SUSTAINABLE DATA CENTERS ROADMAP

TEXT BOX

Local Opposition

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Strong local opposition to new data centers is emerging in many places. Such opposition is not new. Community organizations in Ireland, the Netherlands, Chile and other locations have been mobilizing to halt new data center construction for years.[1-3] However, recent surges in the construction of hyperscale data centers have sparked a significant increase in local pushback in the United States and around the world.[4,5]

In the United States, opposition to data centers has focused on grid strain, electricity costs, land use, residential quality of life and environmental impacts.[6,7] Data Center Watch, an activist group, estimates that over $64 billion in data center projects were blocked or delayed in the United States between 2023 and 2025 due to local pushback.[8] Examples of recent local opposition include the following:

- In Arizona, the Tucson City Council rejected Amazon's Project Blue AI data center campus due to concerns about substantial water consumption.[9]

- A new North Carolina data center proposal was withdrawn amidst local protests against rising electricity rates and potential grid strain.[10]

- In Indiana, at least five data center proposals were rejected in 2024 and 2025.[11]

- Virginia residents blocked a new data center in Chesapeake, citing concerns about noise, environmental degradation and the project's proximity to residential areas.[12]

Communities in other countries are objecting to data center development as well:

- In Santiago, Chile, local protests successfully halted authorization of a $200 million Google data center project, which has been put on hold until the plan is revised to comply with stringent sustainability standards.[13]

- In the United Kingdom, local opposition has delayed several data center projects, with communities raising concerns about how data center construction on greenbelt-designated land would impact the environment and strain infrastructure.[14]

- Local governments in Dublin, Amsterdam and Singapore have imposed single and multi-year moratoriums to reduce grid congestion and local concerns.[15-17]

This local opposition is sometimes at odds with policies of national, state and provincial governments, which often adopt policies to encourage data center development for a range of economic and security reasons.[18-19]

Recommendations

1. *Data center owners and operators should **engage collaboratively with local communities throughout the lifecycle of a project**, from site selection to post-construction operations. This engagement should **include communication of both the expected benefits to the community from the data center and potential risks** (including those related to grid strain, water resources and local air pollution).*

2. *Data center owners and operators should **work collaboratively with local communities** in areas near data centers to **implement measures that protect residential quality of life**.*

3. *Governments should **require data center owners and operators to provide certificates of collaboration with host communities** and, where appropriate, **enter into community benefit agreements**.*

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