



## **Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council Statement of Principles on Data Centers**

Ohio is positioned to be a national hub for data center construction and job creation, provided we make wise policy decisions. Public debate over data centers has turned from NIMBY-ism into a politicized misinformation campaign led by special interest groups. As a result, some communities have blocked data center development outright, with one opposition group gathering signatures for a statewide ballot initiative to ban all data center construction in Ohio.

The members of the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council want northeast Ohio to be a hub for our state's cyber-physical infrastructure. We advocate for sensible regulations rather than broad data center bans. Thoughtful approval allows local leaders to negotiate community benefits and safeguards that align data center projects with public priorities.

The following principles are intended to promote responsible development, strengthen workforce development in Northeast Ohio through registered apprenticeships, and modernize our electrical grid to meet industrial demand.

**Data centers are critical cyber-physical infrastructure components essential to our region's economic competitiveness.** Data centers are essential to Northeast Ohio's healthcare, education, transportation, finance, public safety, and industrial sectors. Communities that block data center development will forfeit revenue, jobs, and influence while still relying on data centers for essential digital services.

### **Responsible data center development includes:**

- **Creation of long-term, family-sustaining union construction careers with prevailing wages, healthcare, and retirement benefits:**
  - Tens of thousands of Ohio electricians, pipefitters, ironworkers, sheet metal workers, insulators, laborers and other tradespeople have been supporting their families on data center construction jobs for years. The policies that have facilitated these long-term construction careers should stay in place at the state and local levels.
  - Most facilities will require ~7,000 construction workers throughout the project lifecycle.
  - The typical data center will retrofit mechanical, electrical, and technological systems over several year cycles. Continuous maintenance and upgrade cycles create consistent long-term demand for skilled tradespeople.
  
- **Tuition-free registered apprenticeship training for local residents:**

- Data center projects provide structured, long-term work ideal for earn-and-learn apprenticeship training at-scale. Data center projects should help retain young workers in our community and grow Northeast Ohio's construction workforce apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Bottom-up growth in local economies that begins with union construction jobs and apprenticeship:**
  - Data center construction lasts an average of 4-6 years. When projects of this scale hire local trades workforce, local businesses, restaurants, and entertainment venues prosper.
  - Proximity to data centers attracts adjacent industries, creating an ecosystem effect that extends beyond a single data facility.
  - Local construction workers' payroll taxes feed into the tax base of host communities. These funds support local schools, police, fire, emergency services, community programs, and infrastructure.
  - Because data centers use few public services, municipalities and townships will see resources increase without an increase in service demand.
- **Responsible data center development should balance the needs of Ohio's agricultural and industrial sectors:**
  - Decommissioned industrial sites and brownfields should be redeveloped into data centers, as has been proposed in communities across Ohio including Lordstown, Conesville, and Portsmouth.
  - As of October of 2025, data centers occupy roughly 2,000 acres (Source: Columbus Dispatch) of the 13.5 million acres of farmland (Source: USDA National Agricultural Stats Service), meaning data centers currently use .015% of Ohio's farmland.
- **Data centers should pay their own way and be responsible corporate citizens:**
  - PUCO's decision in mid-2025 requires data center owners to pay for 85% of their electricity usage at least over the next 12 years. Data center owners in Ohio will need to invest in research and development of self-sustaining data centers that alleviate burdens on local rate payers.
  - Data centers increasingly rely on closed-loop or air-cooled systems that dramatically reduce water consumption compared to older designs.
  - Data centers should continue meeting the NIOSH-recommended levels for sound exposure (data centers average 55-60 dB at property edges).
- **Policymakers should harness data center development to address another critical issue: power grid modernization and energy independence:**
  - The Cleveland Building Trades supports an all-of-the-above energy approach for Ohio, along with investment in utilities infrastructure. Many data center projects are paired with energy investments or long-term clean power purchasing agreements, accelerating the transition to a more resilient and sustainable grid.