



# DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

## *Final Report*

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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.

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<b>Project I.D.:</b>	DRI #3987
<b>Name of Project:</b>	The Lake Society at Lake Oconee
<b>Name of Host Jurisdiction:</b>	Greene County

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### Background

The developer's request to Greene County for rezoning initiated the review. The site would be rezoned from LR1 (Lakeshore Single-Family Residential/Recreation District) and A1 (Agricultural District) to PUD (Planned Unit Development). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 5/19/23–6/3/23.

### Proposed Development

Southwyck Homes, LLC, is proposing construction of a retirement community consisting of 700 housing units along US-278 in unincorporated Greene County. The proposed development would occupy property totaling 315 acres at 4353 Madison Highway, Greensboro. The parcel numbers are 0310000020, 031000002B, and 0310000030. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in May 2027.

The proposed housing includes 474 single-family detached houses, 75 townhome units, and 151 independent living apartments. Amenities proposed include a clubhouse, indoor and outdoor pools, tennis and pickle ball courts, boat docks, a kayak launch area, a scenic overlook, and a walking trail system. The site plan also includes a two-story, 40,000 square foot RV and boat storage facility. The storage facility and independent living apartments are each accompanied by a parking lot with an unspecified number of parking spaces. Fifteen stormwater management areas are designated on the site plan, as well as a 21-acre drip-field for wastewater management. Two vehicular entrances are proposed from US-278/SR-12. Currently the site consists mostly of partially forested land next to Lake Oconee, with one house located near the end of JP Dyer Road.

### Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting” on the Future Land Use Map (dated 10/16/2018) in Greene County’s current Comprehensive Plan. However, the 2023 update of Greene County’s Comprehensive Plan has been approved by DCA and is pending adoption by the County. On the Character Areas map in the approved draft of the 2023 update, this site is identified as part of the “North Greene/Lake Oconee” Character Area. The proposed project is not compatible with the current “Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting” land use category, but it is mostly consistent with the “North Greene/Lake Oconee” character area in the version of the Comprehensive Plan that is pending adoption, as summarized in the table below. Therefore, it is recommended that Greene County adopt its 2023 Comprehensive Plan update prior to making a final decision on this proposal.

LAND USE/ CHARACTER AREA	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH DESCRIPTION
<p><b>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting</b></p> <p>This is the site’s future land use category from the Comprehensive Plan that is currently in effect (2018).</p>	<p>The proposed project is not compatible with this land use category.</p> <p>This land use category is described as predominantly farms and forest land, with residential development maintaining a rural character of single-family homes on large lots. Listed compatible zoning districts include A1 and A2. The proposed development would be a combination of independent-living apartments and single-family homes at densities not suitable for this land use category. In addition, this project would be rezoned to PUD, which is not listed as an acceptable zoning district for this land use category.</p>
<p><b>North Greene/Lake Oconee</b></p> <p>This is the site’s character area from the County’s draft 2023 Comprehensive Plan update, which has been approved by DCA but not yet adopted by the County.</p>	<p>The proposed project is mostly compatible with this character area.</p> <p>The vision described for this character area includes “low-density neighborhoods and quality lakefront development” supporting “traditional single-family housing types with expanded access to Lake Oconee’s recreational offerings.” Listed compatible zoning districts include R1, LR1, and PUD.</p> <p>The site is proposed to be rezoned to PUD, and most of the housing units proposed are single-family homes or townhomes, which are both traditional single-family housing types. The remaining housing units (151 of the 700 proposed units) would be independent-living apartments for seniors. While independent-living apartments are not traditional single-family homes, they would be in the center of the development and thus would achieve a stepped land-use pattern toward adjacent external locations. The proposed project also includes lake-focused recreational amenities, including a scenic overlook, boat docks, a kayak launch, and trails.</p>

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 project’s compatibility with these recommendations from the Regional Plan is summarized in the table below.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
<b>Match the region's workforce</b>	The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to fulfill the demand created by the project.
<b>Price in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure</b>	No information was provided with the application that would enable evaluation of this recommendation.
<b>Create a sense of place</b>	Natural areas, trails, and access to the lake would contribute to a sense of place for this project. No information was provided that would enable evaluation of whether the architectural or design aspects of this project would contribute to a sense of place.
<b>Create diverse and affordable housing</b>	<p>This project includes a diverse range of housing types and lot sizes: senior-living apartments, townhouses, and single-family detached homes on three lot sizes.</p> <p>Given characteristics of existing land uses at Lake Oconee, it is unlikely that any of the housing units would be considered affordable for the median income of Greene County. The applicant does not specify that any affordable units would be included.</p>
<b>Build a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure</b>	<p>When considering the range of densities compatible with the North Greene/Lake Oconee Character Area, the proposal's development pattern would be considered compact.</p> <p>This project would not be built on existing infrastructure. New transportation, water, and wastewater infrastructure would be installed as part of this project.</p>
<b>Complement existing and planned transportation options</b>	The proposal includes two vehicular access points, both from US-278. The proposed development includes a number of trails, but there are no sidewalks or trails proposed along US-278 that would provide pedestrian and bicycle access to adjoining sites. Sidewalks along streets within the residential areas are strongly recommended, but it is not clear from the site plan whether these are included in the proposal.

## Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

### Natural Resources

The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountain and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies less than one wetland acres onsite and 1,355 wetland acres within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies 315 acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 4,387 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes 192 acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 2,667 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. Most 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). The Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network is intended to serve as a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that benefits wildlife and people, supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, links urban settings to rural ones, and contributes to the health and quality of life for the communities and citizens sharing this network.

Lake Oconee is a Regionally Important Resource within one mile of the proposed site. The site plan shows a minimum 25-foot buffer along the lake, but if built as depicted on the site plan, the functional buffer would be considerably wider than 25 feet due to vegetated areas and stormwater management areas between the residential lots and the lake. This wider vegetated area as shown on the site plan would be very beneficial for protecting the lake from contaminants in runoff, such as nutrients from lawn fertilizers and the wastewater drip field.

#### Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by a new private water system that includes a well and storage system, and by a new private community wastewater disposal system that includes a sewer plant and drip field. The applicant estimates a daily water demand of 0.25 MGD and a daily sewer demand of less than 0.25 MGD. No extensions of existing water or sewer lines are anticipated.

#### Stormwater Management

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.

#### Transportation

KCI Technologies completed a traffic impact study that projects 3,095 new daily trips from the proposed development, including 178 AM peak hour trips and 219 PM peak hour trips from the proposal. Two vehicular entrance points are proposed, both located along US-278. The traffic study recommends that both entrances be stop-controlled with right-turn and left-turn deceleration lanes along US-278.

#### Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 650 tons of solid waste annually. The applicant states that the County's existing landfill capacity is not sufficient to handle this waste, so the waste will be shipped out of the County. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority's *Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (2021-2031)*, all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Greene County is transported out-of-county, most of which is disposed of in a landfill in Twiggs County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

#### Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$250 million at build-out in 2025 and generate nearly \$1.9 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$800,000 and generate approximately \$6000 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**

##### Elizabeth Booth, Watershed Planning and Monitoring Program Manager, Georgia Environmental Protection Division

This development is in the Lake Oconee watershed. It is a lake front development of 351 acres and will have a 21 acre LAS (dripfield for wastewater management). My big concern is nutrients from the LAS and its proximity to the lake. I have concerns that nutrients uptake may not be sufficient and once a hydrologic

connection is made with the lake, we may have problems with algal blooms. The lake has no additional assimilative capacity. If there is an existing treatment plant that the facility could be hooked into that would be much much much better, since we can control nutrients from a treatment plant.

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

This proposal is 7.4 miles from the nearest open-to-the-public 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.

*Brock Tyson, Assistant District Traffic Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation*

The applicant will need to obtain commercial driveway permits for access on SR 12. A commercial access permit can be requested by submitting required documents through GPAS for review. Access location/geometry will be determined based on the current GDOT driveway and encroachment manual i.e., spacing, sight distance, auxiliary lanes...