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**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the mission of the **Public Health and Environment Committee** is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of Baltimore's residents by advancing policies that promote health equity, environmental justice, and sustainability. Recognizing the deep connection between public health and the environment, the committee works to reduce health disparities, improve access to essential services, and address climate-related challenges that impact communities.

**The Honorable Phylicia Porter
Chair**

PUBLIC HEARING

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026
10:00 AM**

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Resolution #26-0050R

**Informational Hearing – Data Centers – Community
Impact and Use Standards**

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BALTIMORE**

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President



Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead - Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Public Health and Environment

Council Resolution: 26-0050R

Informational Hearing- Data Centers – Community Impact and Use Standards

Sponsor: *Councilmembers Blanchard and Porter, et al*

Introduced: *March 23, 2026*

Purpose:

FOR the purpose of inviting the Office of the People’s Counsel and the Public Service Commission and requiring the Department of Planning, Law Department, Department of Finance, Health Department, and the Department of Public Works to appear before the City Council to discuss: (1) the impact a data center may have on Baltimore City’s infrastructure, environment, and its community as a whole; (2) best practices for data center zoning, use standards, and other development standards; and (3) which techniques and technologies are available to limit the public health and environmental impact of these increasingly common facilities.

Effective: Upon enactment.

Agency Reports

Law Department	Favorable
Department of Planning	None as of this writing
Department of Finance	None as of this writing
Health Department	None as of this writing
Department of Public Works	None as of this writing

Background

What are data centers?

More data centers are popping up across the US. What are they?¹



The development of data centers has boomed in recent years, with the United States accounting for about half of the world's data center capacity.

There are nearly 4,000 data centers across the U.S., according to a Get the Facts Data Team analysis. Data was provided by Baxtel, a market research company that has aggregated information about data centers worldwide.

The data includes both data centers in development and operational. It is current as of Jan. 28 and does not include Alaska or Washington, D.C.²

What are data centers?

Data centers are buildings that host electronic equipment used to **store, compute** and **transmit** data.

People use data centers indirectly every day, whether it is by storing photos on the cloud or watching a TV show on a streaming service.

¹ WBAL TV 11 Editorial Standards – by Annie Jenneman, updated on EST February 12, 2026 – Data Journalist - Washington

² Ibid

Over time, they've evolved, now seeing significant surges in growth due to the increase in demand for artificial intelligence. The global market for generative AI is **expected** to grow 25 times as large from 2023 to 2033.³

What is a data center?

A 2024 survey from **Uptime Institute** showed the most common power usage per rack across data centers was between 4 and 6 kilowatts.

Generative AI and large language model training requires more power consumption, with racks requiring up to 120 kilowatts of power.

As data centers become more energy dense, a lot of the data centers being built out are **hyperscalers**, said Erick Vega, a senior credit analyst at Credit Sights. Credit Sights is a part of Fitch, a Hearst-owned partner.

Hyperscale data centers are larger facilities generally owned by a single tenant.

Baxtel breaks down data centers into types, with the **most frequent type** being **colocation centers**, at nearly half of the planned, under construction and operational data centers.

The **second most frequent** are **hyperscale data centers**, accounting for about 21% of data centers in operation or planned.

The first most frequent type of data center is colocation facilities, making up almost half of planned and operational data centers. They typically have an owner who is not the only tenant and will often lease space in the data center to other tenants⁴.

What states have the most data centers?

Virginia has the highest number of data centers in the Baxtel database at 622 — both planned and operational. The northern part of **Virginia** has been dubbed "data center alley" for having the largest concentration of data centers in the world.

The states with the second most data centers are **Texas** and **California**. Texas had **519**, and California had **233**.⁵

Where are data centers being built?

The number of data centers has surged in recent years. **As of late January**, there were **at least 2,338 operating centers in the U.S.**, according to Baxtel. An additional **487** were **under construction** and **965** were planned.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

Virginia had the most data centers either planned or under construction, according to the data, followed by **Texas** and **Georgia**.

Another trend as data center infrastructure surges is a shifting of where data centers are concentrated, according to Vega.

Data centers were historically concentrated near metropolitan areas. Now, more developments are popping up where there hasn't been as much data center activity.⁶

On Wednesday, May 6, 2026, the committee will hold a hearing with pertinent parties and/or representatives to discuss several topics relating to “data centers.”

Additional Information

Fiscal Note: None

Information Source(s): Resolution 26-0050R, recent news articles pertaining to Data Centers, and all agency reports received as of this writing.

Marguerite Currin

Analysis by: Marguerite Currin
Analysis Date: May 4, 2026

Direct Inquiries to: (443) 984-3485

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

26-0050R

**REPORTS
AND/OR
HANDOUTS, ETC.**

SEE ATTACHED

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT
Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW
EBONY THOMPSON
CITY SOLICITOR
100 N. HOLLIDAY STREET
SUITE 101, CITY HALL
BALTIMORE, MD 21202

May 1, 2026

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Attn: Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: City Council Bill 26-0050R – Informational Hearing – Data Centers – Community Impact
and Use Standards

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 26-0050R. This resolution calls on representatives from various agencies to appear before City Council to discuss various issues related to data centers.

A resolution is an appropriate way for the City Council of Baltimore to express its views on a particular matter. *See, e.g., Inlet Assocs. v. Assateague House Condominium*, 313 Md. 413, 428 (1988). Therefore, the Law Department approves this Resolution for form and legal sufficiency.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Hochstetler
Chief Solicitor

cc: Ebony Thompson, City Solicitor
Nina Themlis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Ty'lor Schnella, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Hilary Ruley, Chief Solicitor, General Counsel Division
Ashlea Brown, Chief Solicitor
Michelle Toth, Assistant Solicitor
Desireé Luckey, Assistant Solicitor

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 26-0050R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Blanchard and Porter

Cosponsored by: Councilmembers Parker, Conway, Middleton, Gray, Bullock, Jones, Glover, Ramos, and President Cohen

Introduced and read first time: March 23, 2026

Assigned to: Public Health and Environment Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Department of Planning, Department of Finance, Health Department, Department of Public Works

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

3 **Informational Hearing – Data Centers – Community Impact and Use Standards**

4 FOR the purpose of inviting the Office of the People’s Council and the Public Service
5 Commission and requiring the Department of Planning, Law Department, Department of
6 Finance, Health Department, and the Department of Public Works to appear before the City
7 Council to discuss: (1) the impact a data center may have on Baltimore City’s infrastructure,
8 environment, and its community as a whole; (2) best practices for data center zoning, use
9 standards, and other development standards; and (3) which techniques and technologies are
10 available to limit the public health and environmental impact of these increasingly common
11 facilities.

12 **Recitals**

13 Data centers are large facilities that contain computer systems to store and process large
14 amounts of information, and are becoming an increasingly important part of modern digital
15 infrastructure. Data centers have proliferated throughout the region in service of growing data
16 processing demands from internet and artificial intelligence usage.

17 Data centers bring investment in certain industries, contribute property taxes to the
18 jurisdictions they are located in, and may bring investments in regional infrastructure, including
19 power grid and other utility upgrades.

20 However, data centers can also be a major burden on surrounding communities, especially if
21 not carefully managed, as they often take up a large area of land and consume fresh water for
22 cooling and are electricity-intensive, which raises power bills for local residents and can increase
23 air pollution as power plants increase output to meet demand. Since data centers are constantly
24 running, they can create a noise pollution hazard if not adequately insulated and controlled.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Council Bill 26-0050R

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City
2 Council invites the Office of the People’s Council and the Public Service Commission and
3 requires the Department of Planning, Law Department, Department of Finance, Health
4 Department, and the Department of Public Works to appear before the City Council to discuss:
5 (1) the impact a data center may have on Baltimore City’s infrastructure, environment, and its
6 community as a whole; (2) best practices for data center zoning, use standards, and other
7 development standards; and (3) which techniques and technologies are available to limit the
8 public health and environmental impact of these increasingly common facilities.

9 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the People’s
10 Counsel, the Chair and members of the Public Service Commission, the Director of Planning, the
11 City Solicitor, the Director of Finance, the Director of Public Works, the Health Commissioner
12 and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

26-0050R

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

SEE ATTACHED

Currin, Marguerite (City Council)

From: Westport Neighborhood Assn <wna21230@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 8:00 AM
To: Testimony
Cc: Porter, Phylcia R.L. (City Council); Harris, Javon (City Council); Jones, Desire (City Council); Caraway, Ashia (City Council); Lisa Hodges
Subject: COUNCIL BILL 26-0050R Letter of Support: Data Center Community Impact Study

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Dear Councilwoman Porter and Public Health and Environment Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of the proposed study on the community impacts of data centers (**Council Bill 26-0050R**) and to make it unmistakably clear that Westport and South Baltimore will not quietly accept yet another industrial burden disguised as “economic development.”

For decades, District 10 has been treated as Baltimore’s dumping ground. Westport and the South Baltimore peninsula contain vast acres of land and aging industrial structures that could be demolished, remediated, or transformed into assets that actually serve residents. Instead, these neighborhoods are **REPEATEDLY TARGETED** as host communities for whatever heavy-infrastructure **TOXIC** project the city wants to tuck away out of sight.

Our communities already house a medical waste incinerator, a municipal trash incinerator, and a landfill, all within close reach of homes, schools, and transit corridors. No other district in Baltimore is asked to absorb this level of environmental saturation. And every time residents push for relief, the answer is the same: more industrial uses, more noise, more trucks, more pollution, more “temporary” harms that become permanent.

Now, data centers are being floated as the next addition to this lineup. For communities already carrying the weight of multiple high-impact facilities, this is not development. It is the newest form of environmental injustice. Just like with certain high-speed “rail” plans and recent real estate development projects, you can bet lobbyists will show up trying to dangle incentives in front of community leaders and nonprofits, hoping someone takes the bait and helps them push data centers that do nothing for us.

Data centers bring constant noise, massive energy consumption, and significant water usage. They offer zero jobs and zero community benefit. Yet somehow, they are always proposed for the same neighborhoods that have been overburdened for generations. Districts with political clout or higher-income demographics are never asked to “host” these uses. If it's inappropriate for Charles Village, Mount Washington, or Downtown, it's inappropriate to be dumped here too.

Residents have been clear: we want to eliminate brownfields and heavy commercial and industrial saturation, not another layer added on top of the ones we already carry. We want redevelopment that

restores our neighborhoods, not projects that deepen the inequities we've been fighting for decades.

For these reasons, I urge the City Council to:

1. Fully support and fund the community-impact study, ensuring it includes cumulative environmental and public-health impacts specific to Westport and South Baltimore.
2. Ban data centers in Baltimore City, preventing yet another high-impact use from being forced onto communities already stretched to their limits.
3. Commit to a long-term land-use strategy that prioritizes environmental justice, reforestation, equitable redevelopment, and meaningful community benefit, not the continued concentration of toxic industrial uses in District 10.

Westport and South Baltimore are not sacrifice zones. We are not the city's garbage can for unwanted projects. We deserve the nice things afforded to every other district.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and for your commitment to a more equitable Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Keisha Allen
Westport Resident