



JEFFREY C. MCKAY  
CHAIRMAN

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
**COUNTY OF FAIRFAX**  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035

Suite 530  
12000 GOVERNMENT CENTER PARKWAY  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035-0071

TELEPHONE 703- 324-2321  
FAX 703- 324-3955

[chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:chairman@fairfaxcounty.gov)

# **Board Matter**

## **With Supervisors Smith and Storck**

**May 9, 2023**

### **Guidelines for Data Centers**

Governor Youngkin has recently announced that \$35 billion is being directed to develop data centers in Virginia. Data centers can be beneficial from a tax-base perspective and perhaps even a building repurposing perspective.

Currently the County has 11 existing data centers and 5 in the pipeline. Some have gone in by-right and others have come through the zoning process. The region continues to receive requests for more data centers due to our unique location related to the internet's fiber infrastructure.

Under our 1978 Zoning Ordinance, data centers were treated as telecommunications facilities and were allowed by special exception in residential districts and by right without any specific use restrictions in all commercial, industrial, and planned districts if included in the approved development plan or PRC plan. The zMOD ordinance that we adopted in 2021, and that we are in the process of readopting after the Virginia Supreme Court declared the 2021 adoption to be void, eliminated the option for data centers to locate in residential districts, in most commercial districts, and in many P districts. zMOD also introduced new use-specific standards imposing size limits for data centers in newly proposed buildings in certain commercial and industrial districts and requiring that cooling, ventilating, and other equipment be enclosed in most zoning districts.

Data Centers are an evolving industry that merits our continued attention. EQAC has requested that the Board look into potential environmental issues associated

with data centers and the Planning Commission, based on feedback received during the zMOD readoption process, asked staff to review data centers further as part of the Zoning Ordinance Work Program.

Therefore, I move that the Board direct staff to research what advances are being made to address potential environmental issues; to research potential environmental issues and mitigations; to develop locational guidelines that address siting facilities; and to review how data centers should be approved. Staff should also consider where any new guidelines, if adopted by the Board, should be located including the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. I further move that the staff return to the Board by the end of the year with their findings and recommendations.