

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 #3834
Name of Project:	Oconee Beach Club
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Morgan County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s application to Morgan County for rezoning and a variance. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 10/6/22–10/21/22.

Proposed Development

Oconee 300, LLC, is proposing construction of a mixed-use development. The proposed development would occupy property totaling 292 acres on Reids Ferry and Wood Roads, near Lake Oconee in unincorporated Morgan County (parcel 065-073). The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in December 2031.

The proposed development would include 250–300 single family homes and cottages, 100–150 attached housing units, and either a 75-room hotel with glamping areas and a cottage or 50 multi-family residential housing units. The development would also include approximately 150,000 square feet of non-residential uses, including dining, a marina, a waterfront beach, indoor and outdoor gathering areas and amenities, a boat storage shed, a farm, and a garden market. Additionally, the site plan shows three gated entrances (two on Reids Ferry Road and one on Wood Road), a boat ramp, boat storage, 100-foot county buffers around state waters and wetlands, and a 40-foot minimum Georgia Power setback from Lake Oconee. Currently, the site is forested with a mixture of pine and deciduous trees.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified on Morgan County’s Character Areas Map (dated 07/08/2022) as “Lake Community.” According to the County’s Comprehensive Plan, this character area “has rural character and includes a mix of residential and small commercial uses and water recreation opportunities along Lake Oconee.” For this character area, the Comprehensive Plan encourages a mix of housing types and discourages commercial uses. The primary land uses identified for this character area include recreation and conservation, residential (low, medium, and high densities), neighborhood commercial, lakeshore town center overlay, agriculture, and undeveloped areas left in their natural state. The proposed project is mostly compatible with the character area description, as summarized in the table below.

CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH DESCRIPTION
Rural character; agricultural use	Some portions of the site would have rural character and/or agricultural uses, including the farm, market, vegetated buffers between the areas proposed to be developed and neighboring roads, and the glamping area (if the glamping option is selected for the southernmost portion of the site instead of residences).
Mix of housing types and residential densities (low, medium, and high)	The proposed project includes a mix of housing types and densities, including single family detached housing, single-family attached housing (i.e., townhomes), and possibly multifamily housing (if that option is selected for the southernmost portion of the site instead of glamping).
Small commercial uses; neighborhood commercial; lakeshore town center overlay	A hotel is not typically considered a “neighborhood commercial” use, as it is not focused on catering to the vital needs of neighborhood residents. However, hotels are consistent with the lakeshore town center overlay, which is also listed as a primary land use for this character area.
Water recreation opportunities	The proposed project includes a marina, boat storage, a boat ramp, and a beach for recreation on Lake Oconee.
Conservation uses; undeveloped areas left in natural state	This is potentially an area of concern for this project, with potential impacts to wetlands, floodplains, and other environmentally sensitive resources noted by the applicant. It is essential that the developer carry through with their stated intention to carefully review whether the bald eagles recently observed on the site are preparing a nest, and if so, to adjust the project plan as needed to protect the nesting site. Also, it is essential that the developer maintain careful consideration of the boundaries of sensitive environmental areas to minimize negative effects to their natural state.

The site is identified 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 table below and on the next page summarizes the proposed project’s compatibility with these recommendations.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Match the region’s workforce	The applicant states that the regional work force is sufficient to fill the demand created by the proposed project.
Price in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure	No information was provided with the application that would enable evaluation of this recommendation.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Create a sense of place	The proposed amenities, such as the beach and market, as well as the proposed greenspaces depicted within and between residential blocks, might help create a sense of place. No details were provided with the application that would enable evaluation of whether any building or design elements would contribute to creating a sense of place.
Create diverse and affordable housing	The proposed project includes a variety of housing types and lot sizes. No information was provided about affordable housing, but given the project's proximity to the lake, market rate home values and rents are likely to be higher than comparably sized homes in other parts of the county.
Build a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure	The clustering of residential areas and inclusion of attached and multi-family housing contributes to this site having a somewhat compact development pattern. However, this project is not proposed to be built on existing infrastructure, as it would require new roads, new wells and possibly a new water tower to expand the water system's capacity, and water and sewer line extensions.
Complement existing and planned transportation options	<p>The site plan and traffic study indicate three vehicular access points, including entries along both Reids Ferry and Wood Roads. It is generally recommended to align new vehicular entrances with existing ones on the other side of the road when possible. The alignments of the two entrances along Reids Ferry Road should be considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Main entrance (Full Access Driveway 1)</u>: as proposed, this entrance is located directly across Reids Ferry Road from a home and its driveway. One option for the County and developer to consider is whether the main entrance could instead be aligned with Spinnaker Road, and if so, whether doing so would be beneficial from a traffic flow and/or safety perspective. • <u>Full Access Driveway 3</u>: in the figures in the traffic study, it appears that this entrance, as proposed, is slightly offset across Reids Ferry Road from an unnamed private road leading to several residences. It would be preferable, from a safety perspective, for this entrance location to align directly across from the existing private road instead of offset from it. <p>On the site plan, there appear to be paths throughout the open spaces between residential blocks. These are not labeled, but it is likely they are either sidewalks, multiuse paths, or trails. This bicycle or pedestrian connectivity throughout these open areas is a positive attribute of this proposal and should be retained in the final site plan. It is recommended that sidewalks also be included along Reids Ferry and Wood Roads, for pedestrian connectivity to adjacent land uses. It is also recommended that bicycle parking areas be included at each of the destination amenity areas within the site, such as the beach and market.</p>

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project is likely to affect water supply watersheds, wetlands, floodplains, and other environmentally sensitive resources. They note that a field survey identified six intermittent streams, three perennial streams, six wetland areas, and open water, and that permitting could be required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers based on the final selection design. In addition, while a May 2021 aerial survey of the property revealed no evidence of active bald eagle nests on the property, two bald eagles have been seen on the site in recent weeks, so as the applicant notes, careful review will be needed to determine whether these two eagles are building a nest on the property. Bald eagles as listed by the State of Georgia as "threatened." The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the remaining environmental quality factors

identified on the DRI Additional Form, including groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, or historic resources.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies zero wetland acres onsite and 898 wetland acres within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 280 acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 3,580 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes 110 acres of Regionally Important Resource (RIR) land onsite and 2,621 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. This acreage is a combination of Lake Oconee, an RIR, and a portion of the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network, as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018).

The proposed development 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, efficient land use, 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.

A&R Engineering completed a traffic impact study that projects 1,641 new daily trips, including 100 AM peak hour trips and 140 PM peak hour trips from 350 proposed residential units and 75 proposed hotel rooms. The proposal includes three full access driveways: two on Reids Ferry Road north of Spinnaker Road, and one on Woods Road. The study recommends that all three entrances be stop-sign controlled, with Reids Ferry and Wood Roads remaining free flow. In addition, the study recommends a left turn lane and deceleration lane for entering traffic at Driveway 1, one of the entrances on Reids Ferry Road. As noted above, it is recommended that sidewalks be included throughout the development, that the alignments of the two Reids Ferry Road entrances be evaluated to make sure the alignment with existing roads is optimized, and that bicycle parking be installed at each destination amenity.

The project would be served by Piedmont Water's water and sewer systems, with an estimated daily demand of 0.20 MGD for the water system and 0.18 MGD for the sewer system. The applicant states that the water demand cannot be met by the systems existing capacity, but that it is understood that groundwater wells would need to be installed and connected to the existing water tower located across the road from the proposed development. The applicant also states that a hydrology report will need to be conducted to determine whether an additional water tower will be needed. A water line extension would be required to serve this project, the length of which is unknown at this time. The applicant states that wastewater demands can be covered by existing sewer capacity (see attached letter from Piedmont Water) and that a sewer line extension of approximately 4.6 miles of force main is anticipated.

The developer estimates that 15.8% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The applicant states that most of the site drains directly to Lake Oconee, detention basins will be provided to limit peak flow rate, and 100-foot buffers will be maintained adjacent to all state waters and wetlands. The attached site plan shows the demarcation between northern and southern drainage basins, states that stormwater practices as detention basins (not shown) will be included for the northern drainage basin, and states that stormwater detention should not be needed for the southern drainage basin because stormwater there drains to existing onsite stream basins before flowing into Lake Oconee. The applicant indicates that permitting from the Army Corps of Engineers might be required, depending on final site design. When selecting the final site design, options

that minimize disturbance to streams, wetlands, and open water should be given preference over more disruptive options, if it is feasible to do so.

The applicant estimates the project would generate 200 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity is not available to handle this waste. The applicant indicates that trash collection will be provided by a private contractor and that it has not yet been determined where the trash will be hauled to. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority's *Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (2021-2031)*, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Morgan County is disposed of in a landfill in Barrow County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$550 million at build-out in 2031 and generate \$5.4 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1.9 million and generate approximately \$18,500 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County 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

Greg Boike, Director of Public Administration, Middle Georgia Regional Commission

I would expect somewhat significant impacts to Middle Georgia from this development, specifically in Putnam County, since the site is within around 0.5 miles from the county line. From a transportation impact, the increased traffic on Reid's Ferry Road in Morgan County (Parks Mill Road Putnam County) may lead to a higher rate of collisions given the 55mph speed limit on the road today. The two communities may also need to plan collaboratively for greater Fire/EMS usage from the Sugar Creek Fire Department.

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

This Oconee Beach Club project is approximately 11 miles south west of the Greene County Regional Airport (3J7), 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 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.