

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 #3874
Name of Project:	Russell Tract Active Adult Mixed Use
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	The City of Winder

Background

The developer’s request for rezoning and annexation initiated the review. The entire project site is currently in unincorporated Barrow County and would be annexed into the City of Winder. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 12/2/22–12/17/22. Barrow County was accidentally omitted from the notification of the beginning of the comment period for this DRI. On 12/19/22, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission sent Barrow County the comment package. On 12/21/22, Barrow County notified the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission that they did not wish to comment on this DRI.

Proposed Development

Reynolds Realty Construction, LLC is proposing construction of an active adult mixed-use community with 432 single-family residential units on a 168-acre site in Barrow County. The City of Winder is proposing to incorporate the project site into its city limits. The proposed development would occupy property in an area to the east of the intersection of Georgia Highway 11 and Punkin Junction Road in unincorporated Barrow County. The parcel numbers are XX073 074, XX073 074A, XX073 064, XX073 068, XX073 071, XX073 072, and XX073 073. Of the 432 residential units, 231 are detached single-family lots ranging from 50 to 60 feet wide, and 201 are attached single-family townhomes ranging from 26 to 30 feet wide. The community would include amenities such as a clubhouse, pool, and four pickleball courts. The community would also include a dog park, community garden, community lawn, and approximately 7,200 linear feet of multi-use path. 23 acres of the site located along Georgia Highway 11 would have commercial land uses. The applicant did not provide any details about the square footage, layout, or specific category of commercial use intended for the commercial sites. The site plan proposed five stormwater management areas to handle stormwater on site.

Currently, the site is primarily wooded with two pond areas totaling approximately 3.35 acres in size. Three existing detached single-family homes located along Georgia Highway 11 would be displaced by the development. The applicant states that the project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2030. It is assumed from the application that the residential and commercial portions of the project would be constructed at the same time.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “Rural Neighborhood” on the county's Future Development Map (dated 3/29/2022). The Rural Neighborhood character area is described in the Barrow County Comprehensive Plan as a transition area between Rural Reserve character areas and development in Suburban Neighborhood character areas. Rural Neighborhood areas should maintain the existing rural character of the county. Appropriate land uses in this character area include low-density detached single-family residences with a maximum of one dwelling unit per acre, as well as agricultural/forestry. The proposed site is not compatible with the Rural Neighborhood Character Area designation. The residential portion of the site has an average density of 3 dwelling units per acre, which is substantially higher than the maximum of one dwelling units per acre specified for this character area in the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed land use would not maintain the existing rural character of the area, and the attached single-family residential and commercial land uses included in the plan are not appropriate land uses for this character area. If these properties are annexed into the City of Winder, the City should update the area’s character area to an appropriate designation. The areas north of the project site are designated as “Conservation” in the City of Winder’s Future Development Map and include Fort Yargo State Park and a golf course. The proposed site should incorporate features such as buffers to minimize the impact of site activity on surrounding conservation areas.

The site is identified as “Developing” 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 proposed site is more compact and diverse than a standard single-family residential neighborhood, as it includes smaller lot sizes and townhomes of differing sizes. However, the detached single-family lots and townhomes are separated into two separate sections of the proposed development. The developer should consider mixing the different housing styles throughout the site. Additionally, the developer could consider including Missing Middle housing such as duplexes, fourplex, and cottage courts, to provide more housing options for potential residents.

The proposed site also encourages a sense of place by connecting residents to surrounding natural areas with a multi-use trail and the proposed commercial areas. However, the proposed development is geographically separated from similar land uses: east of the site is rural, west of the site is rural residential, a private school abuts the site’s southern boundary, and a golf course is located to the north of the site. The developer should ensure that the proposed activity on site does not adversely impact surrounding residents and land uses by including large landscaping buffers when appropriate. The developer could also design the commercial areas so that they encourage neighborhood scaled commercial enterprises that provide essential and community services to the residents of the proposed site.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the development is located within or is likely to affect wetlands and floodplains on site. To mitigate impacts to these features, the applicant states that wetlands and floodplain areas will be buffered and located in permanent passive open spaces. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to impact all other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, which include water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain corridors, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies 10 wetland acres onsite and 216 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 818 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes 0.1 acres of threatened Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 14 acres of threatened RIR land within one mile of the site. Fort Yargo State Park, which is an RIR area in Barrow County, is located within one mile of the project 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.

Marc R. Acampora, PE, LLC completed a traffic impact study that projects 2,056 new daily trips, including 118 AM peak hour trips and 139 PM peak hour trips, from the residential component of the proposed development. The traffic memorandum does not appear to consider the potential impact of the commercial portion of the proposed development, so it is recommended that a traffic study be completed that more accurately projects potential traffic impacts by including the anticipated commercial uses in the analysis. Additionally, the proposed development will have negative impacts on road congestion along Highway 11, as well as the nearby Punkin Junction Road and Harry McCarty Road. These roads already experience occasional congestion due to Bethlehem Christian Academy, which is located directly south of the project site.

The site plan includes four entrances to the proposed development along Georgia Highway 11. Along the northwest portion of the site, the site plan shows four short roads that dead end adjacent to Georgia Highway 11. The developer should consider connecting at least one of these roads to Georgia Highway 11 to provide additional access points to the development, which will ease congestion at other access points. The site plan also includes a multi-use trail that will provide non-automotive transportation options for residents. The site plan shows the multi-use trail running along Marbury Creek beyond the southeastern border of the site and connecting to the golf course to the north of the site. The developer could expand the multi-use path throughout the site to provide additional access points. For example, the developer could add additional access points to the section surrounding the 1.75-acre pond area, extend the path to the 1.61-acre pond area, and extend the path to both commercial areas. The site plan does not indicate whether the roadways throughout the site will include pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure. At a minimum, the site should include sidewalks throughout the site to allow safe pedestrian options throughout the site. The developer should consider adding additional traffic calming infrastructure such as stop signs, speed bumps, and curb extensions to reduce driver speeds and make the area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The project would be served by the City of Winder water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.15 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated. An estimated 25% of the site would be covered in impervious

surfaces, and five stormwater management areas are planned to manage stormwater runoff. The applicant estimates the project would generate 700 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority's Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (2021-2031), most municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Barrow County stays within the county for disposal. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$200 million at build-out in 2030 and generate \$2.85 million in annual local taxes and \$700,000 in annual sales tax for a total annual tax generation of \$3.55 million. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1.19 million and generate approximately \$21,131 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

Please note: Barrow County was accidentally omitted from the notification of the beginning of the comment period for this DRI. On 12/19/22, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission sent Barrow County the comment package. On 12/21/22, Barrow County notified the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission that they did not wish to comment on this DRI.

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

This development is 2.8 miles from the Barrow County Airport (WDR), but 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development.

Reginald James, Senior Planner, Atlanta Regional Commission

I have no comments on the project. If there are any other questions or concerns just let me know.