DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT:

ECONOMIC BENEFITS, ENERGY AND WATER CONSUMPTION Q&A

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Q: HOW DO DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO JOB CREATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

A: Data centers create significant employment opportunities, including thousands of skilled construction jobs during development and numerous permanent positions in operations and maintenance. Data centers also drive employment externally – typically generating four indirect jobs for every direct one created. Those benefitting from that multiplier effect include local suppliers, vendors and subcontractors, many times representing small, local businesses and fostering a ripple effect across the regional economy.

Q: WHAT KIND OF SALARIES AND CAREER GROWTH CAN RESIDENTS EXPECT FROM DATA CENTER JOBS?

Technician pay
43%
over last three years

A: Data center roles, especially for technicians, offer family-sustaining wages. According to CompTIA, technician pay has increased by 43% over the past three years, with a median salary of $75,100. Experienced professionals can earn six-figure incomes, making these careers both stable and lucrative. These regional data centers will continuously upgrade, necessitating more engineers and electricians more often than conventional facilities. They also create ancillary on-site jobs through contractors. Facility management, food service, landscaping and security are just a few of the roles necessary for operations.

Q: HOW ARE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HELPING PREPARE THE WORKFORCE FOR DATA CENTER CAREERS?

A: Companies investing in Wisconsin data centers have prioritized workforce development by partnering with local institutions. For example, Microsoft is collaborating with Gateway Technical College to launch a Datacenter Academy, training over 1,000 students in IT and data center skills while providing scholarships so many can attend tuition-free. At the college level, Microsoft established an AI Co-Innovation Lab with UW-Milwaukee, creating opportunities for students, faculty, and local manufacturers to partner on advanced AI projects. Additionally, Microsoft has committed to training more than 100,000 Wisconsin residents in AI and data center skills through various programs, ensuring that even those not directly employed by data centers gain valuable skills for the region's growing tech ecosystem.

Q: WHAT BROADER ECONOMIC BENEFITS DO DATA CENTERS BRING TO THE REGION?

A: They boost property values, add billions to local tax rolls and strengthen municipal finances – helping fund schools, roads and other public services while easing tax burdens for residents. At the same time, they drive substantial infrastructure upgrades by channeling private capital into power grids, water treatment and telecom networks.

SE WI DATA CENTER FACTS

ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Q: DO DATA CENTERS INCREASE ENERGY DEMAND IN THE REGION?

A: Yes, data centers require substantial power for servers and cooling systems. However, here in southeastern Wisconsin, the infrastructure needed to support this increased demand will be funded by the data center operators through custom rate agreements with energy providers, not by local ratepayers.

Q: WHO PAYS FOR THE INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES NEEDED TO SUPPORT DATA CENTER ENERGY USE?

A: Infrastructure costs – including substations, power lines and electrical upgrades – will be covered by the data center owners under proposed rate agreements. This ensures these developments do not impact residents' rates.

DATA CENTER OPERATORS AND OWNERS ARE FUNDING:

- Substations
- Power lines
- Add'l Power Generation
- Electrical Upgrades

THROUGH CUSTOM RATE AGREEMENTS NOT BY LOCAL PAYERS

Q: WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM ENERGY BENEFITS OF DATA CENTER INVESTMENTS?

A: Data centers are investing in new power generation that supports cleaner energy, strengthens grid reliability, and allows for future growth. These investments help power Wisconsin's digital economy while preparing residents and businesses for an increasingly digital future. The local grid gains additional capacity and stability—benefiting the broader community at no additional public cost. As a result, critical infrastructure is being modernized, with new substations and grid upgrades in Mount Pleasant and Port Washington underway alongside the data center projects. Once built, these improvements remain in place for decades, boosting capacity and resilience for the entire region.

WATER CONSUMPTION

Q: HOW MUCH WATER DO REGIONAL DATA CENTERS ACTUALLY USE?

A: The Microsoft Data Center in Mount Pleasant uses about 8,000 gallons of water per day – roughly the volume of four Olympic-sized swimming pools per year. The Port Washington facility uses the equivalent of 65 average Wisconsin households annually, showcasing its efficient design.

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roughly the volume of
FOUR OLYMPIC-SIZED SWIMMING POOLS

Q: HOW DOES DATA CENTER WATER USAGE COMPARE TO OTHER COMMON FACILITIES?

A: Annual water use is modest, requiring roughly the amount of water a typical restaurant uses annually or what an 18-hole golf course consumes weekly in peak summer. Another perspective, more water evaporates from Lake Michigan in just a few minutes than these centers consume annually, highlighting their minimal impact.

Q: WHY ARE THESE DATA CENTERS LOCATED NEAR LAKE MICHIGAN?

A: The proximity to Lake Michigan is not for direct water access, but to benefit from the lake's cooling effect. This natural climate advantage reduces the need for active cooling systems, helping conserve water.

Q: WHAT TECHNOLOGIES ARE USED TO REDUCE WATER CONSUMPTION IN DATA CENTERS?

A: These facilities use advanced cooling systems, including closed-loop technologies, which reuse water instead of discharging it. Water is only used on days exceeding 85°F – typically around 10 days per year – making the overall water footprint very low.