

The Future of Data Centers in the United States in 2026

A market perspective from Mina Metry, Vice President of Engineering and Development, on why GIS, disciplined development, engineering coordination, and practical permitting support are becoming decisive advantages.

Market shift	BrightShift role	Website
Power access, schedule certainty, and entitlement risk now shape site value.	BrightShift helps clients reduce friction from screening through advancement.	brightshiftrenewables.com

Prepared in first-person executive voice for client-facing use.

Foreword

I believe the U.S. data center market in 2026 will reward execution more than speculation. Demand remains strong, but the projects that will create real value are the ones that can secure a realistic power path, withstand permitting review, and move through front-end diligence without losing momentum.

From my perspective, the market is no longer asking only where land is available. It is asking whether a site can become buildable, financeable, and credible fast enough to matter. That is why early GIS work, disciplined development sequencing, practical engineering coordination, and permitting strategy are no longer support functions. They are value drivers.

1. Market Outlook: Why 2026 Looks Different

Power is the market

The strongest sites are increasingly the ones that can show a credible utility path, infrastructure readiness, and realistic timing.

Constraint discovery is moving earlier

Projects are being judged sooner on wetlands, floodplain exposure, access, grading, neighboring land uses, local political context, and entitlement complexity.

Investors want a cleaner path to execution

Capital is increasingly drawn to opportunities that are organized, well-screened, and easy to diligence.

2. How BrightShift Can Help

BrightShift is best positioned as a project advancement partner. The company’s value is in helping clients move from broad opportunity to focused execution.

<p>GIS Services</p> <p>Site screening, parcel intelligence, environmental constraint mapping, infrastructure proximity analysis, comparative ranking, and presentation-quality mapping.</p>	<p>Development Services</p> <p>Early-stage project sequencing, milestone planning, diligence prioritization, gating-item identification, and support for moving a concept toward a real project path.</p>
<p>Engineering Services</p> <p>Coordination of early engineering assumptions across civil, utility, environmental, and site workstreams to reduce redesign risk and improve feasibility clarity.</p>	<p>Permitting Support</p> <p>Early identification of likely permit paths, entitlement risks, study sequencing needs, and jurisdiction-specific issues that can influence schedule and cost.</p>
<p>Renewable & Infrastructure Development</p> <p>Support for utility-scale solar, storage, powered-land opportunities, and energy-aware infrastructure projects where site readiness affects value.</p>	<p>Capital Funding & Origination Support</p> <p>Project framing and diligence-ready packaging that help clients communicate more clearly with investors, landowners, partners, and counterparties.</p>

3. Representative Project Types

These are representative project types and focus areas, not claimed completed transactions.

<p>Data center site selection and advancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate candidate parcels using GIS, infrastructure proximity, access, surrounding uses, floodplain, wetlands, and topographic constraints. Help narrow the field to sites with stronger power, entitlement, and development potential.
<p>Utility-scale solar and storage development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screen sites for land-use conflicts, environmental constraints, access, transmission context, and project scalability. Support development sequencing and engineering coordination needed to move the project toward a cleaner diligence path.
<p>Commercial and industrial powered-land opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess sites for energy-intensive uses where power access, permitting complexity, and infrastructure readiness affect commercial value. Coordinate front-end diligence so energy strategy, site conditions, and entitlement realities are considered together.

4. GIS-Led Project Advancement

The graphic below gives BrightShift a clean visual in place of a site map. It shows how GIS and front-end coordination can help reduce dead-end spend and make projects easier to explain to capital.

GIS-Led Project Advancement Framework

A practical workflow BrightShift can use to help move sites from broad opportunity to executable project path.



Solves: dead-end spend | late constraints | fragmented workstreams | weaker investor narrative

Why it matters in 2026:

AI load growth and utility queues are raising the value of front-end discipline.

5. Selected Experience and Leadership Perspective

This section reflects leadership perspective and relevant market experience rather than a transaction list.

Relevant background	How it strengthens the BrightShift offering
Utility-scale renewables	Experience around solar, storage, and energy-related development work helps BrightShift understand how site viability, infrastructure, and permitting affect project value.
Data center and powered-land strategy	The company can bridge the gap between land identification and real project advancement by focusing on power, access, site readiness, and decision-quality diligence.

GIS, engineering, and permitting	Cross-functional awareness helps reduce fragmentation between mapping, design assumptions, consultant workstreams, and agency-facing project needs.
Investor and diligence packaging	A stronger front-end process leads to clearer narratives, better risk framing, and materials that are easier for investors and partners to evaluate.

6. Why BrightShift

<p>Front-end discipline</p> <p>BrightShift helps clients make better decisions earlier, before weak assumptions become expensive project problems.</p>	<p>Cross-functional view</p> <p>Its services sit where many projects lose time: between GIS, development, engineering, and permitting.</p>
<p>Practical project packaging</p> <p>The company can help translate complex project information into decision-ready materials for investors and partners.</p>	<p>Execution-minded support</p> <p>The objective is a clearer path toward a buildable, financeable project.</p>

7. Closing Perspective

My view is straightforward: the next several years will favor companies that can connect site intelligence, development sequencing, engineering judgment, and permitting realism earlier in the process. That is where time is saved, risk is reduced, and project value is clarified.

BrightShift Renewables can help clients simplify that path. For project screening, development support, engineering coordination, or permitting strategy, BrightShift can be reached through brightshiftrenewables.com.

Market themes in this paper are informed by recent public analysis from DOE/Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, EY, Deloitte, JLL, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.