



DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Finding

Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center • 305 Research Drive, Athens, Georgia 30605-2795 • 706.369.5650 • Fax 706.369.5792 • www.negrdc.org

TO: Affected Local Governments and Other Interested Parties

FROM: James R. Dove, Executive Director *JRD*

DATE: September 27, 2007

The Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center (RDC) has completed its review of the following Development of Regional Impact (DRI). The Northeast Georgia RDC reviewed the proposed project with regard to conflicts with regional plans, goals, and policies and the impacts it might have on the activities, plans, goals, and policies of other local jurisdictions and state, federal, and other agencies. The finding does not address whether the DRI is or is not in the best interest of the local government.

DRI ID Number: 1559
Name of Proposed Project: Swords Pointe
Submitting Local Government: Morgan County

Finding: After review of information submitted by the host government and comments received from affected agencies, the Northeast Georgia RDC finds that the development is in the best interest of the Region and therefore the State.

Additional Comments:

The review produced the following concerns:

- Traffic impacts resulting from this project potentially exceed the road network's ability to accommodate the anticipated additional traffic volumes.
- The potential effect of stormwater runoff and the subsequent impact on water quality specifically due to the location of a stream on the proposed golf course and the typically high nitrate levels from golf courses.
- The cumulative impacts of solid waste generation on the available capacity of regional landfills, specifically the diminishing capacity of Oak Grove, the receiving landfill.
- The failure of this project to provide affordable housing.

Should the project be pursued, the following recommendations are made:

- The developer should coordinate closely with Morgan County and the Georgia Department of Transportation to implement all improvements discussed in the traffic study to address the potential traffic impacts.
- The project should be phased concurrent with the ability of supportive infrastructure to accommodate the additional growth.
- Every effort must be made to comply with all local, state, and federal environmental regulations throughout the development phase to ensure minimal impact on the surrounding areas.



MORGAN COUNTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Request for Comments Re: DRI #1559, Morgan County Submitted September 19, 2007

Within the last 24 months, Morgan County Planning and Development staff has worked with Sean Rasmus of Blue Water Development Group, and his engineers and land planners, as they reviewed and revised a site plan for this project. At minimum, the developers can expect a series of conditions of zoning approval to be recommended by staff. After a more thorough review of the project, if approved, staff may also recommend a development agreement be tied to the project as a condition of zoning approval. In addition to the concerns identified by the RDC and other commenting agencies, at minimum we feel the following items need to be addressed by the developer.

1. **Access to the site.** Based on the concept plan submitted, staff has several concerns about access to the site. The project is located in the old Swords community, which was incorporated in 1906, but no longer is identified as an incorporated municipality. The roads that comprise the area of the county have not undergone any substantial design upgrades. The increased volume of traffic generated by this project will have an impact on the existing road network. At minimum, the improvements identified in the traffic impact analysis will be required to be performed. Additionally, the staff has concerns about the sight clearance at the intersection of Swords Road and the project entrance. Staff may require that this project entrance be relocated to a better location on the property should the zoning change be granted. At various times the developer has indicated that this will be a public street, which will alleviate the traffic that presently utilizes Fractions Bottom Road. Staff may require a provision that specifies the developer must make their new road a private street and deed the right-of-way to the county in accordance with the Morgan County Development Regulations.
2. **Phasing and Road Infrastructure Costs.** Staff has expressed concerns to the developer regarding the substantial infrastructure cost associated with building this project. Specifically, the concept plan is showing approximately 3 miles of new roadways. The new road between Swords and Fractions Bottom Road is approximately 1.3 miles, and it serves only as a drive to access the rear of the property through the golf course. If this project should be approved, staff will probably look for a letter of credit that guarantees that the developer has the financial resources required to install the road. Additionally, staff will also recommend a condition of zoning approval that specifies the boulevard that runs between Swords Road and Fractions Bottom Road be installed before building permits will be issued for the project.
3. **Water and Sewer Infrastructure.** The developer has verbally identified that Piedmont Water will be responsible for the private water and sewer system for the project. If this project should be approved, staff would require a statement in writing from Piedmont Water certifying their agreement to service this project.
4. **Golf Course.** Given the remote location of the site, as well as its limited access to Lake Oconee, the golf course becomes the major amenity to attract people to this community. As such, it is an important part of the project, but if for some reason it is not financially viable in the long term, staff does not want this to become developable land. Therefore, staff will suggest a condition of zoning approval that specifies the area shown as a golf course may be used only for that purpose

or as open space, but it will not be developable land. Additionally, staff will also suggest a condition of zoning approval that will cap the number of building permits that are allowed prior to the installation of the golf course.

5. **Historic Resources and Viewshed Protection.** The staff has expressed concerns to the developer about the impact of the project on significant resources in that area. Though the NAHRGIS database does not identify any resources on the property in question, the project is located in the area of what was once the incorporated town of Swords, Georgia. Swords was incorporated by the Georgia Legislature in August 1909, and it is named in honor of the family that contributed most to its financial success. At one time, this area was home to the J.B. Swords Distillery, (rumored to be a competitor of Jack Daniels Distillery). The community boasted a bank, post office, school building, and jail. Its commercial center consisted of a general supply store, blacksmith shop, grist mill, cotton gin, and several cotton warehouses. The Swords Methodist Church was constructed in 1912, and is still in operation today. The homes of several Swords family members (including a high style, two-story Colonial Revival structure across from the project entrance) are located in close proximity, as well as the church, other architecturally significant residential structures, and the remnants of the old commercial center (which was destroyed by fire in the 1980s). Furthermore, settlement of this area far precedes the incorporation of Swords in 1910. As early as 1809, there was a community identified on early maps as “Blue Springs” that had settled and farmed this region. Given the very historic nature of this area, staff has concerns that a project of this type, with golf, swim, country club, and townhouses, would be an incongruous juxtaposition in this rural agrarian setting. To this end, staff will require certain measures to mitigate the impact on adjacent properties and protect the Viewshed from the right-of-way should this project be approved.
6. **Lake Access Through Bellview Shores.** With the exception of acquiring the boat ramp and an adjacent lot in the Bellview Shores Community, this project does not have direct lake access. The portion of the property that was originally zoned LR3, was supposed to be a second phase of Bellview Shores, a manufactured home community developed on Lake Oconee in the early 1980s. Though some of the lots have transitioned to site-built, single-family detached homes, many of these lots are still modest single and double-wide manufactured homes. Staff has concerns about the impact of this project on the residents of Bellview Shores, and the input of adjacent property owners will be taken into consideration.
7. **Tree Protection.** The developers will have to meet the minimum requirements of the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance, Article 20, Tree Protection.
8. **Stormwater Drainage.** A channel exists that routes stormwater from parcel 064A 034 to Lake Oconee through Bellview Shores. After making a site visit to this area, staff has some concerns about the impact of stormwater from this site leaving the project and flowing through adjacent neighborhoods. Should this project be approved, engineers will have to demonstrate that stormwater can be accommodated in such a manner as to mitigate deleterious effects on adjacent property owners.



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Request for Comments

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DRI Number:	DRI #1559 Swords Pointe, Morgan County
Name of commenting organization:	Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
Department:	Planning Department
Address:	120 W. Dougherty Street
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Date:	September 14, 2007

September 14, 2007

Jim Moneyhun
Northeast Georgia RDC
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Mr. Moneyhun,

In general, the proposed mixed use development (DRI #1559), as proposed, would not have a measurable impact on Athens-Clarke County's water quality, transportation infrastructure, solid waste management services, natural or historic resources, or other community facilities or services.

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact Brad Griffin, Planning Director, or myself at (706) 613-3515.

Leah Graham Stewart
Long Range Planner

