Walla Walla FAQs

Since 2010, Amazon has invested over $400 billion in Washington including infrastructure and compensation to employees and has over 95,000 employees in the state. Amazon is committed to responsible development and being a long-term, positive presence in the Walla Walla community while delivering the digital infrastructure that powers Washington's economy and essential services. Amazon has also invested more than $60 billion in Oregon since 2010, including infrastructure and compensation to employees, and has more than 14,000 employees across the state.

General

Q: What are data centers and why do we need them?

Modern life runs on data centers. Data centers make the internet as we know it possible, enabling us to send emails, place online orders, access online health records, and so much more. Companies like Netflix use Amazon's cloud infrastructure to stream content to over 230 million subscribers worldwide.

Data center facilities contain computer servers, data storage drives, networking equipment, and other forms of technology infrastructure used to power cloud computing capabilities and generative AI technologies. These secure, high-tech facilities enable innovation and serve as economic engines for local communities.

Q: How big is this project and how many jobs will it create?

The proposed data center campus includes three single story data center buildings on approximately 134 acres. A data center campus of this size is projected to create between 120—150 full-time positions.

Data center construction and operations generate hundreds of construction jobs and support a range of other positions, such as data center technicians, network specialists, engineering operation technicians, facility managers, security specialists, electricians, fiber-optic technicians, and air conditioning (HVAC) technicians.

Q: Why did this project receive a notice of incomplete application?

Amazon's Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is complete and ready for submission, which would finalize the application process. However, before taking that step, Amazon is choosing to engage directly with the community to answer questions and share additional project information.

Q: Does Amazon receive property tax breaks for this project?

The Amazon data center in Walla Walla County will pay 100% of its property taxes, directly funding local schools, roads, emergency services, and other public priorities. Data centers are uniquely high-value assets that generate significantly more property tax revenue per acre than most other types of industrial development.

Water

Q: Why will this data center campus use water?

Amazon's data centers are engineered to use as little water as possible, achieving more than 80% greater water efficiency compared to the industry average.

In this region, Amazon facilities use outside air for cooling approximately 93% of the year, eliminating the need for water-based cooling during those hours. During the hottest days of the year — about 7% of the time — we strategically deploy water-based cooling. This approach reduces Amazon's electricity demand by 25–35% when the grid experiences peak summer loads, balancing water and power efficiency.

Q: How does the data center use water?

For approximately 7% of the year, the data center will use water for cooling by passing hot air through water-soaked pads, which lowers the air temperature sent to cool the servers.

Q. How much water does a data center use? How much will this location use?

Amazon data center's water efficiency is industry-leading at 0.12 L/kWh, 7x more efficient than the industry average (0.84 L/kWh) and representing a 52% improvement over our 2021 performance. We maximize water conservation through innovative cooling systems that use outside air cooling for 93% of the time, only requiring water-based cooling during peak summer temperatures.

For Amazon's 134-acre campus project of up to 3 data centers, the annual cooling water use is expected to be 14 million gallons per year. This is less than 25% of what a standard center pivot (130 acres) of food crops would use in the region. By comparison, a 130-acre farm field in the area consumes between 62-145 million gallons per year depending on the crop type.

Note: Net irrigation requirements from WSU Extension AgWeatherNet (https://weather.wsu.edu/) and US Bureau of Reclamations AgriMet data (https://www.usbr.gov/pn/agrimet/etsummary.html), assumes 85% application efficiency based on mid elevation spray application (MESA) using center pivots typically used in the region.

Amazon has committed to being water positive by 2030, meaning it will return more water to communities than it uses. As of 2025, Amazon is 75% of the way to that goal. Amazon has announced over 50 water replenishment projects globally, expected to return more than 5.8 billion gallons of water annually once fully implemented—equivalent to 8,800 Olympic swimming pools.

Q: Will this impact our drinking water or local wells?

No, Amazon data center operations are not expected to place any strain on the community's drinking water supplies or local wells. Amazon is working with the Port of Walla Walla (POWW) to develop a new,

separate non-potable Columbia River supply system for Amazon's cooling water source and our cooling water discharge will meet industrial reuse standards delivered to the POWW's leased agricultural land, decreasing reliance on groundwater.

Q: Will there be water discharge and will it be clean?

Yes, water discharge is a normal part of our data center cooling operations. Within Amazon's data center, the only addition to the water is a small amount of chlorine to keep it clean. We use water to cool the data center through evaporation — the only change to the water is an increase in mineral concentration, similar to what happens in a home humidifier.

Where Amazon discharges to local utilities, the water is designed to meet all applicable local and state water quality standards and is treated by the local utility's wastewater facility before being returned to the environment. In cases where discharge is managed through alternative methods, such as on-site treatment or other approved pathways, we ensure full compliance with all applicable standards.

Q: What is AWS doing to reduce the demand on the water source?

We will utilize potable groundwater from the utility to provide domestic water to the campus as well as temporary cooling water for approximately 1 year while the non-potable Columbia River water system is constructed. The new Columbia River supply system will reduce our demands on the local groundwater system down to only domestic water needs for employees, to a total of about 6 million gallons per year.

Energy

Q: Will the data center strain the electric grid and increase energy costs for residents?

Amazon pays for all costs to operate its data centers. These expenses aren't added to the bills of local residents or businesses. In fact, a recent national analysis study by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and The Brattle Group, found that states with growing electricity demand—including from sectors like manufacturing and data centers—saw lower retail electricity prices. Adding new customers spreads fixed grid costs across more users, which helps reduce pressure on rates.

Q: How are data centers paying their fair share of energy costs?

Amazon works closely with utilities and grid operators to plan for future growth. Where it requires specific infrastructure to meet its needs (such as new substations), Amazon works to make sure that it's covering those costs and that they aren't being passed on to other ratepayers. Amazon is also working with utilities on innovative new agreements to keep rates comparably low and bring net-new carbon-free energy projects to the grid.

An independent study by Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) confirmed that these costs are not passed on to local residents or businesses. In many regions, Amazon's data centers generate surplus revenues that utilities can reinvest into grid modernization, improving reliability for all customers.

Q: What kind of energy will the data center use? Is it powered by fossil fuels?

In 2023 and 2024, Amazon matched 100% of the electricity consumed across all of its operations with renewable energy sources. Amazon has invested in more than 700 carbon-free energy projects globally and is one of the world's largest corporate purchasers of carbon-free energy.

In addition, Amazon is investing billions of dollars in nuclear energy projects, including a small modular reactor (SMR) facility with Energy Northwest. This project will provide net-new carbon-free energy for communities in the Pacific Northwest, including Eastern Washington. Additionally, Amazon has renewable energy investments in Oregon, including a commitment to purchase more than 200,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of clean power each year from a Gilliam County-based 90-megawatt (MW) capacity wind farm.

Q: Will generators be used on site?

Amazon data centers are designed with redundancy for water, power, telecommunications, and internet connectivity to maintain continuous operations in an emergency. Backup generators are designed and operated to minimize noise impacts on neighbors. These generators run an average of less than 12 hours per year, mostly for brief mid-day tests to ensure they are ready and reliable when needed during rare emergencies. All testing must meet local noise and permit requirements. This careful approach keeps facilities prepared for emergencies while minimizing any potential disruption to the community.

Sustainability

Q: What kinds of environmental protection laws does Amazon have to follow?

Amazon is committed to environmental responsibility in building and operating its data centers. Amazon complies with all environmental regulations, including those related to water quality, air emissions, stormwater management, noise levels, and waste disposal. Throughout every phase of its projects, from initial planning through construction and ongoing operations, Amazon works closely with environmental agencies to ensure it meets and often exceeds all applicable environmental and public health standards.

Q: What environmental review will this project undergo?

The project is subject to the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), which requires evaluation of potential impacts to earth, air, water, plants, animals, energy, environmental health, land use, and other factors. SEPA review includes comment periods during which the public and relevant

agencies can provide input. Notice will be provided in accordance with WWCC 14.09.045 and WAC 197-11-510.

Q: How does Amazon handle decommissioned equipment and electronic waste?

Amazon is committed to responsible electronics management and extending the life of its equipment to minimize waste. Amazon sends decommissioned equipment to vendors, including local e-waste recyclers and reverse logistics partners, like sister company, re:Cycle Reverse Logistics (RRL). RRL carefully evaluates Amazon used electronics for reuse opportunities, either internally at Amazon or on the secondary reuse market. For equipment that can't be reused, permitted e-waste recyclers prioritize landfill avoidance and the recovery of critical raw materials for return to productive use.

Q: Why was this site selected for data center development?

The project site is located in the Wallula Gap Business Park and is zoned Industrial Agriculture – Mixed (IA-M). It was designated for industrial development through Walla Walla County's Comprehensive Plan. Data centers are a permitted use in this zoning district.

Amazon is committed to protecting environmental resources at every stage of project planning and development. The company's approach begins with careful site selection that prioritizes avoiding ecologically sensitive areas such as wetlands and waterways. Once a site is selected, Amazon obtains independent third-party environmental studies and habitat evaluations and coordinate with environmental agencies to inform site plans that minimize impacts on the environment.

Community

Q: What opportunities exist for public input?

Amazon is planning community engagement events, including an Open House in August to provide information and hear community feedback. Amazon is committed to being a long-term community partner and is actively engaging with Walla Walla County officials, residents, and stakeholders to educate on its development plans and address any concerns. In addition, the public will have multiple opportunities during the zoning and environmental review processes with notices provided to and published public sources.

Q: What community programs does Amazon invest in near its data centers?

Amazon takes pride in being a good neighbor and using its resources to strengthen communities where its employees live and work. Amazon's efforts are anchored by four key pillars: STEM education, skills training, sustainability, and hyperlocal social impact. Beyond these pillars, Amazon data center employees champion causes they care about, finding uniquely Amazonian ways, such as volunteering, to make a positive, lasting difference in local communities.

In the nearby Eastern Oregon region, Amazon has invested in joint programs and over $9 million in community organizations and causes since 2021. Amazon is working with local leaders and organizations

to bring similar programs to Walla Walla County, tailored to the community's needs. Examples of these programs include:

- **The Amazon Community Fund** — A grant program that provides funding to individuals, community groups, schools, non-profits, and other organizations to support initiatives that strengthen the local community. Since 2022, the fund has supported over 200 community projects in Eastern Oregon.
- **Think Big Spaces** — Amazon works with local schools to build hands-on educational labs, part of a broader STEM initiative serving 8,000 students annually in Eastern Oregon, to give young learners exposure to science and technology concepts and prepare them for the workforce of tomorrow.
- **Girls Tech Day & Think Big Experience** — free half-day learning events designed to inspire school-age children to pursue interests and careers in technology.
- **Community Energy** — Amazon provides grants to community organizations to install solar power systems, helping generate carbon-free energy while providing long-term cost savings that can be reinvested to support their missions. In Eastern Oregon, Amazon has awarded 10 non-profits with solar power systems, reducing their electric bills by about 80% over the next 30 years.

Amazon also collaborates with local organizations to deliver skills-based training, helping people get the knowledge they need to enter infrastructure and data center-related careers. In eastern Oregon, Amazon helped Blue Mountain Community College (BMCC) establish the Data Center Technician Training Program.

    - Since 2017, Amazon has given over $700,000 in scholarships to students going through the Data Center Technician and Industrial Skills Technology programs.

Amazon and BMCC also co-host the AWS Fiber Optic Fusion Splicing Certificate Course with Sumitomo Electric Lightwave. This free two-day training course on fiber optic installation and repair includes a career networking session, helping participants meet local and national employers.