

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 # 4329
Name of Project:	Data Center – 0 Social Circle Parkway
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Social Circle

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for a rezone to Light Industrial (LI), to obtain a Special Use permit, and to annex parcels into the City of Social Circle. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 12/23/2024 to 1/7/2025.

Proposed Development

Sailfish Investors Acquisitions, LLC is proposing construction of 1,786,832 square feet of industrial development on an approximately 344-acre site in Social Circle. The proposed development would include 4 data center buildings, 2 temporary construction lots, a substation, an equipment yard, and 276 parking spaces. The proposal also includes a primary access driveway on Social Circle Parkway and a secondary access driveway on Amber Strapp Studdard road.

The proposed development would be located on Social Circle Parkway (SR 11), north of the E Hightower Trail intersection in the City of Social Circle. The parcel numbers are C1520001, C1720027B00, C1720041, C15200010DP, and SC220009A00. Three parcels in the development are in unincorporated Walton County and the developer is requesting an annexation into the City of Social Circle. The project would be completed in 1 phase with an estimated completion date in January 2027.

Compatibility with Regional Plan

The site is identified as “Rural” 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 job opportunities within the data center and in related industries such as software development and telecommunications. The project would also increase the City’s tax revenue and attract investment opportunities.</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 electrical infrastructure required to support data center operations could be leveraged to expand broadband services and improve internet connectivity for the existing community.</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 2 entrances to facilitate the flow of traffic through the site and uses an existing road for the secondary entrance. The proposal does not include any further contributions to transportation choices.</p>
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>The proposed development is located within the Cornish Creek, Beaverdam Creek and Hard Labor Creek Watershed Protection Overlay District, which requires a 150-ft buffer around streams and ponds. The proposed site plan meets this requirement. The developer will need to comply with all additional development regulations in the Overlay District.</p> <p>The City of Social Circle should consider requiring the installation of cooling technologies that minimize or eliminate water consumption to reduce the strain on the municipal water supply.</p>

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 344 acres	Wetland Acres ¹	14	4.1%
	“Conservation Land” ²	81	23.7%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	0.6	0.2%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE 3350 acres	Wetland Acres	70	2.1%
	“Conservation Land”	906	27%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	74	2.2%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	142	4.2%

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

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources

Currently, the site is primarily undeveloped woodlands and agricultural land with 2 ponds and 2 streams. There are 3 detached single-family homes located on the site. The site plan shows an existing cemetery on the site, and no development is proposed in this area.

The development would be located within the Hard Labor Creek watershed, less than half a mile upstream from the Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir, which is used for drinking water. Means Creek flows along the northern and eastern sides of the project site and into the Reservoir. The proposed impervious surfaces on the site would generate significant stormwater runoff, which could transport pollutants into Means Creek and the Reservoir. Because of the site’s proximity to a drinking water reservoir, it is important for the developer to mitigate the adverse effects of runoff and sedimentation and implement extra measures to prevent streambank erosion and water quality degradation. The developer should consider installing permeable pavements, curb cuts, and vegetated swales to help channel stormwater to pervious areas.

The applicant anticipates fill impacts to the wetlands, and states that the project will follow local, state, and federal regulations regarding the protection of wetlands and streams. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the other environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form,

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).

including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, 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.

Transportation

A&R Engineering completed a trip generation memorandum that projects 1,796 new daily trips, including 227 AM peak hour trips and 191 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. Refer to the attached traffic memorandum for more details and the site plan for the location of proposed infrastructure.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the City of Social Circle water and sewer systems, with an estimated daily water demand of 0.02 MGD and a daily sewer demand of 125,000 GPD. The existing system has sufficient water supply capacity needed to serve the project but does not have sufficient sewer capacity. The City of Social Circle is currently planning system-wide water improvements to increase capacity. The project would require sizing upgrades to the current 10-inch waterline that runs along the western boundary of the site, as well as 0.14-mile sewer line extension.

Stormwater Management

An estimated 25% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and 4 detention ponds are planned to manage stormwater runoff. Refer to the site plan for the proposed location of stormwater management infrastructure.

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 2,700 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, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Walton County is disposed of in a landfill in 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 \$7.4 billion at build-out in 2027 and generate \$54.4 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$21,511,628 and generate approximately \$158,140 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 data center project is more than 8 miles from the nearest civil airport. It is located outside any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact any 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.