

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has completed its review of the following Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This report contains the NEGRC’s assessment of how the proposed project relates to the policies, programs, and projects articulated in the Regional Plan and Regional Resource Plan. Also included is an assessment of likely interjurisdictional impacts resulting from the proposed development, as well as all comments received from identified affected parties and others during the fifteen-day comment period.

The materials presented in this report are purely advisory and under no circumstances should be considered as binding or infringing upon the host jurisdiction’s right to determine for itself the appropriateness of development within its boundaries.

Transmittal of this DRI report officially completes the DRI process. The submitting local government may proceed with whatever final official actions it deems appropriate regarding the proposed project, but it is encouraged to take the materials presented in the DRI report into consideration when rendering its decision.

Project I.D.:	DRI #4232
Name of Project:	The Shoals Athens
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Athens-Clarke County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for a rezone for a Planned Development in Athens-Clarke County. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 7/10/2024 - 7/25/2024.

Proposed Development

Mallory & Evans, LLC is proposing the construction of 745 residential units and 30,000 square feet of commercial space on an 85-acre site in Athens-Clarke County. The proposed development for a new mixed-use district would include a variety of housing options, pockets of common open space, a commercial plaza, and outdoor gathering spaces. The plan includes a street that could be extended to connect with Lexington Road should the adjacent parcel be developed. It also proposes an extension of the current North Oconee River Greenway system by 1.2 miles, which would connect the neighborhoods and commercial mixed-use areas throughout the entire project.

Currently, the site is undeveloped and wooded. Dekle Lake and Centerline Creek are both located on the site, and the proposed plan includes a 25-foot state waters buffer as well as a 75-foot county buffer from water resources. The parcel numbers are parcel 174 B 001B, 174B 001F, 174B 002, 174B 001A, 174B 017, 174B 001C, and 174D1 010. The project would be completed in multiple phases, beginning along Barnett Shoals Rd and moving eastward. This project’s estimated completion year is 2027.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as both Mixed Density Residential and Traditional Neighborhood on the county's Future Land Use Map (dated 5/2/2023). The Mixed Density land use area is described in the Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan as “residential areas where higher density residential development is allowed and intended. Limited nonresidential uses designed at a neighborhood scale may be incorporated into these areas.” The Traditional Neighborhood land use area is described as supporting “single-family residences, duplexes which resemble large homes, and townhouses. Limited commercial and other non-residential uses designed at a neighborhood scale are encouraged, but only in areas close to principal and minor arterial routes that have good access to transit.” The proposed development is compatible with the future land use in that area, as it would create higher density residential areas with a variety of housing options and commercial space intended to serve the community.

The site is identified as “Developed” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/15/2023). The Regional Plan recommends development that

- Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness
- Elevates public health and equity
- Supports and adds value to existing communities
- Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable
- Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options, and
- Protects natural and historic resources.

Proposed Development’s Compatibility with the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	<p>The project would create a mix of employment opportunities for the community by providing commercial retail jobs as well as live/work units where the ground floor could be utilized for commercial or residential use.</p> <p>Depending on the mix of housing price points and commercial tenets selected, having a mix of residential and commercial uses in this project may enhance economic mobility and competitiveness by placing retail establishments near potential employees and/or customers.</p>
Elevates public health and equity	<p>The project would elevate public health by providing opportunities for residents and visitors to access Dekle Lake and Centerline Creek. The project proposes an extension of the current North Oconee River Greenway system to connect the neighborhood, commercial areas, and lake shore. It also proposes pockets of common open space, a commercial plaza, and outdoor gathering spaces.</p> <p>If some of the housing units have price points that are affordable for workers at the site’s retail establishments, then the project has the potential to advance equity in the community by providing employment opportunities within a walkable distance of housing.</p>
Supports and adds value to existing communities	<p>The proposed project would provide additional housing and retail facilities to the community. It would also provide more opportunities for the public to access outdoor amenities through the multi-use trail and common open space.</p>

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	The proposal includes 745 new housing units and 15 types of housing. Including a wide variety of housing types will likely result in variation in housing costs and values, creating more equitable and affordable housing options.
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	<p>The proposal displays a well-connected internal street and sidewalk network which includes six total connections to the existing roads (three on Barnett Shoals Road, two on Dekle Drive, and one on Park Ridge Court) and one connection to an adjacent, undeveloped parcel that could be extended to connect the development to Lexington Road via Shadybrook Drive. The connectivity of roads and active transportation infrastructure will promote health benefits to residents of the community and reduce the potential for traffic congestion. The local government and developer should consider adjusting the placement of housing units between the Central Neighborhood and The Peninsula to better accommodate a future connection to Woodsong Avenue (parcel 233C1 B099) as well.</p> <p>The site plan includes a 12' wide multi-use path to connect the internal neighborhoods with the greater Athens-Clarke multi-use trail network, as well as sidewalks along internal streets. This will promote pedestrian and bike-friendly transportation throughout the development and to surrounding areas.</p>
Protects natural and historic resources	Dekle Lake and Centerline Creek are located on the site and the plan protects them with a 25-foot state waters buffer and a 75-foot impervious setback. The plan does not propose any development in the floodplain and includes a combination of surface and underground facilities to manage stormwater. It also includes permeable pavers in off-street parking stalls to reduce stormwater runoff and preserve the surrounding environment.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources

The development would be located within areas containing state waters and wetlands. The applicant states that no development is proposed in the floodplain, and that the wetlands would be minimally impacted. The proposed site plan includes on-site detention and retention areas, as well as a 75-foot impervious setback around all waters. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect all other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources. Refer to the attached site plan for any stream, floodplain, and buffer locations.

The chart below summarizes the number of acres within the site area as well as within a one-mile buffer around the site that contains 1) wetlands, 2) conservation land, 3) regionally important resources, and 4) threatened regionally important resources. Please refer to the footnotes for definitions for each of these terms.

Wetland, Conservation, and Regionally Important Resources

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA (%)
SITE AREA 90.6	Wetland Acres ¹	2.9	3.2
	“Conservation Land” ²	90.6	100.0
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	90.6	100.0
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	90.6	100.0
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE 2714.2	Wetland Acres	112.1	4.1
	“Conservation Land”	2,337.4	86.1
	Regionally Important Resource Land	2,086.2	76.9
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	2,337.4	86.1

The Oconee River Greenway System and the Firefly Trail are Regionally Important Resources identified within one mile of this site. Also, land within the proposed development is located within the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network. This network is intended to serve as a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that benefits wildlife and people, supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, links urban settings to rural ones, and contributes to the health and quality of life for the communities and citizens sharing this network. The inclusion of a multi-use trail, increased buffers for water resources, and an undisturbed buffer around the lake seem to incorporate the intention of the Green Infrastructure Network.

Transportation

W&A Engineering completed a traffic impact study that projects 6,919 new daily trips, including 588 AM peak hour trips and 861 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development.

The study evaluated two project scenarios and developed recommendations for each scenario.

- **Scenario 1:**
 - Two driveway connections to the roadway network with primary access on Barnett Shoals Road and secondary access on Park Ridge Ct. Park Ridge Drive to Barnett Shoals Road.
- **Scenario 2:**
 - Three driveway connections to the roadway network with one driveway on Barnett Shoals Road, one driveway on US 78/SR 10 (Lexington Rd) and secondary access on Park Ridge Drive to Barnett Shoals Road.

¹ Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

² “Conservation” land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

³ Regionally Important Resources were identified as a part of the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (2/15/2018).

⁴ This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, 6/15/2023), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and “Developed” and “Developing” Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, 6/15/2023).

Nearby, there is a separate ongoing GDOT road construction project to expand the SR10/US78-SR 10 Loop-Barnett Shoals Road intersection from four lanes to six and add a 20-foot raised median and sidewalks. A new entrance ramp is also set to be constructed directly across from Barnett Shoals Road. Refer to the attached traffic study for more details and the site plan for the location of proposed infrastructure.

As stated previously, the developer and local government should consider adjusting building footprints to accommodate a future road connection to the street stub on Woodsong Drive between the Central Neighborhood and the Peninsula to provide more direct access to Barnett Shoals Road to the rear of the development.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Athens-Clarke County Public Utilities water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.169 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. A 1.2-mile water and sewer line extension would be required to serve the project.

Stormwater Management

An estimated 25.3% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces and 9 stormwater management areas are planned to manage runoff. Refer to the site plan for the proposed location of stormwater management infrastructure.

The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams, associated wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure should be incorporated into the project design. At minimum, the project should be in accordance with the latest edition of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book) and meet all relevant EPD requirements.

Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 94 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual tonnage reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Athens-Clarke County is disposed of in a landfill within the county. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant has not yet determined the project's estimated worth at build-out in 2027 or how much it would generate in local tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County should measure the life cycle costs of the infrastructure needed to serve this project to ensure that they would not be committing to more maintenance expenses than the new tax revenue can cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

Justin Lott, P.E., District Preconstruction Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation

There is project under construction in the area but it should be completed before this project gets started. The PI numbers is 122600- and it is reconstructing the interchange of SR 10 Loop at SR 10/US 78/Lexington Road. There is also a programmed bridge replacement on the SR 10 Loop over CSX railroad just north of the interchange with Lexington Road. I believe the submittal indicated no transportation improvements are needed to serve this development. GDOT District 1 – Traffic Ops can comment further, but verify traffic signals are not warranted on Barnett Shoals at Dekle Drive or any other access points.

Jonathan Peevy, P.E., District Traffic Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation

- The intersection of US 78/SR 10/Lexington Rd at Gaines School should also be considered in this report to assess impacts of traffic from the Lexington area.
- Turning Movement Counts were also collected during the active construction project and did not account for the whole day, only peak periods.
- Driveway 3 will require coordination/permitting from GDOT