Sept. 29, 2025
Informational Session on Data Centers

CALVERT COUNTY *Maryland*

What is a data center?
A data center is a facility that houses computer systems and related equipment. It is essential for storing and managing data, with much of the world's internet traffic flowing through data centers. Whether you're using Square at a local farm stand, using ChatGPT to write an email or streaming Netflix from the comfort of your home, you are accessing resources and services housed within a data center.

Why are they being considered in Calvert County?
Data centers are growing nationwide with neighboring counties considering development. Calvert County runs the risk of missing out on the economic benefits should the county choose not to pursue this opportunity.

Calvert County Government is examining the potential for data center development; however, no projects have been approved, and no applications or permits have been filed. The county's role is to update policies and zoning while safeguarding community priorities.

Benefits

- **High-Quality Jobs:** Provides well-paying skilled jobs both during and after construction, without driving significant population growth.
- **Sensible Land Use:** Low-traffic facilities that blend into the landscape and meet stricter zoning and environmental standards than other industries.
- **Economic Development:** Boosts economy, tax revenue and infrastructure with minimal county service impact.
- **Revenue for Services:** Potential to use data center revenue to fund schools, parks, recreation and roadway updates.
- **Industry Attraction:** Strengthens and attracts high-tech industries.

Environmental Standards

- **Water Use:** Data centers must comply with federal, state and local standards that safeguard water quality and quantity. Modern facilities often use efficient cooling, waterless systems or closed-loop designs that recirculate water.
- **Energy Use:** Nationally, data centers represented 4.4% of U.S. electricity use in 2023 and are not among the top 15 industries for consumption.* Under the Next Generation Energy Act of 2025, any electric transmission or distribution infrastructure required to serve a data center must also incorporate broader grid upgrades to safeguard residential ratepayers. The Public Service Commission is currently holding work groups to draft and finalize the regulations by the July 1, 2026, deadline.

Calvert County Snapshot
Agricultural and rural preservation remain a priority, with the county restricting data centers to areas near existing industrial infrastructure to protect farmland and open space. See reverse side for zoning details.

County Size:	Farmland:	Preserved Land:	I-1 Light Industrial:	I-2 Heavy Industrial:
137,000 acres (smallest in MD)	**24,654** acres (2022 USDA Census)	**32,736** acres (goal: 40,000 acres)	**1,169** acres 147 developed parcels 105 undeveloped**	**2,713** acres 2 developed parcels 11 undeveloped**

U.S. Department of Energy. 2024 U.S. Data Center Energy Usage Report; Yahoo Finance. "15 Industries With the Highest Electricity Consumption is the U.S.," April 13, 2024.

**Undeveloped parcels are not always buildable; some are used for parking, stormwater management, utilities or other purposes.*

Calvert County Zoning

On March 1, 2025, Calvert County's updated zoning ordinance went into effect following a two-year public process. The update was part of a broader effort to align zoning regulations with the County's Comprehensive Plan, Calvert 2040, and introduce several countywide changes, including establishing clear standards for the siting and development of data centers.

In accordance with the newly adopted Zoning Ordinance, data centers must comply with use standards addressing setbacks, design and noise (§ Z-18-11F).

Setbacks

- Data centers must be located at least 200 feet from all property lines.

- A minimum setback of 400 feet is required from any lot or parcel containing a residential building or active residential building permit, except for adjacent properties under common ownership. For perspective, 400 feet exceeds the length of a standard football field (360 feet).

Building Design

- Primary building facades shall include at least two of the following treatments:
  - Fenestration (windows or window-like openings)
  - Recesses in the building facade to avoid a continuous unbroken plane
  - Changes in building material, pattern, texture, color or accent materials
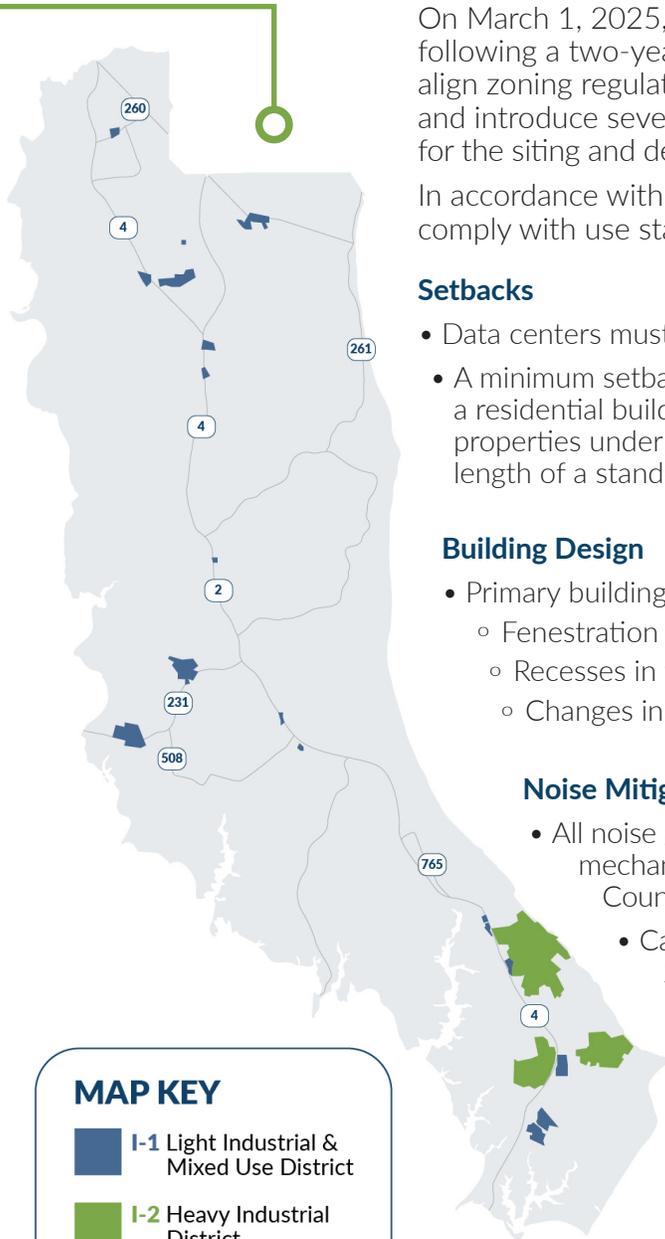
Noise Mitigation

- All noise generated by data center operations, including accessory mechanical equipment, must comply with Chapter 80 of the Calvert County Noise Control Ordinance.

- Calvert County adopts Maryland's noise standards (COMAR 26.02.03) with local modifications enforced by the Sheriff's Office and Planning & Zoning, with the County Attorney prosecuting violations. Noise limits include 75 dBA during the day and 70 dBA at night in industrial zones. Violations carry civil fines up to $1,000 for the first offense and $10,000 for repeat offenses. For reference, 75 dBA is similar to a vacuum cleaner from 10 feet away, a dishwasher or traffic inside a car at highway speeds.

MAP KEY

- **I-1** Light Industrial & Mixed Use District
- **I-2** Heavy Industrial District

Data centers are only permitted in industrial zones (I-1 and I-2)

- In the Heavy Industrial District (I-2), data centers are permitted with conditions.

- In the Light Industrial and Mixed Use District (I-1), data centers require conditional use approval, including a Special Exception from the Board of Appeals.

Public Engagement

- Prior to Planning Commission consideration, the applicant must conduct a public meeting within the district where the use is proposed.

- Meetings must be advertised once per week for at least two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation within the county. The first advertisement shall be no more than 30 days before the public meeting.

- A sign-in sheet and minutes from the meeting must be submitted to the Planning Commission Clerk at least two weeks before the scheduled Planning Commission meeting.

For more information or to submit questions, visit ChooseCalvert.com/DataCenters or scan the QR code.