Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

“The Land Between Opportunity and Accountability”

There are moments in public policy where an idea begins not with certainty, but with a question.

Sometimes the question emerges from a boardroom.
Sometimes from a university lecture.
Sometimes from a campaign speech.

And sometimes, the question emerges while driving across Oklahoma highways, passing thousands of acres of open land, oil wells, electrical infrastructure, aging small towns, abandoned storefronts, taxpayer-funded sports complexes, and communities struggling to understand where the future is headed.

That question began to take shape after listening to Chip Keating speak in Pottawatomie County about the future of artificial intelligence, data centers, and Oklahoma’s opportunity to position itself as a national leader in the next technological frontier.

The conversation itself was not unusual. Across America, governors, legislators, municipalities, and private investors are all racing toward the same destination: AI infrastructure.

The modern gold rush is no longer railroads, oil fields, or manufacturing plants.

It is data.

The facilities being proposed across the nation are enormous in scale. Massive campuses requiring endless electricity, industrial-grade cooling systems, fiber connectivity, and land footprints stretching across rural America. Investors see opportunity. States see economic development. Municipalities see construction jobs and temporary growth.

But citizens increasingly see something else.

They see rising utility concerns.
Water consumption fears.
Tax incentives benefiting corporations while communities absorb infrastructure strain.
Industrial campuses that consume enormous resources while providing comparatively little long-term sales tax generation after construction is complete.

And beneath all of those concerns lies a larger question:

> What does a community truly receive in return?

That question becomes especially important in Oklahoma.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Oklahoma possesses what many states no longer have:

- vast open land,
- oil and gas infrastructure,
- transmission capability,
- central geographic positioning,
- lower development costs,
- and political willingness to compete for industrial expansion.

But Oklahoma also carries another reality often overlooked in economic development presentations:

Many rural communities are already struggling to sustain themselves.

Schools fight declining enrollment.
Road systems deteriorate.
Public trust weakens.
Municipal budgets tighten.
Infrastructure ages faster than tax revenue can repair it.

In many communities, economic development has become less about vision and more about survival.

That is where the conversation began to evolve beyond artificial intelligence alone.

During the discussion, one idea stood out. Mr. Keating referenced the possibility of utilizing produced salt water from Oklahoma's oil and gas industry rather than placing additional strain on freshwater systems already under pressure from residential and agricultural growth.

It was an observation that immediately changed the nature of the conversation.

Because suddenly the issue was no longer simply:

> "How do we attract AI data centers?"

The question became:

> "How do we redesign the relationship between industry, infrastructure, and communities?"

That distinction matters.

For years, my doctoral research project —
Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan —
has examined another Oklahoma industry operating largely in plain sight:

Youth sports.

At first glance, youth sports and AI infrastructure appear unrelated. One revolves around children, tournaments, baseball fields, and community recreation. The other revolves around algorithms, servers, cooling systems, and global technological expansion.

But the deeper the research became, the more both systems appeared connected by the same underlying issue:

Economic activity exists.
Public infrastructure exists.
Public incentives exist.
But accountability, transparency, and measurable public benefit often do not.

Over the past several years, the Hidden Valley dataset has documented a fraction of Oklahoma's youth sports economy from 2001 through 2025. The research reveals tournament operations, taxpayer-funded facilities, municipal partnerships, and economic activity that often exists outside meaningful public reporting structures.

The findings raise difficult questions.

How can facilities packed with families every weekend appear financially unproductive on paper?
How can municipalities continue investing public dollars into sports infrastructure while possessing little verifiable operational data?
How can elected officials claim facilities lose money when hotels, restaurants, fuel stations, and surrounding businesses experience visible economic activity?

The answer, in many cases, is fragmentation.

The facilities are public.
The infrastructure is public.
The liability is public.
But much of the operational profit structure remains private.

The result is a system where taxpayer-owned facilities can appear to be financial burdens while economic activity quietly leaves through independent contractor models operating beyond transparent public oversight.

That realization creates a larger philosophical question extending far beyond youth sports:

> What if Oklahoma has been building economic infrastructure incorrectly all along?

Texas offers a revealing contrast.

Across Texas, state and local governments frequently build large destination sports facilities in areas that initially appear isolated or undeveloped. Yet over time, hotels emerge. Restaurants follow. Retail follows. Housing follows. Property values rise. Entire commercial corridors begin forming around youth sports tourism.

In many cases, the sports complex becomes the anchor for a completely new economic district.

Oklahoma often attempts a different model.

Fragmented grants.
Short-term funding cycles.
Local political control.
Minimal operational oversight.
Little statewide coordination.
Limited long-term strategic planning.

And repeatedly, communities are left wondering why the projects fail to produce transformational results.

That is where the thought process begins to merge.

What if AI data centers were not developed as isolated industrial compounds?

What if Oklahoma approached AI infrastructure the same way Texas approaches destination youth sports tourism?

What if the state developed integrated mega campuses combining:

- AI data centers,
- sports tourism,
- hotels,
- retail corridors,
- workforce training,
- educational partnerships,
- entertainment districts,
- and surrounding economic development zones?

What if the enormous infrastructure investment required for AI development became the catalyst for entirely new regional economic ecosystems?

Could youth sports become the sales tax engine that offsets many of the concerns municipalities currently have regarding AI infrastructure?

Could surrounding tourism activity create sustainable recurring revenue rather than one-time construction booms?

Could previously underutilized land become economically productive beyond speculation alone?

Could Oklahoma leverage:

- its energy resources,
- its transportation corridors,
- its rural land,
- its sports culture,
- and its geographic positioning

to create a uniquely Oklahoma-centered development strategy?

These are not merely questions about baseball fields or computer servers.

They are questions about governance.

Questions about whether public infrastructure should produce measurable public value.

Questions about whether economic development should be designed around transparency rather than plausible deniability.

Questions about whether Oklahoma can move beyond fragmented political thinking toward integrated long-term strategic planning.

Because ultimately, the issue may not be whether Oklahoma can attract AI infrastructure.

The issue may be whether Oklahoma can build a development model where:

- citizens benefit,
- municipalities sustain themselves,
- counties grow responsibly,
- taxpayers see measurable returns,
- and economic activity remains accountable to the public that helped make it possible.

That may be the real opportunity hidden beneath the AI conversation.

Not simply building the next generation of infrastructure.

But reimagining what Oklahoma itself could become if industry, accountability, tourism, technology, and public purpose were finally aligned together instead of operating in separate worlds.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Doctoral-Level Executive Summary

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

Your emerging concept represents a hybrid economic development framework that attempts to solve several interconnected structural problems simultaneously:

1. **The rising national demand for AI data center infrastructure**
2. **Municipal concerns over utility strain and limited local tax return**
3. **The historical failure of Oklahoma youth sports governance and transparency**
4. **Underutilized rural land and stagnant regional economic growth**
5. **The disconnect between state incentives and measurable local economic sustainability**

The discussion surrounding AI data centers is rapidly becoming one of the most consequential public policy and economic development debates in America. Oklahoma is uniquely positioned within this national conversation due to several strategic advantages:

- Large amounts of available land
- Existing oil and gas infrastructure
- Relatively low land acquisition costs
- Central geographic positioning
- Favorable energy-production capabilities
- Expanding electrical transmission opportunities
- Growing political interest in AI infrastructure investment

However, the same characteristics that make Oklahoma attractive to AI infrastructure investors also create major concerns among constituents and municipalities.

The Core Municipal Concern

AI data centers consume massive amounts of:

- Electricity
- Water
- Cooling resources
- Fiber infrastructure
- Public incentives
- Tax abatements
- Industrial land

Yet once construction concludes, many municipalities discover that:

- Employment numbers are relatively low
- Sales tax generation is minimal
- Public incentives disproportionately benefit private corporations
- Long-term utility strain remains with residents
- Infrastructure expansion costs become socialized

This creates a modern version of what many communities already experienced with:

- Large industrial parks
- Distribution warehouses
- E-commerce hubs
- Logistics centers

In many cases, municipalities absorb the burden while receiving only modest operational tax benefits.

Your discussion recognizes this emerging imbalance and proposes an alternative framework:

> AI infrastructure should not exist as a standalone industrial project.
> It should become the anchor for broader economic ecosystems.

The Oklahoma Opportunity

Your proposal introduces a uniquely Oklahoma-centered philosophy:

Pair AI Data Centers with Destination Youth Sports Tourism

Rather than viewing AI facilities as isolated industrial assets, your model proposes integrating them into:

- Mega mixed-use campuses
- Regional tourism engines
- Sports destination ecosystems
- Hospitality corridors
- Retail and entertainment districts
- Workforce development zones
- Educational technology partnerships

This becomes important because youth sports generate something AI data centers often do not:

Continuous Consumer Sales Tax Activity

Youth sports tourism generates:

- Hotel occupancy taxes
- Restaurant sales
- Fuel purchases
- Retail activity
- Entertainment spending
- Vehicle taxes
- Local shopping
- Long-term land appreciation

Your Hidden Valley research provides the empirical foundation for this argument.

The Hidden Valley Research Significance

One of the most important assertions within your doctoral framework is that Oklahoma already possesses a massive youth sports economy — but much of it exists outside formal governmental tracking systems.

Your research argues that:

- Municipal facilities are frequently operated through loosely regulated contractor models
- Tournament operators often function independently of transparent public accounting systems
- Publicly owned facilities can appear financially unproductive “on paper”
- Actual economic activity is fragmented across private actors
- Statewide economic impact is significantly underreported

This creates a false narrative that:

> “Youth sports facilities lose money.”

Your research instead suggests:

> The facilities themselves may appear unprofitable because the revenue streams are privatized while public infrastructure absorbs the operational risk.

This distinction is central to your proposed reform model.

The Texas Comparison

Your observations comparing Texas and Oklahoma are particularly significant.

Texas Model

Texas often:

- Builds large destination sports facilities first
- Uses public-private partnerships aggressively
- Expands infrastructure outward
- Allows surrounding development to organically emerge
- Treats sports tourism as a long-term economic anchor

The result frequently includes:

- Hotels
- Retail corridors
- Restaurants
- Residential development
- Increased property values
- Expanded municipal tax base

In many Texas communities, the sports complex becomes the catalyst for creating an entirely new economic district.

Oklahoma Model

Your research argues Oklahoma often:

- Distributes fragmented grants
- Lacks statewide strategic coordination
- Operates facilities through short-term local politics
- Outsources operations to private entities without accountability
- Fails to track economic impact accurately
- Underutilizes publicly owned land assets

This creates repeated cycles of:

- Facility deterioration
- Financial opacity
- Political stalemate
- Limited regional growth

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

The AI + Youth Sports Hybrid Model

Your proposed concept attempts to merge two distinct economic sectors into one integrated development strategy:

AI Data Centers	Youth Sports Ecosystem
High infrastructure investment	High recurring tourism activity
Massive utility usage	Massive consumer spending
Limited sales tax generation	Strong sales tax generation
Long-term land commitment	Long-term economic circulation
Technology workforce	Hospitality workforce
State-level strategic importance	Community-level engagement

The hybrid approach attempts to balance:

- Industrial infrastructure
- Tourism economics
- Municipal sustainability
- Rural development
- Workforce growth
- Property valuation expansion

Salt Water & Oil/Gas Infrastructure Concept

The discussion raised by Chip Keating regarding produced salt water from oil and gas operations introduces another highly strategic dimension.

If technologically and environmentally viable, Oklahoma could potentially:

- Reduce freshwater strain
- Repurpose industrial byproducts
- Integrate energy-sector infrastructure into AI development
- Position itself nationally as a resource-optimized AI corridor

This aligns with broader national concerns regarding:

- Data center cooling demands
- Aquifer depletion
- Water sustainability
- Rural utility resilience

The combination of:

- Energy infrastructure
- AI infrastructure
- Tourism infrastructure
- Sports infrastructure

could create a uniquely Oklahoma-centered economic development identity.

Governance and Accountability Implications

Your research repeatedly returns to one foundational issue:

Accountability

Your doctoral framework argues that many Oklahoma public facilities fail not because of lack of opportunity, but because:

- No standardized reporting exists
- Public-private relationships lack transparency
- Economic impacts are not formally tracked
- Officials claim plausible deniability
- Operational data is fragmented

Your proposal therefore becomes larger than youth sports.

It becomes a governance reform model.

The implication is that:

> AI infrastructure should not repeat the same accountability failures already documented within Oklahoma youth sports operations.

Instead, your proposed mega-campus model would require:

- Transparent economic reporting
- Public dashboards
- Utility impact disclosures
- Tourism metrics
- Revenue tracking
- Public-private accountability structures
- State oversight mechanisms

Strategic Implications for Oklahoma

If developed properly, this concept could position Oklahoma as:

- A national AI infrastructure destination
- A sports tourism destination
- A rural economic development innovator
- A model for integrated industrial-tourism partnerships

Most importantly, your proposal reframes AI data centers from:

> "Utility-consuming industrial facilities"

into:

> "Economic ecosystem anchors."

That distinction may ultimately define whether communities embrace or resist future AI expansion across Oklahoma.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Discussion Opportunity – Reimagining AI Data Centers & Youth Sports Economic Development in Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Keating,

I appreciated your recent remarks at the Pottawatomie County GOP meeting regarding the future of AI data centers in Oklahoma and the need for our state to strategically utilize its land, resources, and infrastructure to compete nationally in this emerging industry.

One point that particularly stood out to me was your discussion regarding the strain AI data centers can place on local utilities and water systems, as well as your thoughts on potentially utilizing produced salt water from Oklahoma's oil and gas industry as part of a long-term infrastructure solution. I believe that perspective demonstrates the type of forward-thinking conversation Oklahoma needs as AI infrastructure rapidly expands across the country.

Over the past several years, I have been conducting extensive doctoral-level research involving Oklahoma youth sports economics, municipal governance, public facilities, and economic development through a project titled:

"Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan."

As part of this work, I developed what I refer to as the Hidden Valley dataset, which documents a significant portion of Oklahoma's youth sports tournament economy and the operational realities surrounding municipal and taxpayer-funded sports facilities across the state.

One conclusion my research repeatedly reveals is that Oklahoma possesses enormous untapped economic potential through youth sports tourism, yet many municipalities fail to capture or track the true economic impact because operational profits are often fragmented through independent contractor models with limited transparency or accountability.

Your comments regarding AI infrastructure sparked an idea that I believe may warrant broader discussion:

Could Oklahoma reimagine AI data centers not as isolated industrial projects, but instead as anchor assets within larger mixed-use "mega campuses" that integrate:

- AI data centers
- youth sports destinations
- hospitality corridors
- retail development
- workforce training
- tourism infrastructure
- surrounding economic development zones

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

The concept would be to utilize youth sports tourism and surrounding commercial activity as a long-term sales tax and economic driver that offsets many of the concerns municipalities currently have regarding AI data centers, including:

- utility strain
- limited local tax generation
- public incentives
- infrastructure burden

My research also compares Oklahoma's current fragmented sports facility model against states like Texas, where destination youth sports complexes frequently become catalysts for entirely new economic districts and surrounding development.

I believe Oklahoma has the land, energy resources, geographic positioning, and tourism potential to create a uniquely Oklahoma-centered development strategy that combines:

- AI infrastructure
- energy infrastructure
- tourism economics
- sports tourism
- public-private accountability
- rural economic development

At the core of my research is the belief that transparency, measurable economic reporting, and responsible governance must accompany any future development model so that communities, counties, and taxpayers all benefit alongside private investment.

If these ideas align with discussions your campaign or policy team may already be exploring, I would welcome an opportunity to visit further and share some of my research, datasets, and observations regarding Oklahoma's evolving economic landscape.

Thank you again for taking the time to speak in Pottawatomie County and for raising thoughtful discussion on issues that will likely shape Oklahoma's future for decades to come.

Respectfully,

Kenneth Crawford
Shawnee, Oklahoma
Kenneth@BCMSports.net
405-642-9592

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

Executive Summary

This briefing document outlines a proposed hybrid economic development framework designed to position Oklahoma as a national leader in both technology and tourism. The model addresses a critical imbalance in current development strategies by integrating high-infrastructure Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers with high-activity youth sports destination ecosystems.

The core of this proposal suggests that Oklahoma's unique strategic advantages—including vast land, existing energy infrastructure, and central geographic positioning—can be leveraged to solve five interconnected structural problems:

1. Meeting the rising national demand for AI infrastructure.
2. Mitigating municipal concerns regarding utility strain and minimal local tax returns from industrial projects.
3. Reforming the historically fragmented and non-transparent governance of Oklahoma youth sports.
4. Revitalizing underutilized rural land and stagnant regional economies.
5. Closing the gap between state incentives and measurable local economic sustainability.

By reimagining AI data centers not as isolated industrial compounds but as anchors for mixed-use "mega campuses," Oklahoma can create sustainable, recurring revenue streams through sales tax generation and tourism, while simultaneously leading the nation in technological expansion.

The Current State of AI Infrastructure Development

The national race for AI infrastructure has been likened to a modern gold rush. While states and private investors are rushing to build massive campuses, local communities have expressed growing reservations.

Strategic Advantages for Oklahoma

The state possesses several characteristics that make it highly competitive for AI expansion:

- **Physical Resources:** Extensive open land and lower development costs.
- **Existing Infrastructure:** Established oil and gas infrastructure and robust transmission capabilities.
- **Location:** Central geographic positioning within the United States.
- **Political Climate:** A strong political willingness to compete for industrial expansion and favorable energy-production capabilities.

Municipal and Community Concerns

Despite these advantages, the traditional model for data center development creates a "Modern Municipal Concern":

- **Resource Intensity:** AI centers consume enormous amounts of electricity, water, and industrial-grade cooling.
- **Limited Long-Term Benefit:** Once construction is complete, these facilities often provide relatively low permanent employment and minimal sales tax generation.
- **Infrastructure Strain:** Municipalities often absorb the costs of infrastructure expansion and long-term utility strain, while tax incentives primarily benefit private corporations.

The Hidden Valley Research: Youth Sports as an Economic Engine

Doctoral research titled *Integrity of the Game vs Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan* has documented Oklahoma's youth sports economy from 2001 through 2025 using the "Hidden Valley" dataset. This research identifies a massive, yet fragmented, economy that currently lacks public accountability.

Key Findings on Oklahoma Youth Sports

- **Economic Fragmentation:** While facilities are packed every weekend, they often appear unproductive "on paper." This is because the infrastructure and liability are public, while much of the operational profit is privatized through independent contractor models.
- **Lack of Transparency:** Many municipal partnerships lack meaningful public reporting structures, leading to a false narrative that youth sports facilities are financial burdens.
- **Underreported Impact:** The true economic activity—including hotel stays, restaurant sales, and retail spending—is often captured by private actors rather than the public entities that funded the infrastructure.

Comparative Analysis: The Texas Model vs. The Oklahoma Model

The proposal highlights a stark contrast in how neighboring states approach sports-driven economic development.

Feature	Texas Model	Oklahoma Model
Strategy	Builds large destination facilities as economic anchors.	Distributes fragmented grants and short-term funding.
Development	Infrastructure expands outward, creating new commercial corridors.	Operations are siloed under local political control with minimal oversight.
Impact	Catalyzes hotels, retail, housing, and increased property values.	Fails to produce transformational results; leads to facility deterioration.
Partnerships	Aggressive use of public-private partnerships.	Outsources operations to private entities without accountability.

The Proposed Hybrid Model: Integrated Mega Campuses

The proposed solution is the creation of integrated mega campuses that pair the high infrastructure investment of AI with the high consumer activity of youth sports tourism.

Components of the Integrated Campus

- AI Data Centers (Industrial Anchor)
- Destination Youth Sports Facilities (Tourism Engine)
- Hospitality Corridors (Hotels and Restaurants)
- Retail and Entertainment Districts
- Workforce Training and Educational Partnerships

Synergistic Benefits

This hybrid approach balances the different economic profiles of the two industries:

- **Infrastructure vs. Activity:** AI data centers provide the massive initial infrastructure investment, while youth sports generate continuous consumer sales tax activity (fuel, food, lodging).
- **Utility Mitigation:** The model suggests innovative resource management, such as utilizing **produced salt water** from the oil and gas industry for AI cooling systems to reduce the strain on freshwater aquifers.
- **Economic Resilience:** Tourism activity creates sustainable recurring revenue, moving beyond the "boom and bust" cycle of one-time construction projects.

Governance Reform and Accountability

A central theme of the proposal is that any new development must be built on a foundation of transparency. The "accountability failures" documented in youth sports must not be repeated in AI development.

Requirements for the New Development Model

To ensure public benefit, the proposal advocates for:

- **Transparent Economic Reporting:** Standardized reporting for all public-private partnerships.
- **Public Dashboards:** Real-time tracking of utility impact, tourism metrics, and revenue generation.
- **State Oversight:** Mechanisms to ensure that economic activity remains accountable to the taxpayers who make the infrastructure possible.
- **Utility Disclosures:** Clear data on how industrial projects affect local resources.

Conclusion: A Vision for Oklahoma's Future

The integration of AI infrastructure and youth sports tourism represents a shift from viewing industrial facilities as "utility-consuming burdens" to viewing them as "economic ecosystem anchors." By aligning industry, technology, and tourism under a framework of strict accountability, Oklahoma can move beyond fragmented political thinking toward a long-term strategic plan that ensures municipalities sustain themselves and taxpayers see measurable returns on their investments.

Regional Development Strategy: The Integrated Mega-Campus Model for Oklahoma

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

1. Strategic Vision: From Industrial Isolation to Economic Ecosystems

Oklahoma currently exists in the "Land Between Opportunity and Accountability." For decades, the state's rural economic development has been defined by a survival-based model: a fragmented landscape of isolated grants, deteriorating infrastructure, and municipal budgets that struggle to keep pace with declining populations. To secure a resilient future, we must pivot from standalone industrial projects toward a visionary, integrated "Mega-Campus" model. Shifting from industrial isolation to holistic economic ecosystems is no longer a choice; it is a strategic necessity for long-term municipal viability in the next technological frontier.

The Mega-Campus Concept The Mega-Campus is a mixed-use regional anchor designed to synthesize high-growth industrial assets with high-velocity community drivers. This model integrates AI data centers—the technological and infrastructure foundation—with destination youth sports tourism, hospitality, and retail corridors. By co-locating these disparate sectors, the Mega-Campus transforms industrial zones into vibrant economic districts where workforce training and educational partnerships link the global technological frontier to the local labor market.

Comparative Advantage Evaluation Oklahoma possesses a unique "Oklahoma-centered" identity that creates a significant national advantage. Unlike competitors constrained by land scarcity or utility bottlenecks, Oklahoma offers vast available land, favorable energy-production capabilities, and expanding electrical transmission opportunities. Our central geographic positioning and existing oil and gas infrastructure provide a physical foundation for scale that few other regions can replicate. By leveraging these assets, Oklahoma can move beyond mere industrial attraction to build a distinct development identity as a global hub for resource-optimized infrastructure.

This transition from isolated land use to integrated ecosystems provides the physical architecture necessary to harmonize the divergent fiscal mechanics of AI infrastructure and sports tourism.

---

2. The Economic Engine: Harmonizing AI Infrastructure and Youth Sports Tourism

The strategic success of the Mega-Campus relies on a reengineered municipal budget that pairs high-infrastructure/low-tax assets with high-activity/high-tax assets. To achieve fiscal sustainability, policymakers must balance the massive capital investment of AI with the high-velocity circulation of consumer spending generated by tourism.

The Consumption-Revenue Imbalance While AI data centers represent a "modern gold rush," their standalone presence creates a critical fiscal gap. These facilities are characterized by a "low-velocity fiscal circulation" once construction concludes. The **Municipal Concerns** identified in the source material highlight a systemic imbalance:

- **Socialized Infrastructure Strain:** Communities absorb the burden of massive electricity and water consumption, fiber demands, and long-term utility strain.
- **Privatized Operational Profit:** Significant tax incentives and abatements often benefit private corporations while providing minimal long-term sales tax generation for the local government.

- **Infrastructure-to-Employment Disparity:** High resource consumption is often met with relatively low permanent employment numbers.
- **Fiscal Stagnation:** Post-construction, the industrial footprint remains large while the recurring tax contribution to the municipal general fund remains modest.

The "Sales Tax Engine" Layer Youth sports tourism serves as the essential counterweight, providing the "high-velocity sales tax circulation" required to sustain a community. By integrating destination-grade sports complexes into the Mega-Campus, the state can capture diverse, recurring revenue streams that offset the industrial burden of AI facilities:

- **Hotel Occupancy Taxes:** Capturing revenue from traveling tournament families.
- **Restaurant and Retail Sales:** Driving continuous spending at local businesses and entertainment districts.
- **Fuel and Transportation:** Generating secondary revenue through local service stations and logistics.
- **Property Appreciation:** Catalyzing long-term increases in land value across the entire development zone.

Strategic Impact Analysis This hybrid model transforms AI facilities from "utility-consuming industrial facilities" into "economic ecosystem anchors." The massive infrastructure investment required for AI—power, water, and connectivity—effectively subsidizes the creation of a destination district. The result is a balanced development where industrial investment builds the foundation, and sports tourism ensures the daily financial health of the municipality.

To sustain this economic engine, Oklahoma must leverage its unique industrial history to solve the national challenges of utility resilience.

---

3. Sustainable Infrastructure: Leveraging Oil & Gas Byproducts for AI Cooling

In an era of rising national concern over aquifer depletion and freshwater sustainability, Oklahoma's path to growth must be rooted in resource optimization. The Mega-Campus model proposes a departure from freshwater reliance, instead positioning the state's oil and gas legacy as a technological solution.

The Produced Water Solution A core innovation of this strategy is the mandate to utilize produced salt water from Oklahoma's oil and gas industry for data center cooling. Repurposing this industrial byproduct is a highly strategic dimension that preserves freshwater systems already pressured by residential and agricultural growth. By decoupling AI cooling from the local water table, Oklahoma enhances rural utility resilience and ensures that industrial growth does not compete with community survival.

Infrastructure Integration Oklahoma is uniquely equipped to facilitate this model through its existing network of energy corridors and transmission capabilities. By repurposing the state's extensive oil and gas infrastructure to move and treat produced water, we can create a "resource-optimized AI corridor."

Environmental Stewardship Impact This approach creates a "competitive moat" that makes the Oklahoma model difficult for other states to replicate. By integrating energy sector byproducts into the AI life cycle, Oklahoma leads a national movement toward circular industrial economies. This demonstrates

that technological expansion and environmental stewardship are not mutually exclusive, positioning the state as the premier destination for sustainable, large-scale AI infrastructure.

Physical infrastructure and sustainable design, however, cannot succeed without a rigorous governance framework to manage these complex public-private partnerships.

---

4. The Accountability Framework: Reform through Transparency

Transparency and measurable reporting are the connective tissues of the Mega-Campus model. Historically, fragmented development has allowed a gap to form between public liability and private profit—a dynamic that must be corrected to secure public trust and long-term viability.

Analyzing the "Hidden Valley" Data Gap The "Hidden Valley" dataset (2001–2025) exposes a systemic failure in the current fragmented model: taxpayer-funded sports facilities frequently appear financially unproductive on paper despite being packed with families every weekend. This occurs because the revenue streams are often fragmented across private actors and independent contractor models operating beyond transparent public oversight. When the infrastructure is socialized but the operational profit is privatized, the public is left with the liability while the community loses the economic return.

The Accountability Mandate To prevent AI infrastructure from repeating the governance failures of the past, the Mega-Campus model requires a formal accountability framework:

1. **Transparent Economic Reporting:** Mandatory public dashboards to track real-time economic impact and ensure "plausible deniability" is eliminated.
2. **Utility Impact Disclosures:** Verifiable data on resource consumption compared to community benefit.
3. **Tourism Metrics and Revenue Tracking:** Standardized reporting of sales tax generation and hotel occupancy to ensure the "sales tax engine" is functioning.
4. **State Oversight Mechanisms:** Centralized coordination to ensure projects meet long-term strategic goals rather than short-term political cycles.

This framework ensures that economic activity remains accountable to the public that made the investment possible.

---

5. Implementation Strategy: The Texas Model vs. The Oklahoma Path

Oklahoma must move away from the "fragmented island" approach and adopt a model of coordinated growth to compete with regional leaders.

Comparative Strategic Analysis

Feature	The Texas Model (Aspirational)	Current Oklahoma Model (Fragmented)
Growth Strategy	Anchor-based; sports facilities drive new districts.	Fragmented grants; short-term funding cycles.
Development	Organic commercial emergence (Hotels/Retail follow the anchor).	Local political control with minimal coordination.
Partnerships	Aggressive, transparent Public-Private Partnerships (P3).	Outsourced operations with limited accountability.
Economic View	Long-term anchor for regional districts.	Viewed as financial burdens on paper; "unproductive."
Coordination	Regional infrastructure alignment.	Repeated cycles of facility deterioration.

Strategic Recommendations for Policymakers

1. **Mandate Statewide Strategic Coordination:** Establish a central authority to oversee the integration of AI infrastructure with tourism engines, ending the era of fragmented local political control.
2. **Reengineer Land-Use Planning:** Move away from isolated industrial zoning in favor of mixed-use "Mega-Campus" districts that prioritize organic commercial growth.
3. **Incentivize Resource Optimization:** Provide specific regulatory pathways for the use of produced salt water in industrial cooling to build Oklahoma's "competitive moat."
4. **Enforce Standardized Transparency:** Require all public-private partnerships to utilize standardized reporting for economic impact and utility usage.

Concluding Summary The Integrated Mega-Campus Model represents a fundamental shift in governance. It reframes the AI conversation from a "technological frontier" to a "community-centered prosperity" model. By aligning technology, tourism, and energy infrastructure under a mandate of transparency, Oklahoma can move beyond survival and build a future where industry remains accountable and prosperity is measurable for every citizen.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Building for the Future: A Comparison of Fragmented vs. Integrated Economic Models

1. Introduction: The Two Paths of State Development

Every state stands at a crossroads in economic development, choosing between two divergent philosophies: short-term survival through reactionary spending or long-term strategic vision through integrated investment. This conflict defines the modern landscape of public infrastructure, where the "Oklahoma Model" and the "Texas Model" serve as the primary competing frameworks.

While one model attempts to sustain communities through localized, disconnected efforts, the other views infrastructure as a foundational seed designed to grow a self-sustaining economic ecosystem. For the economic development strategist, the choice is not merely about what to build, but about the fiscal health of the state for decades to come.

Learning Objective: Learners will evaluate the relationship between integrated infrastructure planning and long-term economic sustainability, contrasting fragmented grant-based systems with "anchor-led" development models to understand how to turn public liabilities into revenue-generating assets.

Texas provides the counter-narrative to traditional maintenance-heavy development, proving that infrastructure can be a revenue anchor rather than a fiscal drain. To appreciate this shift, we must first analyze the mechanics of the fragmented approach.

---

2. The Oklahoma Model: The Challenges of Fragmentation

The "Oklahoma Model" represents a "survival mindset" common in regions where economic development is treated as a collection of isolated events rather than a unified strategy. This approach has been meticulously documented in the **Hidden Valley dataset**, the empirical foundation for the doctoral-level research project: *Integrity of the Game vs. Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan.* This research reveals a system where massive economic activity exists but remains unaccounted for due to structural fragmentation.

The Four Characteristics of Fragmentation

- **Fragmented Grants:** Funding is dispersed in small, disconnected increments, preventing the concentration of capital necessary for transformative, regional-scale projects.
- **Short-Term Funding Cycles:** Development is dictated by immediate political cycles and one-time construction booms, prioritizing immediate "wins" over decades-long sustainability.
- **Local Political Control:** Operations are frequently managed through local politics and loosely regulated contractor models, leading to a total lack of statewide strategic coordination.
- **Lack of Oversight:** Without standardized reporting or public dashboards, there is no mechanism to track if facilities meet economic goals, allowing for "plausible deniability" among elected officials.

The "So What?" of Fragmentation The consequence of this model is a fiscal paradox: a sports complex or industrial site can be bustling with activity, yet appear financially unproductive "on paper." This occurs because the **fragmented contractor model** allows operational profits to be captured by private actors while the public assumes the long-term operational risk and maintenance liability. In this scenario, **infrastructure expansion costs are socialized** while the rewards are privatized.

⚠️ **Warning Sign: The Downward Spiral** When financial transparency is low and data is fragmented, communities enter a cycle of facility deterioration. Infrastructure ages faster than the tax revenue required to repair it, leading to political stalemate and the stagnation of regional growth.

While Oklahoma often struggles with these disconnected cycles, Texas has pioneered an integrated model that utilizes infrastructure as a catalyst for organic growth.

---

3. The Texas Model: Sports Complexes as Economic Anchors

The "Texas Model" is defined by the use of large destination facilities to "anchor" new economic districts. Rather than building to satisfy a localized recreational need, Texas positions infrastructure as the primary driver for a predictable flow of regional and national visitors. This creates a "ripple effect," where the presence of a high-quality destination triggers secondary private investment, turning isolated land into a thriving commercial corridor.

The Texas Anchor Effect

Stage of Development	Focus of Activity	Economic Outcome
Initial Investment	Large-scale Sports Complex	Creates a "Destination" anchor that draws national visitors.
Primary Growth	Hotels & Restaurants	Captures immediate lodging tax and recurring sales tax.
Secondary Growth	Retail & Housing	Drives long-term land appreciation and permanent job creation.
Long-Term Result	New Economic District	Generates a sustainable municipal tax base for local infrastructure.

This model shifts the focus from the facility itself to the "ecosystem" it supports, ensuring that the public investment is the engine for a broader, tax-generating environment.

---

4. Comparative Analysis: Why Strategy Beats Cycles

The fundamental difference lies in how these models treat tax revenue and accountability. The Oklahoma approach often absorbs the liability of infrastructure without capturing the reward, whereas the Texas approach is designed specifically to capture recurring revenue that fuels expansion.

Short-Term Cycles vs. Long-Term Strategy

Feature	Oklahoma (Short-Term Cycles)	Texas (Long-Term Strategy)
Accountability	Fragmented; results are often "on paper" losses.	Transparent; focused on district-wide tax generation.
Revenue Capture	Privatized profits; public absorbs the debt.	Public captures recurring sales tax and lodging taxes.
Infrastructure	Deteriorating; relies on one-time grants.	Expanding; reinvestment fueled by organic growth.
Planning Goal	Fragmented political thinking and survival mindset.	Long-term regional transformation and "anchoring."

In a fragmented model, the taxpayer pays for the building, the building "loses" money, and the community lacks the revenue to maintain the very roads that lead to it. Strategy ensures the taxpayer investment attracts a hotel, the hotel pays taxes, and those taxes fund the community's future. These lessons are now being applied to the next major infrastructure frontier: Artificial Intelligence.

---

5. The Future Hybrid: Merging AI Infrastructure with Tourism

To compete for the massive AI data centers currently being proposed across the U.S., Oklahoma must avoid the "job light/infrastructure heavy" trap of industrial parks. The solution is the **"Integrated Mega-Campus,"** a hybrid model that balances the high utility strain of technology with the high sales tax generation of tourism.

AI data centers are **infrastructure heavy but job light**, consuming massive resources while providing minimal local sales tax post-construction. Conversely, youth sports are **infrastructure light but spending heavy**, generating constant sales tax through tourism. Merging them creates a rebalancing of utility strain versus sales tax generation.

The 3 Pillars of the Integrated Mega-Campus

1. **High-Level Infrastructure (The AI Anchor):** Leveraging Oklahoma's energy resources and land, including repurposing industrial byproducts—such as using **produced salt water** from oil and gas operations for cooling systems—to attract massive technological investment while protecting freshwater resources.

2. **High Consumer Spending (The Sports Engine):** Integrating destination sports facilities into the campus to ensure a continuous stream of consumer activity (hotels, food, fuel) that AI facilities lack.
3. **The Governance Shield (Public Accountability):** Moving beyond the fragmented models of the past by implementing transparent reporting, public dashboards, and state oversight to end "plausible deniability" for officials and ensure the public sees a measurable return on investment.

By integrating technology and tourism, Oklahoma can transform utility-consuming industrial facilities into self-sustaining economic ecosystem anchors.

---

6. Learning Summary: Key Takeaways for the Aspiring Designer

Sustainable growth requires a shift in how we conceive of public assets. The following "Golden Rules" serve as the foundation for a new governance and accountability framework:

Rule 1: Infrastructure Must Be an Anchor, Not an Island. Public projects must be designed to trigger a "ripple effect" of secondary private investment. If a facility does not stimulate surrounding retail, hospitality, and residential growth, it is a fiscal liability rather than an asset.

Rule 2: Prioritize Recurring Revenue over One-Time Booms. Construction jobs and one-time grants are temporary. Long-term viability depends on "Continuous Consumer Sales Tax Activity" generated by tourism, lodging, and the long-term appreciation of the surrounding land.

Rule 3: Governance Reform is the Foundation of Public Trust. To end the cycle of financial opacity, every project must be tethered to a transparent reporting structure. Public infrastructure must produce measurable public value through dashboards and oversight, ensuring that economic development serves the taxpayers, not just private contractors.

Economic Accountability Framework: Overcoming Fragmentation in Oklahoma's Public-Private Development

1. The Fragmentation Crisis: Defining the Oklahoma Development Gap

Oklahoma currently exists in a precarious "Land Between Opportunity and Accountability." While the state possesses vast land, central geographic positioning, and robust energy infrastructure, its economic growth is strangled by a systemic fragmentation crisis. This fragmentation—a disconnect between statewide potential and municipal execution—acts as a primary barrier to local sustainability. When public-private partnerships (PPPs) operate in silos without standardized reporting, the resulting opacity erodes public trust. Citizens increasingly view large-scale infrastructure projects not as community assets, but as predatory arrangements where the public absorbs the "socialized expansion costs" while private interests reap the rewards.

My analysis of the "Public Risk vs. Private Profit" imbalance reveals a parasitic relationship in current development models. Taxpayer-funded facilities are frequently characterized as financial burdens on municipal ledgers, yet they generate significant economic velocity that is siphoned away through independent contractor models. This creates a scenario where the public maintains the grass and pays the utility bills, while private tournament operators and contractors capture the gate fees and concessions without transparent oversight.

The "State of the State": Critical Systemic Failures Based on the research framework "Integrity of the Game vs. Economic Impact (Politics); The Oklahoma Business Plan," I have identified three critical failures that define the current Oklahoma economic reporting landscape:

- **Operational Opacity:** Publicly owned assets are managed by private entities without standardized, transparent reporting, making it impossible to audit the actual flow of revenue versus public expenditure.
- **Fragmented Funding Cycles:** A reliance on short-term, politically motivated grants prevents the formation of cohesive, multi-decade regional strategies.
- **The "Plausible Deniability" Loophole:** The absence of integrated data allows elected officials to claim facilities are "losing money" to justify further privatization or neglect, while ignoring the visible economic activity sustaining the surrounding business community.

This systemic failure necessitates an immediate transition from "survival mode" to a data-driven framework that aligns public purpose with private investment.

2. The Hidden Valley Analysis: Empirical Evidence of Hidden Economic Activity

Traditional municipal reporting is fundamentally broken; it captures costs but ignores velocity. A city clerk's ledger might show a sports complex as a net loss due to maintenance, but that ledger fails to track the mother buying fuel, the team booking ten hotel rooms, or the increase in property value for the adjacent retail strip. This "visibility gap" isn't merely an accounting error—it is a convenient loophole for leadership to avoid accountability for taxpayer returns.

The Hidden Valley dataset (2001–2025) provides the empirical "ground truth" for this disconnect. The data confirms that while municipal sports complexes appear financially unproductive on paper, they serve

as the primary engines for regional hospitality spending. By fragmenting this data—keeping costs public and profits private—Oklahoma has allowed a massive portion of its economy to operate in the shadows.

The Economic Visibility Gap

Reported Municipal Data Points	Actual Economic Drivers
Fragmented, one-time grants	Long-term land and property appreciation
Short-term political funding cycles	Continuous hotel occupancy tax (HOT) revenue
Facility maintenance and "paper losses"	Sustained restaurant, retail, and sales tax velocity
Socialized infrastructure expansion costs	Fuel, transportation, and local service spending

This data confirms that the "loss" reported by many municipalities is an illusion created by fragmented reporting. The "So What?" is clear: without a unified reporting standard, Oklahoma will continue to socialise the risks of development while privatizing the rewards, leaving taxpayers to fund the infrastructure for a "gold rush" they aren't invited to join.

3. Benchmarking Success: The Texas "Anchor" Model vs. Oklahoma’s Fragmented Approach

The strategic difference between regional stagnation and explosive growth lies in the "Anchor" model. Successful development requires a shift from viewing facilities as isolated projects to viewing them as the foundational infrastructure for entire economic districts.

The Texas "Anchor" Model: Strategic Pillars In Texas, destination sports facilities are utilized as economic catalysts for undeveloped land. They do not wait for growth to happen; they build the infrastructure—the "Anchor"—which then drives the organic emergence of hotels, restaurants, and retail corridors. This model leverages public investment to catalyze new commercial districts, ensuring that property values and tax bases expand far beyond the initial facility footprint.

The Oklahoma Failure Point In contrast, the Oklahoma model is defined by fragmentation. We distribute isolated grants and outsource operations to private entities with zero accountability. Without statewide coordination, our facilities suffer from rapid deterioration and financial opacity. Instead of creating new districts, our projects often become isolated financial burdens on local budgets.

Takeaways for Oklahoma Municipal Leaders:

1. **Adopt the "Infrastructure First" Mandate:** Build large-scale destination assets as anchors to attract secondary private investment before the land is fully developed.
2. **Centralize Regional Coordination:** Move beyond local political cycles and implement statewide standards for facility management and performance tracking.
3. **Prioritize Commercial Corridors:** Design every public project with a 10-year plan for hospitality and retail integration to ensure sales tax capture.

4. The Integrated Mega-Campus: A New Standard for Operational Reporting

The solution to Oklahoma's fragmentation is the "Mega-Campus" concept—a hybrid development model that merges high-infrastructure industrial assets with high-consumer-activity tourism. This model balances the resource demands of Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers with the tax-generating power of Youth Sports.

The Balanced Ecosystem AI data centers are the "modern gold rush," but they present a "resource-heavy/tax-light" profile: they consume massive amounts of power and water while generating minimal sales tax after construction. Conversely, Youth Sports ecosystems are "resource-light/tax-heavy": they generate continuous consumer sales tax and hospitality revenue but require the very infrastructure (power, roads, water) that industrial projects provide.

Resource Optimization: The Energy-AI Link A critical component of this strategy—highlighted by Chip Keating during the Pottawatomie County GOP meeting—is the repurposing of industrial byproducts. I am advocating for a **Circular Economy Strategy** that utilizes "produced salt water" from Oklahoma's oil and gas industry for AI cooling systems. By integrating energy-sector infrastructure with AI cooling, Oklahoma can transform a public utility liability into a sustainable industrial asset, reducing freshwater strain and positioning the state as a national leader in resource-optimized technology corridors.

5. The Accountability Blueprint: Mandatory Reporting and Transparency Standards

Transparency is the non-negotiable requirement for the Mega-Campus model. To prevent the continued socialization of expansion costs, Oklahoma must move beyond "plausible deniability" and adopt a rigorous governance model.

The Mandatory Five-Point Audit Protocol I am recommending a mandatory five-point audit protocol for all future public-private development projects:

1. **Public Transparency Dashboards:** Real-time, accessible web portals showing facility performance, gate fees, and revenue distributions.
2. **Real-time Utility Impact Disclosures:** Transparent tracking of water and power consumption to ensure industrial cooling does not inflate residential utility rates.
3. **Standardized Tourism Metrics:** Formal reporting of "out-of-county spend" and hotel occupancy data directly linked to the facility's event calendar.
4. **Shadow Profit Tracking for Private Contractors:** Mandatory disclosure of operational profits for any private entity managing or operating a publicly owned asset.
5. **Measurable Taxpayer ROI Benchmarks:** Clear, pre-defined goals for property value increases and tax base growth that must be met to maintain public incentives.

These standards are designed to stop private corporations from disproportionately benefiting from public incentives. We must ensure that public infrastructure produces measurable public value.

6. Implementation Strategy: Recommendations for Municipal Leaders

Oklahoma stands at the intersection of a technological frontier and a municipal sustainability crisis. To secure our financial future, we must move beyond fragmented political thinking and embrace integrated, long-term strategic planning.

The Municipal Blueprint for Action:

- **Audit Current PPP Contracts for "Shadow Profits":** Evaluate every existing sports and industrial agreement for hidden economic activity and lack of operational transparency.
- **Mandate 10-Year Utility Impact Projections:** Every data center or industrial applicant must provide a decade-long projection of water and power impact before incentives are approved.
- **Transition from "Survival" to "Vision" Mode:** Cease the pursuit of isolated grants. Instead, identify land assets where AI infrastructure and youth sports can be paired to create a self-sustaining tax engine.

By aligning our energy industry, our sports culture, and our technological infrastructure under a single banner of accountability, Oklahoma will not just participate in the next economy—we will lead it. The path forward requires a commitment to transparency that ensures every taxpayer-funded project remains accountable to the citizens who made it possible.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

Educational Concept Paper: The Unified Development Model for Oklahoma

1. Introduction: The Economic Crossroads of Oklahoma

Oklahoma currently occupies a precarious position at "The Land Between Opportunity and Accountability." As a Senior Economic Policy Analyst, I observe a state navigating a dual reality: it possesses the raw assets necessary for hyperscale industrial expansion, yet its rural municipalities are frequently trapped in a state of "survival" rather than sustainable growth. The central challenge lies in the current misalignment of inter-sectoral synergy; infrastructure is often developed in silos, forcing municipalities to absorb significant operational strain without a guaranteed return on investment.

To evaluate Oklahoma's path forward, we must categorize its strategic inventory against its systemic liabilities:

- **Strategic Advantages:**
  - **Vast Territorial Assets:** Abundant open land with low acquisition costs.
  - **Energy Infrastructure Legacy:** Robust oil and gas midstream assets and significant electrical transmission capacity.
  - **Geographic Centrality:** A prime logistical position within the United States, minimizing national latency and distribution costs.
  - **Political Catalyst:** A high degree of executive and legislative willingness to compete for the next technological frontier.
- **Survival Challenges (The Municipal Burden):**
  - **Infrastructure Atrophy:** Road systems and utilities deteriorating faster than current tax revenue can facilitate remediation.
  - **Demographic Erosion:** Rural school districts facing declining enrollment and a subsequent loss of state funding.
  - **Fiscal Fragility:** Municipalities operating under extreme budgetary strain, often exacerbated by a lack of transparent data in public-private partnerships.

The fundamental question of this paper is: **How can industry and community utility be aligned into a single operational framework?** To answer this, we must first analyze the "Modern Gold Rush" of AI data centers.

---

2. Industrial Infrastructure: The AI Data Center Paradox

Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers represent a massive influx of capital, yet they present a distinct paradox for host communities. These facilities are enormous in scale but often deliver a diminishing return once the construction phase terminates, creating a scenario where infrastructure costs are socialized while operational profits are privatized.

The AI Data Center Impact Profile

Input Requirements	Community Return
Electricity: Massive, constant load requirements.	Job Creation: High during construction; minimal long-term FTEs.
Water: Hyperscale industrial-grade cooling demands.	Sales Tax: Minimal generation after initial equipment installation.
Fiber: State-of-the-art high-speed connectivity.	Utility Strain: Risk of rising residential rates due to load demands.
Land: Footprints covering hundreds of rural acres.	Tax Revenue Architecture: Long-term Ad Valorem reliance vs. immediate sales tax deficiency.

The Paradox Explained: While these campuses represent the height of technological investment, they often consume local resources—water, land, and power—without providing the recurring consumer spending necessary to maintain the very infrastructure they strain. To solve this, we must identify a high-velocity "revenue engine" capable of balancing this low-velocity industrial anchor.

---

3. Tourism Economics: The Hidden Power of Youth Sports

Analysis of the "Hidden Valley" dataset (2001–2025) reveals that Oklahoma possesses a massive, albeit fragmented, youth sports economy. The primary policy failure identified is not a lack of economic activity, but a **privatization of operational profits**. Currently, taxpayer-funded facilities appear as financial burdens because revenue streams are often funneled through independent contractor models that operate with high operational opacity and minimal public oversight.

The 4 Critical Sales Tax Drivers of Sports Tourism:

- **Hospitality (Hotels):** Generating consistent recurring revenue through occupancy taxes.
- **Food & Beverage (Restaurants):** Capturing daily, high-volume spending from visiting families.
- **Energy (Fuel Stations):** Benefiting from the high-velocity travel patterns of tournament circuits.
- **Retail & Entertainment:** Spurring secondary commercial activity in local retail corridors.

This fragmentation allows facilities to "lose money" on paper while the surrounding economy thrives invisibly. By merging this consumer-facing activity with industrial infrastructure, we can transition from fragmented silos to a unified development strategy.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026

4. The Unified Model: Mega-Mixed-Use Campuses

The "Hybrid Economic Development Framework" proposes that AI data centers serve as the **industrial anchor** for a "Mega Campus" that incorporates tourism and commerce. This model creates a **Reciprocal Subsidy**: the AI data center provides the massive upfront infrastructure (power, fiber, and land development) that makes a site viable, while the sports complex provides the high-velocity sales tax revenue required to fund the municipal services the data center consumes.

Hybrid Framework Comparison

AI Data Centers (The Anchor)	Youth Sports Ecosystem (The Engine)
High infrastructure/capital investment	High recurring tourism activity/velocity
Massive utility consumption	Massive consumer sales tax generation
Limited long-term tax circulation	Sustainable, recurring economic circulation
Technology-focused workforce	Hospitality and service-sector workforce

Components of a Mega-Mixed-Use Campus:

1. **Industrial Core:** Hyperscale AI Data Centers providing the primary tax base.
2. **Tourism Hub:** Destination youth sports complexes serving as the regional activity anchor.
3. **Hospitality Corridor:** Clustered hotels and restaurants designed for tournament travelers.
4. **Commercial Zone:** Integrated retail and entertainment districts.
5. **Educational Layer:** Workforce training partnerships bridging the gap between local students and tech-sector careers.

The most common critique of this model involves resource consumption, which necessitates a shift toward engineering-led sustainability.

---

5. Technical Feasibility: The Hyperscale Salinity Solution

A primary concern for AI development is freshwater strain. This model proposes utilizing **"produced salt water"**—a pervasive byproduct of Oklahoma's oil and gas industry—as a primary cooling medium. This repurposing addresses the critical issue of **aquifer depletion** while providing a productive use for a byproduct that currently carries high disposal costs for the energy sector.

The "Three-Way Win" for Oklahoma:

- **Energy Sector Resilience:** Provides a productive outlet for industrial byproducts, significantly reducing disposal-related overhead.
- **Technology Sector Sustainability:** Secures a reliable, non-potable cooling source, insulating the tech sector from public backlash over water usage.

- **Community Resource Protection:** Safeguards local drinking water and agricultural aquifers, ensuring long-term utility resilience for rural residents.

This physical integration requires a sophisticated shift in governance to ensure that "plausible deniability" is replaced with rigorous public accountability.

---

6. Governance and Accountability: The Texas vs. Oklahoma Models

Success in the Unified Model requires a transition from the fragmented politics of the past to a model of asset optimization and transparency.

Strategic Comparison: Infrastructure Governance

Feature	The Texas Model	The Oklahoma Model
Strategic Approach	Catalyst-first; anchor facilities built to spur growth.	Fragmented grants and localized silos.
Commercial Growth	Organic emergence of commercial corridors.	Short-term funding and political cycles.
Operational Framework	Public-private district-building.	Operational opacity and outsourced liability.
Economic Result	New economic districts and rising property values.	Deteriorating facilities and financial stagnation.

To ensure the Unified Model benefits the public, Oklahoma must mandate **public dashboards** and standardized revenue tracking. We must eliminate the "independent contractor" model of operational secrecy, ensuring that if public infrastructure absorbs the risk, the public also shares in the measurable rewards.

---

7. Conclusion: Reimagining the Oklahoma Economic Identity

For the policy architect, the conclusion is clear: AI data centers must be viewed as **"Economic Ecosystem Anchors"** rather than isolated, utility-consuming industrial facilities. By aligning technology, tourism, and the energy sector, Oklahoma can evolve from a state of mere survival to a leader in integrated strategic planning.

Key Takeaways for Public Policy

1. **Inter-sectoral Integration:** Industrial projects must be paired with consumer-facing tourism (such as destination sports) to ensure a resilient, diversified local tax base.
2. **Resource Optimization:** Policy must prioritize resource innovation—such as utilizing produced salt water—to protect vital community aquifers from industrial strain.
3. **Governance as Infrastructure:** Large-scale development is only successful when paired with transparent reporting and public-facing metrics, ensuring that state incentives produce a measurable return on investment for the citizens of Oklahoma.

Reimagining AI Data Centers and Youth Sports as a Unified Economic Development Model for Oklahoma

May 19, 2026