

# Sully District Council of Citizens Associations



P.O. Box 230042  
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## **Joint Sully District Land Use and Transportation Committee** **Testimony on the “Data Centers” Zoning Ordinance** **Amendment**

11 September 2024

Dear Chairman McKay and other members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors,

My name is Jeffrey Parnes, a resident of Fairfax County for close to forty-four years, and a speaker before you and previous boards for now, my fifth decade.

I speak as President of the Sully District Council of Citizens Associations, whose members, along with members from the Western Fairfax County Citizens Association, form the Joint Sully District Land Use and Transportation Committee. The Joint Committee has voted multiple times to express strong objections and concerns regarding the proposed zoning ordinance amendment on Data Centers.

We appreciate the added opportunity to speak to the community’s concerns as a result of the County’s failure to comply with statutory advertising requirements

Let me first state that the Joint Committee is not opposed to data center development in the county; we understand their importance to the county’s financial bottom line.

The Joint Committee has provided you three of its adopted resolution on this topic. The first, dated 20 May 2024, supported the rights of citizens to notice and an opportunity to be heard, through an open and meaningful public hearing process, to allow transparency and case by case mitigation of impacts if any more data centers are to be approved.

In that adopted resolution the Joint Committee requested the Fairfax County Planning Commission recommend that all data centers in Fairfax County be a special exception use, and require a public hearing, due to the importance of

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the decisions, and the magnitude of the impacts.

In the second, dated 17 June 2024, the Joint Committee’s supplemental resolution, strongly supported the Planning Commission recommendation that pending data center site plan applications, not yet approved, be evaluated under the new rules, rather than the weaker development standards currently in place. This condition continues to be particularly important with respect to the controversial site plans for proposed data centers adjacent to existing affordable housing communities. The protection of the existing affordable housing community should be far more important to the board than facilitating additional streamlined development approvals.

In the supplemental resolution the Joint Committee also expressed strong objections to data center applications which abut residential districts, including two past applications (Parkstone and Chantilly Premier) where the data center application site was zoned to an industrial district, but was immediately adjacent to a residential neighborhood zoned R-C (residential conservation), causing significant impacts on the residents, as well as impacts on the environment and infrastructure.

In the third resolution, adopted 19 August 2024, the Joint Committee expressed its deep concern that Fairfax County has conducted no complete, comprehensive or accurate inventory of data centers, or a corresponding analysis of the overall financial effect of the data centers, even though some individual supervisors have recently asserted that data centers will bring a financial benefit to the County through increased real estate tax revenue.

In that resolution, the Joint Committee, in the strongest possible terms, reaffirmed its opposition to any zoning ordinance amendment which would allow data centers as a by-right use in any zoning district rather than they be subject to a special exception application process, with notice to neighbors, and open and meaningful public hearings with full citizen engagement.

The Joint Committee, in the strongest possible terms, disagrees with the conclusion that data centers must be a permitted by-right use in some zoning districts, so as to prevent special exception applications for data centers in unwanted locations. The Board of Supervisors retains precise control over in which zoning districts a special exception for a data center can be applied for, and in which zoning districts a data center is forbidden, which designations are unrelated to the specified application procedure. The Committee opposes the announced justification that requiring a special exception for data centers in all

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zoning districts will lead to a proliferation of data centers outside of industrial districts.

The Joint Committee, in the strongest possible terms, requests that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to prepare a comprehensive analysis of the financial impact of data centers on the community, including the following components: a) the anticipated additional costs passed through to residential consumers, by both Dominion Power and NOVEC, for any additional infrastructure needed for data centers, such as substations and transmission lines; b) the anticipated negative effects on residential real estate values, particularly for residential properties in proximity to data centers; c) any anticipated reduction in tax revenue resulting from depressed real estate values of sites in proximity to data centers; d) the anticipated costs resulting from air and water pollution from data centers; e) the anticipated costs to public health resulting from data centers, including hospitalizations, illnesses, missed work and school absences; f) the reductions in tax revenue from any state-level legislative credits or tax breaks for data centers; and g) whether the above-listed costs of the data centers are greater than or less than the anticipated real estate tax revenue.

As always, we appreciate the Board’s consideration of our concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions.

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Note that our testimony is posted at:  
[http://www.sullydistrict.org/testimony/20240910\\_JSDFLU&TC\\_TestimonyDataCenters.pdf](http://www.sullydistrict.org/testimony/20240910_JSDFLU&TC_TestimonyDataCenters.pdf)