

- ❖ And regarding community impact: In an agricultural region like Irwin County, is a data center the best use of limited community and natural resources like water? Once a community or region elects to host a high energy and water demanding industry, that community is locking in scarce resources that are not cheap or easy to expand, and communities are ultimately putting limits on future economic development opportunities that may generate more jobs.

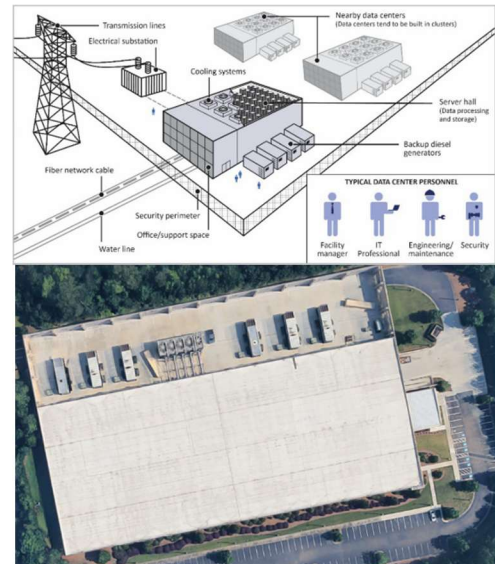
The GWC recognizes that data centers have operated in Georgia for decades. However, current data center proposals and development are unprecedented in scale and scope. GWC members evaluate projects individually, assessing a project’s impact on a community’s and the basin’s water supply, consumption, and wastewater demands. GWC members strive to provide objective and fact-based analysis in an environment where publicly available information and transparency are often lacking.

## 2. What is a Data Center?

Beginning in the 1980s and the early days of the internet, email and other data passed through a few Georgia military, academic, and telecommunication facilities.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1990s, commercial data centers began to occupy metropolitan Atlanta’s downtown high-rise buildings or smaller single-story buildings in suburban office parks measuring less than 100,000 square feet. For reference, a football field covers 57,600 square feet. These early data centers offered telecommunication, network, and colocation data storage services to multiple customers. Almost all were in the City of Atlanta and Fulton and Cobb counties.

In the early 2000s, data center size, scale and location began to shift. Google was among the first of the major technology companies to build a large, stand-alone hyperscale data center in Douglas County to serve their own business and cloud computing needs. After expansion, the facility now occupies large warehouse-like buildings that encapsulate 1.3 million square feet (the equivalent of over 22.5 football fields). Quickly becoming a nucleus of data center development, today, Douglas County hosts—or will host—more than a dozen data centers, and half are of equal or greater size than Google’s operation. The Mall of Georgia in Buford blankets 1.7 million square feet.



<sup>2</sup> Timothy B. Lee, “40 maps that explain the internet,” [Vox](#) (June 2, 2014).