

# **Frequently Asked Question**

## **Data Center Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment**

### **What is a Data Center?**

A use involving a building/premise primarily occupied by computers and/or telecommunications and related equipment where information is processed, transferred and/or stored. This use does not include computers or telecommunications related equipment that is secondary and customarily incidental to an otherwise permitted use on the property, such as servers associated with an office building. Data Centers are classified by the North American Industry Classification System as 518210. This use includes but is not limited to Enterprise Data Centers, Managed Data Centers, Colocation Data Centers, Cloud Data Centers, Edge Data Centers, Hyperscale Data Centers, Cryptocurrency Mining, Blockchain Transaction Processing, and Server Farms. A Data Center may include Data Center Accessory Uses.

### **How is a Data Center Use Currently Classified in the Zoning Ordinance?**

A Data Center use is classified by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as 518210 – Data Center. The two digit code that Data Centers fall under is 51 – Information.

### **What Zoning Districts currently allow a Data Center?**

Data Centers are currently permitted by right in the following zoning districts:

- a. C-2 – General Commercial District
- b. C-3 – Business Park District
- c. I-1 – General Industrial District
- d. I-3 – Industrial/Commercial District

### **What is the purpose of addressing Data Centers in the Zoning Ordinance?**

Cumberland County has seen an increased interest in Data Center development due to access to electricity, water, and transportation infrastructure. In Lower Allen Township there are opportunities to repurpose existing vacant or underutilized buildings into Data Centers which are not consistent with current land use policy.

### **How was the proposed Data Center Zoning Ordinance text amendment developed?**

The proposed text amendment language was developed by reviewing guidance and model ordinance language from the following sources, and input from township staff:

- a. Cumberland County Planning Department – Planning for Data Centers White Paper
- b. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Model Data Center Ordinance
- c. Penn Future Data Center Model Ordinance
- d. Pennsylvania State Association of Township Officials

- e. Data Center Educational Workshops
- f. Township Staff, Zoning Ordinance Update Committee, and Planning Commission Input

**Was there a guiding framework for preparation of the Data Center Zoning Ordinance text amendment?**

Yes, the following guiding framework was used to develop the proposed text amendment language:

- a. Data Center is a legal use that needs to be specifically addressed in the zoning ordinance. This is required by the PA Municipalities Planning Code and Land Use Case Law.
- b. Remove Data Centers from zoning districts that are not suitable for Data Center development.
- c. Include Data Centers in zoning districts that have the least impact on residents' quality of life and public infrastructure.
- d. Data Centers should be regulated like other quality of life/infrastructure impact type uses.
- e. Address primary use impacts:
  - i. Noise
  - ii. Water Usage
  - iii. Energy Impact
- f. Redesignate the Data Center use from "permitted by right" to "conditional use" in the selected zoning districts.

**What Zoning Districts no longer allow a Data Center use?**

A Data Center use is no longer permitted in the following zoning districts:

- a. C-2 – General Commercial District
- b. C-3 – Business Park District

**Which Zoning Districts permit a Data Center use?**

Data Centers are permitted in the following zoning districts by Conditional Use:

- a. I-1 – General Industrial District
- b. I-2 – Mineral Recovery District
- c. I-3 – Industrial/Commercial District

**Are Data Centers required to meet specific Performance Standards?**

Yes, a Data Center use is subject to specific Performance Standards, which include:

- a. Vibration
- b. Particular Matter
- c. Toxic and Noxious Material
- d. Flammable and Explosive Material
- e. Noxious Odorous Material
- f. Outdoor Lighting

- g. Heat
- h. Radiation Hazard
- i. Electromagnetic Interference
- j. Limestone Hazard
- k. Outdoor Storage and Disposal of Waste
- l. Loading Operations
- m. Landscaping Requirements
- n. Screening Requirements
- o. Buffering Requirements
- p. Woodland Preservation
- q. Steep Slope Preservation
- r. Scenic River Corridor Standards
- s. Floodplain Management

**Are there specific Performance Standards that a Data Center must comply with?**

Yes, specific criteria for Data Center use include:

- a. Noise –

Sound levels for Data Centers at perimeter property lines shall not exceed dbA and dbC levels as follows:

<b>Maximum Sound Levels for Data Centers at Perimeter Property Lines</b>			
Daytime* Maximum dbA	Nighttime* Maximum dbA	Daytime* Maximum dbC	Nighttime* Maximum dbC
55	45	55	45

\*Daytime means 7:00 AM EST to 7:00 PM EST and Nighttime means 7:00 PM EST to 7:00 AM EST

**What dbA Means**

The **dbA scale** is a unit used to measure the loudness of sounds as perceived by the human ear, rather than the absolute sound pressure level.

**What dbC Means**

dbC, or C-weighted decibels, is a type of frequency-weighted sound measurement that captures a broader range of frequencies, including low-frequency sounds, more accurately than dBA measurements. Unlike dBA, which mimics the human ear’s sensitivity to mid-range frequencies and attenuates bass, dbC provides a flatter response, making it suitable for measuring sounds with significant low-frequency energy, such as engines, compressors, subwoofers, or industrial machinery.

- b. Confirmation of Energy Capacity

Documentation from the applicable electric service provider certifying that capacity is available on the applicable supply lines and substation to ensure that the capacity available to serve the other

needs of the service area is consistent with the normal projected load growth envisioned by the provider. The applicant shall provide an interconnection agreement from the electric service provider indicating that capacity is available, and the Data Center will be served.

c. Water Use Needs and Impacts

The applicant shall submit an analysis of raw water needs (groundwater or surface water) from either private or public sources, indicating quantity of water required. If the source is from a public system, the applicant shall submit documentation the public authority has capacity and will supply the water needed.

d. Public Sewage Disposal

Public sewage disposal is required.

e. Decommissioning

A decommissioning plan that ensures the return of all participating properties to a useful condition, including removal of above-surface facilities and electronic waste that has no ongoing purpose, shall be provided by the applicant.

f. Auxiliary Power Generating Systems

Auxiliary power generating systems shall not be used to augment the primary power generating system for purposes of increased data processing capacity. Data Centers shall comply with required sound level measurements. Any sound studies provided by the applicant shall include anticipated sound and vibration levels when all auxiliary power generating equipment is running.

g. Emergency Management Coordination

The applicant shall submit an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) prepared by a qualified professional and is to be reviewed by the municipality's Emergency Management Coordinator, and or the Emergency Management Agency or other appropriate Municipal official servicing in this capacity for review and comment.