



# **DATA CENTERS IN OHIO**

## **Fact vs. Fiction**

*Prepared by the Ohio Business Roundtable  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Across Ohio, data center development has become one of the most consequential—and most contested—economic development conversations of the decade. Public commentary frequently leads with alarming claims: that data centers consume staggering amounts of water, drive up residential electric bills, create few jobs, benefit from tax giveaways at residents' expense, and the impact to school district revenue is often overlooked. These claims have generated real political pressure, including a proposed override of Governor DeWine's veto preserving the state's data center sales tax exemption.

The data tells a very different story. Data centers are large, long-term capital investments—typically hundreds of millions to billions of dollars—that pay taxes (often more than the agricultural or residential uses they replace), create high-wage construction and operations jobs, and produce school district and municipal revenue that holds up even with abatements in place. The most-cited concerns—water draw, residential energy rate increases, noise pollution—are either overstated, mitigated by enforceable tariffs and modern engineering, or directly contradicted by the operating record of Ohio communities like New Albany and Marysville.

This briefing pairs each of the eight most-frequent claims with the underlying facts, drawn from Ohio operating data, peer-reviewed and government sources, and the published experience of Ohio host communities.

## The Eight Topics at a Glance

**1. Jobs.** The University of Virginia's Great Lakes Data Center study projects Ohio data centers will add \$4.7 billion in GDP and 37,200 jobs by 2030, including 4,500 long-term operational positions. Ohio data center employment already grew 70.5% from 2016 to 2023—faster than the 60% national rate.

**2. Water.** The most data-center-dense region in the country is using less than half the water it contracted for. In Loudoun County, Virginia—anchoring roughly 100 million square feet of built and planned data centers—actual reclaimed-water demand averages 2 to 3.5 million gallons per day against a contracted capacity of approximately 8 mgd, with peak summer days reaching only 4 to 5 mgd.

**3. Energy.** The PUCO-approved AEP Ohio Data Center Tariff (July 2025) requires large data centers (25 MW+) to pay for 85% of contracted capacity for 12 years even if they use less, with exit penalties equal to three years of minimum charges. Additionally, over 2GW of behind-the-meter natural gas generation has been approved across Ohio, reducing or

eliminating the impact to the grid. In March 2026, all major hyperscalers also signed the White House Ratepayer Protection Pledge, committing to "bring, buy, or build" the energy they need and to shield American consumers from price increases attributable to data center infrastructure.

**4. Property Taxes & Abatements.** Even with an active abatement in place, AWS was Union County's 7th-largest corporate property taxpayer in 2025—ahead of established corporate citizens like Nestle and Kroger. Land taxes cannot be abated under Ohio law, and data center buildings are appraised at \$225–\$300 per SF versus \$60–\$100 per SF for typical industrial buildings.

**5. School Districts.** In the New Albany cluster in 2024—with most data centers still in active abatement—Johnstown-Monroe Schools received \$2.5 million from data center land alone, equal to 9.2% of the district's operating budget. At full buildout and abatement expiration, individual Licking County data center facilities will generate between \$5 million and \$17 million per year in real estate taxes for their host school districts.

**6. Sales Tax Incentives.** Of the 36 states that offer a data center sales tax exemption, Ohio is one of the few where the exemption is discretionary rather than automatic. Repealing the exemption would relocate future projects to one of the 36 other states where the math works, eliminating the much larger downstream revenue streams (property tax, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), New Community Authorities (NCA) charges, payroll income tax) those projects generate.

**7. Noise.** The 60–90 decibel range cited in opposition testimonials spans the everyday spectrum from a normal household conversation to a gas-powered lawnmower—and that reading is at the equipment itself, not at a neighbor's property line. The Marysville South Planned Unit Development (PUD) requires 200-foot building setbacks plus a 12-foot landscaped mound, engineered to bring worst-case equipment noise into the quiet-residential range at the residential edge—all of which are industry-recognized best practices for noise abatement.

**8. Economic Impact.** The New Albany New Community Authority collected ~\$10.3 million in 2024 from data centers on only 3,100 acres that were only 40% built out—and NCA Development Charges are not subject to any form of abatement. AWS has invested \$39.9B in data center construction and operations in Ohio since 2015—surpassing the \$23B committed by the end of this decade.

## Beyond the Eight Topics: The National Security Stakes and the Latency Imperative

The eight claims addressed in this briefing capture the most frequent lines of public criticism, but they do not capture the full case for Ohio's data center investment. Two additional considerations—neither of which is rooted in misinformation, but both of which are critical to the policy decision in front of state lawmakers—deserve explicit recognition.

**National Security and the AI Race.** Data centers are no longer purely commercial infrastructure. They are the physical backbone of artificial intelligence—the training capacity, inference capacity, and cloud capacity on which American AI leadership depends. The Trump administration has treated AI infrastructure expansion as a strategic national priority on par with semiconductor manufacturing, recognizing hyperscale data center development as essential to U.S. competitiveness against China. Ohio sits at the center of this national footprint as a leader in data center investment. A statehouse decision that disrupts the investment climate for an industry the federal government is treating as critical infrastructure carries consequences well beyond Ohio's fiscal balance sheet — it directly affects whether America wins the AI race, and whether Ohio is on the inside of that race or the outside of it.

**The Latency Imperative.** In the AI and cloud economy, physical proximity to data centers is itself an economic asset. Latency—measured in milliseconds—determines whether high-frequency transactions clear, whether AI inference feels instantaneous, and whether downstream Ohio industries (advanced manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, financial services, automotive) can compete with peers in Virginia, Texas, and the Bay Area. Companies increasingly locate headquarters, R&D operations, and digital-first business lines near data center clusters to minimize that latency penalty. The data centers Ohio has attracted are not a self-contained economic prize; they are the substrate on which the next generation of Ohio's broader corporate growth will be built.

Ohio is not at a crossroads—it is at a launching pad. The infrastructure, the investment, and the momentum are already here. The only question now is how much of the future Ohio is ready to claim.

# 1. Jobs

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers don't create jobs."</b></p> <p>Critics argue that because operating headcount per square foot is lower than at a traditional manufacturing facility, data centers fail to deliver meaningful employment for the communities that host them. The claim is often paired with the assertion that construction jobs are "just temporary" and should not be counted.</p>	<p><b>Ohio data center employment grew 70.5%</b> from 2016 to 2023, faster than the national 60% rate for the sector. National employment in the computing infrastructure providers, data processing, web hosting, and related services industry is <b>forecast to grow another 20.3%</b> between 2024 and 2034.<sup>1,2</sup></p> <p>The University of Virginia's Great Lakes Data Center study projects Ohio data centers will add <b>\$4.7 billion in GDP and 37,200 jobs by 2030</b>, of which 4,500 are long-term operational jobs.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>A single large project generates roughly <b>500 construction jobs during build-out</b> and 25–50 full-time operations positions plus 25–50 contractor positions (security, maintenance, staffing) once operational. Servers are replaced on a 5–6 year cycle, regenerating construction work throughout the facility's life.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>Construction work is not "temporary" at scale. A typical data center building takes 12–18 months to construct, and hyperscale campuses (AWS, Google, Meta, Microsoft) build over a decade. New Albany has averaged <b>3,500 construction jobs per year over the past decade</b>, with that level expected to continue for another 10–15 years. A 250,000 square foot data center requires 1,500–2,000 construction workers; Ohio's full data center build-out will require 10,000+.<sup>5,6</sup></p> <p>Data center construction <b>wages average ~\$58/hour, up to \$90/hour with overtime</b>, and average data center operations salaries are approximately \$85,000/year plus of 150–200% of the local median in most Ohio host communities.<sup>6</sup></p>

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, Foote, A. & Wilkie-Rogers, C. (January 6, 2025). [Data centers growing fast and reshaping local economies.](#)

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Rieley, M. J. & Colato, J. (January 2026). [Industry and occupational employment projections, 2024–34.](#)

<sup>3</sup>Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia (2026). [Great Lakes Data Center \(GLDC\) state fact sheets and economic impact report.](#)

<sup>4</sup>Union County, Ohio (February 20, 2026). [Understanding Data Centers — Community & Economic Impacts presentation.](#)

<sup>5</sup>Benefits of Data Center Development to the Local Community (November 8, 2025). [New Albany cluster case study, drawing on New Albany Company experience.](#)

<sup>6</sup>Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (2025), [reported by ACT Ohio.](#)

## Bottom Line

Data centers create a layered job mix: high-volume skilled-trades construction work that lasts years (often a decade or more at hyperscale campuses), permanent operations positions at well above local median wages, and recurring construction cycles every 5–6 years as servers are refreshed. The construction labor demand is significant enough that the IBEW, Ohio Building Trades, and the hyperscalers themselves co-signed the same letter to House Speaker Huffman opposing repeal of the sales tax exemption—an unusual alignment of organized labor and Big Tech.

## 2. Water

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers consume millions of gallons of water per day and dump waste into nearby watersheds."</b></p> <p>This claim typically combines two distinct concerns: (a) the raw volume of water used for evaporative cooling, often quoted as multi-million-gallon-per-day figures; and (b) the assertion that data center operations contaminate local water supplies through discharge or runoff.</p>	<p>Modern data center designs are moving away from evaporative cooling. Microsoft committed in 2024 to zero-water evaporative closed-loop designs by 2030, and <b>the broader industry is shifting to closed-loop and direct-to-chip liquid cooling.</b><sup>7</sup></p> <p>Loudoun County, Virginia—the most data-center-dense region in the United States, with roughly 50 million square feet of data center built and another ~50 million square feet in development—runs the majority of its facilities on a mix of air-cooled and reclaimed-water systems rather than on potable water from the local drinking-water supply.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>A planned 400,000 square foot closed-loop data center in New Albany will require approximately 1.0 million gallons for initial setup (filled over several weeks) and then only ~30,000 gallons per day for domestic uses (restrooms, kitchens)—comparable to an equivalently sized industrial building. The cooling loop is flushed every 5–7 years, scheduled off-hours with the utility.</p> <p>In Union County, the AWS Marysville campus uses water cooling only 3% of the year; the City of Marysville caps the volume data centers may draw and charges additional fees for large users.<sup>9</sup> Marysville is also one of several Ohio cities now advancing recycled-water programs purpose-built for industrial and data center demand, alongside the City of Columbus (Rickenbacker), Del-Co Water and the Delaware County Regional Sewer District, and the City of Sunbury. This is a coordinated, statewide planning effort convened through MORPC and the WaterReuse Ohio chapter, of which the Ohio Business Roundtable is a participating member.</p> <p>The Loudoun model provides a real-world proof point. Loudoun Water's Broad Run Water Reclamation Facility (BRWRF) serves more than 50 data centers within a three-mile radius, with data centers</p>

<sup>7</sup>Solomon, S. (December 9, 2024). Sustainable by design: [Next-generation datacenters consume zero water for cooling.](#)

<sup>8</sup>Kendra Sveum, P.E., Loudoun Water, "[Reclaimed Water in the Heart of Data Center Alley](#)," MORPC Water Reuse Forum (March 31, 2026).

<sup>9</sup>City of Marysville. (2025). [Data Center FAQs.](#)

The Claim	The Facts
	<p>comprising 99% of its reclaimed-water customer base. Average daily reclaimed-water <b>demand has run 2–3.5 million gallons per day with summer peaks of 4–5 mgd, against a contracted capacity of approximately 8 mgd.</b> This load has been carried without straining the region's drinking-water supply, and Loudoun's reclaimed-water rate is set at \$2.07 per 1,000 gallons—less than half the potable rate of \$4.42.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>On the national scale, all U.S. data centers (the vast majority supporting general internet services, not AI) used <b>200–250 million gallons of freshwater per day in 2023, against U.S. daily freshwater consumption of ~132 billion gallons</b>—well under 0.2% of the total.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>Compared with other advanced manufacturing, data centers use far less water than chip fabrication. U.S. Geological Survey data put data center water use in context: thermoelectric power generation accounts for <b>41% of U.S. water withdrawals (~133 Bgal/day)</b>; industrial manufacturing is ~5%. Even aggressive estimates put total data center water at <b>less than 0.1% of U.S. national withdrawals.</b><sup>12</sup></p> <p>Data centers do not meaningfully pollute the water they use. Most onsite cooling water is potable and recirculates through the loop; there is no industrial discharge stream comparable to chemical manufacturing or food processing. In fact, recycling treated effluent for data center cooling can be a water-quality net positive. Loudoun Water's reclaimed-water program was driven in significant part by Chesapeake Bay nitrogen and phosphorus limits: cycling water through data center cooling reduces direct effluent discharge to the Potomac and the Bay. The same logic applies in Ohio—using highly treated effluent for cooling rather than discharging it lowers nutrient loads to the Ohio River and Lake Erie watersheds.<sup>13</sup></p>

<sup>10</sup>Michael Frommer, P.E., CDM Smith, "[Water Reuse System Management and Financing Strategies — Case Study: Loudoun Water](#)," MORPC Water Reuse Forum (March 31, 2026).

<sup>11</sup>Masley, A. (October 11, 2025). [The AI water issue is fake—on the national, local, and personal level.](#)

<sup>12</sup>Dieter, C.A., et al. (2018). Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 2015. [U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1441.](#)

<sup>13</sup>Scott M. Alpert, Ph.D., P.E., Hazen & Sawyer, "[Building a Regulatory Framework for Water Reuse in Ohio](#)," MORPC Water Reuse Forum (March 31, 2026)

The Claim	The Facts
	Ohio is moving toward greater transparency: in March 2026, two state representatives introduced legislation to track data center water usage monthly and annually, giving utilities and local jurisdictions the data they need for resource planning.

### Bottom Line

The most data-center-dense region in the country is using less than half the water it contracted for. In Loudoun County, Virginia—anchoring roughly 100 million square feet of built and planned data centers—actual reclaimed-water demand averages 2 to 3.5 million gallons per day against a contracted capacity of approximately 8 mgd, with peak summer days reaching only 4 to 5 mgd. None of it comes from the region's drinking-water supply. For comparison, industrial manufacturing consumes ~5% of U.S. freshwater withdrawals while data center water consumption sits at less than 0.1% of national withdrawals.

### 3. Energy

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers are driving up electricity bills for Ohio residents and putting the cost of new generation onto everyday ratepayers."</b></p> <p>This is the most politically active claim in 2026. It typically asserts that data center load growth in central Ohio is forcing AEP and other utilities to build new generation, with the cost recovered through residential rate increases—and that, if AI workloads become more efficient, ratepayers will be left holding stranded infrastructure costs.</p>	<p>In July 2025, PUCO approved the AEP Ohio Data Center Tariff requiring <b>large data centers (25 MW+) to pay for 85% of contracted capacity for 12 years even if they use less</b>, with exit penalties equal to three years of minimum charges. The Ohio Consumers' Counsel co-signed the agreement specifically to protect residential ratepayers from stranded-cost risk.<sup>14,15</sup></p> <p>Behind-the-meter generation is reducing pressure on the shared grid, not adding to it. In the past year, the <b>Ohio Power Siting Board has approved over 2GW of behind-the-meter natural gas generation</b> across Ohio. SB Energy has partnered with AEP to build 9.2 GW of new gas generation and invest \$4.2 billion in Ohio transmission, with a \$40 million Community Benefits Agreement attached.<sup>16,17</sup></p> <p>The White House Ratepayer Protection Pledge (March 2026) requires hyperscalers and AI companies to <b>build, bring, or buy the energy they need</b> and protect American consumers from price hikes attributable to data center infrastructure. All major end users have signed it.<sup>18</sup></p>

#### Bottom Line

Data centers are large electricity users, and Ohio data center demand is projected to roughly double from ~5.3% of state demand in 2025 to ~11% by 2030. But the leap from "big user" to "residential rate increase" is not supported by state-level price data, the Berkeley/Brattle research on what is actually driving bills, or the PUCO tariff structure that requires data centers to absorb stranded-cost risk through 12-year minimum charges. The protections residents want—minimum-charge tariffs, behind-the-meter generation, and the federal Ratepayer Protection Pledge—are already in place.

<sup>14</sup>Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) [Order, July 9, 2025 — AEP Ohio Data Center Tariff](#).

<sup>15</sup>Macallan Communications (March 2026). [Ohio Data Centers: The Backlash, the Facts, and the Story — Daily Energy Insider briefing on AEP Ohio Data Center Tariff](#).

<sup>16</sup>Ohio Power Siting Board (2025–2026). [OPSB Generation Projects 1/1/25 – 12/31/25](#).

<sup>17</sup>U.S. Department of Energy (March 20, 2026). [Fact Sheet: DOE Ensures Affordable Energy Access in Ohio While Powering the Future of AI](#).

<sup>18</sup>The White House (March 4, 2026). [Ratepayer Protection Pledge](#).

## 4. Property Taxes & Abatements

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers don't pay property taxes—they receive 100% abatements that shift the tax burden onto residents."</b></p> <p>This claim typically frames property tax abatements as a giveaway and asserts that abated facilities pay nothing, while local governments and residents pick up the difference.</p>	<p>Real estate taxes on land cannot be abated in Ohio. The land under a data center pays from day one and continues to pay even during a building tax abatement. In the New Albany cluster alone, school districts received <b>\$2.67M (Licking Heights), \$2.51M (Johnstown-Monroe), and \$1.93M (New Albany-Plain Local) in 2024 from data center land alone</b>—equal to 4.8%, 9.2%, and 2.5% of their operating budgets, respectively.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>Data center buildings are appraised at <b>\$225–\$300 per SF</b> by Franklin and Licking County auditors, versus \$60–\$100 per SF for typical industrial or manufacturing buildings—so when abatements expire (or are partial), the underlying real estate tax base is multiples larger.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>In Union County in 2025, AWS was the <b>7th-largest corporate property taxpayer</b> at \$485,352—ahead of established corporate citizens like Nestle and Kroger—despite having an active abatement structure in place.<sup>20</sup></p> <p>Even with a 100%, the <b>effective abatement in Union County is approximately 75%</b> once Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) are factored in. PILOTs are not optional in negotiated agreements.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>Ohio’s agricultural land is taxed far below market value under the Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) program. Conversion to commercial/industrial use—even with an abatement—produces multiples more revenue than CAUV taxation.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>Looking forward, data center buildouts in Licking County will produce: <b>Meta ~\$17.0M/year, AWS ~\$4.8M/year, Google ~\$5.5M/year</b> in real estate taxes at full buildout and abatement expiration—figures unattainable from agricultural or even typical industrial use of the same parcels.<sup>19</sup></p>

### Bottom Line

The premise that abated data centers "pay nothing" is factually incorrect. Land taxes are not abatable; building appraisals are 2–4x typical industrial; PILOTs reduce paper abatements to roughly

<sup>19</sup>New Albany Company (March 2, 2026). [School District Revenue From Data Centers; New Albany cluster](#).

<sup>20</sup>Union County, Ohio (2025). [Understanding Data Centers: Community & Economic Impacts](#).

75% in Ohio practice; and the post-abatement tax base is far larger than what the parcel would have produced under agricultural or typical industrial use.

## 5. School Districts

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers strain school districts and starve them of revenue."</b></p> <p>Opponents argue that abatements deprive school districts of property tax revenue while data center growth indirectly increases housing demand and student headcount, shifting costs onto homeowners through future levies.</p>	<p>Data centers do not directly generate students. They have low employment headcount per square foot, so they do not produce the housing demand or enrollment growth that residential or large manufacturing development typically does. All revenue flows in without offsetting cost.</p> <p>School districts receive direct, unabatable revenue from data center land. In the New Albany cluster in 2024 (with most data centers still in active abatement), Johnstown-Monroe Schools received <b>\$2.5M (9.2% of operating budget) from data center land alone.</b><sup>21</sup></p> <p>Ohio law requires school district consent for abatements greater than 75%. School districts use this leverage to negotiate PILOTs that flow directly to the district. The AWS Marysville agreement <b>directs roughly 80% of a \$1.0M annual PILOT to the school district.</b><sup>22</sup></p> <p>New Albany has streamlined the abatement process through blanket school district revenue-sharing agreements: districts pre-approve 100% abatements in exchange for a fixed share of city revenue, eliminating case-by-case negotiation.</p> <p>In addition to tax revenue, <b>data centers fund substantial direct school programming.</b> AWS has funded three "Think Big Spaces" in Jonathan Alder School District serving ~2,300 students annually, hosts Girls' Tech Day STEM events, sponsors Space Night (1,500+ attendees in 2025), and partners with Tolles Career Center on cybersecurity certification pathways.<sup>21</sup></p>

### Bottom Line

Data centers are an unusually favorable revenue source for school districts: high real estate appraisals, no offsetting student demand, un-abatable land taxes from day one, PILOT leverage under Ohio's 75% abatement-consent rule, and post-abatement revenues in the \$5M-\$17M range per facility. The data center-school relationship in central Ohio is not zero-sum—it is one of the largest single sources of incremental school district revenue available.

<sup>21</sup>New Albany Company (March 2, 2026). [School District Revenue From Data Centers; New Albany cluster](#)

<sup>22</sup>Union County, Ohio (2025). [Understanding Data Centers: Community & Economic Impacts.](#)

## 6. Sales Tax Incentives

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Ohio's data center sales tax exemption is an unjustified \$141 million-per-year giveaway. Without the exemption, the data centers would still come here."</b></p> <p>This claim is the basis for the legislative effort to override Governor DeWine's veto and repeal the sales tax exemption. It typically asserts that Ohio has already "won" the data center industry and no longer needs to incentivize it, and that the foregone revenue could be redirected to other public priorities.</p>	<p><b>Of 36 states with a data center sales tax exemption, Ohio is unique in that the exemption is discretionary</b>, not automatic. To qualify, a developer must collaborate with local economic development officials and JobsOhio, then apply to the Ohio Tax Credit Authority, which makes its decision with guidance from the Ohio Department of Development. Projects can receive full, partial, or no exemption.<sup>23</sup></p> <p>Data center server <b>equipment is replaced every 3–5 years</b> at multi-hundred-million-dollar cost cycles. The 7–8% Ohio sales tax on each refresh is a major site-selection input. Without the exemption, the math moves projects to one of the more than 30 states that offer it automatically.</p> <p><b>The exemption is not a static giveaway—it is a multiplier on tax revenue Ohio would not otherwise receive.</b> AWS has invested \$39.9B in data center construction and operations in Ohio since 2015—surpassing the \$23B committed by the end of this decade. Without the exemption, none of the recurring property tax, PILOT, NCA Development Charge, income tax, or construction payroll revenue exists in Ohio. Communities hosting these facilities split \$9.2 million in revenue from those investments.<sup>24</sup></p>

### Bottom Line

The Ohio sales tax exemption is not automatic and not unconditional. Over 30 other states offer the same incentive on more generous terms. Repealing it would not redirect \$141.8M to other priorities; it would relocate future projects to states where the math works, eliminating the much larger downstream revenue streams (property tax, PILOT, NCA charge, payroll income tax) those projects generate. The best legislative path is pursuing targeted reforms—cap, term, conditions—not blanket repeal.

<sup>23</sup>[Ohio Revised Code § 122.175](#), "Tax exemption for sale, storage, use, or other consumption of computer data center equipment" (effective September 30, 2025; enacted by House Bill 96, 136th General Assembly).

<sup>24</sup>New Albany Community Authority disclosure (2024) cited in Toledo Blade Editorial Board (November 4, 2025).

[Editorial: Lesson from New Albany on data centers.](#)

## 7. Noise

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers are loud industrial sites that disturb neighborhoods at all hours."</b></p> <p>This claim cites high decibel readings from cooling towers, diesel backup generators, on-site gas turbines, and rooftop fans, often pointing to widely-publicized complaint cases in northern Virginia, Atlanta-area suburbs, and elsewhere where data centers were sited near existing residential.</p>	<p>Reported noise levels from data centers range from 60 to 90 decibels depending on equipment, density, and proximity.<sup>25</sup> The same range, translated to everyday sources, spans from a normal household conversation to a gas-powered lawnmower. The high end is real—and almost always traces to facilities built without the buffering and equipment-level controls that modern Ohio zoning and design review now require. It should also be noted that decibel estimates are at the equipment, not the nearby residences.</p> <p>Successful noise mitigation efforts include: equipment-level acoustic treatment (foam, panels, silencers, sound blankets on chillers, fans, and generators), perimeter soundproofing (acoustic barriers, insulated walls, rooftop shielding), quieter cooling technologies (immersion cooling, low-noise chillers), and site planning with natural buffers (vegetation, distance from residential, zoning controls).</p> <p>Backup generators rarely run—typically only during monthly testing and grid outages.<sup>26</sup></p> <p>Ohio <b>host communities are building noise mitigation into the zoning approval itself</b>, not relying on post-hoc complaints. The Marysville South PUD rezoning expanded building setbacks from as little as 10 feet to <b>200 feet for buildings (150 feet for pavement)</b>, added a 12-foot landscaped mound with 6 feet of additional landscape material along the residential edge, and routes operational traffic exclusively to Industrial Parkway.<sup>26</sup></p> <p><b>Data centers are subject to the same noise ordinance as every other business in Marysville</b> and other Ohio host communities. Noise complaints in problem jurisdictions elsewhere typically stem from absent or weak local ordinances, not from the technology itself.<sup>26</sup></p>

### Bottom Line

Noise complaints are real where data centers have been sited without buffering, without setback discipline, or in areas with weak local ordinances. Mitigation toolkits are well-established, mature,

<sup>25</sup>Yañez-Barnuevo, M. (March 23, 2026). [Communities are raising noise pollution concerns about data centers](#). Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI).

<sup>26</sup>City of Marysville. (2025). [Data Center FAQs](#).

and being built into Ohio zoning approvals as a condition of permitting—not negotiated after the fact.

## 8. Economic Impact

The Claim	The Facts
<p><b>"Data centers create no real economic value. They take farmland, drain utilities, and leave little behind for the community."</b></p> <p>This is the catch-all claim that bundles the others: that data centers are extractive, that they don't generate broad community benefit, that they will leave when subsidies run out, and that the land conversion is a net loss to the host community.</p>	<p>AWS alone has <b>invested \$39.9B in data center construction and operations in Ohio</b> since 2015—surpassing the \$23B committed by the end of this decade. In Union County alone, AWS represents <b>\$4.1 billion in total investment, \$645 million in GDP contributed, and 2,360 FTE jobs supported.</b><sup>27,27</sup></p> <p>Data centers are designed for decades of operation and require hundreds of millions to billions of dollars in upfront, immobile capital investment.<sup>28</sup></p> <p>Communities can capture revenue beyond conventional property tax through New Community Authorities (NCAs). <b>The New Albany NCA collected ~\$10.3 million in 2024 from data centers</b> on only ~3,100 acres that were only ~40% built out—and NCA charges are not subject to abatement.<sup>29</sup></p> <p><b>Data centers catalyze further development:</b> they validate sites in the eyes of technology and advanced manufacturing users, and they pull forward utility and road infrastructure investments that benefit subsequent projects in the same corridor.</p> <p>Operational impact on local services is minimal: low traffic generation, low demand on police and fire (data centers have substantial built-in security and life-safety systems), and no student generation. Tax revenue flows in without offsetting public service cost.</p> <p>Construction income tax—often overlooked—is a major recurring revenue source. New Albany had <b>~3,500 daily construction jobs across multiple data center projects in 2025</b>, and the city collects municipal income tax on those wages. Construction phases at hyperscale campuses can run a decade or more.<sup>28</sup></p>

<sup>27</sup>New Albany Community Authority disclosure (2024) cited in Toledo Blade Editorial Board (November 4, 2025). [Editorial: Lesson from New Albany on data centers.](#)

<sup>28</sup>Union County, Ohio. (February 20, 2026). [Understanding Data Centers—Community & Economic Impacts presentation.](#)

<sup>29</sup>Benefits of Data Center Development to the Local Community (November 8, 2025). [New Albany cluster case study, drawing on New Albany Company experience.](#)

## Bottom Line

The economic case for Ohio data center development is not the sales tax exemption—it is the stacked revenue model that follows it: unabatable land taxes from day one, PILOT payments through the abatement period, NCA development charges that no abatement touches, construction-payroll income tax across multi-year build cycles, full property tax post-abatement, and large recurring corporate citizens (AWS, Google, Meta, Microsoft) embedded in school and workforce programs. The framing of "farmland lost for nothing" misses the comparison that actually matters: CAUV-rate farm taxation versus the multi-million-dollar annual revenue streams data centers produce.