

TXT-2026-002 - Rezoning Request Text Amendment to:

- Sections 25.010 Table of Allowed Uses,
- Section 25.020-F 25.020-I, Other Use Category,
- 30.210 Data Centers, and
- 32.220 Cryptomining Operations of the Union County Development Ordinance

The current Union County Development Ordinance (UDO) does not contain specific standards governing the establishment and operation of data centers or cryptomining operations. While such uses may be interpreted under existing industrial classifications, the ordinance does not currently address the unique land use considerations associated with these facilities, including utility demand, noise, backup power generation, cooling infrastructure, and compatibility with nearby uses.

In recent years, data centers have become an increasingly significant component of economic development efforts throughout North Carolina and the Southeast. As local governments have received inquiries regarding these facilities, many have adopted use-specific regulations to provide greater predictability for applicants while ensuring that potential impacts on surrounding properties and public infrastructure are appropriately addressed.

This text amendment was initiated by staff to establish a regulatory framework for data centers and cryptomining operations within Union County. The proposed amendment would add these uses to the UDO, establish definitions, identify appropriate zoning districts, and create use-specific standards related to setbacks, screening, lighting, noise mitigation, backup power generation, utility capacity verification, and decommissioning.

During the development of the proposed regulations, staff reviewed recently adopted ordinances from other North Carolina jurisdictions as well as emerging best practices from across the country. Staff also evaluated how these facilities may interact with existing residential development, public infrastructure, and utility systems within Union County. The proposed text is intended to balance economic development opportunities with the protection of public health, safety, and welfare while providing clear standards for future applications.

This text amendment establishes a comprehensive set of regulations for data centers and cryptomining operations where no such standards currently exist within the UDO.

Contact Information

1. Staff: Lee Jensen, Planning Director, 704-283-3564, lee.jensen@unioncountync.gov
2. Staff: John Wear, Senior Planner, 704-283-3605, john.wear@unioncountync.gov

Planning Documents

Union County Development Ordinance: The current Union County Development Ordinance does not contain use-specific standards for data centers or cryptomining operations. While these uses may be accommodated through existing industrial use classifications, the ordinance does not currently address site design, utility capacity, cooling infrastructure, backup power generation, noise mitigation, or decommissioning requirements specific to these facilities. The proposed amendment establishes a regulatory framework intended to protect public health, safety, and welfare while providing clear development standards for emerging technology-related uses.

Union County Comprehensive Plan: The Union County Comprehensive Plan does not specifically identify locations for data centers or cryptomining operations. However, the plan supports economic development opportunities, investment in employment-generating uses, and the protection of existing neighborhoods and community facilities from incompatible development. The proposed amendment is consistent with these objectives by allowing such uses within the Heavy Industrial zoning district through the Special Use Permit process while establishing standards intended to mitigate potential impacts associated with noise, utility demand, lighting, backup power generation, and compatibility with surrounding land uses.

Because these uses are proposed to be reviewed through the Special Use Permit process, each application will continue to be evaluated on its individual merits and must demonstrate compliance with the required findings of fact and all applicable ordinance standards.



Planning Department

Staff Analysis and Recommendation

Data centers and cryptomining operations represent emerging land uses that are becoming increasingly common throughout North Carolina and the Southeast. These facilities can provide significant private investment and contribute to the local tax base; however, they also present unique land use considerations that are not addressed by the current Union County Development Ordinance.

The proposed text amendment establishes definitions, identifies appropriate zoning districts, and creates use-specific standards related to setbacks, screening, lighting, noise mitigation, backup power generation, utility capacity verification, cooling infrastructure, and decommissioning. These standards are intended to provide predictability for both applicants and nearby property owners while ensuring that the County has an appropriate regulatory framework in place should these uses be proposed in the future.

The proposed standards are generally consistent with regulations recently adopted by other jurisdictions and are intended to address the primary land use concerns associated with these facilities while avoiding unnecessary restrictions that could discourage future investment within Union County.

Based upon the foregoing analysis, staff finds that the proposed text amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of the Union County Comprehensive Plan and is reasonable and in the public interest.

Staff Recommendation: Approval.

Land Use Board

The Land Use Board is scheduled to review this text amendment request at its June 9, 2026 meeting.

