FLORIDIAN FUTURE

RISE UP. SPEAK UP. JOIN UP.

Floridian Future

Stands With

CITIZENS AGAINST HYPERSCALE DATA CENTERS

A Handbook for City Commission Meetings

Floridian Future wrote the Citizens Against Hyperscale Data Centers Handbook so you don't have to figure it out alone:

- ✅ **What to say**
- ✅ **Which codes to cite**
- ✅ **How to shut down their talking points**
- ✅ **A one-page cheat sheet for the commissioners**

These companies have lawyers. You have the truth and your neighbors. That's enough.

Big Tech wants to build an industrial power plant in your community and call it a "data center." They'll promise jobs. They'll talk about innovation. They'll flash renderings of sleek buildings and smiling workers.

Here's what they won't tell you:

- **It will run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year — humming, buzzing, glowing — forever**
- **It will use more water than a small town while your drought restrictions tighten**
- **It will draw enough electricity to power hundreds of thousands of homes — and you'll pay for the new transmission lines on your monthly bill**
- **It will radiate electromagnetic fields, noise, and light pollution into your neighborhood with no off switch**

This handbook is your weapon. Inside you'll find:

- **Every health and environmental danger — EMF, noise, light, water, and energy**
- **The exact local codes they're violating — with section numbers you can cite at the podium**
- **A word-for-word script for your three minutes before the commission**
- **A cheat sheet you can hand to every commissioner**

They have lobbyists, PR firms, and law firms on retainer. You have the truth, your neighbors, and the codes on your side.

That's enough to win.

Read it. Print it. Share it. Bring it to the meeting. And when you step up to that microphone, make them answer for every single line.

— Floridian Future and *The Citizens Against Hyperscale Data Center*

THEY WANT TO BUILD AN AI DATA CENTER IN YOUR BACKYARD

What Big Tech Won't Tell You — And What You Need to Say at the Podium

You've heard the pitch. "Jobs." "Innovation." "The future."

What you haven't heard is what actually happens when one of these AI behemoths moves in next door. They're not just buildings with computers. They're industrial-scale resource vampires that will degrade your health, your environment, and your quality of life — permanently.

Here's your ammunition. Every section below ends with **specific code violations** you can cite at your commission meeting.

EMF: The Invisible Assault

AI data centers don't just use electricity. They *radiate* it.

A single hyperscale data center can draw 100–300 megawatts. That's the output of a small power plant — and all that current generates **extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields (ELF-EMF)** and **radiofrequency radiation** from the server racks, transformers, and the transmission lines feeding the facility.

We're talking about:

- **Massive substations** on-site or adjacent, stepping down transmission voltage. These generate powerful magnetic fields that penetrate walls, homes, and human tissue.
- **Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS)** — essentially buildings full of batteries — pulsing DC-AC conversion at high currents, 24/7/365.
- **Server racks by the thousands**, each one a source of RF noise across a wide spectrum.
- **Backup diesel generators** the size of locomotives, tested regularly, radiating during operation.

What the research shows

The FCC's exposure guidelines were written in 1996 — for *thermal* effects only. They ignore decades of research on non-thermal biological effects: oxidative stress, DNA damage, blood-brain barrier permeability, sperm damage, and neurological effects.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified RF radiation as a **Group 2B carcinogen** back in 2011. Since then, the evidence has only gotten stronger. The National Toxicology Program found *clear evidence* of tumors from cell-phone-level radiation in animals. Now multiply that by the continuous, industrial-scale exposure from a data center.

Children, pregnant women, and people with electromagnetic hypersensitivity are especially vulnerable — and you won't know you're affected until the facility is already built and running.

Codes They'd Be Violating

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
Local zoning ordinances — nearly all have provisions against nuisance and hazards to public health	EMF is a documented health concern; zoning boards have broad discretion to deny based on public welfare
National Electrical Code (NEC) Article 250 — grounding and bonding	Improper grounding of massive electrical systems creates stray currents and elevated EMF
IEEE C95.1 safety standards	These are *voluntary* but can be adopted by reference in local codes
State public utility commission regulations	Transmission lines and substations serving data centers often require PUC review — demand an EMF environmental assessment
California Public Utilities Commission precedent (if applicable)	CPUC has required EMF mitigation for new substations near schools and residences

Talking point: "The FCC hasn't updated its human exposure guidelines in 30 years. Are we really going to bet our children's health on 1996 science?"

Noise Pollution: The Never-Ending Hum

Data centers don't sleep. The noise is **24/7/365** — and it's not just one sound. It's a layered assault:

- **HVAC and cooling fans** — thousands of them, running constantly. The whine of server fans sits in the 1–8 kHz range, right where human hearing is most sensitive.
- **Chillers and cooling towers** — low-frequency hum that travels through the ground and walls, perceptible hundreds of yards away.
- **Diesel generators** — tested under load monthly. When they fire up, you're looking at 85–100+ dB at the source.
- **Electrical noise** — transformers emit a 60 Hz hum (plus harmonics at 120, 180, 240 Hz) that is notoriously hard to mitigate.

What this does to people

Chronic low-frequency noise exposure is linked to:

- Sleep disturbance and insomnia
- Elevated cortisol and stress hormones
- Hypertension and cardiovascular disease
- Cognitive impairment in children
- Annoyance, anxiety, and depression

The World Health Organization's *Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region* (2018) recommends nighttime noise levels below **40 dB Lnight** to protect public health. A data center's ambient hum alone can push 50–65 dB at the property line.

Codes They'd Be Violating

Code/Regulation	Typical Limit
Local noise ordinance	Most cities: 45–55 dBA nighttime, 55–65 dBA daytime at property line
Low-frequency noise provisions (increasingly adopted)	Some jurisdictions now regulate dBC levels separately from dBA
State environmental quality review (CEQA in CA, SEQRA in NY, etc.)	Requires noise impact analysis for major projects
EPA Noise Control Act (federal, though under-enforced)	Establishes that noise is a pollutant; state/local can enforce

Code/Regulation	Typical Limit
OSHA occupational limits (for workers)	If it's too loud for workers without hearing protection, it's too loud for neighbors

Talking point: "The WHO says nighttime noise above 40 decibels harms human health. This facility will run at 60-plus decibels — every single night, forever. That's not a neighbor. That's a health hazard."

Light Pollution: The Glow That Never Dies

Data centers are 24-hour operations. Security lighting, parking lot floods, exterior illumination, and the eerie blue-white glow from cooling systems create a permanent twilight zone.

- **Sky glow** obscures the night sky — a loss of natural heritage
- **Light trespass** spills into neighboring homes and properties
- **Glare** from unshielded fixtures creates safety hazards on adjacent roads
- **Blue-rich LED lighting** suppresses melatonin production, disrupting circadian rhythms in both humans and wildlife

The ecological impact is real: migratory birds are disoriented, nocturnal pollinators decline, and entire local ecosystems shift when night is eliminated.

Codes They'd Be Violating

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
Dark sky ordinances	Many cities and counties have adopted IDA (International Dark-Sky Association) compliant lighting codes
Local light trespass provisions	Typically limit foot-candles at property line (often 0.1–0.5 fc at residential boundaries)
LEED or local green building codes	Require full cutoff fixtures and light pollution reduction
State environmental review	Lighting must be assessed for wildlife and neighborhood impact

Talking point: "Our city has a dark sky ordinance for a reason. A 24/7 industrial floodlight zone doesn't qualify for a variance just because the applicant has a big name.

Water Usage: They're Drinking Your Aquifer

This is where the numbers get truly obscene.

A mid-sized AI data center can consume **1–5 million gallons of water per day** for cooling. That's the equivalent of a small town's entire water supply.

- **Evaporative cooling** literally vaporizes water into the atmosphere — it's gone, not returned to the watershed
- **Water treatment chemicals** (biocides, corrosion inhibitors) contaminate blowdown discharge
- **Aquifer depletion** in water-stressed regions is accelerated
- **Competition with agriculture and residential use** — during droughts, guess who gets priority? (Hint: not you.)

Microsoft's water consumption jumped 34% from 2021 to 2022, largely driven by AI workloads. Google's data centers used an estimated 5 billion gallons in 2022. And that was *before* the current AI explosion. Training a single large language model can consume hundreds of thousands of gallons.

Codes They'd Be Violating

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
Local water use permits	Most municipalities require review for users above a threshold
Drought contingency plans	If your region has one, industrial users face the strictest curtailments
Clean Water Act (NPDES permits)	Cooling tower blowdown discharge requires permits — demand to see them
State water rights and appropriation law	In western states especially, water rights are fiercely regulated
Groundwater management district rules	Aquifer drawdown limits and well permits

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
Local sewer/stormwater ordinances	Discharge temperature, volume, and chemistry limits

Talking point: "This facility wants to use more water in one day than my entire neighborhood uses in a month — and they're asking for it during a drought. Whose water gets cut off first when the aquifer runs dry?"

Energy Usage: They'll Crash Your Grid

Hyperscale data centers don't just *use* power. They fundamentally reshape the entire electrical infrastructure of a region.

- A single campus can draw **300–1,000+ megawatts** — enough to power hundreds of thousands of homes
- Utilities must build **new transmission lines, substations, and peaker plants** to serve them
- These costs are **socialized across all ratepayers** — your electric bill goes up so Amazon and Google get cheap, reliable power
- Grid instability increases — data centers demand rock-solid power, so utilities prioritize them over residential reliability
- Natural gas peaker plants get built (often in disadvantaged communities) to backstop the intermittent load

The transmission infrastructure alone — high-voltage lines cutting through neighborhoods, new substations, cleared right-of-ways — represents a permanent transformation of the local landscape.

Codes They'd Be Violating

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
State Public Utility Commission certificate of need	New transmission and generation require PUC approval — intervene
Local comprehensive/master plan	Does the land use designation even allow industrial power plants?

Code/Regulation	How It Applies
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	Federal nexus if on federal land or using federal funds — requires Environmental Impact Statement
State environmental review	CEQA, SEQRA, MEPA, etc. — energy demand and infrastructure must be analyzed
Regional transmission organization (RTO/ISO) interconnection queue	Data centers must demonstrate grid impact — demand the interconnection study
Local building energy codes	Some jurisdictions now require data centers to meet efficiency standards or face rejection

Talking point: "This facility will use more electricity than our entire county. Who's paying for the new transmission lines? We are — on our monthly bills. They're privatizing the profit and socializing the cost."

Your Game Plan for the Commission Meeting

Before the Meeting

1. **Pull the codes.** Go to your city/county website. Download the noise ordinance, zoning code, lighting ordinance, and comprehensive plan. Print the relevant sections. Highlight them.
2. **File public records requests.** Ask for: any pre-application meetings between the developer and city staff, any draft development agreements, any utility studies or traffic impact analyses already submitted.
3. **Organize your neighbors.** A room full of angry constituents beats a polished PowerPoint every time. Data centers often try to fly under the radar — sunlight is your best weapon.
4. **Demand an independent environmental review.** Not one paid for by the developer. Insist on third-party EMF measurements, noise modeling, water impact analysis, and grid interconnection studies.

At the Podium (You Get 3 Minutes — Make Them Count)

Open strong:

"I'm here to oppose the [name] data center project. This is not a technology campus. It's an industrial power plant that will consume our water, degrade our health, and raise our electric bills — permanently."

Hit the codes:

"Under our city noise ordinance [cite section], nighttime noise at the property line is limited to 50 dBA. This facility's own environmental assessment — if they've even done one — will show ambient levels exceeding that. Under our zoning code [cite section], industrial uses that constitute a nuisance to adjacent residential properties are prohibited. I'd ask the commission: how is 24/7 noise, light trespass, and electromagnetic radiation not a nuisance?"

Close with the ask:

"I ask the commission to deny the special use permit and reject any variances. If you won't deny it outright, I demand a full, independent Environmental Impact Statement — not a checklist paid for by the applicant — and a public health assessment that includes EMF exposure, cumulative noise impacts, and water availability under drought conditions."

The Codes Cheat Sheet (Print This)

Issue	Code to Cite
Noise	Local noise ordinance (dBA and dBC limits), state env. review
EMF	Zoning nuisance provisions, PUC substation review, IEEE C95.1
Light	Dark sky ordinance, light trespass limits (foot-candles at property line)
Water	Water use permit threshold, drought plan, NPDES discharge permit
Energy	PUC certificate of need, comprehensive plan land use, interconnection study
General	Comprehensive/master plan consistency, zoning district permitted uses, special use permit criteria

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The Bottom Line

AI data centers are the new factory farms, the new landfills, the new fracking wells. They're industrial operations that extract local resources, degrade local quality of life, and export the profits to Silicon Valley — while leaving you with the externalities.

The tech companies know exactly what they're doing. They target rural and exurban communities with weak zoning, offer a few dozen jobs and some property tax revenue, and hope nobody looks too closely at the fine print. By the time the problems surface, the concrete is poured and the lawyers are on retainer.

Your job is to make them look closely — before the first shovel hits dirt.

The codes are on your side. The science is on your side. Now go fill that commission chamber and make some noise.

Specific to Lakeland
(can be used as a guide in all of Florida)

Noise

Ordinance: Chapter 70, Article II — Lakeland Noise Control Ordinance (Ord. No. 5207)

- **Sec. 70-46 — Prohibition of noise disturbance:** No person or legal entity shall make, maintain, or cause a noise disturbance. This applies to corporations — your data center operator is explicitly covered.
- **Sec. 70-45 — Definition of "noise disturbance":** Any sound that annoys or disturbs a reasonable person. This is a subjective standard — meaning *you* are the evidence. If it bothers you, it's a violation.
- **Sec. 70-53 — Penalties:** Misdemeanor prosecution. Fine up to $500 and/or up to 60 days in jail per violation. Each occurrence is a separate violation.

The Big Problem — Sec. 70-48 Exemptions:

The ordinance explicitly exempts:

- *"Sounds relating to and originating within any area zoned for commercial use"*
- *"Sounds relating to and originating within any area zoned for industrial use"*

This is the loophole they'll drive a truck through. Your counter-argument: these exemptions were written for normal commercial/industrial activity — not a 24/7/365 high-frequency whine with low-frequency bass hum that travels through walls. Argue that a hyperscale data center is qualitatively different from a warehouse or factory and that the exemption was never intended for this use. Demand the commission interpret

"noise disturbance" broadly under the general prohibition in 70-46, or amend the ordinance.

Also cite:

- **Florida Constitution, Article II, Section 7** — cited in the ordinance itself as the enabling authority: *"adequate provision shall be made by law for the abatement of excessive and unnecessary noise."* This is a constitutional mandate, not a suggestion.
- **F.S. § 166.021 (Home Rule Powers Act)** — gives Lakeland broad authority to regulate noise beyond state minimums.

Light Pollution

Ordinance: Land Development Code (Ord. 5425), Article 4, Section 4.6 — Outdoor Lighting

Key provisions (from the Land Development Code):

- **4.6.1 — Intent and Applicability:** The outdoor lighting section exists for a reason — to protect public health, safety, and welfare from excessive artificial light.
- **4.6.2 — Outdoor Lighting Standards:** Establishes specific requirements for:
    - Full cutoff fixtures (lights must be shielded, pointing down — no skyglow)
    - Limits on foot-candle levels at property lines
    - Restrictions on light trespass onto adjacent properties
    - Color temperature limits (likely 3,000K or lower — warm light, not harsh blue-white)

What to demand at the meeting:

- Pull the full text of Section 4.6 from the Land Development Code. Ask city staff whether the data center's site plan meets every provision.
- Demand to know: *What are the foot-candle levels at the property line?* If they haven't modeled it, they can't claim compliance.
- Security lighting at data centers is notoriously over-bright and unshielded — this will violate 4.6.2 on day one.

Also cite:

- **International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) guidelines** — while not law in Lakeland, neighboring cities like Groveland have adopted IDA-compliant codes. Argue Lakeland should match best practices.
- **General nuisance provisions** in the zoning code — light trespass is a common-law nuisance even without a specific ordinance.

Zoning & Land Use

Ordinance: Land Development Code (Ord. 5425)

- **Industrial zoning districts (I-1, I-2, I-3):** A data center would likely seek I-2 or I-3 zoning.
    - **I-1 (Light Industrial):** *"Uses which usually have the most limited external impacts. Such uses do not create an appreciable nuisance or hazard."* A data center with 24/7 noise, massive power draw, and water consumption arguably exceeds I-1.
    - **I-2 (Medium Industrial):** Permits broader uses but requires *conditional use review* for higher-impact uses. Demand conditional use hearing — this gives you a public process to fight.
    - **I-3 (Heavy Industrial):** *"Uses which often have significant external impacts because of their appearance and/or their potential for generating noise, vibration, odor, glare, fire, explosion, or air or water quality threats."* If they need I-3, they've admitted it's a nuisance.
- **Conditional Use requirement:** If the property isn't already zoned appropriately, they need a conditional use permit or rezoning. This is your biggest procedural weapon — it requires public notice, a public hearing, and commission vote.
- **Comprehensive Plan consistency:** Any rezoning or permit must be consistent with Lakeland's Comprehensive Plan. Demand the planning staff's consistency finding in writing.
- **Ordinance 4131 — Minimum maintenance standards for commercial/industrial structures:** Covers exterior property conditions. Can be used if the facility becomes an eyesore.

Water

Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) — Consumptive Use Permit

Lakeland falls under SWFWMD jurisdiction. Key points:

- **Water Use Permit threshold:** Any withdrawal above **100,000 gallons per day** (aggregate) requires an Individual Water Use Permit — not a general permit by rule. A data center will blow past this.
- **Application requirements (F.A.C. 40D-2.101):**
    - Must demonstrate the use is *"reasonable and beneficial"* (F.S. § 373.019)
    - Must show no interference with existing legal users
    - Must be *"consistent with the public interest"* — including environmental harm, saltwater intrusion, wetland impacts, and pollution movement
- **Drought contingency:** SWFWMD can and does impose water restrictions. During drought phases, industrial users face the deepest cuts.
- **Bartow Regulation Department** handles Polk County: (863) 534-1448. They're at 170 Century Boulevard, Bartow, FL.

What to demand:

- Has the applicant filed for a Water Use Permit? If not, they can't legally withdraw water.
- Request a copy of the application. Check the stated daily withdrawal against local aquifer capacity.
- Demand an independent hydrological study — not one paid for by the applicant.

Energy & Grid

- **Florida Public Service Commission (PSC):** Any new transmission line or substation serving the data center may require PSC review under the **Transmission Line Siting Act (F.S. § 403.52)** for lines above a certain voltage/length.
- **Lakeland Electric** is a municipal utility. As a public entity, their decisions are subject to open meetings and public records laws. Demand:
    - The interconnection agreement and load study

- Any cost allocation showing whether residential ratepayers will subsidize the industrial customer
- Minutes of any meetings between Lakeland Electric and the developer

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EMF

Lakeland has no specific EMF ordinance — almost no city does. But here's your angle:

- **Zoning nuisance provisions:** The I-1 district explicitly prohibits uses that *"create an appreciable nuisance or hazard."* If EMF is a documented health concern (and the evidence is there), it falls under nuisance.
- **Florida Constitution, Article II, Section 7:** The same constitutional provision used for noise — *"adequate provision shall be made by law for the abatement of excessive and unnecessary"* hazards — can be argued to apply.
- **IEEE C95.1 standard:** Voluntary, but can be cited as an industry benchmark they should meet.
- **Public health authority:** The city commission has broad police power to protect public health. EMF exposure is a legitimate public health concern.

Your Podium Cheat Sheet

What to Hit	Code to Cite
Noise — general prohibition	Chapter 70, Sec. 70-46
Noise — constitutional mandate	FL Constitution Art. II, Sec. 7
Noise — penalties	Chapter 70, Sec. 70-53
Light — shielding & trespass	Land Dev. Code Sec. 4.6.2
Zoning — industrial classification	Land Dev. Code, I-1/I-2/I-3 districts
Zoning — conditional use trigger	Land Dev. Code, use tables
Water — permit requirement	SWFWMD, F.A.C. 40D-2.101
Water — public interest test	F.S. § 373.019
Energy — PSC review	F.S. § 403.52

What to Hit	Code to Cite
EMF — nuisance	I-1 district language, general police power

One last thing: FOIA the hell out of this. File a public records request with the City of Lakeland for any emails, meeting notes, or draft agreements between city staff and the developer. If they've been talking behind closed doors, that comes out at the commission meeting and changes the whole dynamic.

Go get 'em!