



Where are they built?

Data centers come in various sizes and serve different purposes. The type that have made headlines lately are known as hyperscale data centers, which are 100+ megawatt facilities built by companies like Microsoft, Amazon, and Google for AI training, cloud services, and data storage.

Why are they controversial?

The impact data centers have on the environment and surrounding communities has recently made them a hot button issue. In 2024, data centers accounted for 4% of total U.S. electricity use. That could go up to 17% by 2030, according to experts at the Pew Research Center.

What are data centers?

Data centers are digital infrastructure facilities that house servers and other computer equipment that process, store, and transmit digital information. These facilities have been around for decades. But with the AI tech boom, more of them are being built across the country - and they're bigger than ever.

How big are these facilities?

Developers look at access to power, land, water, fiber connectivity, and tax incentives, and consider the reception from area residents to figure out where to build. For a community, data centers bring benefits and costs, and they must be weighed to achieve the best outcome for everyone.

- What questions can I ask about proposed data centers?**
- What is the purpose of this data center?
 - How big will it be and how much energy will it require?
 - What type of energy will power this facility?
 - How much water will be used at its peak? (Water usage can vary and peak in the summer.)
 - Will this development lead to infrastructure upgrades to our electrical grid or the public water system? And who will be paying for them?
 - How long will it take for the facility to be built? And how long will it take to connect to power?
 - How much tax revenue will our town, city, or county receive?
 - What will the impact be to the environment? Ask about air, traffic, light, and other types of pollution.
 - How will the developer support the community?
 - How many short vs long-term jobs will be created? And will local residents be eligible to apply?
 - Is there a decommissioning plan and what is it?

How have communities sought accountability?

Some communities have used a tool known as a **community benefits agreement**, a binding contract between companies and local organizations, to ensure that they receive benefits promised by the developer. This can be a list of stipulations that include funding for community programs and requirements on water usage and waste disposal.

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