



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 #3831
Name of Project:	Williams Residential
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	The City of Covington

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for rezoning from M-2 (heavy residential) to CR (corridor residential) with an overlay. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 10/5/22–10/20/22.

Proposed Development

JBW Investments LLC is proposing construction of 768 residential housing units on a 122-acre site in the City of Covington, Georgia. The proposed development would be located along Flat Rock Road between Gregory Road and Baker Lane in Covington, Georgia. Of the 768 proposed residential units, 396 would be multi-family apartment units and 372 would be townhomes. The townhome portion of the site would include two greenspaces totaling 3.2 acres and an unspecified number of on-street parking spaces. The multi-family portion of the site includes a 1.1-acre greenspace/amenity area, 525 parking spaces, a leasing office/clubhouse, a residential common area, and a gated entrance. In total, approximately 65 acres of the site would be greenspace (53% of the total). Approximately 61.5 acres would be preserved as “passive recreation area greenspace.” This passive recreation area includes an existing lake and dam. The plan proposes using the existing lake as a detention pond and creating a water quality pond at the southeast portion of the apartment complex. The site would be accessible via three proposed entrances connecting to Flat Rock Road, Gregory Road, and Baker Road. Currently, the site is mostly pastures with a large lake and a small number of trees. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2026.

This development would be located on the northern portion of a site recently reviewed for DRI #3758: Covington Industrial Park, which proposed construction of 4,081,792 square feet of industrial warehouse,

manufacturing, and e-commerce space on a 478-acre site. The developer now proposes replacing approximately 1,666,784 square feet of industrial space on the northern industrial section with a separate residential development of 768 units.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified on the City's Future Land Use Map (dated 11/28/17) as "IND – Industrial." In the City's comprehensive plan, Industrial is described as "property used for warehousing, distribution, trucking, and manufacturing." The proposed site is not compatible with the existing future land designation, as residential use is not included in the industrial definition. All surrounding parcels that lie within the city are also designated as industrial in the City's Future Land Use Map. However, land to the west and southwest of the site has existing housing units, even though its future land use designation is "industrial." Additionally, the site parcel abuts land in Newton County that is identified in the County's Character Areas map (dated 6/27/18) as the "Flint Hill" character area. The vision for this character area is "a mixture of rural communities tied closely to the preservation, recreation of the Lake Varner Reservoir, and walkable conservation style residential communities with urban town centers," and appropriate land uses included agriculture, residential, parks and recreation, and conservation. Therefore, although the proposed development is not compatible with the City's future land use designation of "Industrial" on and surrounding the site, it is congruent with the neighboring Newton County "Flint Hill" Character Area.

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 complements existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to fill the demand created by the proposed project. No information was provided in the application that would enable determination of whether the proposal prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure. The site is more compact than a standard single-family residential neighborhood, as it includes both townhomes and multi-family apartment buildings. However, it does not entirely build on existing infrastructure, as servicing the site will require an unspecified water line extension and approximately 4,000 linear feet of additional sewer lines. The proposed development does provide housing choices with two townhome sizes and apartments. However, the site plan completely separates the townhomes and the apartments into two distinct sections and further divides them with a gated entrance to the apartment section. There are no proposed pedestrian or vehicular access points between the two parts of the site. Instead of separating housing types into separate sections of the site, dispersing the apartments and townhomes throughout the site could create a better mix of diverse housing types throughout the site. The site design should provide additional connections between adjacent streets when possible, as this will improve circulation throughout the site and provide all residents with better mobility throughout the site. The site plan does include sidewalks along all streets in the development, which promotes pedestrian safety in the development. The developer could add trails through the passive recreation areas to promote pedestrian and bicycle circulation between the residential area and Flat Rock.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the proposed site would likely affect the Alcovy water supply watershed, in which the project site is located. The site proposal includes a 100-foot stream buffer and a 150-foot impervious setback around the existing lake and stream. The developer proposes to retrofit the existing lake for a detention pond. The applicant also states that there are isolated wetlands located on site, which the project would be designed around. The applicant states that no historic resources would be impacted. However, there is an existing

cemetery located to the south of proposed street “A” near the entrance to the site along Flat Rock Road. The applicant states that all other environmental quality factors including significant groundwater recharge areas, protected mountains, protected river corridors, and floodplains would not be impacted.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 7 wetland acres onsite and 123 wetland acres are located within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 7 acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 1,172 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. This “Conservation” land includes 7 acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 100 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. Portions of this acreage is 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). No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site. 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.

WMB Engineering completed a traffic impact study that projects 4,789 new daily trips, including 365 AM peak hour trips and 439 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The traffic study recommends adding a roundabout at the main entrance to the site at Flat Rock Road. The traffic study also recommends considering adding a traffic signal at the intersection of GA-142 and Flat Rock Road in the future as needed.

The project would be served by either the City of Covington or Newton County water system (both mains are present) and would be served by the City of Covington sewer system. The applicant estimates that the project would demand 0.579 MGD of water and would produce 0.768 MGD of sewage. While there is sufficient water supply capacity to serve the project, the project would require a water line extension that would either extend from Flat Rock Road or from the existing water line that runs through the site. The project would also require approximately 4,000 linear feet of additional sewer line, and the city would need to upgrade its pipes and pump stations surrounding the site to ensure that sewage produced by the project can be transported to the City’s wastewater plant. An estimated 50% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and the developer proposes building one water-quality pond and retrofitting the existing lake as a detention pond to manage stormwater runoff. The applicant estimates the project would generate 1,400 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$175,000,000 at build-out in 2026 and generate \$2,600,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1,434,426 and generate approximately \$21,311 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

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

The Williams Residential project is approximately 1 mile north east of the Covington Municipal Airport (CVC), and is located outside of any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

However, if any construction or construction equipment reaches 882' MSL or more, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration. That may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notification, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impact 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.