

DATE: August 3, 2023

TO: Chair Carlotta Harrell, Henry County Commission
ATTN TO: Touissant Kirk, Planning and Economic Development Lead, Henry County
FROM: Mike Alexander, COO, Atlanta Regional Commission
RE: Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Review

ARC has completed a regional review of the below DRI. ARC reviewed the DRI's relationship to regional plans, goals and policies – and impacts it may have on the activities, plans, goals and policies of other local jurisdictions as well as state, federal and other agencies. This Final Report does not address whether the DRI is or is not in the best interest of the host local government.

Name of Proposal: 2023 The Grove DRI 3974

Submitting Local Government: Henry County

Date Opened: July 14, 2023

Date Closed: August 3, 2023

Description: A DRI review of a proposal to construct a mixed-use development with 7,160 residential units (including single-family homes, townhomes, senior residences, and multi-family apartments), 1,990,000 SF of commercial/retail space, 100,000 SF of village retail space and 180 hotel rooms on a 1,277-acre site fronting Shoal Creek off of Lovejoy Road and Highway 19/41 in Henry County.

Comments:

Key Comments

The project is not aligned with applicable Rural Areas policy recommendations which note: "There is a strong desire from residents and elected officials in these areas to keep them rural. Increased development threatens existing rural economic uses, such as forestry, agriculture, and tourism. The region is striving to protect these areas by limiting infrastructure investments to targeted areas and allowing no development or only low impact development."

Approximately 150 of the project's total 1,278 acres will be retained as open space. The project could be better aligned with Rural Areas policies by utilizing more concentrated development and providing more conservation and open space especially around water elements. A development approach employing site sensitive clearing and nestling of new structures into the existing landscape rather than clearcutting and grading the entire site would dramatically decrease the project's environmental impact.

The project aligns with regional policies related to walkable mixed-used development and includes a robust internal pedestrian network with a minimum standard sidewalk of 5 feet to all areas of the site, a large enhanced 8 foot central sidewalk loop connecting residential with commercial areas, and 8 miles of multi-use trails.

The project provides a wide range of housing choices including several types of detached single-family homes, townhomes, multi-family homes, and senior homes which is strongly supportive of regional housing policies.

The project will generate a total of 28,170 daily vehicular trips. A wide range of roadway improvements are proposed to help mitigate the vehicular impact.

The project is located in a small water supply watershed and is therefore subject to the Henry County watershed protection ordinance for all small water supply watersheds in the County. All development in the watershed, including this project, is subject to all applicable requirements of that ordinance as specified in the Henry County Code, including stream buffers.

Any utilization of the Shoal Creek Reservoir in the stormwater management design analysis would need to be coordinated with the Clayton County Water Authority.

The City of Hampton submitted the detailed attached comments related to vehicular circulation, pedestrian and bike elements, greenspace connectivity, public access to waterfront amenities, parks layout and distribution, potential stormwater element locations, and utilization of green infrastructure.

Fayette County expressed concerns that the development would have impacts on several roads and intersections within Fayette County as noted in their attached detailed comments.

General Comments

The Atlanta Region's Plan, developed by ARC in close coordination with partner local governments, is intended to broadly guide regional development in the 12-county metro region to ensure that required infrastructure and resources are in place to support continued economic development and prosperity. The Plan assigns a relevant growth management category designation with accompanying policy recommendations to all areas in the region. This DRI site is designated Rural Areas; corresponding policy recommendations are provided at the end of these comments.

Transportation and Mobility Comments

ARC's Transportation and Mobility Division comments are attached.

The project will generate a total of 28,170 daily vehicular trips. A wide range of roadway improvements are proposed to help mitigate the vehicular impact.

The project aligns with regional policy related to walkable mixed-used development and includes a robust internal pedestrian network with a minimum standard sidewalk of 5 feet to all areas of the site, a large enhanced 8 foot central sidewalk loop connecting residential with commercial areas, and 8 miles of multi-use trails.

Care should be taken to ensure that the constructed development provides an interconnected, functional, clearly marked and comfortable pedestrian experience on all driveways, paths, entrances, and parking areas. To the maximum extent possible, new driveways and intersection corners where pedestrians will cross should be constructed with minimal curb radii to reduce speeds of turning vehicles and decrease crossing distances for pedestrians.

Fayette County submitted transportation comments which are attached. The County is concerned that the development would have negative impacts on several roads and intersections within Fayette County including: McDonough Road at Countyline Road and McElroy; McDonough Road at SR 54; McElroy Road at SR 54; North Bridge Road at County Line, Inman Road, and Jefferson Davis Drive; Hampton Road East at SR 92; and Hampton Road West at SR 92.

City of Hampton submitted transportation comments including: provide a road connection to the west into Clayton County; ensure good internal vehicular circulation; consider revising the collector road layout to minimize driveway interruptions and enhance bike and pedestrian safety by moving lot access to alleys or other points away from the collector road; consider adding a multi-use trail along both sides of the collector road; and include pedestrian and bike amenities in the commercial to the east of US 19/41.

ARC Natural Resource Comments

ARC's detailed Natural Resource Department comments are attached.

The proposed project property is located entirely within the Shoal Creek Water Supply Watershed, which is a small (less than 100 square mile) public water supply watershed as defined by the Georgia DNR Part 5 Minimum Planning Criteria.

Henry County has a watershed protection ordinance for all small water supply watersheds in the County, with specific criteria for the individual watersheds, including the unincorporated County sections of Shoal Creek. All development in the watershed, including this project, is subject to all applicable requirements of that ordinance as specified in the Henry County Code, including stream buffers.

Plans show 100'/150' buffers on the portions of the project bordering the Shoal Creek Reservoir. Henry County would need to adopt a revision to their County small water supply watershed protection ordinance for these buffers to be formalized.

The Shoal Creek Reservoir, labeled on the site plan as "Lake Talmadge," is owned and operated by the Clayton County Water Authority for water supply storage. Any utilization of the Shoal Creek Reservoir in the

stormwater management design analysis would need to be coordinated with the Clayton County Water Authority.

Environmental Comments

The currently mostly wooded project site bordering the Shoal Creek Reservoir and traversed by several streams provides extensive carbon sequestration, heat island mitigation/urban cooling, and stormwater services for the surrounding area which will all be significantly diminished by the project. The functions are becoming increasingly critical in light of climate change concerns.

Only approximately 150 of the 1,278 total site acres are to be retained as open space and it is not clear if these will be cleared of existing forest or retained in a natural state. The project could be better aligned with Rural Areas policies by better concentrating developed areas and providing more conservation and open space especially around water elements. Further, a development approach employing site sensitive clearing and nestling of new structures into the existing landscape rather than clearcutting and grading the entire site would dramatically decrease the project's environmental impact.

The project can help mitigate this impact and support The Atlanta Region's Plan by incorporating numerous aspects of regional environmental policy, including green infrastructure and/or low-impact design, e.g., pervious pavers, rain gardens, vegetated swales, etc., in parking areas and site driveways, and as part of any improvements to site frontages.

City of Hampton provided environmental comments including: greenspace connectivity and possible county parks would enhance the development; access for all to water's edge would enhance value of all properties; green infrastructure and water quality measures could be located throughout the development providing stormwater treatment in addition to aesthetic appeal and a demonstration/educational opportunity; and provision of a buffer along existing Lake Talmadge residences would provide aesthetic and environmental benefits to residents on both sides.

Unified Growth Policy Designation Considerations: Rural Areas

This DRI site falls under the UGPM Rural Areas category which are areas in the region where limited development has taken place or and where development pressure is low. These areas are characterized by sporadic, large single-family lots, agricultural uses, protected lands, and forests. These areas border more central developed and developing areas and represent the limits of the urban service area in the region. There is a strong desire from residents and elected officials in these areas to keep them rural. Increased development threatens existing rural economic uses, such as forestry, agriculture, and tourism.

To maintain economic viability without undesirable development, these areas may be appropriate as "sending" areas in potential Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs. The region is striving to protect these areas by limiting infrastructure investments to targeted areas and allowing no development or only low impact development. There will be a continued need to maintain existing transportation

infrastructure, but care should be taken not to spur unwanted growth by inappropriate expansion of infrastructure capacity.

The project is generally not aligned with the Rural Areas overall goal of retaining policy rural area uses. The currently mostly wooded project site bordering the Shoal Creek Reservoir and traversed by several streams provides extensive carbon sequestration, heat island mitigation/urban cooling, and stormwater services for the surrounding area which will all be significantly diminished by the project. It could be better aligned with Rural Areas policies by better concentrating developed areas and providing more conservation and open space especially around water elements. The housing and walkability aspects of the project are generally aligned with associated regional policies.

Henry County leadership and staff, along with the applicant team, should collaborate closely to ensure optimal sensitivity to nearby local governments, neighborhoods, and natural systems.

THE FOLLOWING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND AGENCIES RECEIVED NOTICE OF THIS REVIEW:

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION	GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE	GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	GEORGIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY	GEORGIA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
GEORGIA ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE AUTHORITY	GEORGIA CONSERVANCY	CITY OF HAMPTON
CITY OF LOVEJOY	CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE	CITY OF McDONOUGH
CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE	CLAYTON COUNTY	FAYETTE COUNTY
SPALDING COUNTY		

For questions, please contact Donald Shockey at (470) 378-1531 or dshockey@atlantaregional.org. This finding will be published to the ARC review website located at <http://atlantaregional.org/plan-reviews>.