



DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Final Report

Northeast Georgia Regional Commission • 305 Research Drive, Athens, Georgia • www.negrc.org

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 #3315
Name of Project:	The Oaks Development
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Porterdale

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request for a Character Area map amendment and a rezoning from the City of Porterdale. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 05/28/21—06/12/21.

Proposed Development

Infinity Homes and Development, LLC is proposing redevelopment of the existing Oaks Golf Course into a mixed-use development, including 692 residential units (332 single-family attached and detached units, 360 multi-family units), approximately 27 acres of commercial development (including 143,000 sq ft of retail with a grocery store anchor), and potentially a 9-hole executive golf course. In addition, surface parking lots, interior roads, open spaces, and other associated infrastructure and amenities are proposed to serve the project. The proposed development would occupy property totaling 270.02 acres along the east side of Crowell Rd and the north side of Brown Bridge Rd, bordered by the Yellow River to the east, in the City of Porterdale (parcels: P044 061, P043 056, and P044 050). Currently, the site serves as an 18-hole golf course, with associated cart paths, parking areas, and clubhouse. Ponds and large, wooded areas also exist onsite. Two easements (that appear to be power) cross the site: one on the southeastern edge and one vertically through the eastern side of the site. The project will be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2025.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as a mixture of Character Areas on the City of Porterdale Comprehensive Plan's Character Areas Map (dated 12/02/2020). The majority of the site is identified as "Active Recreation Area." Appropriate zoning categories and land uses for that area include Commercial Neighborhood and recreation, with

preservation of open space, environmental conservation, and plan for future growth identified as some of the community development objectives. The Comprehensive Plan presents a review of incentives and other programs as well as development of a redevelopment plan for the area as implementation strategies for the Active Recreation Character Area.

Portions of the site are identified as “Conservation” Character Areas (mostly on the northern half of the proposed project). This Character Area is intended to protect the Yellow River and other environmentally sensitive resources in the city; appropriate zoning categories and land uses for these areas are recreation, conservation, and low impact residential uses.

Two more Character Areas are identified onsite: “Commercial Node” on the northwestern tip and “Commercial Corridor” on the southern end, at the intersection of Crowell and Brown Bridge roads. Both Character Areas encourage high-density mixes of retail, office, services, and restaurants, and require that development “be in character with historic downtown Porterdale (p. 34-35).” General Commercial District, Office Institutional District, and residential as part of mixed use development are identified as appropriate zoning categories and land uses for both Character Areas. The Comprehensive Plan identifies development of employment opportunities and attraction of appropriate businesses as community development objectives for both Character Areas; environmental protection and conservation, and creation of a sense of place and identity are also listed for Commercial Corridor areas. Implementation strategies for both Character Areas include ensuring that new development “is compatible with the existing architectural style and character of Porterdale,” and that “adequate water and sewer service [is available] to the area (p. 34-35).”

The project appears compliant with the plan to protect the Yellow River through buffers and conservation space. The most intense construction would take place on the portions of the property that are furthest away from the river. The Plan encourages high-density mixes of a variety of commercial uses to create a node that is architecturally compatible with the character of Porterdale. As submitted, the site is designed according to auto-centric suburban standards. While it cannot be determined whether the proposed structures will be architecturally consistent with Porterdale’s character (since no elevations were provided) the overall layout is not consistent with the walkable mill town that forms Porterdale’s identity. Specifically, surrounding the apartments and commercial buildings with large parking lots negates any opportunity to create a node with a sense of place that resembles historic Porterdale. Reducing the amount of parking and re-locating the commercial buildings to form a “main street” or a central, walkable promenade would help create the node that the Plan calls for.

The site is identified as “Rural” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). In addition, portions of the site are identified as areas of Rapid Development and containing Threatened Regionally Important Resources per 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 proposal does bring several types of housing including what appear to be rear-loaded townhomes and detached single-family houses. This will help create a stronger sense of place and appeal to a larger demographic than if the project only provided one type of housing. As noted above, the commercial portion of the site needs improvement if it is to create a node with a sense of place that is easily accessible for multiple types of transportation. The residents of the proposal would have difficulty accessing the businesses because of the extensive parking areas and would also be discouraged from walking or biking due to the lack of safety and visual interest in that area of the development. Creating a

commercial “main street” would be much more effective at drawing people to the site and helping residents easily access nearby businesses. The developer should also consider adding more ingress/egress points to improve access to the site.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant indicated that the project will likely affect floodplains stating, “there is a possibility that one of the existing golf fairways would realign through a portion of the floodplain, but no grading would occur in the area” (see Environmental Quality section of Form 2). The project is not expected to affect any of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, or historic resources.

The site is within one mile of the Yellow River, a Regionally Important Resource according to the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources. The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 30.6 acres of wetlands onsite and 555.3 acres of wetlands within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 248 acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 3,436.5 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. A total of 109.9 acres of Regionally Important Resources (RIRs), including sections of the Yellow River and the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network, are identified onsite by the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources. A total of 1,319.3 RIR acres are identified within one mile of the proposed project.

An estimated 20% of the site would be preserved as open space although the site plan shows up to 50% of the site could be open space. Due to the conceptual nature of the current proposal, the exact impervious surface cover is unknown. The applicant stated that the development will conserve most of the undeveloped land of the existing golf course, along the Yellow River, to mitigate the project’s impacts on stormwater management. The site plan shows large areas of greenspace adjacent to the river. There are also numerous water features shown. No buffers or callouts identifying stormwater infrastructure or protective measures appear on the site plan and no specific details were provided. The site plan also proposes large forested buffer areas along the streams; however, no legend, notation, or labels identify them as buffers or areas to be protected. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the adjacent river, streams, associated wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. The Yellow River serves as a significant point of interest for the area and heightened measures should be taken to protect the water quality, along with ongoing monitoring during and after construction. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, raingardens, and permeable pavers, 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; the applicant provided trip generation estimates for the project, at buildout. The full project is projected to produce 448 AM Peak Hour and 750 PM Peak Hour trips, with an estimated average daily total of 9,879 trips (see attached trip generation calculations spreadsheet). No transportation improvements are currently planned. The site plan shows four (4) access driveways planned along Crowell Rd to serve various portions of the development. The site plan does not show any bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure; it is unclear whether any is proposed.

The project would be served by the City of Porterdale water and sewer systems, with estimated daily demands of 0.35 and 0.3 MGD each, respectively. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity and that no line extensions would be required to serve the project. The applicant estimates the project

would generate 360 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 an estimated \$215 million at build-out in 2025 and generate \$850,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$926,000 and generate approximately \$3,148 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

Shena Applewhite, Newton County (see attached)

Eva Kennedy

From: Shena Applewhaite <sapplewhaite@co.newton.ga.us>
Sent: Monday, June 7, 2021 4:15 PM
To: Eva Kennedy
Cc: Judy Johnson; Stephen Jaques
Subject: Re: Request for Comment: DRI#3315 (The Oaks Development) City of Porterdale
Attachments: Concept BB @ Crowell Road (1).pdf

Good afternoon Ms Kennedy,
I have included feedback from our Fire Marshal's Office as well as an attachment from the Transportation Department.

Please see feedback from Newton County below.

Transportation Department

- 1) The proposed project will need to accommodate the attached planned intersection improvements at Brown Bridge Road and Crowell Road.
- 2) A traffic study will be required to determine the type of upgrades required at each site access point.
- 3) An additional access point is needed near Ram Drive on Brown Bridge Road.
- 4) A 30 ft wide Access Easement/Right of Way is needed along the Yellow River in the floodplain starting at Ram Drive and ending at the northern property line to accommodate the Yellow River Trail project.

Planning and Zoning

- 1) The project's location is adjacent to the Almon Overlay in the County. In order to maintain the character of the area the project's design and build out should reflect the development standards in the Almon Overlay such as its architectural features, sidewalks (on Crowell & Brown Bridge Rds.), other pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity (the section to the north appears to be disconnected from the development)
- 2) An added access point on Brown Bridge road would address any life safety issues should Crowell road become inaccessible for any reason. This would also improve traffic flow and accessibility within the development.
- 3) Upgrades at the access points (left turn lane, decal lane etc.) should also be considered.
- 4) Along the northern boundary line of the development, it appears that green spaces on portions of properties located in the County are included in this development? Could clarification be provided as to whether this is accurate and if so is this green space being used to calculate densities in the development?

Fire Marshal's Office

We have noted just some of the properties that may need special attention:

- 1) Water- It is important to review the availability of adequate water, not only for sewage, but also for service as well as firefighting operations (hydrants and water flow for this amount of residents and commercial property)
- 2) Traffic- (Exit Access and Egress) There are enough entrances and exits for the property. However, it is of note that the traffic will all converge out into one street, Crowell Road. Serious problems may arise and could cause inadequate exit egress and access
- 3) Parking- Does the Commercial property have adequate parking?
- 4) Road Width- There are concerns with regard to the roads being able to sustain our current fire apparatuses.

Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us