Large-Load Projects Are Moving Faster Than Community Policy

Prepared for Local Government Executives and Economic Development Professionals

Data centers, advanced manufacturing, battery plants, and other large-load projects bring major investment and tax-base growth — along with immediate questions about electric capacity, water and wastewater demand, land use, roads, emergency services, environmental impact, community character, and public trust. Across the Southeast, communities are considering moratoriums because they are being asked to evaluate complex proposals before policies and infrastructure strategies are in place.

A MORATORIUM CREATES TIME. NOT READINESS.

The most effective communities use that time to decide, in advance: where these projects belong, what infrastructure they require, who pays for it, what standards developers must meet, how residents and stakeholders will be engaged, and how every proposal will be evaluated against the same standard.

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR CONFIDENT DECISIONS

The answer is not to promote or oppose every large-load project — it is to put a structured, transparent process in place before the next one arrives, one that weighs infrastructure capacity alongside stakeholder trust and a credible decision record. Bear Strategies builds and applies that process through the Community Energy Resilience Framework (CERF™): aligning elected officials, staff, utilities, and economic developers; distinguishing technical concerns from misinformation; and applying consistent review criteria to every proposal.

ONE CONSOLIDATED DECISION RECORD

Every technical input — utility filings, engineering studies, fiscal models, community input — is tracked against the specific decision it affects, producing one consolidated record instead of a stack of disconnected reports: what is known, what is still open, and what has to be resolved before a vote is defensible.

THE QUESTIONS LEADERSHIP NEEDS ANSWERED

What is the actual power availability and interconnection timeline for this project?	What are the true water, wastewater, and cooling demands, and can existing infrastructure absorb them?
What is the net fiscal impact once incentives, service costs, and infrastructure obligations are netted out?	What traffic, noise, and environmental effects has the applicant documented versus what remains unverified?
What conditions, if any, would make this project acceptable, and are they enforceable after approval?	What has the community actually said, and how has each concern been addressed in the record?

HOW BEAR STRATEGIES HELPS

Bear Strategies helps communities assess readiness, plan through a moratorium period, design stakeholder engagement, establish project-review criteria, and build the infrastructure and community-benefit frameworks that let a jurisdiction manage growth without closing the door to investment.

The framework does not begin from a predetermined position for or against any proposal. It exists so the next project is met with information, stakeholder alignment, and a credible decision-making process already in hand — instead of a pressured yes-or-no vote made under urgency and controversy.

About CERF™: The Community Energy Resilience Framework is Bear Strategies' methodology for evaluating large-load and energy-intensive development. It brings infrastructure capacity, fiscal impact, environmental review, and stakeholder engagement into one consistent, evidence-based process — carried from first proposal through final decision — so communities meet every project with the same defensible standard.

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