

\$100B AI energy hub announced for DOE Paducah Site

BY PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

The U.S. Department of Energy announced a \$100 billion private investment at the DOE Paducah Site for an AI data center campus with a designated energy infrastructure Wednesday.

The Paducah American Energy Hub — a partnership with Brookfield, NextEra Energy, Big Rivers Electric Power Corporation, Jackson Purchase Energy Cooperative and Paducah Power System — is one of the largest in the history of Kentucky and is expected to create roughly 8,000 construction jobs and 600 permanent jobs.

Brookfield — a global alternative asset management and investment company that manages more than \$1 trillion in capital — has leased 785 acres from the DOE Paducah to build, finance and operate the AI data center.

NextEra Energy Resources will be responsible for building and supplying the energy infrastructure. Big Rivers Electric Corporation will provide wholesale electric service to the site with Jackson Purchase Energy Cooperative delivering retail service and Paducah Power System serving as a community supporter.

Commercial operation dates for the data center and battery energy storage system components of the project are expected as early as 2028, while the natural gas generation component is expected as early as 2032.

During an announcement event at the site, CEOs from the companies involved in the Paducah American Energy Hub project, as well as DOE Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management Tim Walsh, U.S. Rep. Andy Barr and U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright discussed its potential impact on Paducah and the United States and addressed common concerns about AI data centers.

The project is consistent with the Trump administration’s Raterpayer Protection Pledge, which



Community and industry leaders, as well as workers at the DOE Paducah Site, attended the announcement Wednesday of a \$100 billion project that will bring an AI data center and dedicated energy infrastructure to the site.



John W. Ketchum, CEO of NextEra Energy, speaks Wednesday at the AI data center campus in Paducah.

requires the project’s energy generation and storage capacity to exceed the amount needed to power the AI data center. According to a release from the DOE, the AI data center campus will require 1.8 gigawatts of energy, while NextEra Energy plans to develop 2 GW of new grid-connected natural gas-fired generation and deploy up to 2.6 GW of battery energy storage.

“We’re building energy infrastructure specifically designed for this data center campus,” John W. Ketchum, CEO of NextEra Energy, said. “Those costs will be borne by the project itself, not by anyone else here in western Kentucky. We often describe this as a ‘bring your own generation’ approach, and we believe it represents a responsible path forward for meeting America’s

growth and their needs. It’s a model that supports economic development while protecting existing customers. It’s a model that brings new generation resources onto the grid while enhancing reliability, and it’s a model that ensures that communities see the benefits of growth without having to shoulder the cost.”

In his remarks, Barr said excess energy flowing back into the regional power grid will help reduce energy costs for Kentucky families and businesses long-term. He also touted that the project will put the DOE Paducah Site in a position to help the United States in a global race for AI advancement.

“During the Cold War, [the site] helped power America’s national security at one of the most conse-

quential moments in our history,” Barr said. “Now it begins a new mission.”

Following the event, Bruce Wilcox, president of Greater Paducah Economic Development, addressed concerns about the AI data center’s water use, explaining that it will use a water system that recirculates after a 2 million-gallon initial fill and does not require constant water consumption for cooling. Additional water use will be required for the power generation aspect of the project.

“The technology that they are using will be a closed-loop technology system which recirculates the water, probably a couple million gallons a year,” Wilcox said. “Depending upon how you look at the natural gas combined cycle plant, it should be less than 5 million gallons a year. That might seem like a lot to a lot of folks, but when you take into consideration that approximately 162 billion gallons flow by the Ohio River every day, 59 trillion gallons a year, it’s not even a rounding error.”

McCracken County Judge-Executive Craig Clymer said the project will bring significant tax revenue during the buildout and ongoing through property tax and payroll tax.

“It’s going to bring massive wealth into our county



A crew moves large air ducts on the inside of the Bluegrass Fieldhouse sports complex on Thursday as construction continues.

OPENING

FROM PAGE A1

Hancock said Thursday the project would not meet that timeline and that he did not have a new opening date.

“With condition things are in, we are not going to make that (September) date,” he said. “It’s going to be tough to determine what the completion date is, to be honest with you.

“There’s a ton of work to be done,” Hancock said. “They’ve come a long way, but we’ve got a very long way to go.”

The retractable basketball goals have been installed, the elevated viewing area has been constructed, and contractors have enclosed the restroom areas. In addition to installing the windows, portions of the floor must be leveled before the hardwood sports flooring can be installed.

“There have been some unexpected delays,” Hancock said. “We found a few foundations in the building ... those were backfilled, so you had some delays there. We’ve given the contractor roughly 67 days so far, and we’ve got another 30 days that are in-contract to extend that completion date.”

The project remains on budget, Hancock said.

When asked whether the facility is still expected to open this year, Hancock said: “I would hope we can open in 2026, that would be the goal, but there is a lot of work to be done between now and then.”

The idea behind the sports complex is to attract youth sports tournaments to the city. Youth sports are big business. The New York Times, quoting the Aspen Institute, reported last year that youth sports generate \$40 billion in annual revenue.

City officials have previously said they hope some of that indoor sports tourism money will find its way to

Owensboro restaurants, hotels and shops. A consultant told commissioners in 2022 the indoor sports complex would generate \$1.3 million annually in hotel bookings and \$3.1 million a year in other sales if the city hosted tournaments on 50% of weekends.

Hancock said Thursday the plan is to have the facility booked every weekend. But because of the additional time needed for construction, some events scheduled for this year have been canceled or postponed.

“At this point, anything we had planned in September, there are tournaments that have been pushed back and canceled,” he said. “It is having a negative impact on our ability to book tournaments.

“There are others interested in the building and we can’t accommodate them just yet,” Hancock said. “... There are quite a few impacts. We’d rather not be in that situation, but projects do have delays and this is one of those that’s got some significant delays at this point.”

and community, so we’re really excited about that,” he said.

Clymer said as the project develops, the county will need to take steps to accommodate housing and traffic demand, and they have been talking with developers.

“We’re looking at developing anything from small camping trailers on up to large homes and everything in between,” Clymer said. “We’re going to need several thousand housing units, and we’re getting that done. I also chair the Paducah-McCracken County Industrial Development Authority, and we’re looking at building more roads, how to move people about, lessening congestion, and that sort of thing.”

Paducah Mayor George Bray said the city is talking with developers daily to try to accommodate housing needs for projects at the DOE Paducah Site and called for more collaboration between the city and county on those efforts.

Bray also said he understands community members’ concerns about an AI data center being built in McCracken County, but feels it is an important step forward for the region and honors the original purpose of the DOE Paducah Site.

“I understand people’s wariness and concern, but we have researched this,” Bray said. “We understand what’s going to happen here. We believe that this is the next step in U.S. energy dominance. We have a responsibility to redevelop this site. There’s U.S. patriots out there who worked at the Gaseous Diffusion Plant for so many years and gave themselves, and now it’s up to us to honor them and redevelop the site.”

Lottery Numbers

Thursday’s lottery numbers:

Kentucky
Midday Pick 3: 9-6-8
Midday Pick 4: 1-5-0-0
Evening Pick 3: 3-8-6
Evening Pick 4: 3-6-9-2
Cash Ball 225: 5-8-22-28;
The Cash Ball was 16
Millionaire For Life:
6-35-38-46-58
The Millionaire Ball was 3
Indiana
Midday Daily 3: 2-9-6
Super Ball was 8
Midday Daily 4: 1-8-1-0
Super Ball was 8
Evening Daily 3: 6-4-9
Super Ball was 1
Evening Daily 4: 7-9-1-5
Super Ball was 1
Cash 5: 3-15-18-32-42

Digest

Daviess

Fiscal Court

During its meeting Thursday at the Daviess County Courthouse, Daviess County Fiscal Court took the following actions:

- Approved minutes of July 16, 2026, Daviess County Fiscal Court meeting
- Approved all claims for all departments
- Approved treasurer’s report for June 2026 and final settlement
- Approved solid waste disposal agreement with Renewable Resources
- Approved Kentucky Product Development Initiative (KPD) grant agreement by and among the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, Daviess County, and the City of Owensboro
- Approved security services agreement 14-2026 effective Aug. 1, 2026, through the Daviess County Sheriff’s Office
- Awarded Bid No. 2627-01: One (1) New ½-ton 4WD pickup truck (Engineering)
- Awarded RFQ No. 2627-09: D8T dozer undercarriage replacement (Landfill)
- Accepted the retirement resignation of Kevin Gore effective July 31, 2026
- Promoted Mike Page to EMA director effective Aug. 2, 2026
- Hired Wes Stone as solid waste heavy equipment operator I effective Aug. 2, 2026
- Heard first reading of KOC 921.692 (2026) 06-2026: An ordinance amending text in Article 8 of the Owensboro Metropolitan Zoning Ordinance
- Heard first reading of KOC B.54 (2026) 07-2026: An ordinance relating to the issuance of general obligation bonds Series 2026A in a maximum aggregate principal amount not to exceed \$60M for the purpose of financing the costs of the expansion of, and various improvements and renovations to, the Daviess County Detention Center
- Heard first reading of KOC A.110.01 (2026) 08-2026: Budget amendment No. 1

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