

# OpenAI's 2.7 GW Camellia Campus in Georgia

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OpenAI is planning a \$20 billion datacenter campus in Effingham County, Georgia, with approximately 3.2 GW of power secured under a 25-year contract with Georgia Power—equivalent to an estimated 2.7 GW of IT capacity. The five-phase development could bring an estimated 540 MW IT online in its first phase—potentially in late 2029—with construction work anticipated to begin by the end of 2028. OpenAI is leading design and development and selecting a partner to build and operate the campus through a competitive process. As of September 2026, the project remains in permitting and site-plan review.

## Campus Design and Timeline

Georgia's Development of Regional Impact (DRI) records describe four main buildings totaling 4.4 million square feet. The project website lists four 720,000-square-foot buildings totaling 2.88 million square feet, with a height limit of 35 feet. The developer entity, Octans GA, a Delaware-registered OpenAI affiliate, secured the 1,441 acres of land from the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority (ECIDA) through separate purchase agreements.



Tentative campus plan for the Project Camellia datacenter; source: Effingham County Documents

On July 21, 2026, ECIDA and OpenAI signed an economic-development incentive agreement anticipating five development phases. The first construction phase is expected to start by December 31, 2028, with all phases completed by December 31, 2034. We estimate initial operations could begin in late 2029, assuming construction starts in late 2028 and takes approximately one year. First-phase capacity could reach approximately 540 MW IT, based on an estimated 2.7 GW of campus-wide IT capacity delivered in five equal phases.

## Project Status and Regulatory Review

As of September 2026, Project Camellia remains in permitting and site-plan review. The Coastal Regional Commission issued its final Development of Regional Impact (DRI) report on August 26, 2026, and Georgia's DRI portal marked the review complete on September 1. The DRI process is advisory: completion allows local governments to proceed with their decisions but does not authorize construction. The county's approval process addresses water service, site layout, earthworks, drainage, building safety and occupancy.

The datacenter site plan review was scheduled for consideration by the Effingham County Board of Commissioners on September 15, 2026, but was postponed to a future date to allow additional county review. OpenAI agreed to a short postponement, and says it will not affect the development timeline. No new consideration date has been set.

## Power Agreement and Infrastructure

On August 26, 2026, Georgia Power received approval from the Georgia Public Service Commission for a 25-year power contract to supply OpenAI's datacenter. The contract sets a final grid load of 3.21 GW, with supply increasing in phases between 2028 and 2032. As a vertically integrated utility, Georgia Power offers a single counterparty for electricity supply, generation planning and grid connections. OpenAI must fund local infrastructure upfront and pay a minimum monthly bill regardless of electricity use, reducing other ratepayers' exposure if demand falls short.

The agreement requires OpenAI to reduce demand by up to 1 GW, roughly 31% of its contracted load, when Georgia Power requests it within the contract's operating limits. The utility can curtail supply if OpenAI does not comply, while the minimum bill remains payable. This flexibility allows Georgia Power to "defer or avoid generation capacity," suggesting demand reductions could remain part of the arrangement after new plants come online. Whether OpenAI will use onsite batteries or BtM generation to manage these reductions remains unclear.

OpenAI's approximately 3.2 GW contracted load is equivalent to roughly 7% of SERC-Southeast's projected net summer peak demand for 2026. Georgia Power's reported 15.6 GW of large-load commitments equates to roughly 33% of that regional peak. The utility plans approximately 5 GW of new gas capacity by the end of 2030.

For Camellia, the key transmission development to watch is Georgia Power's planned **Effingham County 500/230 kV substation and associated 500 kV infrastructure**, described by the utility as serving a large-load customer. The tentative schedule calls for land acquisition in fall 2026, clearing in spring 2027 and substation construction in fall 2027. **No completion or energization date has been published**, and the schedule does not establish which works are required for the campus's first phase.

## Opposition and legal challenges

Project Camellia has faced sustained local opposition since its announcement on July 22, 2026, including petitions, a lawsuit and civil rights complaints. These challenges are not currently expected to alter the project's entitlements or timeline.

Residents' concerns center on the campus's scale, proximity to homes and Blandford Elementary School, water use, electricity demand, noise and the secrecy of the approval process. The county manager signed a nondisclosure agreement with OpenAI, and ECIDA approved the tax abatement the evening before the project was publicly announced. More than 500 people attended the July 23 open house, and an opposition petition launched around that time has since attracted more than 23,500 signatures.

The legal challenge targets the zoning process. The tract was rezoned for industrial use in 2012. Datacenters were subsequently added as a permitted use in light-industrial districts in January 2025 and heavy-industrial districts in April 2025. A "corrected" Permitted Use Table received its first reading in December 2025 and final

approval in August 2026. On September 2, three residents sued Effingham County in Superior Court, alleging that it adopted the revised table without the two required public hearings and asking the court to invalidate the amendment.

Separately, four related complaints filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on July 27, 2026, alleged that county and state officials discriminated against a predominantly low-income community by concealing the project and bypassing standard review procedures. The EPA rejected all four complaints on September 9, 2026.

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