, AS REVISED 1988, TO ADD REGULATIONS FOR DATA CENTERS IN DEKALB COUNTY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Authority of DeKalb County is tasked with protecting the County's health, safety, and general welfare, and the Board of Commissioners is authorized to exercise zoning powers; and

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary to provide a definition for data centers; and,

**WHEREAS**, it is necessary to establish design and development standards for data centers to ensure that there is no discernible impact on adjacent properties or residential areas; and,

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

**WHEREAS**, to ensure that growth and density around high-capacity transit stops focuses on pedestrian orientation and is not hindered by development that does not generate increased pedestrian activity; and,

**WHEREAS**, in pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable future, it is critical to protect at-risk uses, such as parks, trails, schools, daycares, senior care facilities, and other areas from intensive development that may pose adverse health and environmental impacts; and,

**WHEREAS,** it is desirable to promote development that minimizes environmental impacts and integrates with existing and planned land uses of DeKalb County; and,

**WHEREAS**, to recognize the rapid changes within the data center industry and to account for the lifecycle of sites, ensuring that developments can be adaptively reused and can be revitalized with the possibility of future reuse; and,

**WHEREAS**, to ensure that development of data centers remains compatible with all character areas and that their use is located within the appropriate character area(s) designated in the 2050 Comprehensive Unified Plan;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Governing Authority of DeKalb County, Georgia, 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 (Use Table) to include data centers as follows:

| 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 | MU-1 | MU-2 | MU-3 | MU-4,5 | See Section 4.2 ✓ |
| INDUSTRIAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data centers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data center, accessory* | | | P | | | | | P | | | | | | | ✓ |
| Data center, minor* | | | SP | | | | | SP | P | P | | | | | ✓ |
| Data Center, medium* | | | SP | | | | | SP | P | P | | | | | ✓ |
| Data center, major (in industrial and light industrial character areas)* | | | | | | | | | SP | SP | | | | | ✓ |
| Data center, campus (in industrial and light industrial character areas)* | | | | | | | | | SP | SP | | | | | ✓ |
| Data centers, major or campus in all other character areas* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |
| Data centers, redevelopment of existing industrial sites to medium, major, or campus*/** | | | | | | | | | P | P | | | | | ✓ |
| *In the event of a conflict between the Use Table and the language stated in section 27-4.2.64, the application shall adhere to the written language in section 27-4.2.64. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **See section 27-4.2.64(G) for all application requirements for data centers on redeveloped industrial sites and limited exemptions from Special Land Use Permit requirements. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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By amending section 27-9.1.3 – Defined terms *of the Code of DeKalb County, to add the following terms:*

*Closed loop system*: A system that constantly reuses and recycles an initial load of water within its operation, significantly reducing the draw on external water sources and minimizing wastewater discharge. A closed loop system shall not use evaporative cooling, and may consist of methods including, but not limited to, air-cooled (dry) cooling, rear-door heat exchanger cooling, hybrid dry economizer cooling, direct-to-chip cooling, or immersion cooling.

*Data center*: A physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting technological applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with technological equipment, applications, systems or services.

*Data center, accessory*: Minor data centers shall only be permitted on parcels zoned Office-Institutional (O-I) and Office-Distribution (O-D) as an accessory use if under 2,000 square feet.

*Data center, campus*: A data center campus is a geographically contiguous development of one or multiple buildings built across one or multiple phases totaling at least 500,000 square feet.

*Data center, major*: A major data center has an area between 100,000 square feet and 499,999 square feet and has a substation.

*Data center, medium*: A medium data center has an area between 20,000 square feet and 99,999 square feet and may include a substation.

*Data center, minor*: A minor data center has an area of less than 20,000 square feet and does not have a substation.

*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), Arterial Rapid Transit (ART), Commuter Rail Transit (CRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Heavy Rail Transit (HRT).

*Load*: The total power consumed by servers, storage, cooling, ventilation, generators, and other networking devices that operate within a data center.

*Megawatt (MW)*: The unit of measurement for electricity that is equivalent to one million watts. This is commonly used to measure the total power consumption of a data center.

*Substation*: An electric utility facility that converts higher voltages to lower voltages within, or separate from, a data center to deliver sufficient power at maximum efficiency; may operate independently as a dedicated site once directly connected to a transmission line(s).

*Square footage, data centers*: The square footage of a data center shall include the total square footage of each floor in the data center development, the square footage of any supporting uses, and the square footage of any additional exterior equipment, such as substations, electrical yards, mechanical yards, and all other exposed equipment, located within the property boundaries.

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

**Section 27-4.2.64. - Data center supplemental regulations.**

A. Permitted locations.

1. Accessory data centers shall only be permitted on parcels zoned Office-Institutional (O-I) and Office-Distribution (O-D) as an accessory use if under 2,000 square feet.
2. Minor data centers and medium data centers shall only be permitted as a primary use by-right in Light Industrial (M) and Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning districts.
3. Minor and medium data centers on parcels zoned Office-Institutional (O-I) and Office-Distribution (O-D) shall require approval of a Special Land Use Permit, regardless of future fand use designation.
4. Major data centers and campus data centers shall only be permitted in the Light Industrial (M) or Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning districts on parcels with Light Industrial (LIND) or Heavy Industrial (IND) future land use designations, with the approval of a Special Land Use Permit.
5. No data centers shall be allowed in any Activity Center.
6. In the event of a conflict between the Use Table and the language stated in section 27-4.2.64, the application shall adhere to the written language in section 27-4.2.64.

B. Buffer and screening requirements.

1. No data center in a Light Industrial (M) or Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning district shall be permitted within 500 feet of the property line of any mixed-use or residentially zoned parcel.
2. No data center in Light Industrial (M) or Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning district shall be permitted within 500 feet of the property line of any DeKalb County park(s) and/or trail(s).
3. If an interstate roadway, state highway, or major arterial road abuts the property line of a data center, the required distance between a data center and a residentially zoned property is reduced to 300 feet along the property line where the interstate roadway, state highway, or major arterial is located.
4. Major or campus data centers shall not be allowed where any of their property lines are within 2,640 feet (a half-mile) of a high-capacity transit stop.
5. Major and campus data centers shall maintain a minimum transitional buffer of 100 feet along all property lines abutting any property used for or zoned non-industrial.
6. Major data centers and campus data centers shall provide a 20-foot-wide landscaped buffer, which shall comply with the requirements of section 27-5.4.5. The landscape buffer shall be located along all property lines of the subject site. Additionally, the landscape buffer may be within the 100-foot transitional buffer and shall include a minimum 8-foot-high wall, see section 27-5.4.7. A minimum of one canopy tree shall be planted for every 30 feet of property frontage if the subject site abuts publicly accessible right-of-way or non-industrially zoned properties. These improvements may be located within the required 100-foot transitional buffer described in section 27-4.2.64(B)(5), if applicable.
7. Screening requirements contained in this subsection beyond those otherwise required in Chapter 27 shall not apply to minor or medium data centers.
8. Minor data centers and medium data centers shall comply with the transitional buffer requirements contained in section 27-5.4.5.
9. The required buffer described in sections 27-4.2.64(B)(1) through (3) may be reduced by the Board of Commissioners as part of an approved Special Land Use Permit (SLUP).
10. Distance shall be measured from the edge of any building, substation, drive, street, parking lot, structure, or improvement to the nearest property line in a straight line (i.e. “as the crow flies”).

C. Architectural and design requirements.

1. When within 300 feet of a publicly accessible road or right-of-way, a medium, major, or campus data center, a minimum of thirty (30) percent of the width of the front façade at the ground level or any building shall consist of fenestration. Murals or other decorative treatments may count towards the fenestration requirements, up to 10% of the front facade. Fenestration requirements listed in this section beyond those otherwise required in Chapter 27 shall not apply to minor data centers.
    a) A mural shall be a large image, such as a painting, applied directly to a wall. Murals are public art and shall not be used for commercial advertising.

2. A minimum of ten percent (10%) of the width of side and rear facades shall incorporate decorative faux windows, architecturally glazed windows, or other decorative treatment, such as murals.
3. The following materials shall not be utilized on any building façade: aluminum siding; corrugated steel; vinyl siding; plywood; pressed wood products; synthetic stucco; or unfinished concrete block.
4. A data center campus shall have unified landscape and architectural elements.
5. Building height for any data center shall not exceed seventy-five (75) feet in Light Industrial (M) and Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning districts, which shall be measured from average finished grade (determined by averaging the elevations of the finished grade around the entire footprint of the structure) to the top of the highest roof beams on a flat roof, to the deck level on a mansard roof, and to the average distance between the eaves and the ridge level for gable, hip, shed, and gambrel roofs. Rooftop mechanical equipment, including but not limited to heating, air conditioning, ventilation, generators, and similar equipment shall not exceed a height of thirty (30) feet. Data centers in other zoning districts shall comply with the height limit requirements of the relevant zoning district.
6. Any rooftop mechanical equipment, including but not limited to heating, air conditioning, ventilation, generators, and similar equipment, shall be screened with a parapet wall, false roof, or other building element so as to fully conceal the mechanical equipment from the adjacent roadways and properties and from the site itself.
    a) The parapet wall, false roof, or building element shall be designed to be architecturally integrated with the building's overall design.
    b) No screening shall be required for renewable energy infrastructure equipment, including but not limited to solar energy systems, wind energy systems, and other power generation equipment.
    c) No screening shall be required for any green infrastructure, including but not limited to green roofs, rooftop cisterns, and other bioretention equipment.
7. All data centers shall comply with the transitional height plane standards contained in section 27-5.2.4.
8. If an application includes the use of renewable energy sources to offset at least forty-five (45) percent of a medium, major, or campus data center’s total energy usage, the project shall be permitted to increase the height of a building to a maximum of one hundred fifty (150) feet, subject to compliance with required transitional building height planes. Renewable energy sources may consist of solar panels, on-site solar farm, small-scale wind turbines, waste heat recovery, and other renewable energy sources.

D. Operation requirements.

1. Substations, electrical yards, mechanical yards, and any other exposed equipment shall not be located between the primary data center building and a public road or right-of-way and shall be screened from all adjacent public streets, private streets, trails, and parks.

2. All lighting other than street and pedestrian scale lighting shall a have "Dark Sky" design. There shall be no spillover from the fixture onto surrounding properties, including the street. All lights and poles shall have a permanent black finish.
3. All cooling and ventilation equipment shall operate on a closed-loop system.
4. Cooling, ventilation, and other external equipment shall not be located between the primary data center building and a public road or right-of-way, unless located on the rooftop of a data center building.
5. Mechanical and utility equipment shall comply with the screening requirements for site and parking area landscaping contained in section 27-4.2.64.(B) and (C) and Article 5 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance.
6. Substations associated with the operation of a data center shall only be permitted in the O-D, M and M-2 zoning districts, and shall be subject to the following requirements:
    a) The substation shall be at least fifty (50) feet from any public right-of-way.
    b) The substation shall be screened from any adjoining property or public or private street with a minimum eight (8) foot tall decorative brick-faced wall.
    c) Vehicle storage and service equipment may not be collocated with the substation.

E. Noise and maintenance requirements.

1. Maximum permissible sound levels shall not exceed sixty-five (65) decibels (dB) during the daytime (7:01 a.m. to (9:59 p.m.) and fifty-five (55) decibels (dB) during the nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) as measured from any property line.
2. Any generators on the property shall comply with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for at least Tier 4 emission standards.
    a) Testing for these generators shall not exceed 10 hours per month.
    b) Testing for these generators shall only occur between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
    c) Generators shall be fully enclosed within a sound attenuation wall for noise reduction and to reduce pollution.
    d) A generator testing log demonstrating compliance with these regulations shall be submitted as part of the annual compliance report to the Director of Planning and Sustainability or his/her/their designee.
3. Except for generator testing or commissioning activities, generator use is limited to backup/emergency use only. In no circumstances shall generators operate for more than 72 hours consecutively.

F. Application requirements for all data centers.

1. All applications for any new data center, regardless of SLUP requirements, shall, in addition to any other application requirements of this code, provide the following information:
    a) Prior to an application for a Special Land Use Permit, the applicant shall confirm in writing that it is working with the applicable utility service provider to procure utility service in connection with the site. Prior to an application for a land disturbance permit, the applicant shall provide written confirmation that the

applicable utility service (power) provider has agreed to provide service. The applicant must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and ordinances pertaining to its activities at the site.

b) A noise impact assessment shall be required as part of the permitting process for any proposed data center and shall be assessed at a distance of 500 feet from the data center property line. The noise impact assessment shall:
    i. Define the scope of the assessment, including the geographic area, the noise sources to be studied, and the specific objectives of the assessment.
    ii. Measure pre-operation ambient noise, existing background noise, and provide acoustic mitigation strategies to ensure the post construction noise levels do not exceed sixty-five (65) decibels (dB) during the daytime (7:01 a.m. to 9:59 p.m.) and fifty-five (55) decibels (dB) during the nighttime (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) as measured from all property lines.

c) A water consumption and sustainability plan shall address conservation and scarcity, outlining the total water requirement of the data center, including cooling needs, and any strategies to reduce or mitigate excessive water usage. The plan shall demonstrate that water usage will not significantly strain DeKalb County's water supply. The water consumption and sustainability plan shall specifically demonstrate:
    i. The vulnerability of the project and project site to water scarcity and drought.
    ii. Anticipated disturbance of public services, including but not limited to: transport, communication, sanitation, fresh water, and electricity supply.
    iii. Identify any drought monitoring and forecasting systems that exist in the project area.
    iv. Proposed water scarcity/drought management measures to alleviate risk, including water storage, alternative sources, and reduced use of resources.
    v. The adoption of advanced low-water or water-free cooling systems that align with the regional drought and water-scarcity planning of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.

d) An energy consumption and sustainability plan shall include the energy load before construction of the data center and the projected daily operational load once constructed. This assessment shall demonstrate:
    i. Estimates of peak electricity demand and strategies for mitigating strain on local power infrastructure.
    ii. Estimates of proposed improvements and alternatives to minimize the need for additional transmission lines from the designated power provider.
    iii. The use of sustainable alternatives for power generation, such as solar panels, small-scale wind turbines, or other renewable energy sources that will offset at least 10% of total power usage.
    iv. A decommissioning plan for unsold or surplus data infrastructure, for recycling all on-site electronic infrastructure through certified recyclers that follow Responsible Recycling (R2) Standard for Electronics

Recyclers and/or e-Stewards® Standard for Responsible Recycling and Reuse of Electronic Equipment.

v. Planned use of sustainable practices to limit or offset the data center's use of power and water.

e. A lighting plan shall show compliance with "Dark Sky design" principles, demonstrating that there will be no spillover onto surrounding properties. A conceptual lighting plan shall be submitted with the initial application. A complete lighting plan shall be submitted as part of a Land Development Permit application demonstrating compliance with the requirements of section 27-5.6.1. - Outdoor Lighting.

f. Transmission line impact assessment: a transmission line impact assessment shall identify the need for new or upgraded transmission lines to meet the data center's electricity requirements. This assessment shall include the potential environmental impact on public land, including tree removal from county-owned land and rights-of-way. This plan shall also include information on any planned substation's location and shall show the screening mechanism(s), which shall include a minimum of an eight (8) foot tall decorative brick-faced wall if potentially visible from a public or private right-of-way. Screening shall comply with section 27-4.2.64(B).

g. Tree preservation and reforestation plan: a tree preservation and reforestation plan shall outline plans to minimize tree removal and enhance urban forestry efforts.

h. Stormwater management plan: a stormwater management plan shall address how the site's development and operation shall manage stormwater runoff, as well as any mitigation measures to prevent negative impacts on local water systems.

i. Sewer plan: a sewer plan shall evaluate and include:
   i. Actual and expected daily sewer flow.
   ii. Identify potential or planned sanitary sewer capacity projects.
   iii. An on-site treatment plan, including any necessary equipment to conduct trace analyses and consistent monitoring of chemical use for on-site water preparation and treatment.
   iv. An analysis of the community's treatment system, or a private treatment system, to determine whether there is adequate capacity to serve the forecasted growth or has planned improvements to add capacity to accommodate the forecasted growth.
   v. Clear indication of pipe size, material type, percent grade, and length of all pipes.
   vi. A utility plan with direction of sewer flow.
   vii. Disclose pretreatment or discharge permit request if any effluent leaves the closed loop system to sanitary or storm sewers for the DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management Industrial Pretreatment Program Review.
   viii. Submit a Closure and Disposal Plan at decommissioning covering treatment systems, chemical waste, and related infrastructure.
   ix. Disclosure Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE) target or performance metric.

2. Additional Information: Any additional information requested by DeKalb County's Department of Watershed Management, Department of Fire Rescue, Department of Public Works, Code Compliance Administration, or Department of Planning & Sustainability shall be submitted before the application is deemed complete.
3. The owner and/or operator shall submit an annual compliance report that details any changes to, and continuation of all, assessments submitted with an application and demonstrating compliance and monitoring of all application requirements and conditions of zoning to the Director of Planning and Sustainability, or his/her/their designee no later than the first of January of each year.
4. The burden of showing compliance with all supplemental requirements of section 27-4.2.64 and/or conditions of zoning is the responsibility of the applicant and/or owner of the property or use.

G. Special Land Use Permit requirements.

1. Redevelopment of Existing Industrial Sites: A Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) shall not be required for the redevelopment, reuse, renovation, or reconstruction of a site to allow a medium, major, or campus data center located within the Light Industrial (M) or Heavy Industrial (M-2) zoning districts and designated as Light Industrial (LIND) or Heavy Industrial (IND) on the Future Land Use Map, provided that:
    a. The site was previously developed and contains existing industrial, warehouse, or manufacturing improvements that were in place prior to December 31, 2024, and there has not been an active business license within the previous six (6) months.
    b. The redevelopment replaces or repurposes previous development with a medium, major, or campus data center that complies fully with the supplemental regulations in section 27-4.2.64.
    c. The redevelopment does not expand the site's total impervious surface area or building footprint by more than twenty-five (25) percent beyond existing conditions.
    d. No portion of the site is within 500 feet of a residentially zoned property, unless separated by an interstate, state highway, or major arterial road as described in section 27-4.2.64(B)(1) and section 27-4.2.64(B)(3); and
    e. The applicant submits all required technical plans and studies listed under section 27-4.2.64(F) (Application Requirements) with the Land Disturbance Permit application, to be reviewed administratively by County staff for compliance.
    f. Redevelopment proposals that do not meet these conditions shall require approval of a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP).
    g. In the event of a conflict between the Use Table and the language stated in section 27-4.2.64, the application shall adhere to the written language in section 27-4.2.64.

2. A Special Land Use Permit shall be required for any building expansion or height increase of any existing data center.

3. In addition to the standard Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) criteria listed in section 27-7.4.6., applications shall be evaluated on the following supplemental criteria:

    a. Adequacy of operation and infrastructure equipment that ensures the most sustainable use of resource, energy, and water consumption to serve the proposed use.
    b. Whether the proposed use demonstrates compliance to all plans and assessments required by this code, including but not limited to: noise impact assessment, water consumption and sustainability plan, energy consumption plan, lighting plan, transmission line impact assessment, tree preservation and reforestation plan, stormwater management plan, and sewer plan.
    c. Compliance shall be deemed satisfied when all plans and assessments have been properly submitted, potential impacts have been identified, proposed feasible mitigation strategies have been identified, and adverse impacts on public health, the surrounding environment, and infrastructure have been minimized.

H. Parking requirements.

1. Any data center shall comply with the standards in section 27-6.1.3 - Parking regulations, off-street parking spaces.
2. See Table 6.2 for Off-street Parking Ratios.

***

By amending Table 6.2 for Off-street Parking Ratios as follows:

***

| TABLE 6.2: Off-street Parking Ratios | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Minimum and Maximum Parking Spaces** | | |
| **Industrial** | | |
| **Use** | **Minimum** | **Maximum Parking** |
| Data centers, accessory, minor, and medium | | One (1) space for each one thousand five hundred (1,500) square feet of floor area. |
| Data centers, major and campus | | One (1) space for each two thousand five hundred (2,500) square feet of floor area. |

***

By amending section 27-7.4.7 as follows:

**Section 7.4.7. – Additional criteria for specified uses.**

*******

F. In addition to the application requirements contained in Article 7, any application for a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) related to any data center shall provide the following information where applicable:

1. Adequacy of operation and infrastructure equipment that ensures the most sustainable use of resources, energy, and water consumption to serve the proposed use.
2. Whether the proposed use demonstrates compliance to all plans and assessments required by this code, including but not limited to: noise impact assessment, water consumption and sustainability plan, energy consumption plan, lighting plan, transmission line impact assessment, tree preservation and reforestation plan, stormwater management plan, and sewer plan.
3. Compliance shall be deemed satisfied when all plans and assessments have been properly submitted, potential impacts have been identified, proposed feasible mitigation strategies have been identified, and adverse impacts on public health, the surrounding environment, and infrastructure have been minimized.

**ADOPTED** by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this _____ day of _____, **2026**

_____
**CHAKIRA JOHNSON**
Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners DeKalb County, Georgia

**APPROVED** by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this _____ day of _____, **2026.**

_____
**LORRAINE COCHRAN-JOHNSON**
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

**ATTEST:**

_____
**BARBARA H. SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC**
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

**APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:**

_____
**JULIANA A. NJOKU**
Director, Planning and Sustainability

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

_____
**TERRY G. PHILLIPS**
Interim County Attorney