NEW ALBANY
COMMUNITY CONNECTS US

From: City of New Albany, Ohio Community Development Department

Date: May 2026

Re: City of New Albany, Ohio Data Center Zoning

Zoning is the local legal regulation of how property is used and can be developed. The City of New Albany's zoning framework for data centers reflects the same thoughtful and intentional approach that guides all development in our community. By requiring thoughtful site planning, coordinated architecture, and enhanced buffering, the City ensures that large-scale facilities such as data centers are seamlessly integrated into their surroundings. By incorporating data centers into pre-zoned, shovel-ready sites within the New Albany International Business Park, the City ensures these facilities align with long-term land use goals and minimize potential impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. This approach reflects a strong commitment to balancing economic growth with community character and reinforces the principles outlined in the city's comprehensive strategic plan.

Data centers are a permitted use in the General Employment (Codified Ordinances § 1153) and Technology Manufacturing District (TMD) (Codified Ordinances § 1154). Over time developers, landowners, City staff, the Planning Commission and City Council have identified and implemented best practices into each of these zoning texts and base code to facilitate well-planned development and mitigate impacts to adjoining areas. The TMD zoning district was the product of a 2021 City-led effort to consolidate all the best practices from these prior zonings. Whether it be within the TMD zoning district or the GE zoning district with a Limited Overlay commercial zoning text, data centers in New Albany are subject to heightened standards that go beyond basic zoning ordinance requirements found in other communities.

These heightened standards include:

- Enhanced landscaping
    - Wherever possible, existing natural features must be incorporated into future development.
    - Installation of white four-rail horse fence that preserves the agrarian character of the community. Paint color, fence rail and post dimensions, and species of wood to be used in the construction of the fence are predetermined and standardized.
    - Installation of standardized blacktop leisure trail to provide pedestrian connections that enable walking, biking, and other recreation. The placement of

this pathway is consistent relative to the nearest curb, as is the width of the path, strips of grass on either side, and street tree placement.
    - Specific size, gradient, and undulation criteria for swales, berms, and gateway water features that screen development from roadways.
    - Preapproved native species lists with specified tree installation sizes, spacings, and required underplanted shrubs and seeded meadow mix. In the case that berm height is unable to be met around the entirety of a site, plantings that provide 100% screening coverage at full foliage can be deployed within these criteria.
    - Pond shapes, plantings, and gradings that aesthetically integrate into the surrounding landscape; wetland plant mixes must be developed in consultation with a wetland ecologist.
    - Consistent campus entrance signage, roadway and wayfinding/address signage, and street light standards including specifications for the size, frequency, color, graphics, fonts, construction materials and placement proximate to paths, fences, bridges, and roadways.
    - Preapproved primary entry drive widths, radii of curbing, skirt and drive materials, and roadway paint schemas.
    - Specific bridge requirements with consideration for architecture, materials, height, wall width and aesthetic, and surrounding culvert size and shape.
- Architectural standards
    - Accessory or ancillary buildings, whether attached or detached, must be of similar design, materials and construction as the primary structure if they are visible from a public street right-of-way.
    - Building façade colors and materials are coordinated to complement each other.
    - Building elevations shall be designed to be compatible with each other and to reflect a consistent design approach.
    - Elements such as meter boxes, utility conduits, roof and wall projections such as vent and exhaust pipes, basement window enclosures, and trash containers must be located so as to minimize their visibility and visual impact from off-site. For more information, please reference The New Albany Technology Manufacturing District Landscape and Architecture Standards Plan.
- Screening elements that are complementary to primary buildings
    - Mechanical equipment and service areas that cannot be located out of sight of public right of way must be screened using materials and design treatments that match the building's architecture, reinforcing a cohesive and high-quality visual environment. Special attention has been given to design requirements within setbacks along major public streets to balance site and facility needs with the rural aesthetic throughout the business park.
- Noise mitigation standards to minimize off-site impacts

- Rather than establishing a specific decibel limit, the City's noise ordinance prohibits the sound on an industrial parcel from exceeding "exceed the average intensity of street traffic noise in the nearest residential districts." Furthermore, "no sound shall be objectionable due to intermittence, best frequency or shrillness" (Codified Ordinances § 1153.07).

New Albany's strategic planning process demonstrates that clearly defined standards can successfully accommodate complex, large-scale developments like data centers without compromising community character.