

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 #4426
Name of Project:	Social Circle Technology Park
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	City of Social Circle

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for a rezone from Agricultural (A), Agricultural-Residential (A-R), and Highway Commercial (CH) to Light Industrial (M1). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 3/28/2025 to 4/12/2025.

This proposal was previously submitted by Newton County for review as DRI #4376, Newton County Technology Park. Due to an error in annexation reporting, the proposal has been resubmitted by Social Circle as DRI #4426, Social Circle Technology Park, after Social Circle determined that the site is within the city boundaries. The site plan and proposed development are the same for DRI #4426 as they were for DRI #4376.

Proposed Development

SC Infrastructure is proposing construction of 2,567,040 square feet of industrial development on an approximately 317-acre site in Social Circle. The proposed development would include 9 data center buildings, 2 substations, and 1,104 parking spaces. The proposal also includes two site entrances, Site Driveway A on SR 11 and Site Driveway B on Social Circle Road.

The proposed development would be located north of 1-20, east of SR-11, and west of Social Circle Road. The parcel number is 0123 032. The development would cover a portion of this parcel, and the remaining land would eventually be subdivided for separate undetermined uses. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2031.

Compatibility with 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 proposal’s compatibility with these recommendations is summarized below:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	<p>The applicant states that the regional workforce 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 County’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 proposal includes 2 site entrances to facilitate the flow of traffic through the site. The traffic study submitted recommendations to improve site access, which are summarized in the Transportation section below.</p>

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>The proposal's design does not protect the natural resources located on the site. A wetland area and all streams located on the site would be disturbed to varying degrees. The site plan includes a 25-foot state waters buffer, as well as 50-foot and 75-foot buffers around the streams, excluding the areas where the proposed road and building intersections occur. Mitigation of stormwater runoff should be a high priority for this project to mitigate any downstream effects of erosion and sedimentation. The developer should consider incorporating permeable pavement throughout the site and other water retention methods.</p> <p>Social Circle should consider requiring the installation of cooling technologies that minimize water consumption to reduce any potential strain on the municipal water supply.</p> <p>There are no known historic resources that would be affected by the proposed development.</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 About 330 acres	Wetland Acres ¹	11	3.3%
	"Conservation Land" ²	328	99.4%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0	0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	328	99.4%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE 3917 acres	Wetland Acres	98	2.5%
	"Conservation Land"	2,508	64%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	731	18.7%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	2,270	58%

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 Brick Store, a historic resource, is listed as a Regionally Important Resource (RIR) located within one mile of the proposed development. However, the building is located on the southern side of Interstate 20 and not on any of the roads impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, there are no anticipated impacts to the RIR.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources

Currently, the site is primarily undeveloped woodlands with one detached single-family home. Lake Duvall is located on the site, along with 4 streams and 2 wetland areas. The proposed road would cross an existing earthen dam at the southern end of Lake Duval and intersect the other 3 streams and a wetland area. Of the 9 buildings, 2 would be placed across the stream located on the western side of the parcel and 2 would be placed on the stream located on the eastern side of the parcel. Also, one of the proposed substations would be placed on a stream in the middle of the site. These streams are tributaries of Nelson Creek, upstream from the Little River. The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the other 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. Refer to the attached site plan for any stream, wetland, floodplain, and buffer locations.

Transportation

Kimley Horn completed a traffic impact study that projects 2,542 new daily trips, including 328 AM peak hour trips and 277 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The study recommends installing a traffic signal at the intersection of SR-11 and Site Driveway A, along with left and right turn lanes on SR-11 if the signal is approved. It also proposes adding two egress lanes exiting the site; one exclusive left turn lane and one shared right turn lane. For site Driveway B, the study recommends constructing a full-movement driveway along Social Circle Rd, with one ingress lane for entering the site and one egress lane for exiting.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewerage Authority for water and sewer services, with an estimated daily water demand of 0.23 MGD and a daily sewer demand of 0.19 MGD. The applicant notes that there is sufficient capacity to serve the project for both the water and sewer systems. No additional lines, except for those installed within the site, would be required to serve the site.

Stormwater Management

An estimated 40% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and 3 detention ponds are planned to manage 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 4,700 tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual tonnage reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, the majority of municipal solid waste generated in Newton County is disposed of in a landfill in Newton County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$5,000,000,000 at build-out in 2031 and generate \$7,000,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$15,772,870 and generate approximately \$22,082 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 data center about 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 as long as construction or construction equipment remains below 919' Mean Seal Level.

If any construction equipment or construction exceeds 69' 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.

Rachel Borkowski, Civil Engineer 3, Georgia Department of Transportation

- Provide a sight plan including all proposed work
 - i.e. deceleration lanes, left turn lanes, and driveways
- Label access points on site plan.
- Note that there are pieces of the parcel that have been subdivided out from the main lot and there will need to be a subdivision of properties submission for this section of land that was sold, if the land is under five acres. If the land was not sold please explain why there is a section of land missing from the parcel.
- An access plan will need to be submitted to the GDOT permitting office and will be subject to the driveway and encroachment manual.
- Sight distance will need to be verified based off AASHTO guidelines.
- Provide full build out site plan.
- Recommendation to have one driveway along SR 11 and connect internally to the driveway with the proposed signalized intersection.
- In the formal submission include the signal warrants.

Shena Applewhaite, Director, Newton County Department of Development Services

It is Newton County's position that the subject property was never properly annexed into the City of Social Circle.