

Data Center Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Adopted June 10, 2025

Goals, objectives and development guidelines for data centers throughout the county are hereby established and adopted as part of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan. These guidelines should be used in the evaluation of data center proposals.

Data Center Development Goals, Objectives and Guidelines

Goals

Data center development in Henrico will have:

- Goal 1: A focus on respecting existing residential development.***
- Goal 2: Adequate utilities provided prior to or in conjunction with new development.***
- Goal 3: Shared access for uses developed in a coordinated plan spanning large parcels to maximize areas for screening along roadways and adjacent to existing development.***
- Goal 4: Coordinated provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to serve new industrial development while connecting to surrounding areas and a countywide network.***

Objectives

The following objectives will guide the county in review of data center development proposals throughout the county.

The county will:

1. Encourage large site planned industrial development which provides shared access to existing and future transportation networks. This includes enhanced pedestrian and other non-vehicular connections across collector roads, both major and minor, and connecting with the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. Examine the potential for the interpretation of cultural resources in addition to their preservation.
3. Enhance buffering along major roadways and along shared borders with existing residential development. Buffers could consist of both vegetative materials and earthen berms where appropriate.
4. Discourage major development near environmentally sensitive areas. This would include increased buffers to enhance the separation of both buildings and accessory uses from potential impacts.

5. Consider the use of environmentally friendly development strategies, such as the use of solar power generation, enhanced building efficiency requirements, and increased use of native species plantings.
6. Require the completion of noise studies prior to both the start of construction and the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
7. Examine potential zoning ordinance amendments to regulate data center development.
8. Encourage the continued development of public pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
9. Encourage non-county controlled utilities to provide and maintain adequate services prior to or in coordination with new development.

Development Guidelines

In order to implement the Plan's vision for data center development, the following development guidelines are recommended. These guidelines will help ensure new industrial development is consistent with the quality of previous construction, while providing protection to the surrounding existing and future residential areas. The guidelines include general concepts and recommendations specifically oriented toward pedestrian travel, architecture, site design, open space, and residential properties.

1. Principal building façades. Principal building façades are any building façade that faces an adjacent public roadway. When a building has more than one principal façade, all principal building façades should be consistent in terms of design, materials, details, and treatment. Principal building façades associated with new construction should meet the following standards:
 - a. Principal building façades should avoid the use of undifferentiated surfaces by including at least two of the following design elements:
 - i. change in building height;
 - ii. building step-backs or recesses;
 - iii. fenestration;
 - iv. change in building material, pattern, texture, color; or
 - v. use of accent materials.
2. Screening of mechanical equipment. To minimize transmission of sound and visibility from adjacent roads and adjacent properties with residential uses, ground level and roof top mechanical equipment should be screened from public roadways, residentially zoned properties, adjacent properties with existing residential uses, or properties with a residential future land use recommendation. This screening may be provided by a principal building. Mechanical equipment not screened by a principal building should be screened by a screen wall or panel,

parapet wall, or other visually solid screen which should be constructed of materials compatible with those used in the exterior construction of the principal building.

3. Buffers. A buffer of at least 100 feet to include vegetation equivalent to a TB50 should be utilized to screen the data center from adjacent residentially zoned properties, properties with a residential future land use recommendation, or adjacent properties with existing residential uses. The use of natural topography and preservation of existing vegetation should be the primary methods of buffering, but where that is not sufficient it could be supplemented by new vegetation or an earthen berm.
4. Fencing. Fencing of the property is permitted, provided that fencing along public or private streets should not be chain-link, with or without slatted inserts, and does not include barbed wire or other similarly visibly intrusive deterrence device. Fencing should also be located on one side of buffers and should not disrupt existing vegetation.
5. Substations. Substations should be screened from adjacent major roads or residentially zoned properties, adjacent properties with existing residential uses, or properties with a residential future land use designation through the use of opaque fencing and landscaped buffers.
6. Noise Studies. Prior to site plan approval, a noise study should be submitted. In addition, prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy, a post-construction noise study should also be conducted to demonstrate to the Planning Director's satisfaction that the operation complies with any conditions or other legal requirements for the property.
7. Recommended setbacks. Any data center building should be located at least 500 feet from the lot line of adjacent residentially zoned properties, properties with a residential future land use recommendation or adjacent properties with existing residential uses.