

DATA CENTER OPPOSITION READINESS CHECKLIST

15 questions every developer should answer before announcing a project

Community opposition now moves faster than most project timelines. Some towns are passing moratoriums before a single proposal is filed, and objections are spreading from one community to the next. The developers who fare best are the ones who prepare before the first headline.

How to use it: Answer each question honestly with a yes or a no. Every “no” is a gap in your story, and opponents will be glad to fill it for you. Count your “yes” answers and find your score on page 2.

1. KNOW THE GROUND

BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT

- 01 Do you know what residents believe about data centers, and where they hear it?** ☐ Yes
Neighborhood social media groups, public meetings, local news and national advocacy content ☐ No
- 02 Have you mapped the groups likely to oppose the project, local and national?** ☐ Yes
Their leaders, arguments and channels, plus any moratoriums passed or under debate nearby ☐ No
- 03 Do you know who will vote on the project and what constituents are telling them?** ☐ Yes
Planning commission, county board or council, and any state legislators already weighing in ☐ No

2. BUILD THE FACT BASE

BEFORE ANYONE ASKS

- 04 Can you explain in plain numbers who pays for new power and transmission?** ☐ Yes
Power bills are a top concern. Put any cost-allocation commitment in writing ☐ No
- 05 Can you state projected water use, its source and your cooling technology?** ☐ Yes
Compared to a benchmark residents recognize, with an offer of independent verification ☐ No
- 06 Can you publish modeled noise levels at the property line and a mitigation plan?** ☐ Yes
Setbacks, buffers, equipment design and a commitment to ongoing monitoring ☐ No
- 07 Can you show net local tax revenue after incentives, year by year?** ☐ Yes
Ideally translated into what it means per household or for local schools and services ☐ No
- 08 Are your jobs numbers precise and modest?** ☐ Yes
Construction and permanent roles reported separately. Overpromising costs trust ☐ No

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

\$130B

in U.S. projects blocked or delayed by local opposition, Q1 2026¹

800+

local opposition groups in 49 states, double the prior quarter¹

60%

of Americans uncomfortable with a new data center nearby²

3. LINE UP CREDIBLE VOICES

WHO ELSE WILL SPEAK?

- 09 Have you lined up local validators who will speak from their own experience?** ☐ Yes
Residents, business owners, educators and community leaders with a stake in the outcome ☐ No
- 10 Will a credible third party confirm your key claims on power, water and cost?** ☐ Yes
A utility, regulator or independent expert carries real weight with residents ☐ No
- 11 Can you connect residents with people in towns that already host data centers?** ☐ Yes
Officials and neighbors who can describe the reality, including the tradeoffs ☐ No

4. PREPARE FOR PRESSURE

ANNOUNCEMENT AND BEYOND

- 12 Will your announcement lead with specifics and acknowledge the tradeoffs?** ☐ Yes
Put the community benefit in the first paragraph. Early credibility is hard to take away ☐ No
- 13 Do you have a verified information hub ready to launch on announcement day?** ☐ Yes
One place where residents and reporters can check the facts, updated as the project evolves ☐ No
- 14 Can you spot and correct misinformation within 24 hours?** ☐ Yes
Social and news monitoring, a pre-approved fact base and a clear sign-off process ☐ No
- 15 Are your spokespeople trained to treat hearings like TV interviews?** ☐ Yes
Every public meeting is now a media event, and every answer can become a viral clip ☐ No

YOUR SCORE

READY

13 to 15 “yes” answers

You have the foundation to tell your story first. Keep it current as the project and the conversation evolve.

EXPOSED

9 to 12 “yes” answers

Your gaps are where opposition narratives take root. Close them before you announce.

AT RISK

8 or fewer “yes” answers

The opposition may already be telling your story. Bring in crisis communications support before you go public.

FACING OPPOSITION TO A DATA CENTER PROJECT? TALK TO US BEFORE THE FIRST HEARING.

Red Banyan specializes in crisis communications and cancel culture defense, and we know the data center debate from both sides of the table.

CONTACT RED BANYAN

Go deeper: [Data Center Backlash: A Crisis Communications Guide](#) | [Cancel Culture Response Playbook](#) | [The Cancel Culture Curse by Evan Nierman](#)

Sources: ¹ Data Center Watch, Q1 2026 report. ² Pew Research Center, “Americans’ views of data centers have turned more negative,” Sept. 22, 2026. This checklist is provided for general informational purposes and is not legal advice.