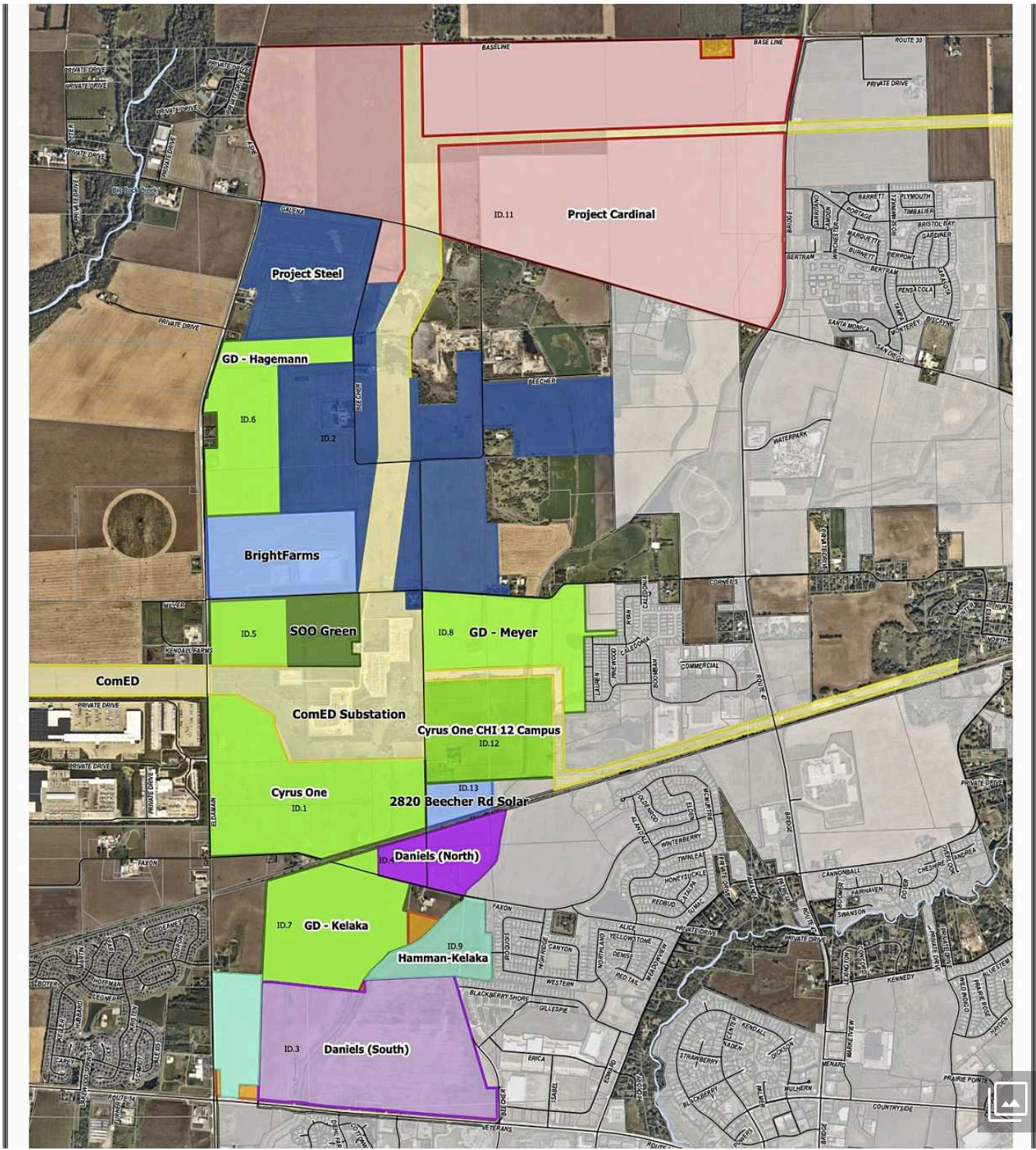


Yorkville council OKs data center pacts

Engineering firm, acoustical consultant measures get approval



A map of potential data center projects proposed for the northeast quadrant of Eldamain Road and Route 34 in Yorkville. Engineering Enterprises Inc.

By Molly Morrow
Aurora Beacon-News

As resident pushback continues, the Yorkville City Council approved two more measures related to evaluating the data center projects proposed for the city.

At its Feb. 24 meeting, the City Council approved contracts with an engineering firm and an acoustical consultant, as the city continues to move forward with plans for several different data centers to one day set up in Yorkville.

Yorkville has become a sort of hub for data center projects, in part due to the area’s proximity to a ComEd substation. Several projects at varying stages of approval are under consideration in Yorkville, forming what may one day be a sort of corridor of data center campuses in the northeast quadrant of Eldamain Road and Route 34.

But with these proposed developments has come significant resident opposition, with concerns ranging from residents’ health to noise to energy usage and costs.

The city has also begun to standardize how it evaluates and proceeds with data center projects as they crop up.

Last June, for example, Yorkville approved an amendment to a portion of its Unified Development Ordinance, seeking to establish regulations specific to data centers, according to documents from the city. It includes requirements related to things like landscape buffering, maximum height, noise mitigation and appearance standards. Any future development plans have to comply with these standards.

Now, the city has approved two consulting services contracts as it prepares for the future data center developments.

The first contract approved at the recent City Council meeting was with Chicago-based Sargent & Lundy LLC for electrical engineering consulting services.

The contract is for the CyrusOne data center substation project in the city, and costs from the contract are set to come in at no more than \$149,600, a city memo notes. The costs are a “pass-through expense” to the developer, and therefore will not have an impact on the city’s general fund.

One CyrusOne data center site was approved by the city in 2024, and another CyrusOne campus has been proposed nearby. CyrusOne also has a data center property nearby on Aurora’s far East Side.

The services the city expects to receive from Sargent & Lundy include things like plan review and commissioning support, the memo notes. The city memo indicates that the scope of the services are “narrowly tailored to the high-risk, highly technical components of the project.” Other inspection and review services will continue to be done by city staff.

The other contract approved by the council is with Soundscape Engineering, for acoustic consulting services for the city.

This contract would essentially enable the city to receive acoustic consulting services on an on-call basis, the memo says, and would provide things like peer review of developers’ noise studies as well as field inspections, sound measurements and compliance verification.

At the meeting, City Administrator Bart Olson said that Yorkville has used the sound engineer’s services in the past for project-specific reviews of the proposed Project Cardinal and Project Steel data center developments. This contract would include any review the city does beyond project-specific studies, like a cumulative noise study that the city has authorized.

There is no set cost with the agreement, as the city will only incur costs when task orders for particular projects are issued, the memo notes.

Also at the meeting, during which several residents spoke critically of the data centers proposed for Yorkville, Olson addressed some of the questions that have been arising with regards to the city’s data center plans.

Olson noted, for example, that the city is limiting diesel generator testing to during weekdays, and said that the city is requiring several stages of noise studies for each project, paid for by the developer and conducted by the city.

And he reiterated that the data center developers are responsible for paying for water and sewer extensions and roadways that touch the respective properties.

Olson also discussed whether data centers are expected to impact property values, and noted the possibility of the area school districts getting in-advance property tax payments from the data center developers, which would then be abated later on by the school districts.

As far as transparency, Olson said that there are city webpages for each data center proposal being considered in Yorkville, and said that the idea of having annual public reporting on different issues related to data centers is under review by the city. He said there are currently no plans from the city to create a community oversight committee, but indicated that the City Council could discuss the idea and potentially pursue it.

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