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## **Microsoft shrugs off company climate goals to support burning methane gas for AI data centers**

Microsoft is walking back its long-touted commitment to clean energy as the company seeks to build more artificial intelligence data centers in the Midwest. In a [recent interview](#), an executive with the tech giant admitted burning gas “absolutely would not be off the table” to support the enormous energy demands of AI. Microsoft has purchased more than 1,300 acres in Mt. Pleasant, Wis., to build a data center that will use as much electricity as [300,000 Wisconsin homes](#). It has also announced plans for a smaller cluster of data centers in the Kenosha area.

“Microsoft walking back its climate commitment is a great example of why we need binding state and federal climate laws, not corporate pledges that are reneged when they become inconvenient to profits and shareholders,” says Clean Wisconsin Energy & Air Manager Ciaran Gallagher.

“Microsoft’s reference to potential carbon capture and storage at gas plants is unrealistic and a smokescreen,” she adds, noting that investor-owned utility We Energies is using the Mt. Pleasant data center to push through \$1.5 billion in new gas powerplants and pipelines. Those construction cases are currently before the Public Service Commission for approval. Last fall, nearly 1,000 Wisconsinites and dozens of environmental groups [called on Microsoft](#) to commit to local wind and solar to power its data center.

“The public deserves more time, real transparency, and a chance to understand the impacts of what’s happening and weigh in on solutions,” says Gallagher. “Natural gas is mostly methane, a potent greenhouse gas with 80 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide. Much of it escapes into the atmosphere during fracking extraction, processing and transportation. And burning gas at the plants would harm the same Wisconsin communities who have been suffering with coal plant air pollution and dangerous ozone for decades.”

Tech companies are beginning to eye water-rich Midwestern states for new AI data centers as climate change puts stress on freshwater resources in other parts of the country and around the world. According to company reports, in 2022, [Microsoft's data centers](#) consumed about 1.7 billion gallons of water worldwide, and [Google data centers](#) consumed more than 5.5 billion gallons.