

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP  
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF PLAINFIELD  
TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,  
AMENDING THE PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP ZONING ORDINANCE TO  
DEFINE AND ADD SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR DATA CENTERS  
AND DATA CENTER ACCESSORY USES.**

WHEREAS, Article VI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, 53 P.S. § 10601, *et seq.*, authorizes Plainfield Township to enact, amend and repeal Zoning Ordinances within Plainfield Township; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors deems it to be in the best interest and general welfare of the residents of Plainfield Township to update and amend provisions of the Plainfield Township Zoning Ordinance to provide for Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors of Plainfield Township desires to add provisions to the Zoning Ordinance relating to Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED, by the Board of Supervisors of Plainfield Township as follows:

**Section 1.** Section 27-202 of the Plainfield Township Code of Ordinances, entitled Definitions, is amended to add the following definitions:

**Data Center:** A building or buildings which are occupied primarily by computers and/or telecommunications and related equipment where digital information is processed, transferred and/or stored, primarily to and from offsite locations. This use does not include computers or telecommunications related equipment that is secondary and customarily incidental to an otherwise permitted use on the property, such as servers associated with an office building. This use shall also include cryptocurrency mining, blockchain transaction processing, and server farms. A Data Center may include Data Center Accessory Uses.

**Data Center Accessory Use:** Ancillary uses or structures secondary and incidental to a Data Center use, including but not limited to: administrative, logistical, fiber optic, storage, and security buildings or structures; sources of electrical power such as generators used to provide temporary power when the main source of power is interrupted; electrical substations; utility lines; domestic and non-contact cooling water and wastewater treatment facilities; water holding facilities; pump stations; water towers; environmental controls (air conditioning or cooling towers, fire suppression, and related equipment); security features, provided such data center accessory uses/structures are located on the same tract or assemblage of adjacent parcels developed as a unified development with a Data Center. The use shall not include energy generation systems used or intended to be used to supply power to the Data Center during normal operations.

## Section 2. DISTRICTS

- A. Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses shall be permitted as a Conditional Use in the following districts subject to Section 22-320:
1. Section 27-311 General Commercial (GC) – Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses
  2. Section 27-313 Industrial Business Park (I-BP) – Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses (I-BP)

**Section 3.** Section 27-320.5 (Specific Standards for Conditional Uses) is amended to add Section 27-320.5.C-1, Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses following Section 27-320.5.C and prior to Section 27-320.5.D:

### Section 27-320.5.C-1 – Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses

- A. Data Centers shall be permitted by Conditional Use in the General Commercial (GC) and Industrial Business Park (I-BP) Zoning District when approved in compliance with the procedures, standards, and criteria contained in this section.
- B. For purposes of this section, sensitive receptors shall be defined as residential uses, schools, preschools, daycare centers, in-home daycares, long term care facilities, retirement and nursing homes, community centers, places of worship, parks (excluding trails), campgrounds, prisons, and dormitories.
- C. **Dimensional Standards.** The dimensional standards of Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses shall be in accordance with Sections 27-311 and 27-313 as applicable with the following exceptions:
1. The maximum building height for a Data Center shall be in accordance with the District regulations, inclusive of roof-mounted equipment such as cooling and ventilation systems, HVAC units and cooling towers. Structures above 35 feet shall provide an exterior access stair tower meeting all Uniform Construction Code and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements.
  2. The maximum height of Data Center Accessory Uses shall be no greater than the height of the principal building.
  3. Data Centers and Data Center Accessory Uses shall be set back 200 feet from the boundary of any residential zoning district or within 500' of any property developed with a sensitive receptor.
- D. **Landscape Buffer.** A landscape buffer is required between Data Centers and Data Center Accessory uses and any adjoining [residential zoning district], sensitive receptor, or public roadway. The landscape buffer shall comply with the following requirements:
1. The landscape buffer shall be at least 100 feet in width and may be part of the minimum setback distance.
  2. Buffer plantings shall consist of native species planted as follows:
    - a. One (1) large evergreen tree per 25 linear feet of buffer. The size of large evergreen trees shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in height at the time of planting.
    - b. One (1) deciduous canopy (shade) tree per 75 linear feet of buffer. Size of canopy (shade) trees shall be a minimum of 2½ inch caliper at the time of planting.

- c. One ornamental/flowering tree per 50 linear feet of buffer. The size of ornamental/flowering trees shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in height for multi-stemmed varieties, or 2½ inch caliper at the time of planting for single-stemmed varieties.
  - d. Five (5) shrubs per 25 linear feet of buffer. Size of shrubs shall be fully branched and minimum of four feet in height at the time of planting. Shrubs shall be a combination of evergreen and deciduous species, with a minimum of 50% being evergreen.
3. In the event that existing vegetation is adequate to meet the intent of the required buffer yard to screen the Data Center and Data Center Accessory Uses from adjoining residential zoning districts, sensitive receptors, and public roadways, the Board of Supervisors, upon recommendation by the Township Engineer and Planning Commission, may determine that existing topography and/or vegetation constitutes all or part of the required buffer yard.

#### **E. Screening and Fencing**

1. To provide visual screening and reduce noise levels, ground-mounted and roof-mounted equipment used for cooling, ventilating, or otherwise operating the facility, including power generation or other power supply equipment, that is located within 300 feet of a public roadway, any residential zoning district, or the lot line of any sensitive receptor must be fully enclosed, except where not mechanically feasible based on the manufacturer's specifications. If it is not mechanically feasible to fully enclose the equipment, it must be fully screened from view using one or more of the following means:
    - a. The landscape buffer required by subsection (D) above.
    - b. By existing vegetation that will remain on the property.
    - c. By the principal Data Center building or an accessory building
    - d. A berm averaging a minimum of five (5) feet in height above the adjacent average ground level with a maximum side slope of 3:1, provided that the berm shall be covered by a well-maintained all season natural ground cover and any required screening plantings shall be arranged on the outside and top of the berm.
    - e. A visually solid fence, screen wall or panel, parapet wall, or other visually solid screen that shall be constructed of materials compatible with those used in the exterior construction of the principal building.
  2. Fencing of the property is permitted, provided that fencing along public and private roadways is not chain-link, with or without slatted inserts, and does not include barbed wire or other similarly visibly intrusive deterrence device. An applicant shall not be required to comply with this requirement if fencing is fully screened from view by one or more of the means identified in subparagraph 1 above.
- F. Noise and Vibration** - In accordance with Section 27-511 (Noise Control) and as follows. If requirements differ between sets of criteria, the most stringent requirements shall be used.
1. The applicant shall demonstrate through a sound study conducted by a professional acoustical expert that the sound generated by a Data Center and/or Data Center Accessory Uses during normal operations shall be limited to a maximum daytime (7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday-Friday) decibel level of 67 dB(A) and a maximum

nighttime and weekend (8:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Monday-Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday) decibel level of 57 dB(A) as measured from the property line of the use. Such sound study shall be conducted using Sound Level Meters described in ANSI S1.4-2104 and generally accepted methodology. A sound study shall be conducted at the following phases:

- a. A preliminary study shall be conducted as part of the [conditional use/special exception/land development] process. The preliminary sound study shall include recommended sound reducing materials or systems as needed to meet the aforesaid sound limits.
  - b. An interim sound study shall be conducted during the building permit approval process based upon the proposed user or users of the Data Center and Data Center Accessory Uses depicted on the building plans. Any sound reducing materials or systems recommended by interim sound study shall be incorporated into the construction plans for the use.
  - c. An as-built sound study shall be conducted six months after issuance of the certificate of occupancy and prior to the final escrow release for any land development phase. An as-built sound study may also be required thereafter by the [municipality]. If it is determined by the as-built sound study that there is a violation of the aforesaid noise limits, it shall be considered a violation of this Ordinance.
2. Maximum decibel levels specified herein shall not apply during times of power outage, however the sound studies shall also evaluate and report anticipated decibel levels when all emergency power generation equipment is running, including backup generators.
  3. The applicant shall provide a vibration study prepared by a qualified professional that demonstrates that no vibration from the Data Center, Data Center Accessory Uses, or associated equipment will be perceptible to the human sense of feeling beyond the property line.

#### **G. Water and Sewer**

1. If the use will be served by a public water supply, the applicant shall submit documentation from the public authority certifying that the public authority will supply the water needed.
2. If the use is to rely upon nonpublic sources of water, the applicant shall provide a water feasibility study. The purpose of the study is to determine if there is an adequate supply of water for the proposed use and to estimate the impact of the use on existing wells, groundwater, and surface waters in the vicinity. No Data Center shall be approved unless the water feasibility study demonstrates that the anticipated water supply yield is adequate for the project and that the proposed water withdrawals and discharges will not endanger or adversely affect the quantity or quality of groundwater supplies or surface waters in the vicinity. The water feasibility study shall include the following information at a minimum:
  - a. The projected water demands of the Data Center;
  - b. The source of water to be used;
  - c. A description of how water will be used, including the amount or proportion of water to be used for each purpose (e.g. cooling, humidity control, fire suppression, and domestic usage);
  - d. The long-term safe yield of the water source;

- e. A description of the amount or portion of water withdrawn that will be recycled or discharged and by what means;
  - f. A geologic map of the area with a radius of at least one mile from the site;
  - g. The location of all existing and proposed wells within 1,000 feet of the property boundary, with a notation of the capacity of all high-yield wells;
  - h. The location of all surface waters, including perennial and intermittent streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, wetlands, springs, natural seeps, and estuaries, within 1,000 feet of the property boundary;
  - i. A determination of the effects of the proposed water supply system on the quantity and quality of water in nearby wells, surface waters, and the groundwater table;
  - j. A statement of the qualifications and the signature(s) of the person(s) preparing the study.
3. The applicant shall provide proof of review and approval from the Delaware River Basin Commission for projects proposing:
    - a. Water withdrawals of 100,000 gallons per day (gpd) or more over a 30-day average from any source or combination of sources within the Delaware River Basin; or
    - b. Any consumptive water use of 20,000 gpd or more over a 30-day average from any water source.
  4. The applicant shall demonstrate that adequate means of wastewater disposal, including domestic wastewater and wastewater used for cooling or industrial purposes, have been provided and approved by the Sewage Enforcement Officer and/or the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

#### **H. Power Supply**

1. If the applicant proposes to connect the Data Center to the electric grid, the applicant shall provide documentation from the applicable electric service provider certifying that the necessary capacity is available, and that electric service provider will serve the Data Center. Known impacts on electric rates or availability for other uses directly attributable to the Data Center project shall be noted.
2. Any energy generation system designed or used to supply power directly to a Data Center during normal operations, including solar, wind, fossil fuel, or nuclear energy generating systems, shall not be considered part of the Data Center use. Such systems shall be considered a separate use and shall be approved according to the zoning regulations applicable to such use.

#### **I. Emergency Management**

1. The applicant shall submit an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) prepared by a qualified professional. The ERP shall:
  - a. Be reviewed and accepted by the local fire department and emergency management services as part of the Conditional Use process;
  - b. Include detailed procedures for fire suppression, containment, ventilation, and evacuation;

- c. Include an evaluation of the access roads and hydrant locations within the site to ensure suitable access for emergency equipment within the site;
  - d. Ensure that all first responders receive adequate training specific to the installed system;
  - e. Include provisions for annual fire safety inspections demonstrating compliance with fire safety standards to be performed by a qualified professional on behalf of the Data Center.
2. Any Data Center use proposing battery storage or any other device or group of devices capable of storing energy in order to supply electrical energy at a later time, whether the energy is stored for use on-site or off-site, shall demonstrate compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 855, Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems, or similar standards and must include fire suppression systems designed specifically for battery storage.
  3. No Data Center shall be approved unless the applicant demonstrates that procedures for fire suppression, containment, ventilation, and evacuation are sufficiently protective of public health, safety and welfare.

#### **J. Aesthetics**

1. Any Data Center and Data Center Accessory Use building façade that faces a road, any residential zoning district, or existing residential use must incorporate at least two of the following design elements every 150 horizontal feet:
  - a. A change in building material, pattern, texture, or color;
  - b. A change in building height;
  - c. Building step-backs or recesses having a minimum depth of five (5) feet.

#### **K. Parking**

1. Data Centers are to be provided with at least one parking space per 8,000 square feet of floor area designed and intended to be accessible regularly by employees, or one parking space for every one employee, based upon the maximum number of employees on site during the largest shift, whichever is lesser.

**Section 4: Severability.** If any sentence, clause, section, or part of this Ordinance or of the Zoning Ordinance is for any reason found to be unconstitutional, illegal or invalid, such unconstitutionality, illegality or invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sentences, clauses, sections, or parts hereof. It is hereby declared as the intent of the Board of Supervisors that this Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance would have been adopted had such unconstitutional, illegal or invalid sentence, clause, section or part thereof not been included herein.

**Section 5. Repealer.** All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances conflicting with any provision of this Ordinance are hereby repealed insofar as the same affects this Ordinance.

**Section 6. Codification.** Pursuant to the Plainfield Township Zoning Ordinance and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Plainfield Township Zoning Ordinance shall hereby be codified to incorporate the above-referenced amendments.

**Section 7. Effective Date.** This Ordinance shall take effect five (5) days after its adoption.

ENACTED AND ORDAINED, into law by the Township of Plainfield, Northampton

County, Pennsylvania, this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

ATTEST:

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paige Stefanelli, Township Manager

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Glenn Borger, Chairman

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kenneth Field, Vice Chairman

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nolan Kemmerer

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Levits

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jane Mellert