

Great Falls Development Alliance

Data Center Taskforce Meeting Summary

2/23/2026

Meeting input highlights several consistent priorities and concerns regarding potential data center development in the Great Falls area. While opinions vary on whether data centers should be pursued, participants generally emphasized that any project must protect community resources, maintain transparency, and deliver clear local benefits.

1. Transparency and Public Communication

Participants emphasized the need for clear and transparent information about proposed projects. Requests included disclosure of energy use, water use, environmental impacts, and tax incentives. Many noted the importance of providing information that is understandable to the public and avoiding confidentiality agreements that limit community awareness.

2. Water Resources

Water use was one of the most frequently raised concerns. Participants discussed potential strain on water resources during drought conditions, protection of aquifers and water rights, and the need for monitoring and treatment of discharged water. Suggested approaches included closed-loop cooling systems, recycling water, and transparent reporting of water use.

3. Energy Demand and Infrastructure

Participants raised questions about electricity demand associated with large data centers and the ability of the regional grid to support additional load. Concerns included impacts on electricity costs and service reliability. Suggested approaches included developer-supplied energy, clean or renewable sources, and requiring large users to pay the full cost of necessary infrastructure upgrades.

4. Economic Impact and Fair Cost Allocation

Participants frequently stressed that development should not shift costs to local taxpayers or ratepayers. Expectations included developers paying for infrastructure upgrades and utility connections and ensuring projects contribute meaningfully to the local tax base and economy.

5. Environmental and Community Impacts

Environmental and quality-of-life impacts were widely discussed, including noise, light pollution, emissions, and land use. Suggested mitigation strategies included environmental studies, sound controls, design standards, and siting that protects neighborhoods and natural areas.

6. Community Benefits

Participants expressed interest in projects that provide clear local benefits, including workforce training, partnerships with schools, job creation, community investment, and potential reuse of waste heat for other industries or facilities.

Overall Perspective

Public input reflects strong interest in careful evaluation of potential data center development. Participants consistently emphasized protecting natural resources, maintaining transparency, ensuring developers bear project costs, and providing tangible benefits to the Great Falls community.

**Great Falls Development Alliance
Data Center Taskforce Meeting Notes
2/23/2026**

TABLE 1 RESPONSES

Name:	Jeni Dodd
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	6 at our table who wanted to remain anonymous.
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	Native American community PSC

General Comments:

Don't let mega-centers and hyper data centers build here.

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Cost of power infrastructure passed on to regular ratepayer.	
Promise of long term job creation isn't realized.	
Excessive water use (extreme).	
Low hum along with higher decibel noise causes disruption of sleep and other health issues.	
Excessive land use / footprint.	
NW Energy spokesman stated data center need 250 megawatts of power; they only can generate 900 mw. Where is the power going to come from?	
Data centers aren't transparent with their information when proposing a facility.	We looked at VisionNet - no specific company public or independent disclosure on energy consumption. We expect the same from any private company. More transparency because even the local supposed data center (VisionNet) is not transparent in their energy use or much else.
Data centers in other areas have asked for tax abatements and TIF districts, which force regular taxpayers to pay a higher burden to support local schools and infrastructure.	

TABLE 1 RESPONSES - CONTINUED

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More government transparency 2. More transparency with industries that want to come into Great Falls 3. No deals at the expense of regular taxpayers |
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TABLE 2 RESPONSES

Name:	David Brindley
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	City environmental & engineering firms

General Comments:

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Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Light/sound pollution Will facility be sound proof	Construction that prevents sound leaking & minimal lighting on exterior
Power needs for cooling operations Will this impact current power costs or impact the river	Take advantage of renewable energy Require filtration/treatment of water prior to return to river Limit water usage
Long & short term jobs Is construction going to attract construction jobs and will those people have future work	
Location Is there a planned location for the facility. Will this impact traffic in the city.	Site survey on potential impacts along with construction requirements

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

<p>Something that can synergize with the city rather than just consume resources like closed loop cooling and renewable energy. Partnering with other industries like education for improving tech programs or using residual resources for farming.</p> <p>Opening a path to improve community spaces like parks.</p>

TABLE 3 RESPONSES

Name:	Emily Stewart
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Tianta, Rus, Dan, Sara
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

Data Centers – National Security – Who owns data center? Who has access to this data?

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Water usage	Closed loop, recycle water
Electricity use – cost, amount (dictate the size of data center)	Use multiple types of power – solar, nuclear, renewable energy, batteries Funding policy to ensure that citizens won't be responsible for the bills to build and sustain data centers
Noise pollution	Create a policy that noise would have to adhere to Policy could include distance from city, architectural mitigation
Visually appealing	Partner with artists - creative/beautiful Multi-purpose ex. greenhouses, plants
Health concerns (environmentally – people & animals) Quality of life	Take research results from other locations first

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

<p>I would like requirements for a data-centers to be multi-purpose – more than one use for the facility</p> <p>Greater employment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. education 2. Research 3. Aesthetically pleasing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - architecturally - land use/environmentally 4. gardens 5. self-sustaining power 6. Pay dividends to everyone

TABLE 4 RESPONSES

Name:	Jami Wright
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Deb Evans Jeff Plattsha Kelly Ecklund Kara Ecklund Todd Ondich Jami Wright
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

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Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Incomplete or misinformation	Vetting the incoming company Know your audience + simplify the message Follow the money - who gains - property owner who is selling
Overbuilding Exit plan / remediation	Bond & reclamation plan
Water via municipal or groundwater	Focus on sustainability & wouldn't draw water from municipal supply
Power	New technology for generating power - BYOP Create own energy - nuclear?
Noise Light Pollution	Design parameters via building codes etc.

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud? (continue on back if needed)

<p>Least amount of drain to the community w/ hidden costs. Minimal contamination. Be part of the community - partnering w/ schools. Max # of on prem positions w/ company who will be part of the community Use the wind in G.F. power the D.C.</p>

TABLE 5 RESPONSES

Name:	Tom Harmon
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Tom Harmon Alex Scheffield Brett Harris Alana Ballard Richard Liebert
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DataCenters are not new - Taxes - Infrastructure - How to Become a Community Partner - Economic Impact good or bad?

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Agriculture, Water Sourcing, Technology Solvency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geothermal use - Closed loop cooling - Heat recovery - Energy supplementation
Land Use & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to use less land for utility + construction
Jobs & Public Interface Humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance & supply interface - Local interface requirements
Necessity of People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non existent for operations
Tax Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Property tax? - Recurring physical updates

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

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TABLE 6 RESPONSES

Name:	Mark Goetz
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Mark Ron Pavlick Gordon Wherry Larry Stimac Steve Grout
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

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Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Resource Consumption - water - land - electricity	Use best practices to minimize resources and to recycle appropriately Identify source and <u>volume</u> of water used Protect existing water rights
Community Impact - new infrastructure; roads, city services - effect on local taxes - labor force - housing	Data centers should pay for their addition infrastructure and community services Data center should pay full share of taxes
Energy Use - fossil fuel - renewable energy - utility rates	Bring or build their own energy (Consider cooperative energy farm)
Project Longevity - how long is the technology that is used current, then what?	provide a 15 year plan
Purpose, Intent - RE: medical research, telecommunication? - we want to be proud of what it contributes to Great Falls + larger community	

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperative project that is mutually beneficial to the community and the DataCenter. - Long term commitment. - Ongoing structured relationship between community members, city officials and DataCenter. (An MOU similar to the Good Neighbor project with Stillwater Mining)

TABLE 7 RESPONSES

Name:	Valynda Holland
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Zach Brown Jessica Gary Lori Nelson Cheyenne
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

<p>Impact to water/pollution – closed loop systems Impact to electrical grid Potential for abandonment of buildings Cooling loop system – no standing pond-like water mini-nuclear reactor system (military submarines) Sound Basement of buildings, use heat to heat building Require bonding – ensure clean-up of project once technology has surpassed use of building Tax-based incentives, school benefits *Data Center already here, what makes them great, what are they doing?*</p> <p>Light pollution, set dB limits, fans with dB rating Require amperage reduction, funnel sound, sound barriers Data Center does not need to be in city, can be out of city limits No tax break incentives for big corporations - Potential tax incentives while project is being developed, then taxes go up after completion (sunset tax incentive) Water testing regularly for TDS (total dissolved solids), no self-monitoring of water Are they using air-cooled system, open-looped system, or closed-loop system? Can utilize empty basement space downtown Proposed size limitations for city limits Bond for treatment or potential failure that lead to clean-up Invest in updating city water treatment center to accommodate water treatment from data centers</p> <p>Dream: Utilize existing buildings, benefit from heat Taxes within city limits that goes to school system Find a way to utilize the heat that is produced for community use – existing tunnel system to heat roads Maximize benefits for community good, not profits Regulators, negotiators, and legislators to ensure accountability at every step of the way Utilize mini-nuclear reactors to power data centers, utilize excess power for community benefit, could reduce market prices for Montanans Require use of new-tech power lines out of data centers</p>

TABLE 7 RESPONSES - CONTINUED

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

What is the confidence in longevity of the data center?
 - Bonding

TABLE 8 RESPONSES

Name:	Shannon Wilson
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Brock Cherry (CO GF) Jeff Griffin Kara Forrester Tim Forrester Sharon Patton- Griffin
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)

General Comments:

for Benefit to people and earth

Utility rates: all customers paying to upgrade existing system for the one
 Water consumption: we are in extreme drought
 Our city code doesn't address data centers, no formal procedure.
 Suggestions from MEIC (attached)
 Impact on river's edge trail, environmental impact
 Noise and Light pollution.
 Need a lot of transparency (no 'proprietary' info stop)
 Important to be resilient, is it good for us to have it.
 Build, then disappear, leaving taxpayers, rate payers holding the bag.
 Misuse?

Reach out to other cities with data centers.
 Need information simplified for public.
 Need truthful information.
 Obtaining unbiased information. 'Consumable information'
 Who is making the decision.
 - Independent?
 Can they produce their own energy.
 Legislative issues – prop tax, taxable value
 Environmental issues
 Water rights
 Taxation
 Don't need a large data center – size and scale and placement.
 Need to recycle water
 Zoning issues
 Annexation

TABLE 8 RESPONSES - CONTINUED

General Comments:

Use existing buildings Solar energy River’s Edge Trail is important to the community. Growth pays for growth – they pay their fair share Landscaping Can energy consultant facilitate conversations on projects

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Radical transparency	Company must be willing or mandated to be transp.
Infrastructure Demand	Make sure they pay their proportionate share
Placement/site location	Protect natural areas / neighborhoods, or avoid these areas
Water	Must recycle their water.
Tax implications	Don’t be a drain on the city, contribute to public safety.

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is served from green energy. - Highest standard of data center function. - Pays its own way → and provides community value. - More smaller (VisionNet like) facilities than one large one. - The most jobs per SF possible.

TABLE 9 RESPONSES

Name:	Matt Hudson
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

See Attachment

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
rates	Regulatory bodies – PSC, governor, local
environment – water use/consumption	
infrastructure – access to power/fiber – you can't build a data center w/o energy. Where from?	

The type of data center - low vs. high footprint	Want to see comparable facilities and results
Placement/Location – tax implications Politics of water use.	As developer, important to get in front of public and hear concerns Tax incentives for development or revenue sharing agreement between govts
Workforce eventually - How many actually? - How many at different tiers	Transparency of workforce #s
Purchasing the equipment - nat'l security interests in chips, tech	

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

- May not matter the size as long as they bring their own power. - High-wage job training locally, leading to local hires. Education and training programs. Must be sustainable.

TABLE 10 RESPONSES

Name:	Gabi
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	Cam Rachel Doug Gabi
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	

General Comments:

Water – How is the water returned to the environment? AI data center vs. server farm – size differences? What type of data center are we talking about?

Top 4–5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Energy consumption	Renewable energy sources Environmentally sound building practices
Clean water usage	On-site water treatment Increase existing city water treatment infrastructure
Light pollution	Directional lighting technology Light limiting guidelines
Noise pollution	Possible subterranean design to absorb sound
Jobs / construction	Local construction contracts with local workers
No tax exempt status	

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

No support for AI data center

Small server farm/data center acceptable built by local workers, no tax exempt status, designed with the local scenery in mind, potential use of discharge water to heat buildings (done in northern Europe), with local employees.

TABLE 11 RESPONSES

Name:	David Saslav -note taker and Iron Mountain employee if you'd like an introduction
Contact Info (in case we need clarification on your notes):	
Table participants:	London Griffith Tyler Krom-Power Maia Trombley Cameron Pratt
Who else should we be speaking with that has knowledge of data centers (name and contact info if you have it):	http://ironmountain.com/data-centers

General Comments:

WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THIS DISCUSSION IS BROADER THAN JUST BEING ABOUT DATA CENTERS; WE THINK THE OUTPUT OF THIS TASK FORCE SHOULD APPLY TO ANY LARGE ENERGY-CONSUMING OR PRODUCING PROJECT INTERESTED in SETTING UP IN GREAT FALLS

IDEAL FUTURE GREAT FALLS:
 Preserve what we have - don't give it away to someone just because they have a big checkbook
 No more lead in the drinking water - we should be able to drink from the tap with no filters required - newcomers to Great Falls, MT were told to install water filters - arsenic leads to depression and psychological effects unless reverse osmosis
 Clean, not noisy, close to tourist attractions, not flooded (approve the Stormwater runoff so that streets don't flood once the drought ends)
 A Great Falls that won't vaccinate is a big big risk to public health
 - We envision a Great Falls that promotes public health and is measles-free and isn't fearmongering around supposed "risks" of vaccines
 Enhance our own tourist attractions - not just base camp for other Montana tourist attractions
 Become a cultural hub of north central Montana - with a food and events culture
 Become a journalism center again - the loss of the Tribune has damaged our culture almost irrevocably - make it so we are not a FACEBOOK COMMUNITY again.
 Fewer casinos, liquor stores and bars - cap on casinos per capita
 More companies with equitable, fair and inclusive benefits/healthcare and supportive benefits - quality time off, maternity leave, family leave

TABLE 11 RESPONSES - CONTINUED

Top 4-5 Concerns	What Actions Mitigate these Concerns?
Transparency- secret meetings don't spark confidence in the process	open meetings / earlier notifications and responses to questions made publicly available
We are in a drought - AI vs. other data center uses- hypothesis that AI clean, fresh water use is 2x other data centers (equivalent of the need of a 50,000 person city) London provided link: https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/data-centers-and-water-consumption	Cap on water allowed to consume, Cap on water rate increases seen by residents
POLLUTION CONCERNS - AIR, LIGHT, and NOISE POLLUTION CONCERNS	Environmental study - EIS requirement? Baseline measurement - E.g., A data center offering to do Water quality testing baseline would enable their future outputs to be more scientifically assessed for pollutants
Energy - Demand outstrips supply for all scenarios with Montana data centers We already don't got it (enough energy to go around) Building more energy Supply is only going to raise our northwestern energy bills	We envision a Great Falls that relies 100% on clean energy And limits our demand for energy for big projects ALL new energy brought in or spun up for data centers should be CLEAN, non-nuclear BYONCE - Bring Your Own New, Clean Energy if you want to set up a large power hungry business like a data centers
What if the AI bubble pops - what guarantees around exit strategy and "blight avoidance" do we have as a city?	Show us your plan to grow/expand/maintain/wind down/clean up? Transfer of ownership to a "bad" data center firm should require new round of public comments and input

What would be a data center project that would make our community proud?

<p>Extra Credit only: Community involvement - Pro bono work? Do you have a desire to meet the city and community's needs outside of your core mission - how will your data center support the Boys & Girls Club and other community efforts; how good a citizen do you plan to be in terms of monetary and employee volunteer service levels that you support?</p>
