

Every day, people rely on digital services such as online banking, social media, healthcare portals, navigation systems, and online learning platforms. Modern society depends heavily on internet-based technology, and none of these systems would function without data centers. As the demand for digital services continues to grow, the need for large-scale data center development grows alongside it. However, many communities express concerns regarding the rapid construction of these facilities. Common concerns include environmental impact, the loss of farmland and residential space, increased traffic, and noise and light pollution. Although these concerns are understandable, responsible planning, transparency, and the use of union labor can help bridge the gap between community concerns and technological advancement.

One of the most important ways to ensure responsible development is through the use of skilled union labor. Union workers provide communities with highly trained and reliable tradespeople who are held to strict safety and quality standards. These standards help guarantee that projects are completed safely, efficiently, and correctly. In contrast, non-union contractors may sometimes cut corners in order to save time or money, which can create safety risks and lead to lower-quality construction. Data centers are massive, highly technical facilities that require precision and long-term durability, making skilled labor especially important.

In addition to quality construction, union labor creates valuable career opportunities for Indiana workers. Indiana's Graduation Pathways program allows students who do not wish to pursue a traditional college education to earn industry-recognized certifications and career experience while still in high school. Many of these students can transition directly into apprenticeships and skilled trades careers after graduation. As more data centers are developed, these projects can provide stable employment opportunities for both younger workers entering

the trades and experienced tradespeople seeking long-term careers. In return, unions provide the workforce necessary to complete these projects responsibly and professionally.

Another major concern surrounding data center development is the fear that these facilities will consume farmland or disrupt residential communities. To address these concerns, companies must communicate openly and honestly with residents before construction begins. Community members should have opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback, and better understand how these projects will impact their area. Transparency can help reduce fear and build trust between companies and the public.

Environmental responsibility should also be a priority during both the construction and operation of data centers. Companies should work closely with environmental experts and agencies such as the United States Environmental Protection Agency to explore sustainable solutions. This could include investing in renewable energy sources such as solar power, improving water recycling systems used for cooling, and researching cleaner long-term energy options. Responsible environmental practices can help reduce the impact of these facilities while still allowing communities to benefit from technological growth.

Additionally, Indiana has an opportunity to recycle abandoned industrial areas through data center development. Rather than building solely on undeveloped land, companies could invest in former industrial zones. Indiana currently has 150,000 acres of abandoned industrial land, mainly throughout areas of the Rust Belt, including cities such as Gary. Redeveloping these areas could create jobs, attract investment, and provide economic growth for communities that have struggled with poverty and population decline for decades. Transforming abandoned spaces into centers of innovation would benefit both local residents and Indiana's economy as a whole.

Data centers can also provide long-term benefits to local communities. These facilities generate significant tax revenue that can be reinvested into public services such as schools, roads, hospitals, and emergency services. When developed responsibly, data centers can strengthen communities far beyond the initial construction process. Combined with the use of union labor, these projects can create both immediate and lasting benefits for Indiana workers and families.

Ultimately, responsible data center development depends on cooperation between companies, local communities, environmental agencies, and Indiana's union workforce. Through transparency, sustainable planning, and skilled union labor, Indiana has the opportunity to support technological growth while still protecting its communities and workers. By balancing innovation with responsibility, Indiana can set a national example for how data centers should be developed in the future.