

June 24, 2026

Honorable Council:

I support Emergency Ordinance 26-026, relating to Growth Management; adopting a moratorium on Data Centers within Unincorporated Snohomish County; adding New Sections to Chapter 30.28 SCC and Chapter 30.91d SCC; and declaring an emergency Public Infrastructure and Conservation. This year the Natural Resources Committee of the League of Women Voters concluded its May meeting with a disturbing discussion of the possible entry of large data centers locating in our County. Most of this alarm surrounded a hazy project in Arlington being led by Amazon. Before we closed, we had designated an ad hoc committee to draft questions. That committee forged more than two pages of them and we forwarded to all of you. When we have appealed for experts and speakers to come to us and begin to answer some of those questions, we have met with a constant barrage of "We don't understand the impacts ourselves yet."

We are in a quandary as even our "experts" need more time to debate and determine how to adapt to the AI Revolution within our society. We are entering another year of El Nino impacts. This one more intense than those before. The snow pack that takes us through summer is minimal. From what we can glean the risks of a data center locating here would negatively impact our water resources both as cooling and waste agent, our salmon recovery and ultimately the Climate Commitment Act. Hence, we are in a state of emergency for building permit decisions of this nature.

This is even before a quick glance at the impact to our electric grid infrastructure and cost implications. The social and political impacts are equally open to question. This moratorium, even though brief, would give some space for consultation and exploration of the direction that we would like to take.

Thank you for considering your support for this moratorium.

Respectfully,

Joan Smith
14106 64th Ave. W.
Edmonds, WA 98026
(425) 218-3594

Questions on Locating Data Centers in our County

Policies and Processes

- 1. Does the Snohomish County Council or any of the County departments (e.g. Planning, Natural Resources, Economic Development, Community Development) have existing policies regarding the placement of large load data centers in Snohomish County?**

If no:

- When will policies be developed and will community input be accepted in the process?**

If yes:

- What is the process for accepting applications for and permitting data centers and does it address the necessary infrastructure needed to support the centers? e.g. increased traffic, sewer loads, transmission wires, fire department**
- In what zoning designations are data centers allowed to be located?**
- What exemptions (zoning, taxes, etc.) or considerations might be available to developers of data centers?**
- What are the rules and criteria regarding the use of NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements) and how do those agreements impact what is disclosed and when to the local government and the public?**

- 2. Will the County have any role in the decision about whether or not to approve Project Cascade in the Cascade Industrial Center?**

Economic Impact

Data centers have a reputation for promising lots of jobs to build the center but once construction is completed, few jobs are needed. How will the County assess the value of temporary construction jobs vs. minimal long-term employment?

How will the property tax breaks and incentives be balanced against the lost revenue at the state, county, city, school and other taxing districts? *This an issue with the Cascade Industrial Center since a property tax break is already available for businesses that meet the criteria.*

Data Centers, especially larger ones, require vast amounts of land and are automatically pushing into rural or nearly rural areas. What protections are in place to protect rural and agricultural lands?

Social, Health and Environmental

How will the County ensure environmental justice principles (all people—regardless of race, income, or national origin—have the right to live in safe, healthy environments and have an equal say in environmental policies) are applied to the placement and impacts of data centers?

How will the data center companies be held financially accountable for the potential health conditions citizens may experience due to their operations?

How will the County - or the data center companies - address the strain on our natural resources such as:

- Water – both the supply of fresh water and water waste, effect of steam on any aviation safety at nearby airports
- Air pollution from backup generators' emissions,
- E-waste disposal
- Light and Noise pollution, all day and night

- **Excessive heat, raising day and night temperatures**

How will the County's solution – or the actions the County requires of the Data Center Company – ensure alignment with our Climate Commitment Act pledges?

Public Information

What processes are in place to ensure the public – and County leaders – are aware of the full details for proposed data centers and their potential impact and have the ability to provide input and demand pro-active solutions?