

Andy Nielsen

Councilor – District 14

Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council



Hearing Examiner for the Metropolitan Development Commission
200 East Washington Street Suite 2042
Indianapolis, IN 46204

June 9, 2026

Hearing Examiner –

I am writing to express my opposition to 2026-CVR-815 and 2026-CPL-815 requesting a variance of use and development standards to construct a data center and approval of an associated subdivision plat, respectively. After hearing clearly and overwhelmingly from my district, I request that you recommend denial of the petition to the Metropolitan Development Commission.

The proposed site, part of the Thunderbird Commerce Center, sits directly on the border of two City-County Council Districts in Council District 20, directionally south of Council District 14 that I represent. With respect to district lines, my involvement and engagement on this petition is unique, given the proximity to the proposed site and that 97% of the nearly 1,800 residents who live within a half-mile radius of the proposed site live in District 14.

My position on this issue is representative of the people who I serve. In late April 2026, I held a community forum for neighbors to learn more from the petitioner. Recently, I closed a month-long survey to collect input from residents. The results from the survey reflect the trend I have heard via hundreds of phone calls, text messages, emails, social media messages, and conversations with neighbors directly on this proposed development: **83% of respondents oppose the proposed data center, with nearly 70% selecting “Strongly Oppose.”**

The community’s concerns were deep, consistent, and clear. The four themes that emerged most strongly:

- Environmental concerns: Neighbors raised serious questions about water consumption, air quality from diesel generators, energy grid strain, and the long-term environmental footprint of a facility of this scale. The lack of a decommissioning plan has been an ongoing concern as well.
- Utility costs: Many neighbors are already feeling squeezed by AES Indiana rate increases and have deep skepticism about promises that a large-scale data center won’t drive rates higher.
- Noise and light pollution: Neighbors are particularly concerned about operational noise from cooling systems and backup generators, and the proximity of the site to Irvington Community Elementary School and the Pennsy Trail.
- Community Benefits: There are growing concerns that any potential community benefits are contingent on the neighborhood’s and/or local elected official’s support of the project, including tax incentives, and not an authentic commitment to support the neighborhood as specific details remain to be seen.

The context of the community’s position is very important, as it was not made with haste. Instead, it is an example of how an engaged community makes an informed decision about what they want their neighborhood to look like in the future. Of note, the petitioner has been communicative on several concerns; the proposed development sits on a brownfield that will make future development challenging; the project may be built with union labor; and the proposed development has the potential to generate significant tax revenue to local units of government and districts including Warren Township Schools, the Irvington-

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Brookville Tax Increment Financing District, and the Consolidated City's general fund, to name a few.

I emphasize these points to provide an honest overview of the proposed development: it does have the potential to provide benefits to the district and the people who I represent. Importantly, the community is also aware of these prospective benefits but feels strongly that the potential costs are too high. My district has performed a cost-benefit analysis and has ultimately concluded that the development costs more than the benefits it could generate.

I believe firmly that community must be at the center of development. The long-term success of any project is contingent on community trust and respect, and an assurance that their voices have been heard. In this case, the community's decision is clear, and I stand with District 14 neighbors in opposition to the petition.

For these reasons, I request that you recommend denial of the petition to the Metropolitan Development Commission.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. Nielsen", written over a horizontal line.

Andy Nielsen
City-County Councilor – District 14