Magellan Strategies

Colorado 2026 AI & Data Center Opinion Survey Results

Magellan Strategies is pleased to present the topline results of a survey of 1,389 Colorado registered voters. We weighted the survey data to reflect the state's voter registration demographics. The interviews were conducted from August 26th to September 2nd, 2026. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 2.63% at the 95% confidence level. You can view and download the survey toplines, presentation, crosstabs, and verbatim responses on our website at https://magellanstrategies.com/colorado-2026-ai-data-center-opinion-survey/.

The Magellan Strategies staff designed each survey question. No individual, group, or organization contributed to the cost of this survey project. For any questions regarding the survey results or methodology, please contact David Flaherty at 303-861-8585 or by email at DFlaherty@MagellanStrategies.com.

Survey Overview & Objectives

Artificial intelligence (AI) and the unprecedented infrastructure demand it requires is the story of our time. This technology will change and disrupt, for better or worse, every aspect of our society and way of life in the coming years. The incredible growth and development of AI technology will generate feelings and opinions across every population demographic in Colorado and the country. As a professional public opinion research firm, we were inspired to measure and capture these feelings and opinions.

Furthermore, our friends and clients are public-sector and policy organizations (governments, school districts, special districts) managed by professional staff and governed by elected boards and officials. We hope this research will help them understand how Coloradans think and feel about the use of artificial intelligence across different areas, the companies and business leaders in the AI space, and data center development.

One key finding that resonates across every voter subgroup is overwhelming fear and strong opposition to AI technology, along with deep mistrust of the companies that design and deploy these models. This research shows how difficult it will be for AI companies to improve their image and earn the public's trust in the short and long term. After 20 years of polling Coloradans on a wide range of issues, we'd argue the oil and gas industry would have an easier time defending a fracking well 100 feet from a school than an AI company would have defending a new data center. It will be interesting to see how this story unfolds in the years to come.

Key Findings

Two-thirds of Colorado voters hold an unfavorable view of artificial intelligence: Among all respondents, 66% have an unfavorable opinion of AI, including 41% who are very unfavorable, while 29% are favorable. Six in ten voters have used an AI tool such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude in the past year. However, among individuals who have used AI for work or a personal task, a majority (56%) have a favorable opinion of AI. Younger voters hold the most negative opinions of AI: just 16% of voters 18 to 44 are favorable, compared with 40% of voters 45 to 64 and 42% of voters 65 and older. Republican voters (48% favorable) are twice as favorable as Democratic voters (20%) and unaffiliated voters (25%).

Voters expect AI to eliminate jobs, and the worry is more about the next generation than about themselves: Seventy-seven percent of voters believe AI will eliminate jobs, including 52% who say it definitely will, versus 8% who expect it to create jobs. 88% are concerned that AI will eliminate jobs for future generations, with 59% very concerned, and that concern reaches 92% among voters 18 to 44 and 95% among Democratic voters. Among the 897 employed respondents, 48% are concerned about losing their own job to AI and 50% are not.

Voters do not trust the companies building AI, and they do not want their local government or school district adopting it: On eleven measures of trust, just 16% of voters trust AI companies to deliver; 83% say the companies cannot be trusted to make tools that are safe for children or free from political bias, and 82% say the same about respecting users' privacy. Among the companies most voters recognize, unfavorable image ratings run from 66% for Google to 86% for Meta. Seventy percent of voters are not comfortable at all with their local government incorporating AI into its operations and services, and 75% are not comfortable with their school district using AI to educate students. Comfort rises with income (49% of voters earning over $200,000 are comfortable with local government use, compared with 16% of those earning under $75,000), but it never reaches a majority in any group.

Opposition to data centers is broad and intense, growing the closer the facility comes; a majority prefers an outright ban: Eighty-two percent of voters oppose a data center in their city or town, 77% oppose one in their county, 86% oppose one near their neighborhood, and 75% oppose one elsewhere in the state. Among the 83% of voters who have seen or heard information about data center construction in Colorado, 83% say it made them more negative. Asked about the best path forward for their own community, 55% choose a ban on all data center construction, 26% choose new zoning and land-use codes, and 4% choose a time delay. An outright ban is the choice of 68% of voters aged 18 to 44 and 73% of voters who have not used AI, but of 38% of voters 65 and older and 38% of Republican voters.

Voters accept the case against data centers and reject the case for them: 83% agree they strain the power grid, 82% that they use too much water, 78% that they raise nearby electricity costs; 75% disagree that local governments should offer them tax incentives, 68% disagree that they bring long-term, high-paying jobs, and 77% disagree that their economic benefits outweigh their impact on the community.

Water tops the list of concerns regarding data center construction. Supporters and opponents share the expectation that a data center should pay its own way for water and power. Roughly six in ten of the 1,092 voters who explained their opposition to a local data center cited water, describing a record drought, dead lawns under watering restrictions, wells and reservoirs running low, and farms and ranches with first claim on what remains. About a third raised concerns about electric rates and grid strain they expect Xcel Energy and other utilities to pass on to households, and about a quarter described the round-the-clock noise, heat, and light of living next to one.

The 16% of voters who would support a data center in their town cite jobs and tax revenue above all else, and about one in seven attach conditions. Among the 11% who wrote in their own path forward, the most common proposal was conditional approval: build only if the facility supplies its own power and water, draws nothing from the Colorado River or residential ratepayers, and receives no tax break.

T1. First, please verify that you are at least 18 years old and a full-time resident of Colorado.

Yes	100%

T2. In the past 12 months, have you used an artificial intelligence (AI) tool such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude?

Yes	60%
No	40%

T3. Have you used an AI tool for a personal task, a business/work related task, or both? *(Asked to the 835 respondents who answered "Yes" to T2)*

Both	51%
A personal task	30%
A business/work related task	15%
Unsure or No Opinion	4%

T4. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of artificial intelligence (AI)?

Total Favorable	29%
Total Unfavorable	66%
Unsure or No Opinion	5%
Very Favorable	9%
Somewhat Favorable	20%
Very Unfavorable	41%
Somewhat Unfavorable	25%

T5. Please describe the reasons why you have a favorable opinion of artificial intelligence (AI). *(Asked to the 401 respondents who had a favorable opinion of AI)*

Faster Work and Fewer Mundane Tasks: The most common reason respondents cite is that AI gets work done faster. They describe handing off repetitive or tedious tasks so they can focus on harder problems, and they name the tasks: drafting and cleaning up emails, letters, and reports; writing basic code and spreadsheets; taking clinical notes; compiling labor costs in the automotive industry; and reviewing lengthy contracts for provisions that might work against them. Several call it an accelerator or force multiplier that turns weeks of work into an hour. Most of these respondents frame it as a workplace tool first, with home use as a bonus.

A Direct Answer Instead of a Search: Many respondents value AI for quickly getting information in plain language, pitched to their level of understanding. A recurring comparison is with Google, which respondents describe as declining in quality and overrun by commercial interests; some now use ChatGPT or Facebook's AI answers for most of what they once searched for. The uses are practical: photographing a broken appliance to identify it and learn how to fix it; troubleshooting a car problem that ended up costing $190 rather than the $1,600 quoted by a tire and brake shop; adjusting recipes; planning travel itineraries; getting gardening advice tailored to local growing conditions; reading medical reports; checking whether a claim is true; and skipping the customer service line at Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment offices. Respondents also like that it anticipates follow-up questions and carries context from one question to the next within a conversation.

Running a Business and Working Beyond One's Training: Small business owners and self-employed respondents say AI has enabled them to start or run a company they otherwise could not, compete with larger, better-funded firms, and build their own software instead of paying for per-user subscriptions that had become too expensive. A few also say it has raised their earnings. Others describe going beyond their training: coding without a degree, learning subjects beyond their formal education, preparing for job interviews, checking college papers for run-on sentences, analyzing individual stocks, researching case law, or fact-checking a novel before publication. A few add that it is especially useful for people with learning disabilities or for anyone who could not otherwise afford an accountant, an attorney, or a second medical opinion.

The Next Industrial Revolution, and Staying Ahead of China: Some respondents focus less on their own use and more on where the technology is headed. They call it the new industrial revolution or the biggest change since the internet, say it is inevitable, and conclude that the sensible response is to learn it rather than resist it. Medicine comes up most often as the field with the largest payoff, with mentions of AlphaFold, mRNA treatments, personalized medicine, and faster development of cancer drugs. A smaller group ties their view to national competitiveness and security, arguing that the United States must stay ahead of China and other countries and that AI will bring jobs and new business here.

Favorable Toward AI With Conditions Attached: Many respondents qualify their favorable view before they finish the sentence. The most frequent condition is accuracy: answers sometimes hallucinate or draw on unvetted or skewed sources, so users double-check anything that matters. Next come calls for regulation, guardrails, watermarking AI-generated content, and liability for developers whose products cause harm. Data center water and power use draws objections even within this favorable group, including from respondents who say they would pay more for AI if it spared the environment and from those who argue that closed-loop cooling systems still fall short. Other reservations include job losses, students leaning on it instead of learning, artists' work being used without permission, and military or government misuse, with several respondents saying they trust the tool more than the companies and politicians deploying it.

T6. Please describe the reasons why you have an unfavorable opinion of artificial intelligence (AI). *(Asked to the 918 respondents who had an unfavorable opinion of AI)*

Water, Power, and the Environmental Cost of Data Centers: A clear majority of unfavorable respondents start by describing what it takes to run AI, and water comes up more than anything else. They describe data centers cooling servers with drinking water while Colorado is in a drought, with active wildfire seasons and farmers and ranchers already short on supply. Several object to siting facilities near aquifers or inside residential areas. Electricity is the second complaint: strain on an already stressed grid, fossil-fuel generators brought in to cover the new load, higher carbon emissions, and the open land and wildlife habitat that large campuses consume. Many of these respondents call the trade absurd on its face, spending irreplaceable water and power so people can draft emails or generate pictures. A number say they would give up the technology entirely if the data centers went away with it.

Outsourced Thinking and Declining Skills: Close behind the environment, respondents believe technology is reshaping people's minds. They describe students turning in essays they did not write, teachers and school staff watching kids cheat and stop working to learn, a decline in literacy, and adults who reach for a chatbot for every question instead of reading or reasoning it through. Several call it a crutch that lets the brain atrophy like an unused muscle, and some cite brain-scan studies and falling test scores. The same respondents often add that generated writing and images are flattening human creativity and making everything look and sound alike. A smaller group extends the harm to mental health: chatbots used as therapists or friends by young or vulnerable users, systems built to agree with whoever is typing, compulsive use, and what several respondents call AI psychosis.

Wrong Answers and a Product Forced on Everyone: A significant share do not trust what the tools produce. Respondents recount hallucinated facts, fabricated sources, a travel itinerary built around non-existent dates, and answers delivered so confidently that errors slip past people who take the output as gospel; several say the checking required erases any time saved. Customer service is a sore spot, with respondents describing phone systems and chat agents at companies like Wendy's and Amazon that loop and never hand off to a person. Many object

that the technology is being pushed on them anyway: Gemini answers inserted at the top of Google searches, AI features switched on by default in software they already own, and opt-outs buried or missing.

Beyond individual errors, respondents worry about a public that can no longer tell generated images, video, and voices from real ones, about deepfakes and voice-cloning scams aimed at older residents, and about models that carry the political leanings of whoever trained them. A number draw a line between generative chatbots and image generators, which they see as useless, and narrower uses in medical research or cancer detection they would accept.

Job Loss for Corporate Gain: Employment is the central concern among many respondents. They say companies are using the technology to cut staff rather than help existing workers, and that productivity gains go to shareholders instead of wages or shorter hours; some report being required to use tools at work that their employer is training to replace them. Entry-level and junior roles come up repeatedly, along with graphic design, writing and editing, customer service, and drive-through and retail work. Several describe a hiring market already worsened by automated resume screening and by degrees chosen before 2022 for careers that have since thinned out. Respondents also note that a data center creates few permanent jobs once construction ends, and that no one has a plan for displaced workers.
No Rules and No Trust in the People Running It: Some of the opposition is aimed less at the software than at the companies and the pace. Respondents describe an industry moving faster than anyone can measure the consequences, with no meaningful regulation, no liability when the output is wrong, and executives who admit the risks and build anyway; they point to social media as the precedent for what self-policing produces. Distrust of the billionaires and tech executives in charge runs through these responses, along with objections to wealth concentrating in a few firms while the costs land on everyone else.

Related concerns include surveillance and data scraping without consent, license-plate cameras and other police uses, military applications, and a speculative bubble that has already pushed up prices for memory chips and computer parts and could leave communities holding empty buildings when it bursts. Several want the infrastructure regulated as a public utility or partly owned by the state, and a few expect the technology to escape human control altogether.

Stolen Work: A meaningful minority, including respondents who identify as artists, authors, illustrators, and musicians, object that the models were trained on copyrighted art, writing, music, and scanned books without permission, credit, or payment, and that companies are now selling the results back while cutting the people whose work went in. They describe generated art and music flooding online markets, search results, and publishing with low-quality imitations that displace human work, and some cite reports of physical books being destroyed to feed scanners. Related complaints cover the use of a person's face, voice, and likeness without consent, and sexual imagery of real people, including minors, generated without their knowledge.

Data Centers as Neighbors: Bills, Noise, and Local Approvals: The facilities themselves, rather than the technology, draw complaints from a meaningful minority. They cite a round-the-clock hum heard by nearby residents and livestock, light pollution, heat vented into the surrounding area, and the loss of farmland and ranchland. Rising residential electric bills recur throughout, with respondents arguing that Xcel Energy and other utilities are passing grid upgrades for industrial customers onto households, while tax abatements shift the public cost further onto residents.

Greeley is named as a city spending on big tech instead of local needs, and Garden of the Gods as a place no facility should go near. Several say local officials approve the projects over residents' objections, that nobody got to vote, and that a facility bringing a couple hundred jobs is not worth what it takes.

T7. Will the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the following areas be positive/negative/unsure?

	Total Positive	Total Negative	Equally Positive & Negative	No Opinion
Medical and Healthcare	40%	31%	21%	8%
How people do their jobs	24%	49%	24%	3%
Colorado businesses	23%	47%	20%	10%
Law enforcement	18%	61%	14%	7%
Higher Education (college)	16%	63%	17%	4%
The Colorado economy	16%	56%	15%	13%
The criminal justice system	16%	61%	14%	9%
K-12 Education	14%	65%	17%	4%
How people get news and information	14%	66%	16%	4%
Elections	9%	73%	11%	7%
Personal relationships	7%	71%	14%	8%
Social media	7%	74%	13%	6%

T8. In general, do you think the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) will create or eliminate jobs?

Total Create Jobs	8%
Total Eliminate Jobs	77%
Equally Create and Eliminate Jobs	13%
Unsure or No Opinion	2%
Definitely Create Jobs	4%
Probably Create Jobs	4%
Definitely Eliminate Jobs	52%
Probably Eliminate Jobs	25%

T9. If you are employed, are you concerned at all that the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) will eliminate your job? *(Percentages are among the 897 respondents who are employed)*

Total Concerned	48%
Total Not Concerned	50%
Unsure or No Opinion	2%
Yes, Very Concerned	15%
Yes, Somewhat Concerned	33%

T10. In general, are you concerned at all that artificial intelligence (AI) will eliminate jobs for future generations?

Total Concerned	88%
Total Not Concerned	10%
Unsure or No Opinion	2%
Yes, Very Concerned	59%
Yes, Somewhat Concerned	28%

T11. Generally speaking, how comfortable are you with your local government incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into its regular operations and the services they provide to your community?

Total Comfortable	25%
Not Comfortable at All	70%
Unsure or No Opinion	5%
Very Comfortable	6%
Somewhat Comfortable	19%

T12. Generally speaking, how comfortable are you with your local school district incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into how it educates students?

Total Comfortable 20%
Not Comfortable at All 75%
Unsure or No Opinion 5%

Very Comfortable 4%
Somewhat Comfortable 16%

T13. Thinking now about companies that build, create, and manage AI tools. Please indicate if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following companies. If you do not know the company and have never heard of it, you can select that option as well. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of:

	Total Favorable	Total Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of
Google (Now Alphabet)	33%	66%	37%	1%
Microsoft	32%	68%	38%	0%
Amazon	29%	70%	46%	1%
Space X	26%	69%	55%	5%
OpenAI	23%	67%	47%	10%
Anthropic	18%	46%	32%	36%
Meta (Formerly Facebook)	12%	86%	66%	2%
Perplexity	9%	31%	23%	60%

T14. And do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following individuals?

	Total Favorable	Total Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of
Elon Musk	25%	74%	64%	1%
Jeff Bezos	15%	82%	62%	3%
Sam Altman	10%	61%	47%	29%
Mark Zuckerberg	8%	91%	68%	1%
Dario Amodei	7%	32%	25%	61%

T15. Do you trust companies to create AI tools that are:

	Yes	No	Unsure
Accurate and reliable	16%	71%	13%
Safe in general	15%	72%	13%
Free from discrimination	12%	77%	11%
Designed to prevent harmful uses	12%	77%	11%
Developed responsibly	12%	75%	13%
Respectful of users' privacy	11%	82%	7%
Honest about their dangers	11%	80%	9%
Accountable when something goes wrong	11%	80%	9%
Transparent	10%	80%	10%
Free from political bias	9%	83%	8%
Safe for children	8%	83%	9%

T16. How important is it for AI companies in the United States to stay ahead of Chinese AI companies in developing the most advanced, cutting-edge AI models in the world?

Total Important 48%
Not Important at All 37%
Unsure or No Opinion 15%

Very Important 26%
Somewhat Important 22%

T17. How familiar are you with what "data centers" are — the large facilities that house computer servers?

Total Familiar 94%
Not Familiar At All 4%
Unsure or No Opinion 2%

Very Familiar 50%
Somewhat Familiar 44%

T18. How much information have you seen, read, or heard regarding the construction of data centers here in Colorado?

A Lot and Some Information 83%

A Lot of Information 31%
Some Information 52%
No Information at all 15%
Unsure or No Opinion 2%

T19. Has the information you have seen, read, or heard regarding data centers given you a more positive or negative opinion of them? *(Asked of the 1,162 respondents who answered "A lot of information" or "Some information" to T18)*

Total More Positive 8%
Total More Negative 83%
Equally Positive and Negative 7%
Unsure or No Opinion 2%

Much More Positive 3%
Somewhat More Positive 5%

Much More Negative 69%
Somewhat More Negative 14%

T20. For the next few questions, when we say data centers, we mean large buildings that house computer servers used to store data and run online services, including artificial intelligence. Knowing this information, would you support or oppose the construction of a data center:

	Total Support	Total Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Unsure
In your state, but not close to home	22%	75%	64%	3%
In your County	20%	77%	68%	3%
In your city/town	16%	82%	77%	2%
Near your neighborhood	12%	86%	81%	2%

T21. Please describe the reasons why you would support the construction of a data center in your city/town. *(Asked to the 216 respondents who support building a data center in their city or town)*

Jobs and Tax Revenue: Most respondents cite employment first, often listing nothing else. Those who elaborate separate the construction and trades work of the build phase from the technical and monitoring positions that follow, and describe the operating jobs as well paid by local standards. Tax revenue is the usual companion, with respondents expecting the added base to fund schools, roads, and county services, and some hoping it will lower homeowner property taxes or bring down residential electric, gas, and water bills.

A smaller group of respondents looked beyond the facility itself to business, hoping it would support local companies and attract skilled workers and their families. A few hope it nudges the next generation toward STEM and computer science. Not everyone is sold on the scale of the benefit: a few say the construction work is temporary and the permanent headcount small, or that jobs are the only upside they can think of.

Inevitable Infrastructure With Room to Build: Many supporters treat the facility as something that will exist somewhere, and it might as well be here. They describe data centers as the next

utility, comparable to broadband, power, or telephone service, and note that the buildings predate the AI boom and already sit throughout Colorado. Respondents who use AI, cloud storage, or their phones for everything say it would be inconsistent to want the service and refuse the machines that run it. Others make a land argument: the open ground between the Front Range and Kansas, the plains, abandoned towns, and empty office campuses left behind by IBM, Oracle, Hewlett Packard, and Sun Microsystems are described as places waiting for a use. A few add practical payoffs: faster internet and lower latency for AI tools, disaster recovery by spreading facilities across regions, and the advances in medicine and engineering they expect AI to deliver.

Keeping Pace With China and Neighboring States: Several respondents framed the facility in terms of competition rather than local benefit. China came up most, with respondents describing AI capacity as a race the United States has to win and domestic data storage as a security question. A Colorado version of the same argument holds that Denver and the state are losing companies and talent to other states because of their business posture, and that turning away data centers would deepen that loss. Several put it more simply as a choice between moving forward and being left behind.

Water and Power Fears Called Overblown: Some respondents support data centers in part because they believe the case against them is flawed. They cite closed-loop systems, refrigerant chillers, glycol coolant, and dry coolers to argue that Colorado facilities do not consume water as critics claim, and compare the figures in circulation to the water used to produce a hamburger or California almonds. Some fault news coverage and social media memes for the alarm, a few call it a deliberate scare tactic, and one line of argument asks why Xcel Energy draws none of the criticism for power use that data centers do. A handful speak from experience, as an IBM retiree, a former data center product planner, or someone who researched the question independently, and expect solar mandates or future technology to handle whatever strain remains on the grid.

Support With Strings Attached: Some support comes with conditions rather than as a blank endorsement. The most common condition is that the operator supply its own power and water, pay its own way for infrastructure, and never push costs onto residential ratepayers; a few say their support ends the moment their utility bill rises. Siting comes next: out on the outskirts, in industrial parks or manufacturing districts, in remote or even underground locations, and away from neighborhoods, schools, ranches, and farms. A few raise concerns about noise and visual impact, and some expect state and local regulation to enforce water and energy limits. A number put it more loosely, as support for responsible development, without spelling out what would break the deal.

T22. Please describe the reasons why you would oppose the construction of a data center in your city/town. (Asked to the 1,137 respondents who oppose building a data center in their city or town)

Water in a Drought State: A clear majority name water, and most of them say some version of the same thing: Colorado does not have it to spare. Respondents describe the worst drought on record, a summer of wildfires, dead lawns under watering restrictions, wells and reservoirs running low, and the Colorado River drying up while downstream states still draw from it. Many argue that people, farms, and ranches should have first claim, with Greeley farmland, orchard towns, irrigation in southwest Colorado, and the Summit County watershed that supplies Denver named in particular. A smaller group disputes the industry's claims about closed-loop cooling, saying the systems still need secondary water and are chosen because they are the cheapest option. They also point to reports of contaminated wells, silt in aquifers, and households near existing facilities unable to flush toilets. Several say a facility that used gray water or no water at all would be a different conversation.

Electric Rates and Grid Strain Paid for by Households: A significant share objects to the power draw and, more sharply, to who pays for it. Respondents expect their Xcel Energy or Black Hills Energy bills to rise to cover transmission upgrades and new generation for a single industrial customer. One respondent from the Colorado Springs area adds that Colorado Springs Utilities and Mountain View Electric give data centers discounted enterprise rates, while Hoover Dam prepares to cut generation as its water level drops. Others describe a grid already prone to outages, homes already asked to curb use during peak demand, and new load met with gas plants or diesel backup generators. Tax abatements draw the same complaint: a respondent living near an existing facility says it produced sixteen jobs and no tax payments for thirty-nine years, and many say a company earning record profits should pay its own utilities and infrastructure without public assistance.

Noise, Heat, Light, and Health Next Door: The constant sound is the complaint respondents describe most vividly, comparing it to a 737 idling, a vacuum running in the ear, or a high-pitched whine heard for miles that never stops at night. People who moved to rural areas or small mountain towns for quiet say a data center would defeat the reason they came. Waste heat and warmer neighborhoods, around-the-clock lighting, construction and truck traffic, and falling home values follow. A number of respondents raise health concerns: infrasound and electromagnetic fields, headaches and lost sleep, cancer claims from other states, and effects on livestock, bees, and nocturnal wildlife. A few identify themselves as electricians or data center engineers and say the noise from generators and heat rejection is real and that the buildings belong far from homes, as refineries and factories are.

Farmland, Open Space, and Colorado's Scenery: Concerns about what the buildings would replace and how they would look bother a significant share. Respondents describe windowless industrial boxes that do not belong in mountain communities, on the Eastern Plains, near Garden of the Gods, or on Weld County farmland, and several say their town simply has no buildable room. Wildlife displacement, habitat loss, and the conversion of public land and

working farms come up repeatedly, along with the view that the same land and water should go to housing, schools, parks, or a grocery store. A minority accept that the facilities have to go somewhere and offer alternatives: outside city limits in industrial zones, on military bases, near coasts or nuclear plants, in the Midwest, in empty existing buildings, or underwater, as they understand China is doing.

Few Jobs, Profits Elsewhere, and a Possible Bubble: A meaningful minority reject the economic case on its own terms. Respondents estimate permanent staffing at five, sixteen, twenty, or fifty jobs; say construction crews are traveling specialists rather than local workers; and conclude that the headcount cannot justify the land, water, and power consumed. Many frame the deal as billionaires and hyperscalers extracting value from a community that bears the costs, and a smaller group questions whether the facilities will still be running in ten years, raising concerns about Detroit, obsolete hardware, and an AI bubble that could leave the town holding an empty shell, with a request that developers post an escrow account to cover cleanup. Running alongside this is opposition to AI itself: respondents say they would fight a data center anywhere because they object to generative AI, its errors, its effect on students, and the jobs it will replace.

Distrust of Developers, Officials, and the Absence of Rules: Process and accountability are the core grievance for a meaningful minority. Respondents say companies understate water and power use, sign non-disclosure agreements with local governments, make closed-loop and noise-mitigation promises they later abandon as too expensive, and sue towns that try to stop them. Local officials receive the same treatment: the Colorado Springs mayor and city council for failing to adopt ordinances on noise, light, water, and energy; a city council planning commission that approved a project opposed by everyone else; and the former Kodak site in Weld County, where construction continued despite three stop-work orders for missing permits. Many note that Colorado has no statewide regulation of data centers and that no one voted on any of this. A small group ties the buildout to Flock license-plate cameras and mass surveillance and says the facilities' real purpose has not been disclosed.

T23. As you may know, many local governments in Colorado are deciding the best path forward for their communities regarding data center construction projects. Among the following options, which one do you think is the best path forward for your own community if a data center construction project were under consideration?

A ban on all data center construction projects 55%
Develop new zoning & land use code for data center project applications 26%
A time delay of 6, 9, or 12 months on all data center construction projects..... 4%
Some other option not mentioned. Please describe:..... 11%
Unsure or No Opinion..... 4%

A summary of responses from the “some other option not mentioned” follows.

Approve Only if the Facility Pays Its Own Way on Water and Power: The most common alternative is conditional approval: a data center can be built if it supplies or pays for its own electricity and water and leaves residential utility bills untouched. Respondents outline the conditions they have in mind, including on-site solar, geothermal, hydrogen, or small nuclear generation; closed-loop or recycled wastewater cooling instead of fresh water; no draw on the Colorado River; and per-gallon pricing that rises with consumption. Several want money to flow the other way as well, through local taxes on the operator, a performance deposit, a fund that lowers residents' power costs, or a contract that returns to the city and county for review every twelve months. Refusing tax breaks and incentives comes up repeatedly, and a couple of respondents would add limits on what the facility may do, such as no surveillance or military work.

Slow It Down: Longer Moratoriums, Impact Studies, and a Public Vote: Rather than a six- to twelve-month delay, these respondents want the pause to run longer or end only when something specific happens. Suggestions include a two-year or three-to-five-year moratorium, a halt until the drought is over, an indefinite delay until new zoning and land use codes are adopted, and a freeze while the state studies the effects of data centers elsewhere and sends representatives to communities that already host them.

Some respondents would put each project to a yes-or-no vote by the people in the affected district, or require public hearings, an independent impact statement, and a cost-benefit analysis covering water, power, noise, and long-term expansion before any approval. Some in this group combine the listed options, asking for a moratorium followed by zoning and, if the findings warrant it, a ban.

Keep Them Away From Homes and Water, or Out of Colorado: Several respondents accept data centers only in certain locations. Proposals include a fifty-mile buffer from homes, schools, and parks; siting in remote deserts with no aquifers; underground construction; reusing vacant office and tech buildings instead of farmland; and classifying data centers as heavy industry, like a concrete plant, rather than light industrial. One respondent would ban them throughout the Colorado River watershed because of the reservoir crisis; others would keep them clear of the I-25 and I-70 corridors or require them to be silent and out of sight. A smaller group said the state is the wrong place: build them east, where water is cheaper, or don't build them anywhere.

Treat Them Like Any Other Business: A number of respondents reject all three listed options because they want no data-center-specific rules. They would let the county planning board run its normal permitting and conditional-use process, allow construction in any zone that already permits industrial development, and impose nothing on data centers that is not imposed on a factory or warehouse. A few go further, saying Colorado should welcome data centers with tax incentives rather than restrictions, and a few object to the question for offering only limits.

T24. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Data centers put too much strain on the local power grid.	83%	69%	9%	5%	8%
Data centers use too much water.	82%	72%	11%	6%	7%
Data centers drive up electricity costs for nearby households.	78%	64%	9%	4%	13%
Data centers are noisy.	62%	48%	10%	4%	28%
Data centers are essential for the future.	30%	15%	62%	48%	8%
Data centers bring in significant tax revenue for the local community.	20%	8%	57%	46%	23%
Data centers bring long-term, high-paying permanent jobs to the local community.	19%	7%	68%	55%	13%
The benefits of data centers to the local economy outweigh their impact on the community.	16%	9%	77%	69%	7%
Local governments should offer tax incentives for data centers.	12%	6%	75%	68%	13%

And now, we have a few questions for statistical purposes only.

T25. Are you:

Female 51%
Male 48%
Identify Differently 1%

T26. Are you between the ages of:

18-34 ..... 29%
35-44 ..... 19%
45-54 ..... 15%
55-64 ..... 14%
65 or Older 23%

T27. For statistical and weighting purposes only, are you registered to vote as an Unaffiliated voter, a Democrat, a Republican, registered with another party, or not registered to vote?

Unaffiliated	50%
Democrat	24%
Republican	22%
Other Party	3%
Not registered to vote	1%

T28. Which race or ethnicity do you most identify with?

White	70%
Hispanic or Latino	19%
Black or African-American	3%
Asian	2%
Other	6%

T29. Do you have a four-year college degree?

Yes	57%
No	43%

T30. How would you describe the area where you currently live?

Suburban Area	41%
City Or Urban Area	31%
Small Town Area	15%
Rural Area	11%
Prefer not to say	2%

T31. Do you have a child 18 and under living in the household?

Yes	27%
No	73%

T32. Last year, what was your total family income before taxes?

Less than $50,000	13%
$50,000 to $74,999	15%
$75,000 to $99,999	13%
$100,000 to $124,999	12%
$125,000 to $149,999	9%
$150,000 to $199,000	10%
More than $200,000	11%
Prefer not to say	17%

T33. What is your work/occupation status?

Employed	65%
Retired	21%
Unemployed looking for work	5%
Unemployed not looking for work	2%
Other	7%

Survey Methodology

This survey used an MMS text-to-web survey data-collection method, inviting a random sample of Colorado voters to participate. The sample records were selected from a database of Colorado registered voters. The survey data were weighted to reflect the demographics of the Colorado registered voter population. The interviews were conducted from August 26th to September 2nd, 2026. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 2.63% at the 95% confidence interval. For any questions regarding the survey results and data collection methodology, contact David Flaherty at 303-861-8585 or by email at DFlaherty@MagellanStrategies.com.