



MARYLAND TECH COUNCIL

ADVANCING LIFE SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Montgomery County Council
Public Hearing: February 24, 2026.

Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 26-01, Commercial Uses – Data Center

POSITION: SUPPORT

President Fani-González and Members of the County Council,

On behalf of the Maryland Tech Council (MTC), I respectfully submit this written testimony in support of ZTA 26-01. MTC is Maryland's largest technology and life sciences trade association, representing more than 850 member organizations. We support ZTA 26-01 because it provides a clearer and more predictable framework for data center development in Montgomery County, while incorporating reasonable standards that reflect best practices for responsible development.

Data center projects require long lead times, major capital investment, and early coordination with critical infrastructure and service providers. For that reason, clarity in the zoning code matters. By defining "data center" as a distinct use and establishing a clear approval pathway in appropriate locations, ZTA 26-01 reduces uncertainty for applicants and communities alike and helps the County compete for investment in essential digital infrastructure.

Equally important, ZTA 26-01 sets expectations up front for how projects should be designed and operated. Clear baseline requirements related to setbacks from residentially zoned property, vegetative screening and lighting mitigation, noise compliance, and the use of low-emission Tier 4 backup generators provide a more consistent standard for review and improve predictability for responsible projects.

From an economic standpoint, data center development brings real workforce opportunity, especially in construction and the skilled trades. These facilities drive significant construction, electrical, mechanical, and systems work during site development and buildout, and they support sustained demand for skilled workers in electrical, HVAC, building controls, security, and network operations. While permanent on-site staffing is typically smaller than many other facility types, the roles tend to be well-compensated and include both direct employees and contractors.

A clearer pathway for these projects also helps workforce and training partners plan for pipelines, including apprenticeships and industry-recognized credentials tied to critical facilities operations and IT support. Over time, a stable development environment can support a broader ecosystem of suppliers and service providers that maintain and upgrade this infrastructure.

Finally, data centers can be meaningful and stable contributors to local revenues and public services. Data centers are capital-intensive and can strengthen the commercial tax base, which helps fund core services that residents rely on, including schools, public safety, and infrastructure. These revenues can also reduce pressure to shift costs onto households and other employers.

ZTA 26-01 is a constructive step toward a clearer and more predictable zoning framework that supports responsible data center development. With strong demand for digital infrastructure, Montgomery County has an opportunity to attract investment that supports skilled jobs, workforce partnerships, and a stronger local tax base, while ensuring development occurs with defined standards and accountability. For these reasons, the Maryland Tech Council respectfully urges the County Council to support ZTA 26-01.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly M. Schulz
Chief Executive Officer
Maryland Tech Council