

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT A PROPOSED DATA CENTER

A starting point for informed community conversations

Every project is different. These questions can help residents and local leaders understand a proposal's full scope, potential benefits and tradeoffs before major decisions are made.

- 1 What is the project at full buildout?** Ask for total acreage, buildings, square footage, phases, intended computing use, tenant status, and timeline beyond the first phase. Find out if the facility complies with current zoning and the local comprehensive plan, or if it will require annexation, rezoning, or special permitting. Do the size and location cause the project to qualify as a Development of Regional Impact (DRI)?
- 2 How much electricity will it require?** Request peak demand and annual energy use at opening and full buildout, along with the serving utility and related generation, transmission, or substation needs, both on and off the property. Find out if the local grid can support the project without raising outage risk or costs for existing customers.
- 3 Who pays for new infrastructure and who holds the risk?** Identify who funds new infrastructure and what contracts, minimum payments, collateral, and termination obligations protect other customers. Will any of it involve eminent domain?
- 4 How much water will it use?** Request average, peak-day and annual demand; water source; cooling technology; wastewater plan; and operations during extreme heat or drought. Ask if the capacity of the water source supplying the facility has been independently verified.
- 5 How will the project support clean energy and efficiency?** Ask if the developer will commit to new solar or other climate solutions like battery storage, energy efficiency, renewable-energy credits and the ability to reduce demand when the grid is stressed.
- 6 What will nearby residents experience?** Address construction, noise, use of diesel generators, air emissions, lighting, traffic, setbacks, landscaping and the process for resolving complaints. Ask how water use, energy use, emissions, and noise will be monitored after approval, what happens if the facility expands, exceeds its projections, or changes ownership, and how the community can contact the facility with concerns during construction and during operation.
- 7 How will air, land, and water resources be protected?** Will the project be regulated under the Clean Water Act or require permits from Georgia EPD? If so, what is the status? Review streams, wetlands, floodplains, habitat, tree clearing, impervious surface, stormwater and mitigation across every phase.
- 8 What is the complete public financial picture?** Compare permanent jobs and expected tax revenue with incentives, abatements, infrastructure spending, financing obligations and public-service costs.
- 9 Which commitments are enforceable—and by whom?** Identify where the public can access each promise is documented, who monitors it, what must be reported (such as annual water and electricity use), what happens if it is not met, and whether it transfers to a future owner. Find out if there is an enforceable Community Benefit Agreement already in place, and what specific commitments it includes.
- 10 When and how can the public participate?** List every remaining decision, responsible agency or governing body, public meeting or comment deadline, and location of the public record.

GO DEEPER

Use the complete Georgia Data Center Toolkit for plain-language explanations, Georgia-specific resources and additional questions about energy, water, public health, economic impacts and community engagement. [DrawdownGA.org/data-centers](https://drawdownga.org/data-centers)

Drawdown Georgia does not take a position for or against any specific project. The toolkit is designed to support informed, community-centered decision-making.