The following information is provided by
the South Florida Regional Planning Council

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 20, 2026

TO: THE HONORABLE DANIELLA LEVINE CAVA, MAYOR, MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
KIMBERLY BROWN, AICP, CHIEF, LONG RANGE AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY EAR TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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SUBJECT: SFRPC EAR TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Data Centers

The South Florida Regional Planning Council (Council) recommends that the EAR Task Force consider including in its final report a recommendation to amend the Comprehensive Development Master Plan (CDMP) to define data centers and establish a distinct and specialized land use category for data centers. This recommendation is supported by Florida Commerce, as evidenced by comments provided during its review of the City Park Development of Regional Impact Application for Development Approval (second submission), dated April 23, 2026. Florida Commerce emphasized that data centers should not be treated under broad "office" or "industrial" land use categories due to their potentially significant impacts on state and regional infrastructure, utilities, and resources.

Data centers represent a unique form of development that does not fit neatly within traditional commercial, office, or industrial land use classifications due to their exceptionally high electricity demand, water consumption, backup power generation requirements, noise characteristics, light pollution characteristics, heat generation, low employment density, security needs, and substantial infrastructure impacts. National planning and zoning guidance increasingly recognizes that data centers warrant specialized regulatory treatment because of these unique operational and land use characteristics as well as community and environmental justice, and public health impacts. A robust list of local strategies for regulating data centers can be found here: https://datacenters.ainowinstitute.org/local/

The Council further recommends that the CDMP establish location, infrastructure, environmental, and compatibility criteria specific to data center development. Such criteria should include, at a minimum: proximity to high-capacity electrical transmission infrastructure and fiber networks; limitations on development near residential neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive areas; evaluation of potable and reclaimed water demands; assessment of impacts to regional energy systems; noise and vibration mitigation standards for generators and cooling equipment; resiliency and emergency management considerations; and minimum design standards addressing buffering, screening, and urban design compatibility. The County should also require comprehensive analysis of cumulative impacts associated with clustered data center development, particularly regarding energy demand, water consumption, heat generation, and backup power systems.

The creation of a dedicated CDMP land use category would provide Miami-Dade County with a clear and predictable regulatory framework to appropriately site and manage future data center development while balancing economic development objectives with long-term community resiliency, infrastructure capacity, land use compatibility, and environmental protection. The recommendation is particularly important given the accelerating growth of artificial intelligence and cloud-computing infrastructure and the emergence of new data center proposals within Miami-Dade County.

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

The Council recommends that Miami-Dade County delineate within the CDMP all areas identified in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) "Yellow Book," as well as areas where Project Implementation Report planning has resulted in a final Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) or where lands fall within the footprint of identified restoration alternatives, including projects such as BBSEER, the Southern Everglades study, and Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands. The Council recommends that this mapping be maintained as a regularly updated planning resource to reflect evolving restoration modeling and project refinements, thereby providing guidance on areas where future land use and infrastructure conflicts may arise.

Viability of Agricultural Sector

The Council recommends that Miami-Dade County establish a minimum agricultural land retention threshold, employing the acreage benchmarks identified in the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Agricultural Trends and Outlook Study, to help ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in Southeast Florida by maintaining sufficient Agricultural (AU) land to support continued agricultural production and related economic activity. Additional policies allowing for the Transfer or Purchase of Development Rights should be considered when agricultural land conversion is necessary to sustain growth.

Missing Middle and Affordable Housing

The Council recommends expressly considering demand for "missing middle" housing types when assessing unmet residential demand in Miami-Dade County, as it is not feasible to provide enough land to fully meet projected demand for traditional single-family housing. Duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, courtyard apartments, accessory dwelling units, and small-scale multifamily housing can serve as context-

sensitive alternatives that help meet a share of housing demand within existing urbanized areas while expanding housing choice, improving infrastructure efficiency, and reducing pressure to develop agricultural or environmentally sensitive lands.

In addition, lowering the Area Median Income (AMI) threshold from 140% AMI to at least 100% AMI or lower for density bonuses provided through the Workforce Housing Development Program would align the program with the income ranges of cost burdened residents.

Encroachment on Military Installations

The Council recommends updating the Homestead Air Reserve Base Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) to ensure regulations reflect the expanded activities and mission of the installation within five years of EAR adoption. The updated report should include policies and recommendations necessary to support the compatibility between spaceport and military installation activities. Coordination with Homestead Air Reserve Base is essential to protect both national security assets and maintain a major employer of Miami-Dade residents.