



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Macon County, IL – July 29th, 2026

Decatur “Let's Talk Data Centers” Event Explores Next Steps for Concerned Community Members

DECATUR — Community members gathered at the Decatur Public Library Wednesday evening for a presentation and discussion focusing on the growing impact of data centers on the water supplies, energy demand and utility costs, noise pollution, and environmental health—and how communities can respond locally and statewide.

The event, *Let's Talk Data Centers*, was hosted by Soy City Indivisible and presented by Prairie Rivers Network, Citizens Utility Board, and Illinois People's Action.

“We want our neighbors to be educated on the risks that data centers pose to our city, towns, and county, as well as clarification on the talking points used by data center developers to woo communities like ours into allowing these complexes to be built,” **said Adam Herrmann of Soy City Indivisible.**

Attendees discussed local moratoria, how local communities might ensure good governance regulations are enacted, and the POWER Act—pending legislation designed to hold data center developers accountable while protecting Illinois ratepayers. The measure did not pass during the spring 2026 legislative session,

but it will be back on the schedule during this fall's legislative veto session [at the urging of Governor JB Pritzker](#).

Communities across Illinois are grappling with data center proposals seeking local approval. So far this year, some data centers across Illinois have received local approval—and some have been denied. The approved data centers total over 5 gigawatts of energy demand, which is more than the demand of the entire city of Chicago.

“For the second year in a row, we’re seeing significant increases for energy prices, and data centers are driving these increases,” **said Scott Allen, Energy Policy Specialist with the Citizen’s Utility Board**. “Until we do something about it, we should expect more of the same next year.”

Presenters also explained the relationship between AI data centers and the proposed Broadwing Energy Center in Decatur. The center’s power, generated by gas turbines, would be purchased by Google to power their Midwest data center portfolio, and 90% of its CO₂ emissions would be injected into the Mt. Simon sandstone formation under Lake Decatur. “We’re concerned about CO₂ leaks, increased air pollution, and the vast amount of water that would be used by the plant from Lake Decatur,” said Dawn Dannenbring of Illinois People’s Action. “Our lake is already under vast stress. People need to be aware of the enormous risks involved with this project.”

While the event focused on local and statewide action, recent news of possible data center developments in the region was also discussed.

In response to the rapid expansion of data centers across Illinois, event organizers have collaborated with concerned community members in several Illinois cities and towns to hold similar community conversations, providing the opportunity to learn about the POWER Act and discuss statewide and local solutions for data center impacts. Additional events are planned statewide.

“We’re at a critical moment. Data centers are coming faster than ever, and communities are dealing with the consequences in silos,” **said Andrew Rehn, Director of Climate Policy at Prairie Rivers Network**. “The state needs to lead and the POWER Act will provide every community in the state with the protections they need when a data center comes to town.”

Soy City Indivisible encourages community members to visit their local issues pages on their [website](#) and voice their opinions to local elected officials

regarding a 12-month data center moratorium at the county and city levels as well as the Broadwing Energy Center and CCS project.

[Watch a recording of the event here.](#)

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