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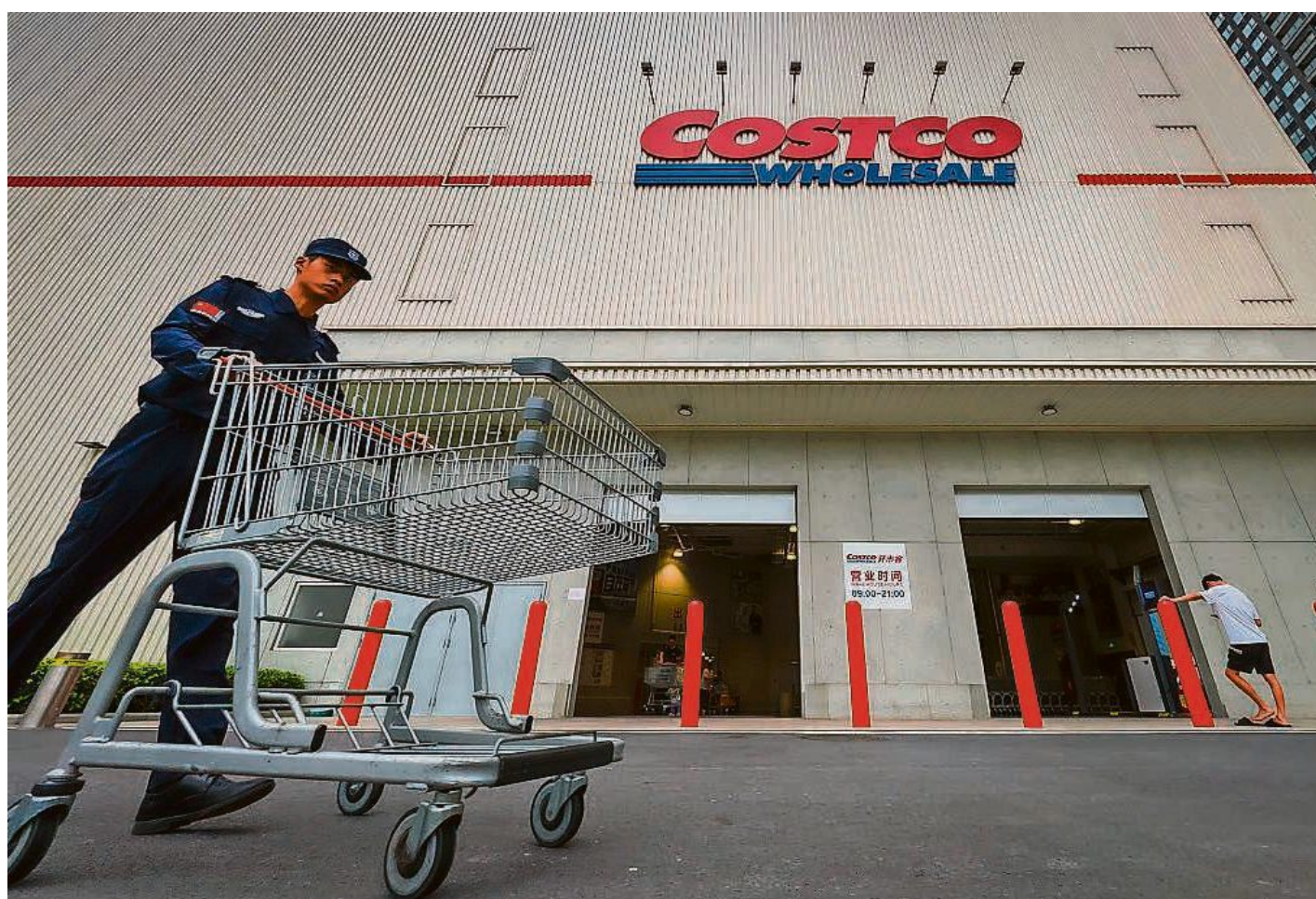
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# PENSACOLA PNJ.COM News Journal WEEKEND

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2026 | PNJ.COM

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## PENSACOLA



A security guard organizes shopping carts outside the entrance of a Costco Wholesale store on April 12, 2025, in Shenzhen, China. CHENG XIN/GETTY IMAGES

# Costco's dominance shows why its debut matters

Laura Layden USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

When it comes to warehouse clubs, for many, Costco reigns supreme. • It's the big dog — in what has been described as essentially a three-dog race against rivals Sam's Club and BJ's Wholesale. Beginning June 25 when Costco opens in Pensacola at 225 E. Nine Mile Road, they city will have all three. • As of late 2025, Costco maintained its commanding lead in the U.S. warehouse club industry. Its market share has been estimated at more than 60%.

Over the last few decades, Costco has grown alongside America, with more than 630 locations across the country, capitalizing on the rise in consumerism and catering to value-conscious shoppers.

Costco maintains a cult-like following, with fiercely loyal customers. It boasts a membership renewal rate of nearly 90% worldwide.

It has a massive following on social media, particularly TikTok, driven by influencers and fan accounts, such as @costcohotfinds.

On social media, Costco fanatics have shared photos of their Costco-themed birthday parties, featuring warehouse-inspired decor and food. Some have gone as far as to host surprise birthday parties, to propose and to hold impromptu weddings inside stores (with no formal party or event packages offered).

In part, the retail giant's customer loyalty has been attributed to its consistency. One of those

See **COSTCO**, Page 5A



Keeler Center fourth grader Justin Frazier, left, looks over his food while sitting with parapro Takimia Thompson while during an annual Thanksgiving feast at Redford Union School District's Keeler Center on Nov. 25, 2025. Students who attend the school for those with emotional impairments were able to eat together with supplies donated by Costco.

RYAN GARZA/DETROIT FREE PRESS

## ESCAMBIA COUNTY

# Ban on data center is possible after citizens protest

Mollye Barrows

Pensacola News Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Escambia County Commissioners say they're ready to consider a ban on data centers.

The issue wasn't originally on the agenda for their June 17 board meeting, but it was added for discussion after a crowd converged on county chambers during Public Forum to protest the facilities.

More than 30 people signed up to speak to the board about data centers.

They packed the room in one of the largest crowds some commissioners said they had ever seen waiting for their turn at the podium.

Most everyone opposed them and many held up signs saying as much.

"I'm here tonight to urge you to ban any AI data center in Escambia County," said resident Christy Rosen, "because the cost to our community far outweighs the benefits."

Like many others who protested data centers, she said data centers were not only a drain on electricity and water, they pose a threat to the environment and don't provide the number or types of jobs that meaningfully benefit the community.

Many were under the impression local leaders were already working on a deal to support a data center. County and economic leaders said that simply isn't true.

"I'm never going to vote for a data center," said Escambia Commissioner Lumon May.

The fear stems from rumors that economic development leaders were in "active negotiations" with a company that was exploring the possibility of building a data center in northern Escambia County.

FloridaWest Chief Executive Officer Chris Platé repeated to the board what he told the News Journal in May — that he was not in active negotiations with the unnamed company.

He said FloridaWest did sign a non-disclosure agreement with a defense company that was exploring the possibility of building a smaller size data center in the county, which is typical of any business potentially seeking to set up shop in Escambia County, but the company has not been in contact with him in a couple of months and no deal is being discussed or negotiated.

See **DATA CENTER**, Page 2A

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