

Technology has become an essential part of our everyday lives. People rely on the internet to communicate, for entertainment, and most notably, to help them solve problems, cure diseases, and provide military intelligence, pushing the use of AI to limits we never dreamt of. As technology and the use of artificial intelligence begins to play a larger role in our everyday lives, the need for facilities that store and process digital information is crucial. Data centers are massive facilities that house thousands of specialized computer chips in order to store, process, and distribute data and include “power subsystems, uninterruptible power supplies, ventilation, cooling systems, fire suppression, backup generators, and connections to external networks” (What Is). They are the physical locations of the “cloud” which we all know to be the storage of all our personal information (AI Data). They perform complex calculations and are the backbone of all of the largest streaming services, search engines, and social media apps. As the demand for technology continues to grow, companies are investing billions of dollars into building new data centers across the United States. Google’s data centers help support products such as Google search, Gmail, Google Maps, and YouTube, and cloud storage services used by individuals and businesses around the world. These are massively used applications used by billions of people daily. Because these facilities run twenty-four hours a day and process enormous amounts of information, they require advanced technology, reliable electricity, and extensive cooling systems by water sources. While most people are not aware of these facilities, they play a vital role in keeping the digital world running smoothly.

The addition of a new data center in Fort Wayne would likely create opportunities as well as challenges for the community. Advocates argue that these data centers would create jobs, increase tax revenue, attract additional businesses, and improve local infrastructure. However,

critics claim that the amount of electricity and water demanded, power bill inflation, as well as the lack of long-term job development, are reasons to avoid data centers all together. As a result, community members and leaders must carefully consider both the benefits and consequences of implementing these facilities in their areas.

As previously mentioned, there are many aspects of data centers that are appreciated by communities who choose to build them. Positive implications of a data center in Fort Wayne include the capital investment that goes into building a structure of this magnitude. With that capital investment can come tax breaks for job creation and property taxes, therefore resulting in economic growth in the community. Local businesses, restaurants, hotels, and suppliers may benefit from increased activity, and can utilize data centers to better manage the digital aspect of running a company, rather than micromanaging it themselves. The Digital Fortress advocates that data centers “reduce the risk of disruptions” as well as administration costs, allowing for businesses to focus on their core mission (The 5). Accordingly, the tax revenue on property and businesses will provide additional funds for public goods, such as schools, roads, and public safety. Not only will there be an increase in the quality of community services, there will be infrastructure improvements with better internet connectivity, utilities, and power systems that may be upgraded to support the facility, benefiting residents as well.

Although there are many positive faucets of building data centers, there are also numerous environmental concerns and negative implications voiced by others. The MIT Technology Review by Mat Honan cited many negative impacts to a data center including the effect on power grids during the construction of it, which causes loss of land and water consumption (Honan). Honan stated a statistic showing that in the state of Wyoming, a Meta data

center will require more electricity than every household in the state combined (Honan). Citizens are not going to be supportive of the construction of these data centers if they have to bear the burden of higher power bills. One of the largest environmental impacts of building data centers is the enormous amount of water required to run effective cooling systems. The American Rivers Organization reveals that a single data center can consume up to five million gallons of water per day (Rivers). This overwhelming demand of water can put much more pressure on communities where the water supply is already scarce.

Data centers supporting AI may carry many consequences, but despite those implications, technology is going to continue to advance and society is going to have to adapt. Communities across America can and should work to find solutions to the negative environmental impacts of these data centers. However, the reality is that even if we don't construct these facilities here, other states or countries will. Data centers are generally beneficial for communities from an economic standpoint. Building a Google data center in a town such as Fort Wayne will bring investment, tax revenue, and infrastructure, as well as temporary job opportunities, all of which will stimulate economic growth. The problem is not merely whether they should or should not be installed, but how can we adjust them to limit their negative impacts. Community leaders must ensure that companies building data centers, such as Google, are managing its energy and water usage responsibly, and work to minimize environmental disturbances. If these problems are addressed, the benefits are likely to outweigh the drawbacks.

Fort Wayne might benefit from looking at more geographically similar communities such as St. Joseph, Indiana, where Amazon developed one of the largest AI data centers (Sigalos). Amazon has succeeded in other industries so much so that it's developed a trust with

communities. They provided the largest capital investment in the state's history (Sigalos). The irony of data centers seems to lie in the title of one article, "*Data centers are amazing. Everyone hates them*", because in fact the enormous benefits have also created much controversy, environmental concerns, and financial implications and hatred of them. In an MIT Technology Review article, it discussed how technological changes eventually changed Silicon Valley and the fear is will these data centers make society unrecognizable in the future (Honan).

There was once a time that people feared the automobile industry. People feared that the noise and clouds of dust and a threat to pedestrians, bicyclists, and horses. What was once a feared technological advancement is now so much of a norm that we would not possibly question its necessity. Will we also think of data centers and the product of AI in years to come as a norm, despite the challenges we face with it, and should solve because of its fast integration into our lives? It is certainly something to consider. We must not seek the benefit of technology and then challenge the obstacles without trying to solve them.

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