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THE STATE Journal Register

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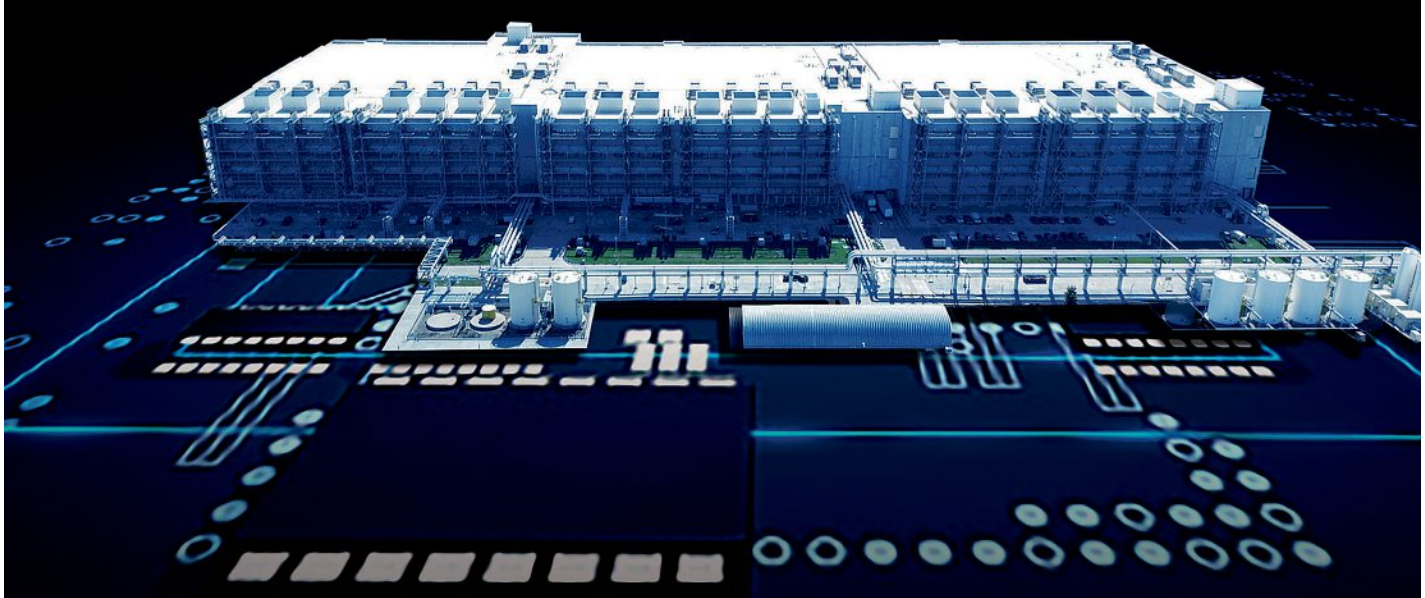
DATA CENTERS: BENEFITS & BURDENS

PROCESSING THE IMPACT



20 years in, how data centers changed one town's economy



Byron McCauley
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa –

When the folks from Big Data eye your town for a hyperscale data center, read their lips when they start talking impact, numbers and benefits.

• Nearly two decades ago, Council Bluffs made a starter deal with Google: tax advantages in exchange for economic investment in the form of 200 permanent, good-paying jobs and millions in tax revenue. In 2007, Google announced an initial $600 million hyperscale data center on the site of the city's only remaining drive-in movie theater that had operated since 1950. The original building was 100,000 square feet when it opened. **See DATA CENTERS, Page 5A**

More online

Scan the QR code for the full three-part series, videos, photos, polls, previous coverage and more about the impact of data centers on local communities.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY REESE STRICKLAND, GRAPHIC BY GETTYIMAGES AND ROBIN FERGUSON

New grants target food desert gaps

Claire Grant
Springfield State Journal-Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Food is more expensive than it was last year for Illinoisans.

Rising food costs and changes to the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) earlier this year from President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act have left people across the country paying for groceries out of pocket.

It isn't the end, either. Around 225,000 Illinoisans would be at risk of losing eligibility, or 15.7% of people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in the state under the Nov. 10 proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Choosing where to go get groceries matters, and in Springfield, that can be more difficult for residents in some parts of the city than others.

Locals know it – and Jay Shanle, director of Downtown Springfield, Inc. knows it too.

The city has growing food desert issue, and city leaders are now looking for solutions to help.

"There is no one solution that addresses all of downtown's needs," Shanle said via email on Oct. 13. "Essentially, there is no top-down list of priorities. Instead, it's focusing on stacking small wins and connecting incremental development successes across multiple fronts. For example, residential development grows with amenities like third places, green spaces, and access to entertainment and essentials."

Shanle says he's aware downtown is part of a larger food desert in the city and has been since the '80s when Osco Drug was a mainstay staple at 510 E. Adams St. in the main square. More recently, Milk & Honey in 2018 operated as a corner grocer in downtown between Cafe Moxo and Elf Shelf but has since closed. A new grocery store, 7's Groceries, is opening soon on the city's eastside.

Shanle points to a wide variety of empty buildings as points of opportunity for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity New Stores in Food Deserts program.

Part of the Illinois Grocery Initiative, the program will award just under $21 million to retailers based on need of $500,000 to up to $5 million to purchase property, equipment or startup costs.

"Yes, I believe downtown as a census tract is a food desert, but I would urge anyone interested in this opportunity to contact the DCEO grant manager to verify," Shanle said. "You can walk to the northern edge of downtown to 2nd and Carpenter to the County Market store. Ease of access often affects our food choices."

Shanle confirmed to the SJ-R the Springfield Sangamon Growth Alliance communicates with DSI on site selection requests for several of the empty units downtown, yet no large chain grocery stores are on his radar to

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