

Columbia, Missouri • Phase 2 Report

The results are in!

Find out what COMO residents believe should change to secure a better future for everyone.

Change.org and Mayor Buffaloe teamed up to start a conversation that crossed boundaries:

“What would **positive change look like in COMO?”**

Get hundreds of people to share their ideas, and vote on the ideas of others.

Identify their **common interests**, despite differences on other issues.

Bring 100 people together for a conversation about those resonant issues.

Stop hiring out of state companies to solve local issues, such as violence prevention consultants with zero proof of success. Invest that money in programs for kids & cops in teams on foot in high risk areas building positive relationships.

Clean streets monthly at minimum to prevent trash entering waterways.

Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working.

In Phase 1, we received **41,579 votes** on

452 IDEAS

from **1,858 residents.**

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Would it be possible to have a parking meter that allowed the use of an app as well as coins?

Add street reflectors to the major roads, it's impossible to see the lanes when it rains.

Make Columbia more attractive to high paying employers, not the service sector. Retail & restaurants are great to have, but they do not provide decent wages. Incentivize employers who will provide high wages.

Our analysis identified three main groups of residents based on how they voted



Green & Equity Advocates

Supports **ambitious climate action**, including renewable energy mandates and energy-efficient building codes, alongside **robust social programs** addressing housing affordability and homelessness. They imagine an inclusive, sustainable Columbia where **public resources reduce inequality**.

Safety & Infrastructure Pragmatists

Prioritizes **public safety investment**, particularly increased police staffing and accountability measures while expressing **skepticism toward new taxes and expanded social spending**. They are cautious about climate mandates, homeless program expansions, and surveillance technology.

Fiscal Minimalists

Defined by **strong opposition to new taxes and government spending**, consistently rejecting proposals for transit expansion, affordable housing programs, parks funding, and climate initiatives. Their focus is on **basic utility reliability and fiscal restraint** rather than expanded public services.

GREEN & EQUITY ADVOCATES

This group strongly supports ambitious climate action, including renewable energy mandates and energy-efficient building codes, alongside robust social programs addressing housing affordability and homelessness. They favor public investment in transit, community gardens, and infrastructure that benefits lower-income residents. Their vision centers on an inclusive, sustainable Columbia where public resources actively reduce inequality.

MAKE OR BREAK

Have the city subsidize solar panels for low income residents.

This group: 91%

vs Others: 22%

69% Gap

Renewable energy transition and emissions reduction goals

Affordable housing, rent control, and homeownership support

Expanded homelessness services and rapid rehousing

Active transportation, sidewalks, and public transit

Community infrastructure: parks, gardens, and safe streets

SUPPORTS

More affordable housing options for first time homebuyers and also for renters. Not many non college renting options. Apartments don't include utilities and cost more then 1000 a month for a 2 bedroom 100%

Family shelters and more support to help the ones who are living in hotels. Also help the ones who are housed but at low income. They are like me in a program with very low income. 100%

Pay non-degreed city workers MORE, working class wages are embarrassing. City has trouble filling/retaining positions due to the work being physically demanding/dangerous & low paid. City has serious 100%

OPPOSES

Many bus stops are taken over by homeless drug users 77%

We need more police patrolling the business loop and handling the homeless issue 69%

I would like to see less tax increases with a large amount of the \$ going to uncommitted items! We need police to enforce laws, keep us safe! We do not need to vote for thousands of \$ going into uns 58%

SAFETY & INFRASTRUCTURE PRAGMATISTS

This group prioritizes public safety investment, particularly increased police staffing and accountability measures like body cameras, while expressing skepticism toward new taxes and expanded social spending. They support core infrastructure fixes — potholes, water and sewage — but prefer that funding come from reallocating existing budgets rather than new levies. They are cautious about climate mandates, homeless program expansions, and surveillance technology.

MAKE OR BREAK

Hire more police officers per the recent study that said we were severely understaffed. The lack of awareness is astounding.

This group: 82%

vs Others: 50%

32% Gap

- Increased police staffing and public safety funding
- Accountability and transparency in city government
- Opposition to new taxes and calls for budget reallocation
- Core infrastructure repair as the top priority
- Skepticism toward homelessness program expansion and climate mandates

SUPPORTS

- | | |
|---|------|
| Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in. | 100% |
| Fix potholes around the city | 100% |
| Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! | 97% |

OPPOSES

- | | |
|---|-----|
| Shut down Broadway to traffic and parking from 9 pm to 7 am on Fridays and Saturdays to allow for food trucks to set up along Broadway and safe pedestrian movement downtown. | 64% |
| Construct an outdoor swimming pool in the empty field adjacent to the ARC. | 56% |
| More resources and shelters for the homeless | 54% |

FISCAL MINIMALISTS

This group is defined by strong opposition to new taxes and government spending, consistently rejecting proposals for transit expansion, affordable housing programs, parks funding, and climate initiatives. They are particularly concerned about an overburdened tax base and want sunset clauses on existing taxes. Their focus is on basic utility reliability and fiscal restraint rather than expanded public services.

MAKE OR BREAK

Expand Rapid Rehousing initiatives to provide medium-term (4-24 months) tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services to unhoused families.

This group: 11%

vs Others: 95%

84% Gap

- Strong opposition to new and ongoing taxes
- Sunset clauses and voter reauthorization for all tax levies
- Utility grid reliability and basic infrastructure over expansion
- Rejection of climate, housing, and transit spending programs
- Fiscal restraint as the overriding city priority

SUPPORTS

- No new taxes! Taxpayers are overburdened and overtaxed in Columbia. 95%
- Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! 90%

OPPOSES

- Mandate a transition to 100% renewable electricity for Columbia Water & Light by 2035 to meet the targets of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). 100%
- Increase funding and dedicated staffing for the DIVERT program to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. 97%
- Direct the Climate & Environment Commission to create an incentive program for residential energy-efficient retrofits to help achieve an 80% reduction in community emissions by 2050 94%

Unifying Ideas

These are the ideas all COMO residents agreed on, ordered by how important voters indicated they were.*

Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in.

(10.41 Importance Score)**

#1

*Ideas listed meet a minimum threshold of agreement among the entire COMO community.

**Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement with a goal.

2. Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city! **(9.50)**
3. Use City buses for shuttling people to and from Farot Field on game days. Have 2 central pick up/ drop off spots. Charge a couple bucks. See what might happen! **(9.34)**
4. The homelessness crisis is out of control. Residents and business owners deserve safe streets too. We need real solutions that reduce homelessness, improve public safety, and hold city leadership accountable for results. **(8.57)**
5. Re-paint road and lane lines with reflective paint to improve visibility and driving safety during the nighttime and in rainy conditions. **(8.09)**
6. Have the City Manager's annual performance review tied to the agreed upon goal and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) decided in the next five-year Strategic Plan. **(7.86)**
7. Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working. **(6.99)**
8. We need to stop filling downtown with more smoke shops and bodegas and start attracting family-friendly locally owned restaurants, shops, and businesses that make people want to spend time downtown again. **(4.06)**
9. Allow apps and cash to pay for parking. That gives people more options and doesn't prevent someone with no cash from paying the parking meters. **(2.93)**

This enables us to identify the issues that all groups care most about

01

10.41

Importance Score*

Responsible Limits on Data Center Development

"Protect the land around Columbia to prevent large data centers from moving in."

✓ 75% bridge

"Absolutely no data centers in Columbia. They do not provide jobs and drain natural resources."

✓ 67% bridge

"The electrical grid is negatively impacted by AI data centers."

✓ 58% bridge

02

9.50

Importance Score

Well-Maintained Roads, Reliable Water, and a Resilient Grid

"Re-paint road and lane lines with reflective paint to improve visibility and driving safety during the nighttime and in rainy conditions."

✓ 96% bridge

"Fix potholes around the city"

✓ 93% bridge

"Water and sewage infrastructure should be a top priority. Both are important to the health of our city!"

✓ 90% bridge

03

9.34

Importance Score

Better Transit Connections and Easier Parking

"Would it be possible to have a parking meter that allowed the use of an app as well as coins?"

✓ 75% bridge

"Allow apps and cash to pay for parking. That gives people more options and doesn't prevent someone with no cash from paying the parking meters."

✓ 73% bridge

"Use City buses for shuttling people to and from Farot Field on game days. Have 2 central pick up/ drop off spots. Charge a couple bucks. See what might happen!"

✓ 67% bridge

*Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement or disagreement with a goal.

✓ % shows cross-group bridging score

This enables us to identify the issues that all groups care most about

04

8.57

Importance Score*

Real Solutions to Reduce Homelessness

"The homelessness crisis is out of control. Residents and business owners deserve safe streets too. We need real solutions that reduce homelessness, improve public safety, and hold city leadership accountable for results"

✓ 75% bridge

"Separate homelessness from addiction and public disorder when developing city policy. Different problems require different solutions, and treating them all the same isn't working."

✓ 75% bridge

"Enlist the homeless to help build tiny homes. Clean up Columbia works well. Do it like a habitat for humanity type project."

✓ 54% bridge

05

7.86

Importance Score

Disciplined, Transparent, and Accountable City Management

"Have the City Manager's annual performance review tied to the agreed upon goal and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) decided in the next five-year Strategic Plan."

✓ 86% bridge

"Every added tax above the 4.75% basic state tax should have a time ended date then the publican revote to keep it or discontinue it."

✓ 72% bridge

"Create a new charter taking the power out of the hands of unelected city staffers. The City Manager holds all the power, seems accountable to no one. Mayor and Council need power to hire/fire/manage City Manager."

✓ 72% bridge

06

6.99

Importance Score

Community-Based Public Safety and Public Order

"Stop hiring out of state companies to solve local issues, such as violence prevention consultants with zero proof of success. Invest that money in programs for kids & cops in teams on foot in high risk areas building positive relationships."

✓ 78% bridge

"Make people get a citation and pay a fine or more if they're driving while they are high. It's a constant problem in this city."

✓ 70% bridge

"Remove and ban Flock surveillance cameras and contracts."

✓ 69% bridge

*Importance Scores are a standardized measure of the strength of voters' agreement or disagreement with a goal.

✓ % shows cross-group bridging score

Of everything we heard,

Responsible Data Center Development

emerged as the topic to talk about next.

- **RELEVANT**

All three groups consistently engaged with this topic and was an issue that resonated strongly across all three opinion groups – making it a clear point of shared interest.

- **ACTIONABLE**

Regulation of data centers, including their construction and zoning, use of utilities like water and electricity, and their relationship with the community are core activities the city can take action on.

- **COMPLEX**

Real trade-offs exist between development and regulation. Residents broadly agree that strong regulations are needed - but it is unclear what those regulations should be and how they interact with the potential economic benefits data centers might bring to the city.

Running the Civic Dialogue

On July 29, 2026, 142 Columbia residents came together on Zoom to discuss the rules and oversight the city should consider for data center development. Change.org specifically recruited a group that reflected the city in terms of age, sex, race, and political leaning.

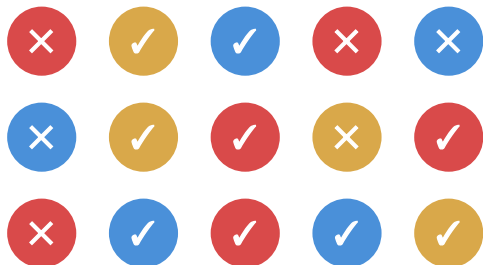
The set of policy options they discussed was determined through research and conversations with practitioners. Participants were provided briefing material ahead of the session to ensure a more informed discussion.

Discussions were held primarily within small groups of 5-8 residents, over the course of four focused breakout sessions. Each session focused on a different aspect of data center development — from resource impacts and environmental protection to oversight, enforcement, and community benefits. Residents were compensated for the time spent to participate in the surveys & dialogue.

UNDERSTANDING THE

Bridging Score

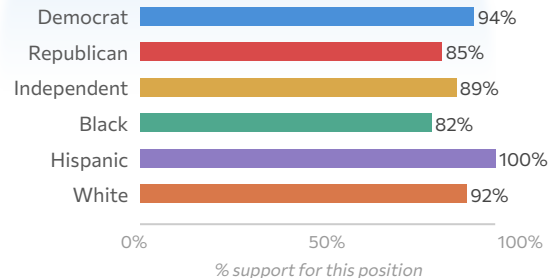
Noise limits with independent testing



After the Dialogue, we polled all participants on **specific policy positions** related to data center development in Columbia.

82%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



We found the share of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and Black, Hispanic, and White residents who supported each statement, then used the lowest of those as the “bridging score.”

This way, we identify policies that all groups significantly support.

COLUMBIA'S OVERALL APPROACH

At a high level, how should Columbia approach data centers? Participants chose one of three postures — no posture won an overall majority.

Share of participants choosing each approach

Ban. Columbia should ban new data centers outright, even if that means turning away potential jobs and investment, and even if it invites a legal challenge the city might not win.

Permit. Columbia should not offer financial incentives, but should welcome data centers under strong new standards on utility service terms and pollution, even though no set of standards fully removes the risk to nearby neighborhoods.

Incentivize. Columbia should incentivize data centers to build in the city as long as they meet environmental standards and commit significant investments in Columbia, such as improving city infrastructure or funding local schools.

Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind	Black	Hisp	White
45%	47%	31%	56%	64%	29%	46%
40%	45%	35%	28%	18%	43%	40%
15%	8%	35%	17%	18%	29%	14%

Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

Principles to Guide Data Center Decisions

Funded, enforceable rules

Columbia should write clear data center rules and fund the staff to enforce them, paid for by fees on the facilities themselves. Rules without the capacity to enforce them are not enough.

88%

D 91
R 88
I 94

Residents have a formal role

Residents should have a formal role in deciding how data centers operate in Columbia — not just city staff and elected officials.

77%

D 97
R 77
I 89

Fixed rules, applied equally

Columbia should put its data center rules in writing and apply them the same way to every project — which means a project that meets every rule must be approved.

62%

D 62
R 69
I 67

Impacted neighborhoods benefit first

Money a data center pays the city should first be spent on reducing the effects Columbia neighborhoods experience before any of it is spent citywide.

58%

D 89
R 58
I 72

Ban only the largest data centers

Columbia should ban large data centers, but allow small and mid-sized data centers the same size or slightly bigger than what Columbia already has.

22%

D 42
R 54
I 22

Welcome data centers to attract investment

Columbia should welcome new data centers to show tech and industrial companies this is a good place to invest.

12%

D 12
R 35
I 33

Policy Recommendations for Data Center Development

All Policy Recommendations shown alongside their bridge score: the minimum support across all groups

Protect Against Negative Impacts

Noise Limits with Independent Testing	82%
Flexible Power Use During Grid Emergencies	77%
No Abandoned Data Centers	73%
Residents Don't Pay for New Infrastructure	73%
Rules for Data Centers' Own Power Supply	73%
Utility Shutoff for Violations	73%
Recycled Water Requirement	64%
Safe Distance Standards	45%

Governance

Full Transparency	82%
Review Impact of All Data Centers	64%
Public Data Dashboard	55%
Write Standards Into Law	55%
A Funded Watchdog Team	43%

Capture Economic Benefits

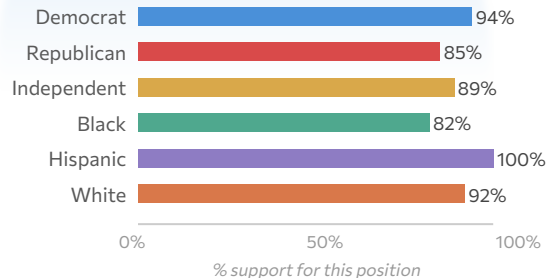
Community Benefit Agreements	64%
Community Benefit Endowment Fund	55%
Discounted Computing for Schools & Services	39%

#1 Noise Limits with Independent Testing

Noise limits are written into the zoning code, cannot be waived per project, and cover deep rumbling as well as regular noise. Testing is done by a firm the city chooses and the company pays for — before construction, right after opening, and every year after — with fines that grow for repeat violations. A facility that stays over the limit loses its permit to operate.

82%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“This would be a non starter for me if they didn't get noise levels figured out, because I wouldn't want to live next to it and I wouldn't want anybody else to have to live next to it if it wasn't managed.”

— **40-65, Independent Male**

“It's called infrasound and it goes through the ground and you can hear it miles away. And there is literally not a single city with a data center in the country that is measuring or regulating that sound. And we should... be the first to do it.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“They would hire people to do their own sound testing. That doesn't make sense... They can just adjust their sound levels, tone down things right before a test, and then the city who is stuck next to it is just kind of left in the dust.”

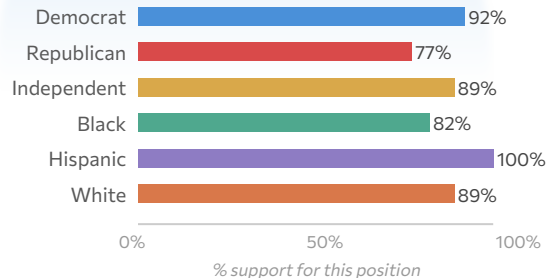
— **18-24, Democratic Male**

#3 Flexible Power Use During Grid Emergencies

When Columbia Water & Light declares a system emergency, data centers must slow down or pause computing work that is not critical before any reduction affects homes, hospitals, or emergency services, as part of their utility service agreement.

77%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

"I think we need something in place where we're prioritizing power to the people... There's no way that my power at home should go out because the data center is using too much. I just. That that's super important to me."

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

"Obviously data centers aren't the priority when it comes to the power grid so they should absolutely have to slow down or pause when there is a strain on the grid."

— **25-39, Republican Female**

"If I need to turn my AC up to keep the power on, there is no reason that a data center should be running at full torque."

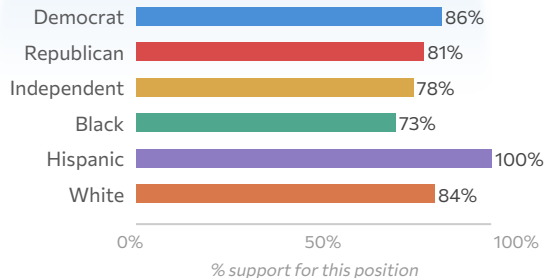
— **25-39, Democratic Female**

#4 No Abandoned Data Centers

Before construction starts, every company must set aside money (through a bond or letter of credit) to cover full site cleanup if the facility shuts down or is abandoned early. An outside engineer sets the amount, reviewed every three years.

73%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

"The city should not be on the hook to remove buildings that are abandoned. The company should be required to cover all costs from cradle to grave."

— **40-65, Republican Male**

"We work with bonds at what I do for work. They're required for large projects if we can't fulfill our end. And they're not inexpensive. And they do work, though, which is why large projects require them."

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

"I grew up in a small town in Nebraska where they built a Walmart and that building's been sitting empty now for almost 15 years... it's wasted resources if we do not have... the policies that are going to protect society, protect the environment, protect our resources."

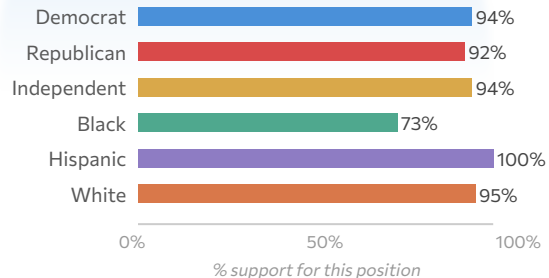
— **40-65, Independent Male**

#5 Residents Don't Pay for New Infrastructure

Columbia Water & Light connects a new data center only under a special utility service agreement. The company pays the full cost of any new or upgraded power plants, power lines, grid upgrades, or water and sewer infrastructure, with none of the costs passed on to other customers. An independent cost study — paid for by the company, run by a firm the city selects — sets those figures, and the city publishes them before the Council votes.

73%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“We don't pay for our infrastructure to grow for them... And we currently don't have enough power to support them. So either they have to support themselves or they have to pay for our, you know, our infrastructure to improve.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“So if a developer is going to develop a subdivision, he has to put those roads in himself. So shouldn't a data center have to put their road in?”

— **40-65, Democratic Female**

“The residents should not be forced to pay for a facility to connect to utilities. That is simply the cost of doing business.”

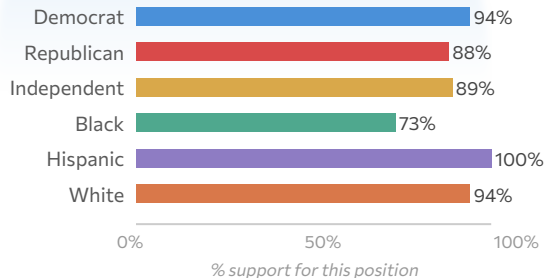
— **40-65, Republican Male**

#6 Rules for Data Centers' Own Power Supply

New data centers using backup generators or their own main power supply must follow fixed city rules: cleaner generator equipment, limits on generator testing, and city review of any main power supply plan before approval. Backup generators are for emergencies only and cannot be used as a routine power source.

73%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“Where I work, we have diesel generators for backup power. And they’re loud. When we test them, it is like you have hearing protection in the room... You’re talking about like battleship sized diesel generators, multiple of them that they’re just gonna test randomly.”

— **40-65, Democratic Male**

“If there are diesel generators in the megawatt scale, even if it’s just during their high demand times, that will increase asthma rates in town. If it’s happening in town, that will have a huge impact on livability.”

— **40-65, Democratic Male**

“...the X facility in Memphis that got a lot of pushback. The problem there was that they didn’t have even basic filtration on the diesel generators. So they really were polluting the surrounding community.”

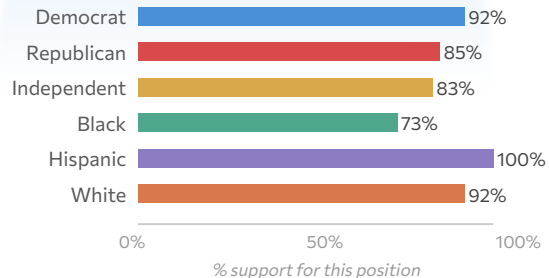
— **40-65, Republican Male**

#7 Utility Shutoff for Violations

Columbia Water & Light can reduce or cut off power and water to a data center that breaks the rules, uses more than allowed, or fails to keep up required financial guarantees. The company gets written notice and 30 days to fix it, except where the violation threatens public health, safety, or the reliability of the grid.

73%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“We own our own water and light, and we can literally turn off their electricity. That's something that very few cities actually have is owning their own power company.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“There's minor violations, there's deficiencies at times... But if it's a repeated offense... the ultimate answer could be just pull their license and they can't operate. That would get their attention a lot more than being able to just throw handfuls of money at it.”

— **40-65, Republican Male**

“I've had my power shut off for not paying the bill... They should be the same rules for everybody when it comes to money. If we have to have our spikes go up, they should too.”

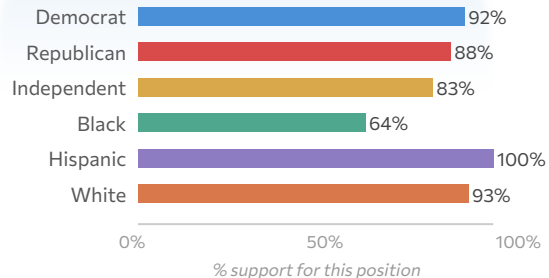
— **40-65, Democratic Female**

#9 Recycled Water Requirement

New data centers cannot use cooling systems that evaporate the city's drinking water. Instead, they must use closed-loop systems, water that is not drinking water, or other designs that use little water. The city checks the cooling design before the project is approved.

64%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“Water resources are probably my biggest concern... I'd like to make all this a requirement. You know, no evaporative cooling systems, must use a closed loop system, don't use drinking water. All that would be my preference.”

— **40-65, Democratic Female**

“I feel like the water is one of the biggest issues and if they can do it in a closed system where they don't have to use our water, they can use non potable water of some kind... that would obviously be the best instead of taking our clean drinking water.”

— **40-65, Democratic Male**

“...surprised that they even let them touch drinking water at all for these projects. That is, like, mind blowing to me.”

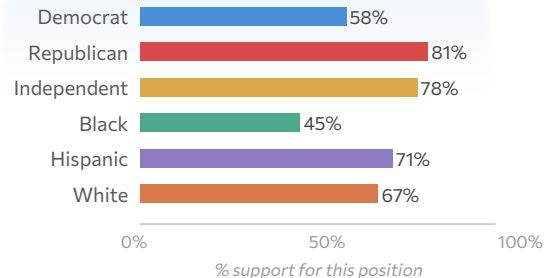
— **25-39, Independent Male**

#14 Safe Distance Standards

A data center must sit far enough from homes, schools, daycares, hospitals, and community centers that it meets the city's noise limit at the property line — but never closer than 1,000 feet.

45%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“When I saw that 1,000ft distance, I thought that was a joke... the vibrations from those computers... will go into the ground and transmit across a lot more than a thousand feet.”

— **40-65, Independent Male**

“I live one mile, probably one mile as the crow flies from... the University of Missouri stadium. We hear absolutely everything that goes on in that stadium and we're, you know, over 5,000ft away from that.”

— **40-65, Democratic Female**

“What if it was 1,000ft from a school? I just think that would be so distracting to the kids while they're trying to focus, learn. Like the humming, the constant humming.”

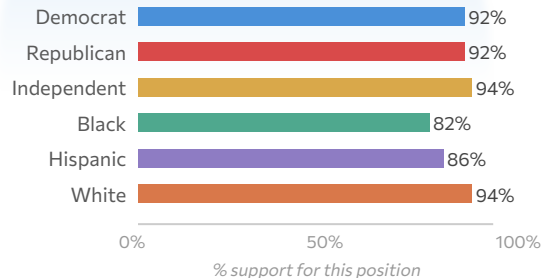
— **40-65, Republican Female**

#2 Full Transparency

Any written non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality agreement, or private commitment between a data center developer and a City of Columbia elected official or employee, or Columbia Water & Light, must be disclosed and published.

82%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“Anytime you have government officials signing NDAs with private corporations to get stuff done, it's not for our benefit. No way. And that's a common practice with these things.”

— **65+, Democratic Female**

“The NDA doesn't just stop them from talking to other tech companies, it stops them from talking to us. And so like we won't even know without some sort of rule in place.”

— **40-65, Democratic Male**

“I think you brought up a really good point about no NDAs regarding the negotiations or discussions with public officials. We should be able to see what's being said. It should be easily, easily findable.”

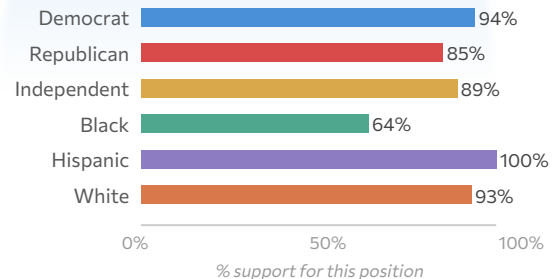
— **40-65, Republican Male**

#10 Review Impact of All Data Centers

Before any new data center is approved, the city will review the cumulative impact of all approved and pending data centers — covering combined water demand, electrical load, noise footprint, and fiscal impact.

64%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“We could allow one data center here at 50 megawatts, but who's to say that... they can't build 10 different ones and use the same amount of power each. Like, we need to regulate how many are able to be billed as well.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“Clear KPIs are great. I'd also add context — what percent of TOTAL use in the community do they represent (individually and collectively).”

— **40-65, Republican Male**

“Nothing here addresses cumulative impact. One facility might pass every test while five together break the system. Cap total citywide load, not just per-project rules.”

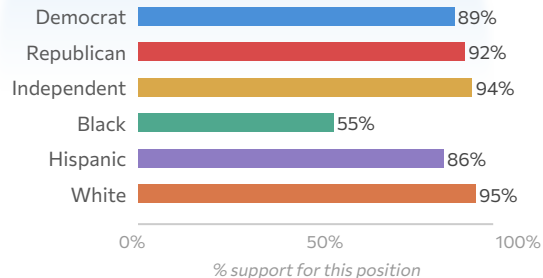
— **40-65, Democratic Female**

#12 Public Data Dashboard

Columbia Water & Light publishes each data center's water and electricity use on a public website, using the city's own meters — the same meters used to bill the facility — alongside every required noise test result, with numbers shown next to their limit. Violations stay on the page as a public record.

55%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“Let me jump to one that I know that I like, the public Data Dashboard. I think it’s a great idea that allows us to monitor daily water use and electric use.”

— **65+, Democratic Male**

“This will keep people accountable, and it will also let everybody know what’s going on to ease their minds or to fix things. It’s a great piece of mind.”

— **40-65, Republican Female**

“I would have no problem with them reporting data that should be readily checkable.”

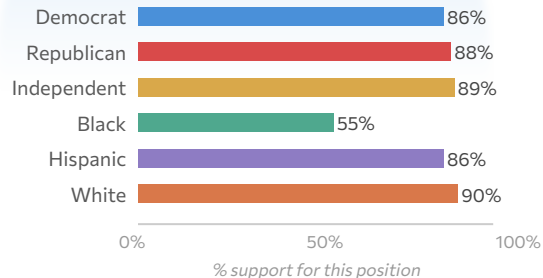
— **65+, Independent Male**

#13 Write Standards Into Law

The city writes its data center rules into the zoning code as fixed requirements covering noise, distance from homes, and water and energy performance. Staff cannot waive the rules and companies cannot bargain around them when a project is approved. The rules can change only through a new city law, passed after a public hearing.

55%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“We have an opportunity here to establish the regulations before and parameters before something gets built. Once it's built, you're stuck with it. So I think now's the time to really take a very close look and establish what kind of rules we need to have in place.”

— **65+, Independent Female**

“I don't know that I trust future council people or a future mayor or, you know, even a future Columbia to vote on this. Like, I'd rather set these things in stone now and preserve what we can... but we start really strong.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“If we set these standards and they might not want to build here anymore, then they shouldn't be building here in the first place. If these standards are too much for them.”

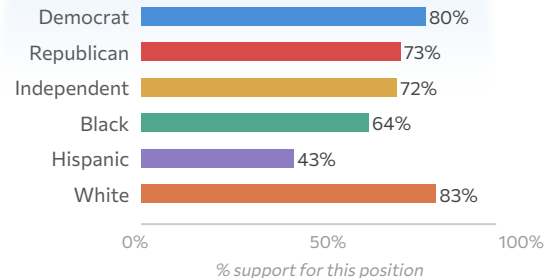
— **18-24, Democratic Male**

#15 A Funded Watchdog Team

Every data center pays a yearly fee based on its size to fund new city staff whose job is to check company reports, run spot checks, and enforce the rules. The fee is set by law, so oversight does not depend on the yearly city budget.

43%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“You can write things, but then, you know, who enforces that? And I feel like that team that’s funded, who’s doing that. We need that.”

— **40-65, Democratic Female**

“It would be a very simple matter for us to find the people that were going to do that, hire them and send the bill to the data center. Let them pay the bill. But us do the hiring.”

— **65+, Republican Male**

“If you’re going to have requirements for the data centers that are set forth and agreements and laws, you must have the staff to ensure those agreements are met. A fee paid by the company to ensure the city has that staff seems reasonable.”

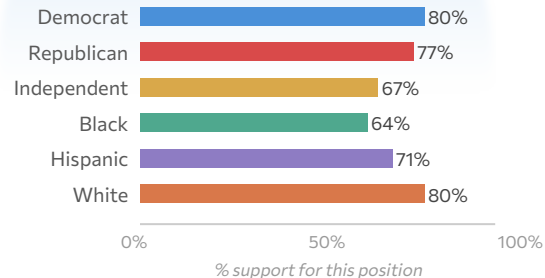
— **65+, Democratic Female**

#8 Community Benefit Agreements

Any new data center using 20 megawatts or more must sign a legally binding community benefit agreement before the city approves the project. The city could enforce it in court, and the agreement would be made public before the City Council's final vote. The agreement sets a dollar amount for each broken promise, so the city collects without having to prove damages in court.

64%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“I think that there should be an enforceable amount for each agreement that's broken, you know, without us having to go to court.”

— **40-65, Republican Male**

“The casinos are supposed to donate so much of their money to the native schools... They had never received any money in history from the casino for the public schools... Nobody held them to it.”

— **40-65, Democratic Male**

“It gives the community a seat at the table before a large, high-impact project moves forward. It creates accountability. A legally binding agreement means the data center can't simply make promises about jobs, infrastructure, or community investments and then walk away.”

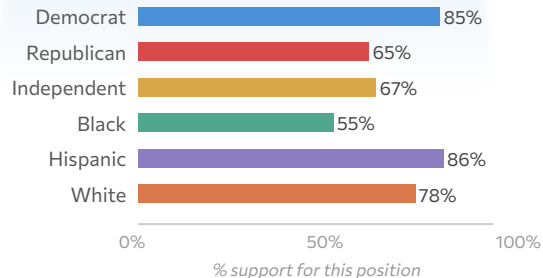
— **40-65, Republican Female**

#11 Community Benefit Endowment Fund

Data centers pay the city every year (scaled to their size), and the money goes into a community fund. A board of local citizens decides where the funds go, with oversight from the City Council and an outside auditor that publicly tracks every dollar.

55%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“I like the endowment fund better because it sounds like the benefit agreement. We only get something if something goes wrong and we can prove it... So I feel like the guaranteed funding would be a better option.”

— **18-24, Democratic Female**

“John Q. Hammond set up an endowment fund for Springfield, and Springfield has benefited greatly from John Q. Hammond's endowments, you know, in that city. So it can work. It can work.”

— **40-65, Independent Male**

“Say the city gets money from the data center. The community could vote on what it's used for. That could be something that could be beneficial instead of them just saying, oh, it goes for parks.”

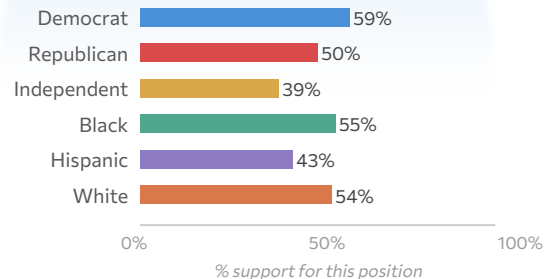
— **25-39, Independent Male**

#16 Discounted Computing for Schools & Public Services

As part of a Community Benefit Agreement, the city has data center companies set aside computing power at lower prices for the University of Missouri, other local schools, nonprofits, and city services, with annual public reporting of who received discounts.

39%

MIN. SUPPORT ACROSS GROUPS



Why Columbia Residents Support this:

“Something that appeals to me conceptually is the concept of cheaper data center access for our community. So for students, researchers, et cetera... That would be something that I would want us to fight for.”

— **25-39, Democratic Female**

“I know the University of Missouri. I work in their IT department. And they have a lot of power... They have a lot of research projects that they're working on and they're connected to other major universities. And so that power is. Is something I bet they would really be happy about.”

— **65+, Republican Female**

“I hate the idea of data centers being built in our community, but if I am unable to stop it, then I definitely want it to benefit good things, like education and healthcare.”

— **18-24, Democratic Female**

TRADE-OFFS — SPENDING NEW REVENUE

If data centers bring new revenue to the city — through fees, community funds, or taxes — residents ranked how the city should prioritize spending it, from most to least important.

Ranked by priority for each group (1st = top priority)

		Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind	Black	Hisp	White
1	Infrastructure: roads, sidewalks, water and sewer systems, and electric infrastructure across the city	1st	4th	1st	3rd	5th	5th	1st
2	Affordable housing: a housing trust fund to help keep housing affordable — home repairs, down payment assistance, or building lower-cost housing	2nd	1st	T-4th	2nd	1st	1st	3rd
3	Direct bill relief: help residents pay Columbia Water & Light water and electric bills	3rd	T-2nd	T-2nd	1st	T-2nd	2nd	2nd
4	Schools: support for Columbia's public schools — career and technical education, tutoring, classroom technology, or teacher recruitment and retention	4th	T-2nd	T-2nd	4th	T-2nd	3rd	4th
5	General Fund: revenue the city could use on any community priority — police and fire, street maintenance, parks and recreation, and libraries	5th	5th	T-4th	6th	6th	6th	5th
6	Local workforce development: training and placement programs connecting Columbians to jobs tied to data center growth	6th	6th	6th	5th	4th	4th	6th

Groups ranked by average rank across participants. T = tied within group.

TRADE-OFFS — TAX INCENTIVES

How should the city approach tax incentives for data centers in Columbia? Participants selected one of the following options.

Share of participants choosing each option

No incentives, ever. There is no scenario where tax incentives should be offered.

Only if an independent review shows the city comes out ahead. Tax incentives should only be given after an independent, third-party assessment shows the city and school district come out ahead on both tax revenue and infrastructure costs over ten years, counting the cost of any utility upgrades.

A bargaining chip. Tax incentives should be used at the discretion of the city as a bargaining chip to negotiate the best deal for Columbia.

None of the above.

Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind	Black	Hisp	White
61%	71%	50%	39%	45%	57%	66%
22%	21%	23%	22%	18%	29%	20%
8%	0%	23%	17%	0%	14%	8%
9%	8%	4%	22%	36%	0%	5%

Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

TRADE-OFFS — WHICH POLICIES COME FIRST

Looking across all the policies, residents selected exactly three the city should prioritize in year one — before and immediately after the moratorium lifts.

Share of participants selecting each policy

Residents Don't Pay for New Infrastructure

Recycled Water Requirement

Noise Limits with Independent Testing

Write Standards Into Law

Safe Distance Standards

Full Transparency

Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind	Black	Hisp	White
66%	67%	73%	56%	73%	71%	65%
41%	55%	12%	33%	9%	57%	43%
36%	30%	42%	50%	45%	29%	36%
29%	29%	27%	33%	18%	14%	31%
25%	27%	27%	17%	45%	14%	24%
23%	18%	31%	28%	27%	57%	20%

Share of participants including each policy among their three year-one priorities. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

TRADE-OFFS — IF A DATA CENTER COMES TO MID-MISSOURI

Suppose a data center will be built somewhere in mid-Missouri — meaning Columbia residents face higher utility bills and other costs whether or not it is inside city limits. Which would you prefer?

Share of participants choosing each option

Discourage or ban. Actively discourage or ban the data center from building within city limits.

Encourage — without incentives. Use everything but financial incentives to encourage the data center to locate within city limits, where it is subject to the city's rules and taxes.

A reasonable tax break. Give the data center a reasonable tax break to locate within city limits, where it is subject to the city's rules and taxes.

Let it build. Do nothing — if the data center wants to comply with all of Columbia's rules, it should be permitted to build within city limits.

None of the above.

Overall	Dem	Rep	Ind	Black	Hisp	White
41%	48%	27%	33%	45%	43%	41%
22%	23%	27%	11%	18%	0%	22%
15%	11%	19%	28%	0%	29%	17%
14%	11%	19%	17%	0%	14%	16%
8%	8%	8%	11%	36%	14%	5%

Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Darkest chip = most chosen within that group.

WHO PARTICIPATED

Share of the 142 attendees by demographic, against the recruitment target for Columbia.

Party	Attendees / Target		Race / ethnicity	Attendees / Target		Age	Attendees / Target		Sex	Attendees / Target	
Democrat	56%	58%	White	76%	73%	18-24	13%	30%	Male	37%	48%
Republican	24%	40%	Black	11%	12%	25-39	25%	27%	Female	63%	52%
Independent	20%	2%	Hispanic or Latino	6%	4%	40-65	46%	29%	Other	0%	0%
			Other	7%	11%	65+	15%	14%			

Now that we're done,

What's Next?

- These results are being shared with Mayor Buffaloe and different city departments as they consider permanent data center standards ahead of the May 2027 deadline.
- The full results will be available at www.ideasforchange.org/columbia.

Thank you!

To Mayor Buffaloe, city staff, all our community partners, and every resident who shared their views throughout this process.

If you have any questions, reach out at info@ideasforchange.org.