It is reassuring to see so many people here tonight who are committed to saving our County from the jaws of reckless development. Even more reckless because it is so unnecessary.

It’s hard to believe that only six years ago our County leadership actually had a good idea. It was called the Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District. Its objective was to restrict data centers to industrial areas suitable for that type of development. This completely reasonable concept held up pretty well until it was deemed an impediment to developer designs.

Look at this chart. Prince William County is already on track to surpass Loudoun County as data center capital of the universe even without the Prince William Digital Gateway. The County has articulated no end goal for data center development. Are we to believe their appetite is unlimited? What other priorities will be subordinate to the insatiable demand of data centers? Where will our citizens live, work, learn and play if we must all take a back seat to the relentless march of concrete behemoths? How many plans and dreams will be upended as we are elbowed aside to accommodate developer ambitions.

Now look at this next chart and ask yourself what for? Opponents of this proposal have said all along that there is sufficient usable land in the existing overlay district that can be developed responsibly. Prematurely seeking data center development outside the overlay district is unnecessary when the County is in a strong position to drive a harder bargain over highly desirable properties. The County’s lame marketing efforts are giving away the store and needlessly squandering our irreplaceable natural, historic and cultural resources.

Why would your government pursue this reckless course when there are clearly better options available?

1. Ineptitude. Your government doesn’t come up with its own ideas but simply considers whatever developers throw on the table.
2. Gullibility. Your government officials are suckers for a slick sales pitch.
3. Laziness. Due diligence is not performed. When the sharkskin suits tell our government not to worry about something, they don’t.
4. Undue influence. Moneyed interests speak louder than the public interest.

You should be very worried about the future of our County. Not only because of this issue, but because of what it portends for the future. If they can approve this incredibly bad idea over the objections of numerous subject matter experts, they can do anything. And don’t kid yourself. Unless we start making more noise, they will.

So what do we do? We need more and different people making noise. The supervisors are thoroughly sick of hearing from me and the small vocal nucleus that has been carrying this torch to date. Silent support is useless. They need to see, hear and feel the depth of the opposition. It is the only thing that will move them. Write letters and e-mails, make phone calls, show up at meetings and comment. Write letters to the editor. Unless we alter the current trajectory, we will lose and you will regret your complacency.

Take action and you can take control of your government. Let them know the citizens of Prince William County demand:

* People before Profits
* Preservation, not Ruination
* Prudence, not Negligence
* Smart Growth, not Reckless Development
* NO to bad ideas for a fast buck
* NO to surrendering our sovereignty to bull throwers and bulldozers
* NO to the Prince William Digital Gateway