



SourceAlternatives to Data Center Construction



For:

Battey Business Complex, 705 North Division Street, Rome, Georgia 30165

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What's a SourceAlternative?



My name is Kelly Limes-Taylor, and I'm the founder of Limes-Taylor Consulting & Advising. I present this proposal as a development alternative to Generative AI data center construction in the area.

Since the data center construction push began around three years ago, dozens of communities have learned about the consumptive nature of these centers and their staggering public costs. (You can find more research that's been done about community resistance [here](#) and [here](#).)

Data centers' extreme resource use aside, AI creators themselves have voiced concerns about the dangerous future of their creations, all while continuing to market and insert AI in as much of their tech as they can – and getting as rich as they can – in the present day. Certain generative AI critics assert that the AI bubble is near, as its costs have already outweighed its value and benefit. While many types of technology have had unfortunate environmental costs despite their benefits, AI data centers' resource use, combined with their lack of comparable community benefit, will be unlike anything most of us have seen before.

Still, these technology companies and contractors press on, navigating municipal and state systems to ensure they'll have unlimited access to the clean air, land, and water their computers need in order to grow AI. **That means these companies want to use our *very real* clean air, land, and water to create *digital* items that we did not ask for and that won't be able to help very much when our natural resources run out, are completely polluted, or are no longer accessible.** There are assumptions that our tech industries need to be – or should be – on a constant forward push; that unrestrained competition between big tech is helpful or makes sense for the general populace; and that the growth of AI is 'inevitable.' But it's actually us individuals – us regular people – that hold the power in this situation.

Despite what we are often led to believe, **we must remember that clean water is more important than money.** Clean air is more important than money. Healthy land is more important than money. Once our air is polluted enough, once our land is spoiled enough, and once enough water disappears, money is relatively useless. Once we lose reasonable access to our local natural resources, our problems as a community would become too great to be reasonably fixed using dollars. Thus, when a tech company wants to consume a substantial amount of the natural resources that we need to live, and just to experiment and compete with each other, it is up to us to draw the line. It is up to us to protect and celebrate the surrounding natural resources that are in fact priceless, as we literally cannot live without them.

With all this in mind, I've created a set of development orientation proposals called "SourceAlternatives to Data Center Construction." These SourceAlternatives, written to municipal and county development authorities and officials, propose various ways to pursue area business and development ambitions while simultaneously prioritizing the health of local natural resources.

While they can be used in various capacities, SourceAlternatives are specifically a response to the proliferation of AI data centers around the world -- and they focus on an area's prominent natural resource when applicable, as that natural resource will likely attract increased human activity while simultaneously needing protection from it.

SourceAlternatives also focus on business development for the benefit of local community first. By attracting and encouraging businesses, services, and industries that consider locals as their primary customers, we encourage local financial growth while ensuring that our city and county thrive during times of wider regional, state, and national instability and/or shortage.

In order to do all this, SourceAlternatives proposals prioritize Community and Resource Health (CRH) and refer to this concept often. CRH consideration is the qualitative metric we use when matching development vision to short- and long-term community health. We consider seven areas in particular, areas that may seem very simple but that we believe are profoundly important for the health, safety, and longevity of a community and that we thus encourage as a development focus. **Specifically, CRH considers the ways local business development can guarantee or enhance local residents' access to one or more of the following:**

- Clean water
- Healthy local food
- Safe and fun outdoor leisure activity and natural access
- The ability to healthily address pain, grief, and fear
- Safe residence
- Meaningful work
- “Local livelihood,” which is our term for comprehensively local self-sustenance

We believe that when businesses are eager to address at least one, if not more, of our CRH priorities, they are better equipped to establish roots in, and long-term benefits for, our community. The prioritization of CRH in development considerations may shift the way the city and county attract business, but we anticipate the community will appreciate the shift. Our proposals encourage an enhanced balance between our local natural resources and the human desire for growth, because we humans require that balance in order to sustain life. By focusing on the health of the natural environment as a business and development benefit – as well as insurance against future national instabilities – government officials and everyday residents alike may enjoy not only a better quality of life but a truer and more longstanding form of community wealth.

This is the SourceAlternatives Proposal for the Battey Business Complex, located at 705 North Division Street and currently under contract for purchase by data center contractor [Atlas Development](#). We first provide a general alternative land-use vision by describing a fictional “River City” and “River County,” where natural resource health is intentionally emphasized through flourishing commercial and industrial opportunity. The proposal then goes on to offer a more specific land-use alternative to the current proposed data center construction at the Battey Business Complex.



"The River City"



Night to begins to fall upon River City – a city of around 40,000 residents set at the conjunction of three rivers. Where the rivers meet, canoes, small boats and ferries bob on intermingling waves. The ferries – some equipped for entertainment and fine dining, others used primarily for transport – smoothly move toward docks positioned a league away from each other, ready to pick up residents and visitors eager for a sunset trip along the Riverwalk or on into River County.

Nearby, neighborhoods light up under the soft glow of bulbs from City glassworks. Families stroll down wide sidewalks, their canvas and paper bags full of produce from River County farmers, as the neighborhood farmer's market closes for the night. Narrow, tree-lined canals wind throughout the neighborhoods, and their concrete foot bridges connect pedestrian and bike traffic to the City's extensive trail system. River Intra-City Trails, one of the most well-known and respected urban trail systems in the region, lead to various key points in River City, including 'the big' farmer's market, the artisan's market, the River Walk, and clusters of farm-to-table restaurants directly supplied by River County's large farms and River City's smaller urban farms.

Just beyond the River City limits, lightning bugs start to glow, flitting across the extensive tracts of land River County set aside for paid daytime hunting and fishing expeditions. Toads and crickets, some distance away, begin their night calls in the County's multiple "you-pick" food forests. Out at the privately-contracted and -managed rustic trails and campgrounds, security details begin their rounds, ready to notify River County police of dangers or problems under their watch. Thanks to their watchful eyes, the River County Trails and Campgrounds have become known for the safest hiking and camping experiences in the state.

Some distance away, in River City's and County's conjoined industrial sections, small warehouses and artisan's workshops give way to independent mechanics and appliance servicers. The servicers' section then gives way to the area's industrial plants, which primarily make products for regional sale. The service shops and plants lie quiet for the night, a big change from their daily activity of calming the concerns of residents and tourists alike who appear with blown tires and compressors, or of local shop owners asking about their large manufacturing orders. Though the nearby service shops and industrial buildings are quiet, the warehouses and workshops, known as the artisan's market, host their own nightlife, with food trucks lining the hard dirt paths as shoppers search for the perfect handmade items.

Speaking of nightlife, River City's joint commitment to dark-sky lighting and river rejuvenation

boosted the City's Riverwalk nightlife in a way that surprised even the City leaders. News of River City's night sky visibility nearly tripled Riverwalk tourism, causing the Riverwalk to grow half a mile on either side. News of the attraction's popularity also included many stories of visitors bumping into walls, outdoor chairs, and each other because they were walking while looking up at the stars!



The True Economy



The above description is my personal idea of an ideal city and county – called River City and County here, but of course reflecting what I imagine for Rome and Floyd County. It is an ideal, to be sure, but I think it also reflects aspects that many other residents in this city would enjoy, if not prefer, to an alternative of data centers. More significantly, I think that this idea presents lots of potential for the type of development and growth that many people, including some city officials, say that they would actually prefer.

For instance, the research has long since revealed the positive correlation between human health and increased safe contact with nature. Check out these studies by the [American Psychological Association](#), the [UK's Mental Health Foundation](#), and [this article from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#) for an idea. In addition, there are many examples of communities and businesses that thrive based on their care of and engagement with the prominent local natural resource – like a local rainforest, mountain (range), or river.

In Rome's and Floyd County's case, I believe that more powerfully focusing and marketing ourselves as a 'river city,' while engaging businesses that help guarantee Rome and Floyd self-sustainability, could provide a healthy balance between outside income and self-sufficiency. This sort of focus may also be greatly attractive to younger populations due to community life/nightlife, more engagement with nature, and a greater variety of entrepreneurship opportunities. Finally, many of us who are older miss the days of smaller stores and businesses providing community needs and developing community relationships through the provision of those needs.

Alternatives like this one encourage a world where people are better able to enjoy their lives in simple and natural ways that nowadays feel harder and harder to find. It is worth imagining such an ideal for our city and county, and then appealing to the businesses and industries that can help us build toward that ideal, whatever we decide it is. What I can guarantee is that, regardless of party or background, many of us would prefer to live in a community similar to the one described above than a community dominated by data centers.

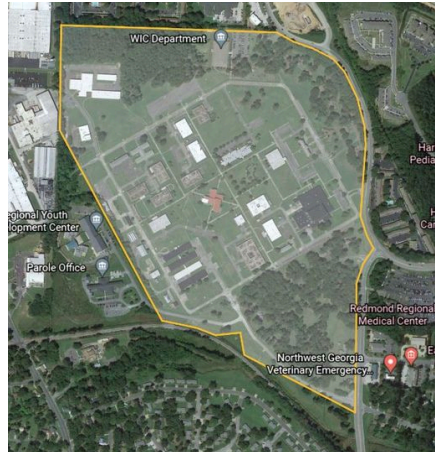
In the next section, I offer a SourceAlternative for the Battey Center Complex in particular, where 114 acres are currently being proposed for purchase by Atlas Development for \$5.7 million. My proposal and similar ones could lead to far greater environmental and economic returns than the data center slated to be built in the area. And though plans like this one undoubtedly involve some big changes in the way we do things in order to implement them, I believe there will be immeasurable returns for our creativity, as we ensure both a healthy natural environment and development model for future generations to enjoy.

I ask that the Development Authority, the Commission, and all other local humans who drink water consider both the business and quality-of-life possibilities when we prioritize the health of our local natural resources *while* we make our money, especially when we focus on and protect our most prominent natural resource.

Money is great, but we need healthy natural resources to live. Let's make sure that we not only organize our economic ambition around that fact, but capitalize on it in a way that makes Rome and Floyd County an enviable place to live, work, and play.



SourceAlternative for the Battey Business Complex



This proposal is based on approximately 114 acres located in the Battey Business Complex – as detailed in the purchase and sale agreement between RFCDA and Atlas Development, LLC (with survey to find exact acreage forthcoming) – though [initial reporting](#) said the agreement was for 100 acres. The site address is 705 N. Division St. in Rome.

In this proposal, we suggest that, instead of allowing a data center on the Battey Business Complex site, the Development Authority divides that property into lots and sells whole or partial lots at market rate to businesses eager to address our CRH priorities. While applicable businesses may vary based on more research and real public suggestion, for the purposes of this proposal, this Battey Complex SourceAlternative focuses on the presence of small urban farmers, artisans prepared to sell their goods on-site, several small farm-to-table restaurants, and more. We believe this or a similar type of land use could meet all seven CRH priorities.

Here's a breakdown of the potential land use above:

Of the 114 available acres:

- Two acres would be designated for two privately managed public parks and playgrounds
- Twenty-seven acres designated for small artisan businesses
 - Nine one-acre lots
 - Thirty-six ½-acre lots

- Two acres designated for farm-to-table restaurants
- Eighty acres designated for urban farming
 - Sixty one-acre lots, with the option for a tiny-home residence on-property
 - Forty half-acre lots
- One acre for an ecotech facility, specializing in ecologically-focused or ecologically-minded tech (partnerships with cities in global south)
- Two acres (total) for parking, broken into small lots/parking garages throughout the complex
 - *Note on additional parking:* Each 1-acre lot must accommodate 4 customer parking spaces at the back of their lot for ‘1-visit voucher’ visitors, or visitors entering the Complex *solely* to do business at their establishment. ½ acre lots must accommodate 2 of those customer spaces.

Now let’s imagine it:

“Battey Gardens”

Imagine that the main business presence on the 114-acre Battey Business Complex are urban farming small businesses, which collectively own eighty acres of the property. A little over half of those lots are the larger 1-acre farm tracts, where many business owners have already taken advantage of an RFCDA tiny-home allowance for large urban farms. News of this allowance started a bidding war among young urban-farming families, excited by the idea of a southern city that encourages urban farming. Though not eligible for the tiny-home allowance, the urban farming half-acre lots were similarly attractive to urban farmers, who went on to purchase and rent homes in the area in order to stay and grow their small agricultural businesses.

Interspersed among the large gardens and small farms, numerous restaurants and artisans’ workshops serve both local customers trying to make quick transactions and the meandering tourist looking for whatever perfect thing they haven’t found yet. With twenty-nine combined acres of niche restaurants and hand-crafted local handiwork stores, “Battey Gardens,” as it has come to be known, quickly became famous to foodies and craftwork lovers, attracting new residents and tourists alike as news of “The Gardens” spread.

The more heavily-wooded northwest and southeast corners of Battey Gardens each contain a privately-managed one-acre public park, with management contracts up for bid on alternating three-year cycles. Winning companies can also bid to manage the Complex’s paid parking for 25% of the meters’ revenue. The two public parks, easily one of the biggest attractions for families in the area, represent a bulk of the paid parking revenue. While plenty of park visitors walk from the nearby hospital, and medical and apartment complexes, families in West Rome gratefully pay the parking fee to access the well-maintained, large, tree-covered parks that allow their children to spend many more hours outside than were possible before. The nearby medical community made their appreciation of the park clear as well: the ability to suggest it as a nearby place for patients to walk or access the outdoors as needed – or even as a place for quiet contemplation or mournful moments – provided widespread patient benefit that the doctors had not anticipated. The ability to do yoga, powerwalk, or play a game of soccer at a nearby public park has changed the lives of many.

While prioritizing the importance of natural spaces and natural growth, “Battey Gardens” has not

forgotten the importance of technology. The complex is home to the Battey Research Center, a research facility quickly gaining notoriety as a front-runner in ecotechnological sciences, defined as, “an applied science that seeks to fulfill human needs while causing minimal ecological disruption, by harnessing and manipulating natural forces to leverage their beneficial effects.” While definitely a gamble due to some constituents’ politicization of the Research Center, the Center quickly attracted global attention when it began hosting Pritzker Architecture prize nominees and Right Livelihood Award winners. The proximity of farm-to-table restaurants and small craft markets has made the Battey Research Center quite attractive to the ecologically-minded global STEM community, greatly expanding local educational experiences. The Center also makes the city and county an attractive conference site, with the new connections forged between local businesses, educational communities, and global environmental research, thus greatly benefiting the health and preservation of local natural resources.

Additional thoughts about Battey Complex:

These suggestions are based on planning that considers the potential CRH requirements of the surrounding community, as well as the general enhancement of the community’s quality of life. We encourage governmental officials to update this specific land-use plan to address additional CRH priorities as needed.

Rather than allowing data center encroachment on our communities and extreme use of our resources for the sake of unrequested and potentially flailing artificial intelligence experiments, I ask that we turn our development attention to businesses and other enterprise that intentionally focuses on local livelihood and natural resource enhancement, as we are truly dependent on these things for a well-maintained and progressively improving quality of life, especially during times of wider economic and resource uncertainty.



“But what if we [city officials] still want the data center?”



If city and county commissioners and the development authority *still* decide they want to go with the Atlas deal, it would likely deal quite a blow to our natural environment and community, as cities like [Memphis, TN](#) and [Mansfield, GA](#) are currently experiencing, as well as [Lowndes County, VA](#) and other counties. It's also of note that data centers tend to employ 25-150 permanent workers – not nearly enough jobs to be worth their resource cost.

However, if officials still insist on going forward with the Atlas deal, I ask them to do three things before closing day:

- **Please ask Atlas questions from our ever-growing [SourceAlternatives Question List](#)**, and make sure that Atlas' solutions/answers either represent a clear benefit for the community or are updated until they do.
- **Get more money.** Atlas Development is slated to pay less per acre in 2025 than I did for my home purchase in 2019 – and that's from a company that is not guaranteed to provide substantial community benefit and will likely assure substantial losses for us, particularly when it comes to water and electricity.

So, if the city insists on continuing in this direction, I would ask that this or any company interested in placing a data center within our city limits receive no breaks or no favors, especially because the long-term costs of data centers within communities has already been documented. If these companies are so uninterested in nearby residents' quality of life and property values, the least they can do is pay more for the purchase of the land.

- **Consider a moratorium.** If the answer can't be “No!” then at least allow both time and technology to play out so that the data center that is eventually built will maintain the highest environmental standards that it can, based on the likelihood that an increasing number of safeguards and regulations will be put in place to protect the public and increase public benefit from data center construction as time goes on.

It is my heartfelt hope that this moment in history moves countless communities toward a better quality of life for residents and a speedy rejuvenation of our natural resources, and all because we see the type of future tech billionaires are offering us and instead choose to intentionally work toward a community future we love. Let's grasp this moment in time to make the future better for ourselves and future city and county residents.

Thank you for your time and attention to this proposal.