

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.

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<b>Project I.D.:</b>	DRI #4739
<b>Name of Project:</b>	Research Quarter
<b>Name of Host Jurisdiction:</b>	Oconee County

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### Background

The developer's request for rezoning, sewer and water connections, and permits initiated the review. The site is currently zoned as B-2, and according to the site plan, the developer is requesting to rezone it to a modified B-2 zone. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 5/22/2026 to 6/6/2026.

### Proposed Development

Burgess Jennings Mill Land, LLC, is proposing construction of a 250,000 square-foot mixed-use development on a 23-acre site in Oconee County. The County previously approved a 174,500 square-foot development on the site, of which 50,202 square feet have already been built. The developer is now proposing to increase the square footage to 250,000 square feet. The initial project is ongoing, and the applicant estimates a completion date between 2028 and 2030.

Between the existing and proposed buildings, the proposal includes 11 buildings totaling 250,000 square feet:

- Already built following previous approval (four buildings):
  - One 17,202 square-foot two-story daycare, and
  - Three medical offices (9,000–12,000 square feet, each).
- Additional buildings proposed to be built (seven buildings):
  - Two three-story medical offices (20,000 and 9,000 square feet),
  - One 60,000 square-foot three-story hospital,
  - Two 13,000 square-foot shopping centers,
  - One 2,000 square-foot coffee shop, and
  - One four-story 58,532 square-foot hotel.

Additional site improvements proposed include landscape strips, which would be 10 feet wide and total 8,709 feet in length. The site is accessed from three existing internal roads (Research Parkway, Goddard Way, and CAAP Drive), and

no changes are proposed to those roads. Sidewalks are proposed throughout the site. The application does not specify the number of parking spaces, but the site plan shows that most of the land around each building would be used for surface parking.

The proposed development would occupy property east of the Oconee Connector, south of the Athens Perimeter Bypass, and north of Virgil Langford Drive in Oconee County. The site borders medical facilities south of Virgil Langford Road and is near a shopping center north of the Athens Perimeter. The parcels concerned are C01AV001, C01AV002, C01AV003, C01AV004, C01AV005, C01AV007, C01AV008A, C01AV008B, C01AV009, C01AV0010, and C01AV0011.

## Compatibility with Existing Plans

### Compatibility with Regional Plan

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
<b>Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness</b>	Additional buildings proposed include retail and lodging options such as two shopping centers, a hotel, and a coffee shop. Collectively, these facilities would likely yield economic benefits through job creation and the provision of goods and services for the community. The proposed development is near existing shopping centers, which would likely increase the economic competitiveness of the area due to more consumer options existing within the community, as some goods and services provided at this site may not be available elsewhere in the county. The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to fill the projected demand.
<b>Elevates public health and equity</b>	The proposed development contains multiple medical offices, which could elevate the area’s public health through access to additional medical facilities. The proposed development would also contain large trees to achieve canopy coverage, which would provide consumers with shade.
<b>Supports and adds value to existing communities</b>	Given proximity of existing shopping centers to the proposed development, the proposal adds more goods and services for the general population around the Oconee Connector. The proposed development might provide increased access to goods and services that the community can benefit from, if either it provides new goods and services that are not already available in the area, or if the demand for the goods and services it would provide is higher than can be fulfilled by existing facilities. The proposed development is also close to existing medical facilities, so the proposed new hospital and medical offices would add to an existing cluster of medical facilities. Clustering medical facilities in an area can benefit the community through increased access to care and greater coordination of care. Additionally, the proposal includes a new hotel, which would add additional lodging options near several highways and would also provide the County with new hotel-motel tax revenue.
<b>Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable</b>	The proposed development does not include any housing units but does include lodging options, which could complement the existing lodging options nearby and provide consumers with goods and services within the project site.

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
<b>Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options</b>	Located directly off the Oconee Connector, the proposed development is accessible from a minor arterial. A bicycle lane and sidewalks run along the Oconee Connector intersecting with Virgil Langford Road (proposed development access point), creating alternative transportation opportunities. Given the high traffic speeds and propensities off the Oconee Connector, accessing the proposed development with a private automobile is likely the most desired mode of transportation. Internally, the proposed development would be navigated through Goddard Way and CAAP Drive in addition to the proposed parking lots and sidewalk network. Since a bicycle lane exists near the site, it is recommended that the proposed development include bicycle racks at each facility within the project site.
<b>Protects natural and historic resources</b>	Given the site contains no significant environmental resources, environmental impacts would likely be insignificant. There are also no historic resources near or on the site. The applicant also states that the proposed development is unlikely to affect any environmental quality factors.

### 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.

#### **Wetland, Conservation, and Regionally Important Resources**

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA
<b>SITE AREA (27 Acres<sup>1</sup>)</b>	Wetland Acres <sup>2</sup>	--	0.0%
	"Conservation Land" <sup>3</sup>	24.7	91.1%
	Regionally Important Resource Land <sup>4</sup>	--	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land <sup>5</sup>	24.7	91.1%
<b>1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (2,673 Acres)</b>	Wetland Acres	79.3	3.0%
	"Conservation Land"	502.1	18.8%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	--	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	502.1	18.8%

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

### **Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts**

#### Natural Resources and Stormwater Management

There are no natural features of significance on the site. The applicant states that an estimated 63% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces; however, the site plan lists the maximum lot coverage as 80%. 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. At minimum, the project should be in

<sup>1</sup> The total site area of the proposal is 23 acres. The 27 acres listed here include three existing public roads that are internal to the site (Research Drive, Goddard Way, and CAAP Drive).

<sup>2</sup> Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

<sup>3</sup> "Conservation" land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

<sup>4</sup> Regionally Important Resources were identified as a part of the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (2/15/2018).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

accordance with the latest edition of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book) and meet all relevant EPD requirements. According to the applicant, Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater facilities will be employed throughout the site, including roadside swales, grassed and natural waterways, rain gardens, bio-retention strips, enhanced swales, pervious paving, sheet flow, infiltration areas, underground stormwater management, enhanced water quality, and related items

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. Based on NEGRC's review of submitting materials, the applicant's assessment appears to be accurate.

### Transportation

Travis Pruitt and Associates, Inc. completed a traffic impact study that projects 6,530 new daily trips from the proposed development, including 505 AM peak hour trips and 559 PM peak hour trips. GDOT has two projects along SR-316/Oconee Connector near the site, both entailing ramps. The traffic study recommends one improvement: the addition of an east-bound left turn lane at the intersection of Virgil Langford Road and Research Parkway.

### Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Oconee County Water Resource Department. Water and sewer systems estimate a daily demand of 0.0368 MGD for each system. Approximately 400 linear feet of additional sanitary sewer lines will be required and funded by the developer to serve this project.

### Energy Supply

The applicant states that Walton EMC will supply energy for this site, and the project's estimated peak connected electrical load is 0.925 megawatts. A Walton EMC electrical substation is located directly across from the project site.

### Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate approximately 118 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, the municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Oconee County is disposed of in landfills in Banks and Barrow Counties. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated, though it is expected that there would be medical waste generated based on the proposed uses. Medical waste generally has an alternative disposal and/or reuse stream from MSW.

### Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth over \$56 million at build-out in 2030 and generate approximately \$534,000 in annual property and school taxes. Sales tax revenues are not included in the estimate. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$2.4 million and generate approximately \$23,000 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 250,000 sq ft of mixed use space on a 23 acre in Oconee County is over 7 miles from the Athens-Ben Epps Airport (AHN). 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.