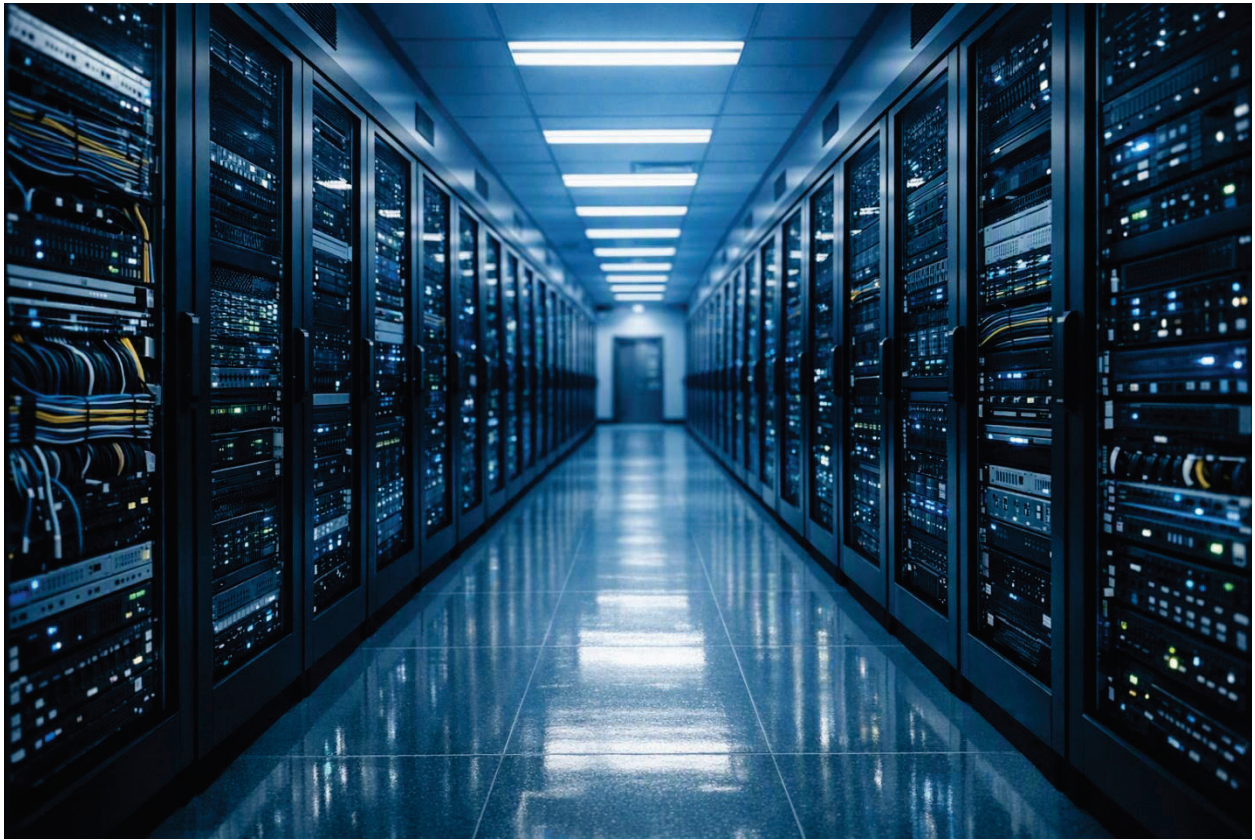




From the Executive Director – MILO Coding Academy

Data Centers in Our Communities

Building Opportunity for Underrepresented Youth and
Families



*A community briefing on AI infrastructure, accountability, workforce pathways, and
local opportunity.*

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Introduction

Across the country, communities are hearing more about data centers because of the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, streaming services, online banking, healthcare technology, and other digital services. This document explains what data centers are, addresses legitimate community concerns, and highlights how underrepresented youth and families can benefit when development includes accountability, transparency, and local opportunity.

For minority youth and families historically underrepresented in technology industries, understanding why data centers are being built is essential to shaping decisions about their impact, benefits, and long-term value to the community.

What Is a Data Center?

A data center is a secure facility filled with computers, servers, networking equipment, and cooling systems that store, process, and manage digital information. Every time someone sends an email, streams a video, uses online banking, schedules a doctor's appointment online, or interacts with an AI tool, a data center is working behind the scenes.

Think of a data center as the digital equivalent of a power station, water plant, or transportation hub. Just as roads move people and goods, data centers move and process information that powers modern life.

A Brief History of Data Centers

Modern data centers trace their roots to early computers such as ENIAC in the 1940s. As computers became smaller, faster, and more powerful, the growth of the internet in the 1990s led organizations to build dedicated facilities for storing and processing digital information. Today, data centers support cloud computing, social media, e-commerce, and AI technologies used worldwide.

[\[datacenter...wledge.com\]](#), [\[wri.org\]](#)

The current expansion of data centers is largely driven by artificial intelligence, which requires enormous amounts of computing power to train and operate advanced systems. [\[brookings.edu\]](#), [\[forbes.com\]](#)

Why Data Centers Matter to Our Communities

Data centers are essential infrastructure for the modern economy, supporting schools, hospitals, emergency services, businesses, government agencies, and AI applications that depend on reliable digital systems. [\[cbsnews.com\]](#), [\[brookings.edu\]](#)



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For communities, data centers can provide:

- Construction jobs during development.
- Technical and operational careers after construction.
- Increased local investment.
- Opportunities for workforce training.
- Potential partnerships with schools and community organizations.
- Exposure to technology careers for young people. [\[ncrc.org\]](https://www.ncrc.org/), [\[gatech.edu\]](https://www.gatech.edu/)

These opportunities are strongest when development includes intentional workforce programs, school partnerships, and community-based training that prepare underrepresented students for careers in IT, cybersecurity, networking, cloud computing, engineering, and AI.

Understanding Community Concerns

Many families have legitimate concerns about data centers. The most common concerns involve:

Electricity Use

Data centers require large amounts of electricity to power servers and cooling systems. Residents often worry that growing energy demand could place pressure on local power grids and increase electricity costs. [\[yahoo.com\]](https://www.yahoo.com/), [\[news.harvard.edu\]](https://www.news.harvard.edu/)

Water Use

Some data centers use water-based cooling systems. Depending on the design and climate, facilities may require significant amounts of water to keep equipment from overheating. This has led to concerns about local water resources. [\[keranews.org\]](https://www.keranews.org/), [\[eesi.org\]](https://www.eesi.org/)

Environmental Impact

Citizens are also concerned about land use, noise, infrastructure strain, and ensuring that growth benefits local residents rather than only large corporations. [\[wri.org\]](https://www.wri.org/), [\[news.harvard.edu\]](https://www.news.harvard.edu/)

These concerns should not be ignored. Instead, communities should ask questions and demand transparency from developers. [\[yahoo.com\]](https://www.yahoo.com/), [\[wri.org\]](https://www.wri.org/)

How Communities Can Negotiate for Better Outcomes

A key message for underrepresented communities is that data center development does not have to be a one-sided arrangement.



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Local governments, residents, community organizations, and school districts can negotiate conditions that protect community interests, including:

- Requiring developers to help fund infrastructure improvements.
- Requesting investments in renewable energy.
- Establishing water conservation requirements.
- Requiring transparent reporting of water and electricity usage.
- Creating workforce training programs.
- Supporting STEM education in local schools.
- Funding scholarships and internships for local students.
- Prioritizing hiring from the surrounding community.

Communities can work with developers to ensure that environmental concerns are addressed while still benefiting from economic and educational opportunities. [\[wri.org\]](http://wri.org), [\[keranews.org\]](http://keranews.org)

Why Minority Youth Should Be Included

Many minority children use technology every day without seeing how it works or where it can lead. As AI becomes a larger force in the economy, underrepresented youth must have opportunities to become creators of technology, not only consumers of it. [\[brookings.edu\]](http://brookings.edu), [\[forbes.com\]](http://forbes.com)

Data centers provide a practical way to introduce young people to careers in:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- Cloud Computing
- Network Engineering
- Software Development
- Data Analytics
- Facilities Operations
- Electrical and Mechanical Engineering

When data center projects are connected to local schools, mentoring programs, and workforce initiatives, they can help close opportunity gaps and create practical pathways into high-paying technology and operations careers.



Conclusion

Data centers are now a core part of the digital economy and a foundation for modern AI technologies. Concerns about energy use, water consumption, and environmental impact are legitimate, but communities also have the right and responsibility to negotiate protections, accountability, and local benefits.

For minority and underrepresented communities, the central question is not only whether a data center is built, but whether that investment delivers measurable educational opportunities, workforce programs, internships, scholarships, and career pathways for local youth. By staying informed and engaged, parents, community leaders, and students can help ensure these projects support both technological progress and community empowerment.