

Community In Action - Our Data Center Panel Recap



From Concern to Clarity: How Progress Grove City Brought the Data Center Debate Home

When Progress Grove City announced “Ask the Experts: Data Centers,” the goal was straightforward — give Grove City residents the information they need to understand what a proposed 310-acre data center development would actually mean for their community. What happened on the evening of April 24th at the Urbancrest Community Center was something more: a room full of neighbors who arrived worried and left armed.

Building the Event

PGC designed the evening around two parallel questions. The first: should Grove City have a massive data center at all, and what are the real costs? The second, equally important: if it comes regardless, what does Grove City have the right to demand in return? That two-track framing — resist and negotiate — gave residents something concrete to fight for no matter how the development unfolds.

The panel PGC assembled reflected that seriousness. Maureen Willis, Director of the Ohio Consumers’ Counsel, brought the rate and consumer protection expertise. Becca Pollard of Buckeye Environmental

Network offered 30 years of grassroots site-fight experience. Cathy Cowan Becker of Save Ohio Parks came straight from the front lines in Hilliard, where an Amazon data center just received approval for the largest gas fuel cell in North America — with no public hearing required. And Dr. Amber McNair, a former Ohio State planning professor, brought a systems-level perspective drawn from her work on large public infrastructure and environmental justice.

Bailey Sandin of Policy Matters Ohio moderated, keeping the conversation moving and grounded — including delivering the tax and jobs analysis herself when that section of the agenda arrived.

What the Room Learned

The evening produced a steady stream of information that was, at turns, alarming and clarifying.

Cathy Cowan Becker's account of Hilliard stopped the room. Under House Bill 15, once a data center is approved locally, the data center's operator can apply for a behind-the-meter gas plant — and get it approved in just 45 days through the Ohio Power Siting Board, with no public notice, no public hearing, and no meaningful role for local officials. "If you approve a data center," she told the audience, "you're very likely to get a gas plant of some sort, and you won't have a say over that."

Maureen Willis explained that while the rate picture is still developing, the OCC successfully negotiated consumer protections into AEP's tariff structure — including 12-year minimum contracts, collateral requirements, and demand charges — specifically to prevent data centers from offloading costs onto residential customers and then walking away. Grove City, she noted, is actually better positioned than most of Ohio because it sits in AEP territory.

Bailey Sandin laid out the tax incentive picture clearly: Ohio is projected to forgo more than \$140 million per year in sales tax revenue from data center companies. Permanent employment at a facility this size runs roughly 30 jobs per building. And developers have said publicly they'd build anyway, even without the tax breaks.

Dr. Amber McNair walked the audience through what communities don't see coming — from truck traffic near schools during construction, to the risk of worker migration straining local housing affordability, to the challenge of decommissioning when a data center eventually becomes obsolete. Her core message: the window to act is before the land is purchased. After that, the question shifts from "can we stop it" to "how do we mitigate it."

The Intelligence That Came From the Room

One of the most significant moments came not from the panel but from the audience. A resident who had attended Headwaters' own open house days earlier shared what she had learned directly from the developer: annexation papers are being filed imminently. The Grove City zoning commission is expected to take up the project in June. City Council is expected to vote in July. And Headwaters confirmed it will be seeking a 15-year tax abatement.

That timeline ... months, not years ... landed hard. It also confirmed PGC's instinct that the community needed this conversation now.

Where Things Stand

The evening ended with clear calls to action: show up to Grove City Council meetings, apply pressure to the Franklin County Commissioners when the annexation petition is filed, contact state representatives about legislation that would extend AEP-style consumer protections statewide, and ...

critically ... keep the pressure visible and sustained. As one panelist put it, developers count on communities forgetting.

Progress Grove City hosted this event as part of its ongoing commitment to making sure that doesn't happen here.

Want to stay involved? Follow Progress Grove City and watch for updates on the June zoning commission meeting. The timeline is moving fast — and so are we.

 For more info on the speakers and the actual video of the event, watch the full event [here](#).

Visit Our Website

Become a Member

Donate to the Cause

Progress Weekly Coffee Talks

What Do Our Friday Morning Meetings Look Like?

If you've seen our events and wondered what actually happens at a Friday morning meeting—this is for you.

We keep it simple: introductions, an agenda, updates, and real conversation. New faces are always part of the mix, and that's by design. In fact, the group has grown enough that we've had to move out of our cozy corner spot and into the main room, and we are not even a little bit mad about it.

Here's a sample of the kinds of things we dig into:

- Local levies and ballot issues - what they mean and how to support them
- School funding and how parents and community members can advocate most effectively for public schools
- Legislative proposals affecting our town - zoning, TIFs, development deals, and more
- Candidate forums and educational opportunities we're organizing
- Current events and what we can actually do about them
- Community celebrations and ways to connect with neighbors
- Upcoming actions, events, and how to plug in

And speaking of candidates - our forums have drawn nearly every candidate to the table, with campaign representative attending when one couldn't make it in person. The community is showing up, and so are the people who want to represent it.

That's a Friday meeting. Busy, productive, and almost always something on the agenda that connects to what you care about.

Curious? Come find out. We'd sure love to have you.

Every Friday morning at the Stringtown Rd. Panera - 10am til about noon.



Spring Fling Recap





Our annual spring kickoff cookout delivered exactly what we needed - good food, good people, and proof that this community knows how to show up for each other.

The spread was something else. Hot dogs over the fire, s'mores by the handful, and (a true highlight) custom stamped crackers and graham crackers courtesy of one of our own. A group member and local business owner brought her edible stamp artistry to the occasion, and the result was delicious AND on-brand. (S'mores Not Wars. We stand by it.)

The fire was the heart of the evening- marshmallows roasted, conversations had, kids running around doing kid things while their adults actually got to relax and connect. There is something genuinely special about watching a community just be together, and this cookout had it in abundance.

We also held our first Civic Engagement Bingo raffle drawings, with some great prizes going home with some lucky winners. Speaking of which.. we would love more prize donations for future drawings! If you're a local business owner or just someone with something fun to

contribute or gift cards for local businesses, reach out. Every donation helps keep civic engagement feeling like something worth celebrating.

And of course, our resident cool-as-they-come science presenter showed up and delivered yet another fascinating presentation. Never a disappointment.

This is what Progress Grove City is about, not just the advocacy and the action, but the people. See you at the next one.

The Bob Ruth Report

DATA CENTER CONFLICT

By Bob Ruth

(Full Disclosure: The author, a retired newspaper reporter and political consultant, lives in Grove City less than one mile from the proposed data center. He has friends and family who live even closer.)

A grassroots battle is brewing in Grove City. It involves a proposed mega data center on the city's West Side.

The fight will involve one of those rare issues that crosses political and ideological lines. This won't be about Democrat vs. Republican, conservative vs. liberal. It's more personal than that.

And the verbal fisticuffs could get down and dirty. Don't be surprised if some data center supporters characterize opponents as anti-growth, tree-hugging liberal extremists. Some opponents might accuse supporters of being shills for corporate America who aren't interested in the average residents' home property values, health and environment.

The proposed data center complex would include five or six warehouse-sized buildings and a new electric substation built on 300-plus acres west of Harrisburg Pike between Rensch and Beatty Roads.

About one-third of the land is in Grove City. Most of the remaining acreage is in Pleasant Township. The project's developer, Texas-based Headwaters Site Development, wants to annex the Pleasant Township land into Grove City so the project can use city sewer and water services.

West Side housing subdivisions like Autumn Grove, Holton Run and Beulah Park and homes around Windsor Park and Murfin Field and in Pleasant Township could be most affected by the data center. Businesses along Broadway and homes just east of Town Center also could be affected. But if a data center leads real estate agents to warn potential home buyers against moving into Grove City, property values throughout the area could suffer.

At this early stage, there are many unanswered questions. What will be the financial benefits to Grove City? Will the benefits outweigh the potential negatives of air, noise and water pollution? Will the entire city get an unwanted reputation as Central Ohio's Hub for Data Centers? Will home property values decrease or, at best, remain stagnate? Will the data

center's dependence on massive amounts of electric power – and, maybe, water - result in rate increases for homeowners? These are just a few of many questions.

One thing is certain, however. Headwaters Site Development has deep pockets. Its sister business, Stream Data Centers, is a construction company that boasts of building 20 “hyper-scale” data centers throughout the country. Mike Lebow, CEO and founder of Headwaters, is a senior vice president of Stream, according to the companies' websites.

And who is behind Stream Data Centers? Oh, just a small mom-and-pop outfit named Apollo Global Fund Management. Apollo is a private equity firm that manages almost \$1 trillion in assets. That's right, folks. Not a million. Not a billion. We're talking nearly One Trillion Dollars. Apollo acquired Stream Data Centers last year.

And here's a bit of gossip. Leon Black, a co-founder and former CEO of Apollo, was a buddy and financial sugar daddy of Jeffrey Epstein, the now deceased pedophile multi-millionaire who died in a New York jail. Columbus' own Les Wexner was Epstein's biggest financial godfather, according to multiple news reports. And Leon Black was Epstein's No. 2 financial guy. Black resigned as head of Apollo after his close ties to Epstein were publicized.

In March, shareholders filed a class-action lawsuit in federal court in New York City against Marc Rowan, the private equity's current CEO, and Black. The plaintiffs allege Rowan and Black misled them about the pair's financial dealings with Epstein, according to a *Reuters* news article. In regulatory filings in 2021 and 2022, Black and Rowan falsely claimed they never had any business dealings with Epstein, the suit alleges. Apollo lost \$12 billion in stock value during a three-week period in February 2026 after the truth about the two executives' links to Epstein was revealed, the suit adds. (I warned you this could get down and dirty.)

Written communications obtained through a freedom-of-information request to City Hall indicate Headwaters' representatives have been quietly lobbying some City Council members since February.

Data center skeptics, most prominently Progress Grove City, joined the fight just a few weeks ago. Progress Grove City is a low-budget organization made up mostly of local activists and do-gooders. Talk about David vs. Goliath!

But these activists probably won't be fighting alone for long. As word-of-mouth circulates throughout Grove City, more and more residents are expected to become aware of the pros and cons of the massive project.

Pressure is expected to increase on Mayor Ike Stage and City Council members to delay any final decision until more information can be collected and more residents learn about the potential positive and negative impacts of the proposed complex.

Skeptics are already calling for some sort of 12-month moratorium. Such temporary delays have been enacted by cities, townships and counties throughout Ohio and the nation. Prairie Township and Sunbury are just some of the most recent central Ohio governments to enact months-long moratoriums.

A 12-month pause would allow the city to possibly hold townhall meetings to debate the issues. Such meetings would be more free-wheeling than the public-participation portions of City Council meetings. At Council meetings, residents' speeches are limited to three minutes. They are not allowed to ask Council members follow-up questions. Back-and-forth

discussions between the audience and City Council are virtually prohibited. Townhall meetings would be far less restrictive.

A temporary moratorium would provide time for the City Development Department, Planning Commission and city attorney to possibly study ways in which other municipalities in Ohio have enacted local rules to restrict potential pollution from large-scale data centers. The city might want to hire its own environmental engineer on a contract basis to study the many and complex issues.

The City Council already has rejected a smaller version of a West Side data center. In 2023, the Council unanimously defeated a proposal supported by Mayor Stage to build a data center on part of the land Headwaters now wants to use for its complex. Two of those Council members – Ted Berry and Randy Holt – still serve on Council.

Headwaters initially indicated it would file a formal annexation application late last month. As of the publication of this article, the company had not filed any formal written proposal with either the city or Franklin County.

(This article is the first of several that will appear on Progress Grove City's website. Future articles will go into detail about the pros and cons of data centers.

Introducing: The Grove Guys Podcast




Progress Grove City is proud to highlight something homegrown: The Grove Guys, a podcast featuring some familiar faces from our own community!

The latest episode tackles masculinity: what it actually looks like when it's done right, where the guys have seen it modeled well, and what it means to be a positive male role model. Real conversation, good laughs, zero lectures.

It's the kind of content we don't talk about enough, and we think it really matters. Healthy, grounded examples of masculinity aren't just important for boys and men. They shape what girls and women learn to expect, recognize, and value in the people around them. They influence how boys see themselves and what kind of men they grow up to be. In a cultural moment where the loudest voices defining masculinity are often the most harmful ones, it means something to have local guys having honest, thoughtful conversations about it instead.

This is community building too, just in a different register.

New listener? It's a perfect time to jump in!

 Search "The Grove Guys" on Apple Podcasts and other platforms, and follow them on Facebook [here](#).

New From The Kindness Crew



May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the Progress Grove City Kindness Crew is marking it with two community events built around connection, support, and practical tools, with no clinical setting required.

Little Minds Matter: A Feelings Fair

Saturday, May 16, 5–8pm | Windsor Park Shelter

A family-friendly evening designed to help kids learn about emotions and coping skills through hands-on activities and games. Station style, with resources available for families seeking connection to mental health services in our community.

Refill Your Cup: A Self Care & Mental Wellness Fair

Friday, May 29, 6–9pm | Location TBD

An adult gathering focused on slowing down, self-care, and genuine connection. Stations will include yoga, music therapy, a 30-second rant station, and more. This event also marks the launch of Kindness in Connection- a new Kindness Crew initiative creating space for adults to volunteer together, encourage each other, and build real community bonds.

Both events will feature Calm Kit stations where attendees can build their own kit of simple tools for managing anxiety and overwhelm- for themselves, a loved one, or to donate to local mental health providers and community spaces.

Here's how you can help:

- Run a station- facilitate a simple guided activity (materials and guidance provided)
- Help with Calm Kits- donate items like fidgets, tea, small comfort items, and bags, or help assemble kits before or during the events
- Outreach support- contact local businesses or organizations to help gather sponsorships or donations
- Day-of support- assist with setup and cleanup, greet attendees, provide general support
- Donations- funds for rental spaces, food, supplies, and equipment; bags and items for calm kits; or simply your time

Want more information or to help? Send a message to

KindnessCrew@ProgressGroveCity.com - we'd love to have you involved.

KYR: IEP Circle with Parents United

IEP CIRCLE

MAY 6TH 6PM - 7:30PM

Parents and families of students with special needs or IEP/504s are invited to join us for our first IEP Circle. We will learn about the IEP process from Legal Aid & have an open Q&A for parents.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: May 6th

Time: 6pm - 7:30pm

Location: Bethel
Lutheran Church

Address: 4501 Hoover Rd
Grove City 43123



THIS EVENT IS FREE OF CHARGE



PARENTS UNITED FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

If you have a child with an IEP or 504 plan, this one's for you.

The SWCS Parents United Chapter (part of Parents United for Public Schools) is hosting its first IEP Circle on Tuesday, May 6th from 6–7:30pm at Bethel Lutheran Church, 4501 Hoover Rd, Grove City 43123. The event is free.

Representatives from Legal Aid will walk families through the IEP process, followed by an open Q&A. Whether you're new to navigating special education services or have been in the trenches for years, this is a space to get informed, get answers, and connect with other families.

Navigating the IEP process can feel overwhelming, so this is exactly the kind of community resource that makes a difference. Register [here](#).

A proposed 300+ acre data center on Rensch Road has been quietly moving forward - and our community deserves to know what that could mean for the people who live nearby.

After attending a community meet and greet with Headwaters, the developer behind the project, one of our members came away with serious concerns. When asked about water usage, engineers explained the facility would use an air cooling system, meaning large industrial HVAC units with fans mounted on the roof, running continuously to cool servers that operate 24/7.

For context: Story Point Retirement & Assisted Living is just down the street. Autumn Grove and surrounding rural properties sit within close range of the proposed site. Chronic exposure to industrial ambient noise has documented effects on cognitive function, stress response, and neurological health- with children and the elderly most vulnerable.

Here's the other important piece: as of now, nothing has been formally approved. The property has not been annexed. Zoning and land use have not been assigned. No plans have been submitted to City Council for a vote. That means there is still time to act.

What you can do right now:

- Email City Council and Mayor Ike Stage and ask them to propose a moratorium, a formal pause on the project, until residents are fully informed and heard
- Sign the community petition that Progress Grove City plans to present to Council
- Attend a City Council meeting and make your voice part of the public record

The process isn't over. We caught wind of this early, and that matters. Let's use it.

This is a bipartisan issue that affects every Ohioan. Progress Grove City will have petitions available at our upcoming events, so come out and sign! You can also visit

[ConserveOhio.com](https://www.conserveohio.com) to learn more or find other signing opportunities in your county.

Next Up...

PROGRESS

2026



**PROGRESS
GROVE CITY**

SAVE THE DATE

&

AGENDA

COMING

SOON

MAY 17, 2026

REGISTER ON WEBSITE FOR LOCATION

We are excited to share our next monthly meeting with you all, so RSVP [here](#) and be on the lookout for that information as it is available!

Join Our Partners In Action

If you're eager to make a significant impact in your community, consider taking action now. It's time to address the issues that matter to you and express your concerns about leadership. Our friends with Indivisible Central Ohio are planning in person visit's to Senator Moreno's

office. Please consider joining them to share your thoughts and help drive meaningful change! You can find the sign up sheet at [this link](#).

Thanks everyone!!



ProgressGroveCity.com



If you would like to unsubscribe, please click [here](#).