Great Falls Development Alliance Data Center Task Force
Sixth Meeting
9/28/2026
Approx. 50 attendees

The first community meeting on 2/23/2026 asked stakeholders to list their top 4 - 5 concerns with potential data center development. The top aggregated concerns were:

1. Transparency and Public Communication
2. Water Resource Use
3. Energy Demand and Infrastructure Use
4. Economic Impact and Fair Cost Allocation
5. Environmental and Community Impacts

Subsequent meetings brought in subject matter experts in the data center space to present on data center design, operation, and impacts.

Today's community engagement (9/28/2026) is twofold:

1- Clarify the questions GFDA should ask any potential data center developer that approaches our region for development.

2- In detail, line out benefits our community would like to see a potential developer commit to.

Discuss with your table mates, get into details, and have fun!

Compiled table responses follow.

The most cited recurring concern was whether data center development would provide lasting benefits to Great Falls while protecting residents from higher costs, resource depletion, environmental impacts, and financial risk. Nearly all participants asked for specific information and enforceable commitments before projects move forward.

Questions:

- How do we ensure that adherence to the long term plan/commitment is upheld? What would be punishment for a developer not upholding their word?
- What guarantees do we have that the data center will benefit the community in the long run?
- Will they ensure that workers will be from our area?
- What is peak demand?
- What is the 24/7 load?
- What will be the drought year requirements for water?
- What new generation is required?
- What are the gallons per day of water use?
- What do Great Falls residents get?
- Will you carry all the financial risk if the project collapses?
- How will environmental compliance be reported publicly?
- Where will they get the water?
- How will they dispose of waste?
- How is the data center using the data?
- What commitments will you make for paying for infrastructure?
- Will you meet community needs as a condition of receiving permits?
- Where will the power come from?
- Where will the workforce come from?
- What about noise?
- Will you have multiple data centers per campus?
- How much water will you use?
- What is the electricity demand now and in the future?
- What kind of data center is it?
- How will you generate your electricity?
- Are you using a closed loop water system?
- What will be the noise decibels at the fenceline and at other distances away?
- What are the potential tax benefits to the data center versus the potential benefits to the community?
- What will be the infrastructure impacted during construction and during ongoing operations?
- Do you plan for expansion in the future?

- Once a data center is approved, can they have free reign to grow?
- Is the data center considering geothermal?
- What can a data center do to build out infrastructure for communities?
- How will the data center mitigate noise?
- Is the data center cutting edge with the newest technology so older problems are solved?
- Will the data center hire locals whenever possible?
- What guarantees do we have that if a data center generates its own power it won't use up our resources?
- How does a data center help mitigate the boom & bust cycle?
- What is the shelf life of the data center design proposed?
- How do you intend to protect the public from data cybersecurity issues?
- How are you cooling? How are you paying for that?
- What is the purpose of your data center? What companies do you support or work for?
- Does your data center give Great Falls opportunity to build/create more local business?
- Who pays for infrastructure?
- Will you bring your own clean energy?
- How many sustainable jobs created?
- What is the overall goal of the data center?
- How will a data center keep the Great Falls culture?
- How will a data center benefit the community?
- What will current ratepayers pay if a data center is built?
- How will a data center improve the tax base?
- What are the impacts on property values?
- Has the cooling water system proposed been proven?
- What bonding requirements are you willing to put into place to ensure compliance with community concerns?
- How will the data center benefit the local economy?
- Will the data center pay fair share of taxes?
- Will the data center be powered by clean energy?
- What is the plan for any generated waste, heater, water or other?
- Where will the data center be sited? In the county or in the city?
- Are you willing to enter into a Good Neighbor Policy?

- What is the developer history and track record?
- Will the data center adhere to growth policy framework?
- What is the remediation plan for disasters or emergencies?
- What is the bonding and decommissioning process if the technology becomes obsolete?
- Will incoming industries support the qualities that make Great Falls special and encourage families to stay?
- What shared vision does the community have for its future?

Benefits:

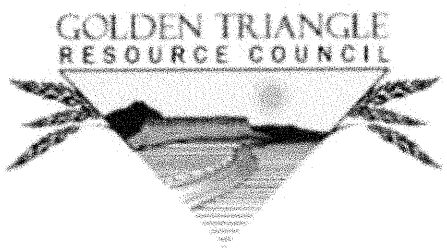
- Local funds to support local government
- Reduce tax burden on residents and small businesses
- Prioritize local hires
- Provide training/internship programs for students
- Provide property tax relief to residents
- Support community projects
- Create jobs and skill set building
- Create greater access to high speed internet for rural communities
- We want tax benefits for the community
- We want lower property taxes
- We want the data center full bonded with inflation costs included
- A good neighbor agreement like Sibanye- Stillwater has with the mine in Stillwater county
- Must live up to commitments made
- Support public safety needs
- We need a detailed list of community investments and benefits and a way to monitor them
- Need a bond for the total revenue from created jobs and tax revenue and no impact to the community if the data center closes prematurely
- Guarantee no impact to current electrical ratepayers
- Must have local union jobs and workforce development
- Data center must pay fair taxes and not shift tax burden to other taxpayers
- The process must be transparent and maintained throughout the whole process

Comments:

Outside the meeting scope of specific questions or benefits several stakeholders offered general comments. Several respondents expressed embracing data center development if proper guardrails were in place to receive the benefits. Other respondents suggested a moratorium and statewide regulations must be in place prior to considering any data center development. Some participants suggested citizen ballot initiatives and utilizing federal and state bonds for any data center projects.

Golden Triangle Resource Council shared a position statement on hyperscale AI Data Centers and a community member shared 3 pages of questions and comments. Those documents are attached to these notes.

End of compiled notes.



GTRC POSITION STATEMENT ON HYPERSCALE AI DATA CENTERS

We do not support attracting hyperscale AI data centers to our region. The risks outweigh the potential community benefits, and a majority of residents are opposed. Recent polls in Montana and nationally indicate approximately 75 percent of people do not want to see a large data center located nearby. Over 360 Cascade County residents have signed our petition asking elected officials to pause hyperscale data center development and work for regulatory safeguards. Great Falls will also soon be facing increased pressure on public services, housing and labor force adequacy with the Janicki Industries startup and the Sentinel Missile upgrade.

Our local Golden Triangle affiliate efforts and those of Northern Plains Resource Council statewide are seeking a moratorium on engaging in developer negotiations or agreements until the Montana Legislature and the Public Service Commission can enact regulatory protections. These should include:

Mandate transparency with communities: Developers must engage early with full disclosure and in good faith. Potential indirect and collateral impacts should be addressed. Non-disclosure agreements with elected officials must be prohibited.

Protect affordability for energy ratepayers: Developers must pay the full cost of new generation, transmission and distribution. Costs must not be shifted to ratepayers.

Strengthen environmental protections: Regulations and monitoring must be in place to protect our water, air and land. Closed loop cooling systems must be mandated, with controls and monitoring on discharges. Total water use and source, including for generation, must be disclosed. Strict limits must be placed on use of backup diesel generators. Noise and vibration limits must be set at low levels. Agricultural land and water should not be sacrificed.

Advance clean energy and grid reliability: Incentives should be provided for use of new clean energy and battery storage. New gas generation should be avoided. Development should strengthen grid resilience, demand flexibility and optimization of energy resources.

Require fair taxes: Developers should not receive tax breaks which shift the tax burden to others. The current exceptionally low tax on data centers should be raised to match other industries.

Employ local union workers: Require that most workers be local union workers. Prohibit use of large man-camp housing. Support workforce training, local procurement, and well-paying long-term jobs.

GFDA DATA CENTER — PUBLIC QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Organized by: Moratorium • Water • Energy • Transparency • Reclamation

1. MORATORIUM / PAUSE ON APPROVALS

Questions

- What is GFDA's position on a **temporary moratorium** on data-center approvals until full water, energy, and environmental impacts are independently assessed?
- Has GFDA evaluated the **cumulative impact** of multiple data centers on Great Falls' water supply, wastewater system, and electric grid?
- What specific **thresholds or triggers** would cause GFDA to recommend a pause?
- Will GFDA support a **joint City–County review process** before any additional permits are issued?

Comments

- A moratorium is not anti-development; it is **risk management**.
- Great Falls needs **baseline data** before approving industrial loads of this scale.
- A pause protects residents from **rate hikes, water shortages, and stranded infrastructure costs**.

2. WATER

Questions

- What is the **daily, monthly, annual, and peak water demand** of the proposed facility?
- What **cooling technology** will be used, and why was it selected over lower-water alternatives?
- What is the **source** of the water (municipal, groundwater, surface water, industrial reuse)?
- If groundwater is involved, has the aquifer been **characterized** for recharge rate, drawdown, and senior water rights conflicts?
- Who pays for **new water infrastructure** (pipelines, pumps, storage, treatment)?
- Will the developer commit to **third-party water monitoring** and **public dashboards**?
- What chemicals will be used in cooling water (biocides, PFAS, anti-scaling agents), and how will they be managed?

Comments

- Water is Great Falls' most constrained resource; **industrial cooling loads must not compete with residential supply**.
- "Growth pays for growth" must be a **non-negotiable condition** — no cost shifting to ratepayers.

- Transparency on **temperature, chemistry, and discharge volumes** is essential for public trust.

3. ENERGY

Questions

- What is the facility's **total MW load** at build-out and full expansion?
- Will the developer disclose **hour-by-hour load profiles**?
- What **generation sources** will serve the facility (grid mix, gas plant, renewables)?
- If a gas plant is involved, what are the **air emissions**, pipeline requirements, and noise impacts?
- Who pays for **transmission and distribution upgrades** required to serve the facility?
- Will GFDA support a **separate rate class** for data centers to prevent cost shifting?
- What is the plan for **backup generation** (diesel, gas, battery), and what are the permitted operating hours?

Comments

- Large industrial loads can **raise residential rates** unless cost-causation is enforced.
- Energy transparency is essential: **MW, emissions, expansion plans, and reliability impacts** must be public.
- Great Falls needs commitments to **clean energy procurement** before operation begins.

4. TRANSPARENCY

Questions

- Will GFDA require developers to commit to **radical transparency** — no proprietary blocks on water, energy, or environmental data?
- Will full **cooling system designs, environmental analyses, and load profiles** be publicly available?
- Will the developer participate in **open public meetings** and publish Q&A responses?
- Will GFDA require **independent monitoring** of water, air, noise, and wastewater?
- Will baseline environmental measurements be conducted **before construction**?

Comments

- Transparency is the foundation of public trust — **no redactions, no secrecy, no proprietary barriers**.
- Surprise inspections and public dashboards should be **standard conditions** for any data-center approval.

5. RECLAMATION / LONG-TERM ACCOUNTABILITY

Questions

- What **financial assurance** (bonding) will be required to cover cleanup, abandonment, or infrastructure failure?
- What is the developer's **15-year lifecycle plan** for equipment, water systems, and energy infrastructure?
- If the facility is sold, what **transfer-of-ownership review** will be triggered?
- What protections exist against **abandonment or blight** if the project becomes non-viable?

Comments

- Reclamation must be planned **before construction**, not after problems arise.
- Bonding protects the community from **stranded assets and cleanup liabilities**.
- Long-term accountability ensures Great Falls is not left with **dead infrastructure**.

6. CLOSING COMMENT YOU CAN READ VERBATIM

"Great Falls deserves development that strengthens our community without compromising our water, our rates, or our long-term environmental health. A temporary moratorium, paired with full transparency and independent analysis, is the responsible path forward. We welcome good projects — but only when they are good for the people who live here."

If you want, I can turn this into a **one-page handout**, a **3-minute public comment script**, or a **formal question card** for distribution at the meeting.

You said

one-page handout, a 3-minute public comment script, or a formal question card please consider the TAC data center that GFDA proposed. I don't believe it would reach the level of accountability we want. We want a Janicki level. There is no rush because of development of technology that may reduce size of data centers to boxes; edge sites, dislocated sites. Data centers are already realizing that they have to meet the communities and are modifying their demands.

Copilot said

Below is **all three items you asked for** — each written in your municipal, black-and-white, enforceable style, and tailored to the **TAC data center concept GFDA floated**, with your position clearly framed: **Great Falls needs Janicki-level accountability, not a lower standard.** And **there is no urgency** because the industry is already shifting toward **edge sites, distributed nodes, and smaller modular units**.

You can use any of these tonight.

1 ONE-PAGE HANDOUT (Public-Facing, Municipal Style)