



BEHIND THE CLOUD

EPISODE 8 | QUICK REFERENCE

Leverage that is not used before a deal is signed is the same as leverage that never existed.

01 THE BIG IDEA

Two communities can have the same tools and the same leverage and still end up with different outcomes. The outcome depends on whether it uses its tools while they are still available, not on whether it has them at all.



18-24 Months

compressed time in which developers push to move from land acquisition to an operational facility.

02 THREE POLICY AREAS TO WATCH



GRID PLANNING: Regulators must plan for exponential load growth without knowing where new data centers will site. Communities in integrated resource planning processes can shape assumptions that govern a decade of infrastructure investment.



COST ALLOCATION: A small but growing number of states now require large new customers to cover the infrastructure costs they generate, instead of spreading them across the general rate base.



ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Review processes were built for smaller projects. Data centers often get less scrutiny than comparable industrial development and can be exempted from permits.

03 TIMING IS THE TOOL THAT EXPIRES

- **BEFORE THE PROPOSAL:** Build an evaluation framework before a developer ever makes contact.
- **FIRST CONTACT:** Clarify NDA scope and gather baseline facts before signing anything.
- **NEGOTIATION + APPROVAL:** Leverage for zoning votes and community benefit agreements is strongest before approval, not after.
- **AFTER THE DEAL:** Monitor utility dockets and enforce compliance.

**The key question is not "What does the deal contain?"
It's "Did your community use its leverage when it still had it?"**

04 THE BIG QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. **TIMING:** How do we use our leverage before approval?
2. **POLICY:** Are we engaged on grid planning, cost allocation, and environmental review?
3. **MONITORING:** Who is watching the docket and enforcing what we agreed to?
4. **CIVIC CAPACITY:** Are we building lasting knowledge, or starting over with each new proposal?

BOTTOM LINE: Data center growth is not slowing down, and the tools this series covered all have deadlines. The difference between a community that ends up with real leverage and one that does not comes down to using those tools before they expire.

