

Big data center in Yorkville advances

1,000-acre project calls for 14 buildings

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After months of discussion — and some resident opposition — the Yorkville City Council has given a first green light to a roughly 1,000-acre data center campus proposed in the area.

The proposed data center project, called Project Cardinal, is being brought forward by Pioneer Development LLC, along with the property owners, according to the city's website.

The development site is just over 1,000 acres — a total of 20 parcels — in the northwest corner of Yorkville on the border with Sugar Grove, generally located northwest of Route 47 and Galena Road, south of Baseline Road and east of Ashe Road.

There would be a total of 14 data center buildings, along with two electrical substations, a utility switchyard and stormwater detention basins, according to the city.

After two public hearings over the summer, the rezoning of the land for the project and a planned unit development, or PUD, and preliminary PUD plan were recommended for approval in July by the city's Planning and Zoning Commission.

Since then, the Yorkville City Council has discussed the proposed project — along with another data center plan called Project Steel also seeking the green light from the city — at its meetings over the past several months.

On Oct. 28, first approvals of the Project Cardinal data center were slated to be voted on by the City Council, but the matter was ultimately tabled after a lengthy meeting, at which some residents spoke against the proposed project.

Then, the annexation agreement and Planned Unit Development agreement for the project came up again for a vote from the council on Nov. 10 and were approved unanimously, following around two hours of resident comments.

At Monday's meeting before the council vote, Yorkville City Administrator Bart Olson summarized the data center project and addressed some of the questions raised by residents.

Olson pointed to growing investment in data center construction, and said Illinois is both "pretty well-situated" in terms of its future energy supply and investing in the proliferation of data centers in the state by way of tax incentives.

As for Yorkville specifically, Olson pointed to its ComEd electrical substation, and the presence of open land that data centers could be built on.