

Clearing up the Confusion for McCormick County

by Pollard Land Company, acting agent on behalf
of contiguous property owners requesting rezoning.

Tuesday, August 11, 2026

This proposed data center, [Project Palmetto](#), could solve two long-standing problems with one partnership. It would bring natural gas to McCormick County and it would provide funds that could be used to replace aging water and sewer pipes.

OVERVIEW

1 Energy

This project would bring a natural gas line to McCormick County at no cost to the county or its residents—an investment between \$200-\$280 million just to lay the pipes. Once the gas reaches the area, it would allow the data center to generate its own electricity on site and it would also allow McCormick County to become its own gas distributor for residents and other businesses.

2 Funding

McCormick County's water and sewer lines are aging and breaking and causing residents significant issues already. There is currently no funding available to replace them. A data center—once built out—has the potential to double or even triple the county's nearly \$15 million budget and fund the water and sewer utility upgrades the county desperately needs.

What you may have seen or heard online about data centers is partially true. But whether what you are seeing applies to [this particular project](#) in McCormick County is what we hope to straighten out.



WATER

Community Concern: Water

The proposed McCormick County facility would use newer, water-efficient closed-loop cooling technology. As landowners, we are going to provide general numbers now for context, but the actual details would have to be decided between the project developer and the county once zoning is complete. We are landowners who have done business in McCormick County for decades. We have also done our research. We would not propose a data center in our region if we thought it would in any way drain or pollute the water supply that our families also rely on. We are trying to clear up confusion by providing a generalized idea of what the community might expect should Project Palmetto be approved.

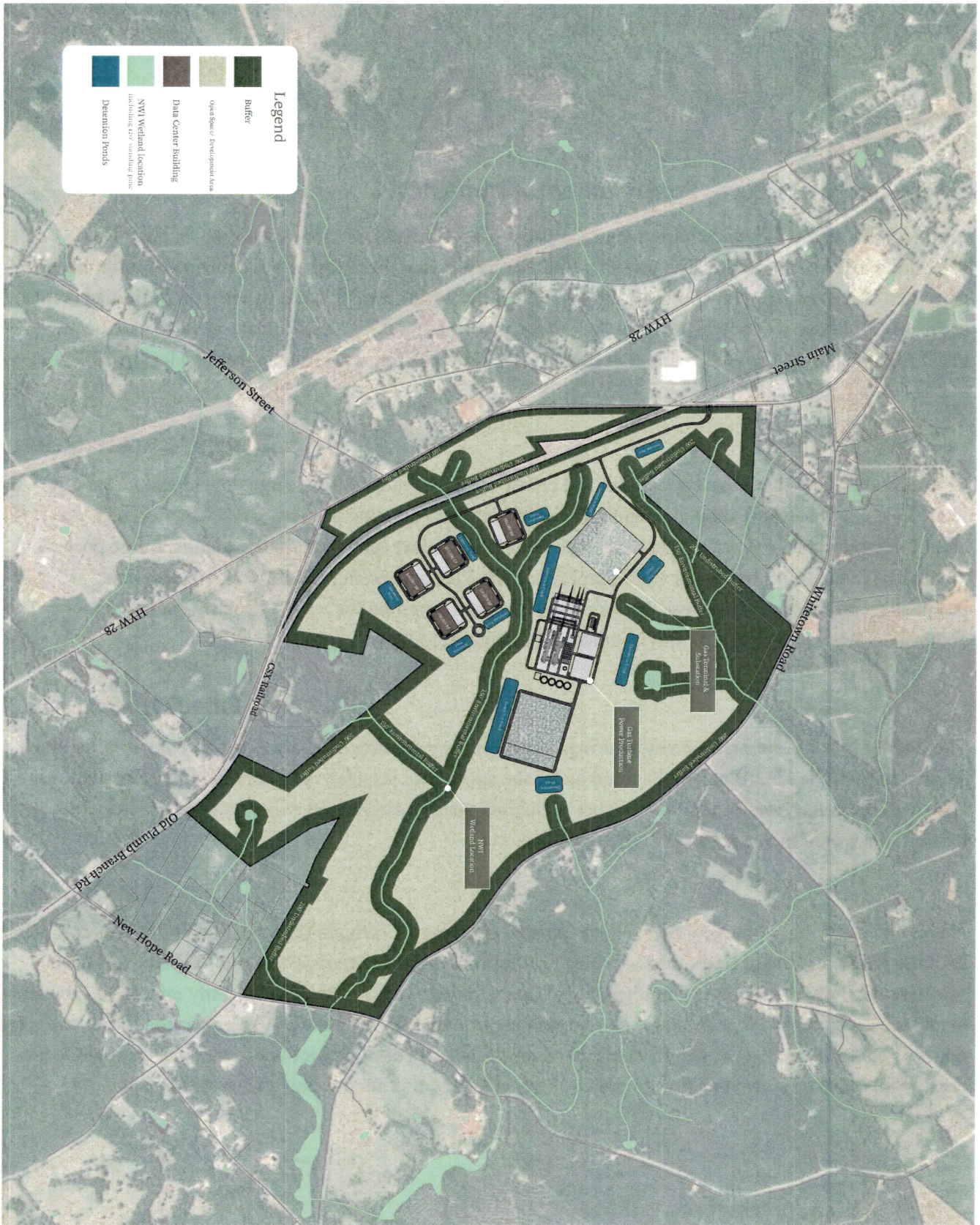
That said, it is possible that the proposed data center could eventually become a full 1-gigawatt buildout. McCormick County currently has 1 million **extra** gallons of water available every day. That means the data center *could* use that amount if needed on extremely hot days, but it does not mean that it will. In fact, the newer closed-loop cooling systems are filled once and then the water is **recirculated**. Residents should be reassured that this data center would not require the county to pull more water from the lake than it already does. The capacity the project could use would not impact the existing and commercial users since this is extra water that is not currently being consumed. It would also generate millions of dollars in tax revenue to help replace aging water and sewer lines that often break and result in boil water advisories--should the county choose to direct the excess funds to those needs. Again, those funding decisions are made at the county level.

LAND

Community Concern: Land

We are seeking rezoning on approximately 1,000-acres. The rezoning is for the overall property, not necessarily the disturbed footprint. To provide perspective—and in the interest of full transparency—Pollard Land Co. hired an engineer to illustrate what this development *could* look like if we added buffers and placed buildings so the rural character of the area is preserved according to the requirements in McCormick County's draft ordinance. What we are presenting tonight is not a site plan. It is a conceptual illustration drafted in accordance to what the project developer has represented to us as their intention for the site. However, the project is far too early in the process for definitive plans. The conceptual plan depicts five 100,000-square-foot buildings, detention ponds, wetland areas, open areas and several undisturbed buffers. The entire property will not be covered with buildings or pavement. The current concept preserves substantial buffers, wetlands and open space in a way that respects the land and community according to the draft ordinance.

For a familiar comparison to understand scale of the data center buildings on the above plan, consider Mullins Crossing and the adjacent Mullins Colony development in Evans, Georgia. Together, these retail centers contain approximately 550,000 square feet of commercial building space—including Target, Kohl's, Belk and numerous other retailers. The main difference would be that the buildings would be largely shrouded from view and there would be 98% less parking surface.



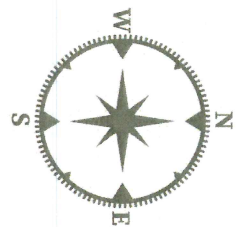
**CONCEPT
PLAN**

August 11, 2026

Disclaimer: *Concept Only.*
Not intended to be represented as the site plan.

PROJECT PALMETTO

McCormick County, South Carolina



ENVIRONMENT

Community Concern: Environmental Impacts

A project this size will have environmental impacts from construction, land disturbance, electricity generation and infrastructure. The pressing question is whether those impacts are measured, minimized, permitted and outweighed by enforceable public benefits. McCormick County has a draft ordinance that addresses all of these concerns in a way that protects the community. As a family, we also care deeply about the impacts on the environment because we grow trees on tracts of land all over McCormick County.

During Construction

Construction of any kind can expose soil and create sediment runoff. But, large developments cannot simply clear acreage and allow uncontrolled runoff onto surrounding property. In South Carolina, projects disturbing more than one acre must have state permitting before land disturbance begins. Large projects must also have a full Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan addressing runoff, erosion, sediment, pollutants, and nearby waterways. The program is administered by the state of South Carolina under authority delegated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Once Operational

The facility is not a chemical-manufacturing operation. Any cooling discharge, sanitary wastewater and stormwater will be identified and handled under the applicable permits. As a condition of construction approval, the county can require the project to publish what is discharged, where it goes and how it is tested. This would happen after the zoning phase.

Air Quality

An on-site natural gas plant would produce exhaust containing Nitrogen (N₂), Oxygen (O₂), Water, Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) and trace Carbon Monoxide. The turbines are not emission-free, but this site will have selective catalytic reduction technology (SCR) that will remove 85-95% of NO_x. Any emissions have to meet federal, state, and local emission guidelines to get approval to operate. A large portion of our extended family's personal homes are within about 20 miles of this proposed project site. Our sons and daughters breathe this air too, so we are also intimately invested and committed to the quality of air.



NOISE

Community concern: Noise

Turbines, transformers, cooling equipment and generators all produce sound. But what neighbors actually hear depends on much more than the equipment itself—including distance, setbacks, enclosures, terrain, vegetation and how equipment operates together.

That is one reason this location makes sense. This is not a property with no history of industrial activity. For more than 50 years, a large commercial sawmill, most recently owned by Georgia Pacific, operated on this site until production stopped at the end of 2019.

A working sawmill is a significant industrial operation. Saws, chippers, conveyors, loaders, log handling and heavy trucks also produce sound. The county's draft ordinance provides strict sound requirements to protect any neighboring properties. At the time of writing, we could not find an online draft of the ordinance to share as a resource but we encourage residents to email the County Administrator James Upchurch (like we had to) in order to obtain a copy: jupchurch@mccormickcountysc.org. McCormick County residents are protected from the nightmare scenarios circulating online. Here is the quoted section from the draft ordinance on noise:

Projects shall be designed and operated to minimize noise impacts on adjacent properties, surrounding land uses, and public roads. No project shall exceed 55 dBA Equivalent Continuous Sound Level at the receiving property line of any residential use, residential zoning district, school, church, park, public facility, occupied commercial building, or public road. No project shall create a low-frequency tonal, impulsive, recurring, or mechanical hum that exceeds ambient conditions by more than 7 dBC at the receiving property line. Generator testing shall be limited to Monday through Friday between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., excluding County holidays, unless emergency operation is required.

A dBA (A-weighted decibels) is a unit used to ensure sound levels. It adjusts raw decibels (dB) to match how the human ear actually hears. 55 dBA is equivalent to a quiet conversation. An operating sawmill, like what existed on part of the property before as recently as 2019, is significantly louder. The estimated sound levels produced by an operating sawmill are between 90 and 115 dBA and the previous mill that existed on this property was close to the road.



OPPORTUNITY

McCormick County residents need to understand that this opportunity is time-sensitive. The project developer is working within outside market deadlines, and the gas company, Kinder Morgan (through its partnership with Southern Natural Gas), must have its contracts finalized by September 2026—mere weeks from now. This deadline is tied to federally regulated pipeline capacity and cannot simply be extended by the county or the project developer. In short, McCormick has an opportunity to benefit now, but the window to do so is closing quickly.

A Case Study: Marion County, South Carolina ("Project Liberty")

Marion County, a rural community with an annual operating budget of approximately \$25 million, approved a \$2.4 billion data center development in January 2026 during a major winter storm. Many residents felt blindsided. The project had received little public attention before the vote, and the resulting backlash was intense.

The potential economic benefit was substantial. Local officials estimated that, once fully developed, the facility could generate approximately \$28 million annually in local payments—more than the county's entire existing operating budget. But the size of the opportunity did not eliminate the need for transparency and public participation. Much of the process had occurred outside public view, leaving residents feeling that a decision with enormous implications for their community had been made before they had a meaningful opportunity to understand it or participate.

In the end, none of that mattered. On June 11, 2026, the project developer pulled out of the project because they were not able to get the power they needed to move forward on their timeline. Marion County lost \$28 million annually in added revenue and the officials lost the trust of its taxpayers who did not like the lack of transparency.

We would also ask the residents of McCormick County to consider this: government transparency and confidentiality are not the same issue. A project developer can legitimately protect its identity and proprietary business information while the county still conducts zoning hearings, adopts ordinances, approves development agreements and takes required governmental actions publicly. Residents do not necessarily need to know who the logo on the building belongs to in order to insist on enforceable requirements governing noise, water, setbacks, environmental protection and other community impacts. For example, a new grocery store benefits the community and has to follow the same rules regardless of who owns and operates the business. The county ordinance ensures that the end user operates the facility as county leaders intend, and the state and federal regulations ensure compliance with environmental requirements.

Marion County shows us what happens when residents are not brought into the conversation; **McCormick County is taking a different approach.** County officials have already drafted a strong, community-focused ordinance that directly addresses many of the concerns residents have raised and establishes clear protections if the process moves forward.

One key difference between Marion County and McCormick County is this—this project will bring its own power and by doing so, county residents will finally have access to natural gas as well. It is important to note that the project developer will negotiate some minimal grid connectivity as well for access to power during construction (like any other major development) while it awaits the gas line to arrive. One benefit of that connection is it can later be used to send excess power generated by the natural gas plant back to the grid. It also provides a contingent source of power in case it is needed for any reason. The project developer will be 100% responsible for all upgrades/substations/engineering/ transmission, etc. Those costs will not be passed onto county residents.

This opportunity for McCormick County also has the potential to dramatically increase the tax revenue. That will be negotiated between the project developer and the county once zoning has been approved. South Carolina does allow counties to negotiate Fee-in-Lieu-of-Tax (FILOT) agreements. According to the Department of Revenue, a FILOT can produce property-tax savings of roughly 40% for the project developer, but it is a contractual fee—not zero payment. Assessment ratios, millage, credits and the investment schedule determine the result. In Marion County, for example, officials negotiated the fee of \$28 million as part of the project’s FILOT. The reduction might be up to 40%, but it still results in a considerable revenue generation for the county that it did not have before.

The project developer for Project Palmetto is also working against a firm timeline, and a nine month moratorium could effectively end this opportunity—including the opportunity to bring valuable natural gas infrastructure to McCormick County. Natural gas generated approximately 41% of U.S. utility-scale electricity in 2025 and remained the nation’s largest source of electricity generation.

Project Palmetto proposes to use that resource to support new on-site power generation and bring a needed resource into McCormick County. But because the project developer and its utility partners are operating under external market and regulatory deadlines, that opportunity cannot simply be put on hold for nine months and expected to still be available. The wisest path forward is to pair this opportunity with the expansion of the proposed South System Expansion 5 gas line and to dramatically help McCormick County economically in the process.



What Could This Revenue Mean for McCormick County?

The potential revenue from this project isn't just a number on a county budget. It represents opportunities McCormick County may otherwise struggle to afford.

Project Palmetto could help:

- Invest in the infrastructure McCormick needs—improving water and sewer systems, roads and other essential services without placing the entire burden on current taxpayers.
- Strengthen public safety—providing resources to recruit and retain EMTs and law-enforcement officers with more competitive salaries and potentially making a full-time fire department possible.
- Revitalize downtown McCormick—establishing dedicated funding to restore buildings, attract businesses, improve public spaces and breathe new life into the heart of the community.
- Ease the burden on property owners—giving county leaders greater financial flexibility and the potential to reduce property-tax pressure on residents.
- Plan for the future instead of simply paying for the present —creating the financial capacity to address long-standing needs, invest strategically and prepare for the next generation.

This is about more than bringing a data center to McCormick County. It is about what McCormick County could do with the opportunity it creates. The decisions made on August 18th could give the county resources to strengthen its infrastructure, support the people who serve this community, revitalize its downtown and reduce the burden on taxpayers—not just next year, but for decades to come.

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