

Bartow County Statement Regarding the Proposed Kingston Technology Hub

September 21, 2026

Questions have been raised about Bartow County's involvement in the proposed Kingston Technology Hub and the intergovernmental agreement between Bartow County and the City of Kingston. We want to address those questions directly.

Bartow County was aware that the property was being considered for a data center when the County agreed to the initial annexation requested by the City of Kingston. The County also understood that annexation of the approximately three-acre parcel could facilitate Kingston's later annexation of the larger, adjacent property. The County's action to approve the intergovernmental agreement was taken at an open public meeting on August 5, and the intergovernmental agreement is a public document.

We supported that request because, based on the information available to us, we believed allowing Kingston to pursue the project was reasonable and could provide significant benefits to both Kingston and Bartow County.

The method used for the initial annexation was not a special exception created for this project. Georgia law expressly allows a municipality and county to agree to an annexation notwithstanding the ordinary contiguity requirements. That statutory authority is specifically identified in the intergovernmental agreement between Bartow County and Kingston (O.C.G.A. Sec. 36-36-20(b)).

It is equally important to understand what the County's agreement did not do. It did not approve construction of a data center. It did not rezone the approximately 559-acre property. It did not approve a site plan, generators, lighting, noise levels, setbacks, landscaping, water usage or any other development standards. And it did not eliminate the public zoning process.

The Kingston Technology Hub is now proceeding through Georgia's Development of Regional Impact process as DRI No. 4835. The filing describes a proposed approximately 350,000-square-foot data center on roughly 559 acres, with an estimated investment of approximately \$1 billion. The project remains a proposal; completion of the DRI process is not a rezoning approval.

Any annexation, and any rezoning or other land-use approval required for the project will be a decision of the City of Kingston and must go through the public process required by Georgia law and the City's ordinances. Georgia's Zoning Procedures Law requires public notice and a hearing for a rezoning, including published notice and property posting for an owner-initiated rezoning. Citizens will therefore have an opportunity to review the proposal and express their views before the applicable land-use decision is made.

There were several reasons the County believed Kingston's annexation request was worth supporting.

First, annexation does not remove the property from Bartow County or from the County tax base. Real property remains taxable in the county where it is located, whether it is inside or outside a municipality. Incorporation into Kingston can, however, provide Kingston with additional municipal

revenues that are not available to the County in the same manner. In particular, Georgia law authorizes municipalities to receive **electric franchise fees** while counties presently do not have equivalent authority.

For a small city like Kingston, these revenues would be transformative. While the developer currently projects at least \$2 million annually in localized property tax revenue, that number remains an estimate until the facility is fully built and evaluated. However, there is a much larger, highly predictable revenue stream to consider: Georgia's 4% electric franchise fee. Industry benchmarks show that a 150 MW data center typically spends \$75 million or more annually on electricity. Because Georgia allows cities (but not counties) to collect a 4% franchise fee on power bills, this single facility's energy use could translate into an additional \$3 million or more flowing directly into Kingston's city budget every year—money that can fund local roads, parks, and public services without raising resident taxes.

Second, the proposed development presents an opportunity to address a longstanding infrastructure problem in Kingston. The developer has proposed constructing a sewer line through Kingston to connect with Bartow County's West Bartow Water Reclamation Facility, and providing a regional lift station south of downtown. Kingston has historically been constrained by the absence of adequate sewer service, particularly in its downtown area. A developer-funded sewer connection would provide infrastructure that remains useful to the community well beyond this individual project. The developer itself has publicly identified construction of a new sewer line as one of the proposed community infrastructure improvements.

Third, the projected water demand for this particular proposal is substantially lower than many people may associate with large data centers. The DRI information reported publicly estimates actual water use at approximately 50,000 gallons per day, and the developer says it intends to use a closed-loop cooling system. That is the current model for all data center operators.

The property also contains a substantial natural spring. The developer has offered Bartow County the opportunity to investigate whether that groundwater resource can be developed for the County water system. Initial hydrogeologic testing is promising; if a productive well can be developed, that would provide an additional public benefit and could offset or exceed the project's potable-water demand.

Finally, the County considered the characteristics of this particular location. It is a very large tract with substantial wooded acreage and room for meaningful setbacks and screening. County GIS also shows large tracts around much of its perimeter, an existing major electric transmission corridor through the area, and significant business-park/industrial zoning immediately south of Highway 293 near the HSBMA battery facility. Those characteristics do not mean nearby property owners should have no concerns. They do mean that this site should be evaluated on its actual circumstances rather than treating every possible data-center location as bad.

Bartow County has generally viewed properly-located data center investment as an opportunity to expand the tax base while requiring developers to address infrastructure and neighborhood impacts. Supporting Kingston's ability to consider this proposal was consistent with that approach. Data centers generate significantly less traffic than other industrial or residential development, do not increase school enrollment, use very little water, generate a decent amount of high-paying technology jobs, and add enormous value to the tax digest; and for cities, generate enormous electric franchise fees. The County plans to use the additional tax revenue it receives off data centers to reduce homestead taxes, strengthen the financial condition of the County, and invest in infrastructure and amenities for the benefit of the citizens.

This process has been public. City of Kingston City Council minutes for July 6 show a discussion of requesting annexation from the County. City of Kingston City Council minutes for August 3 show discussion of a Zoning Ordinance amendment for data centers. The County approved the IGA to allow the annexation of three acres, as requested by the City, on August 5, in a public meeting. The next public process was the Development of Regional Impact review, which is underway. The additional public process will be City of Kingston Unified Zoning Board and City Council hearings, under the City's ordinances for annexation and rezoning. There is ample opportunity for the public to obtain clear information about the proposal, the infrastructure arrangements, its projected fiscal impact, and the protections that will apply to neighboring properties.

The County's position is therefore straightforward: we knew a data center was being considered; we agreed to Kingston's initial annexation request because we believed there were legitimate fiscal and infrastructure reasons to do so; and that agreement did not substitute for or eliminate the public process that must occur before the proposed development receives the land-use approvals necessary to proceed.

We encourage residents to participate in that process and to evaluate the proposal based on the complete information – and facts rather than irrational fears – presented as it moves forward.