



CITY OF ATLANTA

55 TRINITY AVE, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0300

TEL (404) 330-6100

ANDRE DICKENS
MAYOR

December 2, 2024

Re: Data Centers and Ordinance 24-O-1481

To the Atlanta City Council,

My vision for the City of Atlanta is a city of safe, healthy, connected neighborhoods with opportunity for all. In our tech driven world, data centers are necessary infrastructure that support our connectivity across multiple public services and social assets. Atlanta has emerged as a significant participant in the data center landscape due to favorable factors like robust fiber connectivity, minimal natural disaster risks, and access to relatively inexpensive land for well-resourced corporations. This has resulted in a 76 percent increase in data center construction activity in metro Atlanta from August 2023 to August 2024, [according to real estate research firm CBRE](#).

While important, data centers can also make it more difficult to develop affordable housing, grocery, greenspace, and retail, which are all more suitable projects for the urban core of our city which is why I supported the recent ban on data centers in certain areas recently approved by council. The council was right then, and it would be beneficial for the communities we serve if you all stick with that judgement now. Moreover, the centers are being pushed into underserved, traditionally African-American areas that have been starved of equitable development and amenities. This is unacceptable. The increased interest in data centers and the attractiveness of valuable real estate means that I must be on the record with my concerns.

1. Data Center development cannot be prioritized over people-centered urban development, including affordable housing, quality jobs, and neighborhood retail. This is particularly important near the Beltline and high-capacity transit as stated by City Council in 24-O-1222.
2. Data Centers are bad urban land use, requiring large sites and substantial resources while generating limited jobs or community benefits. In urban areas, this often results in large dead zones that have a detrimental impact on neighborhood livability.
3. Data Center development puts enormous strain on the power grid. As a city with a commitment to 100 percent clean energy by 2035, we need to ensure new development in our City is not pushing the electric utility to invest in more fossil fuel infrastructure as is their current default. This leads to more utility rate increases across all customer types.



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4. Data Centers demand an exorbitant amount of water. Some on the scale of millions of gallons per day. This demand can stress local water resources and impact the functions of our Department of Watershed Management. This is especially pertinent in Atlanta where drought exacerbated by extreme heat and aging infrastructure present significant challenges.

Recently, in my role as Chair of the ARC Board, we reviewed data on the exponential growth of data centers in the metro region (see exhibit A). Over the last 24 months, new planned data center projects exceed the total energy demand over the previous 20 years combined. Data Centers are also exacerbating water scarcity problems throughout our region.

Understanding the stress put on local systems, negative impact on our communities, our goals for people-centered urban development, and the regional impacts of data centers on shared natural resources, I cannot support Ordinance 24-O-1481.

This particular data center is of significant concern. We recently facilitated the purchase of the West End mall paving the way for a major revitalization. We are working on the development of Murphy's Crossing, which stands to be one of the most transformative transit-oriented developments in the city's history, and we are working diligently on other major developments in this area that are vital to the entire city. Allowing a data center in this area now would hamper if not stall each of these projects.

NPU-T, City Planning staff, and the Zoning Review Board all recommended denial of this zoning change. I stand alongside them and recommend that we continue to adhere to the limitations set forth in 24-O-1222 in the interest of promoting healthy, whole communities where all can thrive. I also welcome engagement on this issue that prioritizes early collaboration with our Department of Planning, Watershed Management, Office of Sustainability and Resilience and Office of Policy to develop a framework for how data centers fit into our comprehensive development planning, sustainable practices, climate/emissions goals while meeting community needs.

However, I cannot and do not support this legislation and urge you to vote no.

Sincerely,

Mayor Andre Dickens



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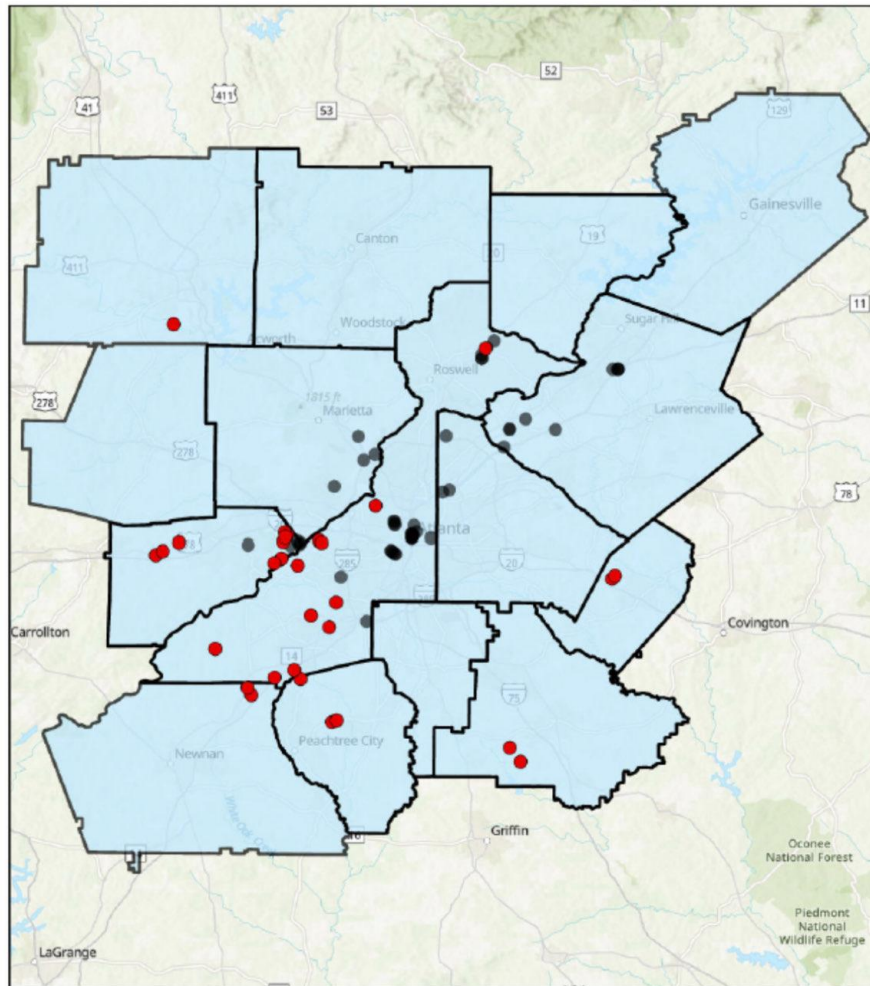
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Exhibit A

Locations of Existing and Proposed Data Centers in the Metro Water District Region



Data Centers as of October 2024

- Proposed (33)
- Existing (52)