

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 #4387
Name of Project:	Project Paradise
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Newton County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request to rezone the property from Single Family Residential (R-2) to Light Industrial (M1). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 2/11/2025 - 2/26/2025.

Proposed Development

Euphoric Development is proposing the construction of 1,941,000 square feet of industrial space on a 177-acre site in Newton County. The proposed site is located north of I-20 off Old Atlanta Road and is bisected by a CSX railroad easement. The parcel numbers are 0042 003, 0042 004, 0042 049A, 0042 050A, and 0042 051.

The proposed site includes three buildings. Buildings A and B are located north of the railroad easement and would be accessed via Hawkins Drive. Building C is located just north of I-20, south of the railroad easement, and is directly accessible by Old Atlanta Road. Each of the three buildings includes two auto parking lots and two trailer parking lots. Details on each building's square footage and associated parking spaces are included in the table below.

Building Square Footage and Parking Spaces

PROPOSED BUILDINGS	SQUARE FEET	AUTO PARKING SPACES	TRAILER PARKING SPACES
Building “A”	552,000	163	167
Building “B”	1,116,000	224	163
Building “C”	273,000	294	64
Total Site	1,941,000	681	394

The site plan includes the following site buffers:

- A 75-foot zoning buffer adjacent to surrounding residentially-zoned areas,
- A 40-foot setback from Old Atlanta Road and Hawkins Road,
- A 15-foot rear setback, adjacent to the Yellow River, and
- 10-foot side setbacks, covering the remaining parcel boundaries.

Currently, the two large parcels north of the CSX railroad easements (0042 003 and 0042 004) as well as the parcel fronting I-20 (another portion of parcel 0042 003) are wooded. The remaining parcels (0042 049A, 0042 050A, and 0042 051) are low-density residential. Two homes are currently located in the site area south of the CSX Rail Easement and would need to be demolished by permit. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in December 2026.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

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 following table outlines the proposal’s alignment with these recommendations:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to meet the demand created by the proposed project. However, there is an existing warehousing center approximately 4 miles northeast of the proposed site and other industrial businesses in the area surrounding the site. The local government should consider the area’s available workforce to determine if there is an adequate local supply of labor to work at the proposed location, or whether additional workers would need to be recruited from outside the region.
Elevates public health and equity	No elements of the proposed project that relate to the elevation of public health or equity were identified.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	The proposal could add value to the existing community through employment opportunities.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	The proposal does not include elements that would directly create housing. The local government should evaluate if there is sufficient local housing at an appropriate price point to house the workforce of the proposed site. If not, it should strive to attract additional housing to the area.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	Although the proposed site is directly adjacent to I-20, the site does not have good access to I-20; the site entrance is approximately 2 miles from the nearest I-20 exit at Almon Road. The traffic study indicates that the proposed site would negatively impact the level of service at the intersections of Old Oxford Road & Access Road and the intersection of Crowell Road & Access Road (adjacent to the Almond Road I-20 exit). The local government should be aware of the traffic impacts of the proposed project and plan road improvement projects appropriately.
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>The proposed industrial development would be located directly adjacent to the Yellow River, which is a major river that runs through Gwinnett, DeKalb, Rockdale, and Newton County and feeds into the Ocmulgee River. Additionally, the proposed site plan indicates that one of the buildings would be built on top of an intermittent stream connected to the Yellow River.</p> <p>Locating the proposed industrial site next to a major river has the potential to lead to water pollution, as industrial runoff, waste, and sediment could enter the river. This would harm the aquatic life in the river and negatively affect downstream communities that rely on the river for drinking water. Additionally, building a warehouse on top of an intermittent stream would disrupt the natural flow of water, which could lead to flooding damage, soil erosion, and destabilization of the stream banks downstream.</p> <p>The local government states that the developer would likely be required to obtain approvals from agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission to disrupt the intermittent stream and associated wetlands on site. The developer should be aware of the hazards of disrupting the natural flow of water and mitigate potential risks and impacts accordingly.</p> <p>There are no known historic resources that would be affected by the proposal.</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 (177 ACRES)	Wetland Acres ¹	15	8.6%
	"Conservation Land" ²	177	100%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	177	100%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	177	100%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (3,611 ACRES)	Wetland Acres	437	12.1%
	"Conservation Land"	3,554	98.4%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	3,280	90.8%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	3,393	94%

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).

The affected parcels are 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 developer should consider including components of the Network's intent in partnership with the local government.

The proposed site is located directly adjacent to the Yellow River, which is identified as a Regionally Important Resource in Northeast Georgia. The river is an important recreational resource, providing fishing, boating, space for trails, white-water rapids, and associated greenspace. According to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, this segment of the Yellow River currently does not support its designated uses for fishing and drinking water due to the presence of fecal coliform. Additionally, the Yellow River serves as the habitat for two state- and federal-listed species: the Black-Spored Quillwort (endangered) and the Pool Sprite (threatened). Due to the importance and vulnerability of the Yellow River and the species it supports, the developer should strive to minimize potential impacts from the proposed site. 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 a 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.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

An estimated 49% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The proposed site plan includes four retention ponds for handling site stormwater. The proposed site plan includes a 25-foot state stream buffer, a 50-foot undisturbed natural vegetative buffer, and a 75-foot impervious buffer around Gum Creek. The plan also includes a 50-foot natural and undisturbed riparian buffer, a 100-foot minimally disturbed, natural landscape & replanted riparian buffer, and a 150-foot impervious buffer around the Yellow River.

The applicant states that the project is likely to affect wetland and floodplain areas in the area, particularly because of Proposed Building B's location on top of both of these features. The applicant states the proposed development is unlikely to affect the remaining environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, protected mountain and river corridors, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources.

A&R Engineering Inc. completed a traffic impact study for the proposed development that estimates that the proposed development would create 3,105 additional trips, including 257 AM peak hour trips and 259 PM peak hour trips. The study recommends one entering lane and one exiting lane with a stop-sign control for the access driveways along Old Atlanta Highway and Hawkins Drive. Additionally, the applicant states that Hawkins Drive would need to be widened and paved with curbs and drainage infrastructure installed to service the site.

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewer Authority water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.3 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. A 0.2-mile water & sewer line extension would be required to serve the proposed project.

The applicant estimates the project would generate 2,000 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, almost all of the municipal solid waste generated in Newton County is disposed of in Newton County.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$150,000,000 at build-out in 2025 and generate \$2,500,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$847,458 and generate approximately \$14,124 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 Aviation Programs

This proposed construction of 1,941,000 square feet of industrial space on a 177 acre tract is almost 3.5 miles from the Covington Municipal Airport (CVC). It is located outside of the 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.