The Reality of the T5 Grayslake Data Center Initiative

1. The Fiscal Illusion vs. The Residential Burden

Pro-Development Argument: Data centers maintain the highest tax-revenue-per-acre ratio and demand virtually no municipal resources.
Response: This argument creates a fiscal illusion. While property tax on the improvements does flow to local taxing bodies, the Illinois Data Center Investment Program exempts state and local sales and use tax on qualifying equipment — servers, cooling plant, electrical gear, and building materials. On a project of this scale, that is a very large sum the public never collects. Between 2020 and 2024, 27 Illinois data centers claimed more than $983 million in benefits under this program, and T5 Grayslake was certified for it before the program was suspended in July. Separately, grid upgrades to serve loads of this size are substantially recovered from ratepayers. ComEd has spent more than $3 billion since 2021 connecting large facilities, most of them data centers, with data center customer deposits covering only about 25% of that cost. And the massive scale of the campus means that other public services and infrastructure will require upgrades that will at least partially offset the property tax income.

2. The Permanent Job Mirage

Pro-Development Argument: The campus ensures a multi-year pipeline for thousands of construction workers and high-paying tech roles.
Response: The construction jobs are real but temporary. The permanent jobs are few. For context, the Illinois program T5 is certified under only requires 20 full-time positions for a facility representing at least $250 million of investment. A campus of this footprint delivering permanent employment in the dozens is an extraordinarily low return in jobs per acre for land that could be zoned for manufacturing, logistics, or mixed commercial use. Once the specialized buildout is complete, the local economy is left with massive, automated "ghost buildings" that do not sustain local restaurants, retail, or secondary businesses over the long term.

3. The Threat to Local Resources & Quality of Life

Pro-Development Argument: Layouts achieve near-zero net water utilization and include structural acoustics to limit sound.
Response: True closed loop systems use chemical additives including biocides that are toxic to wildlife and require periodic drainage. A leak, spill, or improper drainage of a closed loop system can release biocides toxic to ecosystems and non-biodegradable corrosion inhibitors, heavy metals or persistent minerals that accumulate in ecosystems. Additionally, sound barriers and landscaping are far less effective at the low frequencies generated by massive industrial fan blades and diesel generators. This low-frequency airborne vibration can travel for miles, penetrating residential walls and causing sleep deprivation, headaches, and structural rattling.

4. Speculative AI vs. Community Identity

Pro-Development Argument: Advanced computational infrastructure serves as a critical national security and utility backbone.
Response: This project is a speculative commercial real estate venture designed to host highly profitable corporate AI models. Grayslake residents are being asked to sacrifice their local landscape, quiet enjoyment, and environment so a private developer can flip data center space to tech conglomerates. A 472-acre development permanently destroys green space and local agricultural land. Once the topsoil is paved over with millions of square feet of concrete data center pads, the land can be restored only at a very high cost, thus permanently changing Grayslake's community identity.

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