



Community Guide to Managing Data Center Growth

By following these actionable steps, communities can fully evaluate and prepare for data center proposals and address priority energy concerns. For more details about these steps see our report: [Lightening the Load: Scaling Clean Solutions for Data Center and Communities](#)

Develop an engagement plan and identify collective priorities

- **Design a community engagement process:** Conduct outreach to relevant stakeholders; create a community advisory board that will develop shared goals, timelines, and expectations.
- **Develop an engagement plan recommendation:** Set clear expectations for how data center developers should engage, including transparency requirements, timelines for input, etc.
- **Identify community priorities:** Consider how to both reduce potential harms from data center development and ensure lasting benefits (e.g. environmental or financial protections).

Enact beneficial local policies and programs

- **Adopt strong building energy codes and performance standards:** Enact policies that support high energy efficiency performance over a data center's entire life cycle.
- **Streamline clean energy deployment:** Remove barriers to customer acquisition, permitting, and interconnection to accelerate clean energy implementation, which can offset the need for more costly transmission or fossil fuel infrastructure.
- **Review zoning rules:** Revise zoning laws to enable renewable energy deployment and manage the infrastructure demands and environmental impacts of data centers.
- **Explore financing tools for community projects:** Establish financing mechanisms — such as green banks, infrastructure bonds, and large load tariff funds — to support local clean energy projects.

Collaborate with the data center company

- **Encourage full use of behind-the-meter opportunities:** Engage data center companies early to maximize efficiency and renewable energy measures to reduce peak load and energy demand.
- **Pursue formal project agreements with the data center:** Negotiate agreements that codify both protections and benefits. Examples include: Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) and Good Neighbor Agreements.
- **Propose clean energy partnership models:** Explore models, such as direct ownership or subsidization, by which data center companies can help finance clean energy investments in the community.

Engage local utilities, utility regulators, and legislators

- **Partner with local utilities on community solutions:** Work with utilities to consider various future scenarios and invest responsibly in transmission, distribution, and generation infrastructure.
- **Implement tariff structures with ratepayer protections:** Engage utilities and regulators to design large load tariffs that address how large load users will pay for necessary grid upgrades and support community priorities.
- **Inform supportive state policies and programs:** Support state programs that link data center development to clean energy growth, efficiency upgrades, grid enhancements, and long-term community benefits.