

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 #3239
Name of Project:	Project Fortune
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Pendergrass

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for permits from the City of Pendergrass. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 6/03/21 – 6/18/21.

Proposed Development

49th Street Properties LP is proposing construction of at least three million square feet of warehousing in three buildings on a 291-acre site along US Hwy 129 North in the City of Pendergrass (parcel: 092 001, 092 030). The project would be completed in one phase by June 2025. Currently, the site is undeveloped. Should significant changes to the proposed uses or size of the project be proposed following this DRI Review, an additional review will be required.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “Industry Corridor” on the City of Pendergrass Comprehensive Plan’s Character Areas Map (dated 11/09/2017). The Plan states the Industry Corridor area is “intended as an employment center, attracting high-end industry” and encourages warehousing and larger-scale commercial development within the character area (p. 17). The Plan does note that sidewalks and bicycle facilities should be provided along rights-of-ways, with buffers, berms, or other techniques to screen developments, reduce noise, and minimize light pollution in this character area. It also promotes the use of internal, interconnected transportation networks in order to reduce the need for multiple access points into a development and lists “[protection] of riparian areas and existing ecosystems through enforcement of buffer and tree canopy requirements” as an implementation measure (p. 18). C-2 and LI are listed as compatible zoning categories. The project appears to

be consistent with the land use proposals in the Plan, but the lack of a site plan makes it difficult to assess whether the project meets the intent of the Character Area.

The site is identified as “Developed” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018) and an area of “Rapid Development” on the Regional Plan’s Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map. 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. The lack of a site plan makes it difficult for the NEGRC to assess whether the project meets the Plan’s development recommendations. Generally, warehouse developers should attempt to build projects that do not create a fiscally unsustainable burden for the local government and develop the site in a way that allows for multiple transportation options.

No Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed project, according to the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan’s Regionally Important Resource Map (dated 08/03/2018).

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would likely impact wetlands and floodplains. The applicant stated that the developer will pay compensation credits and obtain an Individual Permit through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to offset the impacts to onsite wetlands. The applicant also stated that the developer would provide a “No-Rise” condition report since floodplains would be impacted. The applicant indicated that the project is not expected to affect other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, or historic resources.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 51.5 acres of wetlands onsite and 613 acres of wetlands within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 51 acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 1,243 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. The 1,243 acres of “Conservation” land include 331.5 acres that are part of the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network, as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018).

An estimated 75% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The applicant stated that three above-ground stormwater detention ponds are planned to remove 80% of the total suspended solids and provide water quality storage and channel protection. No additional details nor a site plan showing proposed stormwater infrastructure were provided.

The lack of a site plan makes it particularly difficult to assess the environmental impact of the proposal. The size and scale of the project could have significant adverse impacts on a site with a significant amount of environmentally sensitive land. Given the significant amount of environmentally sensitive land on or adjacent to the site, the developer should go above and beyond standard environmental protection measures to mitigate impact to the area. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing wetlands and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. Low impact design measures, like bioswales and green roofs 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.

No traffic study has been performed for the project; Peak Hour traffic estimates were provided on the DRI Additional Form. The project is expected to generate 106 AM and 156 PM Peak Hour trips. No average daily trip estimate was provided, nor were truck traffic estimates. The applicant stated that right-turn lanes will be needed to serve two access drives into the project and that a traffic signal may be added at the US Hwy 129 – Glenn Abby Lane intersection at buildout. No site plan was provided so it is unknown where the two access drives would be located, how the proposed turn lanes would be configured, and the location of any proposed infrastructure within the site.

The project would be served by the Jackson County water and sewer systems with an estimated daily water supply demand of 0.65 MGD and sewerage flow of 0.30 MGD. The applicant indicated that these demands can be covered by existing capacities and that no line extensions would be needed to serve the site. The applicant estimates the project would generate 15-20 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. No hazardous waste would be generated.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$140 million at build-out in 2025 and generate \$175,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$481,000 and generate approximately \$601 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

None received.