

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 #4273
Name of Project:	Oconee Gateway Office Warehouse
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Bogart

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for a permit. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 10/14/2024 to 10/29/2024.

Proposed Development

Gateway East Owner, LLC is proposing construction of 423,333 square feet of office and warehouse space on a 38-acre site in the City of Bogart. The development would feature three parking areas with a total of 643 parking spaces, two loading areas, water and sewer utilities, and a storm water retention area. The proposal includes a site entrance from the existing Gateway East Parkway Street stub, which is located on McNutt Creek Road, and three additional entrances on Aiken Road.

Currently, the site is primarily woodlands and vacant land with a pond and a stream. The site is located between Highway 29 and Aiken Road in the City of Bogart. Approximately 3.6 acres of the proposed development would be in unincorporated Oconee County. Affected parcels include B01U 002, B01U 003, and B01U 001PSB. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2028.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as Workplace Center on both the City and the County’s Character Areas Maps (dated June 2023). The Workplace Center character area is described in Oconee County’s Comprehensive Plan as “intended primarily for larger-scale heavy commercial, industrial, wholesale, and office uses that may be land intensive, generate high employee, or truck traffic, or create noise, odor, or other impacts associated with

manufacturing and production uses.” The proposed development is compatible with the designated character area, as it would feature office complexes and warehouse space.

The site is identified as “Developed” 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 following table outlines the proposal’s alignment with these recommendations:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	<p>The applicant states that the regional work force is sufficient to meet the demand created by the proposed project.</p> <p>The project would create a mix of employment opportunities for the community by providing warehouse and office jobs.</p>
Elevates public health and equity	<p>There are no elements of the proposed project that relate to improvements of public health and equity.</p>
Supports and adds value to existing communities	<p>The proposed project would place employment opportunities near existing residential areas, which could create opportunities for a shorter commute time for residents.</p>
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	<p>Not applicable to this project type.</p>
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	<p>The development has 4 entrances to facilitate the flow of traffic through the site and uses an existing street stub for one of the entrances. The proposal does not include any further contributions to transportation choices.</p>
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>The site plan includes a 50-foot conservation corridor, a 25-foot state waters buffer, and a 25-foot impervious setback around the stream on the site. There are no Regionally Important Resources located within one mile of this site.</p> <p>According to a comment from the Wildlife Conservation Division of the GA Department of Natural Resources, a tricolored bat has been recorded in the project area. The tricolored bat was proposed for the Endangered Species list in 2022, and a final listing determination is anticipated in 2024. They recommend consulting the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for this species. (See “Comments from Affected Parties” section below.)</p>

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources

There is a pond and a stream located in the southern portion of the site, with the pond designated as “wetlands” on the site plan. The site plan includes a 50-foot Conservation Corridor, a 25-foot state waters buffer, and a 25-foot impervious setback to mitigate impacts to the existing stream and wetland area. According to the site plan, no development is proposed within the wetlands. 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. Refer to the attached site plan for any stream, floodplain, and buffer locations.

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 (38 acres)	Wetland Acres ¹	1.2	3.2%
	“Conservation Land” ²	1.8	4.7%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0.0	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	1.8	4.7%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (1995 acres)	Wetland Acres	61.7	3.1%
	“Conservation Land”	512.8	25.7%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	0.0	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	512.8	25.7%

No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

Transportation

The applicant projects 5,262 new daily trips from the proposed development. The site plan includes a primary entrance on Gateway East Parkway, which is accessible from McNutt Creek Road. There are three additional entrances proposed on Aiken Road to access parking areas in the northern portion of the site. No traffic study has been completed for the proposed development. Refer to the site plan for the location of proposed infrastructure.

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

⁴ 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).

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Oconee County Water Resources water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.02 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

Stormwater Management

An estimated 55% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and one retention pond is planned to manage stormwater runoff. The developer would remove the existing storm water detention pond to make room for building structures and build a new retention pond in the southern portion of the site. Refer to the site plan for the proposed location of stormwater management infrastructure.

The Watershed Protection Branch of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) requires the developer to submit an Erosion, Sedimentation and Pollution Control Plan to receive the NPDES General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activities. They also recommend scheduling a site visit with EPD to determine whether the existing stormwater pond on the site will require a buffer. (See “Comments from Affected Parties” section below.)

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 1,181 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual tonnage reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, most municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Oconee County is disposed of in a landfill in Banks County or Barrow County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$51,000,000 at build-out in 2028 and generate \$400,770 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1,342,105 and generate approximately \$10,547 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 construction of 423,333 square feet of office/warehouse space on a 38-acre tract is 7 miles from the Barrow County Airport (WDR). It is located outside of the 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.

Tina Morris, Program Manager, Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Comments are attached in the letter below.

Jennifer H. Welte, Assistant Branch Chief, Watershed Protection Branch, Georgia Environmental Protection Division
The following are comments from our Watershed Protection Branch on this proposed project.

Any construction project which will result in greater than or equal to 1.0 acre of land disturbance will require coverage under the NPDES General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated With Construction Activities prior to conducting land disturbance. Permit coverage requires the submittal of the Erosion, Sedimentation and Pollution Control Plan to EPD's Watershed Protection Branch.

The project proposal includes the removal of an existing detention pond to accommodate part of the development. The existing pond is shown on the plans to not require a buffer. Our E&S Unit recommends that a site visit/state waters determination be conducted to know whether or not the stormwater pond would require a buffer. Since the project appears to be located within the city limits of the City of Bogart, EPD would conduct that review. The project applicant can reach out to Jennifer Hackney of our E&S Unit for more information at jennifer.hackney@dnr.ga.gov for more information.



WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL
DIRECTOR

October 29, 2024

Beck Pirkle
Grants & Planning Specialist
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
305 Research Drive

Athens, GA 30605

Subject: Known occurrences of natural communities, plants and animals of highest priority conservation status on or near DRI 4273 Oconee Gateway Office Warehouse, City of Bogart, Oconee, Georgia

Dear Beck Pirkle:

This is in response to your request of October 14, 2024. The following Georgia natural heritage database element occurrences (EOs) were selected for the current site using the local HUC10 watershed for elements whose range distribution is limited by aquatic systems (AQ) and within 3 miles for all other EOs (TR).

DRI 4273 Oconee Gateway Office Warehouse (-83.543107, 33.940115, WGS84)

Bombus pensylvanicus (American Bumblebee) approximately 0.7 mi NE of site

GA *Cyprinella xaenura* (Altamaha Shiner) in McNutt Creek Huc 10 - 0307010103 Middle Oconee 1 (AQ), approx. 8.2 mi E of site

GA *Cyprinella xaenura* (Altamaha Shiner) in Calls Creek Huc 10 - 0307010103 (Middle Oconee River 1) (AQ), approx. 9.6 mi SE of site

GA *Cyprinella xaenura* (Altamaha Shiner) in Turkey Creek Huc 10 - 0307010103 (AQ), approx. 5.5 mi NE of site

Micropterus sp. 2 (Altamaha) (Altamaha Bass) in McNutt Creek Huc 10 - 0307010103 (AQ), approx. 5.1 mi E of site

Moxostoma sp. 4 (Brassy Jumprock) in Middle Oconee River Huc 10 - 0307010103 Middle Oconee River 1 (AQ), approx. 5.9 mi E of site

US *Perimyotis subflavus* (Tricolored bat) on site

2012108 [Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land] (TR), approx. 1.9 mi W of site

2013004 [Athens Land Trust] (TR), approx. 2.9 mi NE of site

Barrow County Greenspace [Barrow County] (TR), approx. 3.0 mi W of site

McNutt Creek [Oconee River Land Trust] (TR), approx. 2.7 mi E of site

Greenspace program acquisition [county] (TR), approx. 3.0 mi W of site

Bridge/Culvert Inspection (33.9027, -83.5229), Bats Present: No, Species: N/A (TR), approx. 2.6 mi SE of site

Bridge/Culvert Inspection (33.9363, -83.542), Bats Present: Yes, Species: *Perimyotis subflavus* (TR), on or immediate vicinity of site

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SECTION

2065 U.S. HIGHWAY 278 S.E. | SOCIAL CIRCLE, GEORGIA 30025-4743
770.918.6411 | FAX 706.557.3033 | WWW.GEORGIAWILDLIFE.COM

Bridge/Culvert Inspection (33.9389, -83.5499), Bats Present: No, Species: N/A (TR),
approx. 0.2 mi W of site
Middle Oconee River 1 (0307010103) [SWAP High Priority Watershed] (TR), on or
immediate vicinity of site
Apalachee River 1, Lake Oconee (0307010109) [SWAP High Priority Watershed] (TR),
approx. 2.8 mi SW of site

Recommendations:

We have a record of a tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) in the project area. Please note that the tricolored bat was proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on September 14, 2022, by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. A final listing determination is anticipated in 2024. We recommend consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for this species in anticipation of the species being listed as endangered under the ESA.

Please also be aware that other state protected species have been documented near the proposed project. For information about these species, including survey recommendations, please visit our webpage at <http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>.

The following biologists can provide additional recommendations and assistance regarding the following groups:

Plants: Lisa Kruse (Lisa.Kruse@dnr.ga.gov)

Fishes: Bryant Bowen (Bryant.Bowen@dnr.ga.gov)

Crayfish & Mussels: Matt Rowe (Matthew.Rowe@dnr.ga.gov)

Reptiles & Amphibians: Daniel Sollenberger (Daniel.Sollenberger@dnr.ga.gov)

Mammals: Trina Morris (Katrina.Morris@dnr.ga.gov)

Birds: Nathan Klaus (Nathan.Klaus@dnr.ga.gov) or Tim Keyes (Tim.Keyes@dnr.ga.gov)

Terrestrial Invertebrates: Anna Yellin (Anna.Yellin@dnr.ga.gov)

We advocate green growth, which focuses on environmentally sustainable development and leaving open space in newly developed areas. By clustering development and minimizing infrastructure, such as paved surfaces and utilities, conscientious design can help protect natural habitats from fragmentation and habitat degradation. Development should occur away from sensitive environmental resources. Undisturbed buffers of at least 100 feet should be left surrounding any streams or wetlands at the site. We recommend that open greenspace be protected by use of a conservation easement or other legal agreement. The open space may be used for recreation, wildlife habitat, and stormwater control, and native vegetation should be incorporated or preserved. We recommend these developments set aside as much land as possible to remain in a natural state. This will allow for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources as well as recreation opportunities for residents of the planned development and surrounding communities. For more information on Green Growth Guidelines, please visit the Georgia DNR Coastal Resources Division website (<https://coastalgadnr.org/GGG>).

This project occurs within a high priority watershed(s). As part of Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan, high priority watersheds were identified to protect populations of high priority aquatic

species, important coastal habitats, and migratory corridors for anadromous species. Please refer to Appendix F of Georgia's State Wildlife Action Plan to find out more specific information about the listed high priority watershed(s) (<https://georgiawildlife.com/wildlifeactionplan>).

Disclaimer:

Please keep in mind the limitations of our database. The data collected by the Wildlife Conservation Section comes from a variety of sources, including museum and herbarium records, literature, and reports from individuals and organizations, as well as field surveys by our staff biologists. In most cases the information is not the result of a recent on-site survey by our staff. Many areas of Georgia have never been surveyed thoroughly. Therefore, the Wildlife Conservation Section can only occasionally provide definitive information on the presence or absence of rare species on a given site. Our files are updated constantly as new information is received. **Thus, information provided by our program represents the existing data in our files at the time of the request and should not be considered a final statement on the species or area under consideration.**

If you know of populations of highest priority species that are not in our database, please fill out the appropriate data collection form and send it to our office. Forms can be obtained through our web site (<http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>) or by contacting our office. If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Trina Morris, Program Manager
Katrina.morris@dnr.ga.gov, 706-557-3220

Data Available on the Wildlife Conservation Section Website

- Georgia protected plant and animal profiles are available on our website. These accounts cover basics like descriptions and life history, as well as threats, management recommendations and conservation status. To view these profiles, please visit: <http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>
- Rare species and natural community information can be viewed by Quarter Quad, County and HUC8 Watershed. To access this information, please visit our GA Rare Species and Natural Community Information page at: <http://georgiabiodiversity.org/>
- Downloadable files of rare species and natural community data by quarter quad and county are also available. These files can be downloaded from: <http://georgiabiodiversity.org/natels/natural-element-locations.html>