

#1 in Systems Design Practices — ALEX Intelligence 2026

The Real AI Powerhouses Are Counties

Not nations. Not megacities. County-level ecosystems drive U.S. AI innovation.

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THE DATA

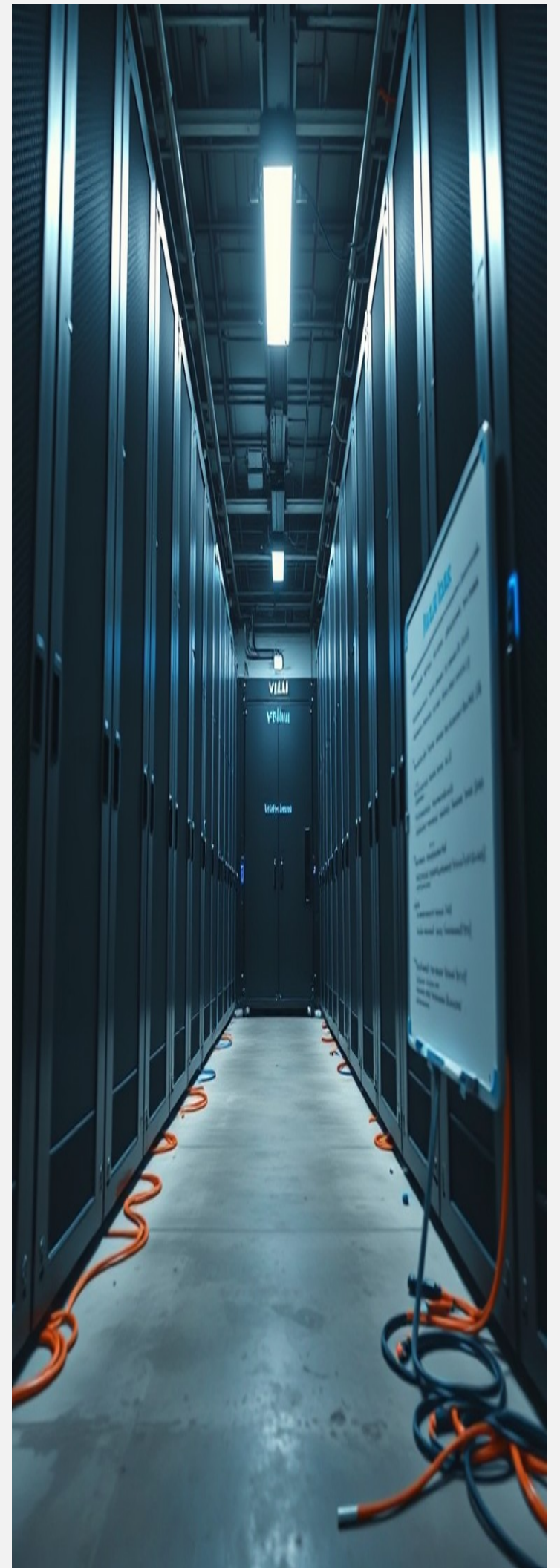
1,759

Systems Design Practices (2022)

Los Angeles County, California leads the nation in systems design services, a key indicator of AI infrastructure maturity.

This number—1,759—is not just a count of firms; it represents a dense, interconnected ecosystem of independent developers, startups, and in-house engineering teams building real-time, embedded, and self-hosted AI systems. The concentration of such activity in a single county signals a shift from centralized cloud dependency to localized, resilient AI ecosystems.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns 2022, NAICS 541512 (Computer systems design services) · ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-10-04-ai-tech-ind-541512-county>



01

Sovereignty Begins Where Code Lives

The highest-ranked counties are not just places with more AI labs—they are where systems design practices are embedded in local workflows. This is where self-hosted models, private RAG pipelines, and on-prem inference are not exceptions but standard operating procedure. Sovereignty isn't a policy choice; it's a spatial reality—built where developers live and work, not where cloud providers host their data.



02

The Hidden Frontier of AI Sovereignty

Counties like Dallas and Harris in Texas—ranked 4th and 6th—show that AI sovereignty is not confined to Silicon Valley. These areas are incubating decentralized, open-weight AI stacks using tools like Ollama, vLLM, and LlamaIndex. The real innovation isn't in the model size, but in the ability to deploy, audit, and control AI within a local network. This is the new frontier: not cloud dominance, but edge resilience.

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