





September 28, 2021

TO: Board of County Supervisors

FROM: Parag Agrawal, AICP
Planning Director 

THRU: Christopher E. Martino
County Executive 

SUBJECT: Scope and Schedule Differences for the Data Center Projects

As initiated by the Board of County Supervisors (Board), the Planning Office is currently working on the following projects:

1. Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA); and
2. PW Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA).

We anticipate that with several major overlapping projects, they might be confusing to track. Therefore, the purpose of this memorandum is to explain the scope of and scheduling differences between these two projects.

Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA)

On May 18, 2021, the Board initiated the Zoning Text Amendment for Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District and subsequent changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Design and Construction Standards Manual. The initiation was in response to the Board Directive issued on March 2, 2021, requesting staff to bring forward recommendations to expand and change the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District. The Board further directed those recommendations should reflect increased infrastructure and new ways of developing data centers.

The ZTA project will allow the staff to work with various stakeholders to study best practices for data center development, emerging green technologies, and existing or planned infrastructure, as it relates to data centers in the County, while recognizing that data centers are a targeted industry and an important driver of economic growth and tax base in the County.

Based on the existing schedule, the staff is currently working with the consultants on background research that includes data center market demand and analysis, data center industry emerging trends, and local economic development best practices. The public outreach and engagement process will begin in Fall 2021, and Planning Commission and Board public hearings will be scheduled in early 2022.

As requested by the Board, staff will also schedule interactive work sessions with the Planning Commission and the Board in Fall 2021. To keep the community informed, staff has launched an interactive project webpage on which residents can get more information about project deliverables and the schedule. Please see the link below for the project webpage:

<https://www.pwcva.gov/department/planning-office/data-center-overlay-district-comprehensive-review>

PW Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA)

On July 20, 2021, the Board initiated the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application (#CPA2021-00004) for PW Digital Gateway. As part of the initiation, the Board expanded the study area to include the entire Pageland Lane corridor between Route 29 and Sudley Road to review traffic, land use and environmental implications in a more holistic manner and analyze the impacts on the cultural resources. The expanded scope of work initiated will require additional information and studies from the Applicant. These include transportation network analysis, a cultural resources assessment, water/sewer impacts and environmental/open space/sustainability analysis.

Although some initial analysis was completed with the initiation of the CPA, the schedule for the completion of the CPA will be dependent on when the Applicant can provide additional information and studies. The CPA would also be informed and benefit from the analysis and recommendations being completed as a part of the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District's comprehensive review (the ZTA described above) to ensure that best practices and the impacts of data centers on land use, environmental and cultural resources are also incorporated in the final staff recommendation on the CPA.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Board directed the Planning Office to work on both the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District ZTA and Comprehensive Plan Amendment for PW Digital Gateway. As directed by the Board through the ZTA and the CPA initiations, the Planning Office is working on both the projects simultaneously, however both projects might not have similar schedules for the Planning Commission and the Board hearings; due to the unique considerations associated with each independent request. The timing of the PW Digital Gateway CPA application primarily depends on when the Applicant can provide additional information and studies required for the transportation network analysis, cultural resources assessment, water/ sewer impacts and environmental/ open space analysis, and the review timelines of various County and State agencies. Staff believes it is very likely that the CPA for Digital Gateway will be heard in advance of the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District ZTA, however that depends heavily on the applicant's responsiveness to staff comments on the application. The staff will keep the Board and all stakeholders fully informed as these two projects move forward.