

Dear [City Council Member Name],

The rapid expansion of data centers — especially hyperscale AI operations — will undoubtedly inflict serious, lasting damage: from environmental and public health harm to the affordability of basic utilities. Far too much data center construction is being performed with far too little understanding, unproven public benefit, and almost no regulation.

Energy and electricity costs. Data centers already account for roughly 4% of total U.S. electricity use, and that demand is projected to triple by 2030. In North Carolina, 80% of Duke Energy's projected new demand growth is driven by hyperscale data centers, and the utility requested an 18% rate hike on customers even as it reports billions in annual profit. The approved increase was merely 11.6%, but this is still 3 times more than the current rate of inflation. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation has identified data center growth as one of the greatest reliability threats to the U.S. power grid, raising the risk of outages nationwide — and in July 2024, data center operators in Virginia nearly caused blackouts while prioritizing their own facilities during an equipment failure. This demand is being met largely by extending the life of polluting coal plants and rushing new gas turbines online, not by clean energy.

Water. Training a single large AI model can consume hundreds of millions of gallons of water. A single data center can use as much water as a city of 50,000 people, and roughly two-thirds of data centers built since 2022 sit in water-stressed regions. North Carolina has seen years of worsening drought, with 97 of our 100 counties currently affected. Communities elsewhere have already seen taps run dry and water rates spike by double digits after a data center moved in. Climate change is set to exacerbate water scarcity — even without the massive construction of data centers.

Air quality and noise. Backup diesel generators and unpermitted gas turbines release pollutants linked to asthma, cancer, heart attacks, and cognitive decline; nationwide, air pollution from data centers could cause hundreds of thousands of additional asthma cases and over a thousand premature deaths annually by 2030. Continuous generator and HVAC noise — sometimes exceeding safe hearing thresholds — is linked to sleep disruption, cardiovascular disease, and reduced property values for nearby homes.

Land and heat. The average data center site now covers roughly 224 acres, with the largest hyperscale campuses exceeding 1,000 acres, often displacing farmland and rural land. Farmland is becoming more scarce just as the need for food increases with the growing population. These facilities also create localized "heat islands," raising surrounding surface temperatures by several degrees and in extreme cases by over 16 degrees Fahrenheit.

Public cost, private benefit. North Carolina offers multiple state sales and use tax exemption programs for data centers, currently costing an estimated \$50 million a year — a figure projected to rise to roughly \$400 million annually, a 700% increase, if announced projects proceed. Local governments have layered on additional property tax exemptions with little

transparency or public accounting of what is being given away. This will push more of the cost of public services onto individuals rather than having this burden shared by the commercial and industrial sector as well. The public benefit case for this trade-off has not been made. Data centers are NOT job creators. Although the investment in construction provides some temporary jobs, once the construction is complete, data centers run with a skeleton crew, completely negating any public investments in the long term.

Job displacement. The same AI infrastructure these facilities are built to power is projected to displace workers on a massive scale — some estimates suggest up to 400 million jobs worldwide, with one analysis projecting AI-related disruption could affect roughly 15% of the global workforce between 2016 and 2030. Surveys show a significant share of employers already expect to reduce headcount as AI automates tasks. These impacts are expected to fall disproportionately on workers of color. In other words, the communities asked to absorb the environmental and infrastructure costs of data centers are not the primary beneficiaries of what those facilities produce — and may instead see their own livelihoods undercut by it.

I am asking you to advocate for the **establishment of a 32-month moratorium on new data center development in Greensboro** to allow extensive research into the environmental and societal implications of their construction. This is not a fringe position: many municipalities have passed legislation calling for a moratorium on AI data center construction, and a growing bipartisan coalition of organizations nationwide is calling for the same.

Our community deserves a real voice in decisions that will shape our air, water, energy costs, and land for decades to come. I urge you to act on our behalf before further approvals lock in irreversible harm.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[Date]