

Community Survey Findings:

Risk Perceptions of AI Data Centers in Dorr Township

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Why was this research conducted?

Artificial intelligence and cloud computing are increasing demand for large data centers. These facilities are physical infrastructure that can require substantial amounts of electricity, water, land, and supporting infrastructure.

For communities considering data-center development, sustainability involves more than technology and economic development. It also includes questions about water resources, energy costs, environmental quality, public health and safety, fairness, local infrastructure, trust, and community participation in decision-making.

This study examines how people connected to Dorr Township perceive a proposed artificial intelligence data center and what protections and forms of local oversight they would like to see.

The study documents community perceptions. It does not determine whether the proposed data center will actually cause a particular health or environmental impact, nor does it measure whether residents overall support or oppose the project.

Who participated?

The survey includes adults age 18 or older who live, work, or spend significant time in Dorr Township. After applying the eligibility criteria, the final analysis includes 367 eligible, complete respondents.

Sample characteristic	Percent
Currently live in Dorr Township	67.6%
Work in Dorr Township	21.3%
Close friend/family member in Dorr Township	88.0%
Had heard about the proposed data center	99.2%
Received information from township officials	34.3%

Important limitation: The survey uses voluntary participation and convenience sampling. The 367 respondents should not be considered statistically representative of all Dorr Township residents; the results describe the people who participated.

What did the survey ask?

- **Environmental and health concerns:** Water availability and quality; wells and aquifers; air quality; noise and light pollution; electricity costs; wildlife; human health; and long-term or uncertain impacts.
- **Community control and fairness:** Whether residents would have meaningful control and power to respond if problems occurred, and whether risks and benefits would be distributed fairly.
- **Institutional trust:** Trust in Dorr Township officials and trust in the company proposing the data center.

- **Perceived proximity:** A respondent's subjective assessment of how close their home, workplace, school, or other important places are to the proposed site.
- **Policy preferences:** Support for environmental monitoring, emergency planning, public hearings, resident participation, safety requirements, and local oversight.

What did respondents report?

1. Overall perceived risk was high

Respondents' overall perceived-risk score averaged 3.69 on a four-point scale. The average response was therefore close to the highest possible level of concern measured by the survey.

Concern / agreement	Respondents
Residents have little control over operations	97.3%
Little power if problems arise	96.5%
Water availability, wells, or aquifers	94.6%
Water quality	94.5%
Electricity costs	94.0%
Human health effects	93.7%
Environmental worry	94.3%

These results show that concerns extend beyond a single environmental issue. Water, energy, health, uncertainty, fairness, and community control appear together as interconnected sustainability concerns.

2. Trust in institutions was low

Trust in township officials averaged 1.56 out of 4, while trust in the proposing company averaged 1.27 out of 4. Only 11.2% agreed or strongly agreed that township officials would make decisions that protect residents' health and safety. Fewer than 8% agreed or strongly agreed with each company-trust statement.

The survey does not prove that low trust causes high concern. It shows a consistent relationship: respondents who reported greater trust generally reported lower perceived risk. The strongest relationship was between company trust and concerns about the fairness of how risks and benefits are distributed.

This suggests that community perceptions may depend not only on what information is provided, but also on whether people trust the institutions providing that information.

3. Perceived proximity was related to risk and policy preferences

Respondents generally reported feeling relatively close to the proposed development, with an average perceived-proximity score of 4.28 out of 5.

People who felt closer to the proposed site tended to report somewhat higher perceived risk, although the relationship was weak. Perceived proximity had a stronger relationship with support for policy and oversight measures, including monitoring, emergency planning, public hearings, resident participation, and local oversight.

4. Respondents strongly supported safeguards and public participation

Proposed policy	Respondents supporting
Emergency-response planning	98.1%
Information for schools and families	96.7%
Environmental monitoring	96.4%
Public meetings or hearings	96.2%
Strict safety requirements	95.9%

Township authority to stop risky projects	95.9%
Resident participation	94.8%
Conditional incentives such as tax breaks	20.2%

Respondents strongly support monitoring, safety requirements, public participation, and emergency planning, while considerably less support is expressed for financial incentives.

What do these findings mean for sustainability?

Taken together, the findings suggest that respondents view the proposed data center as more than a technology or economic-development project. They appear to understand it as a sustainability, environmental, governance, and environmental-justice issue.

- **Environmental sustainability:** Water, energy, air, noise, light, wildlife, and health.
- **Social sustainability:** Fairness, who bears risks, who receives benefits, vulnerable populations, and community well-being.
- **Governance and institutional sustainability:** Trust, transparency, participation, accountability, and local authority.

These dimensions are connected. A community may want economic investment while also wanting assurances that environmental resources will be protected and that residents will have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions.

What could come next?

1. **Provide independent environmental baseline information.** Water, energy, air quality, noise, traffic, and emergency-response capacity could be measured before major development decisions occur.
2. **Improve community communication.** Information about project plans, environmental monitoring, permits, company commitments, and enforcement could be communicated in accessible language.
3. **Create meaningful opportunities for participation.** Residents could ask questions, review evidence, provide input, and understand how concerns are incorporated into decision-making.
4. **Continue studying community perceptions over time.** Future surveys could determine whether trust and risk perceptions change as more project information becomes available.
5. **Conduct more representative research.** Probability-based or stratified sampling could determine whether these patterns extend across the broader Dorr Township population.