



Fort Wayne's Google Data Center: Is it Good or Bad for Our Community?

Before I started researching this topic, I honestly did not know much about data centers. I knew that they had something to do with technology and the internet, but I had no idea how important they are to our everyday lives that are becoming more technologically dependent as time goes on. I also did not fully understand why people felt so strongly about them. In my own community, I have seen people standing outside asking others to sign petitions against new data center developments. Many of the farmers where I live are especially concerned because these projects often require large amounts of land that could otherwise be used for agriculture. Since farming is how many families in my community make their living, I understand why they are worried about losing farmland. After researching both the benefits and the drawbacks of data centers, I have realized that this issue is much more complicated than I originally thought. While I believe Fort Wayne's new Google data center will bring important benefits, I also think those benefits should be balanced with environmental practices and respect for the surrounding community.

From my research I have gathered that a data center is a large facility that houses thousands of computer servers, storage devices, and networking equipment that processes and store digital information. Although these buildings often just look like warehouses from the outside, they are responsible for supporting many of the digital services people use every day. Such as streaming movies, using Google Maps, sending emails, online banking, cloud storage, and even artificial intelligence.

One of the biggest advantages of the Google data center is its potential economic impact. According to the Goldwater Institute, large data center projects create thousands of construction jobs and continue to provide hundreds of permanent jobs once they are operating. They also

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generate tax revenue that can help support schools, roads, and other public programs. As technology continues to grow, data centers will become even more important because they support businesses, hospitals, schools, and many of the online services people use in everyday life.

There are still legitimate concerns about the environmental impact of these facilities that need to be taken into consideration. One that I feel I hear about the most on social media and in everyday conversations is the amount of water use. Because thousands of servers generate a tremendous amount of heat, many data centers use cooling systems that consume large amounts of water. One source explained that a single large data center can use up to five million gallons of water per day. They also require large amounts of electricity and generating that electricity often causes power plants to use and increased amounts of water. Together, this high demand for water can place additional stress on local water supplies, especially during periods of drought or in areas where water resources are already limited. As more water is used by data centers and power plants, some people worry that less clean drinking water could be available for local communities in the future.

Another concern about data centers is how much energy they use and the impact that can have on the environment. According to the International Energy Agency, data centers require large amounts of electricity to store and process information, and this demand is still increasing as more people use digital services and AI grows. Even though technology is becoming more efficient, the total energy use is still going up. This can put pressure on power systems and, depending on how the electricity is produced, can lead to more pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Overall, this means data centers can have a negative impact on the environment if they are not powered by cleaner energy sources.



One final concern that stood out to me was the loss of farmland. Growing up around agriculture, I know how valuable farmland is to families in my community. Many local farmers worry that land used for growing crops could instead become industrial developments. Once farmland is developed, it is extremely difficult to restore it.

Another thing I found interesting is that I did not come across much information in my research about noise pollution from data centers. However, I have seen people on social media discussing the constant noise created by cooling equipment and backup systems, as well as expressing concerns about possible effects on clean drinking water. While I cannot say whether all of those claims are accurate because they were not supported by the sources I used, I do think they are concerns that deserve further research.

Now after researching both sides, I personally do not think building large data centers in communities like Fort Wayne is the best decision. I understand that they create jobs, generate tax revenue, and support technology that people use every day, I believe that the potential costs to the community outweigh those benefits. The amount of water and electricity these facilities require and the possible impacts they could have on the environment and natural resources is very concerning to me. Overall, this research completely changed my understanding of data centers. Before this assignment, I never realized how much we depend on them or why they have become such a controversial topic. Seeing people collecting signatures for petitions against data centers in my own community and hearing local farmers express their concerns made this issue feel much more personal. Although I recognize that data centers are necessary for modern technology, I think they should be built in locations where they will have less impact on communities, farmland, and the environment.

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References

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