San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency

DATE: July 20, 2026

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Lance Eckhart, General Manager

BY: Maricela Cabral, Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: **SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

At the July 20, 2026, meeting of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency's (Agency) Board of Directors (Board), the Board heard a presentation by Jagger Mattox, the Agency's intern, on data centers. Mr. Mattox subsequently amended his report, which is attached hereto, to incorporate Board feedback. The final version of Mr. Mattox's report is being included with the July 20 meeting materials as a courtesy to the public. It is not an adopted Agency document and does not necessarily reflect the Agency's positions or policies, nor does it necessarily reflect the opinions of its Board members.

<u>Attachment</u>

Mattox Report re Data Centers

San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency

Overview of Data Center Development in the Pass Area

Water Demand, Energy Demand, and Policy Considerations

Revised July 21, 2026

To:

Board of Directors

Prepared By:

Jagger Mattox

Preface

This report was prepared at the request of the Board of the San Gorgonio Pass Water Agency. The information only agenda item, titled "Overview of Data Centers," was requested on June 1, 2026. During the research process and as of the date of publication, the author was not aware of any planned data center development within the Agency's service area or the surrounding Inland Empire and High Desert. Any references to hypothetical data centers are not based on known current developments and are included only to inform the analysis or provide examples for calculations.

The City of Banning was not consulted during the preparation of this report, did not collaborate on the analysis, and had no prior knowledge of its contents. References to Banning should not be interpreted as identifying the city as a prospective project location. Banning was selected solely as a locally relevant comparison because its public electric utility provides accessible data on electricity demand, geographic scale, and utility usage. Most communities in the Pass Area receive electric service from Southern California Edison, which does not publish directly comparable municipal utility data. All electricity and water figures used in the report were collected from publicly available sources.

This report was sole-authored. As an informational overview, decisions regarding the scope, depth, source selection, and emphasis of topics were made at the author's discretion. No outside organization or individual directed the analysis or conclusions of the report.

Executive Summary

Data center development continues to be a polarized topic as local cities move to ban data centers outright (Victoria, 2026). To evaluate this issue objectively, this report evaluates whether data center development in local municipalities can create enough public benefit to outweigh the costs of its resource demands. The analysis focuses on three categories: electricity demand, water demand, and fiscal/tax impacts.

Findings

- Electricity is the largest infrastructure concern.

  Data centers require large and constant electric loads, making them significant users of electricity in any grid they join. Using a PUE (Power Usage Effectiveness) of 1.11, a 100 MW IT load data center consumes approximately 972 GWh per year, or about 6 times the City of Banning's 2024 electricity consumption.

- Direct water demand is substantial but manageable.

  Using a WUE (Water Usage Effectiveness) of 0.59 L/kWh, a 100 MW IT load data center consumes approximately 419 acre-feet of water per year. Compared to Banning's annual water consumption of 8,635 acre-feet, this represents about 5% of their total water use.

- Economic benefits from data centers depend on tax structure, not job creation.

  Data centers cannot be treated as traditional businesses if the goal is to generate local benefits. A Business Insider investigation (Beckler et al., 2025) found that data centers create only about 25–150 permanent jobs, meaning communities should not expect long-term economic benefits from employment or consumer activity. Public value instead depends on local tax structures, utility negotiations, and beneficial project concessions to generate long-term revenue.

Key Considerations

- Do not evaluate data centers as typical commercial development.

  Due to the resource demands of data centers, local agencies should be involved in negotiations to ensure utility agreements account for increased constant load and prevent infrastructure costs from being shifted onto existing ratepayers.

- Require full-cost water agreements before approval.

  Projects should be required to pay for capacity, infrastructure, and long-term service obligations to meet their individual needs.

- Take a neutral approach to data centers.

  Local agencies should not preemptively oppose data centers, but they also should not offer concessions without a clear framework in place. Data centers can be positive or negative depending on the structure of the agreement and what is established regarding long-term utility usage.

Introduction

With the advent of proposed data center projects nationally, understanding what data centers consume and what they contribute to communities has become increasingly important. The central issue is not whether data centers are inherently good or bad, but whether data center development may impose public costs that exceed local public benefits. While the potential benefits and drawbacks of data center development are nuanced, this report focuses specifically on electricity usage, water usage, and tax considerations if data center companies seek to establish projects in the region.

What is a datacenter?

A data center can be thought of as a warehouse, but instead of inventory, it is filled with server racks. These racks are filled with servers that are interconnected and share power, storage, cooling, and networking. A server is a specialized computer engineered for other devices to interact with, not something meant for individual use. The best way to think about this is from the perspective of a web server. When someone visits a website, a server somewhere stores and processes the information necessary to display the page. Networking equipment connected to the server routes the request, the server sends the information needed to display the page, and then it checks for inputs that will load the next page. Traditional data centers were built for this and similar tasks, mostly involving storage, networking, and general processing.

Modern artificial intelligence (AI) data centers add a new dimension to the workload, where systems need to repeatedly perform mathematical calculations. This is due to machine learning (ML), where models are trained by algorithms that adjust mathematical parameters to identify patterns, classify information, and make predictions. This change requires a different type of processing and therefore different hardware. Central processing units (CPUs) are chips designed for general computing in sequence, while graphics processing units (GPUs) are chips designed to perform almost identical calculations in parallel. These differences in computing create a contrast where modern AI data centers are built around GPU clusters, which require more power and produce more heat compared to traditional data centers which use CPUs.

Large language models (LLMs) have been a major catalyst for this transition and are one reason data center growth has accelerated. LLMs are machine learning systems designed to generate language, code, and other forms of semantic information. These systems have two computationally expensive stages: training and inference. Training, as with other ML models, requires building a model by running algorithms across large datasets, but LLMs are specifically trained to learn patterns in language and other semantic structures. Inference happens after the model has been trained and occurs when users prompt the model to generate responses. In the case of the largest LLMs, called frontier models, training can take months of continuous compute (Emberson and Edelman, 2025), helping justify the cost of the large GPU clusters required for these systems. What keeps electricity loads constant even when training is not occurring is inference. Every message sent to an LLM is different from loading a webpage with predetermined content. Instead, every prompt is run through the trained model, requiring additional computation to generate a response.

As servers use more power, most of that energy is converted into heat that must be removed. Traditional data centers typically use air cooling, where fans blow air across servers to carry heat away from the server racks. Larger facilities may use chilled-water systems, where cooling towers act as heat exchangers to lower system temperatures, but causes water to evaporate in the process. Newer facilities are also using direct-to-chip cooling, where a working fluid circulates near individual chips to remove heat more efficiently. Each cooling system has benefits and drawbacks, and the best choice depends on the facility's design and whether the priority is minimizing water use, electricity use, or overall operating cost.

Why is this an issue today?

The reason data centers are becoming more consequential now is due to advances in artificial intelligence, specifically machine learning (ML) and large language models (LLMs). During training, hardware is optimized to run continuously at high utilization, requiring these data centers to operate for long periods with high power consumption and heat generation. Once a training run has started, it is difficult to stop because these runs can cost millions of dollars, and if the run is interrupted, the model may need to restart an iteration or face costly delays (Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI, 2024). As a result, changes in how modern AI data centers operate have created a significant gap in both policy and taxation practices, leaving public entities and municipalities unprepared to deal with high constant load and rapidly changing technology.

This gap exists because data centers have undergone a significant shift from how they were understood over the last 30 years, moving away from the idea of a "center for data" toward a more accurate framing of "computing centers" or "AI facilities." Historically, data centers primarily stored large amounts of data for enterprise users or hosted internet traffic. Today, these buildings are not being built only because more data storage is needed, but because companies need centralized locations that can operate tens of thousands of GPUs to train and run new models. This has allowed hyperscalers, defined as massive cloud service providers (Amazon AWS, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud, Meta, Alibaba, etc.), to benefit from new business models which incentivize high compute. Older data centers did not operate on the same power density, business model, or utilization that modern AI facilities do today, making the distinction between traditional data centers and AI facilities important.

This distinction is shown in the growth and scale of data centers, with hyperscaler data centers increasing from 541 in 2020 to 1,136 in 2024, a 110% increase over five years (Synergy Research Group, 2020; Synergy Research Group, 2025). Not only has the number of data centers grown, but their size has increased as well. Cushman & Wakefield reports that the average data center parcel reached 224 acres, a 144% increase from 2022, showing that developers are moving toward multi-building AI campuses and expansions rather than individual buildings (Cushman & Wakefield, 2025). This shift is not only reflected in the market growth of AI companies, but also in the physical development patterns of data centers, making the change both visible and quantifiable.

Along with the increase in hyperscaler data centers, it should be noted that companies do not always specify whether new data center growth is tied directly to AI, since most data center reporting does not distinguish between traditional facilities and AI facilities. However, the pace of expansion, combined with the market growth of AI companies, suggests that data center growth is at least closely connected to the broader implementation of AI.

How significant is data center electricity demand?

Before describing how much electricity is used by data centers, it is important to understand the size and scale of different facility types.

IT Load [MW]	Facility Type	Common Operations
5	Small Enterprise / Edge Facility	Data Backup, Government Systems, Local Business
10	Regional Cloud Services	Edge Facility, Cloud Hosting, Video Streaming
25	Large Cloud / AI Services	AI Inferencing, Scientific Computing, Large Business
100	Hyperscale / AI Training	AI Training, GPU Rentals, One building of a campus

Table 1. Data center size by IT load, associated classification, and potential operations. Facility types are examples not formal or industry classification.

For this report, these sizes will be differentiated by Information Technology (IT) load. IT load is defined as the electrical power required to operate computing and networking equipment. This value excludes supporting systems such as cooling, lighting, and power distribution, which can differ significantly depending on the layout and size of the data center. To estimate total facility electricity consumption for each data center size, a Power Usage Effectiveness score (PUE) must be applied. PUE measures total facility electricity consumption relative to the electricity consumed by IT equipment (Vries-Gao, 2026). For this report, a PUE of 1.11 was chosen because it represents the average PUE of Google, Microsoft, and Meta, the American companies in Vries-Gao that reported both total company power and water usage.

$$\text{PUE} = \frac{\text{Total Facility Electricity Consumption (TWh)}}{\text{IT Load (TWh)}}$$

Equation 1. Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE)

$$\text{Total Facility Electricity Consumption (TWh)} = \text{PUE} \times \text{IT Load (TWh)}$$

Equation 2. Rearranged total facility consumption equation

IT Load [MW]	GWh per Year	GWh (Total Consumption)
5	43.8	48.618
10	87.6	97.236
25	219	243.09
100	876	972.36

Table 2. Data Center IT Load Conversions (PUE = 1.11)

Table 2 shows the conversions between the hypothetical IT loads and estimated total consumption after accounting for cooling and other supporting systems associated with a data center. On their own, these numbers lack context, but as a reference point, the City of Banning used 160.73 GWh in 2024 according to the CEC (California Energy Commission, 2026). This means a 100 MW data center would consume approximately 605% of Banning's 2024 electricity consumption or about 6 times as much as the city used that year. The average U.S. household consumes about 10,500 kWh per year, making a 100 MW data center equivalent to approximately 92,000 homes per year (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023).

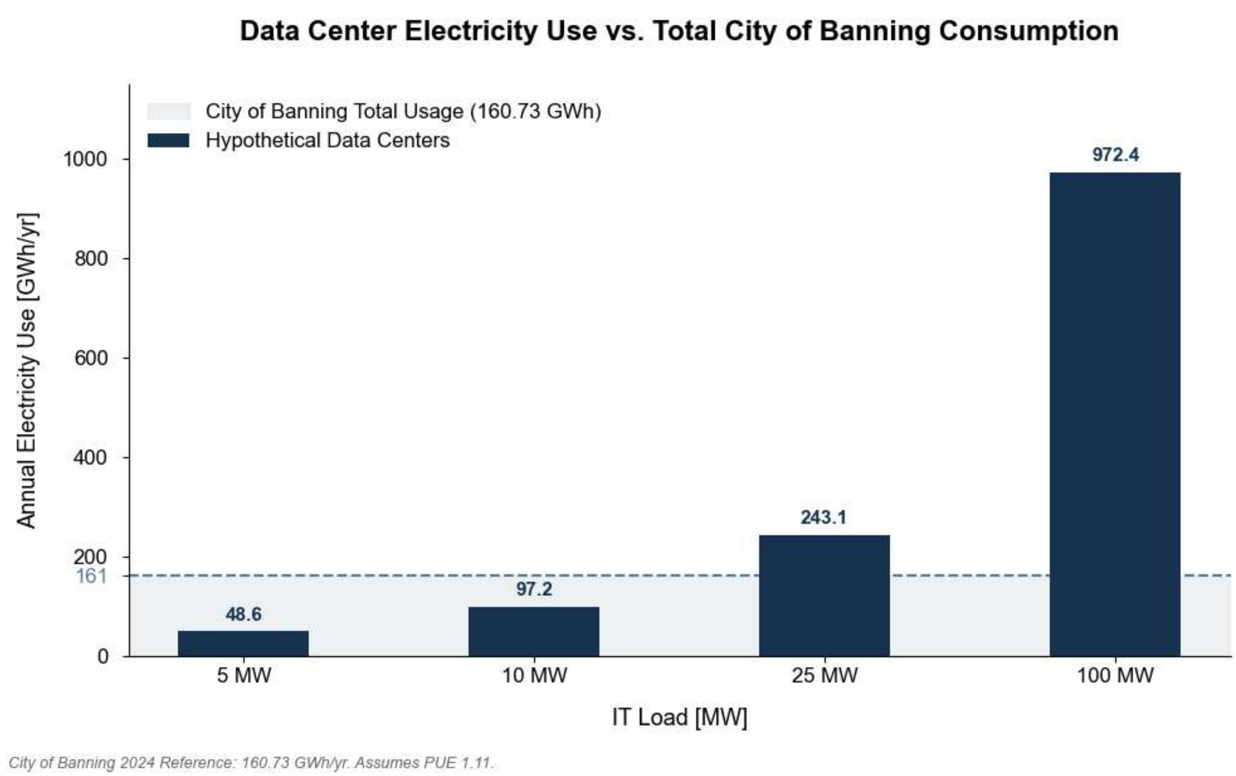

Figure 1. Data Center Electricity Use vs. Total City of Banning Consumption

How significant is data center water usage?

To calculate on-site data center water usage, a metric called Water Use Effectiveness score (WUE) is used. WUE expresses total on-site water consumption relative to the electricity consumption of IT equipment (Vries-Gao, 2026).

$$WUE = \frac{\text{Direct Water Consumption (Acre-Feet)}}{\text{IT Load (GWh)}}$$

Equation 2. Water Use Effectiveness (WUE)

Vries-Gao calculates a weighted average WUE of 0.59 L/kWh using the equation above for companies that provide both electricity consumption and direct water consumption data. One caveat to note is that these companies do not all report data center specific electricity consumption, meaning water intensity can only reflect company level reporting rather than facility specific. Using this value of 0.59 L/kWh or 0.48 AF/GWh, water usage can be estimated for the hypothetical data center sizes.

IT Load [MW]	GWh per Year	Acre-Feet per Year
5	43.8	20.95
10	87.6	41.90
25	219	104.75
100	876	419.01

Table 3. Estimated data center water consumption by IT load. (WUE = 0.59 L/kWh)

Based on these calculations, a 100 MW data center would consume approximately 419 acre-feet (AF) of water per year. By comparison, the City of Banning consumes 8,635 AF of water annually (City of Banning Public Works Department, 2026). This means the same data center that would use roughly six times Banning's annual electricity consumption would use approximately 5% of Banning's annual water consumption. Another way to frame this is that 1 AF of water typically serves about 3 homes, meaning 419 AF per year is equivalent to the annual water demand of approximately 1,257 homes.

This figure represents on-site water consumption, not indirect water consumption. Indirect water consumption includes water used to generate electricity or produce silicon, which may be significant at a global scale but is outside the scope of this local analysis.

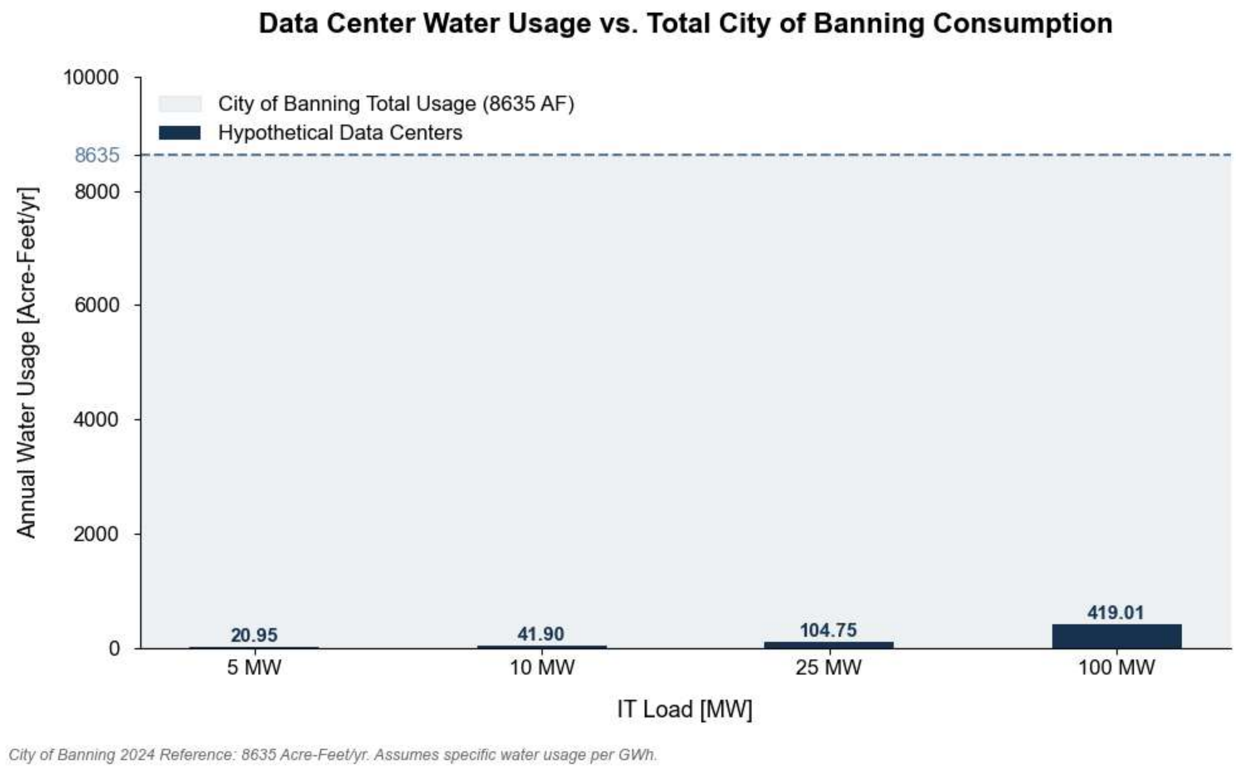

Figure 2. Data Center Water Use vs. Total City of Banning Consumption

What are the economic and fiscal impacts of data centers?

The most nuanced discussion regarding data centers comes from economic and feasibility analysis. Local governments must understand that data centers do not function like typical businesses. According to a Business Insider investigation, data centers create approximately 25–150 permanent jobs, meaning local governments should not expect a significant increase in revenue from increased consumer activity (Beckler et al., 2025). Additionally, due to the nature of data centers, local tax revenue will not be generated in the same way as consumer-facing businesses do. Instead, recurring local tax revenue depends on whether tax structures capture the value of capital assets such as land or equipment rather than sales activity or job creation (JLARC, 2024).

Taking these factors into consideration, it is critical for local governments to recognize that adding data centers without appropriate tax and utility provisions may be detrimental not only to the community, but also to the constituents. Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's (LBNL) 2026 retail price update does not show that data centers directly increase retail electricity prices, but it does state that the relationship depends on available generation, transmission, distribution capacity, and tariff design (Hledik and Lam, 2026). In constrained regions, data center buildout can increase costs if infrastructure and capacity expenses are distributed across existing ratepayers rather than directly assigned to the customers causing those increases (Satchwell et al., 2025). From 2019 to 2025, residential electricity prices increased by 33%, compared to 26% for commercial customers and 27% for industrial customers, meaning residential prices rose 6–7 percentage points more than commercial and industrial rates over that period (Hledik and Lam, 2026). Data centers did not cause these increases, but this trend shows why cost distribution matters. If data center infrastructure is treated like ordinary commercial or industrial use, those costs may be distributed across existing ratepayers. If historical trends continue, additional increases to the rate base could leave residential customers disproportionately exposed to higher costs.

While utility provisions determine whether infrastructure costs are shifted onto existing ratepayers, tax structure determines whether data centers provide enough public revenue to justify those infrastructure demands. The Tax Foundation created a $1 billion data center scenario across 12 cities illustrating how dramatically tax liability and tax rates affect public revenue from data centers across jurisdictions (Walczak, 2024). In the scenario, the Tax Foundation models a $1 billion data center facility, assuming $220 million in annual revenue and a 15% net income before tax. Columns two and three assume a first-year new operation where all equipment is purchased in one year at maximum value, while columns four and five assume an established operation where the business is replacing previously used equipment.

The model shows a first-year tax liability range from $2.2 million in Charlotte, NC, to $86.8 million in Santa Clara County, CA. This equates to a tax liability approximately 39 times higher in Santa Clara County than in Charlotte under the same modeled scenario. The purpose of this model is not to analyze individual cities and their data center tax structures or suggest that the region should copy one of the examples, but to show that an identical data center can produce dramatically different levels of public revenue.

Data Center Tax Liability and Effective Tax Rates by Jurisdiction (Federal and All States)

Jurisdiction	First Year Tax Liability	First Year Effective Tax Rate	Steady State Tax Liability	Steady State Effective Tax Rate
Phoenix, AZ	$16,461,296	50%	$15,478,226	47%
Santa Clara County, CA	$86,806,500	263%	$26,268,463	80%
Atlanta, GA	$7,440,164	23%	$15,408,492	47%
Elk Grove, IL	$19,434,387	59%	$23,611,602	72%
Papillion, NE	$6,046,276	18%	$12,060,870	37%
Charlotte, NC	$2,218,522	7%	$8,008,539	24%
Columbus, OH	$7,872,785	24%	$12,050,000	37%
Hillsboro, OR	$7,618,516	23%	$17,135,927	52%
Irving, TX	$15,247,927	46%	$16,754,351	51%
Loudoun County, VA	$18,592,601	56%	$16,220,926	49%
Quincy, WA	$13,452,990	41%	$15,210,946	46%
Cheyenne, WY	$8,256,517	25%	$11,014,195	33%

Table 4. Data center tax liability and effective tax rates by jurisdiction under a $1 billion model data center scenario (Walczak, 2024).

This dramatically different range is important because data centers use substantial infrastructure capacity while creating a relatively small number of permanent jobs, meaning the public benefit must come primarily from tax structure and negotiated payments. The model shows that significant public return is not guaranteed and depends on whether existing tax structures can generate revenue from the capital investment behind the project.

Project concessions can be just as important to project success as utility and tax provisions because their structure can either increase or reduce the public benefit of a development. For example, a data center developed in Dublin, Ohio, involved Amazon receiving 66 acres of land, valued at $100,000 per acre, for $1 total (Beckler et al., 2025). Amazon projected only 25 permanent workers for the facility, while an equivalent fulfillment center in Canton, Ohio, created a projected 1,000 jobs. Business Insider also found that 19 data center-related deals forfeited at least $750 million in tax revenue in exchange for a total of 770 full-time jobs. On the other hand, localities in Virginia have allowed data centers broad access to electricity infrastructure while requiring them to pay business personal property taxes on computer equipment, generating substantial revenue through local tax structures. This has allowed some Northern Virginia cities to generate 31% of their total tax revenue from data centers (Beckler et al., 2025).

Additional Considerations

In this report, only three topics were discussed: electricity consumption, water consumption, and economics, because they represent the most significant regional impacts. Many reports on data centers mention issues such as noise, greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), and land use concerns, but in the context of California and specifically the Pass Area, these issues are more site-specific and are therefore governed through existing review processes or are less likely to create region-wide impacts. These concerns also vary significantly by project location, design, and surrounding land use. For that reason, this report does not examine these issues in depth, as their significance depends heavily on design and land use decisions regarding individual projects.

Noise, for example, often stems from backup generators, cooling systems, and substations. These impacts are reviewed through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes, which can identify significant noise concerns and require mitigation measures or setbacks (Association of Environmental Professionals, 2026). GHGs were also omitted from this report because direct emissions from data centers are limited, typically originating from refrigerant leaks and backup generator use. In California specifically, these sources are regulated through CARB and SCAQMD, which require monitoring and help minimize local impacts compared to other states (California Air Resources Board, n.d.) (South Coast AQMD, n.d.). Indirect emissions typically originate from electricity generation and silicon production. Estimating these impacts requires more detailed modeling assumptions, making them better suited for a broader lifecycle analysis than a regional discussion. Nevertheless, many projects minimize these effects by requiring developers to use a percentage of renewable energy, decreasing the number of indirect emissions generated through electricity use. Pittsburg, CA, for example, has mandated the use of 100% carbon-free electricity, which dramatically reduces indirect emissions (City of Pittsburg, n.d.).

Land use and zoning considerations, like noise, are better evaluated through project-specific review, as their impacts depend on facility design and surrounding development. In the Pass Area, existing industrial zones have already been used to accommodate warehouses and fulfillment centers, which suggests that similar land-use impacts from data centers may be manageable if projects are placed in appropriate locations. Like warehouses, any proposed data center would still be subject to California’s environmental review and permitting processes, and local codes may need to be updated if specific concerns are considered significant.

Conclusions

The main conclusion of this report is that data centers are not automatically infeasible, but their public value depends on how water, electricity, and tax agreements are structured. Regarding water and electricity, significant planning is required to handle increased loads on both systems, but cost shifting can be minimized through negotiations that ensure developers pay for capacity and infrastructure needs (Satchwell et al., 2025). From the perspective of a State Water Project (SWP) wholesaler, the scale of water use is manageable, but only after accounting for supply reliability, recharge rates, infrastructure burdens, and purchase agreements. Additionally, specific data centers can use recycled water instead of potable water, potentially creating a sink for excess recycled water and making projects more manageable (Amazon, 2025). Electricity presents a greater challenge because demand may exceed existing infrastructure, but as mentioned before, the financial burden may be manageable if negotiations require companies to pay for the infrastructure needed to serve them.

Extracting public benefits is just as important as utility negotiations because data centers operate on fundamentally different economic models. Due to data centers employing relatively few people, public benefit must come primarily from tax structures that capture long-term revenue from capital assets. Utility negotiations should prevent cost shifting to existing ratepayers by ensuring developers pay for the required infrastructure upgrades and do not reduce load availability for existing constituents. Project concessions can successfully attract investment, but they should be applied carefully because case studies show that poorly structured agreements can forfeit millions of dollars in potential public revenue. If beneficial terms are not achieved through utility and tax negotiations, a local agency should not agree to the project. Without these protections, the resource demands of data center development can quickly outweigh the public benefits and harm constituents.

This report is intended to help local agencies evaluate data center development as a regional infrastructure issue, not only as an economic or land-use issue. Data centers are not inherently good or bad; some regions in the country have benefited significantly from them, while others have faced major challenges. In an increasingly polarized political environment around technology and AI, it is important to recognize that this is a nuanced topic, especially for local governments. When evaluating individual projects, local governments may reasonably conclude that data centers do not align with current land-use, infrastructure, or development priorities and instead pursue other forms of development. However, that project-specific judgment is different from adopting a blanket ban on data centers, which could leave potentially hundreds of millions of dollars on the table that might otherwise support local programs and development. On the other hand, accepting data centers without proper due diligence could place pressure on both water and electricity systems, negatively affect constituents, and potentially exacerbate the broader cost-of-living crisis.

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