Growing town or suburb plan

If the developer builds only the first phase, who pays for the larger water main the town already ordered? Have the finance director, school district and utility review those costs with residents, including people in newly annexed areas.

Taxes and school funding

Before the incentive vote, the finance director shows the town's budget with and without each phase: taxes, tax breaks, school and fire revenue, staffing and debt payments. Each district checks its figures. Before the town releases an installment it controls, verify [permanent jobs], [wages] and [investment]. Set out how much the town can recover for a shortfall, if local law permits, and how the developer can appeal.

If the developer cancels

The operator pays for [road and water works] as the engineer signs off on each stage. Ask the utility for its approved terms for grid upgrades, deposits, minimum bills and exit fees. The utility or its regulator sets electricity charges. Before the town places an order, the developer guarantees the costs the town cannot recover if a phase is late or canceled. Name who can collect, revise the guarantee as costs change and credit anything the town can reuse.

Annual payments and local jobs

Set a minimum annual payment per operating building. Give the first due date and the amount owed if no more buildings open. The operator funds [paid places per class] at [wage] through the college. The college reports enrollment, completions and jobs six months later. Use payroll totals to distinguish years of construction work from permanent jobs. If the operator offers fewer paid places than promised, it funds the missing places by [date].

> Marshalltown's August 2026 ordinance included substantial expansions and recognized vested rights. Inventory pending applications before projecting growth. A separate Cedar Rapids amendment pairs qualifying jobs per phase with a fund of *up to* $18 million over 20 years. The cap is neither an annual payment nor proof of receipt.

Adamstown, Maryland: the county declined the deal

On September 14, Frederick County's executive rejected the developer's agreement application and extended the pause on new applications. The announced benefits package was not money secured for residents.

Ask the developer to list the approvals it wants in exchange. Residents should be able to see those terms before the county decides whether to sign.

Operator registration in Norway

In Norway, registering a data center with the regulator does not give it permission to build. Ask the town clerk which approvals a developer has in hand before the town budgets for new revenue.

Olievenhoutbosch, South Africa: where did trainees find work?

Near the Tshwane campus in South Africa, Microsoft reports that local partners trained more than 500 young people. It reports a further 27 received Azure training and 12-month internship placements. It gives no count of permanent campus hires. Have the training partner report separately how many residents started a placement, who employed them and how many still had paid work after a year.

Sample agreement

Project: [site and phases]. Parties: [landowner], [operator], [guarantor] and [community signatories]. Replace the brackets with local names, amounts and deadlines before anyone signs.

Resident representation

Residents choose their representatives at an open meeting. Include renters and neighbors outside the tax district. The developer pays for interpretation and an independent adviser from a separate account. Publish the draft for [review period] and respond publicly to suggested changes. Residents may participate and still oppose the project.

Payments to the community

The operator pays [fund holder] [amount] when [milestone] occurs, then [amount] each year, adjusted for inflation using [index]. Residents hold a majority of seats on the board that awards grants. The board publishes its conflict-of-interest rules; the treasurer posts receipts and spending every quarter. List taxes, tax breaks, infrastructure reimbursements and gifts separately from the promised payments.

Who can enforce each term

Put payments in the signed agreement, land-use restrictions in the permit and electricity charges in the approved utility terms. Ask local counsel who has authority to sign and enforce each one. Any right for residents to enforce the agreement must be written into it. The agreement cannot replace environmental review, public hearings or Tribal consultation, or change treaty rights.

Missed payments and complaints

Residents choose an independent monitor who can inspect invoices, meter readings and payroll with names removed. The operator deposits [annual monitoring budget] through closure. Each quarter the monitor publishes what was due, paid, late or disputed, with the supporting records. Residents can call [phone] or file with [office] online. The office acknowledges complaints within [days] and publishes outcomes without names. After written notice, the operator has [days] to fix a breach. Specify who may draw on [financial guarantee] if it does not, who decides disputes and where either party can appeal.

Sale or closure

Before construction, the owner provides a financial guarantee for the independently estimated cost of restoring the site. Update the estimate and guarantee every [interval]. Release the original owner only after a buyer accepts the obligations in writing and supplies replacement security. List payments that remain due if work stops early. Publish the signed schedules, amendments, annual audits and final inspection.

Payment and inspection record

Make a copy for each obligation:

- Work promised: [starting condition], [target and units], [deadline].
- Payment: [who owes it], [budget and source], [amount due], [amount paid], [recipient and date].

- Inspection: [who checks the work], [public record], [next review date].
- If the operator falls short: [who gives notice], [time to fix it], [remedy and who can use it].

For home repairs, for example, the budget shows what the city approved. A paid invoice and a final inspection show which repairs were finished. Record both.

Before the vote, read out any unresolved terms. Attach the payment and inspection records to the agreement. Record who signed, the vote date and where residents can get a copy.

If your community has a moratorium

Ask the clerk for the adopted text, amendments, effective and end dates, application map, and exemptions for existing approvals. A proposal, an advisory vote and an enacted pause have different effects. A dated tracker entry does not establish that a pause is still in force.

During a pause, use only the activities the text permits. Ask the authorized body to publish outstanding studies, resident objections and what remains unresolved before its next public decision. Compare a smaller project, delay, relocation and no project. A private agreement cannot lift a public restriction.

Find the jurisdiction in the tracker's Moratoriums directory.

Sources

For a public meeting, these guides can help residents decide which documents to request. Each local example links to the record it describes.

- NAACP: Stop Dirty Data — publish project impacts before bargaining over money; residents need time and independent advice.
- American Rivers: Data Centers and Rivers — ask separately about water withdrawn, water returned, discharge quality and who pays for new capacity (pp. 7–10).
- World Resources Institute: Powering Progress — distinguish who signs from who benefits; design training that gives workers options beyond a single campus.
- Federation of American Scientists: finding eight agreements — ask the clerk for executed contracts and exhibits; a promise to file a later plan leaves terms unsettled.
- Science for Georgia: community benefit agreements — name the person who measures compliance and the party able to enforce each requirement.

Compare these proposals with Microsoft's company-wide commitments on power, jobs and taxes. Ask who will sign for the local campus, how much is due and when. None of the organizations listed here has endorsed these drafts.

Editable draft and sources: https://pranava0x0.github.io/datacenterpolicytracker/community-benefits.html#town