

WHAT IS A DATA CENTER?

Data centers are coming to Montana.

Data centers are huge warehouses full of computer servers and other computer equipment that powers artificial intelligence and other technologies. Oftentimes, as is the case here in Montana, instead of one large warehouse, data center proposals are actually multi-hundred or multi-thousand acre campuses with a ton of infrastructure sprawling across it. For example, Quantica is proposing a data center project in Broadview (30 miles north of Billings) that would cover 5,000 acres.

WHY THE SUDDEN DATA CENTER BOOM?

The United States is going through a rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) technology right now. Four of the biggest AI companies - Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, and Meta - have poured enormous amounts of money into the AI world. Nvidia, considered an industry-leader, recently made a \$100 billion deal with OpenAI (Chat GPT maker) in 2025. Microsoft announced plans to invest around \$80 billion in data center development in 2025. Meta and Alphabet (the parent companies of Facebook and Google, respectively) have announced plans to invest a combined \$157 billion in AI technology as well.

Coupled with these mind boggling investments are actions from the Trump Administration focused on AI deregulation and accelerated permitting for large-scale AI data centers. These government actions, paired with the huge investments from the world's biggest companies, has led to an industry that prioritizes higher profits for Wall Street and leaves everyday people dealing with the financial and environmental harm.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

All across the country people are organizing, fighting back, and refocusing the conversation on the health of everyday people and our communities. From Tennessee, to Virginia, to Tucson, diverse coalitions are building power together and are successfully resisting what some say was inevitable.

The power needed to push back comes from Montanans coming together. If you are interested in getting involved in this work, let us know.

Current projects proposed in MT

Quantica Project

- Developer: Quantica
- Location: Broadview, MT
- Size: 500mw with planned expansion to 1000mw
- 5,000 acre campus

Sabey Project

- Developer: Sabey Data Centers
- Location: Butte, MT
- Size: ~250mw
- Campus size: unknown

Atlas Project

- Developer: Atlas Power Group
- Location: Butte, MT
- Size: ~150mw
- Campus size: unknown



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WHAT ARE THE BIG IMPACTS DATA CENTERS WILL HAVE?

1 Financial Impacts to Ratepayers

To service these energy-intensive projects, utilities will need to invest in new generation and/or upgrades to their transmission system. Without regulatory protections put in place by our Public Service Commission, these costs will be borne by everyday ratepayers and could lead to monthly energy bills for Montana families and small businesses skyrocketing.

2 Water Impacts

In order for data centers to maintain a high level of performance and prevent overheating, constant cooling is required. Depending on the size of the project, this could require tens to hundreds of millions of gallons of water per year.¹

3 Reliance on Outdated Energy Generation

Data centers will significantly increase energy demand in Montana. NorthWestern Energy currently provides around 759 megawatts of energy to all of their Montana customers per day.² If all the current project proposals in Montana came to fruition, they would be on the hook for an additional 1,400 megawatts. Utilities will likely look to aging fossil fuel infrastructure to provide this power and put the high-costs associated with it on the backs of ratepayers.

POLICY EXAMPLES

Type of Policy	Explanation
Creation of a separate rate class for data centers	A separate rate class would ensure that data centers cover the costs of grid expansions and upgrades needed to provide service to them (i.e., pay their fair share). This insulates the ratepayer from subsidizing the development of these projects.
Transparency measures	Require data center developers to disclose costs and resource usage, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Energy and water consumption• New infrastructure needed• Emissions output• Cost / bill impact on utility ratepayers• Tax exemptions received

¹ Terry Nguyen & Ben Green, "What Happens When Data Centers Come To Town?", University of Michigan's Ford School of Science, Technology, and Public Policy, July 2025

² NorthWestern Energy 2024 Annual Report

1
HIGHER ENERGY BILLS

2
MASSIVE AMOUNTS
of water consumed

3
2x
energy demand from aging fossil fuel infrastructure

