

Champion Farms Development Report

Background

Over the past several years, Perry Village has invested significant time and resources studying potential uses for the Champion Farms property. In 2017, Perry Village commissioned a joint comprehensive land use study for the Champion Farms property. The study was performed by Dimit Architects, with planning and landscape analysis by Cawrse & Associates, and market feasibility input from Cushman & Wakefield. The project began in early 2017 and concluded in late 2017, helping guide land uses for the Village.

The study evaluated market conditions, infrastructure requirements, and community goals to identify development options compatible with the Village's character and financial sustainability.

2017 Land Use Study – Recommended Uses

The 2017 Land Use Study recommended the following possibilities:

☒ **Low-Density Residential Development**

- Single-family neighborhoods, possibly including senior housing in small numbers
- However, the study highlighted limited market demand for senior living in Perry due to Village size, lack of nearby amenities, and distance from major highways. Single-family residential development would be large lots due to 50 home deed restrictions on property.

☒ **Recreational or Open Space**

- Community parks, walking trails, sports fields
- Appealed to community values but would generate no tax revenue. It would bring a large financial responsibility to the Village and tax payers.

☒ **Institutional Uses (Limited)**

- Potential for schools, religious facilities, or community centers
- Feasible only if a specific institutional user emerged, which did not occur

2017 Land Use Study – Not Recommended Uses

The study specifically recommended against several types of development:

☐ **Traditional Industrial Development**

- Discouraged due to potential for high truck traffic, noise, and incompatibility with Village character

- Would require significant public funding for infrastructure
- Industrial users typically prefer sites closer to major freeways,

❌ Retail or Commercial Development

- Market analysis showed insufficient demand for new retail, not enough roof tops to attract retail, strip malls, shopping centers, restaurants, or commercial markets given nearby centers in Mentor and Painesville
- Retail alone would not generate enough tax revenue to justify infrastructure costs

❌ High-Density Residential Development

- Apartments, condos, or dense subdivisions were ruled out because:
- The property is subject to a deed restriction limiting residential development to no more than 50 homes
- Market studies indicated low demand for multi-family housing in Perry Village

❌ Medical Campus Development

- Considered but ruled out due to:
- Limited local population size and demand
- Closure of the pilot medical clinic at the Perry Area Community Center, which demonstrated insufficient utilization and financial viability
- Proximity to existing medical services in surrounding communities

Senior Living Follow-Up

Although senior living was conceptually considered under “low-density residential,” Perry Village approached several national senior housing developers after 2017. All concluded that a senior community on the Champion Farms property was not financially viable, citing:

- Insufficient local demand
- Lack of nearby commercial amenities
- Distance from regional transportation corridors

Others Who Evaluated the Property

Over the years, other businesses have also evaluated the Champion Farms property but ultimately determined it was not feasible for their operations.

For example, a hydroponic tomato growing and distribution facility explored purchasing the land and required it to be rezoned to mixed-use industrial, which the Village accommodated during their due diligence process. However, the significant costs associated with extending necessary infrastructure—including water, sewer, and utilities—ultimately led the company to withdraw. Additionally, proposals for tiny home developments were considered, but these projects

required the Village to finance and construct substantial infrastructure upfront. The presence of a 50-home deed restriction further limited the economic viability of such residential projects, making it financially unfeasible for developers to proceed.

Why Data Centers Weren't Considered in 2017?

When the 2017 study was completed, data centers were not commonly evaluated as a standalone use for sites like Champion Farms:

- At the time, data centers were primarily concentrated in major urban markets like Northern Virginia, Dallas, and Silicon Valley. (CBRE, U.S. Data Center Trends Report, 2016)
- Ohio municipalities did not begin drafting data center-specific zoning codes until after significant projects in New Albany, Ohio (2018-2020).
- Industrial zoning in 2017 focused on traditional manufacturing and warehouses, which carried significant negative impacts (noise, traffic, infrastructure cost) unsuitable for Perry Village.

Because of these factors, the 2017 study recommended against industrial development based on the impacts typically associated with traditional manufacturing or warehousing, such as heavy truck traffic, noise, and significant public infrastructure costs.

Data centers, however, are fundamentally different and offer unique advantages. Unlike traditional industrial uses, data centers generate minimal noise, low traffic, and substantial tax revenue while requiring less intensive municipal services.

Importantly, around 2018 to 2020 in Ohio, local governments began drafting specific zoning ordinances that recognized data centers as a distinct industrial use. This shift occurred as communities like New Albany, Ohio, experienced significant data center growth and realized these facilities had unique operational characteristics—such as low external impacts and developers' willingness to invest in required infrastructure at their own expense.

For example, New Albany, Ohio, adopted specific Data Center Development Standards starting in 2018 to regulate noise, lighting, setbacks, and other site-specific considerations uniquely applicable to data centers (New Albany Planning Department, Data Center Development Standards, 2018-2020).

Likewise, national research showed data centers evolving into a distinct real estate sector, with CBRE noting in 2016 that data centers were “emerging as a specialized asset class requiring unique planning and infrastructure considerations,” though they were still largely concentrated in major urban markets at the time (CBRE, U.S. Data Center Trends Report, 2016).

This evolution in zoning practice explains why the 2017 land use study did not identify data centers as a unique industry category or explore zoning possibilities specifically tailored for them. At the time, such uses were not widely anticipated or differentiated from traditional industrial development in local planning processes.

Why Perry Village is considering the potential development of a Data Center?

Given that the Champion Farms property has remained unused for over 30 years, and in line with the Village's Comprehensive Plan goals of diversifying the tax base and ensuring long-term financial stability, Perry Village believes that pursuing industrial development—specifically, a data center campus—is the most viable and responsible path forward.

A data center offers unique benefits:

- Minimal traffic and low noise levels, unlike traditional industrial uses
- Significant capital investment and increased property tax, income tax, and net profits tax revenue, reducing the burden on residential taxpayers
- High-quality jobs during construction and operations
- Developers willing to pay for necessary infrastructure improvements at their own expense
- Modern design standards protecting the environment and the Village's rural character

Moving forward with a data center represents a rare opportunity to transform unused land into a community asset that will benefit Perry Village for decades to come.

Perry Village remains committed to ensuring that any development is carefully planned, well-regulated, and aligned with community values. We encourage residents to stay involved and informed as this process continues.

Sources

- Perry Village Champion Farms Land Use Study (2017)
- CBRE, U.S. Data Center Trends Report (2016)
- New Albany, Ohio Planning Department (2023)
- Village records on PAC medical clinic- Lake Health (2018-2020)
- Ohio EPA Institutional Land Use Guidance (2017)
- CBRE, U.S. Data Center Trends Report, (2016)
- New Albany Planning Department, Data Center Development Standards, (2018-2020)