



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 #3998
Name of Project:	Newton County Logistics Center
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Newton County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request to rezone the site from R-1 (parcel 0124 010) and A (parcel 0124 011) to M-1. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 7/3/2023 to 7/18/2023.

Proposed Development

Longleaf Commercial Properties, LLC is proposing construction of 869,120 square feet of distribution space on an 89-acre site at the northwest corner of US Highway 278 and Old Social Circle Road in Newton County. The proposed site's parcel numbers are 0124 010 and 0124 011. The site would include two distribution buildings. The larger facility (#100) would be 526,400 square feet, and the smaller building (#200) would be 342,720 square feet. In total, the lot would have 538 regular parking spaces and 222 trailer parking spaces (see breakout of parking lots in the table below). The plan proposes two site entrances, one along US Highway 278 and the other along Social Circle Road. The site also would include two stormwater ponds to handle site stormwater. The plan proposes a 60-foot front building setback along US Highway 278, a 40-foot side building setback along Social Circle Road, a 15-foot rear building setback along I-20, and a 75-foot transition buffer along the western site boundary.

Breakout of Proposed Parking on Site

	REGULAR PARKING SPACES	TRAILER PARKING SPACES
BUILDING #100	364	78
BUILDING #200	174	71
SEPARATE TRAILER LOT	0	73
TOTAL	538	222

Currently, the site is primarily wooded. Nelson Creek runs along the site’s eastern boundary, and the creek’s 100-Year FEMA Flood Boundary overlaps with the site’s 75-foot transitional buffer near Building #100. A Georgia Power easement runs inside the site’s northern boundary. One single-family detached home is located onsite along US Highway 278 and would be demolished during construction. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in June 2025.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The northern portion of the site closest to I-20 is identified as a Live/Work Corridor on Newton County's Character Areas Map (dated 6/27/2023). The remainder of the site is identified as an Industrial Heavy Commercial area. The proposed development is compatible with the Industrial Heavy Commercial area description but is not fully compatible with the Live/Work Corridor description. A description of these character areas as defined in the Newton County Comprehensive Plan, as well as reasoning for the proposed development's compatibility with the character area descriptions, is summarized in the following table:

Newton County Character Area Compatibility

CHARACTER AREA	CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH CHARACTER AREA
INDUSTRIAL AND HEAVY COMMERCIAL AREAS	“Concentrated industrial development and heavy commercial properties such as large machinery repair, materials processing, and other non-retail uses. These character areas are ideal for attracting large manufacturers, providing opportunities for employment and workforce development as well as increasing Newton County’s tax base.”	The proposed development is compatible with this Character Area. It is compatible with the Character Area’s vision and the proposed land use (Light Industrial) and proposed zoning (M-1) are both included in the character area description.
LIVE/WORK AREAS	“Characterized by their proximity to high traffic areas, such as Hwy 278 and Hwy 11, making them ideal for mixed use development. Live/Work Corridors Character Areas are suitable for a mix of neighborhood level commercial, multifamily residential housing and walkable streets.”	While the proposed land use (Light Industrial) and zoning (M-1) are both included in the character area description, the proposed development does not align with the Character Area’s vision of creating a mixed-use development. That being said, a mixed use development would not be appropriate in this location, as it adjoins I-20, there is a Georgia Power Easement in the area, and the surrounding land use is designated to be Industrial/Heavy Commercial.

The site is identified as “Developing” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/15/2023). The Regional Plan recommends developments that contain six characteristics that benefit the region’s people, economy, environment, and communities. The proposed project’s compatibility with these recommendations is summarized below:

Regional Plan Compatibility

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	The applicant states that the regional work force is sufficient to fill the demand created for the proposed project.
Elevates public health and equity	The proposed development would leave open green space surrounding both warehousing buildings. The developer should consider utilizing this greenspace for amenities for warehouse employees such as walking trails and picnic areas.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	Due to their nature, the proposed warehouse does little to add to the character of the area beyond providing additional jobs within the county.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	The proposed development does not include any housing. The County should be cognizant of whether there is adequate housing around the development to provide affordable housing for potential employees.
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	The proposed development is in an industrial and auto-centric area of Newton County, and there are few residential or commercial land uses in the surrounding areas. Therefore, there is limited need for pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure.
Protects natural and historic resources	The proposed development would be located directly east of Nelson Creek, and the creek’s 100-Year FEMA Flood Boundary overlaps with the site’s 75-foot transitional buffer near Building #100. Retaining a forested buffer along the side of the site closest to Nelson Creek is encouraged, as a buffer would serve to improve the site’s flood resilience, reduce erosion, and buffer noise from I-20 and on site for the benefit of surrounding residential areas.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project would likely affect water supply watersheds, as the proposed project would be in the Little River Watershed, which is a protected watershed in Newton County. The applicant states that the “floodplain, river and wetlands do not fall on the property and are approximately 500 feet west of the property.” According to the site plan, the floodplain extends into a small portion of the site adjacent to Building #100, but no development is proposed within the floodplain. The applicant states that the proposed development is unlikely to affect all other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountain and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources.

The table below summarizes the number of acres within the site area and within a one-mile buffer around the site that contains 1) wetlands, 2) conservation land, 3) regionally important resources (RIRs), and 4) threatened RIRs. Refer to the footnotes for definitions for each of these terms.

Wetland, Conservation, and Regionally Important Resources

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA
SITE AREA (89 Acres)	Wetland Acres ¹	0.2	0.2%
	Conservation Land ²	46.3	52%
	RIR Land ³	46.3	52%
	Threatened RIR Land ⁴	46.3	52%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (3,171 Acres)	Wetland Acres	81.2	3%
	Conservation Land	1,473	46%
	RIR Land	1,513	48%
	Threatened RIR Land	887	28%

A portion of the “Conservation” land onsite 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. No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

An estimated 49.9% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and two stormwater ponds are planned to manage stormwater runoff. The applicant estimates the project would generate 12 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 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.

A&R Engineering Inc. completed a traffic impact study that projects 1,411 new daily trips, including 128 AM peak hour trips and 131 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The traffic study recommends that a right turn lane and a left turn lane be added along US 278 for traffic entering the site.

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewer Authority with an estimated daily demand of 0.03 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

¹ Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

² “Conservation” land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

³ RIRs are identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (8/7/2018).

⁴ This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, 6/15/2023), adopted RIRs, and “Developed” and “Developing” Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, 6/15/2023).

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$108,640,000 at build-out in 2025 and generate \$729,250 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1,220,674 and generate approximately \$8,194 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

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

This proposed development is about 6.6 miles from the Covington Municipal Airport (CVC), and is located outside the approach and departure surfaces, and outside of the airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

However, if any construction or construction equipment reaches 180' 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.