



DEKALB COUNTY PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT



DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES IN DEVELOPING POLICY

A DATA CENTER DISCUSSION

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DeKalb County Planning &
Sustainability

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DeKalb County Planning &
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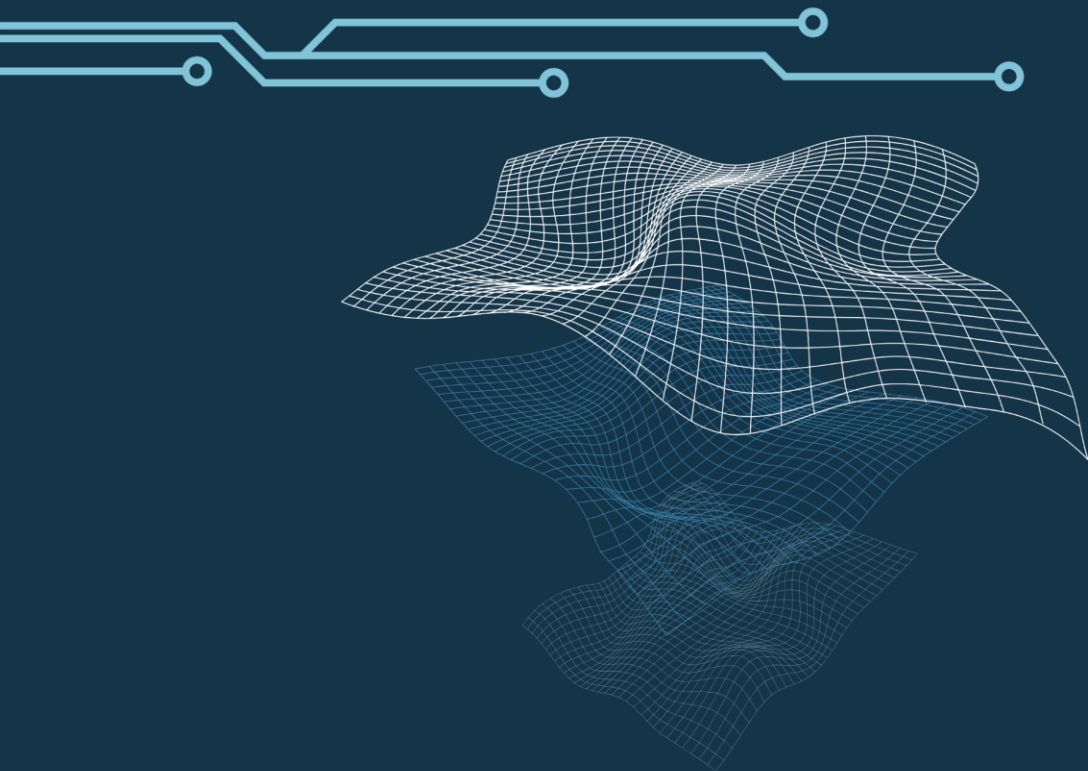
**DONALD SHOCKEY, AICP-CUD,
LEED GA, CNU-A**

Senior Planner
Atlanta Regional Commission





AGENDA



01

Introductions

Ice Breaker

02

About DeKalb County

DeKalb 2050 Unified Comprehensive Plan

03

Regional Impact

Developments with Regional Impact

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What are Data Centers?

05

Regulations, Research, & Recommendations

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Collaboration is Key

Developing Partnerships for Progress

07

Next Steps

Discussion with Q&A

08

Conclusion

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS...

DeKalb County
Planning & Sustainability
Department

Long Range Planning



Tricia Prevost, AICP
Senior Planner



Eva Chauveau
Planner



Donald Shockey, AICP
Senior Planner

PURPOSE



- Sharp increase in data center development throughout the metro area.
- Currently, DeKalb County has no standards for data centers.
- We conducted research into impacts/benefits of data centers and the regulations of other jurisdictions in the region.
- **Goal of policy recommendations :**
 - Ensure a *balance* between economic development and the welfare of the community
 - Implement regulations to *address* data center location, design, and energy consumption.

THINKING ABOUT DATA CENTERS...



Do you have data centers in your community?



What is the current outlook on data centers in your community?



Do you have regulations?
Are they comprehensive or do they need to be updated?



What did you wish you knew before reviewing data center developments?

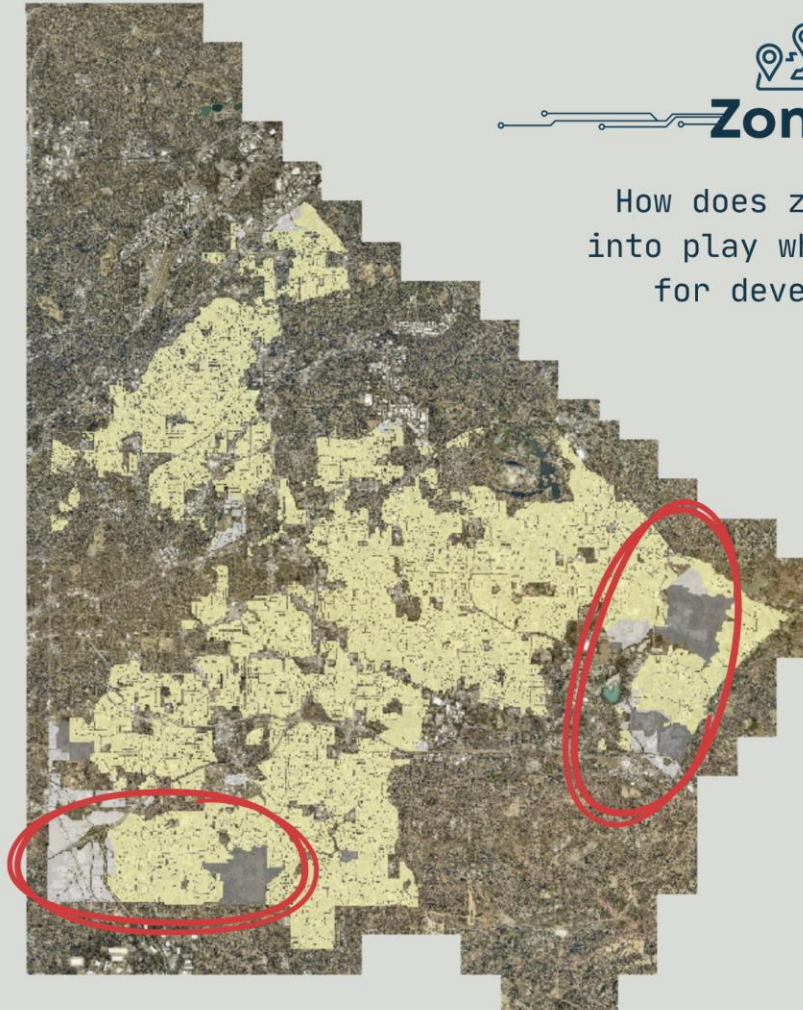


WHO IS DEKALB COUNTY...



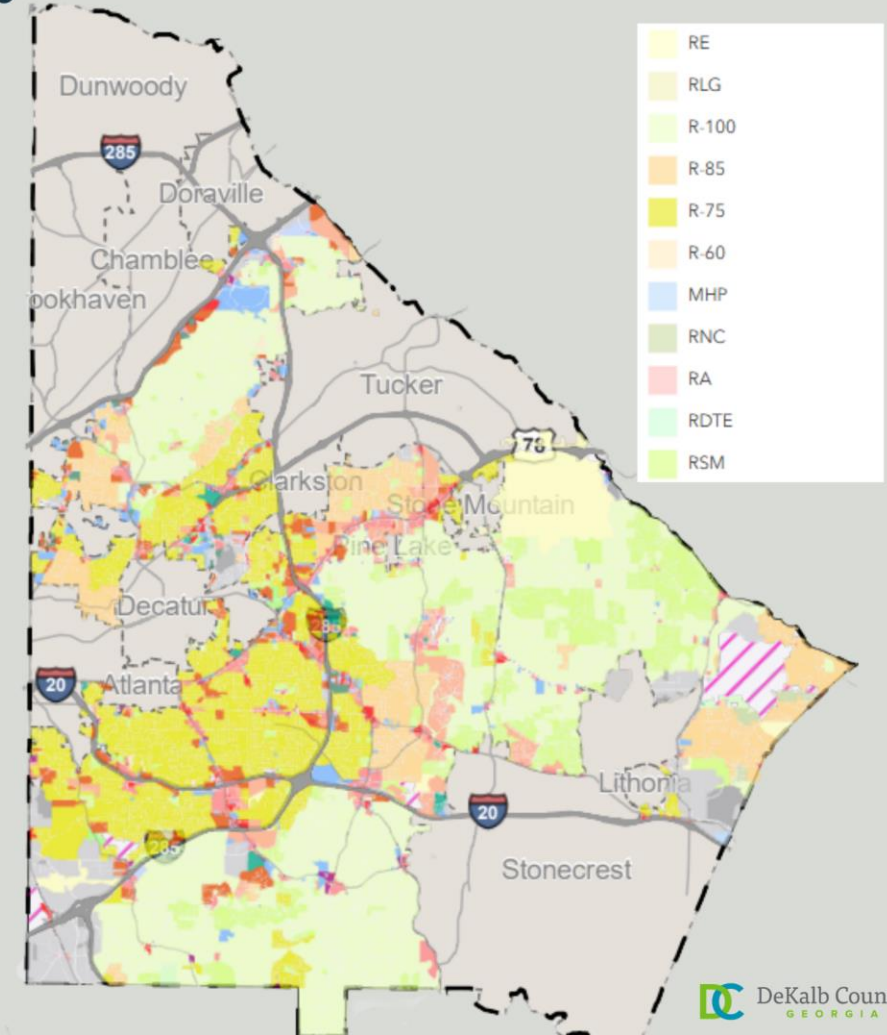
Land Use

What percent is DeKalb residential? Industrial?



Zoning

How does zoning come into play when planning for development?



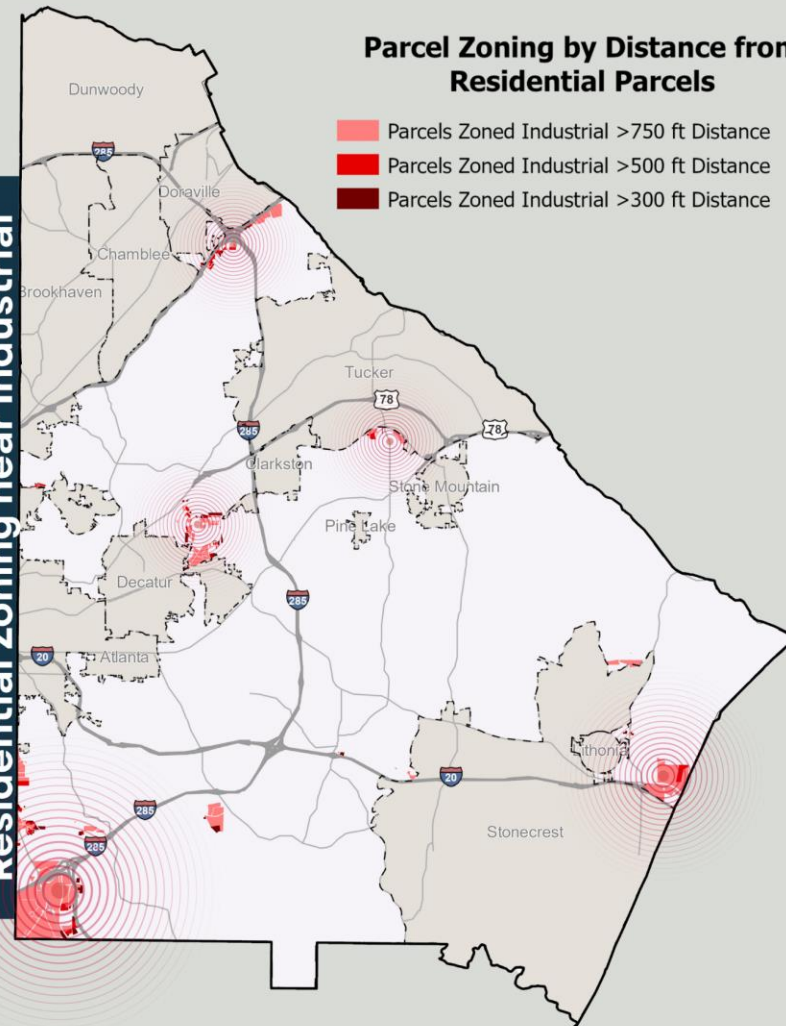
WHO IS DEKALB COUNTY...



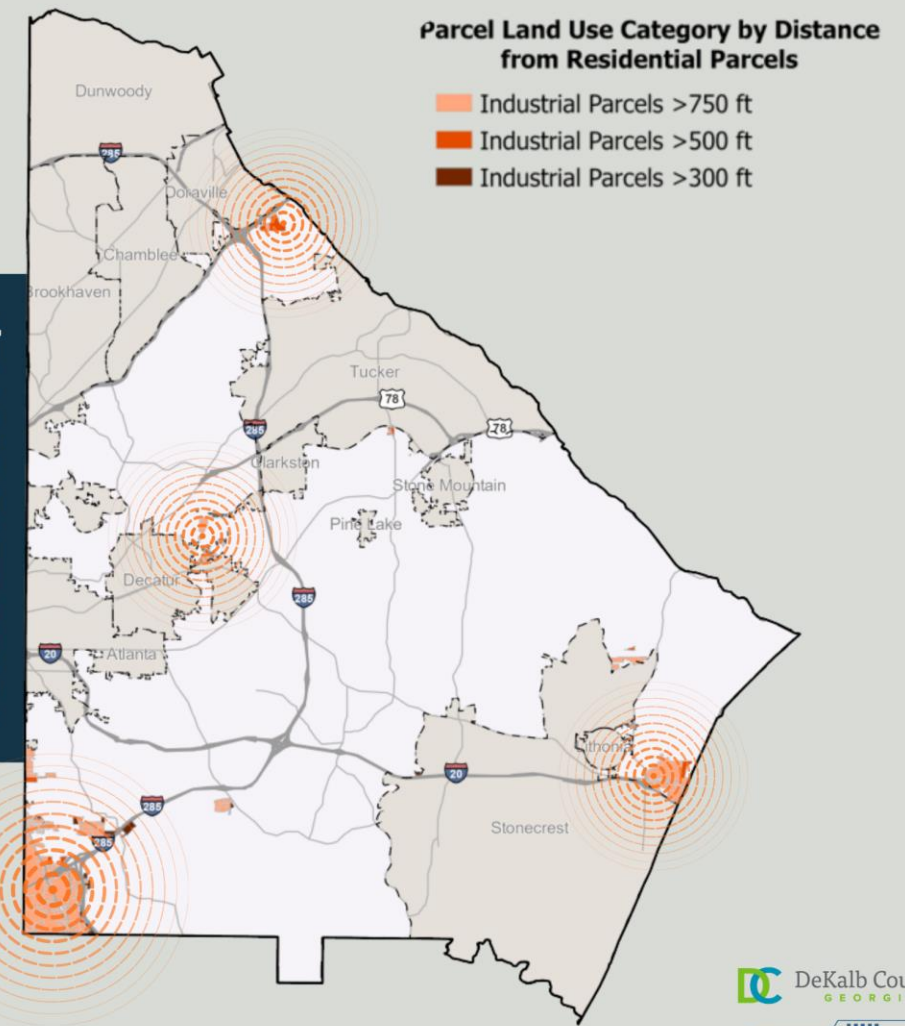
Visualizing Policy

How do distance requirements affect available land?

Residential Zoning near Industrial



Future Land Use Map



REGIONAL IMPACT...



Understanding Interest in DeKalb

Fiber, power availability, and tax incentives are key motivators for developers.

- **Fiber Providers:** Earthlink, Google Fiber, AT&T, and Xfinity (varies by location)
- **Utility Providers:** GA Power & Electric Membership Corporations (EMCs)
- **Economic Growth:** Decide DeKalb Economic Development Authority

Development on a Regional Scale

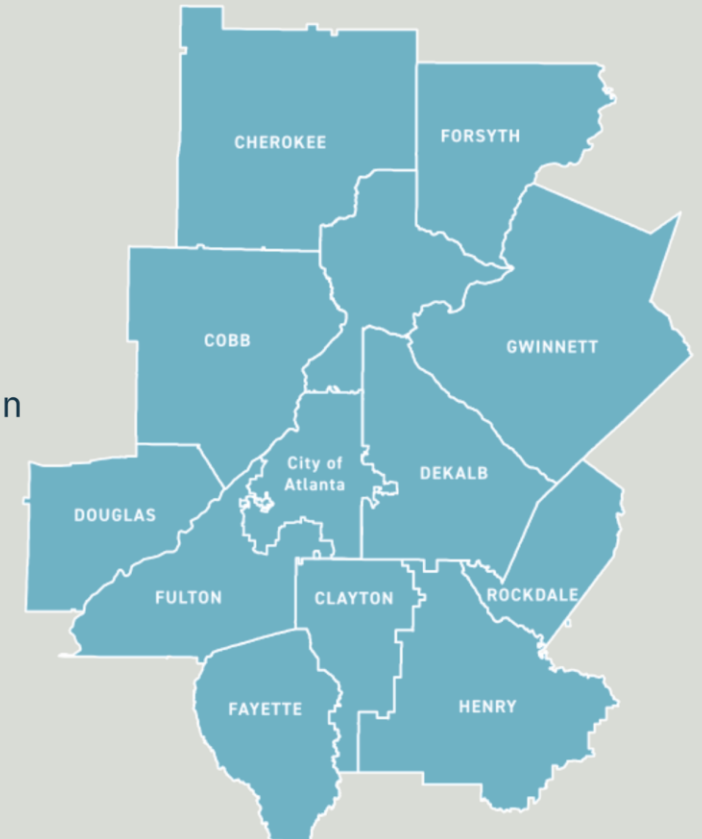
How does DeKalb County contribute to regional growth?

It is important to understand the regional trends present throughout the State and how data center development on a national scale can effect development on a local one.

Projected Impact in Georgia:

- Power
- Water
- Land

Department of Community Affairs &
Development of Regional Impact





Georgia's Data Center Boom

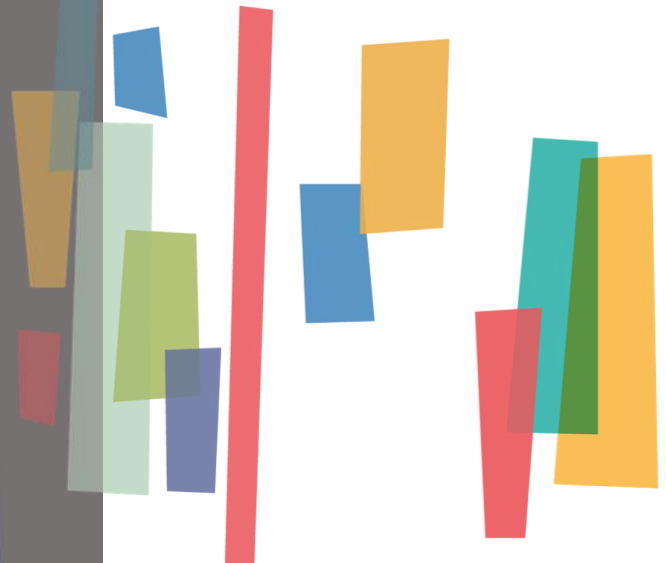
Regional Planning Challenges and Opportunities

Georgia Planning Association

Fall 2025 Conference

Donald Shockey, Atlanta Regional Commission

October 8, 2025

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent, colorful rectangles in shades of blue, green, orange, and red, arranged in a vertical, slightly staggered manner.

ONE
great
REGION

Government Policy Responses: State Level

2018 State tax break - full exemption from state and local sales and use taxes on high-tech equipment

Legislature passed law to end tax breaks due to concerns, vetoed by Governor

Much legislation to control data center development considered but not approved

Public Service Commission specifically requires data centers to pay cost of their energy use



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Georgia Public Service
Commission

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Toll free: 1-800-282-5813
Fax: 404-656-2341

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

PSC Approves Rule to Allow New Power Usage Terms for Data Centers

January 23, 2025 – (ATLANTA) The Georgia Public Service Commission voted unanimously on Thursday to approve a new rule that allows Georgia Power to charge new data centers in a manner that will protect ratepayers from cost shifting.

Government Policy Responses: Regional Level

- Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review of data centers halted by DCA in June 2025
- “Data Center” not a development type requiring review specifically identified in DRI rules
- DCA proposed DRI rules revisions to require review of data centers subject to DCA Board approval in November
- Data center DRI reviews expected to resume by end of year
- DRI review “findings” are only advisory, not required to be followed by local government

Government Policy Responses: Local Level

Several Atlanta region jurisdictions have responded to data center challenges

City of Atlanta requires all data centers to obtain special use permit, not allowed near MARTA stations or Beltline

Dekalb, Rockdale, Clayton, Coweta and Douglas counties placed moratoria on data center development to allow time for policy response

Many communities looking for guidance



EMERGING TECH

Second Atlanta Area Government Hits Pause on Data Centers

Coweta County officials on Tuesday became the second metro Atlanta government to temporarily pause all new data center projects, to find their bearings amid an unprecedented wave of proposals.

May 08, 2025 • Zachary Hansen, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



ARC Data Center Policy Responses

- Information sharing – 2025 LINK event held in Northern Virginia- another data center nexus - with sessions on data center policies and lessons learned
- Data centers addressed in comprehensive plans created by ARC
- Completed dozens of DRI reviews of data center projects in last 4 years – reviews will resume once rules are revised
- Standard DRI recommendation - tax revenues be allocated to mitigation measures such as conservation land acquisition, community improvements

ARC Data Center Policy Responses: Community Design Guide

- In development in partnership with a noted design firm
- Illustrated guide to achieving better data center projects that are integrated into local communities
- Promote publicly accessible edges, shared amenities and appealing façades so that facilities contribute to place-making
- Direct projects away from greenfields to areas in dire need of regenerative redevelopment
- Can serve as a reference in negotiations with developers

ARC Data Center Policy Responses: Community Design Guide



WHAT ARE DATA CENTERS...



Definition Loading...

A physical room, building, or facility that houses infrastructure for building, running, delivering, or transmitting applications and services, or for storing and managing the data associated with those applications or services.

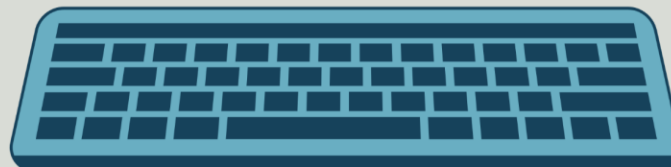
AI-Processing vs. Cloud Computing

AI-Processing focus on machine learning through requires programming and natural language processing.

Cloud computing primarily stores and manages the data associated with applications or services.

Critical Infrastructure

Data centers are important because they run internet infrastructure, provide critical connectivity for various industries, such as healthcare and finance.

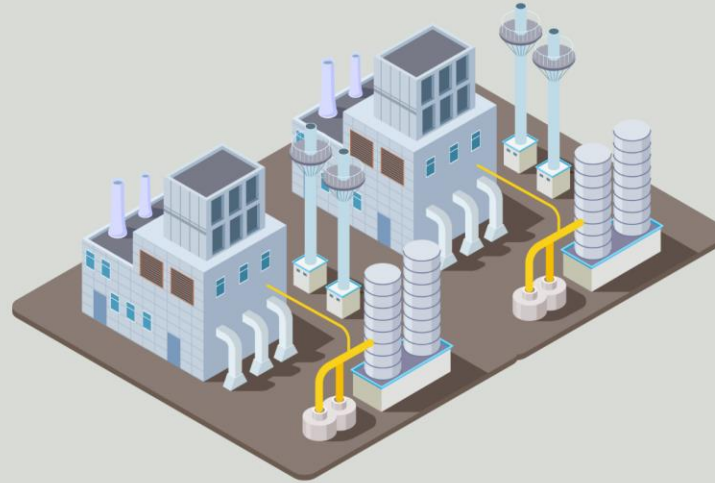


DATA CENTER CLASSIFICATIONS



Minor Data Center

Substation not required
Less than 20,000 sqft
Load capacity under 5 MW



Major Data Center

Substation required
Between 20,000 and 500,000 sqft
Load capacity under 5 to 50 MW



Campus Data Center

Substation(s) required
More than 500,000 sqft
Load capacity above 50 MW

DRAFTING REGULATIONS...



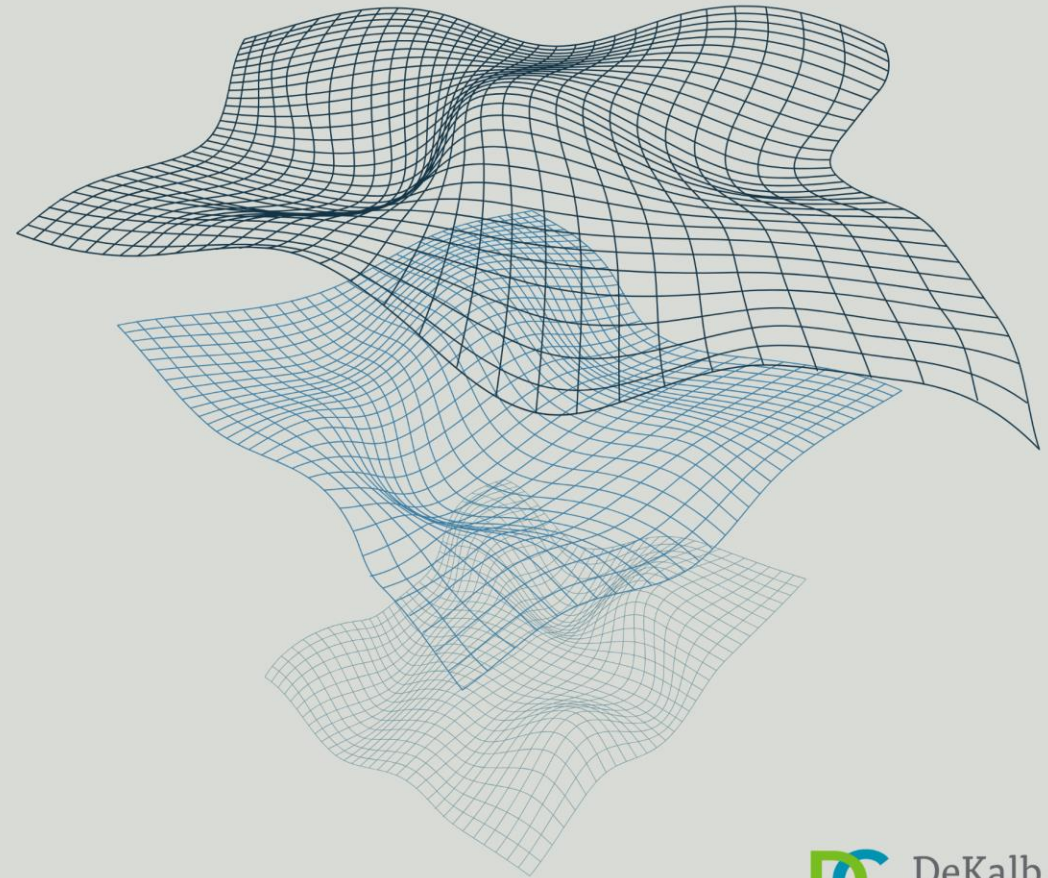
Creating Layers of Accountability

Our policy recommendations aim to reflect the interests of the County, its constituents, and economic foresight.

Special Land Use Permits allow for added transparency and public input.

Keeping the Community Engaged & Informed:

- Public Comment (*Engage DeKalb*)
- Community Council
- Planning Commission
- Board of Commissioners



DRAFTING REGULATIONS...



FROM RESEARCH TO RECOMMENDATIONS...



Draft 1

Internal Review

Using our Current Planning and Long Range Divisions to build out the first phase of regulations.

Draft 2

Public Comment

Going through the process of obtaining comments from all Community Councils (1-5) and adding regulations accordingly.

Draft 3

Citizen Advisory/ Public Official Feedback

Gather feedback from Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners to create a third draft.

TIMELINE...



COLLABORATION IS KEY...



The image features a light gray background with decorative circuit-like patterns in the corners. These patterns consist of thin blue lines, dots, and small rectangular blocks, resembling a stylized electronic circuit or data network. The patterns are more dense in the top corners and more sparse in the bottom corners.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

COUNTY VS REGIONAL POV





What are the main factors that need to be considered when thinking about data center development?



**How do you build partnerships
in the regulation process?**



**How do we balance feedback
from the public and private
sectors?**



**Is sustainability possible in
this industry?**

Conclusion



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