

Request from Mike Mosharo State of Michigan Resident

One Global People, LLC.

A. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

Harms and Negative Impacts of Large Data Centers on Host Communities

Title:

Appendix A – Documented Harms from Large-Scale Data Center Development in U.S. Communities

Purpose:

To provide factual evidence and statistics showing that large data centers have caused serious negative impacts on water resources, electric grids, public health, local finances, environmental quality, and democratic transparency in communities across the United States. This establishes a rational and evidence-based basis for requiring strict oversight, full disclosure, and precaution in Saline, Michigan and across the state.

1. Electricity Demand, Grid Stress, and Rate Impacts

Finding 1.1 – Data centers are extremely high-load electricity users.

- The U.S. hosts **over 5,400 data centers**, more than any other country.
- U.S. data centers used about **17 gigawatts (GW)** of power in 2022—equivalent to **17 large nuclear plants** running continuously.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates global data center electricity use at about **415 TWh in 2024 (≈1.5% of global demand)**, with projections up to **945 TWh by 2030**—more than doubling in a few years.

Finding 1.2 – U.S. electricity use from data centers is projected to skyrocket, shifting costs onto the public.

- A Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory / DOE-backed analysis projects U.S. data centers could nearly **triple their electricity use by 2028**, consuming **up to 12% of all U.S. power**, up from a little over 4% today.
- Another study suggests data centers could, by 2030, use **more electricity than all traditional energy-intensive manufacturing sectors combined** (steel, cement, chemicals, etc.).

Finding 1.3 – Grid expansions and new fossil generation are being built for data centers, with costs socialized.

- In Louisiana, regulators approved **three new gas turbines and a \$550 million transmission project** largely to power a 4-million-square-foot Meta data center, raising concerns that residential ratepayers will bear the financial and pollution burden for a private facility.
 - Watchdog groups (e.g., Good Jobs First) warn that data center build-outs **increase electricity demand, strain grids, and push up rates for residents and small businesses**, while the primary beneficiaries are large tech companies.
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2. Water Use, Local Depletion, and Resource Conflicts

Finding 2.1 – Single data centers can use millions of gallons of water per day.

- A single hyperscale data center can consume up to **5 million gallons of potable water per day** for cooling—equivalent to the daily use of **tens of thousands of residents**.

Finding 2.2 – Real-world examples show large shares of local water systems diverted to data centers.

- In *The Dalles, Oregon*, Google data centers consumed between **274.5 million and 355 million gallons of water in a single year**, amounting to more than **one-quarter of the city’s total water use**. This information was originally kept secret until forced disclosure after litigation.
- In *Arizona*, data centers are projected to use **about 905 million gallons of water annually** ($\approx 2,777$ acre-feet) in 2025, enough for nearly **10,000 homes per year** in the Phoenix area.

Finding 2.3 – Aggregate water footprints are already impacting communities.

- The Environmental and Energy Study Institute notes that the water demands of the **over 5,400 U.S. data centers** are already affecting local supplies, especially where water must be purified to ultra-pure standards, which wastes additional municipal water in the process.
 - Indirect water impacts arise when local power for data centers is generated by fossil fuels—fracking, cooling for thermal power plants, and related processes all add further strain and contamination to regional water resources.
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3. Air Pollution, Public Health, and Climate Impacts

Finding 3.1 – Increased fossil generation and backup diesel fleets have measurable health costs.

- A recent health-impact analysis of U.S. data center growth estimates **\$5.7–\$9.2 billion per year** in public-health damages, including up to **595 premature deaths** and **300,000 asthma episodes annually**, largely from additional fossil fuel generation and diesel backup generator emissions.

Finding 3.2 – Data centers are often sited where grids are carbon-intensive and communities are already burdened.

- About **95% of U.S. data centers** are in regions where electricity is **more carbon intensive than the U.S. average**, meaning each added megawatt increases local greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions (NO_x, SO₂, PM_{2.5}).
- Approximately **20% of data centers** are located in communities already experiencing disproportionate environmental burdens, compounding existing health and justice disparities.

Finding 3.3 – On-the-ground impacts include diesel fumes and air quality complaints.

- In *Northern Virginia's "Data Center Alley"*, residents report **diesel exhaust odors**, worries over emissions from thousands of backup generators, and concerns about cumulative pollution near sensitive historic and natural sites such as Manassas National Battlefield Park.

4. Noise, Vibration, and Quality of Life

Finding 4.1 – Data centers create continuous low-frequency noise that residents struggle to escape.

- Residents near data center clusters in *Loudoun and Prince William Counties, Virginia* describe an unceasing **"eerie hum"** from massive cooling fans and chillers—audible even through closed windows. Many report **sleep disruption, anxiety, and chronic stress** tied to this low-frequency noise.
- Local reporting and verification efforts show this noise persists **24/7/365**, is difficult for the human brain to ignore, and has led some residents to consider moving away from their homes.

Finding 4.2 – Construction and ancillary traffic further degrade neighborhood conditions.

- Community reports around large campuses note **heavy truck and construction traffic**, vibration, dust, and general disturbance during multi-year buildouts, followed by ongoing maintenance traffic once facilities are live.

5. Economic Harms, Subsidies, and Poor Return on Public Investment

Finding 5.1 – Data centers receive massive public subsidies with limited local benefit.

- At least **30+ U.S. states** now offer large tax and utility incentives for data centers. Analyses by Good Jobs First and others find that state and local governments have granted **billions of dollars** in sales and property tax exemptions and infrastructure subsidies.
- A CRE Daily review estimates nearly **\$6 billion in sales tax exemptions** have been granted to U.S. data centers in just the last five years, while watchdogs argue these deals often result in **very few permanent jobs** and increased strain on local power systems.

Finding 5.2 – Independent audits show states losing money on data center tax incentives.

- In *Virginia*, a legislative audit of data center tax incentives found the state recovers only **48–72 cents in revenue for every 1 dollar of tax expenditure**, meaning a **net fiscal loss** for the public.

Finding 5.3 – Very large capital investments yield surprisingly few jobs.

- Two Google data centers in *Loudoun County, VA*—a core hub of the global internet—produce roughly **150 direct jobs** despite very high power use and land consumption.
- In *Abilene, Texas*, the Crusoe/“Stargate” AI data center campus represents up to a **\$3.5 billion** investment but is projected to create only **357 full-time jobs**, while qualifying for an **85% property tax abatement**, radically shrinking the local tax base.
- Good Jobs First finds that **nearly half of state-level data center subsidy programs do not require any minimum job creation** as a condition of receiving incentives.

6. Secrecy, Transparency Failures, and Democratic Harms

Finding 6.1 – Water and resource use information is often actively concealed.

- In *The Dalles, Oregon*, city officials actually filed a **lawsuit against a local newspaper** to avoid disclosing Google’s data center water usage. Only after the city dropped the suit and released the records did residents learn that Google’s facilities used over one-quarter of the city’s water and that **Google had paid more than \$100,000 of the city’s legal costs** in the secrecy fight.

Finding 6.2 – Political pressure and rushed approvals have been documented.

- In *Pennsylvania*, internal emails obtained through public records requests revealed regulators describing a data center/crypto-mining project as a **“governor’s priority**

project,” stressing the need to **“meet/exceed all timelines”**. This raised concerns that political pressure was pushing regulators to accelerate permits at the expense of thorough review and community input.

7. Synthesis: Relevance to Saline and Michigan

Taken together, the factual record from multiple U.S. communities demonstrates that:

- Large data centers **consume extraordinary amounts of electricity and water**, often rivaling small cities;
- They drive **new fossil fuel plants, grid expansions, and health-damaging pollution**, with costs largely socialized onto residents;
- They can **degrade quality of life** (noise, traffic, dust, stress);
- They routinely receive **massive public subsidies with weak job creation** and poor fiscal return;
- Their operations are frequently shrouded in **secrecy, legal battles, and non-transparent agreements**, undermining democratic oversight.

Therefore, Michigan has a clear, evidence-based justification to:

1. Require **full project disclosure** (water, power, subsidies, emissions, jobs).
 2. Conduct **independent impact assessments** before approval.
 3. Impose **strict conditions or deny approval** where harms outweigh verified public benefit.
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B. Full Disclosure should be required for all data site developments and installations within the U.S., as well as abroad.

“Data Centers: Hidden Harms to Communities – Why Full Disclosure is Essential”

You can use this as a structure for PowerPoint/Keynote/Google Slides or for a live spoken presentation. Each slide includes bullets plus suggested talking points.

Slide 1 – Title

Title:

“Data Centers and Our Community: The Real Costs We’re Being Asked to Bear”

Bullets:

- Proposed high-load data center project in our region (Saline / Washtenaw County)
- Why this conversation matters now
- What other communities have already learned the hard way

Talking Point:

“We’re not guessing. We now have hard data from communities across the U.S. that have already lived through data center buildouts—and we need to learn from their experience before we commit our water, power, land, and tax dollars.”

Slide 2 – What Is a Hyperscale Data Center?

Bullets:

- A single facility can use **as much power as a city**
- Operates 24/7/365, no seasonal shutoff
- Requires massive **cooling, water, and backup generators**

Talking Point:

“This isn’t just a couple of servers in a closet—it’s industrial infrastructure at city scale, planted next to homes, schools, and farms.”

Slide 3 – Electricity & Grid Impacts

Bullets:

- U.S. data centers **≈ 17 GW of power** (17 nuclear plants).
- Could reach **up to 12% of all U.S. electricity by 2028**.
- Some states building **new gas plants and \$500M+ transmission** just to feed data centers.

Talking Point:

“When a data center plugs into a regional grid, it can become one of the biggest single users of electricity—forcing expensive new power plants and transmission that **we** help pay for.”

Slide 4 – Who Pays the Power Bill?

Bullets:

- Grid upgrades and new generation often rolled into **ratepayer bills**
- Watchdogs warn: data centers **increase rates for residents & small businesses**
- Private facility, public burden

Talking Point:

“Even if you never walk through the door of the data center, you can still end up paying for its electricity through higher monthly bills.”

Slide 5 – Water: Competing With Residents and Farms

Bullets:

- Single data center: **up to 5 million gallons/day**.
- Oregon case: Google data centers used **>25% of city’s water** in The Dalles.
- Arizona: **≈ 905 million gallons/year** for data centers = **water for ~10,000 homes**.

Talking Point:

“In the middle of climate uncertainty and water stress, we are being asked to sign away a huge share of our future water for a facility that doesn’t live here, doesn’t vote here, and can leave whenever incentives dry up.”

Slide 6 – Health & Pollution

Bullets:

- Extra fossil power + diesel backup = **billions in health damages**
- Estimated **\$5.7–\$9.2 billion/year**, up to **595 premature deaths & 300,000 asthma episodes** from data-center-linked pollution.
- 95% of data centers in **high-carbon** grid regions; 20% in already overburdened communities.

Talking Point:

“Even if the building itself looks clean and high-tech, the air that powers it often comes from gas plants and diesel exhaust that hit our lungs, not theirs.”

Slide 7 – Noise, Stress, and Quality of Life

Bullets:

- Constant low-frequency **fan and chiller noise**: the “eerie hum”

- Residents in Northern Virginia report **sleep disruption, anxiety, and wanting to move.**
- Construction brings years of **truck traffic, dust, and vibration**

Talking Point:

“This is not just about metrics; it’s about whether families can sleep at night in their own homes.”

Slide 8 – Economics: Subsidies vs. Jobs

Bullets:

- States have granted **billions in tax breaks** & utility incentives.
- Virginia audit: state gets back only **\$0.48–\$0.72 per \$1** in data center tax breaks.
- Huge projects, **very few jobs**: often only hundreds of permanent positions.

Talking Point:

“Our community is being asked to give up land, water, power, and tax base in exchange for what often turns out to be a few hundred jobs—and sometimes less.”

Slide 9 – Secrecy & Democratic Harm

Bullets:

- The Dalles, OR: city sued to **hide Google’s water use**; Google even paid city legal fees.
- Pennsylvania: internal emails labeled a data center project a “**governor’s priority**” with pressure to rush permits.
- Pattern: **non-disclosure, rushed approvals, and limited community input**

Talking Point:

“When you see secrecy and lawsuits just to reveal how much water a project is using, that’s a red flag that the public interest is not the priority.”

Slide 10 – What This Means for Saline / Michigan

Bullets:

- Data centers are **not low-impact neighbors**
- Documented harms justify **strong precaution**
- Michigan must not approve such projects without:
 - Full disclosure (water, power, emissions, subsidies, jobs)

- Independent impact studies
- Enforceable protections & fair economics

Talking Point:

“We are not opposed to technology—we are opposed to sacrificing our water, our air, and our wallets for a deal that benefits a distant corporation more than our own community.”

Slide 11 – Our Specific Demands

Bullets:

- Full public release of all project data and agreements
- Independent studies on water, grid, health, and noise
- Transparent accounting of tax incentives and who pays
- Binding job and community benefit commitments
- Right to say **no** if costs outweigh benefits

Talking Point:

“Before we sign a generational contract with our land and resources, we demand the truth, the full picture, and the right to make an informed decision.”

Slide 12 – Call to Action

Bullets:

- Contact local and state officials (list them or link to your contact sheet)
- Submit written comments to MPSC and city/county bodies
- Join or form a community coalition
- Insist on **full disclosure before approval**

Talking Point:

“This is the moment where our voices matter. Once the facility is built, the water pipe laid, and the power lines upgraded, we can’t easily take it back. We either stand up now or live with the consequences for decades.”