

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 #3837
Name of Project:	New Water Supply Wells
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Town of Braselton

Background

Because this project includes new public water supply wells, a DRI review is required during the local government’s approval process for this project. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 10/14/22–10/29/22.

Proposed Development

The Town of Braselton is proposing the construction of two new municipal water supply wells on a 66-acre site on Charlie Smith Road in the Town of Braselton. The project site’s parcel number is 124 001. The project would consist of two small well buildings, piping, pumps, controls, treatment equipment, and a water line to the town’s water distribution system. According to the applicant, the project would add approximately 270,000 gallons per day in additional water supply for the town. The two wells will be located towards the southern end of the parcel, and the water line connecting to the town distribution system will run from one of the wells towards the existing waterline on Charlie Smith Road. Currently, the northern end of the site is wooded, and the southern end of the site is primarily a field. The Mulberry River runs along the parcel’s southern boundary.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The Town of Braselton includes both a Future Land Use Map and a Character Areas Map in its comprehensive plan. The site is identified as “Utilities” on the town’s Future Land Use Map (dated 7/29/2020). The plan’s “Utilities” land use designation includes treatment plants, cell phone/communication towers, power lines/substations, and waste management. The site is identified as “Conservation & Residential” on the town’s Character Areas Map (dated 7/29/2020). The “Conservation & Residential” character area is described in the plan as “Braselton’s primary residential and conservation areas,” where the town prioritizes “efforts to

preserve the natural environment.” Recommended land uses in the “Conservation & Residential” character areas include low-density single-family residential, medium-density residential, commercial (retail), civic/institutional, parks/recreation/conservation, and utilities. This project is consistent with the Town’s future land use and character area map designations, as the proposed land usage is consistent with the land usage specified in both maps. The project would not detract from the conservation or residential characteristics of the area, as the land would be left mostly undisturbed and would not include activity that detracts from the intended characteristics.

The site is identified partially as “Developing” and partially as “Rural” 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. It is not possible from the information submitted to evaluate whether the proposal prices in the lifecycle costs of infrastructure. New infrastructure would be needed to convey well water to the Town of Braselton’s water infrastructure. It is important during construction of the new pipeline that land disturbance be minimized, especially because of the project’s proximity to the Mulberry River. While this project would not create housing on its own, expanding wastewater treatment capacity would enable the development of additional housing within the area served by the water system.

The proposed public water supply well project is compatible with the Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan (dated June 2017), which lays out a roadmap for implementing specific measures to ensure wise use and management of the waters in the Upper Oconee Watershed over a period of 35 years. The plan includes the development of new groundwater wells as an action that supports the plan’s goals to ensure a sustainable, adequate water supply, provide sufficient revenues to maintain a high level of service while promoting water conservation and efficiency, and balance economic development, recreation, and environmental risks. The plan also included a *Groundwater Availability Assessment*, which concluded that the region’s aquifers are generally sufficient to meet forecasted groundwater demand based on projected population growth.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the development is in a water supply watershed used by the City of Winder and the City of Auburn but that the project will have no negative impacts on the water supply watershed. The applicant also states that the site is partially located in a floodplain and that all essential facilities on site would be constructed four feet above the floodplain elevation. The applicant should take all necessary precautions to minimize the possibility of the groundwater wells being impacted by floodwaters from the Mulberry River, as pollutants in floodwater can contaminate water wells. Climate change will cause future flooding events more severe, so the Town should ensure that the elevation of well water infrastructure is well above the current required elevation. The applicant states that all other listed environmental factors, which include significant groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountains, protected river corridors, and historic resources will not be impacted by the development.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies zero wetland acres onsite and 90 wetland acres within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies zero acres of “Conservation” land onsite and 622 acres of “Conservation” land within one mile of the site. This “Conservation” land includes zero acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 688 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. 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). Thompson Mills Forest and State Arboretum, which is a Regional Importance Resource located in Jackson County, is within one mile of the 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.

The applicant projects an increase of one trip to the facility by Town staff each day. No traffic study was performed for the proposed project.

The project would supply approximately 270,000 gallons of water per day for the Town of Braselton. The project would not produce any sewage flow. The site would require approximately 3,000 linear feet of additional water line to connect the project to the town's water line. The applicant states that less than 1% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and no infrastructure will be required to manage stormwater runoff. No solid waste or hazardous waste would be generated by this project.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$1,035,000 at build-out in 2023 and be worth approximately \$15,700 on a per-acre basis. The project would not directly produce any tax revenue since it would be a town-owned project. Prior to approval, the Town should measure the life cycle costs of the infrastructure needed to serve this project to ensure that the overall economic and community benefit of the project outweighs construction and maintenance costs.

Comments from Affected Parties

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

This proposed development of two new municipal water supply wells for the Town of Braselton with associated piping, pumps, controls, treatment equipment, and water line to distribution system on a 66-acre tract is more than 10 miles from any civil airport, and is located outside of any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact any airport.

However, if any construction or construction equipment reaches 200' AGL 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.