



TMRPA Data Center Engagement Effort

NADO Annual Training Conference
10/21/2026





Background

- Data centers have long been a necessary component of the infrastructure supporting the digital economy
 - **Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning**
 - **Cloud Computing & Business Operations**
 - **Internet Search, Websites & Digital Content**
 - **Communications & Social Media**
 - **Commerce, Banking & Financial Transactions**
 - **Critical Services, Science & Infrastructure**
- Of late, there has been a significant uptick in the scale and speed of data center growth to support the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI)
- The Truckee Meadows region has been targeted by data center firms, in part, owing to its proximity to tech innovation centers in the Bay Area, abundant land, access to necessary infrastructure, and advantageous tax structure



Background

- TMRPA was first tasked by the Regional Planning Commission to undertake research about data centers early 2025
 - Several staff reports, a data center webpage, Community Conversation last year
- Following our research work, the Regional Planning Governing Board asked staff to come up with recommendations to help local governments **align their collective response** to data center requests for approval in our region
- This led to the TMRPA Data Center Engagement Effort, which started in earnest in May of this year
 - Engage with a wide range of representatives from organizations with information and interest in the data center topic area
 - Hired Right Brain Left Brain Communications to help with scheduling and conducting interviews as well as interview data compilation and reporting

What We Hope to Accomplish With Our Work



- Engage with a wide range of representatives from organizations that interact with this emerging industry to garner information and perspective on how best to manage this growth
- Engage the public to include the sentiment and voice of residents
- Report back to elected and appointed leaders with ideas for possible regulations and best practices that our region can adopt to **align the rules** for data center approvals across the three jurisdictions of Reno, Sparks and Washoe County
- This information can also help inform other counties and state entities involved in this sector and the upcoming legislative session

Dealing with Uncertainty

- **Uncertainty is the inability to predict future outcomes with complete confidence.**
- The AI and data center industry is evolving rapidly. Advances in computing technology are occurring at an unprecedented pace, making long-term forecasts **inherently uncertain**
- Good planning acknowledges uncertainty. Rather than relying on fixed assumptions, communities can adopt **flexible policies** and **performance standards** that allow them to respond to changing technologies while protecting public resources and community objectives



A Map of Perspectives in the Region

- Participants represent a wide range of perspectives
- Qualitative study which garnered participant sentiments
- Presented thus far as draft themes and draft recommendations to help us chart our path forward on this important topic area
- Still in draft form at this point but shared in the interest of timeliness and transparency



"There be dragons here"

Academic – Economic – Environment – Industry – Labor – Government – Tribal - Utility

48 people across 37 organizations

Interviewee Participants

The views and opinions expressed in this report and these findings are those of the Interviewees and do not necessarily reflect the official policy, position, or views of the Organizations mentioned below, their management, or affiliates.

ACADEMIC & SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (3)

- Desert Research Institute
- Great Basin Center for Geothermal Energy (UNR)
- UNR — Hydrologic Sciences

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (4)

- Northern NV Now Economic Development (formerly EDAWN)
- Western Nevada Development District
- Governor's Office of Economic Development
- Nevada Commercial Real Estate Development Association of Nevada (formerly NAIOP)

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY ADVOCACY (7)

- Keystone Area Residents
- Northern Nevada Food Council
- Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter
- Southwest Energy Efficiency Project
- The Nature Conservancy
- Water Over Data Alliance
- Western Resource Advocates

DATA CENTER INDUSTRY (2)

- Data Center Coalition
- Google

LABOR UNION (2)

- Building & Construction Trades Council
- IBEW Local 401

LOCAL & COUNTY GOVERNMENT (8)

- City of Reno, Planning Commission; Data Center Consortium (Unique Ward)
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- City of Reno, Planning Department
- City of Reno, Environmental Services
- City of Sparks, Planning
- Storey County (Commissioner)
- Washoe County, Planning
- Washoe County Health District, Air Quality
- Washoe County, Sustainability
- Western Regional Water

OTHER (3)

- NPR / KUNR
- Resource Concepts Inc. (Natural Resource Planning)
- Redwood Materials Critical Minerals & Energy Storage

STATE GOVERNMENT & REGULATORY BODIES (2)

- NV Attorney General Bureau of Consumer Protection
- Public Utilities Commission of Nevada

UTILITY SECTOR (2)

- NV Energy
- Truckee Meadows Water Authority

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT (2)

- Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
- Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (pending)

Community Conversation and TMRPA Engagement Survey Results

Sentiment	# of Respondents
Positive	~1,000
Neutral	~1,000
Negative	~12,000

[illegible]

TMRPA
TRUCKEE MEADOWS REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

Study Methods

Study Design:

- Pre-interview survey and semi-structured one-on-one interviews (30 min- 1 hr)
- Interviewee stakeholder meeting
- Public community conversation
- Regional Planning Governing Board Meeting
- Continuation

Data Analysis to Date:

Each interview was

- **Coded** into a structured tracker
- **Captured** per-question summaries & emergent themes
- **Flagged** claims for independent sources
- **Synthesized** into the cross-cutting themes summarized below

Study Methods

Question Topics:

- Data center development (general attitude)
- Water use
- Energy and power supply
- Financial costs and benefits
- Land use and siting
- Other public health, environmental & tribal impacts
- Regulatory recommendations
- Drivers of industry growth
- Long-term outlook

Across Themes

General concerns that cut across other themes

Water

Considering the water footprint, with divergence on concerns & impacts

Land Use & Siting

Where and how data centers can be sited

Energy

A defining constraint

Economic Impact

Costs & benefits at state and local levels

Other Concerns

Tribal Sovereign Nations, the environment, community equity & public health

Growth & Outlook

What drives growth and where it's headed

Points of Tension

Local regulatory authority

Question adequate monitoring & enforcement capacity



Current regulations work

Water vs. Energy

WUE can reduce cooling water at facility



More power = indirect water for generation elsewhere

Industrial-only zoning

Classify & site as industrial, not commercial



Limits redevelopment in good-fit places

Behind-the-meter

Developers self-supply power, not impacting the grid



Uncertain about regulations & many are gas-driven

Economic future

Diversifying at scale & laying tech-hub future groundwork



Weak revenue capture, leakage & 'give it away' sentiment

Heat island

Reno is the fastest-warming city in the US



Facilities insulation is part of design to protect technology

Real demand

A speculative bubble



Demand is locked-in & growth will continue

Synthesis of Draft Recommendations

Draft recommendations are divided into three categories

- Local Authority
- State Authority
- Local and State Authority

Land Use, Energy, Water, Environmental, Economic

The recommendations reflect what we heard during 38 interviewees with participating groups and organizations

Still in draft form at this point but shared in the interest of timeliness and transparency

Access these draft recommendations on the TMRPA website and provide your feedback

www.TMRPA.org/Data-Center-Engagement/

Local Authority Recommendations (Tier 1)

- **Siting & Land Use**

- **Recommendation:** Establish a predictable regulatory framework that directs data centers to appropriate locations, regulates facilities in proportion to **their** scale and impacts, and applies objective performance standards that protect surrounding communities while allowing flexibility for future technological innovation.

- **Monitoring, Compliance & Transparency**

- **Recommendation:** Establish a comprehensive monitoring and compliance framework that ensures data centers operate within approved limits through independent verification, enforceable permit conditions, and ongoing compliance.

- **Design Standards**

- **Recommendation:** Adopt design standards that minimize environmental impacts and improve compatibility with surrounding communities.

- **Facility Lifecycle & Decommissioning**

- **Recommendation:** Require lifecycle planning that ensures data centers can be safely decommissioned, remediated, and repurposed at the end of their operational life.

- **Backup Power & Air Quality**

- **Recommendation:** Establish clear standards for backup power systems that protect air quality and ensure emergency generators remain an emergency resource rather than a primary source of power.

- **Water Use & Reporting**

- **Recommendation:** Establish clear, transparent, and standardized requirements for water use, cooling technology, and water-use reporting to improve accountability and support informed permitting decisions while encouraging the most efficient use of limited water resources.

Local Authority Recommendations (Tier 2)

- **Regional Water Resources**
 - **Recommendation:** Manage data center water demands through regional planning that protects water resources, water rights, and long-term community interests.
- **Community Benefit Agreements**
 - **Recommendation:** Establish a clear framework for community benefit agreements that addresses infrastructure impacts, ongoing service costs, and community priorities while defining the appropriate role of local government in the negotiation and implementation process.
- **Planning & Project Review**
 - **Recommendation:** Encourage context-sensitive site planning and project review that relies on professional planning expertise and evaluates projects based on measurable impacts.
- **Engagement & Coordination**
 - **Recommendation:** Establish a transparent, coordinated, and fact-based engagement process that prioritizes meaningful tribal government consultation, early community engagement, and technical expertise throughout data center planning and permitting.

State Authority Recommendations

- **Workforce & Economic Development**
- **Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness**
- **Electrical Infrastructure & Siting**
- **Nuclear Energy**
- **Tax Abatements**
- **Utility Regulation, Cost Allocation & Interconnection**
- **Coordinated Energy Infrastructure Review**
- **Clean Energy & Climate Policy**
- **Behind-the-Meter Generation**
- **Grid Reliability**
- **Virtual Power Plants**

Local and State Authority Recommendations

- **Regional & Statewide Coordination**
- **Transparency & Public Reporting**
- **Sustainability Measures**
- **Data-Driven Planning**
- **Telecommunications Infrastructure**



Next Steps



- Access the draft Themes and draft Recommendations documents on the TMRPA data engagement website
 - <https://tmrpa.org/data-center-engagement/>
 - Use the feedback buttons to submit feedback
- Share your thoughts at – input@tmrpa.org



Final Report planned for
December 10th RRGB meeting

