

# Project Camellia: Schools Done Right

*Project Camellia delivers immediate benefits for Effingham County Schools by providing significant new funding for our school district and property tax relief to Effingham County families while securing major long-term financial resources for local schools and students.*

## Immediate Tax Relief for Residents

- Direct Tax Savings:** Following the land sale to OpenAI, the ECIDA is proposing \$30 million annually for three years to support property tax relief. This funding will support approximately 2 mills of relief for the Effingham County School District on the school millage rate for the FY27 budget.
- Historic Tax Cuts:** Combined with County relief, and the suspension of the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority (ECIDA) suspension of their 2 mill property tax levy, property owners will see roughly 6 mills of total property tax reduction this year, the largest tax cut in Effingham County history.

## Additional Long-Term Funding Without New Taxes for Residents

Once the data center reaches full buildout (2031–2032), Project Camellia will become the county’s largest local taxpayer:

- Property Taxes:** Will generate a forecasted \$32 million annually directly into the school district’s operating budget by 2031.
- ESPLOST Sales Tax:** Sales tax revenues dedicated to education will scale from \$3.4 million in 2029 to \$10.2 million annually by 2031.

## How Effingham Compares: Doing It Right vs. Doing It Wrong

| Effingham County: Doing It Right                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Other Places: Did It Wrong                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <b>Proactive Funding Protection</b><br>School District leaders collaborated early with the ECIDA and Effingham County Commissions to discuss Georgia’s complex school finance system (QBE, 5-mill share, and equalization grants). This early discussion protected state educational funding while allowing leaders to lower local millage rates.                 | <b>Lost State Educational Funding</b><br>In other communities, leaders didn’t plan ahead together. Sudden jumps in local tax values caught them off guard, causing their schools to accidentally lose out on major state funding and Equalization grant. |
| <b>Investing in Educators</b><br>Provides the tax growth needed to increase teacher and staff salaries, recruit and retain top teachers, and roll back millage rates to provide residents tax relief.                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Strained Budgets &amp; Tax Hikes</b><br>Communities elsewhere are forced to either raise property tax rates on local residents or freeze educator pay to keep pace with demand.                                                                       |
| <b>Next-level Student Opportunities</b><br>Uses new ESPLOST (sales tax) revenue to provide top-tier resources, updated technology, modern classrooms, new buses, and programs never before dreamed of.                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Delayed Upgrades</b><br>School districts in other regions face squeezed budgets, forcing them to delay facility improvements and limit student programming.                                                                                           |
| <b>OpenAI Community Fund</b><br>Separate from tax dollars, OpenAI has committed \$80 million in community benefits over the life of the project, guided by community input and focused on local priorities like education, parks and recreation, workforce development, healthcare, housing, public safety, veterans’ services, and support for working families. | <b>No Dedicated Community Fund</b><br>Developers in other communities build projects without committing a separate, dedicated community fund for local schools and residents.                                                                            |

## Preparing Students for High-Paying Local Careers

In addition to funding, Project Camellia connects classroom learning directly to real-world opportunities through expanded STEM pathways, AI education, work-based learning, and apprenticeships. As the facility creates hundreds of high-paying technology jobs, Effingham County students can build rewarding, high-tech careers right here at home without needing to move away.

**Project Camellia funds our schools, cuts taxes for our families, and prepares our students for the careers of the future — today and for generations to come.**