



May 31, 2023

To: Fauquier County Board of Supervisors

Subject: CFFC Position on Data Centers

CC: Fauquier County Planning Commission
Holly Meade – Director of Community Development
CFFC Board of Directors and Advisors

In recent months, Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC) established a task force to develop recommendations for data centers to share with county leaders, much as we did in 2022 on the topic of utility-scale solar facilities. While the work of our data center task force is ongoing, we felt it was important to let the Board of Supervisors know our preliminary recommendations given the number of data center applications and re-zoning decisions that will be presented to you in the very near future.

The continued expansion of data centers in the County threatens the rural character and beauty of Fauquier, and could compromise the efforts of citizens and elected officials over decades to minimize the impact of undesirable development. We have all seen what has happened in Loudoun and more recently in Prince William counties. Power transmission lines are a key part of the infrastructure for data centers and more utility-scale solar facilities that will erode our farmland will follow as data center developers seek to meet their green energy commitments.

Experience reveals that the data center industry will pay little regard to existing zoning and will advocate strongly to open up more of the County to data centers. Case in point, several proposed data centers in the County would involve rezoning of agricultural, residential and industrially zoned areas. And one only has to look at Amazon's efforts to implement a zoning ordinance text amendment to allow it to put a data center in arguably the worst possible location in the town of Warrenton as further proof.

With all this in mind, and recognizing the strong appeal of additional tax revenues, here are the six principles that CFFC believes should guide any and all data center decisions in the near future:

- (1) Fauquier County's current Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance should be strictly enforced for the foreseeable future. No changes should be considered until the risks to the County's rural character and the cost and benefits of further data center development have been fully evaluated, with full disclosure to, and in accordance with, input from the public.

- (2) Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Service District model, the County should encourage data center development only in already-zoned, by-right locations in the Service Districts. The County has approximately 500,000 square feet already of data centers in three separate locations and previously allocated another 2.6 million square feet through by-right development at two additional locations, which we estimate should generate at least \$30 million in tax revenue.
- (3) The County must broaden its economic development strategy beyond data centers, and recognize the importance of agriculture and that data center proliferation is inconsistent with our rural heritage and preserving open space and agriculture. This approach will not only protect Fauquier, but it will avoid the risky situation where the County becomes overly dependent on a single source of revenue.
- (4) Data center tax revenues should be earmarked for agricultural and agribusiness development, expansion of the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, and improvements to schools and libraries rather than becoming a general source of revenue to be used at the discretion of county officials.
- (5) Only existing transmission lines should be utilized for data center development, and current zoning prohibitions against above-ground transmission lines to data centers should be strictly enforced. Power capacity approved should be limited to the particular data center's power requirements to ensure additional capacity is available for future uses in the Service District.
- (6) Detailed data center standards should be developed and included in the County's ordinances and be based on environmentally and socially sound practices.

CFFC believes that the County should seek expert advice on how to best manage the data center challenge it faces and pay for the study out of current data center tax revenues. The County needs a strategy and should be very reluctant to even consider going beyond its current zoning without one.

As always, CFFC would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and will certainly weigh in on specific data center applications and issues that will come before the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of the CFFC Board,

Kevin Ramundo
President, Citizens for Fauquier County