



## Prince William Conservation Alliance

PO Box 6351, Woodbridge, VA 22195 ★ 703.490.5200 ★ pwconserve.org

December 8, 2022

The Honorable Ann Wheeler, Chair,  
and Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Prince William County  
via email

RE: REZ2022-00015, Potomac Technology Park  
SUP2022-00016, Potomac Technology Park

Dear Chair Wheeler and Members of the Board:

Prince William Conservation Alliance (PWCA) works to establish desirable, equitable, sustainable communities, promote environmental stewardship, and create opportunities for residents to engage in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities. I write on behalf of our nearly 300 members in Prince William County regarding the subject application. We are writing to you regarding the proposed Data Center adjacent to Prince William Forest [National] Park (PWFP). We strongly recommend the denial of this rezoning and accompanying special use permit. If approval is considered, substantial modifications are needed to ensure adequate protection of the natural resources iconic to the area, namely PWFP and Quantico Creek.

The request to rezone ±51.667 acres from A-1, Agriculture to O(M), Office Mid-Rise District to develop the property with office or data center uses, is incompatible with this site. The soils are highly erodible, and the site is located next to the PWFP and at the headwaters of Quantico Creek, one of the region's highest-quality streams. The Applicants stated "Adjusting the limits for clearing and grading to remain outside the ER designations, would leave the property nearly undevelopable, particularly for the proposed data center use," further indicating inappropriate site selection for data centers.

Prince William Forest Park is a gem and part of what makes our county special. While protecting Quantico Creek, the park provides critical habitat for wildlife including endangered and threatened species such as the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*). It

captures the transition from the coastal plain to the Piedmont ecosystem, making it an important area for current and future research and study, especially as climate change impacts these systems and development pressures reduce what we have left. It's a key tourist attraction - in 2018 park visitors spent an estimated \$17.9 million in the community, which supported 219 jobs. Environmentally and economically, this park is an indispensable part of our community.

Developing forested land as proposed here would increase edge habitat and forest fragmentation which is prime for invasive species to enter the park and for white-tailed deer, which over-browse young trees and impact forest regrowth. Managing invasive species, repairing streams, and addressing any other damage is costly and may never achieve the quality habitat and the environmental services it now provides for healthy sustainable communities in Prince William County.

The County is currently undergoing a comprehensive review expansion of the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District. The parcel has not been identified as a recommended site for data center use per the contractor's metrics. However, a site has been identified across the street, which we see as an appropriate redevelopment opportunity. The County should encourage data center development there before looking to other areas.

This parcel is in the Rural Crescent and within the legislative boundary of PWF, which means it could easily become parkland. The property has been a priority for the PWF to acquire since at least the 1990s. We previously participated in a charrette process and our group, which consisted of mostly developers, agreed that this parcel would be best served as parkland. In fact, 4 of the 6 breakout groups recommended that this parcel should remain part of the Rural Crescent as part of a strategy that it would one day become part of the park. It's currently densely forested and could be an excellent addition to the park, for visitors and wildlife alike to enjoy for generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Court Squires".

Court Squires  
Executive Director

CC: The Planning Commission; Christopher Perez, Case Planner; Rebecca Horner, Acting Planning Director; George Liffert, Superintendent of PWF