

Grant County Data Center Article Series

Site Layer 1 proposal near Hachita and Playas, New Mexico

Randy Salars • Updated October 12, 2026 • 25 articles and research addendum

This edition reproduces the complete online series, including the local news update checked October 12 and its source links. Proposals, estimates, commentary, and agency actions are identified as such. Current permit and meeting status should be checked with the responsible agency.

Contents

1. What Is Actually Being Proposed?
2. What Data Centers Do and Why We Need Them
3. AI, China, and America's Future
4. Who Is Behind the Project?
5. Why This Location?
6. Water in the Desert: Where Would It Come From?
7. A Data Center With Its Own Power Plant
8. What Would Living Near It Be Like?
9. What Would Grant County Gain, and What Would It Cost?
10. What Can Other Communities Teach Us?
11. Who Decides, and What Should Be Put in Writing?
12. What Happens Five, Ten, or Twenty Years From Now?
13. What Would Make This a Good Deal for Grant County?
14. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage: What Should We Check Before Construction?
15. Who Pays for the Power?
16. How Much Water Would the Whole Site Use?
17. What Would Neighbors Hear?
18. What Would the Air Permit Allow?
19. What Is the Local Return?
20. What Should Be Public Before a Decision?
21. Can Better Copper Cooling Help?
22. Could Dry Cooling and Heat Reuse Work Here?
23. Could Batteries and Flexible Computing Help?
24. Does Its Own Power Plant Solve the Problem?
25. What Has Happened Since the First Series?

Online series: <https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>

1. What Is Actually Being Proposed?

The proposed Site Layer 1 development would put a data center and a substantial natural-gas power plant in southern Grant County. Its notice describes 32 engines with about 300.8 megawatts of generating capacity and possible operation around the clock. At an October 8 county presentation, the developer also described a preliminary solar and battery concept of roughly 714–715 megawatts each, within an approximately 8,000-acre project area. The design and data-center size remain unsettled. Daily Press account (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>); Albuquerque Journal account (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>).

I'm still undecided. Good jobs, useful investment, and dependable public revenue deserve serious consideration. So do the consequences for water users, nearby residents, and the governments that would provide services. I want to understand the whole proposal well enough to judge what we would receive, what we would commit, and who would remain responsible.

The published notice supplied for this series (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) gives us a starting point. The supplied notice excerpt (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center#source-notice>) is included with the series overview so readers can check its wording and figures directly.

The starting point

Topic • What the notice says • What it leaves unanswered

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Applicant • Site Layer 1, LLC; New York address • Complete ownership, financial backing, and eventual operator

Location • About 4.5 miles northeast of Playas and 11.8 miles west-northwest of Hachita • Surveyed boundaries, full development footprint, and utility routes

Power • 32 gas engines rated at about 9.4 megawatts each • Dependable output, computer demand, fuel contracts, and actual operating pattern

Water • The notice lacks a water budget; the developer later projected less than 25 acre-feet annually with closed-loop cooling • Engineering basis, whole-site use, source, peak demand, and effects on other users

Timing • The notice anticipated an October 1, 2026 air-permit filing; a consultant reported submission October 7 • Agency receipt and completeness status, review schedule, and other approvals

The company email and NMED's September 29 reply (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>) document the earlier procedural exchange. At the October 8 meeting, the consultant said (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>) an application had been submitted the previous day. An agency-posted application or completeness finding was not located in this review.

Those distinctions prevent several mistakes. A planned submission date is not an approval. An equipment rating is not a measurement of actual computer demand. An applicant's business address is not a complete account of ownership. The notice describes an intended project; it does not establish that every business arrangement needed to deliver it has been completed.

The power proposal deserves particular attention. Generating capacity measures what equipment is rated to produce under specified conditions. Some electricity supports cooling and other equipment, and some generating capacity may be reserved for outages or maintenance. The community needs the design that connects those figures. A headline describing a "300-megawatt data center" can otherwise leave readers confusing the power plant's capacity with the computers' actual demand.

The notice also lists estimated maximum greenhouse-gas emissions of 1,292,118 tons per year of carbon-dioxide equivalent, along with other pollutants. These are proposed estimates, not measured emissions from an operating facility. The calculations, operating assumptions, and controls deserve scrutiny. Later articles explain why annual emissions, pollution at a nearby home, and climate effects are related but different questions.

Air permitting supplies one route for examining the proposal. The New Mexico Environment Department describes the applicable categories and reviews on its air-quality permitting page (<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/permitting-section-home-page/>). Residents need the actual application number, current documents, and participation instructions. One permit should not be treated as a verdict on every financial, water, land, or community question associated with the development.

The water discussion shows why we need to separate a claim from a project commitment. In its September 2, 2026 announcement, the Gila Resources Information Project presented a possible annual demand of 6,535 acre-feet for a facility of this size using wet cooling. That is an opponent's scenario based on a cooling assumption. It is not a water requirement stated in the notice or a verified description of this developer's chosen design. GRIP's announcement (<https://gilaresources.info/wp/blog/urgent-action-site-layer-1-data-center-proposed-for-grant-co/>) gives readers the organization's position.

At the October 8 presentation, Marcus projected less than 25 acre-feet a year with closed-loop cooling, according to the Daily Press (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>). The Journal (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>) also reported that he had no water plan yet. The company should supply the actual design and calculations, including whether that figure covers the entire site. The public can then compare it with higher-use scenarios and test the reasons for the difference.

We also need to know the development's intended full size. An initial phase may be only part of the business plan. Roads, pipelines, land arrangements, or customer negotiations could anticipate later expansion. The public needs that larger picture before evaluating commitments that would make it possible. This does not mean predicting every future server purchase. It means understanding the development the first phase is intended to support.

In the materials reviewed for this series, a complete ownership chain, committed project financing, a confirmed customer, binding local employment commitments, and a full account of public costs remain unverified. That is a description of the available evidence, not proof that the arrangements do not exist. Publishing an accurate status for each would let residents concentrate on the questions that actually remain open.

I want this conversation to leave room for people who value development and people who worry about water or rural life. Many of us hold both concerns. We can recognize a useful national industry while asking whether its local terms are acceptable. We can also recognize a risk without assuming the company cannot address it.

The standard I will use throughout the series is straightforward: distinguish what is documented, what someone is proposing or claiming, and what remains unanswered. Then ask what evidence would resolve the question and which decision depends on that answer. That approach gives a serious developer a fair opportunity to make its case and gives the community a way to evaluate it.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should provide a dated project description covering the initial phase, intended expansion, ownership, operator, customers, financing milestones, and infrastructure. Each responsible agency should identify the applications it holds and the next public decision. Unresolved items should have a named contact and an expected date for an answer.

Questions worth asking

- Will the developer publish one dated description of the initial project and intended expansion, with a record of changes?
- Which applications have been received, under what numbers, and where can residents read the current files?
- Who would finance, build, own, operate, and purchase services from the facility, and which roles remain unfilled?
- What water, employment, and infrastructure statements are written commitments, and which are projections or goals?
- Which missing answers are needed before each proposed public commitment or agency decision?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Series overview (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-data-centers-do-and-why-we-need-them>)

2. What Data Centers Do and Why We Need Them

When we check a bank balance, send a document, or watch a video, we are using equipment somewhere beyond the screen. “The cloud” has buildings, wires, machines, and a power bill. Understanding that physical reality helps us see both why data centers matter and why their host communities deserve a clear account of what they require.

A data center is a place that houses computers and the systems needed to keep them working. Servers perform calculations and run software. Storage equipment keeps information available. Networking equipment moves it between machines and users. Power, cooling, fire protection, and security support that work. A company can own a facility for itself, rent space for its equipment, or purchase computing services from a cloud provider. Those arrangements have different owners and customers, even when the buildings look similar. AWS explains the equipment and business arrangements. (<https://aws.amazon.com/what-is/data-center/>)

For a small business or nonprofit, buying a service can be much more practical than assembling a computer department. Consider a hypothetical local organization that needs payroll, donor records, appointments, and reliable backups. It needs those functions to work, but it may have neither the staff nor the money to operate every underlying system. Shared computing services let organizations purchase capabilities in manageable pieces. Many ordinary needs, added together, create demand for substantial computing infrastructure.

The word “data” can also create a misleading picture of a giant warehouse that merely collects information about people. Storage is one function. Computing is another. The question “Why store so much?” therefore needs a companion: “What calculations and services will these machines perform?” Privacy remains an appropriate concern, but the amount of electricity a facility uses does not tell us whether it holds personal records, analyzes scientific information, runs business applications, or performs some combination.

AI adds two terms worth learning: training and inference. Training is the process of adjusting a model using examples and feedback so it becomes better at a task. Inference is using the resulting model to produce an answer, prediction, image, or other output. The first builds a capability; the second puts it to work. Both require computation. A finished model does not answer an unlimited number of people without equipment continuing to run. NVIDIA describes these stages in its training and inference explainer, updated in October 2025. (<https://blogs.nvidia.com/blog/difference-deep-learning-training-inference-ai/>)

A company may train a model during a concentrated period and then serve requests over a much longer period. Serving many users at once requires capacity even when individual requests are small. Grant County should ask which activities are intended here because that helps establish the equipment, business plan, and operating pattern.

Some large AI training jobs require thousands of processors to exchange information rapidly while working on the same task. Distance and slow connections can make that difficult. Meta describes building a cluster of about 129,000 H100 processors across five buildings, and explains how a lagging processor can slow a synchronized training job. This is one reason a very large facility can have a technical purpose beyond simply fitting more computers under a roof. It is an example from Meta, not evidence that Meta is a customer of this proposal. Meta’s account of its infrastructure development. (<https://engineering.fb.com/2025/09/29/data-infrastructure/metas-infrastructure-evolution-and-the-advent-of-ai/>)

The machinery also produces heat. Getting heat away from a chip is only part of the cooling job; the facility must ultimately release it outside. Water consumption depends on that whole arrangement. A circulating liquid loop inside the building does not, by itself, establish whether the outside cooling system evaporates water. The Department of Energy explains that distinction in its cooling guidance. (<https://www.energy.gov/cmei/femp/cooling-water-efficiency-opportunities-federal-data-centers>)

This is why a phrase such as “advanced cooling” cannot settle a local water question. Residents need an understandable description of the complete system and quantities for its actual operating conditions. The same applies to claims of efficiency. A design might perform very well by one measure while still requiring a substantial amount of a resource at its proposed scale. We need both the efficiency figure and the total.

Large remote facilities are also only one part of computing’s future. Apple describes an approach that handles many AI functions on a personal device and uses cloud computing for more demanding requests. That example shows how local

and centralized computing can work together. Apple's description of its device and cloud approach. (<https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2024/06/introducing-apple-intelligence-for-iphone-ipad-and-mac/>)

The scale of the industry's electricity demand is already significant. The International Energy Agency's April 2026 outlook projects global data-center consumption rising from 485 terawatt-hours in 2025 to roughly 950 in 2030. A terawatt-hour is a billion kilowatt-hours. These figures cover all data centers, and the later figure is a projection. They are not a measurement or forecast for Grant County. IEA's updated outlook (<https://www.iea.org/reports/key-questions-on-energy-and-ai/executive-summary>) · Official PDF, page 10 (<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/3179f7f8-01f6-4dd6-bffa-c9f7b73f1dc9/KeyQuestionsonEnergyandAI.pdf#page=10>).

Better chips and software can reduce the electricity needed for a particular task. Total demand can still grow if many more people use the service or ask it to perform more demanding work. The IEA identifies efficiency, expanding use, and changing tasks as separate influences on demand. An efficiency improvement therefore does not automatically make a facility unnecessary, and rising industry demand does not guarantee that every proposed project will find customers. IEA's explanation of these competing forces (<https://www.iea.org/reports/key-questions-on-energy-and-ai/executive-summary>) · Official PDF, executive summary (<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/3179f7f8-01f6-4dd6-bffa-c9f7b73f1dc9/KeyQuestionsonEnergyandAI.pdf#page=9>).

I use digital services and see their value. That gives me a reason to understand the infrastructure, and a reason to expect a convincing explanation of this particular project. The places hosting the equipment deserve clear information about its physical demands and local terms.

For Site Layer 1, the next explanation should connect the machines to an actual business purpose: what customers would buy, why this location works, and how much equipment would operate during each phase. That would give residents something concrete to evaluate.

What a useful answer would include

The developer and intended operator should provide a dated schedule showing proposed computing uses, equipment, customer status, and electricity demand for each phase. An engineer should explain the full power and cooling system, including the hottest operating conditions. Forecasts and maximum permitted operation should be identified separately from signed commitments.

Questions worth asking

- What computing uses are planned, and what documents confirm customer demand for each phase?
- How much electricity would the computers use, compared with cooling and other supporting equipment?
- What technical or business requirements explain the proposed size and location?
- What operating schedule and peak demand has the engineer assumed for each phase?
- Can the developer publish a complete cooling diagram and water budget for those operating conditions?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

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3. AI, China, and America's Future

I want America to help shape artificial intelligence and remain able to supply and use it. Depending heavily on other countries for essential computing, chips, or software could limit our choices. Leadership also means making the technology useful, reliable, affordable, and secure. Counting buildings alone cannot tell us whether we are succeeding.

“Whoever wins AI wins everything” captures the stakes people feel. It goes further than the evidence supports. This competition has no agreed finish line, and today’s strongest model does not confer permanent control of the future. Our practical goal should be to preserve the ability of the United States and its partners to develop the technology, obtain essential supplies, and put it to work on terms we can accept.

One claim we can put aside is that China competes without large data centers. In August 2024, China’s government reported that its eight national computing hubs contained more than 1.95 million data-center racks and had received over 43.5 billion yuan in direct investment by the end of June. Those are official Chinese figures, covering a broad computing program rather than AI alone. They nevertheless make the existence of major infrastructure investment clear. China’s announcement about its national computing hubs.

(https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202408/29/content_WS66d03a1ac6d0868f4e8ea539.html)

China’s effort to connect demand in its eastern regions with computing in inland regions also offers a useful comparison for our conversation. The physical location of computing and the location of its users can differ considerably. A rural host community needs to understand what it supplies and what it receives. The mere fact that customers live somewhere else does not make a project undesirable, but it makes the local agreement especially important.

The competition is substantial. Stanford’s 2026 AI Index reports that leading American and Chinese models were close on prominent public performance rankings through March 2026. The same chapter describes shortcomings in the tests used to measure progress. These rankings offer evidence about particular tasks and user preferences; they are not a universal measurement of intelligence, national strength, or performance in every workplace. Stanford’s technical-performance findings. (<https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report/technical-performance>)

A model may excel at one task and disappoint on another. Dependable results are a better guide to progress: better products, productive workers, useful discoveries, secure systems, and businesses able to compete. Additional computing capacity matters when it helps deliver those outcomes.

There are concrete benefits worth considering. Research involving 5,172 customer-support workers found that access to an AI assistant increased issues resolved per hour by 15 percent on average. Gains varied, with less experienced workers benefiting more. This demonstrates a useful result in one setting; it does not establish that every worker, industry, or national economy receives a 15 percent improvement. The researchers’ summary, published by Stanford’s Digital Economy Lab. (<https://digitaleconomy.stanford.edu/publication/generative-ai-at-work/>)

Scientific computing offers another example. The AlphaFold database makes more than 200 million predicted protein structures available to researchers. A prediction is not a proven treatment or a completed experiment, but it can provide researchers with something valuable to investigate. This illustrates why access to advanced computing can matter beyond consumer entertainment. EMBL-EBI’s description of the AlphaFold database.

(<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/about/news/updates-from-data-resources/new-alphafold-database-entry-pages/>)

Those are benefits worth pursuing. American researchers need tools for discovery, businesses need affordable access, and workers need opportunities to learn. A local business using AI well can benefit without owning a server. A community hosting thousands of servers might receive less benefit than expected if hiring, training, and public revenue commitments are weak. Hosting the equipment and using its capabilities are distinct opportunities.

Grant County could ask whether a project agreement would support instruction for local students, workers, and small businesses. That is an idea to negotiate, not a benefit established by the proposal. Useful training should lead to identifiable skills and opportunities, with a named provider and funding attached.

The hardware supply chain adds another layer. Stanford’s 2026 report identifies Taiwan’s TSMC as the manufacturer behind almost every leading AI chip. That dependence makes it difficult to discuss American computing as though every essential piece originates within our borders. Reliable partners and a broader supply base deserve a place in the definition

of national strength. Stanford's research and development findings. (<https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report/research-and-development>)

Electricity, networking, skilled people, and good software must work together. Buildings without customers or usable equipment cannot deliver the benefits of an operating service. Hospitals, factories, and county offices also need dependable tools that fit their work. Those practical demands belong in any discussion of American leadership.

Security belongs in this discussion because useful capabilities can be misused. The 2026 International AI Safety Report describes growing evidence of AI assistance in cyber operations, alongside continuing problems with reliability and evaluation. Its findings support taking both capability and safeguards seriously. They do not establish that simply building a domestic facility makes its systems secure. The report's extended summary. (<https://internationalaisafetyreport.org/publication/2026-report-extended-summary-policy-makers>)

Leadership should include the ability to build responsibly and maintain public trust. Incomplete information and unexpected public costs can undermine support for worthwhile development. Clear agreements and credible local benefits give infrastructure a stronger foundation for operating over decades.

For Grant County, the national case creates a reason to consider the proposal carefully. It does not supply the missing details. We still need to know what Site Layer 1 would do, who would use it, and what obligations its owners would accept. A general claim about American competitiveness cannot identify a customer, guarantee a job, or establish an available water supply.

I want America to remain strong in AI, and I want Grant County to make a sound decision. A project that advances useful computing while protecting its neighbors and paying its way could serve both goals. Whether this proposal meets that description is something its documents and commitments must show.

What a useful answer would include

The developer and intended operator should explain what AI work the site would support and provide evidence of customer commitments, with appropriate protection for confidential contract details. A proposed local training program should identify its provider, budget, participants, and measurable outcomes. Schools and employers should help assess whether it meets local needs.

Questions worth asking

- What evidence establishes this facility's intended contribution to AI computing, beyond its proposed generating capacity?
- Which customers or uses are committed, and which remain business-development goals?
- Would the developer fund a local training program, and who would deliver and evaluate it?
- Who would operate the facility and be responsible for its security and local commitments?
- What concrete benefits for Grant County accompany the claims about American competitiveness?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

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4. Who Is Behind the Project?

If a promise is broken five years from now, which company will Grant County call—and which company will have the obligation and resources to put things right? That is the practical reason to ask who is behind this proposal. The investor, developer, builder, operator, and customer may be different businesses. We need to know what each one would be responsible for.

The supplied air-permit notice names Site Layer 1, LLC as the owner and/or operator. It gives a business address at 126 East 56th Street, seventh floor, New York. That is the applicant identity residents should use when requesting project records. The notice does not provide a complete ownership chart or identify a committed computing customer. The applicant's public notice. (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>)

The Gila Resources Information Project reports that state business registrations for Site Layer 1 in New Mexico, Site Layer 2 in Colorado, and Site Layer 4 in Wyoming name David Katz as the authorizing individual. Corner's own website identifies Katz as its director of legal. The original registrations were not obtained for this series, so the reported filing connection still needs confirmation. A person signing a filing may represent a company without personally owning it or guaranteeing its debts. GRIP's account of the registrations (<https://gilaresources.info/wp/blog/urgent-action-site-layer-1-data-center-proposed-for-grant-co/>) and Corner's team listing (<https://corner.xyz/>).

Corner's company-creation page lists RockLayer and AirLayer under energy development, along with SOLCAP under energy financing. That establishes Corner's stated association with those businesses. At the October 8, 2026 county presentation, Granite Renewables described Site Layer 1 as wholly owned by Rock Layer LLC and as the owner of SL1NM LLC, which handles permitting and agency contacts. Granite said it is an equity partner in Rock Layer and Site Layer 1 and manages project development. These are the developer's reported descriptions; the underlying agreements and final operating structure remain unavailable in this review. Corner's company-creation page (<https://corner.xyz/creations>); Daily Press account of the presentation (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>).

A May 2026 company announcement describes bringing investment in physical assets, company creation, and venture capital under the Corner brand. Its strategy spans AI technology, supporting energy and infrastructure, and human experiences. I use "Corner" here for that umbrella brand; the actual legal entities responsible for Site Layer 1 must still be identified. Corner's account of its strategy and organization. (<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/corner-expands-leadership-team-appointing-michael-sonnenshein-partner--group-president-302785022.html>)

That distinction matters whenever a proposal is associated with a "multibillion-dollar firm." Managed assets, money invested over many years, the value of portfolio businesses, and available project financing are different things. A community should ask what the quoted number measures. More directly, it should ask how much financing is committed to this project, what conditions must be met, and who bears the cost if construction stalls.

The people involved are identifiable. In its May 29, 2026 announcement, Corner named Jane Mathieu as CEO and Marvin Tien as executive chairman, and announced Michael Sonnenshein as partner and group president. Sonnenshein's experience includes leadership at Grayscale Investments and Securitize. Those credentials concern institutional finance. Residents also need to know who would manage this facility and what operating experience that team has. Corner's leadership announcement. (<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/corner-expands-leadership-team-appointing-michael-sonnenshein-partner--group-president-302785022.html>)

Some of the investment connections can also be checked against announcements from the businesses receiving the money. Tenstorrent, which develops AI computing hardware, named Corner Capital among participants in a financing of more than \$693 million announced in December 2024. That amount was the entire financing round, not Corner's individual contribution. Tenstorrent's announcement. (<https://tenstorrent.com/en/newsroom/tenstorrent-closes-693m-of-series-d-funding-led-by-samsung-securities-and-afw-partners>)

In November 2025, advanced nuclear technology company X-energy identified Corner Capital as an existing investor participating in its approximately \$700 million financing. Again, this establishes announced investment participation, not Corner's current ownership percentage or a commitment to supply the New Mexico project. Nothing in that connection changes the natural-gas equipment described in Site Layer 1's notice. X-energy's financing announcement. (<https://x-grant-county-data-center-article-series-salars.net>)

energy.com/news/x-energy-closes-oversubscribed-700-million-series-d-financing-round-to-continue-expansion-to-meet-global-energy-demand/)

The investments suggest commercial interest in several parts of the same expanding market. That is my interpretation of the pattern. Seeking a return is what investors ordinarily do. The community's task is to negotiate a worthwhile local return and understand who carries the risks.

Public county records offer a revealing description of the development approach. At an October 14, 2025 Logan County, Colorado meeting, Blake Marcus, identified with Granite Renewables, described developing sites until construction and then becoming a limited partner with a larger purchasing company. He mentioned Oracle, Google, Meta, and Tract as examples. The minutes record what he told the commissioners; they do not establish a signed contract with any of those companies or the final structure of Site Layer 1. Logan County's meeting minutes.

(https://www.logancountyco.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_10072025-73)

That business model makes the handoff important. If another business will operate the facility, the applicable agreements should establish how obligations continue through that transition. Residents need to know who answers complaints, pays agreed expenses, and provides financial guarantees. The county's legal advisers should examine whether those protections will work after a sale or business failure.

References should be equally specific. A proposed site, an approved permit, a financed energy asset, and a completed operating data center demonstrate different kinds of experience. A useful reference would identify the address, operating date, actual role of the team, and a local official or service provider willing to discuss performance. A tour of another company's facility could teach residents about equipment, but it would not establish this developer's record.

As of October 12, 2026, the developer has publicly described a corporate chain, but the materials examined do not establish its underlying agreements, committed construction financing, a signed Site Layer 1 customer, or a confirmed long-term operator. Those arrangements may exist. Documents explaining them would allow a much firmer assessment than the size or reputation of an investment brand.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should supply a dated chart naming the legal entities that would finance, build, own, and operate each part of the project. It should identify the proposed guarantor and financing milestones. County advisers should examine the supporting agreements, protections after ownership changes, and evidence that financial promises can be met.

Questions worth asking

- What original filings establish Site Layer 1's ownership and its relationships to Corner, RockLayer, and the other Site Layer companies?
- Which legal entity would be responsible for the data center, power plant, and each local agreement?
- What financing and customer commitments are signed, and what conditions or deadlines remain?
- Which operating projects demonstrate this team's actual experience, and who can provide independent references?
- Which entity would guarantee local obligations, and how would those protections survive a sale or business failure?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

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5. Why This Location?

The proposed location could be one of this project's strongest advantages or one of its largest practical challenges. Space and separation may make construction easier. Distance can also make a pipeline, an ambulance response, or a daily commute more difficult. Calling the area the middle of nowhere tells us little about either side of that bargain. People already live, work, ranch, and travel there.

The supplied notice places Site Layer 1 at latitude 31.980165 and longitude -108.511324, approximately 4.5 miles northeast of Playas and 11.8 miles west-northwest of Hachita. The accompanying maps place it near NM 9 and NM 113 in southern Grant County. Those coordinates identify a point; they do not establish the property's complete boundaries, ownership, access rights, or eventual development footprint. Source: applicant's published notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>).

There are understandable reasons a developer might investigate a location like this. A large, comparatively isolated parcel may offer room for buildings and equipment, a security perimeter, and future phases. Separation from densely populated neighborhoods could reduce some conflicts. The supplied map also depicts an El Paso Natural Gas pipeline in the broader vicinity. However, a line on a map does not establish available capacity, a connection agreement, or the cost of bringing fuel to the facility. The developer should explain which location advantages are already secured and which remain assumptions.

Roads and communications need the same attention. Large equipment deliveries require a route that accommodates their weight and dimensions. A nearby fiber route would be useful only if suitable service could be obtained. A public account of required improvements, easements, and payment responsibilities would show how much of the location's apparent advantage is real. Security-sensitive details can remain protected.

Playas itself illustrates why an apparently empty landscape can be more complicated than it looks. New Mexico Tech describes the town as a former copper-smelter company town that it acquired in 2004. The Playas Research and Training Center now supports training and research, with buildings, housing, and communications infrastructure. Those are existing activities to understand and consult. Their presence does not establish that the data-center developer can use the center's assets or that a partnership exists. Source: New Mexico Tech's description of Playas (<https://www.nmt.edu/research/projects/playas/>).

One especially revealing feature of this location is that different kinds of maps give it different water-related labels. A coordinate check against the Office of the State Engineer's declared-groundwater-basin map places the proposed point inside the administrative Hachita basin, spelled "Hachita" in that dataset. This is a boundary used in water administration. It does not, by itself, identify the rock or sediment that a particular well would draw from. Source: OSE declared-groundwater-basin map (<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=f179656e9d154d28a70137a6a532d80f>).

A separate check against the federal Watershed Boundary Dataset places the point in the Water Canyon surface-drainage unit, HUC 130302010103, whose downstream unit is Lower Playas Valley. This describes how the land is divided into surface watersheds. It is not a finding about the direction or reach of future groundwater pumping. Source: USGS watershed query for the proposed coordinates (<https://hydro.nationalmap.gov/arcgis/rest/services/wbd/MapServer/6/query?f=json&geometry=-108.511324%2C31.980165&geometryType=esriGeometryPoint&inSR=4326&spatialRel=esriSpatialRelIntersects&outFields=%2A&returnGeometry=false>).

That distinction matters whenever someone says the project is downstream from us. Downstream in which system: a wash after a storm, a groundwater formation, or an administrative map? Before using the word to assure people that they are protected, we need to identify the proposed water source and the physical connections that matter. The next article examines that question more closely.

The desert also makes drainage worth examining carefully. A site assessment should show where storm runoff enters the property, how grading would change its path, and where water would leave. Residents should see how roads, drainage structures, and downstream properties would be protected. Calling the area dry is not a drainage analysis; identifying a watershed is not proof that a particular building site is in a floodplain. Grant County's own building-permit information identifies completion of the floodplain application process as a step preceding state building permits. Source: Grant County building-permit guidance (<https://www.grantcountynm.gov/204/Building-Permits>).

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Distance also affects public services. If a serious incident happened at the facility, the first responders and additional help might come from different communities. A response agreement should identify their equipment, training, travel assumptions, and funding. A county boundary does not keep an ambulance, a worker, or a water pipe inside it. The review should follow those actual routes and identify who carries the costs.

The same geographic questions apply to jobs. Someone hired from Silver City would need to consider the actual road journey, shift hours, fuel costs, and reliability of transportation. Construction workers may seek lodging and services somewhere else. A regional hiring or housing opportunity could be worthwhile, but it should be evaluated using realistic travel patterns and available capacity. A straight-line distance on a map does not answer those questions.

Air quality requires a different kind of map. The EPA explains that dispersion models use emissions and weather information to estimate concentrations at downwind locations. The location of the nearest town alone cannot establish what people there might breathe. For this proposal, residents should ask where the model places its highest concentrations, which homes and other places it evaluates, and how the results change under unfavorable weather. Source: EPA's explanation of air-dispersion modeling (<https://www.epa.gov/scram/air-quality-dispersion-modeling>).

The nearby Continental Divide Trail deserves attention too. The supplied map shows its route in the area, but meaningful review requires the current route and the eventual project boundary. A useful discussion would examine nighttime lighting, views, sound, and construction access from the places trail users actually travel. Local residents, ranchers, and neighboring landowners deserve the same attention, whether or not their homes appear on a promotional map.

I could see the appeal of a location with space, workable infrastructure, and limited conflict with its neighbors. My confidence would depend on seeing those advantages documented and the service costs covered. Remoteness belongs in the calculation. It should never become a reason to leave the nearest people out of it.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should provide the surveyed boundary, site-control documents, neighboring uses, and proposed supply and access routes. Utilities and local service agencies should verify their roles. Together, those records should show which communities would supply water, workers, housing, and emergency help, and who would pay for the resulting obligations.

Questions worth asking

- What are the surveyed boundaries, full development footprint, neighboring uses, and current ownership or site-control arrangements?
- Which gas, road, electrical, and fiber connections are secured, and which still require agreements or construction?
- Which communities would supply workers, housing, emergency response, and other services, and how would their costs be covered?
- What do site-specific drainage, air, sound, lighting, and trail assessments show at nearby homes and public places?
- Why did the developer select this location, and what alternatives were considered?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/who-is-behind-the-project>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/water-in-the-desert-where-would-it-come-from>)

6. Water in the Desert: Where Would It Come From?

An assurance such as “we will use very little water” should be the beginning of a conversation. For Grant County, the answer needs a source, a quantity, and an explanation of what the withdrawal would mean for existing users. A design that conserves water could make this proposal more attractive. We need enough detail to recognize that design and hold the operator to it.

The supplied air-permit notice does not provide a complete water budget or cooling design. It cannot settle claims of either minimal use or thousands of acre-feet annually. One acre-foot is approximately 326,000 gallons. As a hypothetical example, 100 acre-feet annually would equal about 32.6 million gallons, averaging roughly 89,000 gallons daily. That is a unit conversion, not an estimate for Site Layer 1, and an annual average would still leave peak demand unanswered.

Three different water numbers matter. Withdrawal is water taken from a source. Consumption is the portion evaporated or otherwise unavailable for immediate reuse. Recirculation is water passing through equipment again. Large recirculation volumes need not mean large new withdrawals. Low consumption alone does not tell us the pumping rate. The budget should show withdrawals, consumption, and discharges separately, including where discharged water goes. Source: USGS water-use definitions (<https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/water-use-terminology>).

“Closed loop” describes only what happens within the specified loop. Water can circulate through computers repeatedly while a separate cooling tower evaporates water to release their heat. The Department of Energy illustrates that arrangement and explains the additional discharge used to control mineral buildup. Following the heat from the chips to its final release outdoors reveals which equipment actually needs replacement water. Source: DOE cooling guidance (<https://www.energy.gov/cmei/femp/cooling-water-efficiency-opportunities-federal-data-centers>).

Low-water alternatives are credible. Microsoft's December 2024 announcement described a design using closed liquid loops and mechanical cooling to avoid evaporation for cooling. It acknowledged an electricity tradeoff and described planned pilots, with new sites expected online in late 2027. That announcement is evidence of a design pathway, rather than measured performance of an operating counterpart to Site Layer 1. Administrative uses such as restrooms still require water. Source: Microsoft's cooling-design announcement (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-cloud/blog/2024/12/09/sustainable-by-design-next-generation-datacenters-consume-zero-water-for-cooling/>).

Here, the complete budget should cover computers, power equipment, treatment, maintenance refills, construction, and ordinary building uses. Fire protection needs its own storage and replenishment plan. Expected and maximum annual withdrawals should accompany peak-day requirements, seasonal differences, and full expansion. A convincing low-water proposal would state whether evaporative assistance is ever used, particularly during prolonged heat, and show the consequence if a preferred supply becomes unavailable.

Location matters at both ends of a pipe. Water could come from onsite wells, existing wells elsewhere, or a supplier. Reclaimed water or treated brackish groundwater could be options where suitable supplies and infrastructure exist. None is established as this project's chosen source in the reviewed documents. Buying water still requires identifying the supplying wells and their available capacity; treatment may introduce additional energy needs and waste streams.

One historical lead illustrates why records need careful reading. NMED lists Well 26B under the Phelps Dodge Hidalgo Smelter system. The system has status “I,” indicating inactive, while the individual well entry carries status “A.” Its recorded location is approximately 5.2 miles west-northwest of the proposed facility. Those entries do not establish whether it pumps today, who controls its rights, or whether this developer could use it. Source: NMED's Well 26B record (https://dww.water.env.nm.gov/JSP/WaterSystemFacility.jsp?tinwsf_is_number=4220&tinwsf_st_code=NM&tinwsys_is_number=1202&tinwsys_st_code=NM).

The specific question is whether any former smelter wells, rights, or pipelines are being considered. If so, current ownership, rights, condition, and pumping information would matter. If not, the lead should be put aside. Nearby industrial history also does not establish that the proposed parcel itself is a former smelter site.

Silver City's water report identifies the Franks wells with the Gila–San Francisco basin and the Woodward and Gabby Hayes wells with the Mimbres basin. The reviewed documents do not demonstrate that this project would draw down those municipal supplies. They also do not identify its eventual supply wells. The next step is to locate those wells and

evaluate their hydraulic connections. Claims of draining Silver City's water—or guarantees of complete separation—go beyond the evidence currently available. Source: Silver City's 2025 Water Quality Report (<https://www.townofsilvercity.org/DocumentCenter/View/3238/2025-Water-Quality-Report-English-Version>).

A New Mexico Geological Society overview describes distinct regional basin systems, barriers, and possible connections, including generally northward groundwater flow through the Playas system. Published in 2000, it provides context rather than present-day predictions for proposed wells. Administrative basin boundaries and surface-drainage maps cannot identify those wells' physical connections either. Source: Kennedy, Hawley, and Johnson's groundwater overview (https://nmgs.nmt.edu/publications/guidebooks/downloads/51/51_p0235_p0244.pdf).

Being downstream is not automatic protection from pumping. Withdrawals can lower groundwater levels around a well and change nearby flow. The reach depends on pumping and aquifer properties. USGS explains that sustained withdrawals can affect neighboring wells and exchanges with connected surface water. That explains the need for analysis; it does not establish a specific impact from this proposal. Source: USGS groundwater-depletion explanation (<https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/groundwater-decline-and-depletion>).

For groundwater in declared basins, the Office of the State Engineer handles applications for new appropriations and changes to existing rights. The supporting rights and necessary approvals should be public alongside an assessment of physical supply. A legally authorized quantity and a well's dependable delivery under future conditions answer different questions. Source: New Mexico groundwater rules, 19.27.1 NMAC (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title19/19.027.0001.html>).

My confidence would increase with baseline measurements and a funded response if reality differs from the predictions. Nearby users should know who investigates falling water levels, when pumping must change, and who provides a justified remedy. A fine paid after a household loses its supply would offer little immediate help. Protection should begin before a problem becomes a crisis.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should supply a seasonal water balance, peak requirements, source locations, rights, and backup arrangements. A qualified groundwater specialist should assess cumulative drawdown with other pumping and drought assumptions. Regulators should identify required approvals, while an enforceable agreement assigns monitoring, warning thresholds, investigations, and funded remedies.

Questions worth asking

- What exact wells or suppliers would provide water, under which rights and approvals?
- What are the whole-facility annual and peak-day withdrawals and consumption at opening and full expansion, including hot-weather and drought conditions?
- What current evidence identifies the supplying aquifer and predicts cumulative effects on neighboring users?
- Are former industrial water assets involved, and what records establish their present condition, capacity, ownership, and available rights?
- What monitoring, pumping limits, complaint process, and funded remedies would protect existing users if the predictions prove wrong?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

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7. A Data Center With Its Own Power Plant

Before deciding how we feel about the computers, we need to understand the power plant proposed to run them. Site Layer 1 would combine two substantial operations on one site. Producing its own electricity could help the developer secure a dependable supply. It would also place responsibility for continuous fuel delivery, generating equipment, cooling, and emissions close to our communities.

The supplied notice describes 32 Wärtsilä 20V34SG natural-gas engines, each rated at approximately 9.4 megawatts. Multiplying those figures gives 300.8 megawatts of nominal gross generating capacity. The notice describes potential operation around the clock throughout the year. It also identifies emissions controls and ammonia storage. Those details warrant review as a potentially continuous industrial operation, rather than an assumption that the engines would run only during occasional outages. Source: applicant's published notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bbc810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>).

Power is the rate at which electrical energy is produced or used, and a megawatt is a unit of power. A megawatt-hour measures an amount of electricity over time. A plant operating at 100 megawatts for one hour produces 100 megawatt-hours. This distinction matters because an equipment rating does not tell us how much electricity would actually be generated during a year. That depends on operating hours, output levels, maintenance, and outages.

It also matters that 300.8 megawatts is not a confirmed computer load. Some generated electricity would support the plant and facility equipment. The design might also reserve capacity for maintenance or failures. We need a clear account of gross generation, power available after the plant's own needs, total facility demand, and the portion used by the computers. Without that breakdown, comparisons with other data centers can easily become misleading.

There is a practical reason developers consider producing their own electricity. If suitable utility service cannot be obtained on the desired schedule, onsite generation may offer another route. It may also give the operator more control over supply. Whether it actually provides a faster or better solution at this location depends on fuel contracts, equipment deliveries, permitting, construction, and operating costs. The developer should be able to explain those choices without asking residents to take the general business case on faith.

Multiple engines can provide useful flexibility. The manufacturer describes Pearsall Station in Texas as a 24-engine installation using the same 20V34SG engine family. Its account identifies modular operation and closed-circuit radiator cooling. That demonstrates relevant engineering experience with this type of equipment. Pearsall is a different facility serving a different role; its performance and water claims cannot simply be transferred to the proposed New Mexico project. Source: Wärtsilä's Pearsall Station reference (<https://www.wartsila.com/energy/learn-more/references/utilities/pearsall-station-texas-usa>).

The manufacturer's own specifications caution that site conditions, fuel, and emissions limits can affect performance and call for project-specific figures. The relevant commitment is therefore guaranteed output for the selected installation, with its actual cooling equipment and local operating conditions. The design should show how many engines normally run and how maintenance occurs while the computers remain online. Source: Wärtsilä 34SG specifications (<https://www.wartsila.com/energy/solutions/engine-power-plants/wartsila-34sg-gas-engine>).

Natural gas is the next link in the chain. Proximity to a pipeline does not establish that enough gas can be delivered at the required pressure throughout the year. A meaningful fuel plan should identify the connection, any additional pipeline or compression facilities, service terms, and what happens during interruption. Public officials should know which costs are private obligations and whether any public infrastructure is involved.

Fuel consumption cannot be determined from megawatts alone. The Energy Information Administration explains that the quantity depends on generating efficiency and the fuel's energy content. A "heat rate" expresses the fuel energy needed to produce a unit of electricity; a lower heat rate means less fuel for the same output when measured on the same basis. Expected and maximum hourly and annual gas consumption should follow from the proposed operating schedule. National averages cannot substitute for those calculations. Source: EIA's explanation of fuel used to generate electricity (<https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=667&t=3>).

Efficiency deserves attention beyond the fuel bill. A generating plant converts part of its fuel energy into electricity; the rest must be accounted for, much of it as heat. EIA distinguishes electricity generated from the amount available after a

plant's own power requirements. The community should ask for performance figures that use consistent boundaries, so an attractive gross rating does not obscure the resources required to deliver useful power. Source: EIA's explanation of power-plant efficiency (<https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=107&t=3>).

The combined facility therefore needs an integrated cooling explanation. The power equipment has heat to manage, and so do the computers using its electricity. A claim about conserving water at the engine plant would not settle water use inside the data center, or vice versa. Engineers should show how the full system performs during the conditions for which it must be designed, including the hottest expected operating periods.

Reliability also reaches beyond the number of engines. If multiple units share a fuel connection, switching equipment, or a control system, the public should ask how failures in those common components are handled. We do not need security-sensitive diagrams to understand whether an interruption would shut down computing, trigger additional equipment, or create demands on public services. The emergency plan should describe responsibilities in terms local responders can use.

Residents may reasonably wonder whether a plant this size could help keep nearby towns powered. That possibility requires actual connections, equipment, operating arrangements, and agreements. It is not an automatic benefit of locating generation in the county. The Department of Energy discusses ways data centers can contribute flexibility to power systems, but realizing those benefits depends on how a facility is connected and operated. No documented commitment reviewed for this proposal guarantees emergency electricity to nearby communities. Source: DOE's discussion of resources and flexibility for data-center electricity demand (<https://www.energy.gov/oe/clean-energy-resources-meet-data-center-electricity-demand>).

A well-designed private power plant could solve a real business problem. Whether it also serves Grant County depends on its resource demands, effects on neighbors, and financial obligations. I would judge the proposal by the electricity it can reliably deliver under actual conditions and by who carries the consequences when something goes wrong.

What a useful answer would include

The developer and equipment supplier should provide guaranteed local-condition output, fuel consumption, cooling requirements, and a clear account of where the electricity goes. Gas and electric providers should verify connection commitments. The outage plan should assign operational, emergency-response, and payment responsibilities, including failures of equipment shared by multiple engines.

Questions worth asking

- What are the gross generating capacity, dependable net output, total facility demand, and confirmed computer load?
- What operating schedule, maintenance reserve, and hot-weather performance does the design assume?
- What gas supply and delivery agreements are secured, and what new infrastructure and interruption arrangements are required?
- How would the entire power-and-computing facility manage heat, water use, emissions, and shared equipment failures?
- Would the project exchange power with the grid or provide community backup, and what agreements establish the benefits and costs?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/water-in-the-desert-where-would-it-come-from>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-living-near-it-be-like>)

8. What Would Living Near It Be Like?

A proposal can look different from a kitchen window than from an investment presentation. Nearby residents have immediate questions: What will I hear at night? What comes out of the stacks? Will trucks pass my driveway? If something goes wrong, who answers the phone?

Those questions deserve attention even when relatively few people live nearby. A remote location may reduce the number of households exposed to noise, traffic, and lighting. It does not make the remaining households less important. We should identify the nearest homes, working ranches, and other places people spend time before deciding what “far enough away” means.

The supplied air-permit notice describes 32 natural-gas engines, pollution controls, and ammonia storage, with potential operation around the clock throughout the year. Continuous generation therefore belongs in the review; these are not described as occasional backup generators. See the proposed facility announcement (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>).

The emissions figures are estimated maximum quantities in a proposal. Tons leaving a stack are not the same as the concentration someone breathes at home. Exhaust conditions, weather, terrain, other sources, and the location of people all matter. A useful air review should identify the highest predicted concentrations, the operating conditions producing them, and the homes and other occupied places evaluated. NMED's permitting information (<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/permitting-section-home-page/>) explains how potential emissions and enforceable limits enter that process.

The hourly and annual numbers need to reconcile. The notice lists nitrogen oxides at 152 pounds per hour and 184 tons per year. Using a standard 8,760-hour year and 2,000 pounds per U.S. short ton, the hourly figure would equal about 666 tons if sustained continuously. That does not demonstrate an error. Different operating modes or enforceable annual restrictions could explain it. The useful answer is an operating schedule and calculation showing how both numbers can be true, with any necessary limits written into the permit.

Adding all the notice's annual non-greenhouse-gas rows produces 1,529 tons per year. That is not a sound total: the PM, PM10, and PM2.5 rows overlap. EPA's particle-pollution explanation (<https://www.epa.gov/pm-pollution/particulate-matter-pm-basics>) describes the size categories. Other categories may overlap too, so removing duplicate particle rows does not establish a correct total. Comparisons with other industries need consistent pollutant categories, operating assumptions, and exposure analysis.

The notice also estimates 42 tons per year of combined hazardous air pollutants. Which substances make up that figure, and which matter most at nearby locations? A chemical-by-chemical breakdown, emission limits, and modeled concentrations would allow an informed review. A combined weight alone does not answer those questions.

Climate effects need their own accounting. The notice estimates a maximum of about 1.29 million tons per year of carbon-dioxide equivalent, a measure combining greenhouse-gas effects. Gas production and transportation can release methane before fuel reaches the plant; the IEA's Global Methane Tracker 2026 (<https://www.iea.org/reports/global-methane-tracker-2026>) (official PDF (<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/8a2639fd-7883-4fe7-bbe7-4f97bc39e2ff/GlobalMethaneTracker2026.pdf>)) examines those emissions across the energy sector. The project accounting should identify which sources are included, which are outside it, and the assumptions used. Comparing power alternatives requires those wider effects alongside cost and reliability, without double counting. This is a different calculation from pollution at a nearby home.

Noise needs comparable care. A steady hum that continues through a quiet night can bother a neighbor even when a brief daytime measurement looks acceptable. Loudoun County, Virginia, explains that conventional A-weighted decibel measurements can miss important characteristics of low-frequency and tonal sound. Its discussion of data-center noise (<https://www.loudoun.gov/6405/Noise-Air-Quality-Concerns>) supports asking for measurements that examine the character of sound as well as its overall level.

For this site, useful evidence begins with sound measurements before construction and predictions for the completed facility. Engines, exhaust equipment, fans, and pumps should be evaluated together. Measurements after opening should test demanding conditions, including hot nights and relevant equipment combinations. A mild afternoon with only part of

the plant running would not settle what nearby households experience during its most demanding operation. The agreement should identify the sound limits, measurement locations, and remedy before those become a dispute.

Lighting plans should show how shielding, aiming, and brightness would provide security while limiting spill beyond the site. Include the expected nighttime view from nearby properties and the Continental Divide Trail.

Construction traffic plans should show delivery volumes, hours, dust controls, intersection conflicts, and responsibility for road improvements and repairs. Include the routes residents and ranchers use. Ongoing maintenance and equipment deliveries need a separate forecast.

Rainfall deserves attention even in the desert. EPA explains that runoff from construction can carry sediment, debris, and chemicals away from disturbed ground. Its construction-stormwater guidance (<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater-discharges-construction-activities>) describes the role of erosion controls and pollution-prevention planning. The local question is where water would travel after grading, paving, and building—not whether the land usually looks dry. We need a site-specific answer without assuming the parcel is already known to flood.

Emergency preparation should be equally concrete. The notice identifies ammonia storage, but does not provide the inventory details a neighbor or responder would need. We should ask about chemical quantities, storage design, detection, containment, shutdown procedures, and access for emergency vehicles. If batteries are included in later plans, their design and response needs should be reviewed too. EPA's community chemical-planning overview (<https://www.epa.gov/epcra/what-epcra>) explains the purpose of emergency planning and chemical reporting; the agencies should identify the requirements that apply to this facility.

The local responders expected to attend an incident should explain their equipment, training, staffing, and mutual-aid needs. Their assessment belongs beside a funding agreement and a site-access plan. A company emergency team, if proposed, should have a defined relationship with public responders. For ordinary complaints, residents need a named contact, response expectations, and a record that follows a problem through to resolution.

Residents need to know what conditions to expect and how to obtain action. Baseline measurements give them and the company a common record, helping distinguish existing conditions from new ones. Commitments become credible when monitoring, funding, and correction continue after opening.

What a useful answer would include

The developer's engineers should provide an emissions calculation, chemical inventory, and maps of predicted air, sound, and lighting conditions at identified locations. Regulators should explain the applicable limits and verification. Local responders should identify funded response needs. A public monitoring and complaint plan should show who investigates and what triggers correction.

Questions worth asking

- Which homes and other occupied locations were included in the air, noise, lighting, and traffic assessments?
- How do the hourly and annual emissions estimates fit together, and what operating limits support them?
- What will be measured after opening, under what conditions, and where will the results be published?
- What additional emergency-response resources are needed, and who will fund them?
- Who handles complaints, how quickly must they respond, and what happens when a problem persists?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/a-data-center-with-its-own-power-plant>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-grant-county-gain-and-what-would-it-cost>)

9. What Would Grant County Gain, and What Would It Cost?

A billion-dollar investment can sound like a billion-dollar benefit to the place receiving it. Much of that money, however, can buy equipment manufactured elsewhere and services supplied from outside the region. The question for Grant County is how much would reach local households, businesses, and public services.

Skilled jobs, dependable revenue, and work for local contractors would matter here. So would an opportunity for young people to build their lives close to home. Those possibilities deserve an honest financial accounting, with the benefits and costs followed through the actual agreements.

Virginia's legislative review of its data-center industry offers useful perspective. It found substantial economic benefits, with much of the activity associated with construction. Ongoing employment was smaller, although data-center jobs tended to pay well. The review also found that local tax receipts could be significant and varied with local tax structures and the size of the industry. These are findings about Virginia's experience (<https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2024-data-centers-in-virginia.asp>), not employment or revenue promises for southern Grant County.

For Site Layer 1, separate construction employment from ongoing work. Show the peak construction workforce and worker-years: ten people working full time for one year represent ten worker-years, not ten permanent jobs. Report ongoing employment as annual average full-time-equivalent positions, distinguishing company employees, regular contractors, and visiting service crews. Define what counts as a local worker and where each job is based. Confidential payroll verification, with public totals, would provide evidence without exposing workers' personal information.

Could local people qualify? Provide job requirements, pay ranges, a hiring schedule, and a training plan. Identify positions likely to require outside recruitment. If training is proposed, who funds it, when does it begin, and how does completion connect to an opening? A practical path into skilled work would be welcome, including for adults changing careers.

Local purchasing deserves the same specificity. Businesses need to know what contracts may be available and how to bid. A small supplier might need insurance, certifications, equipment, or working capital before taking on a large customer. Early communication could make a real difference. A promise to "use local businesses when possible" becomes more useful when accompanied by a purchasing calendar, clear requirements, and reporting on where the money was spent.

Tax revenue is a separate calculation. We need to know which assets would be taxable, how they would be valued over time, which jurisdictions receive each tax, and which exemptions or negotiated arrangements might apply. The New Mexico Economic Development Department describes industrial revenue bonds (<https://edd.newmexico.gov/press-releases/new-mexico-clears-path-for-more-clean-energy-financing/>) as a financing tool that can provide tax benefits to private projects. That is a reason to examine the actual proposal closely, not to assume Site Layer 1 has received any particular incentive.

Show what each government reasonably expects without the project, what changes under the proposed agreement, and what would change under other feasible terms. Ordinary tax treatment is a useful comparison, but it does not prove the same investment would occur without an incentive. Ask what evidence shows that a concession affects the decision to build. If payments in lieu of taxes are proposed, disclose their amount, timing, recipients, and adjustment provisions.

For each year, calculate additional tax receipts and contractual payments after incentives, minus additional public expenses. Do not subtract the same incentive twice. Show possible future liabilities separately. Account for effects on residents, including jobs and resource use; a positive county balance does not settle every concern.

Public expenses include roads, inspections, emergency response, administration, and publicly supported infrastructure. Identify who owns and maintains improvements and what value they retain if the project is delayed or closes. A road serving residents and several employers may have lasting value; a connection serving one unfinished facility may not.

Ask what other realistic uses of public money, infrastructure capacity, or staff time become harder once these commitments are made. Compare credible alternatives, including the possibility that no other large employer is ready to build. This is a question about making good use of limited resources, not assuming a better project is waiting.

Utility commitments need similar attention. AEP Ohio's data-center service process (<https://www.aepohio.com/company/about/rates/data-center-tariff/>) includes obligations to reimburse infrastructure

buildout costs if a customer cancels or substantially delays before energization. Those Ohio terms do not govern this New Mexico proposal. They illustrate a reasonable question for any expensive service arrangement: if infrastructure is built for this customer and the expected demand fails to appear, whose bill carries the cost?

Construction workers could bring customers to lodging operators and restaurants while also competing for limited rentals. Ask where workers would stay and what water, sanitation, transportation, and emergency services their accommodation requires. These are effects to investigate; no specific local housing impact has been established.

County boundaries complicate the picture. A facility in Grant County could draw workers, suppliers, roads, or services from neighboring counties. A benefit received by one government does not automatically reimburse another government's expenses. Silver City should also avoid treating every dollar attributed to Grant County as town revenue. A regional accounting would show who gains, who pays, and whether cooperative agreements are needed.

If incentives are offered, performance should be documented. Virginia's data-center tax-exemption program (<https://www.vedp.org/incentive/data-center-retail-sales-use-tax-exemption>) uses investment, employment, reporting, verification, and repayment requirements. Its specific thresholds belong to Virginia. The useful principle is that a public benefit should have defined conditions, records that demonstrate performance, and a remedy when the agreed result is not delivered. Local officials would need to identify suitable, lawful terms for any agreement here.

Include a conservative scenario: slower construction, fewer occupied buildings, declining equipment values, or a departing customer. Separate direct employment from any model's estimates of jobs supported elsewhere. Wages, purchasing, private investment, and taxes are different measures; adding them into one benefit total can count the same money repeatedly. Essential public services should not depend on every optimistic assumption coming true.

A worthwhile proposal could deliver dependable revenue, useful jobs, and business opportunities while covering its public costs. Following the money year by year would help us see whether this proposal can deliver that result.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should provide staffing, payroll, investment, and construction assumptions. The county's financial staff, affected towns and counties, and service providers should reconcile them with a year-by-year public-cost calculation. Publish the proposed agreements, the assumptions behind the numbers, and a conservative scenario, with independent verification of any benefits tied to incentives.

Questions worth asking

- How many ongoing jobs are expected, who employs those workers, and what would they earn?
- What training and purchasing commitments would create realistic opportunities for local people and businesses?
- What would each affected government receive after incentives and additional public costs?
- Who pays if promised construction, utility demand, or occupancy does not materialize?
- How would jobs, investment, payments, and other commitments be verified and enforced over time?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-living-near-it-be-like>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-can-other-communities-teach-us>)

10. What Can Other Communities Teach Us?

Other communities can show us what a water agreement looks like when it becomes pipes and treatment equipment, what jobs remain after construction, and what officials wish they had settled earlier. The strongest comparisons connect a specific local question to documented experience.

A facility with occasional backup generators tells us little about continuously operating engines. A proposed campus has no operating history. A successful project can suggest what to negotiate here, but its results still depend on its design, location, and agreements. These examples offer different pieces of the picture:

Example • Status and relevant lesson • Limit of the comparison

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Meta, Los Lunas • Operating New Mexico campus; jobs and utility commitments • Company-reported benefits; different operator and design

Quincy, Washington • Operating reuse utility; treatment and financing • Local supplies and infrastructure differ

Wärtsilä Ohio project • Announced engine order; comparable primary-power equipment • Commercial operation anticipated in 2028

Loudoun County, Virginia • Operating facilities; noise measurement and complaints • Different neighbors, land-use rules, and equipment

AEP Ohio tariff • Utility service rules; protection against unused capacity • Applies in its Ohio service territory

There is even another Grant County discussing a data center: Grant County, Arkansas. Its official resolution listing (<https://grantcountyar.com/circuit-county-clerk/resolutions/>) includes a preliminary tax-arrangement resolution for a Sheridan data center. That is a separate proposal. Before carrying a Facebook claim into our local discussion, check the state, applicant, location, and date. Information about the Arkansas project can suggest questions, but it cannot establish who owns Site Layer 1 or what its developers have promised in New Mexico.

In the company fact sheet reviewed September 7, 2026, Meta reports 400+ operational jobs supported at Los Lunas and \$6.2 million-plus in direct funding to Valencia County-area schools and nonprofits. Treat that funding total as reported support to date, not an annual payment or guaranteed recurring contribution. Meta also says it arranged to cover its water and wastewater service costs. These are the company's figures and commitments (<https://datacenters.atmeta.com/asset/los-lunas/>), rather than an independent accounting of every local benefit and expense.

Ask what “jobs supported” includes, which grants recur, and what agreement covers utility costs. Public officials can help explain how they check the figures. An identified operating company and an established campus make Los Lunas useful to investigate; Site Layer 1 still needs its own staffing, funding, and service commitments.

In Quincy, Microsoft and the city created a utility that treats cooling water and returns it for reuse. EPA reports operation since 2021, a cost of about \$31 million, and an estimated offset of 138 million gallons of annual potable-groundwater demand through reuse. It also describes an agreement under which Microsoft finances construction and operation while the city owns and operates the utility. See EPA's account of the Quincy project (<https://www.epa.gov/waterreuse/water-reuse-case-study-quincy-washington>).

The system still needs replacement water for evaporation and other losses, mainly from an irrigation canal, and a disposal plan for removed salts. EPA describes a hot, dry period in 2021 when canal pumps were shut off and the system switched to groundwater. That makes the backup-water question especially relevant here: if the preferred supply fails, what source takes its place, and what limits still apply? A conservation claim needs both an ordinary operating plan and a plan for difficult conditions.

For a closer comparison to the proposed gas engines, there is an Ohio development announced by Wärtsilä on April 16, 2026. The manufacturer reported an order for 40 engines from its 34SG family, providing 412 megawatts of primary power for a data center. It described off-grid operation and anticipated commercial operation in early 2028. Its project

announcement (<https://www.wartsila.com/media/news/16-04-2026-wartsila-s-34sg-engine-makes-its-data-center-debut-with-new-412-mw-u-s-project-3740972>) does not identify the customer.

Site Layer 1's notice proposes the same engine family, making the Ohio design relevant. No ownership connection is established by that similarity. To obtain actual operating experience, ask the manufacturer for references using comparable engines, controls, cooling, and operating schedules, including plants serving other industries. Speak with both the operator and the responsible public agencies.

Loudoun County, Virginia, provides experience with neighbors and noise. Its official guidance describes persistent tonal and low-frequency noise concerns and explains that its zoning ordinance requires assessments before and after construction. The county also explains that its existing rules do not specifically address every aspect of tonal and low-frequency sound. Its public explanation of noise concerns and regulation (<https://www.loudoun.gov/6405/Noise-Air-Quality-Concerns>) shows that having an ordinance and having the right measurement approach are separate questions.

That experience suggests questions to settle before equipment is placed. How will full operation sound at nearby homes? Who checks the prediction afterward? What happens if sound meets one numerical limit but the measurement misses a persistent tone? Establishing suitable measurements and a complaint process early makes corrections easier.

Ohio offers a separate lesson about financial protection for electricity infrastructure. AEP Ohio's data-center tariff includes a defined contract term, financial-security requirements, and minimum billing-demand provisions. The often-discussed 85 percent figure is part of a capacity-billing formula; it is not a requirement to consume 85 percent of some promised electricity volume. The utility's explanation of its tariff (<https://www.aepohio.com/company/about/rates/data-center-tariff/>) provides the actual terms. This policy example should not be confused with the separately announced Wärtsilä project.

The transferable question is who pays for reserved capacity that goes unused. Ask it about any grid connection, gas supply, water system, or public improvement. The answer depends on the actual service arrangement, especially when onsite generation is proposed.

As the proposal becomes more detailed, the comparisons should become more specific. Ask host communities what they would negotiate differently today, and ask operators what helped them keep their commitments. Useful lessons can come from a successful agreement, an expensive correction, or a problem that remains unresolved.

What a useful answer would include

The developer should supply comparable operating references and explain the relevant differences. Local officials and residents should obtain permit records, measured resource use, public financial agreements, and conversations with host communities. Record which results were independently checked, which were company reports, and which remain projections. Publish the questions and answers together.

Questions worth asking

- Which operating facilities are comparable in power generation, cooling, size, climate, and distance from neighbors?
- Can we speak with their operators, public officials, utility providers, and nearby residents?
- Which claimed results are measured, which are company reports, and which remain projections?
- What agreements worked well, and what would those communities negotiate differently today?
- Which lessons fit this location, and what differences prevent a direct comparison?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-grant-county-gain-and-what-would-it-cost>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/who-decides-and-what-should-be-put-in-writing>)

11. Who Decides, and What Should Be Put in Writing?

A resident worried about a well, a neighbor concerned about noise, and a taxpayer asking about incentives may need answers from different offices. There may be no single application, meeting, or vote that decides every part of Site Layer 1. Mistaking one approval for permission to do everything makes the process harder to follow.

County leaders and state agencies could make a useful early contribution by explaining, in one place, who decides what, when decisions happen, and how residents can participate.

Grant County says it does not issue building permits; it directs applicants to the state Construction Industries Division. It also says the floodplain development permit application process must be completed before CID issues a building permit. Those are distinct responsibilities. Grant County's building-permit guidance (<https://www.grantcountynm.gov/204/Building-Permits>) provides the starting point.

The New Mexico Environment Department's Air Quality Bureau handles applicable air permits and notices. An air review addresses that program's requirements, including emissions; it does not establish how many residents will get jobs or whether a tax agreement is worthwhile. NMED's air-permitting overview (<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/permitting-section-home-page/>) explains its role. Ask the agency to identify the applicable permit programs and classification. A label such as "minor source" has a program-specific meaning; it does not by itself describe the importance of every community impact.

Water involves another set of questions. The Office of the State Engineer administers water rights, as NMED's water overview (<https://www.env.nm.gov/water/>) explains. Residents should identify the actual application and follow its instructions for participating; discussing water on social media does not substitute for filing a timely response through the appropriate process. The state's groundwater rules (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title19/19.027.0001.html>) cover applications, notices, and protests.

Water quality is a separate responsibility. NMED's Ground Water Quality Bureau issues applicable discharge permits for activities that could contaminate groundwater, including certain industrial and power-generating facilities. Whether this proposal needs a particular discharge permit depends on its actual design and waste streams. NMED's discharge-permitting information (<https://www.env.nm.gov/gwqb/permits/>) explains that program.

Ask each agency to identify its authority in writing, including issues another office must handle. County officials should do the same for local ordinances, roads, emergency services, land-related approvals, and financial agreements. A concern needs an identified decision-maker and a lawful way to address it. County authority should be established rather than assumed.

A public calendar would help more than another general assurance.

For each required decision, the calendar should show the application number, responsible office, current status, documents available, comment deadline, and next expected action. It should identify which parts remain tentative. A planned submission date is different from a received application, and a received application is different from an approval.

Link the calendar to actual notices, including those on NMED's public-notices page (<https://www.env.nm.gov/public-notices/>). Water applications have their own notices. Check each proceeding's deadlines and participation instructions; they are not interchangeable.

A useful public comment can be plain and specific: identify the application, describe the concern, explain the evidence or missing information, and request an answer within that agency's authority. Someone who knows a nearby well, road, or drainage channel may contribute information that a distant reviewer would otherwise miss. People should not need technical vocabulary to describe what they know.

The promises need addresses, signatures, and measurements.

A promise of little water use becomes something residents can check when it identifies a maximum volume, source, meter, reporting schedule, and action required as the limit is approached or exceeded.

The same approach applies to road repairs, local hiring commitments, emergency-response contributions, and noise. For every substantial promise, ask: who owes the obligation, who can enforce it, what document contains it, and what

happens if it is broken? The appropriate instrument might be a permit condition or a contract, where legally available. Counsel should explain the authority and limits of each proposed mechanism before officials rely on it.

Public benefits deserve that precision too. If incentives are proposed, the agreement should identify which verified results earn the benefit, when performance is reviewed, and what happens when the promised result is not delivered. A project representative's intention is useful information, but it should not be entered in a public budget as guaranteed revenue.

New Mexico's Inspection of Public Records Act provides access to government records, subject to applicable exceptions. It does not require officials to create an answer to a research question or automatically open a private company's books. The New Mexico Department of Justice's IPRA guidance (<https://nmdoj.gov/wp-content/uploads/NMDOJ-IPRA-Guide-Ninth-Edition-25.03.21.pdf>) explains the framework; DFA also provides guidance (<https://platform.dfa.nm.gov/ipra.html>). Ask for identifiable existing records and send questions requesting explanations separately.

For example, a resident could request: "Please provide existing Site Layer 1 applications, executed agreements, proposed incentive agreements, and county correspondence concerning Site Layer 1, dated January 1 through September 7, 2026. Electronic copies are preferred." This is example wording, not a submitted request. Include your name, address, and telephone number as the guidance directs, and use dates appropriate to the records sought.

Publish core documents voluntarily with a readable explanation. If legally protected business or security information is withheld, identify the applicable basis and release what can lawfully be released.

Accountability also needs people and a budget.

An agreement should explain who checks reports, pays for independent measurements, investigates complaints, and follows a problem through to correction. A reporting portal accomplishes little if nobody is assigned to review it. A complaint number is more useful when the resident can learn who received it, what happened next, and how the matter was resolved.

The developer should have a fair opportunity to answer questions and correct mistaken claims. Residents should be able to challenge incomplete answers. Clear responsibilities help the company understand what it must deliver and the public understand what it can reasonably expect. That clarity would weigh heavily in my judgment of the project.

What a useful answer would include

County staff and the relevant agencies should provide a dated approval register with application numbers, status, deadlines, and responsible contacts. Each substantial commitment should point to its governing document, enforcement authority, verification method, and remedy. Identify missing decisions openly and update the register when the design or ownership changes.

Questions worth asking

- Will the county and relevant agencies publish one dated list of approvals, responsibilities, documents, and participation deadlines?
- Which concerns fall within each agency's authority, and who handles the remaining concerns?
- Which developer promises will become enforceable obligations, and through what lawful instrument?
- Who will fund and perform verification, investigate complaints, and report corrective action?
- How will residents obtain records and track material changes after the first approval?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-can-other-communities-teach-us>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-happens-five-ten-or-twenty-years-from-now>)

12. What Happens Five, Ten, or Twenty Years From Now?

Future residents and leaders will inherit these agreements when computers are replaced, a customer leaves, or the property is sold. The years after opening day belong in the discussion now.

A successful facility could remain a useful employer and taxpayer for decades. These planning questions anticipate change without predicting trouble for Site Layer 1.

The computers and the property have different futures.

A server can be replaced while its building remains useful. Older equipment can be repaired, reassigned, or sold. Google describes refurbishing, reusing, and recycling equipment (<https://sustainability.google/stories/circular-economy/>), illustrating that technology replacement need not mean abandoning a facility.

Ask the designer and eventual operator whether the facility can accommodate new equipment while respecting its environmental and infrastructure commitments. Could a different cooling system fit? Would more electrical equipment require more land? Could efficiency improve within the agreed water and emissions limits? A flexible design could make continued operation easier.

Identify who pays for upgrades and any public support already contemplated. The company may seek further assistance later; clear agreements let future officials distinguish existing obligations from new requests.

Expansion deserves particular clarity. Adding buildings or engines may trigger additional reviews depending on the change and the applicable rules. NMED directs companies proposing new or modified emitting facilities to determine their air-permitting obligations. Its permitting guidance (<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/permitting-section-home-page/>) provides that starting point. Residents should request a written explanation of what changes would require further review rather than assume the first approval covers unlimited growth.

A sale can be healthy, but responsibility must remain clear.

A developer may sell a project to an experienced operator. A new owner could bring more capital or a stronger customer base. The public interest is in knowing who takes over the obligations and whether the financial backing remains adequate after the transaction.

Counsel should address transfers of the land, operating company, permits, and contracts, which need not occur together. Agreements should specify any required notices, consents, and replacement guarantees within the authority available. Residents should still know whom to contact and who pays for a required repair after a company name changes.

Business trouble also has more than one outcome. Chapter 11 can allow a company to keep operating while it reorganizes its finances. Bankruptcy does not automatically mean an abandoned site. The U.S. Courts' Chapter 11 explanation (<https://www.uscourts.gov/court-programs/bankruptcy/bankruptcy-basics/chapter-11-bankruptcy-basics>) describes that process. Which particular obligations or financial protections would remain effective requires careful attention to the documents and applicable law.

Financial protection is easiest to address while the business is healthy. Examine delayed construction, partial occupancy, a lost customer, an orderly sale, and permanent closure separately. Each creates different costs; a document written only for complete abandonment may leave important gaps.

Cleanup should have a plan and a credible source of money.

The plan should identify what would be removed, what could safely remain, how wells and pipelines would be handled, and what condition the land must reach. It should distinguish an idle but maintained facility from an abandoned one. The public also needs to know who can require action and what evidence establishes that the work is complete.

There are established financial tools worth discussing with counsel, including funded trusts, surety bonds, and letters of credit. EPA explains these mechanisms in its rules for hazardous-waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities. Those rules are not proof that this data center would be subject to them; they illustrate how cleanup funding can be tied to an obligation. EPA's financial-assurance overview (<https://www.epa.gov/hwpermitting/financial-assurance-requirements-hazardous-waste-treatment-storage-and-disposal>) explains the mechanisms.

For Site Layer 1, determine which protections are legally available and appropriate, with amounts based on credible outside estimates. Review them for inflation, expansion, and changes in the guarantor's finances. Expected scrap value is uncertain and should not be treated as money already set aside.

Then ask how the money becomes available: who can draw on it, what event permits that action, what proof is required, and how soon payment must occur. What happens if the guarantee expires or its provider becomes financially weak? General liability insurance does not automatically fund routine closure. Read the actual coverage and exclusions, and keep the cleanup obligation matched to a source of money that covers it.

Equipment disposal deserves attention during normal operations too. EPA recommends certified electronics recyclers for businesses managing unwanted equipment. Its recycler guidance (<https://www.epa.gov/electronics-batteries-management/certified-electronics-recyclers>) describes programs that assess environmental, worker-safety, and security practices. Residents can ask for a documented equipment-management plan without needing access to customers' private data.

Planning for success means keeping the benefits useful.

If the facility operates for decades, compare actual revenue, employment, service costs, and resource use with the original expectations. Check training arrangements with the employer and education providers. Keep a lower-revenue scenario in public budgets so essential services can continue when receipts disappoint.

Long-term planning should also ask what could be reused if computing leaves. Buildings, power equipment, and connections may have value, but a suitable next user would need to be identified. Remoteness, conversion costs, and available services could affect that answer. Reuse is an option to examine, not a guaranteed rescue plan.

A credible proposal should explain how the company intends to succeed and protect the community through change.

What a useful answer would include

The owner and operator should supply upgrade, transfer, extended-idle, and closure plans. Counsel should identify the obligations that survive each change and the documents supporting them. An independent estimate should support cleanup funding, with clear rules for access, renewal, and adjustment. Future officials need a record they can maintain.

Questions worth asking

- How can equipment be upgraded while remaining within the project's approved resource and environmental limits?
- Which obligations and financial protections continue through a sale, refinancing, or reorganization?
- What happens during a construction delay, partial shutdown, or extended vacancy?
- Who will fund closure, how will the amount be updated, and who can obtain the funds when needed?
- How will future leaders compare actual benefits and costs with the promises made at the beginning?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

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13. What Would Make This a Good Deal for Grant County?

I'm still undecided about Site Layer 1, but the decision has become clearer. A good proposal would bring useful work and dependable public revenue while demonstrating that its resource needs can be met and its responsibilities will be funded. A weak proposal would ask the community to commit first and discover the consequences later.

America's strength in AI and the future of our communities both matter to me. What evidence and terms would make this development serve both interests?

A favorable outcome deserves a fair hearing.

Imagine a proposal backed by credible financing and an experienced operator. Its cooling design keeps water demand within a demonstrated supply. Independent review supports its predictions about nearby wells and living conditions. Its owners cover the public costs they create, and the agreements remain effective through a sale. Local workers can see real openings, required qualifications, and a practical route into the jobs. Public revenue arrives on a schedule that local budgets can use.

These are conditions to investigate, not findings about Site Layer 1. Durable jobs and dependable revenue could matter even without transforming the county. The benefits would need to justify the commitments being requested, with evidence showing that the opportunity is real.

The adverse case deserves the same honesty. A project could leave nearby users exposed to an inadequately understood water risk, require public spending that depends on optimistic occupancy assumptions, or place obligations on a company without adequate backing. Those would be concrete reasons for concern. They should be demonstrated through the design, agreements, and financial analysis, rather than assumed from the size of the buildings or the location of the investors.

Some conditions come before bargaining over benefits.

For my support, a credible resource plan and protection against uncovered public costs would be basic requirements. Water needs must fit an identified, lawful supply, with an adequate assessment of effects on existing users. Air, sound, drainage, and emergency planning must address the actual site and proposed operation. Responsibility needs to remain with an identifiable organization that can pay for what it owes.

The state's groundwater rules (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title19/19.027.0001.html>) describe application and approval requirements. The proposal still needs evidence tied to its actual supply. A donation or a larger jobs estimate would not answer a serious unresolved water problem for me. Nor would an attractive tax estimate make an unfunded public obligation acceptable.

Other terms can allow negotiation. Training arrangements, the timing of local purchasing opportunities, the structure of public payments, and useful shared improvements might take several workable forms. The point is to compare their real value and reliability. A smaller promise that can be delivered may serve us better than an ambitious announcement without a responsible party or a budget.

There are several reasonable positions the evidence could support.

Evidence • My response

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Credible benefits accompany an adequate resource plan and funded, enforceable responsibilities. • I could support proceeding on those documented terms.

A specific design or contract change could resolve a material concern. • I could support a revised proposal after the change is evaluated.

Essential information is missing before a proposed discretionary public commitment. • I would favor deferring that commitment until the relevant question is answered.

Evidence shows an unacceptable harm or public obligation that the proposal cannot resolve. • I would oppose the proposal in that form.

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New evidence can resolve a concern or expose a weak assurance. Supporting a revised proposal acknowledges an improvement; opposing the current terms does not mean opposing every possible data center.

My judgment is also different from a permitting agency's legal task. Agencies must apply the laws governing their decisions. County officials have their own powers and limits. A request to defer an incentive or other discretionary commitment does not give the county authority to halt every permit process. Each concern belongs with the office or agreement that can actually address it.

Put the important answers before the commitments they affect.

For each proposed public decision, leaders should identify the information needed to make it responsibly and set a practical schedule for receiving and reviewing that information. If an answer arrives too late for meaningful review, the public should understand what options remain. This is especially important when money, infrastructure, or long-term obligations would be difficult to recover or change.

A decision does not require certainty about every future server or customer. It requires enough evidence about the consequences that matter, together with a way to respond when conditions change. Monitoring can help verify a sound plan after opening. It should not be used as the entire answer to a major question that can reasonably be examined beforehand.

The nearest residents also need room to explain what countywide figures leave out. A benefit to Silver City does not automatically settle a concern beside the site. Residents may disagree about priorities, but they deserve to see how their concerns were considered and who remains responsible for the response.

What a useful answer would include

A public list of unresolved issues could turn the discussion into work people can follow. Each entry should name the question, the person or agency responsible for answering it, the supporting evidence, its current status, and the decision it affects. Written answers and material changes should be dated. Residents could then distinguish an answered question from a promise to investigate, and leaders could explain which evidence supported each commitment.

That is how I hope to reach a position: by looking at the opportunity fairly, insisting on clear responsibilities, and being willing to change my mind. Grant County deserves answers solid enough for people to understand what they are being asked to accept.

Questions worth asking

- What evidence would support proceeding, revising the proposal, deferring a particular commitment, or opposing the current plan?
- Which resource and public-cost protections must be established before the relevant decision, and which benefits can be negotiated?
- What information remains missing, who will provide it, and will people have time to examine it before commitments are made?
- How have the nearest residents and other affected communities influenced the design and proposed agreements?
- Who will verify the commitments and provide the money needed to enforce them throughout the project's life?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-happens-five-ten-or-twenty-years-from-now>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/archaeology-and-cultural-heritage>)

14. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage: What Should We Check Before Construction?

We have spent a lot of time asking what the proposed data center might bring to southern Grant County. There is another question worth asking: what is already there that construction could disturb?

An open stretch of desert can hold traces of homes, travel, work, and burial places that are difficult to recognize from a road. Before building pads are graded and utility trenches are dug, I would like to know whether qualified people have examined the land and whether the communities connected to its history have been heard.

That question does not assume an important archaeological site lies beneath this proposal. It asks for evidence before a decision becomes difficult to reverse.

This region has a human history

A Forest Service archaeological review published in 2006 discusses evidence of past settlement in the Animas and Playas valleys. It provides regional background, including earlier investigations and their limitations. It is not a survey of the proposed data-center property, and its old survey-coverage figures should not be treated as current. Forest Service regional review (<https://research.fs.usda.gov/treearch/24992>).

More recent history matters too. New Mexico's official historic-marker account describes Hachita's mining origins around 1875 and the later movement of settlement toward the railroad. Historic roads, buildings, and working landscapes can deserve examination alongside much older remains. The marker does not establish that this project overlaps any of them. Hachita entry, PDF page 15 (https://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/assets/files/markers/2017%20-%20Historic%20Markers%20Database_web.pdf#page=15).

Indigenous connections also continue through living communities. The Fort Sill Apache Tribe identifies southwestern New Mexico as part of its ancestral homeland. That is one reason to involve the appropriate tribal governments early. It does not establish that this particular parcel is sacred, identify every tribe with relevant knowledge, or tell us any tribe's position on the development. Fort Sill Apache Tribe (<https://fortsillapache-nsn.gov/about/>).

What do we know about this particular site?

The supplied air-quality notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) identifies a proposed location and generating equipment. It does not answer the archaeological questions raised here.

I have not located a public archaeological survey or preservation determination for this proposal in the sources checked. That does not mean none exists. New Mexico's archaeological records system contains information available to qualified users, with restrictions intended to protect sensitive records. A public web search cannot replace that professional records review. New Mexico Archaeological Records Management Section (<https://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/arms.html>).

The useful request is specific: what review has been completed, what land did it cover, who performed it, and what findings can be shared publicly? The answer should include the report date and reviewing agency's response, where an agency review is required. An old survey may remain useful, but someone needs to explain whether it covers today's design and meets the applicable standards.

What would a useful review involve?

A qualified archaeologist would start with previous records and the proposed construction plans. Fieldwork may include systematically walking the affected ground, documenting visible evidence, and assessing whether buried deposits need further investigation. New Mexico has professional survey standards covering archaeological sites, historic structures, and other cultural properties. The methods and permits must fit the work and the land involved. New Mexico survey standards (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title04/04.010.0015.html>).

The plans should show more than the computer buildings. Residents should ask about the generating plant, access roads, gas and fiber connections, water facilities, drainage work, equipment staging, and any areas used to obtain or dispose of

construction material. Those features are questions about the eventual design, not a claim that every one is already proposed.

Under federal preservation review, the area examined for possible effects can extend beyond a property boundary and below the ground. It can also include changes to a historic property's setting where those changes affect what makes the place significant. The responsible agency determines the scope; federal guidance does not require an identical survey of every acre on every project. ACHP guidance on identifying historic properties (https://www.achp.gov/Section_106_Archaeology_Guidance/Questions%20and%20Answers/Determining_which_archaeological_sites_are_significant_identification).

The community should ask which areas were examined, which were not, and why. A report should make those limits understandable.

Does the law require a survey?

There is no single answer for every data center. The starting questions are who owns the affected land and which government approvals or funds are involved.

Federal involvement: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider effects on historic properties from qualifying projects they fund, permit, approve, or undertake. It includes properties eligible for the National Register, even if they have not been formally listed. A state-issued air permit alone does not establish that this federal process applies. ACHP introduction (<https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/introduction-section-106>); identifying historic properties (<https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/identifying-historic-properties>).

Connections outside the campus can matter. BLM rights-of-way cover uses such as roads, pipelines, power lines, and fiber lines on public land. If this project needs a qualifying federal approval for a connection, that could bring federal preservation review into the picture. A nearby pipeline does not prove a new federal right-of-way is needed. BLM rights-of-way (<https://www.blm.gov/programs/lands-and-realty/rights-way>).

State involvement: New Mexico state trust land has specific cultural-review and survey requirements before new surface disturbance, subject to exceptions. Other state preservation requirements can depend on public ownership, spending, and the historic properties involved. We should ask the reviewing agencies to identify the applicable requirements for every affected area. State Land Office rule (<https://www.nmstatelands.org/divisions/cultural-resources-office/culturalproperties/>); state consultation checklist (<https://www.nmhistoricpreservation.org/assets/files/section106/State%20Consultation%20Checklist.pdf>).

Private land: Private ownership does not automatically trigger the same federal process. It also does not remove every protection. New Mexico has separate provisions for archaeological work on private land and for unmarked human burials. The developer should obtain a clear explanation of the requirements for its actual plans. Private-land cultural-property rules (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title04/04.010.0014.html>); unmarked-burial rules (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title04/04.010.0011.html>).

We have a local example of why funding matters. A 2023 Fort Bayard cleanup memorandum identifies EPA grant funding as the reason EPA was the lead federal agency for Section 106 review. Its discussion identifies the affected area and considers historic properties and effects. That illustrates what a documented review can contain; it does not establish the same requirements for this data center. Fort Bayard memorandum, first page (<https://service.web.env.nm.gov/urls/ZEDDkMod>).

Federal procedures are also under review. ACHP announced a proposed rulemaking in July 2026. A proposal is not an effective replacement rule. The responsible agency should identify the rules and any special procedures that actually apply when this project is reviewed. ACHP announcement (<https://www.achp.gov/news/achp-votes-move-forward-notice-proposed-rulemaking>); current federal regulations (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-VIII/part-800>).

Tribal consultation is part of the substance

An archaeologist's report and a tribal government's knowledge serve different purposes. A place may have meaning through religious practice, oral history, or relationships with the surrounding landscape. That meaning may not be obvious from objects visible on the ground.

Where Section 106 applies, the federal agency has government-to-government consultation responsibilities. A general public meeting or an unanswered developer email does not, by itself, fulfill those responsibilities. Relevant tribes may now be based outside New Mexico. Consultation should begin while the design can still change. ACHP guidance on archaeological consultation

(https://www.achp.gov/Section_106_Archaeology_Guidance/Questions%20and%20Answers/Section%20106%20consultation%20about%20archaeology).

I would ask who was consulted through the proper channels and how their input affected the plans. I would not ask a tribe to publish sensitive knowledge to prove that its concerns deserve attention.

What happens if something important is found?

Finding a cultural resource does not automatically settle whether a project can proceed. Depending on its significance and the applicable review, options may include moving a road, changing a building location, protecting an area, monitoring specified work, or conducting authorized archaeological investigation.

Preserving a site in place can retain information and meaning that excavation cannot fully preserve. Where excavation is appropriate, the work also needs a plan for analysis, reports, and the long-term care of recovered materials. Archaeology involves more than removing objects before construction resumes. ACHP guidance on treatment and preservation (<https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/recommended-approach-consultation-recovery-significant>).

Human remains require particular care. New Mexico's rule for unmarked burials on state and private land requires stopping activities that could disturb the discovery and notifying local law enforcement. Federal and tribal lands have different discovery procedures. Workers need the correct written plan for their location. New Mexico burial rule (<https://www.srca.nm.gov/parts/title04/04.010.0011.html>); National Park Service discovery guidance (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/discovery-and-excavation.htm>).

Before work begins, contracts should identify who can stop activity near a discovery, who must be contacted, how the area will be protected, and who can authorize work to resume. I would also ask the developer to budget for necessary review, protection, monitoring, and unexpected discoveries. Those costs and responsibilities should be addressed while there is still time to plan.

What about fossils and other land reviews?

Fossils involve paleontology, the study of past life, while archaeology concerns human history. BLM uses the geology's potential to contain important fossils to help decide whether specialist review is needed. That does not establish that fossils are present at this site. It gives us another sensible question: has the geology been screened, and is a separate fossil assessment warranted? BLM paleontology management (<https://www.blm.gov/programs/paleontology/paleontology-management>).

Likewise, an archaeological survey does not answer the separate questions about groundwater, drainage, wildlife, or whether the soil can support a building. Each review should have a clear purpose and should inform the same construction plan.

What should the public receive?

I would like a readable summary showing the area reviewed, the work performed, its limitations, the responsible agencies, and any required protections. Where applicable, it should explain how consultation informed the decision and what remains unfinished.

Detailed locations of vulnerable sites, burial places, and confidential tribal information may need protection. Federal preservation rules allow certain sensitive information to be withheld. A useful public explanation can describe the decision and safeguards while respecting those limits. Federal confidentiality provisions, Section 800.11(c)

(<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-VIII/part-800>).

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I am still undecided about the proposed data center. A careful cultural-resource review would help me judge the proposal, just as clear water, power, and financial information would. Our interest in building a useful future should include care for the history we leave to our grandchildren.

Questions worth asking

- What archaeological and historical review has been completed, and does it cover the current campus and all associated construction areas?
- Who verified land ownership and identified the federal, state, or other review requirements and responsible agencies?
- Which tribal governments have been consulted through appropriate channels, and how has their input informed the plans?
- What protections, discovery procedures, funding, and authority to stop or resume work will be established before construction?
- What public summary and agency findings will residents receive, with sensitive locations and cultural information protected?

Sources and references

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Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-make-this-a-good-deal-for-grant-county>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/who-pays-for-the-power>)

15. Who Pays for the Power?

If Site Layer 1 builds the natural-gas plant described in its public notice, a question remains: which parts of the project would connect to the electric grid, and who would pay for each connection and upgrade? An onsite plant does not by itself establish that neighbors would receive electricity or that no public utility costs would arise. The answer belongs in engineering studies and signed agreements.

The notice describes 32 engines with a combined nominal rating of about 300.8 megawatts. That is a generating-equipment rating, not a confirmed computer load, a guarantee of dependable output in summer heat, or proof of a grid connection. The original power article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/a-data-center-with-its-own-power-plant>) explains those distinctions and links the applicant's notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>).

There are several possible arrangements: an isolated plant, a grid-connected plant, a utility supply for startup or backup, or some combination. Each implies different infrastructure and costs. The developer should identify the proposed arrangement, the entity that owns each line or substation, the party paying construction and maintenance costs, and what happens if the project expands or closes.

Experience elsewhere warns against a simple claim that large customers either always subsidize households or always pay their own way. Virginia's legislative audit (<https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2024-data-centers-in-virginia.asp>) found that current rates there allocated current costs appropriately, while forecasting higher system costs as new demand requires generation and transmission. Virginia and New Jersey (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/2026/approved/20260707a.shtml>) have since adopted separate approaches to large data-center rates. Those states' rules do not govern Grant County; they show the questions a regulator can ask.

For an onsite gas plant, electricity is only one part of the bill. Pipeline capacity, compression, fuel delivery, plant cooling, emissions controls, emergency services, and any road or water improvements all need owners and funding. A private agreement should not quietly leave a county with a bill if the operator changes plans. Nor should a claim of community backup power count as a benefit without an electrical design and agreement that can deliver it.

What a useful answer would include

A public diagram of the proposed power arrangement at a level that does not reveal security-sensitive details; utility and gas-provider confirmations; a cost allocation for new infrastructure; and financial security for obligations that could remain after a sale or cancellation.

Questions worth asking

- Will Site Layer 1 connect to the electric grid, and for what purpose?
- What are its expected and maximum electricity and gas demands at each development phase?
- Which upgrades are needed, who owns them, and who pays if the project stops short?
- Is any electricity or emergency service actually committed to nearby communities?
- Which regulator or contract can enforce the answers?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/how-much-water-would-the-whole-site-use>)

16. How Much Water Would the Whole Site Use?

The earlier water article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/water-in-the-desert-where-would-it-come-from>) asked where Site Layer 1 would get water. A second question is just as important: how much would the entire site need during its hottest, driest, busiest period? A yearly average may conceal the moment when wells and other users face the greatest pressure.

The applicant's published notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) describes generating engines, but does not provide the complete water balance for computing, generation, construction, and ordinary building uses. At the October 8 county meeting, Granite Renewables CEO Ian Marcus projected less than 25 acre-feet annually (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>) for a closed-loop cooling design. The Albuquerque Journal reported (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>) that he had no water plan yet. The projection needs a stated scope, engineering basis, source, and seasonal figures before it can serve as a whole-site budget.

Cooling language can be misleading. Water may recirculate in a closed loop at the chips while a separate cooling tower evaporates replacement water to reject heat. DOE's explanation (<https://www.energy.gov/cmei/femp/cooling-water-efficiency-opportunities-federal-data-centers>) traces those loops. Air-cooled or dry systems can reduce direct water use, but may require more electricity under hot conditions; DOE advises (<https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/articles/guideline-water-and-energy-considerations-during-federal-data-center>) evaluating the combined water and energy effect rather than one number alone.

Grant County needs separate figures for withdrawal, consumption, and discharge. It also needs the source wells or suppliers, legal rights, groundwater analysis, and a plan for any users affected if predicted drawdown proves wrong. A design using treated or reclaimed water would still need a named supply, treatment plan, and dependable pipeline. No such choice is confirmed for this project in the reviewed notice.

I would want the same comparison for opening day and full buildout: normal year, extreme heat, prolonged drought, and a failure of the preferred cooling equipment. The power plant's cooling and treatment water belong in the total. So do fire protection, maintenance refills, and wastewater. An independently reviewed model should account for other pumping in the relevant basin.

What a useful answer would include

A seasonal whole-site water balance, peak-day demand, identified rights and wells, cumulative groundwater study, baseline monitoring, and funded response thresholds. Publish measured results after operation begins.

Questions worth asking

- What are annual and peak-day withdrawals at each phase?
- Which components consume water, and which merely recirculate it?
- What changes during heat or drought?
- Which wells and rights supply the water, and how could nearby users be affected?
- Who pays for monitoring and an immediate remedy if a well is harmed?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/who-pays-for-the-power>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-neighbors-hear>)

17. What Would Neighbors Hear?

Noise is easy to underestimate when the proposed site looks remote on a map. The relevant question is what someone would hear at a nearby home at night, with the actual equipment operating and the wind carrying sound toward them.

Site Layer 1's notice identifies 32 generating engines. It does not establish the final layout, acoustic enclosures, cooling equipment, operating pattern, or sound level at residences. We should not claim the site will be silent or disruptive without a model tied to those details and a way to check the model after opening.

Virginia's independent data-center review (<https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2024-data-centers-in-virginia.asp>) found that a continuous, low-frequency sound can trouble neighbors even when an ordinary noise rule is not exceeded. Most facilities in that review did not draw noise complaints, often because of location or design. Both findings matter: good design can work, while the wrong measurement can miss a real problem.

St. Louis now requires sound limits measured against a pre-application baseline and accounts for both dBA and dBC, which better captures low-frequency content. Its rules also call for setbacks and enclosed noisy equipment. St. Louis ordinance (<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/news/mayor-signs-board-bill-49.cfm>) is an example for discussion, not a standard already applicable in New Mexico.

For Grant County, the study should list the sound from engines, exhaust, transformers, fans, dry coolers, vehicle movement, and any backup equipment. It should model full and partial operation, seasonal weather, nighttime conditions, and the closest homes. Neighbors should be able to see the proposed measurement locations and submit their own observations. A binding condition needs a measurement method, a limit, corrective deadline, and a responsible payer.

What a useful answer would include

Baseline measurements, independent predictions at sensitive locations, an equipment-specific mitigation plan, and post-opening measurements under representative worst operating conditions.

Questions worth asking

- Where are the closest homes and what is their present nighttime sound environment?
- Which equipment runs continuously, and which is tested intermittently?
- Will the study measure low-frequency sound as well as ordinary loudness?
- What happens if measured noise exceeds the promised level?
- Can the layout place the loudest equipment farther from residents?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/how-much-water-would-the-whole-site-use>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-the-air-permit-allow>)

18. What Would the Air Permit Allow?

Site Layer 1 proposes a power plant alongside a data center. This is different from a facility with emergency generators that run only for outages and tests. Its published notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) contemplates 32 natural-gas engines and potential operation throughout the year. Residents need to understand the actual operating limits a permit would authorize.

The notice gives preliminary emissions estimates. It is not a final permit, a measurement of future emissions, or a complete exposure assessment. The application should show expected and permitted maximum operating hours, fuel use, pollutant rates, stack characteristics, control equipment, and modeled concentrations at nearby homes and other sensitive places. It should account for startup, shutdown, maintenance, and cumulative sources where required.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (<https://www.epa.gov/stationary-sources-air-pollution/clean-air-act-resources-data-centers>) identifies air permitting and standards relevant to stationary engines and turbines used by data centers. New Mexico's Environment Department must review the application under applicable rules. Residents should look for enforceable limits and how the operator will demonstrate compliance, not just a statement that the equipment is modern.

There is a local procedural update. In a September 18, 2026 letter (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-18-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter-Revised.pdf>), NMED said it would not advance a Site Layer 1 air application until the applicant supplied a qualified public contact and records of stakeholder engagement. In a September 29 follow-up (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>), NMED acknowledged receiving direct contact details, but said the engagement records remained outstanding. It also requested a pre-application meeting and transparent, editable emissions calculations in a complete application. At the October 8 county meeting, SWCA's consultant said an application had been submitted October 7 (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>). That report is not an NMED completeness finding or a permit approval; neither was located in this review.

Air quality and climate questions deserve distinct treatment. A facility can meet local ambient-pollutant limits while still emitting substantial greenhouse gases from continuous fuel combustion. The community should ask for both sets of figures and for the assumptions behind them. A promise to buy renewable electricity elsewhere would not erase local engine exhaust if those engines operate here.

What a useful answer would include

The complete application and modeling, an understandable summary of permit limits, a map of modeled receptors, monitoring and reporting requirements, and a clear process for complaints and enforcement.

Questions worth asking

- How many hours may each engine operate, and at what load?
- Which pollutants are controlled, and by what equipment?
- What is modeled at the nearest homes under permitted maximum operation?
- How will emissions be measured or calculated after startup?
- Where can residents find permit changes and compliance reports?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-neighbors-hear>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-is-the-local-return>)

19. What Is the Local Return?

A project can bring substantial investment without bringing an equally large permanent workforce. Grant County should ask what the proposed data center would add to local budgets and livelihoods after construction, and what public costs would accompany it.

An independent Virginia legislative audit (<https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2024-data-centers-in-virginia.asp>) found most economic activity from data centers there came during construction. Industry representatives told auditors that a typical 250,000-square-foot facility might have about 50 full-time workers, about half contractors, while an individual building could have roughly 1,500 workers onsite at the peak of construction. Those are examples from Virginia, not estimates for Site Layer 1.

The Site Layer 1 notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) does not establish a construction schedule, employee count, local hiring plan, tax agreement, or service-cost budget. Those figures should be requested separately. A headline investment number can include imported servers and machinery; it does not show how much money reaches Grant County households or businesses.

I would ask the county to present at least three cases: a small first phase, the applicant's expected buildout, and a project that stops after infrastructure is built. For each, show property and equipment taxes under actual law, any proposed abatements, water and road works, emergency-response costs, and costs of enforcing agreements. Separate temporary construction jobs from permanent positions, and distinguish county residents from commuters.

Community benefits agreements can make specific investments more dependable. Massachusetts' 2026 order (<https://www.mass.gov/executive-orders/no-658-establishing-requirements-for-responsible-data-center-development-and-operations-in-massachusetts-to-protect-and-support-ratepayers-communities-and-the-environment>) requires such an agreement for certain large projects before specified permits. That process is not New Mexico law, but it illustrates a way to put benefits and responsibilities in writing. A benefit payment should supplement—not substitute for—satisfactory water, air, and safety protections.

What a useful answer would include

A public fiscal analysis by phase, signed terms for any incentive or community payment, job descriptions and training pathways, and security for obligations that survive a sale or early closure.

Questions worth asking

- How many construction and permanent jobs are projected, for how long, and with what qualifications?
- How much taxable value would remain after incentives and depreciation?
- Which public services and infrastructure would need expansion?
- What happens to payments if the project never reaches full buildout?
- Who independently checks the figures?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-the-air-permit-allow>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-should-be-public>)

20. What Should Be Public Before a Decision?

Trust cannot be built from a legal notice alone. Neighbors should be able to learn what is proposed, speak with a knowledgeable representative, and see how the plan changes in response to evidence and public concerns.

That need is immediate for Site Layer 1. In a September 18, 2026 letter (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-18-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter-Revised.pdf>), New Mexico Environment Department Secretary James Kenney said the applicant had not supplied an effective public contact or records of earlier engagement. A September 29 follow-up (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>) says Blake Marcus had since supplied direct contact information, but NMED still required meeting dates, attendees, and presentation materials. The agency also asked for a pre-application meeting and complete, transparent emissions calculations. The attached company email says representatives met virtually with Grant and Hidalgo County officials in fall 2025; the requested records were not included in the published correspondence. At an October 8 county meeting (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>), Granite Renewables presented preliminary solar, battery, cooling, and ownership claims, and its consultant said an air application had been filed. Publishing the slides, assumptions, and agency application would let residents examine those claims. A public presentation or reported filing is not an agency approval.

Other jurisdictions are testing stronger disclosure. New Jersey's 2026 law (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/2026/approved/20260827a.shtml>) requires regular reports on data-center energy and water use. The EU reporting framework (https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-directive/energy-performance-data-centres_en) gathers similar measures, although publicly available data are largely aggregated. Neither system substitutes for a document a Grant County resident can use to understand this particular site.

I would start with a dated project register, available online and in a place residents can reach without internet access. It would show the current site plan and development phases; responsible companies and contacts; applications, decisions, and conditions; water and power studies; estimated versus measured impacts; and every promised remedy. Each item should identify who produced it, who reviewed it, and what remains unverified.

The register should also include comments and answers. People need to know whether a question is open, answered with a source, or outside a particular agency's authority. A permit hearing is one venue. Earlier meetings can still affect the design, especially when a well, road, home, or culturally important place might be affected.

What a useful answer would include

A qualified company contact, a public record of meetings and answers, current source documents, independent reviews, decision dates, and a plain-language change log.

Questions worth asking

- Who can answer detailed questions for Site Layer 1 now?
- What documents changed after the original notice, and when?
- Where will water, air, sound, and fiscal studies be posted?
- Who responds to public comments and by what deadline?
- Which commitments can be enforced, by whom, and with what funding?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-is-the-local-return>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/can-better-copper-cooling-help>)

21. Can Better Copper Cooling Help?

One of the most promising advances in data centers is a small part: the copper plate that carries heat away from a processor. Water or another coolant passes through channels inside the plate. The shape of those channels determines how well it reaches hot spots and how hard pumps must work.

Researchers now use topology optimization—computer methods that search for better channel and fin layouts—and more precise manufacturing. A 2026 experimental study (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrp.2026.103272>) of printed, high-resolution copper plates reported up to 32% lower thermal resistance at the same flow rate, or up to 68% lower pressure drop at equal thermal resistance, against its tested pin-fin reference. Another 2026 study (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0017931025014152>) tested diamond-shaped copper fins. These are component comparisons under specified conditions, not measured savings for an operating Grant County facility.

Better heat transfer could allow higher coolant temperatures or less pumping, both potentially useful. But a cold plate only moves heat out of the chip. The site must still reject it outdoors or send it to someone who can use it. The arrangement of pumps, coolant distribution units, heat exchangers, chillers, dry coolers, and any cooling towers determines whole-site energy and water use. The natural-gas engines proposed for Site Layer 1 also need a cooling explanation.

The applicant's notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) does not identify its chip cooling system or promise to use these copper designs. It would be premature to credit the project with research results. It would also be wrong to dismiss the technology: a developer could compare available designs against a simpler baseline and publish the consequences for pumps, peak water demand, and hot-weather performance.

There is a reliability test as well. Small channels can impose requirements for coolant cleanliness and service. A promising plate must be judged by cost, maintainability, leakage risk, and long-term performance, along with its laboratory thermal figures.

What a useful answer would include

The actual cooling architecture, design temperatures, flow rates, pump power, water balance, maintenance plan, and a whole-facility comparison of realistic options under the same Grant County weather assumptions.

Questions worth asking

- What cools the computing chips, and what cools the proposed engines?
- What equipment ultimately releases the heat outdoors?
- Would an improved cold plate measurably reduce electricity or water use for this site?
- What happens during peak heat or equipment failure?
- Who verifies performance once the facility operates?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-should-be-public>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/could-dry-cooling-and-heat-reuse-work>)

22. Could Dry Cooling and Heat Reuse Work Here?

Water-saving cooling sounds especially attractive in southwest New Mexico. The question is whether it can handle this proposed facility's full heat load through the hottest weather, and at what cost in electricity, equipment, and noise.

Dry coolers use outdoor air to carry heat away, avoiding the routine evaporation of a cooling tower. Warm-water liquid cooling can make dry cooling more practical. Some NVIDIA equipment specifications (<https://networking-docs.nvidia.com/sn6000hw/1.3/liquid-cooling-specifications>) allow coolant entering at up to 45°C. That proves a design point for those specific switches, not that every processor or a whole Site Layer 1 installation could run at that temperature.

There is a tradeoff. DOE guidance (<https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/articles/guideline-water-and-energy-considerations-during-federal-data-center>) explains that dry cooling can use more electricity than evaporative cooling, especially when air is hot. A comparison should include the electricity and fuel used by fans, pumps, and any supplemental chiller as well as direct water withdrawals. If Site Layer 1 generates its own electricity from gas, extra cooling power could mean additional engine output and emissions.

Heat reuse is another possibility, but it needs an actual customer. The DOE data-center guide (<https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/best-practice-guide-data-center-design.pdf>) advises a nearby heat user, a suitable temperature, and a backup way to reject heat when that user cannot take it. In a sparsely settled area, a claimed heat-reuse benefit should identify the customer, pipeline distance, seasonal demand, and financing. A theoretical supply of waste heat is not a community service.

The Site Layer 1 notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) does not settle either choice. It does not provide a complete cooling design or an agreement with a heat user. Those remain options to study, not benefits to count.

What a useful answer would include

A side-by-side comparison of dry, evaporative, and hybrid options under the same peak weather and full-load assumptions, showing water, fuel, electricity, noise, cost, and reliability. Name any proposed heat customer and contract.

Questions worth asking

- Can dry cooling keep every required component within limits during prolonged heat?
- Would the design use evaporative assistance or chillers, and when?
- How much extra electricity or gas would each option require?
- Is there a nearby user able to buy useful heat year-round?
- What releases heat when that customer is unavailable?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/can-better-copper-cooling-help>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/could-batteries-and-flexible-computing-help>)

23. Could Batteries and Flexible Computing Help?

Some computing tasks can wait; others cannot. Batteries can absorb short changes in power demand, bridge an outage, or support a grid when the equipment and contracts permit it. Those ideas deserve examination, but a battery's presence is not proof of a benefit to neighbors.

The International Energy Agency's 2026 review (<https://www.iea.org/reports/key-questions-on-energy-and-ai/executive-summary>) notes rapid power swings in AI workloads and expects substantial battery storage at data centers globally by 2030. Its broader flexibility review (<https://www.iea.org/reports/electricity-2026/flexibility>) explains that demand response can reduce peaks and defer some grid investment, while finding that much of its potential remains unused. These are system-level findings, not a verified plan for Site Layer 1.

For a Grant County proposal, first establish the power arrangement. If the data center is isolated from the grid and supplied by its own gas engines, a battery may smooth engine loading or support reliability but cannot automatically reduce local utility bills. If it connects to the grid, an actual demand-response agreement should state how many megawatts can be reduced, for how long, how quickly, and how often. The utility would need to confirm that service is valuable where the connection sits.

Storage also has physical and public-service needs: space, fire protection, controls, replacement, and eventual disposal. A claim that batteries eliminate engine exhaust would require evidence that the engines run fewer hours or use less fuel under the proposed dispatch pattern. A simulation may help compare options; the benefit remains a projection until operation is measured.

What a useful answer would include

An operating plan for both computing and storage, the grid connection status, hourly modeled fuel and electricity use, a signed flexibility agreement if claimed, and post-opening verification.

Questions worth asking

- Which computing tasks can be delayed without breaking promised service?
- What is the battery's power rating, usable energy, and intended role?
- Is it connected so that it can help the local grid?
- Would it reduce gas consumption or merely move generation to another hour?
- Who pays for safety systems, replacement, and disposal?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/could-dry-cooling-and-heat-reuse-work>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/does-own-power-solve-the-problem>)

24. Does Its Own Power Plant Solve the Problem?

An onsite power plant may solve a developer's difficulty obtaining enough grid power quickly. Whether it solves Grant County's concerns is a separate question. The plant would need fuel, cooling, emissions controls, roads, emergency planning, and someone responsible for every cost.

Site Layer 1's notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>) proposes 32 natural-gas engines rated at about 300.8 megawatts together. The nominal rating does not tell us dependable net power on a hot day, hourly gas demand under actual operation, or whether the facility will import or export grid electricity. Those must be shown in a project-specific design and agreements.

The IEA's 2026 analysis (<https://www.iea.org/reports/key-questions-on-energy-and-ai/executive-summary>) says reliable onsite gas generation for critical, variable data-center loads can require generating capacity 30% to 70% above demand, depending on the design. That is a general modeled range, not a calculation of whether Site Layer 1 has enough engines. It also cautions that onsite generation may not be a faster route once turbine or engine supply, permits, and other bottlenecks are considered.

Power reliability needs more than spare engines. A common gas connection, controls, or switchgear can affect many units at once. Fuel delivery terms and interruptibility matter. So does maintenance when equipment is running around the clock. Any assurance that the plant could power nearby communities needs a physical connection and signed service agreement; proximity alone creates no such service.

The public should see the emissions case alongside the power case. A grid-connected data center may shift some generation impacts elsewhere. An onsite plant brings those impacts close to the site. Neither option can be judged fairly without comparing actual fuel, emissions, water, cost, and reliability assumptions. The air-permit article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-would-the-air-permit-allow>) explains the regulatory questions.

What a useful answer would include

Guaranteed hot-weather net output, normal and maximum engine schedules, a secured gas-delivery plan, grid-interconnection details, cooling and emissions analyses, and an emergency plan reviewed by local responders.

Questions worth asking

- Why was onsite generation selected over available alternatives?
- How much dependable power remains after plant and cooling needs?
- What happens if the gas connection or shared equipment fails?
- Is grid power imported or exported, and who pays for the connection?
- Which impacts and costs remain with Grant County over the plant's life?

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/could-batteries-and-flexible-computing-help>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>) · Next article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/what-has-happened-since-the-first-series>)

25. What Has Happened Since the First Series?

The original Grant County series was expanded on September 9, 2026. Since then, residents have spoken at county meetings, state regulators have demanded better contact and engagement from Site Layer 1, and commissioners have formally begun considering a temporary moratorium. These events matter, but none is a final decision on whether the data center may be built.

September 8: residents raised concerns and disagreed about the path forward. At a county work session, speakers raised water, power, noise, light, permanent jobs, and trust in company claims, according to the Silver City Daily Press (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/09/county-consider-data-center-moratorium-solid-waste-ordinance-changes/>). The people who spoke about a moratorium at that meeting supported a pause, though they did not share one view of data centers generally. Commissioner Thomas Shelley questioned the county's legal authority to stop or control a project; Chair Chris Ponce wanted more information from independent experts. Public testimony describes concerns and priorities. It does not establish the actual water use or emissions of this unbuilt facility.

September 18: NMED required a meaningful public contact and engagement record. In a letter to Granite Renewables and Site Layer 1 (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-18-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter-Revised.pdf>), Environment Department Secretary James Kenney said the agency would not advance a forthcoming air-quality application until the companies supplied qualified representatives reachable by the public and records of prior meetings and presentations. This was a completeness and engagement action, not an air-quality permit denial or finding about groundwater. A later letter now updates that status.

September 22: more elected officials took positions. The Daily Press reported (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/22/elected-officials-line-behind-data-center-moratorium/>) that state Rep. Luis Terrazas, state Sen. Gabriel Ramos, and U.S. Rep. Gabe Vasquez supported a temporary Grant County pause, while Democratic House candidate Raul Turrieta also called for one. The same report says Hidalgo County had adopted a special-use approval requirement for large data centers on September 9. Those statements and Hidalgo's action do not themselves create a Grant County moratorium. The Daily Press also reported a proposed October 6 Silver City planning commission discussion; a town discussion would have a different jurisdiction from the rural project site.

September 24: commissioners approved a notice of intent, not a moratorium itself. The official meeting agenda (<https://grantconm.portal.civicclerk.com/event/884>) identifies Resolution R-26-54 as a notice of intent to consider a one-year moratorium on data centers and directly supporting infrastructure in unincorporated Grant County. The Daily Press account of the vote (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/26/county-commission-oks-solid-waste-ordinance/>) reports that it passed with Shelley opposed. A later vote on the ordinance was expected; the notice did not itself enact the proposed pause.

At that meeting, former Commissioner Harry Browne proposed a citizen commission to study the issues. Gila Resources Information Project Executive Director Allyson Siwik supported the moratorium and offered a possible high-end water estimate. Ponce called for an independent consultant to present both advantages and disadvantages. Shelley preferred first speaking with company representatives. These positions are useful for understanding the public debate. The quoted water figure is not a verified Site Layer 1 water budget: the published notice does not contain the cooling design and supply details needed to calculate one. Daily Press meeting report (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/26/county-commission-oks-solid-waste-ordinance/>), applicant's notice (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d00171a201bbc810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>)

September 25–29: the company responded, and NMED specified what remains. A September 29 NMED letter with Blake Marcus's September 25 email attached (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>) shows that he supplied a direct project contact and said Site Layer 1 representatives had met virtually with Grant and Hidalgo County officials in fall 2025. That meeting claim is the developer's account; the letter does not include meeting records. NMED said it had not yet received the requested dates, attendees, and presentation materials. It asked Site Layer 1 to provide those records, hold a pre-application meeting with the Air Quality Bureau, and submit a complete application with transparent, editable calculations. Marcus described the application as pending in his September 25 email. NMED's September 29 letter does not establish whether an application was filed after that date or whether the agency has since deemed one complete.

October 6: Silver City's planning commission endorsed a town pause. The Daily Press reported (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/08/silvers-pz-endorses-town-data-center-moratorium/>) a unanimous recommendation for a one-year town moratorium. Town staff said no data-center application had been filed with Silver City. A councilor expected to present an ordinance on October 27. A planning recommendation is not an enacted town ordinance, and town limits do not include the rural Site Layer 1 site.

October 8: the developer presented a much larger concept to county commissioners. The published county meeting notice (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/legals/grant-county-board-of-commissioners-regular-meeting-october-8-2026>) listed the presentation. According to detailed accounts by the Daily Press (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>) and Albuquerque Journal (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>), Granite Renewables CEO Ian Marcus described an approximately 8,000-acre development concept on Hurt ranch land, with roughly 714–715 megawatts of solar generation and a similarly sized battery system. He said the project remained in feasibility study and that an October 28 high-impact-load request to Tri-State and Columbus Electric Cooperative could constrain its size or viability. The power mix and ultimate data-center load remain unsettled; the two accounts characterize the solar and gas relationship differently. These are developer statements at a public presentation, not an approved design or a utility commitment.

Marcus projected a closed-loop cooling design using less than 25 acre-feet of water annually, while telling the Journal there was no water plan yet. That estimate is more specific than Granite's earlier general "little to no water" claim, but the underlying engineering, whole-site water budget, source, and enforceable limits have not been published in the material reviewed here. He also said the eventual use of the data center was unknown. Residents pressed for a moratorium, clearer information, and answers about costs and impacts; landowner Lawrence Hurt spoke in support of the project. The meeting was a presentation and public discussion, not a county approval. Daily Press (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>); Albuquerque Journal (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>).

October 7–8: the consultant reported submitting an air application. SWCA consultant Stephanie Blochowiak told commissioners on October 8 that an application had been submitted to NMED the previous day, according to the Daily Press (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>). I have not located an agency-posted application, completeness determination, permit number, or final decision for Site Layer 1. The statement establishes what the consultant reported, not that NMED accepted a complete application or approved the engines.

Public argument is broader than the commission meetings. The Grant County Beat's September 9 meeting report (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/home/news-articles/public-input-highlights-potential-data-center-in-grant-county>) records opposition voiced at the September 8 work session. Its September 10 letter to the editor (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/editorials/letters-to-editor/lte-on-the-proposed-site-layer-1-data-center>) and later editorial (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/category-editorials/the-data-center-house-of-cards>) argue against the project and question the notice's emissions arithmetic. These are attributed views, not agency findings. The series separately checks one hourly-to-annual discrepancy and warns that overlapping particle categories make the sum of annual pollutant rows misleading. The applicant should publish the calculation methods and any enforceable operating limits so the figures can be reconciled.

I searched for public Facebook discussion, including the community opposition campaign. Search results did not give me a stable, publicly readable post that could be checked and linked responsibly. The Daily Press's account of local organizing (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/08/opposition-organizes-data-center-grant-county/>) and the Grant County Beat's reported public comments (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/home/news-articles/public-input-highlights-potential-data-center-in-grant-county>) document the activity without treating an inaccessible social-media post as evidence.

What the developer says publicly. Granite Renewables' digital-infrastructure page (<https://www.graniterenewables.com/digital-infrastructure>) describes campuses with solar, batteries, grid connections, and gas engines. Its October 8 presentation supplied preliminary site-specific figures, but no published design calculations, water-source documentation, or binding local benefit agreement was located in this review. The September 25 company email reproduced by NMED (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>) addresses contact and process. The Daily Press account (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>)

makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/) reports the developer's description of Site Layer 1, Rock Layer, SL1NM, and Granite Renewables' equity and development roles. It does not identify a final operator or customer.

What comes next? A local advocacy group reported (<https://gilaresources.info/wp/blog/grant-county-to-take-action-on-data-centers/>) that a county moratorium vote was planned for October 22; confirm the item and text on the county portal (<https://grantconm.portal.civicclerk.com/>) before treating it as a scheduled vote. The reported October 28 utility request, NMED's application review, and any posted technical materials should clarify whether the preliminary concept can be built. As of this October 12 review, I did not locate an agency-posted Site Layer 1 air application or a complete water plan. This is a limit of the accessible record, not proof that neither exists.

What a useful answer would include

A current county agenda and proposed ordinance text; the presentation and engagement records requested by NMED; any complete air application; and a public log of remaining questions with source documents and responsible offices.

Questions worth asking

- Has Site Layer 1 supplied the engagement records NMED still requested on September 29?
- Has NMED accepted a complete air application, and where can residents read it?
- What precisely would a proposed county moratorium cover, and when would it take effect?
- Which independent experts will examine benefits, water, power, air, and public costs?
- How will public comments change the studies and any binding conditions?

News and regulatory references

Local reporting and public commentary

- Silver City Daily Press, September 8: opposition organizes after the notice (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/08/opposition-organizes-data-center-grant-county/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, September 9: county work session and public comments (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/09/county-consider-data-center-moratorium-solid-waste-ordinance-changes/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, September 22: elected officials' positions and Hidalgo County action (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/22/elected-officials-line-behind-data-center-moratorium/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, September 26: county notice-of-intent vote and testimony (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/09/26/county-commission-oks-solid-waste-ordinance/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, October 3: House candidates discuss data-center policy (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/03/nm-house-dist-39-hopefuls-contrast-backgrounds-plans/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, October 7: developer agrees to address county commissioners (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/07/data-center-developer-will-speak-county-commission-thursday/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, October 8: town planning commission recommends a moratorium (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/08/silvers-pz-endorses-town-data-center-moratorium/>).
- Silver City Daily Press, October 10: Granite Renewables' presentation, consultant's filing statement, and public comments (<https://www.scdailypress.com/2026/10/10/developer-makes-case-hachita-data-center-plan/>).
- Albuquerque Journal, October 9: presentation and remaining feasibility questions (<https://www.abqjournal.com/news/details-scarce-on-grant-county-data-center-proposal/3138673>).
- Grant County Beat, September 9: public input at county work session (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/home/news-articles/public-input-highlights-potential-data-center-in-grant-county>).
- Grant County Beat, September 10: reader's letter (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/editorials/letters-to-editor/lte-on-the-proposed-site-layer-1-data-center>) and later opinion column on the notice's arithmetic (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/category-editorials/the-data-center-house-of-cards>). These are opinion, not verified emissions calculations.
- Grant County Beat, October 2 legal notice: October 8 Site Layer One presentation on the published agenda (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/legals/grant-county-board-of-commissioners-regular-meeting-october-8-2026>).
- Searchlight New Mexico, September 9: interviews and corporate-record reporting (<https://searchlightnm.org/grant-county-residents-raise-alarm-over-secretive-proposed-data-center/>).

- Gila Resources Information Project, September 28: advocacy update and proposed October 22 vote (<https://gilaresources.info/wp/blog/grant-county-to-take-action-on-data-centers/>).

Official records and agency starting points

- Site Layer 1's published notice of intent to seek an air permit (<https://files.constantcontact.com/fd2a5c0d001/71a201bb-c810-4b76-ae9d-b2a914a622de.pdf?rdr=true>); this is the applicant's notice, not an issued permit.
- New Mexico Environment Department's September 18 letter (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-18-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter-Revised.pdf>), September 29 follow-up with the developer's email attached (<https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-09-29-NMED-Site-Layer-1-Letter.pdf>), and agency comments-and-testimony index (<https://www.env.nm.gov/comments-and-testimony/>).
- Grant County Commission September 24 agenda and attachments (<https://grantconm.portal.civicclerk.com/event/884>), including Resolution R-26-54, a notice of intent to consider a moratorium; October 8 published meeting notice (<https://www.grantcountybeat.com/legals/grant-county-board-of-commissioners-regular-meeting-october-8-2026>); county meeting portal (<https://grantconm.portal.civicclerk.com/>) for later agendas and decisions.
- New Mexico Environment Department air-permitting information (<https://www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/permitting-section-home-page/>) and Office of the State Engineer (<https://www.ose.nm.gov/>) for the respective air and water processes. Neither general page confirms a Site Layer 1 filing.

Company information checked

- Granite Renewables' home page (<https://www.graniterenewables.com/>), its digital-infrastructure description and FAQ (<https://www.graniterenewables.com/digital-infrastructure>), and Corner's company-creation page (<https://corner.xyz/creations>). These describe the businesses; the September 25 company email linked above responds on contact and process, while a site-specific technical plan remains unavailable in this review.

Status of this review: October 12, 2026. The October 8 presentation occurred. A consultant said an air application was submitted October 7; agency acceptance and permit status remain unconfirmed here. The October 22 county ordinance item needs confirmation against a posted agenda.

Sources are linked; corrections are welcome.

Previous article (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center/does-own-power-solve-the-problem>) · All articles (<https://salars.net/ai/grant-county-data-center>)