Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS®
The Voice of Real Estate in Northeast Ohio

July 24, 2026

Council President Margo Sommerville
Akron City Council
166 S. High St., Room 301
Akron, OH 44308

RE: Real Estate Industry Feedback on Proposed Data Center Zoning

Dear Council President Sommerville and Members of City Council,

On behalf of our 6,000 members across Summit County and Northeast Ohio, the Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS® (ACAR) appreciates the opportunity to share our perspective on the proposed ordinance regarding data center development.

REALTORS® wear two hats: they are passionate advocates for thriving commercial corridors that create jobs and strengthen our tax base, and they are equally dedicated protectors of residential neighborhoods and property values.

Akron has a proud industrial history, and we have seen firsthand how technology and high-intensity computing can bring new life to legacy industrial footprints, such as the redevelopment around the former Goodyear campus in East Akron. Repurposing these underutilized sites and brownfields injects private capital into our city and capitalizes on pre-existing infrastructure.

At the same time, we fully understand the need for clear ground rules. Neighboring homeowners in our communities deserve protection from continuous operational noise, heavy diesel backup generator testing, and potential power grid strain. Protecting a homeowner's quiet enjoyment and property value is a core priority for our association.

To ensure this legislation strikes the right balance of protecting our neighborhoods without putting up a "closed for business" sign to commercial investment, ACAR respectfully asks Council to consider the following practical adjustments:

1. **Establish Clear Timelines and Objective Approval Standards:**
Moving data centers to a Conditional Use process introduces multi-stage reviews without a defined decision-making timeframe. In commercial real estate, uncertainty and long delays kill

deals and discourage investment. We ask Council to establish a defined review timeline (such as 90 days for complete applications) and create clear, objective approval criteria in a published checklist format. If an applicant satisfies all published technical and buffering requirements, approval should be reasonably assured.

2. Establish Reasonable and Capped Review Fees:
The ordinance proposes an initial $8,500 escrow deposit with ongoing replenishment requirements and no maximum cap on total consultant costs. Unlimited fee liability makes it difficult for developers to underwrite projects or secure financing. We urge Council to establish a maximum fee cap tied to project size (such as 1% of construction value or $50,000, whichever is less) and require itemized consultant invoices to ensure complete transparency.

3. Scale Technical Requirements to Project Size and Impact:
Requiring custom, third-party engineering studies for water, noise, and power can cost upwards of $100,000 before preliminary approval. A 10,000-square-foot server room conversion in an existing industrial building should not require the same technical analysis as a 500,000-square-foot hyperscale campus. We ask Council to allow scaled technical requirements and permit city-approved standard templates for smaller projects and brownfield redevelopments.

4. Early Infrastructure Coordination:
Power and water impact assessments must happen early. Encouraging formal coordination with electric utilities and municipal water providers at the start of the review process acknowledges real infrastructure concerns while supporting efficient project planning across the city.

5. Protect Existing Local Businesses Upgrading IT:
We strongly applaud the carve-out in the ordinance that allows existing Akron companies to upgrade their own on-site computer and server rooms as an accessory use without triggering the full conditional use process. Keeping this exemption clear is essential for our business community's competitiveness.

Thoughtful planning helps our community prepare for the housing, transportation, and infrastructure needs that naturally accompany significant economic investment. As you know, REALTORS® do more than buy and sell properties. ACAR and its members are community partners invested in Akron's future. We look forward to working with City Council to fine-tune this ordinance so Akron remains both a great place to live and an attractive place to invest.

Sincerely,

Mike Valerino

Mike Valerino
Chief Executive Officer