

**DRAFT**

**Resolution Recommending That the Washtenaw County Board Of Commissioners Act on  
Serious Public Health, Energy, Water, Worker and Climate Concerns Related  
To Proposed Data Centers in the County**

**WASHTENAW COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL**

September 2, 2025

*The Resolution was developed by the WCEC Advisory and Policy Committee and Chair Deatrick.*

WHEREAS, on November 18, 2018, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners (“BOC”) established the Washtenaw County Environmental Council (“WCEC” or “Council”) by a unanimous vote; and

WHEREAS, the Council was tasked with “developing recommendations for environmental policy and organizational recommendations for Washtenaw County government in order to: achieve net-zero emissions for County operations, reduce county contributions to climate change; protect the County’s air, land, water, food network, and both mental and public health as related to the environment; and prioritize environmental justice, and intergenerational justice related to the environment”; and

WHEREAS, the Council is also tasked with developing and maintaining “input and dialogue with the wider Washtenaw County community”; and

WHEREAS, the Council has a dedicated Labor seat, and the *Resilient Washtenaw* plan commits the County to working with community partners from labor; and

WHEREAS, in a presentation to the WCEC made on May 27, 2025, Michelle Martinez of UM SEAS summarized the potential harms of data centers:

- Rapid growth in direct and indirect energy consumption associated with data centers high energy use can put a strain on existing local infrastructure leading to prices hikes, overload, resource prioritization issues, and increased emissions from downstream power sourcing
  - **This additional energy consumption would make the county’s goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035 much harder, and possibly impossible, to reach.**
- With wholesale electrical costs rising on average 20% in areas which have data centers, Washtenaw County will likely see large increases in energy usage. Without guardrails in place, the burden of paying for this will fall on County rate payers.
- Data center operations rely on both the significant intake and outflow of water for system cooling leading to unregulated issues of resource consumption, water quality impairment, or run-off. For instance, a data center in Newton County, GA is using 9 million gallons per day, equal to 30,000 households (NYT)
- Data centers generators can run from 85-100 dBA (a dBA is a measure of sound levels). That far exceeds safe levels which are capped at 70 dBA. The sound can be detected up to 3 miles away. These high levels can impact surrounding communities, causing headaches, stress and

sleep disturbances, as well as anxiety, memory, concentration issues, increased diabetes risk, and cardiovascular risks.. In children, the sound levels can decrease growth hormones. Wildlife are also harmed by the sound levels, which disrupt animal communication and can force new migration patterns.

- Data centers are projected to cause nearly 1,300 deaths annually in the U.S. by 2030, resulting in a public health burden of over \$20 Billion; and

WHEREAS, at least four data centers — two in Ypsilanti Township, one in Saline Township and one in Augusta Township — are known to be proposed or in development in Washtenaw County at the time this Resolution was approved by the WCEC; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Environmental Council recommends that the Board of Commissioners direct staff to prioritize development, with review and input by the Washtenaw County Environmental Council, of informational outreach materials for local governments, which have the relevant zoning authority, in order to support their due diligence in reviewing rezoning requests and proposed site plans for data centers. Those materials are to include recommendations that local municipalities require petitioners to:

- Submit data on expected water use and water sources,
- Submit data on energy use and planned sources for their operation,
- Submit an environmental impact statement detailing potential impacts on water resources, (including surface water and groundwater quality and quantity), air quality, surrounding wildlife
- Submit a noise study detailing impacts of noise on surrounding property owners,
- Hold at least two accessible, well-publicized public hearings, prior to which they release the above data, statements and studies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the WCEC recommends that the Board of Commissioners direct staff to develop an outreach plan for the above materials, to be implemented with some urgency, to implement it, and to brief both the WCEC and the BOC on the outreach; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Council recommends that the Board of Commissioners urge local governments, as part of any approval process for data centers:

- Require data center developers and operators to publish Water Use Effectiveness measurements at least quarterly,
- Require data center developers and operators to source 100% of their energy from wind, solar, battery, or geo-thermal sources,
- Require data center developers and operators to pay their fair share of any energy consumption over and above their own sources,
- Require data center developers and operators to pay for grid infrastructure, including but not limited to, new or additional electrical substations,
- Require data center developers and operators to commit to union agreements and local hiring targets,
- Require data center developers and operators to provide resources to local governments for their provision of any extra first responder/emergency services and all initial and ongoing

infrastructure costs, with particular attention to cases in which the data center may be exempt from local taxing authority.

Sources:

- Mlive, August 25, 2025. [Data Centers Proposed Across Washtenaw County](#)
- Business Insider, July 28, 2025. [If you live in one of these 13 states, you might have a higher electric bill next year. Blame data centers.](#)
- Tech Target, December 3, 2024. [Understanding the impact of data center noise pollution](#)
- Noise Analysis for PW County Data Centers, June 5, 2024. [Briefing for Prince William County.](#)
- New York Times, August 14, 2025. [Big Tech's A.I. Data Centers are Driving Up Electricity Bills for Everyone](#)
- Science Direct, September 2025. [Global data center expansion and human health: A call for empirical research](#)