

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 #4151
Name of Project:	Dinah Pace Road at Brown Bridge Road.
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Porterdale

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for annexation into the City of Porterdale. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 3/12/24–3/27/24.

Proposed Development

Dinah Place, LLC, is proposing construction of 651 single-family detached homes on a 387-acre site. The land is currently between the Cities of Porterdale and Covington in Newton County and would be annexed into the City of Porterdale. The site is bordered by Dinah Pace Road to the northeast, Brown Bridge Road SW on the southeast, and the Yellow River along most of its western border. The parcel numbers are 0043 035, 0043 035B, 0043 004A, and 0043 004D. The developer’s request for annexation into the City of Porterdale initiated the review. The site is currently zoned R-2 (“Residential”- medium density) in Newton County and is proposed to be zoned R-3 (“Multifamily Residential”) if annexed into the City of Porterdale. The project would be completed in one phase, with an estimated completion date in 2027.

Four residential lot size categories are shown on the site plan, ranging from a 5,000 square-foot minimum to a 9,000 square-foot minimum. The proposal also includes 205 acres of open space, including nearly 44 acres of open space outside the floodplain. The site plan includes four pocket parks; three community lawns or greens; nine stormwater facilities; an existing pond that would remain; a common sport court area with four courts and a parking area; and master amenity area that includes a playground, pool, clubhouse, trail, parking lot, and recreation field. An existing 100-foot transmission line easement passes through the site and would remain. There would be three full-access vehicular entrances to the neighborhood: two from Dinah Pace Road

and one from Brown Bridge Road SW. In addition to the parking provided in each residence's driveway and garage, there would be 40 parking spaces divided between the parking lots at the court area and the amenity area. The site plan also shows four very heavy dashed lines, but as these lines are unlabeled, it is unclear what they represent.

The site is adjacent to the Yellow River, and the site plan includes several options for residents to access the river. These include a community access area, a non-motorized boat launch with parking lot and a crusher run driveway, and trails connecting two of the neighborhood's streets with the river. Much of the site is within the floodplain, and there are also wetlands on site. No homes or roads are proposed to be constructed within the floodplain or wetlands; however, trails, the boat launch area, and a portion of the crusher run driveway would be built within the floodplain.

The applicant indicated that no existing uses would be displaced by the proposed development; however, aerial imagery and the tax assessor's website show farmland with three single-family homes and some outbuildings on parcel 0043 004A. Only one of the homes and two outbuildings appear to be occupied or in useable condition. Currently over half of the site is wooded; many of the trees are in the floodplain and would remain in place in the proposed development.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

Compatibility with Porterdale's Comprehensive Plan

According to the City of Porterdale's Comprehensive Plan (adopted 2/18/21), the two Porterdale character areas on the large parcel that borders the project site are Conservation and Active Recreational Area. The former recreational use on this adjacent parcel was a golf course, and the Conservation character area portions of this parcel are wetlands. While this parcel is now vacant, most of it is still in the Active Recreational Area character area, and residential development is suitable next to recreational uses.

Within Porterdale, most of the land near the Yellow River is in the Conservation character area. Because of that precedent, and because floodplain and wetlands cover sizable portions of the project site, it seems likely that this site would become part of the Conservation character area if annexed. As a conservation subdivision¹, this proposal is compatible with the Conservation character area as long as it does not negatively affect the Yellow River and other sensitive environmental resources.

Compatibility with Newton County's Comprehensive Plan

On Newton County's Character Areas Map, adopted 6/27/2023, the site is identified partly as "Live/Work Areas" and partly as "Established Suburban Core." The proposal is somewhat inconsistent with the Live/Work Areas character area and is consistent with the Established Suburban Core character area, as summarized in the table on the next page.

¹ A conservation subdivision is one where allowable density is redistributed to cluster housing development and leave large areas of green space undisturbed to protect sensitive areas.

Newton County Character Area Compatibility

CHARACTER AREA	CHARACTER AREA OVERVIEW	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH CHARACTER AREA
LIVE/WORK AREAS	Described as “ideal for mixed-use development” and “suitable for a mix of neighborhood level commercial, multifamily residential housing and walkable streets.”	<p>The Live/Work Areas character area vision, goals, and action items emphasize compact, mixed-use development, employment opportunities, and multi-family housing. Because this project is not mixed-use and would include only single-family residences, this proposal is mostly inconsistent with the overall vision of the Live/Work Areas narrative. Adding some neighborhood-level commercial or multi-family residential uses to the proposal would better align it with the intended mixed-use character of the Live/Work Areas character area.</p> <p>However, residential uses and single-family residential zones are listed in the plan as appropriate within this character area, and there are several commercial facilities near the site, along the access road that borders I-20 and intersects Dinah Pace Rd. Therefore, when considered within the context of nearby parcels, the proposal would somewhat contribute to the mixed-use intention for this character area by creating homes near existing employment and retail opportunities.</p> <p>It is unclear from the information provided whether the streets within the proposed development would be walkable, as no information about sidewalks was provided.</p>
ESTABLISHED SUBURBAN CORE	Described as “characterized by the highest level of density, suitable for higher-density residential, mixed-use, and infill.”	<p>The portions of the project within the Established Suburban Core character area are consistent with the character area narrative. As proposed, the project would be near the maximum density allowed for single-family residential within Porterdale’s R-3 zone, (the zone proposed for this project). The development proposed within this character area would include minimum lot sizes of 5,000 and 6,000 square feet.</p> <p>Note: a goal listed for this character area is to protect the Yellow River from development. While most of the proposed construction would be several hundred feet from the river, some homes and amenities in the southwest portion of the site would be constructed near the river. The City should closely consider any potential impacts to the river during its evaluation of this proposal.</p>

Compatibility with the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan

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 development that enhances economic mobility and competitiveness; elevates public health and equity; supports and adds value to existing communities; creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable; includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options; and protects natural and historic resources. The table on the next page summarizes the project’s compatibility with these recommendations.

Proposed Development's Compatibility with the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	<p>As a residential development, the proposed project would not create jobs beyond those that are necessary to manage and maintain a housing complex.</p> <p>If annexed, this project site would expand upon an existing city "island" surrounded by unincorporated Newton County. The project site is over half a mile from the main section of Porterdale's city limits, and this development would be functionally separate from the rest of the city. Annexing in this fashion is inefficient from a service delivery perspective and usually not recommended, as it is typically more expensive for a city to provide public infrastructure and services to non-contiguous areas than to developments that are more centrally located. No other information was provided about the costs of potential impacts of this project on public infrastructure or natural resources.</p>
Elevates public health and equity	<p>The proposed development would include multiple modes of access to greenspace and the Yellow River. However, no information was provided about whether the project's trails and boat ramp would be open to the public, or whether access would be limited to residents.</p>
Supports and adds value to existing communities	<p>The project might help support nearby commercial sites along the access road north of the site, but only if the housing price points and configurations match the needs of potential customers or employees of these facilities.</p>
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	<p>The proposal includes four relatively compact single-family lot-size categories, with minimum areas ranging from 5,000 to 9,000 square feet, so there is likely to be some variation in housing prices. Further housing diversity and affordability could be achieved by replacing some of the planned single-family homes with townhouses, duplexes, or multi-family housing, and by including a range of house finishes within each size category.</p>
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	<p>The proposed development includes three vehicular access points: two entrances from Dinah Pace Rd. and one from Brown Bridge Rd. The proposed development would improve overall vehicular connectivity in this area by providing a much more direct connection than currently exists between Dinah Pace Rd. and Brown Bridge Rd. Residents would have convenient access to goods and services in either direction.</p> <p>This proposal includes many cul-de-sacs, which are typically not beneficial because they disrupt connectivity and reduce route options for residents. However, almost all the cul-de-sacs in this proposal are located where disconnection would be appropriate, due to natural barriers like the river, wetlands, and floodplain. Street stubs to parcels 0043 037 and 0043 034 should be considered to facilitate potential future connections to neighboring developments.</p> <p>No information was provided about whether this facility would include sidewalks or bicycle facilities. Multiple trails are proposed, but these trails would be self-contained within the development so would not provide pedestrian access to neighboring parcels.</p>
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>Numerous stormwater management facilities are proposed, and no homes or roads are proposed to be constructed within the floodplain, wetlands, or riparian areas. However, trails, the boat access area, and a portion of the crusher run driveway would be built within the floodplain, and the boat access area and parking lot would be built within the riparian buffer. The Yellow River is a protected river corridor under Georgia's Environmental Planning Criteria, and it is also a Regionally Important Resource, as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan (dated 8/7/2018). Therefore, it is very important for the City to ensure that development of this site not negatively impact the Yellow River.</p>

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 chart below summarizes the number of acres within the site area as well as within a one-mile buffer around the site that contains 1) wetlands, 2) conservation land, 3) regionally important resources, and 4) threatened regionally important resources. Please 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 (387.3 Acres)	Wetland Acres ²	73.0	18.8%
	“Conservation Land” ³	387.0	99.9%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	386.6	99.8%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁵	272.0	70.2%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (5,051.0 Acres)	Wetland Acres	480.5	9.5%
	“Conservation Land”	4,731.5	93.7%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	3,219.4	63.7%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	4,583.4	90.7%

The Yellow River, which borders the site, is a Regionally Important Resource. Most of the Regionally Important Resource acreage listed above 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. The development proposal partially aligns with the intent of the Green Infrastructure Network by providing trails and a non-motorized boat ramp. However, information regarding public accessibility of these amenities and their connection to planned or existing trail systems or conservation lands outside of the affected parcels is not provided.

Transportation

A&R Engineering completed a traffic impact study that projects 5,655 new daily trips, including 410 AM peak hour trips and 578 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The results of the future traffic analysis indicate some declines in LOS under the build-out scenario, when compared with the no-build scenario, most notably a PM Peak Hour decrease from LOS C to LOS D at the signalized Brown Bridge Road @

² Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

³ “Conservation” land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

⁴ Regionally Important Resources were identified as a part of the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (2/15/2018).

⁵ This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, 6/15/2023), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and “Developed” and “Developing” Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, 6/15/2023).

Crowell Road intersection, and a PM Peak Hour decrease from LOS B to LOS E in the northbound approach of the Access Road @ Dinah Pace Road intersection. The study recommends that the site's three access driveways be stop-signed controlled at the approach, with the main road (Dinah Pace Road or Brown Bridge Road) remaining free flow. The study recommends right turn lanes for traffic entering the site from Dinah Pace Road, and both right and left turn lanes for traffic entering from Brown Bridge Rd.

Transportation choices and connectivity are considered above, in the table summarizing compatibility with the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewer Authority (NCWSA) water and sewer systems, with an estimated daily demand of 0.17 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity and that no water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

Stormwater Management

It is very important that any stormwater runoff generated by this project be properly managed to avoid contributing excess flow, sediment, or pollutants to the Yellow River. The applicant states that an estimated 40% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and the site plan shows nine facilities for managing stormwater runoff. 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.

Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 2,688 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.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$273 million at build-out in 2027 and generate \$2 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$700,000 and generate approximately \$5,000 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

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

This proposed construction is approximately 2.75 miles southwest of the Covington Municipal Airport (CVC). It is located outside any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport.

If any construction equipment or construction exceeds 200' AGL, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration according to the FAA's Notice Criteria Tool found here (<https://oeaaa.faa.gov/oeaaa/external/gisTools/gisAction.jsp?action=showNoNoticeRequiredToolForm>). Those submissions for any associated cranes may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notifications, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impacts of

the project on protected airspace associated with the airports and advise the proponent if any action is necessary.

Shena Applewhaite, Director, Department of Development Services, Newton County

Please see below. Newton County does not believe that a development of this scale is suitable for this location at this time.

Planning and Zoning

Newton County does not believe the development as proposed meets the requirements of the current ordinance.

- The proposed development currently exceeds the zoning density requirements for the R2(Single family residential zoning). The current minimum lot size is 40,000 sf (Water and Septic) and 35,000sf (water and Sewer).
- The property abuts the Yellow River and under our current ordinance there is a 150ft impervious buffer which is not reflected in the concept plan.
- A development this size will put considerable pressure on the existing facilities.
- The proposed access points do not support the number of proposed units in the development. Please see the Transportation Engineer's comments below.)

Transportation Department

The entire length of Dina Pace Road will need to be improved by the developer.

Improvements include alignment/turn lanes at the intersection of Dina Pace Road and Access Road, road widening, pavement, and drainage improvements.