

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 #3105
Name of Project:	Cedar Shoals Mixed-Use
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Porterdale

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request for permits, water and sewer connections, and variances from the City of Porterdale. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 07/20/2020-08/04/2020.

Proposed Development

Infinity Homes and Development is proposing the construction of a mixed-use development on a 257-acre site between the Covington Bypass, Highway 81, and the Yellow River. The proposal includes 1,218 residential units (720 apartments, 142 townhomes, and 356 detached single-family homes), commercial parcels fronting Highway 81 and the Covington Bypass, plus a recreational trail and kayak launch. The project would be completed in multiple phases with an estimated completion date of 2025. Phase One, consisting of 90 single-family lots, the main street from the Covington Bypass, and an emergency access from Highway 81, would be completed in 2021. Currently, the site is partially wooded with wetland conservation areas next to the Yellow River at the southern edge of the lot. Significant portions of the site were cleared for a previous project that was never constructed.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The City of Porterdale's Zoning and Local Historic Districts Map (dated February 2016) shows the property is zoned for R3 Multi-Family Residential District and C-G General Commercial District. This site contains four character areas (Character Areas City of Porterdale Comprehensive Plan, 2016), including Conservation, Mixed-Use, Commercial Corridor, and Neighborhood Residential, plus a parcel labeled as Potential Annexation. According to the site plan, townhomes and detached single-family houses would be located in the

Neighborhood Residential Area, multi-family housing would be located in the Mixed-Use Area, and future commercial sites would be laid out in the Commercial Corridor and the Potential Annexation Area. Several houses and one commercial site will border the Conservation Area, but from what has been submitted, it does not appear that development (except for a stormwater pond) is proposed within the Conservation Area. It appears that the land uses are generally consistent with each character area. The City of Porterdale Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that all development be “compatible with the historic character of the old mill and historic mill village” of Porterdale. The applicant did not provide any elevations, renderings, development standards, or other documentation demonstrating what the proposed development will look like. It is impossible to determine whether this development will fit in with the historic character of Porterdale’s old mill and mill village. Without compatible building material, layout, streetscape, and other design standards, a project of this size is potentially a threat to Porterdale’s historic character. The City should insist on quality design as a condition of approval.

The site is identified as “Developing” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update 2018 Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). The property also intersects with an area labeled as a Threatened Regionally Important Resource on the Areas Requiring Special Attention map (dated 6/7/2018). The Regional Plan recommends development meet various Quality Community Objectives such as proper management of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas, efficiently using land to minimize the infrastructure burden on the local government, providing multiple housing and transportation options through quality land use and design decisions, and creating a sense of place. The Regional Plan also recommends ensuring waterways are not compromised by using low-impact development methods, green infrastructure, and Smart Growth principles like compact development. A project of this size in such close proximity to a Regionally Important Resource (the Yellow River) requires proper mitigation. Inadequate stormwater management would likely result in pollution and sedimentation of the Yellow River and the onsite streams both during construction and after completion of the project. Due to the large scale of the project and the close proximity to a sensitive Regionally Important Resource, the NEGRC recommends that additional stormwater management and stream protection measures, beyond state and local minimums, be required. Increased buffer requirements, consistent with those required by the Newton County Watershed Protection Overlay District, and low-impact development measures, including green infrastructure and minimization of impervious surfaces, should be incorporated into the design of the project. Best practices, as identified in the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book), should be used.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would impact wetlands on site. 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 two acres of wetlands located on site and an additional 210 acres within one (1) mile of the site. On the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan’s Regionally Important Resources map for Newton County (dated 8/3/2018), the entire site is identified within the Conservation area known as the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network, intended to protect the Yellow River. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update 2018 Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies an additional 3,185 acres of Conservation area located within one (1) mile of the site, also affiliated with the Yellow River.

The developer estimates impervious surfaces would cover approximately 30% of the site. Twenty (20) detention ponds will be constructed to manage runoff, and minimum stream buffers will be observed, as required by state law, with the following five (5) exceptions: the proposed three (3) road crossings within the site, an existing sewer easement through the center of the site (multiple new streets will cross the easement), and the proposed trail to the kayak access on the southern end of the site. The submitted site plan does not specify the width of the buffers, but state law requires a minimum of 25' feet. Greenspaces and a trail connection to a kayak access point on the Yellow River are also proposed. As mentioned previously, increased buffers, green infrastructure, and low-impact development measures are necessary to ensure the proposed development does not negatively affect the water quality of onsite streams and the adjacent Yellow River. As submitted, the proposal is not compatible with the Regional Resource Management Plan.

Thomas & Hutton conducted a traffic impact analysis that estimates the project would generate 13,301 new trips. During the AM Peak hour, an estimated 682 new trips would take place. During the PM Peak hour, an estimated 871 trips would be generated. The developer intends to add deceleration lanes to ease traffic flow, but those improvements are not shown in the site plan. The large number of new vehicle trips could create noticeable congestion on the existing local street network. The Regional Plan recommends that real estate development be constructed with multiple transportation options in mind. This means that new streets should be "complete" as defined in the NEGRC's Complete Streets Guide. That is, they should be safe, comfortable, interesting, and useful for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, the project's street network should avoid circuitous and dead-end streets while maximizing the number of connections with surrounding land parcels (including stubs to undeveloped property). Finally, the commercial component of the mixed-use project should contain businesses that are attractive to and easily accessed by the people living in the residential component. Otherwise, the project will fail to meet the intentions of the mixed-use category of development.

The applicant estimates the project would generate 360 tons of solid waste annually, and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste.

Water would be provided by the City of Porterdale with an estimated demand of 1.02 MGD. The applicant indicated that sufficient capacity exists to meet this need and no water line extension is required. Wastewater disposal and treatment would be provided by the Newton County Water and Sewage Authority with an estimated demand of 1.0 MGD. This demand can be covered by existing capacity, but a 1.8 mile sewer line extension would be needed to serve the site. Newton County, in particular, should measure the life cycle cost of the sewer extension to ensure this project will create enough tax revenue to maintain this infrastructure in perpetuity.

The project is estimated to create \$140,000,000 in taxable value and generate \$790,000 in annual tax revenue. However, when measured as revenue-per-acre, this project would generate \$3,074 per acre. This may not be enough to sustain the infrastructure and services necessary for this project. The City should measure the life cycle costs of serving this project with the projected tax revenue to ensure that they do not commit to more maintenance and services than they can afford.

Comments from Affected Parties

Kedrick Collins, Georgia Department of Transportation

D2 TRAFFIC OPS - CEDAR SHOALS COMMENTS

DRI # 3105

- Access along SR 81 must satisfy GDOT requirements in accordance to policy 6755-8 (Rules and Regulations for Driveway Encroachments Control)
- It is recommended that a signal plan be included in the initial encroachment request for SR 81 to ensure utility conflicts are resolved upfront and adequate right of way is obtained for future signal installation.
- It is recommended that the local municipality (Newton County and/or City of Porterdale) be responsible for providing a signal warrant analysis periodically (2-year intervals) to determine the time when the signal is warranted.
- It is recommended that the local municipality (Newton County and/or City of Porterdale) be responsible for the signal installation on SR 81 when signal warrants are satisfied.
- Need to provide a queue analysis for the left and right turn lanes.
- Roundabout feasibility study is required.
- Page 5 mentions minor street volume for a signal being a combination for left and rights. This could be reduced with a dedicated right turn lane.
- We need access plan/ SOP if one hasn't already been done. Additional access would hurt the case for signalization.
- Ensure location can meet sight distance requirements for all proposals.
- Provide 24-hour count distributions at all locations in addition to the peak hours.
- Ensure that the calculated growth rate is correct. Calculated internally and varied between 2.5% - 4.2% depending on what the start/end date was.