

David Whitaker, Esq.
Director
Irvin Corley, Jr.
Executive Policy Manager
Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director, City Planning
Commission
Janese Chapman
Director, Historic Designation
Advisory Board

John Alexander
LaKisha Barclift, Esq.
Timarie DeBruhl
Paige Blessman
M. Rory Bolger, Ph.D., FAICP
Victory Corley
Lisa DiChiera
Eric Fazzini, AICP
Willene Green
Christopher Gulock, AICP

City of Detroit
CITY COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE POLICY DIVISION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-4946 Fax: (313) 224-4336

Ayesha Harris
Marcel Hurt, Esq.
Sandra L. Jeffers
Kimani Jeffrey
Anthony W. L. Johnson
Phillip Keller, Esq.
Edward King
Kelsey Maas
Jamie Murphy
Dolores Perales-Lara
Analine Powers, Ph.D.
W. Akilah Redmond
Renee Short
Floyd Stanley
Thomas Stephens, Esq.
Theresa Thomas
Janice Tillmon
Ian Tomashik
Emberly Vick

TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: 7/10/2026

RE: **RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE USAGE OF WATER RESOURCES FOR DATA CENTERS**

City Council Member Mary Waters has requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) produce a resolution opposing the usage of Detroit's water resources to cool data centers.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARY WATERS

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE USAGE OF WATER RESOURCES FOR DATA CENTERS

- WHEREAS** Water is an essential resource for sustaining all life on Earth but is relatively scarce, as only 2.5% of the Earth's water is freshwater and less than 1.2% is accessible and safe for humans to drink;¹ and
- WHEREAS** The Great Lakes are a unique world treasure as it is the largest surface freshwater ecosystem, making up over 20% of the world supply of fresh water and 84% of America's fresh water;² and
- WHEREAS** The Great Lakes Basin encompasses large regions of the United States and Canada, and the Great Lakes both define the region's geography and provide freshwater to the surrounding population, including Detroit; and
- WHEREAS** In addition to providing drinking water, the Great Lakes support a rich ecosystem of wildlife and generate trillions of dollars in regional Gross Domestic Product through wages and spending related to activities such as shipping, recreation, tourism, and fishing; and
- WHEREAS** Artificial intelligence (AI) data centers consume a tremendous amount of resources, due to both the energy consumption and the water usage since the vast majority of data centers rely on water-based cooling to remove the excessive amount of heat generated by the servers; and
- WHEREAS** While the amounts vary greatly depending on the size of the data center and the cooling methods used, medium-sized data centers can use 100 million gallons of water per year and large data centers can consume up to 5 million gallons per day;³ and
- WHEREAS** Given the large availability of water in the region, data center water usage is unlikely to cause water shortages as it has in other areas of the country, however, the full scale of current and future water use by data centers is unknown and there are a host of other potential harms related to the use of water to cool data centers; and
- WHEREAS** High concentrations of data centers can overtax local infrastructure such as water treatment facilities which could lead to insufficient water treatment, water discharged at high temperatures can reduce dissolved oxygen levels, harm aquatic wildlife, promote algae blooms, and cause long-term changes to aquatic ecosystems, and water leaving data centers or blown down from cooling towers may contain high levels of minerals, heavy metals, biocides, refrigerants, corrosion inhibitors, and PFAS chemicals; and
- WHEREAS** Data center water usage is exacerbated where the data centers are powered by fossil fuel plants, which also require large amounts of water for cooling, and it is increasingly necessary to prioritize the use of renewable energy to power these facilities given the

¹ <https://www.usgs.gov/media/images/distribution-water-and-above-earth>

² <https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/great-lakes-facts-and-figures>

³ <https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/data-centers-and-water-consumption>

increased energy demands that stress power infrastructure and contribute to climate change; and

WHEREAS A cooler climate and the ready availability of water in the Great Lakes Region has drawn an influx of data center facilities across the region in recent years; and

WHEREAS These facilities continue to expand in both scope and type, with increasingly massive hyperscale facilities and facilities designed for alternate cooling methods such as the Chinese Shanghai Lingang Project, which is located 10 meters beneath the sea surface outside of Shanghai; and

WHEREAS The cumulative impact of these facilities is unknown as they continue to expand, and the Great Lakes Region lacks a consistent and adequate regulatory framework to ensure the protection of precious freshwater supplies; and

WHEREAS There are many current and developing methods to mitigate data center water usage such as using reclaimed wastewater for cooling instead of potable water, closed-loop and “waterless” cooling designs that minimize the volume of necessary water, water management strategies to treat and recirculate water multiple times on-site, the use of renewable energy to power data centers, and transparent real-time monitoring of water flows and quality; and

WHEREAS The Great Lakes Basin, along with all of its tributaries, rivers, and inland bodies of water should be responsibly managed to minimize the threats of all industrial activity, including data centers, given the vital importance freshwater to the life, health, and well-being of everyone in the surrounding region; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED The Detroit City Council hereby strongly opposes the unmitigated use of Detroit’s water resources for the purpose of cooling AI data centers without proper monitoring and without reasonable efforts to minimize water usage and environmental impacts; **NOW BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED That the Detroit City Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to Mayor Sheffield.