



2026 PLAYBOOK:

Precision Site Selection for Data Centers in the Hyperscale Era

Evaluating Power, Zoning, Infrastructure, and Risk Using Land Intelligence



Introduction

The race to build the digital infrastructure of tomorrow is intensifying. Fueled by the explosive growth of AI, cloud computing, and hyperscaler expansion, data center development is booming.

The ability to assess and secure viable land before competitors is no longer just an edge. It's table stakes.

Yet traditional site selection methods are no longer enough. Power availability, zoning challenges, infrastructure gaps, and environmental risks are increasingly complex.

What was once a matter of acreage is now a multidimensional strategic decision.

This white paper explores how location intelligence is enabling a new era of strategic site selection.

The Data Center Development Landscape in 2026

In 2026, demand for data center capacity is outpacing infrastructure readiness.

Key drivers include:

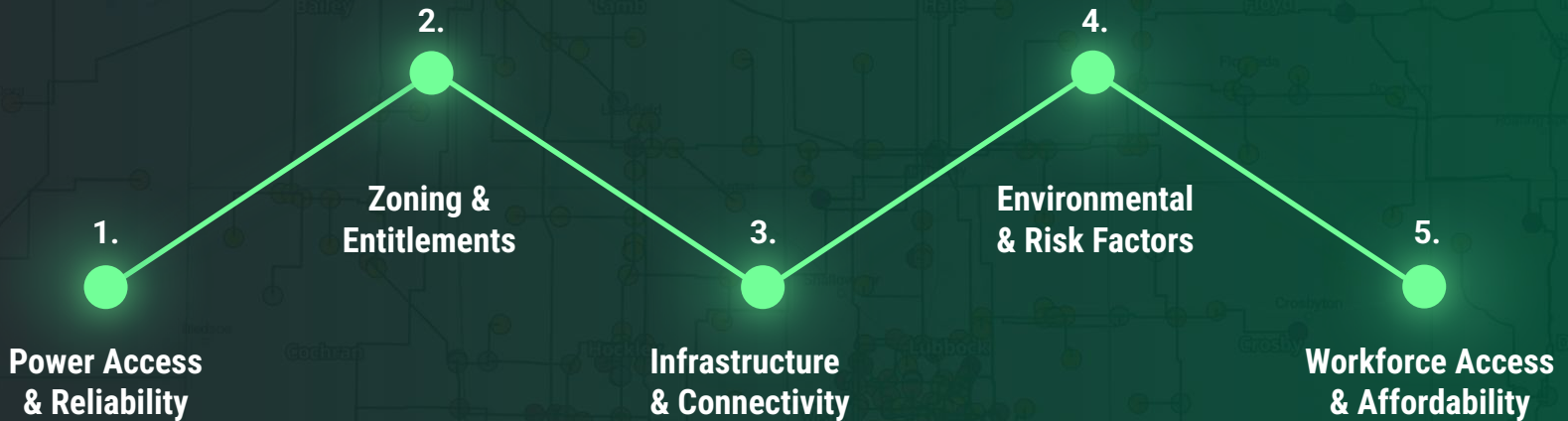
- **AI Workloads:** High-performance computing for AI models demands immense, reliable power density.
- **Cloud Growth:** Enterprise migration to the cloud fuels regional and edge data center demand.
- **Hyperscaler Expansion:** Tech giants are aggressively acquiring land to secure future capacity

Supply chain delays, power grid bottlenecks, and regulatory complexity have raised the bar. The winning sites are not just large—they're grid-connected, entitled, accessible, and de-risked.



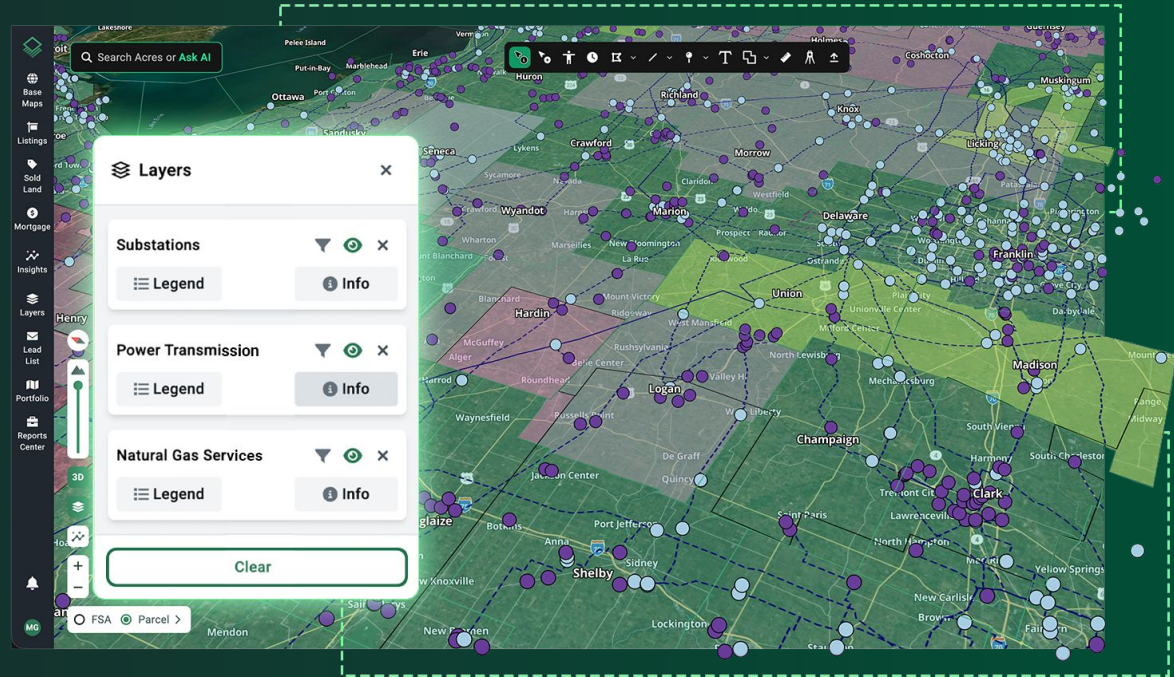
Key Site Criteria:

What Today's Data Centers Need



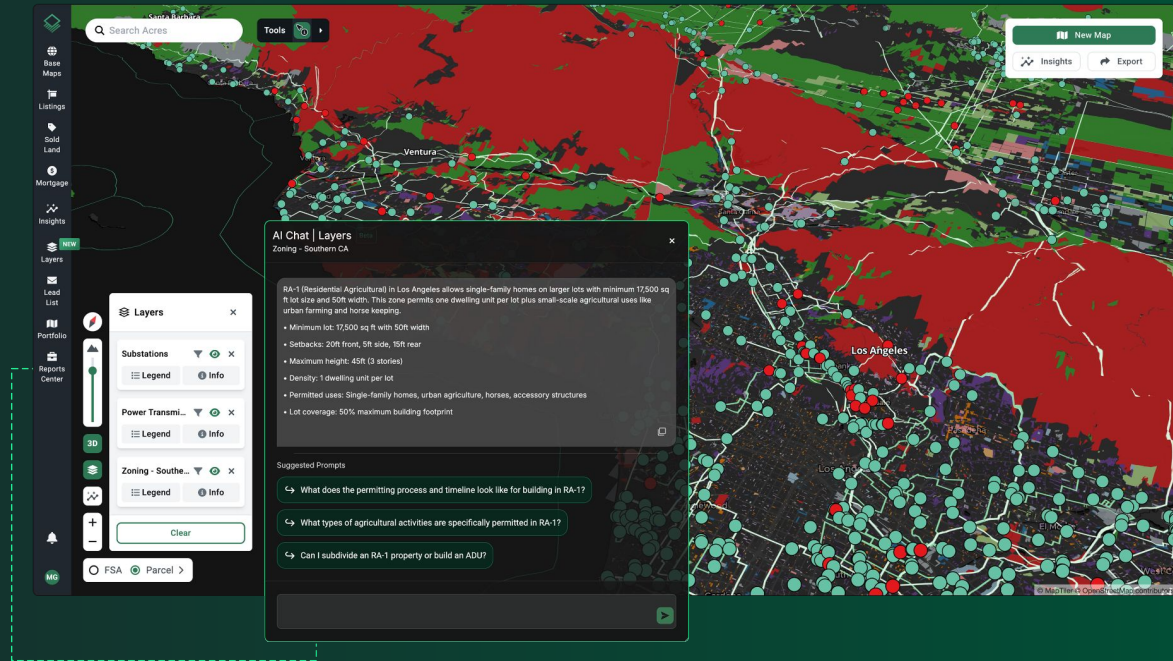
1. Power Access & Reliability

- Instantly identify parcels near high-voltage lines and substations using map overlays.
- Filter by substation ownership and voltage to screen for realistic capacity.
- View utility jurisdictions to anticipate interconnection timelines and decision-makers.
- Locate parcels near battery, nuclear, or biodiesel facilities for hybrid siting strategies.
- Spot areas impacted by power plant retirements to gauge future grid availability.



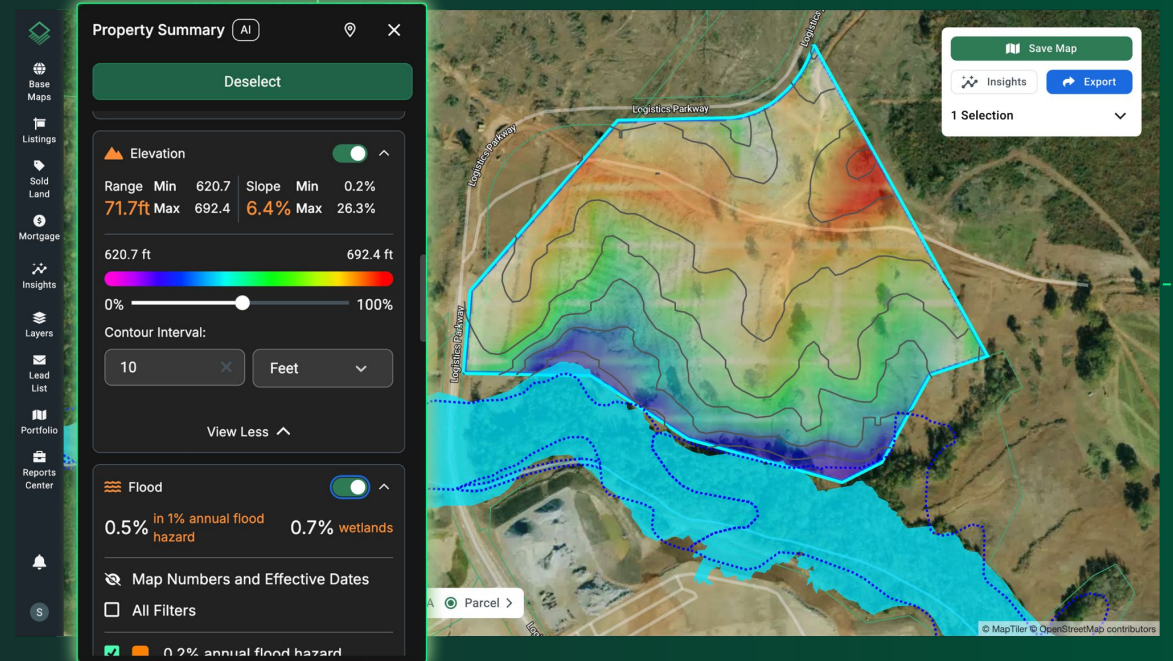
2. Zoning & Entitlements

- Identify parcels with industrial zoning or a viable path to conditional use based on surrounding precedent.
- Evaluate land use context to avoid residential conflicts and reduce entitlement risk.
- Surface local development patterns and revenue potential to frame a municipality-aligned zoning pitch.
- Gather supporting data to build evidence-backed zoning cases.



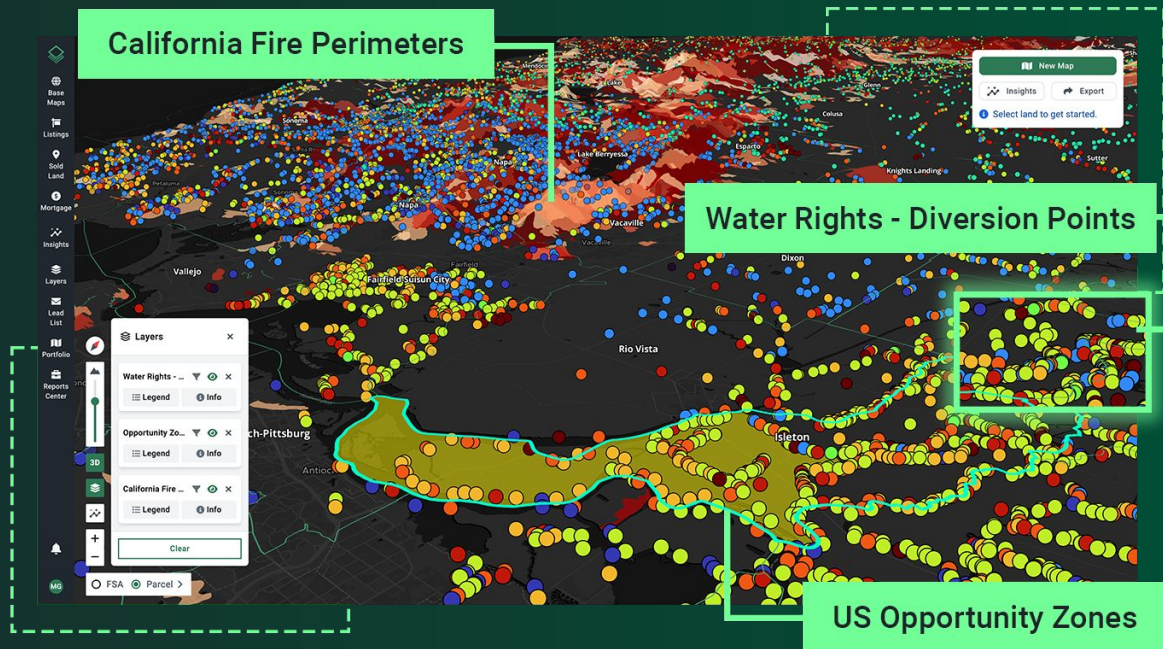
3. Infrastructure & Connectivity

- Locate parcels near multiple fiber routes to ensure carrier diversity and uptime resilience.
- Evaluate access to transportation corridors for construction logistics and long-term serviceability.
- Analyze topography, easements, and setbacks to screen parcels for buildability before committing to site design



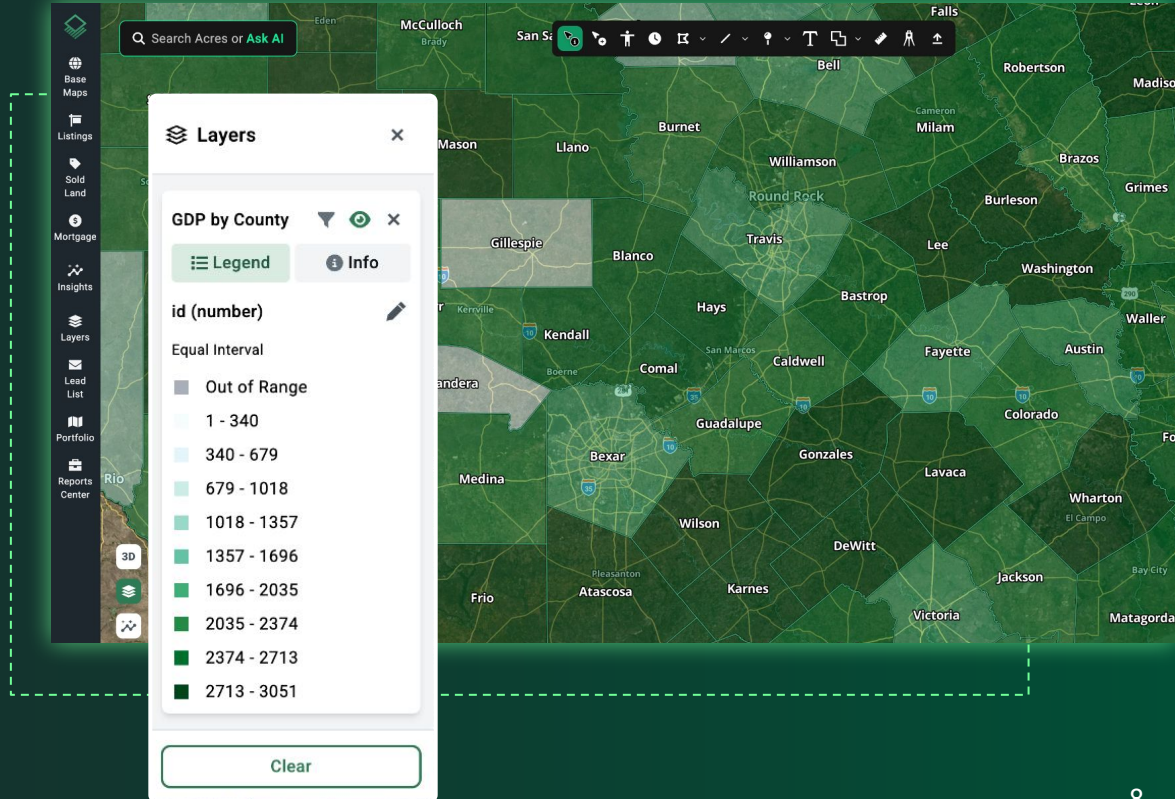
4. Environmental & Risk Factors

- Predict community pushback and regulatory hurdles early with sentiment data.
- Instantly avoid flood zones, wetlands, and wildfire-prone areas using environmental overlays.
- Identify protected habitats, slope restrictions, or other permitting red flags in seconds.
- Understand when a site will trigger agency review — and when it won't.



5. Workforce Access & Affordability

- Surface regional growth trends using population growth and GDP layers.
- Assess economic viability with median income and fair market rent data.
- Eliminate non-viable regions before committing to deep labor modeling.



How Location Intelligence Transforms Site Selection

Acres.com unifies critical land data in one map-based interface to replace tool hopping with streamlined research.

With Acres, developers can:

- **Overlay power infrastructure:** View current and planned substation locations, transmission lines, and grid congestion zones.
- **Visualize zoning and entitlements:** Quickly filter parcels based on permitted uses.
- **Assess environmental risk:** Avoid floodplains, seismic zones, and protected areas.
- **Analyze infrastructure:** Map fiber lines, road access, and water availability.

This shift to geospatial integration dramatically accelerates due diligence while reducing risk.



CASE IN POINT:

Avoiding the Hidden Pitfalls

Consider two sites, both 300 acres with similar land costs:

Site A is 5 miles from a substation, but the transmission line is at capacity.

Site B is zoned industrial, with immediate power access and no environmental flags

Traditional analysis may see these as equals. A location intelligence platform instantly reveals Site A's 3+ year delay risk due to grid upgrades, disqualifying it early and saving millions in opportunity cost.



SPEED AND PRECISION:

The Acres Advantage

In today's hyper-competitive environment, the ability to say "no" faster is as valuable as saying "yes." Acres gives site selectors the tools to:

- Reduce weeks of manual research to minutes.
- Pre-screen sites based on power, zoning, and risk.
- Confidently advance only viable parcels.



Conclusion

Winning in the 2026 data center market requires more than land. **It requires foresight.**

With location intelligence from Acres, site selection becomes a strategic, data-driven process that aligns with how the fastest movers in digital infrastructure operate.

Find the right land, at the right time before your competitors.

Contact our sales team today.

