

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 #3681
Name of Project:	Hog Mountain Site
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Jefferson

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for annexation, rezoning, and three variances from the City of Jefferson. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 5/10/22–5/25/22.

Proposed Development

Oakmont Pacolet Acquisitions, LLC, is proposing construction of two warehouses totaling approximately 1,613,750 square feet on a site zoned A-2 and LI in unincorporated Jackson County. The proposed development would occupy property totaling 125 acres at 1250–1700 Hog Mountain Road, approximately 1.2 miles northeast of the intersection of Hog Mountain Road with US-129. The parcel numbers are 079 022, 079 022 01, 079 023, 079 023A, 079 028, and 079 028A. The developer is requesting that these parcels be annexed into the City of Jefferson. Additionally, three stormwater detention ponds, 619 standard parking spaces, and an unspecified number of truck trailer parking spaces would be constructed. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in late 2023 or early 2024. Currently, the site contains five houses, several outbuildings (garages, sheds, and agricultural structures), and a road (Hickory Chase Drive), but the applicant states that the property has been vacant and undeveloped for many years. One parcel (079 028), has been platted as 32 lots, but no homes have been constructed there. Part of the site is undeveloped woodland and part is open grassland.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is not included in the City of Jefferson’s Comprehensive Plan because the site is not currently included in the city limits; however, the site is adjacent to an area designated as “Industrial” on the Future Land Use

Map (dated 4/2020). The Industrial use description states that “in most cases, the LI, Light Industrial zoning district is the most appropriate category” for this area, and warehouses and distribution centers are listed as acceptable uses. While this site is not specifically addressed in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, annexing this site and rezoning it to LI would be a logical extension of the City’s Future Land Use Map, based on the uses specified on the map for adjacent sites.

The site is identified as “Urban” (U) on Jackson County’s Character Areas Map (dated 12/2/2020). Industrial uses are described as “permitted and encouraged in locations per plan” within the Urban Character Area. The site location is also identified as “Industrial” on Jackson County’s Future Land Use Map (dated 9/10/2020). The Plan’s industrial land use policies include recommending that industrial development be: confined to relatively level topography; possess adequate water and sewer service; have access to arterial streets; avoid creating excessive noise, odor, light, or hazardous conditions; limit impervious surface coverage to less than 60% of the site within water supply watersheds and other sensitive areas; generate high levels of employment per acre; and make use of industrial park and campus designs for the site. Some of the Urban Character Area Policies listed in the Comprehensive Plan include that development should be connected to public sanitary sewer as a prerequisite for development, that all land developments in this Character Area are strongly encouraged to provide sidewalks, and that land developments must demonstrate availability of public facilities at the time of development or within a reasonable period of time thereafter. According to the applicant, these conditions for sewer connections and public facilities would be met either at the time of development or upon completion of the City of Jefferson’s future wastewater treatment facility; however, no sidewalks are indicated on the site plan.

The Comprehensive Plans of the City of Jefferson and Jackson County both specify that harsh or abrupt changes of land use or character are to be avoided, and that if such changes cannot be avoided, “the transition should be facilitated with special design techniques, step downs in intensity or density, and/or conditions of approval related to building height, building setbacks, buffers, and limitations on incompatible operating characteristics.” The land immediately to the east of the proposed project site is designated as “Mixed Use” on the County’s Future Land Use Map, and most of the land south of the project site is designated as “Residential” on the County’s Future Land Use Map and as part of the Suburban Character Area on the County’s Character Areas Map. In accordance with the Transitions policy included in the Comprehensive Plans of both the City and the County, it is recommended that any industrial facility built at this location include some significant buffer elements along the southern and eastern site boundaries to facilitate the transition from to the adjacent future mixed-use and residential land uses. The site plan includes a “natural buffer” along the site borders. The resolution of the submitted site plan is too poor to be able to read the proposed width of these natural buffers, and no description of these buffers was provided with the application, so it is not possible to evaluate whether these natural buffers would sufficiently facilitate the transition to the adjacent future residential and mixed use areas.

The site is identified as “Developed” 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. The applicant states that the current workforce is suitable for the project. At this time, it is unclear whether the project prices in the lifecycle costs of infrastructure and provide public services than it receives in tax revenue. This project would require water and sewer line extensions, so the proposal does not align with the Regional Plan’s recommendation to build on existing infrastructure. Including sidewalk stubs and or bicycle access to connect the project site with the

Suburban Character Area to the south and mixed-use site to the east is recommended to facilitate non-vehicular transportation for employees between the site and future residential areas.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The site plan identifies three existing small wetland areas and an existing stream that originates onsite and flows in a southeastern direction. The applicant states that the project will fill these wetland areas and portions of the stream. The applicant states that permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and State Environmental Protection Division would be obtained for such impacts, and the developer has requested variances from the City of Jefferson to reduce the required 50-foot buffers around streams and wetlands on a portion of the site. Before granting such variances, it is recommended that the City work with the developer to determine whether there are any possible alternative site configurations that would better protect this sensitive resource. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountains and river corridors, floodplains, and historic resources.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies zero wetlands onsite and 84 wetland areas are located within one mile of the site; however, as noted above, the site plan identifies a stream and multiple wetland areas on the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies zero acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 121 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes zero acres of Regionally Important Resource (RIR) land onsite and 52 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site, as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018). No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

Lumin8 Transportation Technologies completed a traffic impact study that projects 2,560 new daily trips, including 250 AM peak hour trips and 279 PM peak hour trips from the proposal. Recommendations from the traffic study include installing a traffic signal at the intersection of Hog Mountain Road and Valentine Industrial Parkway/Possum Creek Road with added turn lanes, implementing timing optimizations for three coordinated traffic signals, and implementing minor street stop controls and right turn lanes into each of the site's four driveways along Hog Mountain Road.

The project would be served by the City of Jefferson water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.03 MGD for each system. The applicant states that this water demand can be covered by existing capacity, and that no water line extension is required to serve this project. The applicant also states that sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is not available to serve the proposed project, as the spray irrigation system currently serving the site is approaching capacity, but that the City of Jefferson is in the process of expanding capacity by building a wastewater treatment facility, which will serve the site. The applicant states that sewer will be extended an unspecified length from the north site of Hog Mountain Road and that this project is also intended to be served by a gravity sewer line to be constructed. The applicant estimates the project would generate 2,000 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. All waste generated in Jackson County is disposed of at out-of-county facilities, with nearly all of its municipal solid waste (MSW) being sent to a landfill in Banks County. No hazardous waste would be generated.

An estimated 60% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. Three detention ponds to manage stormwater runoff are shown on the site plan. Refer to the site plan for the proposed location of stormwater management infrastructure. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams, associated wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and

downstream from the site. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure 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.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$90 million at build-out in 2023 or 2024 and generate nearly \$1.2 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$720,000 and generate approximately \$9,400 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

Jason Dykes, Assistant District Engineer / District Traffic Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation

The intersection of US 129/SR 11 @ Hog Mountain will need to be studied as part of this DRI. We are already experiencing queueing issues for the south bound left turn lane on to Hog Mountain.

John Røgeberg, Site Development Services Coordinator, Economic Development, Athens-Clarke County Unified Government

We are hopeful that Jackson County will work on their zoning & land use and lift their residential housing moratorium soon. Where will the workers for these facilities live?

Jamie Dove, Public Development Director, Jackson County (see comment form, below)

DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Comments Form

Project Name: **Hog Mountain Site**

Project I.D.: **DRI-3681**

Name of Commenting Organization: Jackson County, Georgia

Address: 67 Athens Street, Jefferson, Georgia 30549

Contact Person: Jamie Dove, Public Development Director

Telephone No.: 706-367-5908

Do you believe your jurisdiction will be affected by the proposed development? Yes NO No

Please describe the effects (positive and/or negative) the proposed project could have on your jurisdiction:

****It must be noted that this property has not been annexed into the City of Jefferson at this time.****

(1). All state waters must be protected by a minimum of a 75 foot undisturbed buffer and they shall be monitored during construction to assure no damage occurs by sedimentation. All streams on-site must be shown on the site plan. The provided site plan does not seem to account for all streams on-site. DRI #3681 makes reference that "wetlands" and "other environmentally sensitive resources" will be affected by the proposed project. All design efforts should be required to avoid these areas. (2). With this annexation the Jefferson's City Limits will be on both sides of Hog Mountain Road therefore all future road maintenance and / or road improvements will be the responsibility of the City of Jefferson. The Development of Regional Impact #3681 packet indicates that a Traffic Study was done. All improvements listed in the Traffic Study should be required for the project. (3). Building setbacks for Light Industrial projects in Jackson County are as follows; 50 feet in the front, 20 feet on the sides and 40 feet in the rear. These are the minimum building setbacks and if the City of Jefferson's building setbacks are more those should be enforced. (4). The Jackson County minimum required buffers adjacent to the surrounding properties zoned A-2, Agricultural Rural Farm District and R-2, Medium Density Residential District is 120 feet. This is the minimum buffer width required and if the City of Jefferson requires a wider buffer then that buffer width should be enforced.

Form Completed By: Barry Edgar

Title: Planner

Signature: _____

Date: 5/10/2022

Mail Comments to: Carol Flaute
E-mail: cflaute@negrc.org

Comments Due By: **5/25/2022**