NEGRC
NORTHEAST GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Final Report

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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 #4509
Name of Project:	Richland Crossing
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Greene County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request for a rezone from Agricultural District (A-1) to Multi-Family Residential District (R2), Neighborhood Convenience Commercial District (B1), and General Commercial Highway Oriented District (B2). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 7/11/2025 to 7/26/2025.

Proposed Development

Richland Crossing Investments LLC is proposing the construction of 1,408 housing units and 774,000 square feet of commercial development on an approximately 388-acre site in Greene County. The new mixed-use development would feature a variety of housing types, including 127 detached single-family homes, 116 townhomes, and 1,165 low-rise apartments. The development would also include a warehouse, gas station with 12 fueling stations, 2 general office buildings, a medical office building, commercial retail space, 2 sit-down restaurants, a fast-food restaurant, shopping center, and supermarket. The development would have 14 connections to the existing road network on Lake Oconee Parkway, Richland Connector, and Wrightsville Church Road. The development would occupy property on the east and west sides of 4381 Lake Oconee Parkway in Greene County. The parcel numbers are 0540000200, 054000024D, and 0540000240. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in 2035.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

<u>Compatibility with Regional Plan</u>

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	The project would create a mix of office and commercial employment opportunities for the community. The project could also increase the economic competitiveness of the area by adding additional housing units, thereby increasing the available workforce. Depending on the mix of housing price points and commercial tenets selected, having a mix of residential and commercial uses in this project may enhance economic mobility and competitiveness by placing retail establishments near potential employees and/or customers.
Elevates public health and equity	The proposal includes a walking trail throughout the development and 2 canoe/kayak access points to Richland Creek. If some of the housing units have price points that are affordable for workers at the site's retail establishments, then the project has the potential to advance equity in the community by providing employment opportunities within a walkable distance of housing.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	The proposed project would provide additional housing and retail facilities to the community. The developer should consider making the trails and canoe launches publicly accessible to add value to existing communities.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	The proposal includes 1,408 new housing units and 3 types of housing. Including a variety of housing types will likely result in variation in housing costs and values, creating more equitable and affordable housing options.
Includes transportation choices and is well- connected with existing and planned transportation options	The development includes 14 connections to the existing road network. It also proposes extending Wrightsville Church Road to Hutchinson Grove Road for improved connectivity. The development includes a walking trail that will help pedestrians and bicyclists traverse the site more safely and comfortably. The developer should also consider adding additional safety and traffic-calming infrastructure such as crosswalks, speed humps, or traffic chicanes to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety.
Protects natural and historic resources	There are 2 ponds located on the proposed site and Richland Creek, a tributary of Lake Oconee, flows along the site's eastern border. The site plan preserves the existing tree canopy around Richland Creek, and there are 9 new potential stormwater retention ponds shown throughout the site. No additional information was submitted regarding stormwater buffers or impervious setbacks. This proposal is a suburban greenfield development in nature and clearing a large portion of the existing tree canopy and disturbing the site could negatively impact nearby streams, wetlands, and Lake Oconee by increasing stormwater runoff, erosion, and sedimentation. The developer should consider maintaining as much of the existing tree canopy as possible and maintain as much of the natural topography of the site as possible. This would help reduce erosion, filter stormwater runoff, and minimize disruptions to the site's drainage patterns. The developer should also consider installing permeable pavers in off-street parking stalls to reduce stormwater runoff. There are no known historic resources that would be affected by the proposal.

Compatibility with Regional Resource Management Plan

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.

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA
SITE AREA (388 Acres)	Wetland Acres[1]	9	2.3%
	"Conservation Land" [2]	272	70%
	Regionally Important Resource Land[3]	137	35.3%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land[4]	272	70%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (5,178 Acres)	Wetland Acres	249	4.8%
	"Conservation Land"	3,790	73.2%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	3,123	60.3%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	3,790	73.2%

Lake Oconee is a Regionally Important Resource located within one mile of the proposed site. As stated above, clearing a large portion of the site could increase stormwater runoff and sedimentation into Lake Oconee. The developer should consider maintaining as much of the existing tree canopy as possible, especially around Richland Creek, which is a tributary of Lake Oconee. Also, if the proposal is approved, an erosion and sedimentation plan should be created and adhered to so that negative environmental impacts from land clearing and grading can be mitigated to the greatest extent feasible.

There are 3,790 acres of Threatened RIR Land within one mile of the site. The threatened RIR acreage 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 incorporation of a publicly accessible trail network and maximizing the retention of the existing tree canopy would accomplish the intention of the Green Infrastructure Network.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources and Stormwater Management

There are 2 existing ponds on the proposed site, as well as Richland Creek, which flows into Lake Oconee. The applicant states that an estimated 33% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. There are 9 stormwater ponds 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.

The applicant states that the project is likely to affect wetlands and floodplains. According to the applicant, the proposed development will follow the Greene County stormwater procedures and code.

[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).

Transportation
A&R Engineering completed a traffic impact study that projects 36,223 new external daily trips, including 2,054 AM peak hour trips and 3,003 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. Reductions in total trips generated were incorporated in the calculations based on trips eliminated by the mixed-use nature of the proposal. At the intersection of Lake Oconee Parkway (SR44) and Club Drive, the traffic study recommends installing a traffic signal if warranted by GDOT, "protected & permissive" phases for the westbound and southbound left movements, and a separate left turn lane on the westbound approach of Club Drive. The traffic study also submitted recommendations for the 14 proposed site entrances, including installing traffic signals at Site Driveways 1 and 2.

Water Supply and Wastewater
The project would be served by the Piedmont Water Company water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.67 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated except those into and throughout the site.

Solid Waste
The applicant estimates the project would generate 6,500 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 Greene County is disposed of in a landfill in Twiggs County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues
The applicant estimates that the project would be worth $845,000,000 at build-out in 2035 and generate $16,100,000 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately $2,177,835 and generate approximately $41,494 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 1,408 housing units and 774,000 square feet of commercial development on an approximately 388-acre site in Greene County is approximately 7.6 miles from the Greene County Regional Airport (CPP). 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/oe3a/main/#/noticePrescreen). 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.

Greg Boike, Director of Planning and Public Administration, Middle Georgia Regional Commission
This project represents another major investment in the State Route 44 corridor between Eatonton and Greensboro. MGRC has previously commented on the need for improvements in this corridor, and the scope of DRI #4509 makes this all the more important. In particular, GDOT PI No. 0006253 will be of concern to the Middle Georgia region. Recognizing that the project has a projected timeline of nearly five years for utility relocation and construction, MGRC encourages, to the greatest extent feasible, that roadway construction projects be completed before the full impacts of developments like DRI 4509 are felt on the community.