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# Data Center Resources

## What is a data center?

Data centers are buildings that house computers, servers, and equipment used to support digital services, and they are built in different ways to serve different needs. They range from hyperscale (the largest) to on-site, retail, or industry specific sites which might be referred to as edge, enterprise, or co-location data centers.

Some data centers are designed for advanced computing, including artificial intelligence (AI). AI data centers handle very intensive computing tasks and require higher levels of electricity and more robust cooling systems. Because of these needs, AI data centers are often located in areas with access to large power supplies and high-capacity data networks, while other types of data centers can be located in a wider range of communities.

## Why the focus on data centers now?

Hyperscale data centers are getting a lot of attention in the news right now. These types of data centers can create community and regional concerns around energy consumption, water usage, size, and site location.

The U.S. Department of Energy Advisory Board notes that electric utilities are receiving requests for a single hyperscale campus of between 300-1000MW (2024); 300 MW is enough energy to power about 250,000 homes for a year.[1] The energy operating computers produces heat. Cooling technologies vary using water and/or other solutions, closed-loop systems conserve water and are becoming more common. As an example of size, the data center campus proposed in Saline Township was designed for 1.65 million square feet with potential expansion up to 2.2 million square feet (roughly 38 football fields). The size of hyperscale data centers will vary based on location and computing needs.

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## Supplemental Resources Provided on Following Pages

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# Data Center Resources (Updated as new resources become available)

**Resources**

- Developing Data Center Policy: A Guide for Communities Navigating AI and Digital Infrastructure. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. October 2026.
- Local Government Considerations in Hyperscale Data Center Development. Citizens Research Council of Michigan. September 2026.
- Data Centers in Michigan: Evaluation of Policy Controversies Regarding Hyperscale Data Center Development. Citizens Research Council of Michigan. June 2026.
- Data Centers in Michigan. Community Economic Development Association of Michigan & MSU Quello Center. June 2026.
- How Likely is a Data Center Developer Interested in My Community? MSU Quello Center. June 2026.
- The Policies Communities Need to Confront the AI Data Center Race. Institute for Local Self Reliance. May 2026.
- What Michigan Local Governments Should Know About Data Centers. University of Michigan (UofM) Center for EmPowering Communities. February 2026.
- Catching Heat: Using Waste Heat Generated from Data Centers: Appalachian Responsible Development Opportunities, Challenges, and Policy Options. Stine, D., January 2026.
- Data Centers and Their Energy Consumption: Frequently Asked Questions. Library of Congress. January 2026.
- Data centers in Michigan, what you need to know. Michigan Public Radio. November 2025.
- Local Ordinances to Help Bring Data Centers into Alignment with Climate Goals. Georgetown Climate Center. October 2025.
- Data Center Development in the Great Lakes Region. The Joyce Foundation. September 2025.
- What Happens When Data Centers Come To Town? UofM Ford School of Public Policy. July 2025.
- A Primer for Local Governments: Understanding Data Centers. National League of Cities. 2025.
- Local Guidelines for Data Center Development. Urban Land Institute. 2024.

**American Association of Planning**

- The Physical Footprint of Artificial Intelligence. October 2025.
- Data Centers Evolved: A Primer for Planners. July 2021.

**Mapping**

- Michigan Data Centers. Data Center Map.
- U.S. Data Centers Tracker. FracTracker Alliance.

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# Data Center Resources (Updated as new resources become available)

### Webinars/Recordings

- Civic Learning Session: Data Centers, the Digital Economy & Local Job Creation. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. August 2026.
- Data Centers & Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). Kalamazoo County. June 2026
- Webinar to Review the Data Centers in Michigan Paper. Citizens Research Council of Michigan. June 2026.
- Behind the Cloud: Planning for Data Centers. American Planning Association Technology Division. April 2026.

### State/Regional/County Resource Pages

- Data Centers. State of Michigan.
- Data centers and environmental review. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.
    - FAQ: Data centers and environmental review
- Data Center Resources. Michigan Economic Development Corporation.
- Data Center Resources for Local Governments. Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.
- Oakland County Data Center Website.
- Washtenaw County Data Center Website.

### Community Benefit Agreements

- Building Community-First AI Infrastructure. Microsoft on Issues, January 2026.
- Adapting Community Benefit Agreements for Rural Land Use Practice: Meeting the Demand for Data Centers and Other Controversial Proposals. MSU Center for Community and Economic Development. 2026.
- Community Benefits Brief Final Version. MSU Center for Community and Economic Development. 2024.

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