

DATA CENTER APPROVAL PROCESS FLOW (COUNTY LEVEL)

HOW A DATA CENTER PROJECT MOVES FROM IDEA TO CONSTRUCTION

AND WHERE IT CAN BE STOPPED OR RESTRICTED

1. LAND ACQUISITION

Who is involved:

- Private developer
- Landowner

What happens:

- Property is purchased or under contract

Can it be stopped here?

✗ No (private transaction)

2. ZONING & LAND USE APPROVAL (CRITICAL STEP)

Who decides:

- Planning Commission (recommendation)
- County Commission (final vote)

What is decided:

- Rezoning approval (e.g., agricultural → industrial)
- Special Use Permit (SUP)

Why it matters:

- Determines if the project is legally allowed

Can it stop the project?

 YES — MOST IMPORTANT LOCAL DECISION POINT

3. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

Who:

- County Planning Department + Commission

What:

- Long-term land use compatibility

Impact:

- Strong influence on zoning approval decisions
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4. ELECTRIC POWER & GRID APPROVAL

Who:

- Utility provider (e.g., Georgia Power)
- Public Service Commission (PSC)

What:

- Substations
- Transmission lines
- Power capacity

Impact:

- Without power approval → project cannot operate

Can it stop project?

 YES — CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE GATE

5. WATER USE & SUPPLY APPROVAL

Who:

- County/municipal water authority
- Georgia EPD

What:

- Water withdrawal permits
- Cooling system approval

Can it stop project?

⚠️ YES — especially in high-demand regions

6. ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS

Who:

- Georgia EPD
- EPA (in limited cases)

What:

- Air emissions (backup generators)
- Stormwater runoff
- Wetlands impact

Can it stop project?

⚠️ YES — OR CAUSE DELAYS/RESTRICTIONS

7. TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS

Who:

- County road departments
- GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation)

What:

- Traffic studies
- Road upgrades
- Access permits

8. TAX INCENTIVES / ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS

Who:

- County development authority
- State economic development agencies

What:

- Tax abatements
- Subsidies
- Infrastructure incentives

Impact:

- Can determine financial viability
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9. CONSTRUCTION PERMITS & BUILD-OUT

Who:

- County building department

What:

- Building permits
 - Inspections
 - Code compliance
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KEY STOPPING POINTS

STRONGEST LOCAL CONTROL

- Zoning approval (County Commission)

INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITS

- Electric grid approval (Utility + PSC)
- Water availability (EPD + county)

REGULATORY LIMITS

- Environmental permits
- Transportation approval

FINANCIAL LIMITS

- Tax incentives / subsidies

SIMPLE SUMMARY

A data center project only proceeds if ALL of the following align:

- ✓ Zoned appropriately
- ✓ Power grid can support it
- ✓ Water supply is sufficient
- ✓ Environmental permits approved
- ✓ Financial structure works

If any major category fails → the project is delayed, modified, or stopped.