



DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Finding

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TO: Affected Local Governments and Other Interested Parties

FROM: James R. Dove, Executive Director *for SRD*

DATE: July 9, 2008

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: 1861
Name of Proposed Project: Epps Bridge Centre
Submitting Local Government: Oconee 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 not in the best interest of the Region and therefore the State.

Additional Comments:

The committee noted the positive impacts of this development specifically related to the economy of the applicant county and the region and the creation of jobs. However, the committee felt the negative impacts of the project outweighed the positive economic impacts and job creation.

The reasons for this finding are as follows:

- The amount of impervious surface and the potential effects of stormwater runoff and the subsequent impacts on water quality.
- The location of the proposed stream and wetland restoration site identified to generate mitigation credits and offset the impacts of this development is significantly downstream from the proposed site as well as the areas potentially affected by this development. Because of the potential impacts to the stream, wetlands, and associated water quality, the Committee prefers to see mitigation credits purchased through a bank that can more directly impact the local geographic area impacted by this development.
- Until all phases of the Jennings Mill Parkway road project are completed, including the interchange on SR 10 Loop, all trips generated by this development will utilize Epps Bridge Road; as such, the estimated number of trips generated by this development have the potential to significantly degrade the level of service of Epps Bridge Road and cause safety issues related to access management.
- The stated amount tree canopy and vegetation reduction due to land clearing on the project site will adversely impact water and air quality of the adjacent counties and the region. Canopy and vegetation loss can be reduced through better site design.

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

- The developer should either address the project layout to reduce the amount of impervious surface or consider using pervious pavement, particularly in the parking areas likely to be less in demand. Less impervious pavement can also be achieved by maximizing shared parking between establishments, thereby reducing the square footage of parking area, or building multi-story structures thus accommodating more than one establishment in single-establishment footprints.
- Every attempt should be made to conserve and utilize on-site natural features to protect water quality. The developer should also consider using alternatives to conventional stormwater best management practices such as bioretention cells, pervious paving materials, cisterns, green roofs, and bioswales.
- Attempt should be made to locate stream and wetland mitigation site(s) within the sub-watershed and preferably with close proximity to the project site rather. There is a mitigation bank on the Middle Oconee River in Clarke County with available credits.
- The project should be phased concurrent with the ability of supportive infrastructure to accommodate the additional growth, specifically the Jennings Mill Parkway project.
- At minimum, all improvements discussed in the traffic study should be implemented to address the potential traffic impacts. The developer must coordinate closely with Oconee County, Athens-Clarke County, and the Georgia Department of Transportation to address potential impacts and needed improvements.
- The developer should address the project layout to identify and preserve a greater percentage of existing tree canopy as this is a heavily wooded site providing a significant contribution to the region's air and water quality.

Due to the perceived positive economic impacts on the region, the DRI review committee recommends that the developer revisit the project layout to address the concerns of the committee and resubmit the project for an abbreviated review and potentially receive a different finding.

DRI Review Committee Members

John Middleton, Mary Quinn, Bob Thomas

Date approved by NEGRDC Board of Directors

Chairperson's Signature