

FILE OF THE CITY CLERK

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDINANCE NO. - 2025

ADMINISTRATION BILL - NO. - 2025

INTRODUCED – , 2025

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL – , 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL AMENDING CHAPTER 300 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF LANCASTER—ZONING TO RECOGNIZE COMPUTER DATA CENTERS AS A USE REQUIRING SPECIAL REGULATION; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; ALLOWING DATA CENTERS BY SPECIAL EXCEPTION IN THE CM AND SM ZONES, ESTABLISHING PERFORMANCE STANDARDS; PROVIDING FOR THE REPEAL OF INCONSISTENT ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY OF THE ORDINANCE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE ORDINANCE

WHEREAS, the City of Lancaster is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents through thoughtful and responsible land use regulation; and

WHEREAS, the City of Lancaster’s Comprehensive Plan (2023) outlines guiding principles that represent Lancaster’s vision for the betterment of its economy, environment, and quality of life for all its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan calls for updating city codes and ordinances to align with adopted policies, actions, and maps; and

WHEREAS, the City of Lancaster is undertaking such updates, including revisions to the zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO), and official map; and

WHEREAS, in the interim, there is a need to regulate a new land use not expressly contemplated in the city’s existing zoning regulations, namely data centers; and

WHEREAS, data centers warrant special consideration related to energy and water utilization as well as noise and air pollution; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to establish interim regulations for data centers in advance of further updates to zoning, SALDO, and the official map:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the City of Lancaster that the City of Lancaster Code Chapter 300—Zoning shall be amended as follows:

SECTION 1. Amendment to Chapter 300, Article XVII, Section 83, Definitions.

The Code of the City of Lancaster Chapter 300—Zoning, Section 83, Definitions, is hereby amended to include the following definitions:

DATA CENTER: A facility whose primary purpose is the centralized storage, processing, management, or dissemination of digital data, information, or applications. This includes but is not limited to server farms, cloud computing hubs, colocation centers, and telecommunication switching hubs. Data centers typically house large-scale computer systems and supporting infrastructure such as backup generators, cooling systems, and uninterruptible power supplies. A data center generally includes environmental controls such as air conditioning and fire suppression, redundant/backup power supplies, redundant data communications connections and high security.

SECTION 2. Amendment to Attachment 2: Table of Permitted Uses.

Attachment 2 is hereby amended insofar as it references the “Manufacturing and Industrial” section of Attachment 2, insert the following uses as special exceptions:

Use	MU	CB1	CB	C3	CM	SM
Data Center	—	—	—	---	S	S

SECTION 3. Amendment to Article VII: Supplementary District Regulations.

There shall be enacted a new Section, 300-40.1, Data Centers

All data centers shall comply with the following:

A. Noise

(1) A Noise Mitigation Plan shall be submitted with the zoning application, including, at a minimum, a detailed acoustic study showing the amount of noise to be produced by normal operations and strategies to minimize noise and achieve a neutral impact on the surrounding community.

(2) There shall be no “noise disturbance” as that term is defined in the City’s Lancaster Noise Control Ordinance, at any adjoining property lines. The Plan must be prepared and certified by a professional acoustical engineer. The Plan shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended plans based upon comments by the professional staff of the City prior to any zoning approval.

B. Air Quality

(1) Backup power equipment shall minimize air pollutant emissions and meet or exceed applicable state and federal laws regulating emissions. In the case that backup generators are used, EPA Tier 4 emissions standards, or equivalent, must be achieved.

(2) Annual testing shall be performed, and reports shall be provided to the City and other relevant state and federal agencies to ensure that data center equipment is performing as designed and emissions from the data center do not exceed allowable limits.

C. Energy Use

(1) Data centers shall make good faith efforts to maximize use of renewable and/or clean energy for all electrical and cooling needs, either through on-site generation or verifiable power purchase agreements (PPAs).

(2) An Energy Management Plan shall be submitted with the zoning application detailing at a minimum, annual electricity demand, what supply sources will be utilized, energy storage capacity (if applicable) and efforts made to maximize use of renewable or clean energy. The Plan will be prepared and certified by a professional engineer. The Energy Management Plan shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended plans based upon comments by the City prior to any zoning approval.

D. Water Utilization

(1) A Water Utilization Report shall be submitted with the zoning application detailing, at a minimum the total daily intake volume and source(s) of that water, discharge volumes and destinations, cooling system type and efficiency, and shall demonstrate compliance with the city's stormwater ordinances and regulations. The Report shall be prepared and certified by a professional engineer. The Report shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended reports based upon comments by the City prior to any zoning approval.

E. Electronic Waste

(1) An Electronic Waste Plan shall be submitted with the zoning application outlining procedures for safe removal and recycling or disposal of server infrastructure, hazardous materials, batteries, electronic waste, and related products, which will apply in cases when the data center is updated or decommissioned. The Report shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended reports based upon comments by the City prior to any zoning approval.

F. Heat Mitigation

(1) A Thermal Impact Mitigation Plan shall be submitted with the zoning application, including, at a minimum, strategies for waste heat reuse or dissipation and vegetative or green roof and/or site design to offset urban heat island effects. The Plan will be prepared and certified by a professional engineer. The Thermal Impact Mitigation Plan shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended plans based upon comments by the City prior to any zoning approval.

G. Floodplain Exclusion

(1) No data center shall be located within any 100-year or 500-year floodplain as shown in the most recent Flood Insurance Map Rate Maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the City.

H. Parking Requirements

(1) Parking facilities shall comply with Article VIII Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements.

(2) Efforts shall be made to build only the necessary amount of parking for data center operations and to minimize the amount of impervious parking surface.

I. Setbacks

(1) All Data Center buildings shall be set back a minimum of 200 feet from the lot line of a property used for residential or community purposes and 200 feet from any residentially zoned district or PO District.

(2) Ground mounted equipment used for cooling, ventilation, heat or power shall be set back a minimum of 300 feet from the lot line of any property used for residential or community purposes and a minimum of 300 feet from any residentially zoned district or PO District.

J. Fencing

(1) Fences shall be constructed of good quality and visually appealing materials such as ornamental steel or other durable security-grade materials. Features such as barbed wire and razor wire are prohibited.

K. Buffer Yards

(1) All Data Center operations shall provide buffer yards along all property boundary lines, except for areas of ingress and egress into the site.

(2) A minimum 100-foot-wide buffer yard shall be provided along the entire length of any public street frontage of any property and along any property line which abuts property used for residential or community purposes or zoned residential or PO District.

(3) A minimum 50-foot-wide buffer yard shall be provided along any property line adjacent to a non-residential use or zone.

(4) No improvements other than essential utilities shall cross the buffer. If a utility must do so, it shall be by the minimum traversal distance and then only if every precaution is used to replace any lost visual screen with a screen wall or comparable feature.

(5) Buffer yards shall be composed of a combination of landscaping and screening techniques. A holistic landscape plan prepared by a professional landscape architect is required.

(a) Use of existing vegetation in buffer yards is strongly encouraged and may be substituted for new plantings if approved by the City.

(b) Earthen berms, with no grade steeper than 3:1 shall be planted on the top and along exterior slopes.

L. Screening

(1) Screening shall be provided to reduce the noise output and visual impact of any facilities and equipment necessary for cooling, ventilating or operating the facility, including but not limited to power generators, accessory electrical substations, or other power supply equipment.

(2) Ground-mounted facilities and equipment shall be fully enclosed when technically feasible. If full enclosure is deemed infeasible by the City, the equipment must be screened by a visually solid barrier such as a wall, fence, building and/or natural materials that absorb noise and protect neighboring properties from noise pollution.

(3) Rooftop facilities equipment shall be screened by a parapet wall, equipment penthouse, or visually solid screen on all four sides. Rooftop equipment that is visible above the parapet wall shall be set back from the exterior or parapet wall a distance no less than the height of said equipment.

M. Safety

(1) A detailed Emergency Response Plan shall be submitted with the zoning application, showing at a minimum that the data center has a plan in effect to deal with emergencies resulting from flood, fire, explosion, and catastrophic weather events. The Emergency Response Plan shall be subject to review and comment by the City. The City shall have the right to require supplemental or amended plans based upon comments by the City prior to any zoning approval.

(2) Battery storage systems must meet fire suppression standards, be UL-certified, and follow hazardous material handling protocols.

N. Community Engagement

The developer of the data center shall hold a public informational meeting prior to any Zoning Hearing Board or Planning Commission review. The meeting shall be publicized and conducted in a manner reasonably calculated to inform the general public of the data center application and will be attended by representatives of the data center with knowledge of the general nature of the proposed use. The applicant may, but is not required to, allow persons who are unable to attend the meeting to view the proceedings via a remote electronic open meeting platform.

SECTION 4. Section 330-41.A.

Parking Requirements, Use Classification, Manufacturing or Industrial Establishment, Required Parking shall be amended to read:

“1 for each 3 employees, computed on the basis of the estimated maximum number of employees on duty at any one time, but not less than 1 per 3,000 square feet of gross floor area; provided, however, that data centers shall be required to provide parking solely based on the number of employees and not upon gross floor area, plus five spaces for visitors.”

SECTION 5. Severability.

In the event any provision, section, sentence, clause or part of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sections, sentences, clauses or parts of this Ordinance; it being the intent of the City of Lancaster that the remainder of the Ordinance shall be and remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 6. Repealer.

All ordinances or resolutions or parts of ordinances or resolutions insofar as they are inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed and rescinded.

SECTION 7. Effective Date.

This Ordinance shall become effective twenty days after its adoption.

DULY ORDAINED AND ENACTED this ____ day of _____, 2025, by the Council of the City of Lancaster, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in lawful session duly assembled.

CITY OF LANCASTER

By: _____

Danene Sorace, Mayor

ATTEST:

Bernard W. Harris, Jr.

City Clerk