

Where I Stand on Data Centers

I appreciate the desire for a direct answer: **I do not believe Forest Grove should incentivize additional data centers.**

My responsibility is also to explain what cities can and cannot control under Oregon law—and what protections should be in place when large industrial development occurs. My focus has been on stronger land-use standards, protecting residential utility customers, ensuring large industrial users pay the costs they create, and requiring meaningful public benefit when communities are asked to accommodate development of this scale.

Through 2025, Forest Grove used the authority available under state law to strengthen its development code, including industrial setbacks, height restrictions, buffering and screening. We also established utility protections intended to prevent extraordinary electrical costs from being shifted to residential and ordinary business customers.

But local authority has limits. Oregon communities need better tools from the Legislature to manage industrial growth responsibly while protecting residents, taxpayers, natural resources and the environment.

My state-level priorities would include examining Oregon's land-use statutes and the tax incentives that helped drive data-center development, strengthening local authority, and establishing clearer standards for community benefit.

Beyond “For or Against”

We should also acknowledge why this issue is more complicated than simply declaring ourselves “for” or “against” data centers.

Our collective demand for them grows every day. Banking, healthcare records and imaging, cloud storage, business systems, manufacturing and engineering records, streaming, social media, AI, phones and everyday digital communication all depend on data infrastructure. Moving information from paper files, photographs and physical records to digital storage has also replaced other forms of resource consumption.

At an August 28 forum in Forest Grove, the guest speaker acknowledged that connection by saying she would “choose to get off” demand-generating uses. That is certainly an individual choice, but it illustrates the larger issue: **public policy should address both the demand we collectively create and the impacts of the infrastructure required to serve it.**

Under Oregon's land-use framework, cities generally must evaluate development applications against their comprehensive plans, zoning and applicable development standards. Even

moratoria are governed and constrained by state law. That makes establishing the right rules **before an application arrives** particularly important.

A more useful question should therefore be centered on state law and local authority:

What changes are needed in Oregon law to give local communities the tools and authority to responsibly manage data-center development before an application arrives?

That means examining whether municipalities have adequate authority to determine where facilities of this scale belong; establish appropriate setbacks, buffering, noise and environmental standards; protect water and energy resources; recover infrastructure costs; evaluate tax incentives and community benefits; and require meaningful public transparency and participation.

Once an application is submitted, a city's decisions are constrained by state law and the land-use regulations applicable to the proposal. That makes the Legislature an essential part of this conversation.

The question, then, isn't simply whether an elected official is “for” or “against” data centers. **It is whether Oregon's laws give communities sufficient control over where and how they are developed—and, where they do not, what we are prepared to change.**

Questions Every Community Should Be Able to Address

- Where should facilities of this scale be located?
- How far should they be from residential neighborhoods?
- How much electricity and water will they actually use?
- Who pays for the infrastructure required to serve them?
- Will residential and small-business utility customers be protected?
- What are the noise, generator, air-quality and other environmental impacts?
- What standards should govern tax incentives, and what does the public receive in return?
- How many permanent jobs will actually be created?
- What measurable long-term benefit will the community receive?
- Does the local government have sufficient authority to require changes—or deny a proposal—when established standards cannot be met?

Forest Grove and other communities are already wrestling with these questions through stronger siting, setback, screening, noise and review standards. **The Oregon Legislature needs to be part of that work as well.**

Follow the Policy

The conversation should also include the state statutes and tax incentives enacted over the past decade that helped shape Oregon's data-center growth. Voters can examine the legislative record for themselves: what policies were adopted, who supported them, how they worked, and what changes may now be appropriate.

They can also review publicly reported campaign contributions from industries affected by those policies. A contribution by itself does not establish why someone voted a particular way, but both the legislative record and campaign-finance record are public information and worth understanding.

Search How to find a bill and vote info:

<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/.../Pages/Find-a-Bill.aspx>

Search Oregon campaign-finance records in ORESTAR:

<https://sos.oregon.gov/.../search-campaign-finance.aspx>

The objective should be to establish the rules **before the next application arrives**—giving Oregon communities the authority to determine where these facilities belong, what impacts are acceptable, what companies must pay for, and what public benefit should be required.

We should build that framework with enough foresight and flexibility to address emerging industries and technologies before their impacts arrive at a community's doorstep.

That's where I believe the state and local conversation needs to go. Communities need to be involved early enough to shape the rules and the outcome—not after the major decisions have already been made.

I'm always willing to have that conversation.