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**Subject:** Agenda Item #5, regarding amendments to the Zoning Ordinance

Members of the Town Council:

The Piedmont Environmental Council respectfully submits the following comments concerning the proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, as pertaining to data centers (Agenda Item #5, February 17, 2026).

The proposed changes to data center use status from by-right to special use permit in Articles 5 and 6.A (and prohibiting data centers in the Traditional Town Center district), are a step in the right direction but we urge the Town Council to consider whether it is a good idea to even contemplate a data center in the Town at all, especially hyperscale data centers, and especially in the Town Activity Center district, which includes all of Madison Road, north of downtown. And by the language already found in Article 6.A ("pedestrian-oriented," "town center," "residential," etc.), hyperscale data centers do not belong in the TND districts and should be explicitly prohibited.

While "small" data centers (i.e. 40,000 square feet or less), like those sometimes associated with an academic institution, can be lower impact and blend into an office park setting, the current booming data center market is not interested in 40,000 square foot data centers. Instead, most proposals in Virginia are for massive hyperscale data centers that are 80 feet or taller and over 100,000 square feet — much larger than typical big box stores. Data centers of this size are also accompanied by new 230 kilovolt transmission line(s) and associated substation(s), which are also not conducive to an in-town setting.

Towns are places that are meant to be vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, human-scaled places for people to live, work, and play. They are land constrained, so the limited space should be used for housing, retail and public places and should not allow hyperscale data centers at all, which are not at all consistent with a walkable community. The Town should prohibit data centers larger than 40,000 square feet.

Thank you for your consideration,

Don McCown

Don McCown  
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