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The Fayetteville Observer

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Community backlash grows over power-hungry AI facilities



Fayetteville residents hold up signs that call for a moratorium on AI data centers, during the April 6 meeting of the City Council. MYRON B. PITTS/THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER



The Coffee Scene, which had three locations in Fayetteville including at the Residences at Prince Charles, closed effective April 8, according to an Instagram post.

ANDREW CRAFT/THE FAYETTEVILLE OBSERVER

Coffee Scene closes all Fayetteville locations

Beth Hutson and F.T. Norton
Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

A locally owned coffee shop that opened its first store in 1996 announced on social media April 8 that all three stores are now permanently closed.

"We know our time in Fayetteville has been brief!" reads an Instagram post on the Coffee Scene's Instagram account. "The Coffee Scene will be closing its doors permanently at all 3 locations in Fayetteville effective today, April 8th."

Originally owned and operated by Kiki Manis and her children, Peter Manis and Victoria Stout, the business was sold to owners Stacey and Chad Chapman in early 2025, according to a lawsuit filed by Kiki Manis in August.

In the suit, Manis demands repayment of more than \$428,000 for a loan she provided to finance the sale of her coffee business to the Chapmans, plus interest, attorney fees and court costs.

But the Chapmans dispute that claim and have countersued, saying they lawfully withheld payments, alleging Manis misrepresented the condition of the business, including its

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Residents say 'no' to data centers



Myron B. Pitts
Opinion Editor
Fayetteville Observer
USA TODAY NETWORK

When folks in Fayetteville and Cumberland County are given a chance to speak publicly about data centers, they show up strong and from all walks of life. And from what I've seen so far, they are unanimously against the idea of having more of these projects, which power AI and tend to be power-hungry, water-guzzling and environmentally concerning.

Let's do a tally.

In January, 50 people showed up for an information session led by Robert

Van Geons, CEO of the Fayetteville Cumberland County Economic Development Corporation, and John Geib, a former Duke Energy employee and long-time veteran in the energy industry. Last month, 25 speakers weighed in at a public hearing scheduled by the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners. On April 6, I heard at least 15 people talk on data centers at the Fayetteville City Council public forum, where residents could talk about anything, but most wanted to talk data centers. The council discussed the facilities earlier in the day at its work session.

So that's 91 people. In all venues, the speakers ranged from deeply skeptical to outright opposed. Considering that for each person who takes time out of

their day to go speak publicly, we can safely assume many others at home feel the same way. In both the city forums and county hearings, speakers called for a one-year moratorium.

Power, water and now heat concerns for data centers

Fayetteville resident Lorena Murray, in the April 6 forum, told the council about a CNN story, which I had also read, citing new data showing that large data centers act as "heat islands" that can raise temperatures an average of 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit, an increase that can be felt as far as six miles away.

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Poll: Americans worry most over health care costs

Liz Freeman
Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A new Gallup poll found health care access and affordability is a top concern among American households with 61% saying they worry a great deal about it. It comes in as the No. 1 domestic pol-

icy issue among a list of 16, outweighing the economy, inflation, federal spending and the budget deficit.

The survey, conducted in March, compares how priorities over domestic issues have changed since 2025. Details on how many Americans were surveyed were not readily available. The Gallup survey found Americans'

concern with the economy has dipped some in 2026, as 51% of those surveyed said they worried a great deal about it, a drop from 60% in 2025.

Crime is less concerning now, coming in at 39% compared to 45% holding that view in 2025. Illegal immigration came in at 33% in 2026, compared to 40% a year earlier.

Health care costs and access had been the top domestic policy issue for Americans from 2015 to 2020, according to Gallup. After 2020, the economy took the top spot.

"While healthcare roughly tied the economy as Americans' top concern in

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