

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.

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| Project I.D.: | DRI #3054 |
| Name of Project: | Distribution Center of LIDL Georgia |
| Name of Host Jurisdiction: | Newton County |

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for permits from Newton County. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 02/26/2020-03/12/2020.

Proposed Development

Lidl US, LLC is proposing the construction of an 850,000 sq. ft. distribution center on 115 acres at 3301 Iris Drive next to I-20 in Newton County. Additionally, 275 employee parking spaces, 220 truck courts, and a stormwater detention pond are planned for the site. The project will be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in June 2022. Currently, the site is wooded with wetland conservation areas on the southern side of the lot.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The Newton County Comprehensive Plan (dated 6/27/2018) states a preference for nodal instead of linear development along I-20. This site sits within the Cedar Shoals Character Area (see Newton County Character Area-Future Development Map-dated 6/27/2018), which lists industrial buildings as a compatible use in the area, provided that such development is of sufficient quality to be “compatible with the historic character of the old mill and historic mill village” of Porterdale. Modern warehouses generally do not match the character of old, historic mills. However, this project takes place over four miles from the City of Porterdale’s historic mill and it is not located on any of the major thoroughfares that lead into the city, so the impact of a modern design may be minimized by the location. Given the inconsistency between the proposed design and the vision

for that character area, it is recommended Newton County consult with Porterdale to mitigate any negative effects on the historic character of the area.

The site is identified as “Developing” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update 2018 Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). No Regionally Important Resources are identified within one mile of the proposed site. However, the site is categorized as one of the Areas Requiring Special Attention because of the potential for rapid development in the area and the location adjacent to Yellow River tributaries. Quality Community Objectives for Areas Requiring Special Attention include: resource management, efficient land use, creating a sense of place, and providing transportation options. This project will bring economic development to the area, but is unlikely to provide a sense of place or be a place that is accessible via multiple transportation options. Managing sensitive resources like nearby streams and wetlands appropriately will depend on following proper state and local stormwater regulations and design guidelines. Newton County should ensure that the proposal generates enough tax value to pay for the cost of the public infrastructure and services that will serve the site.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project will impact on-site wetlands. The applicant indicated that project is not expected to affect the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountains and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources. The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 20 wetland areas (totaling 74 acres) located within one mile of the site, including approximately eight acres within the proposed site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update 2018 Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 50 acres as “Conservation” within one mile of the site.

The submitted site plan shows an intermittent stream running in a northwesterly direction before emptying into a perennial stream (creek) that flows in a southeasterly direction and forms much of the western and southern site boundary. The access road will need to cross the intermittent stream, and the stormwater management facility will border the creek. The building will be sited adjacent to and above the flood plain. A 25-foot stream buffer will be observed, as required by state law. This stream flows into the Yellow River, Jackson Lake, and the Ocmulgee River so it is important for the project to take special care to avoid adverse impacts to the wetlands and stream corridor.

The developer estimates impervious surfaces will cover approximately 75% of the site. A stormwater management area including detention pond(s) will be constructed to manage runoff and a 25-foot stream buffer will be observed, as required by state law. A wall, approximately 15-feet in height, will be constructed where the building sits closest to the flood plain. Considering the extensive impervious surfaces proposed adjacent to a sensitive stream corridor, increased buffers and incorporation of low impact development techniques beyond minimum state and local requirements should be considered. At the very least, all state and local stormwater regulations and best management practices should be adhered to.

Initial estimates indicate 200-230 trucks will enter and/or exit the site per day in addition to the trips made by 270 employees. The developer intends to improve Iris Drive to ease access for trucks. However, those improvements are not shown in the site plan. No peak hour trip estimates nor other proposed/recommended improvements were provided. A full traffic study is currently being performed and final trip estimates and infrastructure recommendations will be made when this study is complete. Newton County should work with the developer to ensure proper roadway and curb and gutter improvements are made adjacent to the property to mitigate the effects of increased truck traffic in the area.

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewerage Authority with an estimated daily demand of .07 MGD for water and .03 MGD for wastewater. These demands can be covered by existing capacity, and no water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

Once the project is completed it will be valued at an estimated \$100,000,000 and generate approximately \$1,418,120. The site will cover approximately 115 acres so the estimated tax-value-per-acre is only \$12,331. This modest value may not cover the costs of the public infrastructure and services needed to serve the site over the long term. The costs of maintaining public infrastructure over multiple life cycles should be calculated and weighed against the tax revenue generated by the project to ensure that Newton County does not commit more resources to servicing the property than they receive in tax revenue.

Comments from Affected Parties

Natural Resources Group, Atlanta Regional Commission

OUT OF REGION DRI

**Distribution Center of LIDL Georgia
City of Covington, Newton County
Natural Resources Group Review Comments
March 02, 2020**

The proposed project is located in the South River watershed and is located downstream of the Atlanta Region and the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District jurisdictions. It does not drain into and is not within any water supply or other watershed in the Region or the Water District. Therefore, the Natural Resources Group has no comments on this DRI.