

Date: November 24, 2025

To: The Honorable Chair Edward P. Burroughs III and the Prince George's County Council

Subject: County Data Center Task Force Report and Critical Next Steps

Dear Chair Burroughs and Members of the County Council:

We, the undersigned 30 community organizations and leaders from across the county, thank the Qualified Data Center Task Force, County staff, and community stakeholders for the work reflected in the Task Force report expected to be released shortly. We expect that the report may provide a partial foundation for future policy decisions and will highlight some of the concerns regarding environmental and public health impacts, emergency services, land-use conflicts, equity considerations, water and energy demand, ratepayer impacts, and grid limitations associated with large-scale data center development.

However, we believe that **a crucial step remains undone**.

Before the County makes irreversible land-use decisions or lifts the current moratorium on data center permitting, a **comprehensive, independent, science-based review** must be undertaken to evaluate *all* viable scenarios for data center development in Prince George's County with a rigorous, thorough assessment of the full range of each scenario's potential direct, indirect, and cumulative harmful impacts. **Additionally, the County must enact and be ready to enforce legislation that protects communities and the environment by avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating those impacts.**

I. The Current Report Does Not Evaluate the Full Range of Scenarios

The Task Force focused on two extremes:

1. **Hyperscale data centers**—large 50–300+ MW campuses with significant grid, land, water, and emergency-response impacts; and
2. **No data centers at all**

This leaves a substantial gap between these two poles.

In light of this gap, as the County considers how best to balance technology development with environmental protection, community needs, and infrastructure constraints, it is essential that **alternative, very low to moderate-impact scenarios** also be evaluated by qualified experts.

One such example—offered here purely as an illustrative scenario, not as a policy recommendation—is the concept of **smaller-scale, zero-water, compact “edge data centers”**. To our knowledge, this scenario is not addressed well or at all in the Task Force report, yet similar models are being evaluated in other jurisdictions nationwide. We believe that *any independent review should include such middle-ground options* so the County can make informed decisions.

Further details on this example scenario are provided in **Appendix A**, solely for the purpose of demonstrating the type of alternatives that merit professional evaluation.

II. Why an Independent, Science-Based Assessment Is Essential

Multiple factors justify the need for a rigorous, external review:

1. Electricity Grid Constraints Require Technical Analysis

Pepco and PJM have indicated that large-scale hyperscale data centers would require substantial transmission upgrades. These upgrades could take many years and may shift costs to residents unless tightly regulated. This issue requires detailed modeling by experts in regional grid engineering.

2. Water and Cooling Impacts Must Be Evaluated Holistically

Evaporative cooling and water-intensive systems associated with hyperscale projects are inconsistent with WSSC Water's supply constraints. A county-specific engineering review that also accounts for regional demand is needed to evaluate water use, wastewater, and stormwater impacts. This must preclude the withdrawing of any groundwater from local aquifers for cooling operations. Safeguarding critical water resources for residents and ecosystems must be prioritized.

3. Emergency Response Capabilities Must Be Matched to Risk

Prince George's County Fire Department personnel will need specialized training and equipment to respond to hazards associated with lithium-ion battery systems, chemical storage tanks, extensive generator yards, toxic off-gassing risks, and enormous quantities of diesel fuel. Independent public-safety experts should assess emergency-response readiness and estimated costs for each scenario.

4. Environmental and Climate Impacts Demand Expert Review

Industry-leading research (including Schneider Electric's 2024 *White Paper 188*) demonstrates that data center sustainability depends heavily on local grid mix, regional climate, and power availability. Prince George's County's conditions differ significantly from regions typically hosting hyperscale data centers, and this science must inform decision-making.

5. National Case Studies are Evolving Quickly

Communities in Michigan, Georgia, Colorado, and Virginia are experiencing impacts—both positive and negative—from data center development. Lessons learned from these jurisdictions should be evaluated systematically by independent analysts.

For all these reasons, experts in **grid engineering, water systems, environmental science, public health, emergency management, and modern data center architecture** should perform a comparative assessment of the full range of development scenarios.

6. Quantum Computing and Technology Obsolescence and Decommissioning

As the technology landscape rapidly evolves, it is important to anticipate the potential impacts of **quantum computing**, which is already advancing beyond laboratory testing. Just as the United States now grapples with the environmental and economic legacies of shuttered industrial sites and obsolete manufacturing infrastructure, large-scale data centers could face similar risks of abandonment or underutilization. Quantum computing systems require environmental and physical conditions that are fundamentally incompatible with current data center design, meaning today's facilities may not be readily adaptable to future demands.

Therefore, any comprehensive review must assess not only construction and operating impacts, but also the long-term **economic and environmental legacy** that large, energy-dependent facilities could leave in Prince George's County when they become obsolete and require decommissioning. This is a critical dimension of responsible land-use planning and infrastructure investment.

III. Recommendation: Maintain the Moratorium Until This Review Is Complete and Until the County is Prepared to Enact and Enforce Key Protective Legislation

Given that:

- The Task Force did **not** evaluate all reasonable scenarios;
- Significant scientific, engineering, and emergency-response questions remain unanswered; and
- The County's decisions will have **long-lasting** effects on communities, infrastructure, and ratepayers.

We respectfully urge the Council to maintain the moratorium on data center permitting until an independent, science-based comparative analysis is completed. Additionally, the County must enact and be ready to enforce legislation that protects communities and the environment.

This review should evaluate:

- Hyperscale development
- No-build scenarios
- **Additional reasonable alternatives**, such as zero-water, compact data centers integrated into existing institutions or mixed-use zones (e.g., Edge Centers), and any other approaches the independent team deems relevant.

We emphasize that we are **not advocating** for any particular scenario at this time.

We are advocating for **a process that considers all scenarios fairly**, grounded in evidence and expert analysis.

IV. Conclusion

Our coalition supports responsible technology growth that aligns with the County's infrastructure, environmental realities, and social equity goals. We believe Prince George's County can lead the region in developing a **sustainable, science-driven, community-centered technology policy**—but only if decisions are based on a full and rigorous evaluation of *all* viable options.

We look forward to working with the Council and County staff to support this next phase of analysis.

Respectfully submitted,

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Liz Enagonio, Co-founder, Indivisible Bowie and Beyond

Lily Fountain, Chair, Prince George's Sierra Club

Janet Gingold, Resident, Upper Marlboro

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Patricia Jackman, Resident, New Carrollton

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Karlo Silbiger, Member, Cheverly Planning Board.

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Yonette Thomas, PhD, President Wingate Homeowners Association

Marcia Tucker, Resident, Glenn Dale

Ron Weiss, President, Indian Head Highway Area Action Council, Inc.

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APPENDIX A – Example Scenario for Independent Evaluation: Edge Data Centers

*(Provided as an example of a reasonable alternative that merits scientific review.
This appendix is descriptive, not prescriptive.)*

What Are Edge Data Centers?

Edge Data Centers are smaller (1–15 MW), high-efficiency facilities designed to place computing capacity closer to the users and institutions that rely on it—such as hospitals, universities, public safety agencies, and local businesses.

They typically use:

- **Zero-water cooling** (dry or direct-to-chip systems)

- **High-density racks** that reduce building and generator footprints
- **Minimal diesel backup systems** compared to hyperscale campuses
- **Compact parcels** (often 0.5–2 acres), suitable for urban or mixed-use areas
- **Less noise, traffic, and land disruption**

Why Might They Merit Evaluation in Prince George's County?

1. Better Fit for Local Grid Conditions

Edge data centers can operate within existing substation capacity, avoiding multi-year transmission upgrades.

2. Lower Water Consumption

Modern edge data center facilities eliminate water use entirely, addressing a key environmental concern identified by the Task Force.

3. Compatible With Existing Land-Use Patterns

Because they are compact and low-noise, edge data centers can be located in industrial parks, university campuses, hospital districts, and transit-oriented developments.

4. Reduced Emergency Response Burden

These facilities typically pose far fewer fire and hazardous-material challenges than hyperscale campuses.

5. Relevant to Local Economic Needs

Edge data centers can support innovation districts, digital equity goals, emergency communications, and research partnerships; benefits that are often not associated with hyperscale projects.

Why Include This Scenario?

We include the Edge Data Center Scenario in this appendix **solely as an example** of a reasonable, moderate-impact alternative that was not analyzed in the Task Force report.

We are **not** proposing adoption of this scenario today.

Instead, we believe this and other possible scenarios should be evaluated by an **independent, expert, science-based review team** so that the County can compare options using clear, objective criteria before lifting the current moratorium.

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