

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 #3286
Name of Project:	Fowler Farm
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Auburn

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for a rezoning, water connection, construction permit, and annexation into the City of Auburn. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 4/23/21 – 5/8/21.

Proposed Development

Clayton Properties Group is proposing construction of 529 housing units and a 3-acre commercial tract on a 170-acre site on Apalachee Church Road in Barrow County (parcel numbers: XX014-001, XX012-004). The project would be broken into 355 detached houses and 174 townhomes. Additionally, four stormwater management ponds and a 1.75 acre amenity area would be constructed. The initial phase of the project would be completed by September 15th, 2024, and the overall project would be completed by September 15th, 2026. Currently, the site is a farm with several chicken houses and open fields. This farm would be replaced by the proposed residential subdivision.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is not located on Auburn’s Comprehensive Plan because it is not within city limits. The adjacent properties contain subdivisions within the city limits and are classified as “Single-Family Residential” on the Auburn Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Map (dated 10/18/18). The proposed project would have a similar character to those subdivisions and is generally compatible with the Comprehensive Plan.

The site is identified as “Suburban Neighborhood” on the Barrow County Comprehensive Plan’s Future Development Map (dated 10/24/18). The intent of this area is to, “Preserve established neighborhoods and

create quality new residential development that is consistent with surrounding suburban densities. [...] Future development will be consistent with single-family homes at low to moderate densities (1.0-2.3 dwelling units/acre).” The Plan encourages high quality building materials and site design, maintenance of tree cover, and open space within new subdivisions. No illustrations or descriptions were submitted to judge the quality of materials by, but the rest of the proposal appears consistent with the Plan.

The site is identified as “Developing” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). The Regional Plan recommends development that matches the region’s workforce, prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure, creates a sense of place, builds a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure, creates diverse and affordable housing, and compliments existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. It is unclear if the lifecycle costs of the new infrastructure have been considered and there are no non-automobile transportation options included in the proposal or available in this area. The overall proposal does not build in a compact pattern, create a sense of place, or build diverse housing options. The Regional Plan recommends that projects be built on existing infrastructure, but this proposal would necessitate new wastewater treatment infrastructure.

The Regional Plan also identifies the site as an Area Requiring Special Attention. Specifically, the site sits in “Conservation” areas that are considered “Threatened Regionally Important Resources.” In addition to the previous recommendations, the Plan also encourages projects that steer development away from sensitive areas, protect sensitive environmental resources (especially by setting them aside as park and recreation areas), enlist natural features to enhance the site, minimize parking, facilitate multi-modal transportation, and make use of green infrastructure. While the applicant does not propose construction in the 100-year flood plain surrounding the Apalachee River, the scale of the project could create adverse impact, through stormwater runoff and construction activities, on the Apalachee River—a Regionally Important Resource. Overall, the project is not consistent with the Regional Plan.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would impact the floodplains of the Apalachee River. The applicant indicated that the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountain and river corridors, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources would remain unaffected.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies approximately four acres of wetlands onsite and 156 acres of wetlands within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 170 acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 1,362 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. The Apalachee River, a Regionally Important Resource, forms the southwestern border of the site and its associated riparian buffer is identified as part of the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018). There are 167 acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 1,030 acres of Regionally Important Resource land within one mile of the site. Based on the fact that the entire property is in a Conservation area, this site may not be suited for large-scale development without extensive mitigation measures.

An estimated 70% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and four retention ponds are planned to manage stormwater runoff. The developer would be required to maintain a 50-foot stream buffer plus an additional 25-foot impervious surface buffer. The applicant stated that a 100-foot buffer would be required

along the Apalachee River; however, that buffer is not identified on the submitted site plan. Even with the buffers, the significant impervious surface coverage could generate runoff that would damage the River. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing river, streams, and associated wetlands and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site, including incorporation of low impact development measures. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, 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.

Traffic estimates, prepared by PRIMUS Engineering Inc. (dated 4/15/2021), estimate the project would generate 3,968 new trips overall, including 380 AM peak hour trips and 328 PM peak hour trips. The project would be accessed through one entrance on Apalachee Church Road, and a new left-turn lane is proposed to serve the project. The lack of multi-modal transportation options means that all of the proposed trips would be in an automobile and this could significantly increase congestion on the surrounding street network. The developer should consider adding street stubs to connect with future development and incrementally create a street grid that can distribute traffic and reduce congestion.

The project would be served by the City of Auburn's water system with an estimated daily demand of 0.132 MGD. No water line extension would be necessary and sufficient capacity is available to serve the project. Barrow County's wastewater system would serve the site with an estimated demand of 0.132 MGD. However, the applicant states that insufficient wastewater treatment capacity is available, and that a new sewer line of undetermined length would need to be constructed to serve the site. The developer states that they would work with the Barrow County Wastewater Department to coordinate service. The Regional Plan recommends that future development should be built on existing infrastructure to maximize the financial return on that piece of infrastructure before expanding the infrastructure network.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$171,925,000 at build-out in 2026 and generate \$1.5 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1 million and generate approximately \$8,824 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the City 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

Georgia Department of Transportation, Alan Hood, Airport Safety Data Program Manager

The proposed Fowler Farm development is 5.75 miles east of the Gwinnett County Airport – Briscoe Field, and outside any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

However, if any construction equipment exceeds 200' above ground level, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration according to the FAA's Notice Criteria Tool found here (<https://oeaaa.faa.gov/oeaaa/external/gisTools/gisAction.jsp?action=showNoNoticeRequiredToolForm>). Those submissions for any associated cranes may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notifications, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impacts of the project on protected airspace associated with the airports and advise the proponent if any action is necessary. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development.

Atlanta Regional Commission, Greg Giuffreda, Plans Review Program Manager
(see below)



Gwinnett

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May 7, 2021

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Re: Development of Regional Impact- Fowler Farm City of Auburn (DRI# 3286)

Staff have reviewed the Regional Review Notification (Review) prepared by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission regarding the proposed construction of 529 housing units on a 170-acre tract that will be rezoned and annexed into the City of Auburn.

The proposed development will occupy 170 acres along Apalachee Church Road in Barrow County. The parcel tract numbers are XX014-001 and XX012-004. The site is currently zoned AG (Agriculture) and requested zoning is to PSV (Planned Suburban Village). The overall project would be completed by September 15, 2026.

A detailed site plan with EPD-mandated buffers, impervious surface setbacks, and demarcation of detention ponds and wetland buffers was provided.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation

The project is anticipated to generate 3,968 vehicular trips a day which will impact Highway 29. From analysis of the site plan there appears to be only one vehicular access point to this development. When fully constructed, the traffic flow may be challenging. Gwinnett County Department of Transportation has no comment on this DRI.

As part of the Gwinnett County Trail Master Plan, there is a proposed regional greenway trail known as the Piedmont Pathway that has been proposed to connect to Barrow County along the Georgia Power corridor which passes through this development parcel. We recommend that connection to this trail be explored as part of the subdivision design in coordination with Barrow County.

Water Supply and Wastewater

Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources does not have any comments on water or sewer.

Stormwater Management

Gwinnett County recommends that all work, at a minimum, be in accordance with the Gwinnett County Stormwater Management Manual.

Gwinnett County appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposed development, and sincerely hopes that these comments will be given full consideration as the review process moves forward. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding Gwinnett County's comments on this issue.

Best regards,

Cyndi Sloan, Planning Division Director
Gwinnett County Department of Planning and Development