

Could Rapides Parish be home to Louisiana's next big data center project?

By Dillon Lowe



Public records and local economic development activity suggest that [Applied Digital](#), a digital infrastructure developer based in Dallas, is positioning a site in Rapides Parish for a large-scale data center project.

In December, Applied Digital purchased a 672-acre piece of land near the town of Boyce, west of Alexandria. And in February, the [England Authority](#)—the Rapides Parish economic development district—approved the creation of England District Subdistrict No. 4, an overlay district that encompasses that 672-acre piece of land. Applied Digital has also [posted job listings for positions in Alexandria](#), including listings for a director of site operations and data center subject matter experts.

Applied Digital develops large-scale digital infrastructure, including data centers. The developer often leases its facilities to major tech companies that operate massive computing networks, known as “hyperscalers.”

Ralph Hennessy, executive director of the England Airpark, tells *Daily Report* that the overlay district was created at the request of [Louisiana Central](#), the regional economic development organization working with Applied Digital and state officials on the potential project. The England Airpark, owned and operated by the England Authority, is the 4,000-acre business and aviation campus built on the site of the former England Air Force Base near Alexandria.

According to Hennessy, the project remains in negotiation and many of the finer details are subject to nondisclosure agreements. But he confirmed that Applied Digital is actively making improvements to the site.

“Right now, all you have is a plot of land that’s owned by Applied Digital that they’re doing some improvements on,” Hennessy says.

Applied Digital is in talks with a potential hyperscaler tenant, Hennessy says. Only once an agreement is reached with a tenant would the developer move to finalize terms with local and state officials.

“They’re in talks with somebody, but I don’t know who,” Hennessy says. “When they get that taken care of, they’ll work with us to try to negotiate the actual deal.”

Overlay districts are sometimes created when large projects are under consideration because they allow officials to apply certain economic development tools to a specific property if a project moves forward.

The newly created overlay district in Rapides Parish allows local officials to deploy those tools at the Applied Digital site, including issuing bonds to finance project infrastructure and negotiating payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILOT, agreements.

Under PILOT agreements, developers make annual payments to local governments instead of paying the full property taxes they would otherwise owe. Amazon, Hut 8 and Meta have all struck PILOT agreements for their own Louisiana data center projects.

On the issue of power, Hennessy says Applied Digital has been engaged in discussions with Cleco, the local electric utility, and that “they’ve got power worked out.” Whether new power generation facilities would need to be built is currently unclear.

Water demand, he adds, would be modest, as Applied Digital’s data centers make use of a “closed-loop cooling system.” Such systems recirculate the same coolant in a continuous loop, eliminating the need for constant water replenishment. They’ve become standard in modern data center architecture.

Hennessy’s hope is that the project, should it materialize, will provide a significant economic boost for Rapides Parish, as Hut 8’s currently-under-construction data center in West Feliciana Parish is poised to do. West Feliciana is expected to receive \$90 million annually in lease payments over a 30-year period, money that will be split equally among the parish, the school board and the sheriff’s office.

“There is a very similar concept here,” Hennessy says.

Louisiana Central CEO Chris Masingill was unable to be reached for comment before this morning’s publication deadline.

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