

Development of Regional Impact Findings Report

Prepared for
Metter, Georgia
DRI ID #4695, Fortner Road



Prepared by:
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission
331 West Parker Street
Baxley, Georgia 31513

Table of Contents

1. Project Description	3
a. Location/Zoning/Character Area/Land Use Maps	5
b. Conceptual Master Plan	9
c. Wetland Inventory Map	12
d. Flood Risk Map	13
2. DRI Determination/Comment Period	14
a. Local Jurisdictions/Interested/Affected Parties List	15
3. Comments Received	18
a. Comment from Georgia DNR Environmental Protection Division	21
b. Comment from Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division	23
4. Project Consistency with Local/Regional Plans	28
a. Regionally Important Resources Map	29
5. Project Findings/Recommendations	30

**Development of Regional Impact Project Summary
Fortner Road Mixed Use – Mixed Use Development - #4695
Metter, Candler County Georgia**

Project Description

The Development of Regional Impact (DRI) is the construction of a mixed use development to be known as Fortner Road Mixed Use. The applicant proposes a non-metropolitan mixed use development to include approximately 100 acres that will consist of developing retail and industrial uses along with the necessary infrastructure. The project is to be located at 990 Fortner Road parcel numbers 037 021 and 037 022. The total site area is 100.76 acres. Rezoning is required. Tax Parcel 037 021 is proposed to be rezoned from AG-3 (Agriculture) to HOC-Highway Oriented Commercial. Tax Parcel 037 022 is proposed to be rezoned from AG-3 (Agriculture) to L-1 (Light Industrial). Annexation of the property into the city limits of Metter is also being requested by the City of Metter. The initial phase of the project is estimated to be completed in 2028.

Economic Impact

The estimated value of the development at build-out will be \$125,000,000; the annual estimated tax revenue likely to be generated by the proposed project is \$15,000,000. The developer indicates that the regional workforce is sufficient to serve this development, and that the development will not displace any existing land uses.

Transportation

The proposed mixed use development is to be located in Southeast Georgia, near I-16, about 64 miles west of Savannah. Access to the site will be available on Fortner Road. Traffic volumes generated by the site are expected to reach approximately 4,600 trips per day. The initial traffic study is under review. The city has indicated that transportation improvements will be necessary to serve the project and that development plans will be reviewed to determine if and what transportation improvements will be needed.

Water Supply

The estimated water supply demand to be generated by this project at full development is unknown at this time. Public water is available on Fortner Road to serve the commercial portion of the development. As plans for the industrial parcel become available, additional review may be required. Approximately one mile of 8" water main will be constructed to serve the development at full buildout of both the commercial and industrial portions. This project will be connected to the water system owned, operated, and supplied by the City of Metter. Sufficient water supply capacity is available to serve the proposed project.

Wastewater Disposal

The estimated sewage flow to be generated by this project at full development is unknown at this time. Public wastewater treatment capacity is available on Fortner Road to serve the commercial portion of the development. As plans for the industrial parcel become available, additional review may be required. Approximately one mile of 8" gravity sewer main will be constructed to serve the development at full buildout of both the commercial and industrial portions. This project will be connected to the wastewater treatment service owned, operated, and supplied by the City of Metter. Sufficient wastewater treatment capacity is available to serve the proposed project.

Energy Supply

The energy supply provider for this site will be Excelsior EMC. At full buildout, the project's estimated peak connected electrical load is 16 MWh/day. At full buildout, the project's estimated daily energy usage is 16 MWh/day. Sufficient energy supply capacity is available to serve this proposed project. The project does not anticipate the use of any on-site electrical generation facilities for the purposes of providing power to the project on a regular basis. As plans for the industrial parcel become available, additional review may be required.

Solid Waste Impact

Solid waste generation of 7,500 tons annually is anticipated. Current landfill capacity is sufficient to serve this project. No hazardous waste is expected to be generated. The City of Metter contracts with a private company for waste collection and disposal services.

Storm Water Management

Approximately 75% of the site at full development will be impervious surface. The existing pond will be utilized for stormwater management. Stormwater management will be provided in accordance with the City of Metter stormwater management ordinance.

Environmental Quality

There are non-jurisdictional wetlands located on the development site that may be impacted. Also, the existing pond will be utilized for stormwater management.

Local Planning Considerations

The future land use map from the 2022 Candler County Joint Comprehensive Plan designates the future land use of the project's site as commercial. The current zoning map for Candler County indicates that the location of the proposed project is zoned as AG-3: Agriculture. This project is supported by the attraction of new business, industries, and jobs in Metter and Candler County as outlined in the 2022 Candler County Joint Comprehensive Plan. The proposed project meets future land use goals for Candler County and the City of Metter, however, rezoning of the parcel is required.

DRI 4695: Fortner Road Mixed Use

Tax Parcel ID: 037 021

Current Zoning: AG-3 Agriculture (Candler County zoning district)

Proposed Zoning: HOC – Highway Oriented Commercial

Candler County Future Land Use: Commercial

Location: <https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=799&LayerID=11965&PageTypeID=1>



Tax Parcel ID: 037 022

Current Zoning: AG-3 Agriculture (Candler County zoning district)

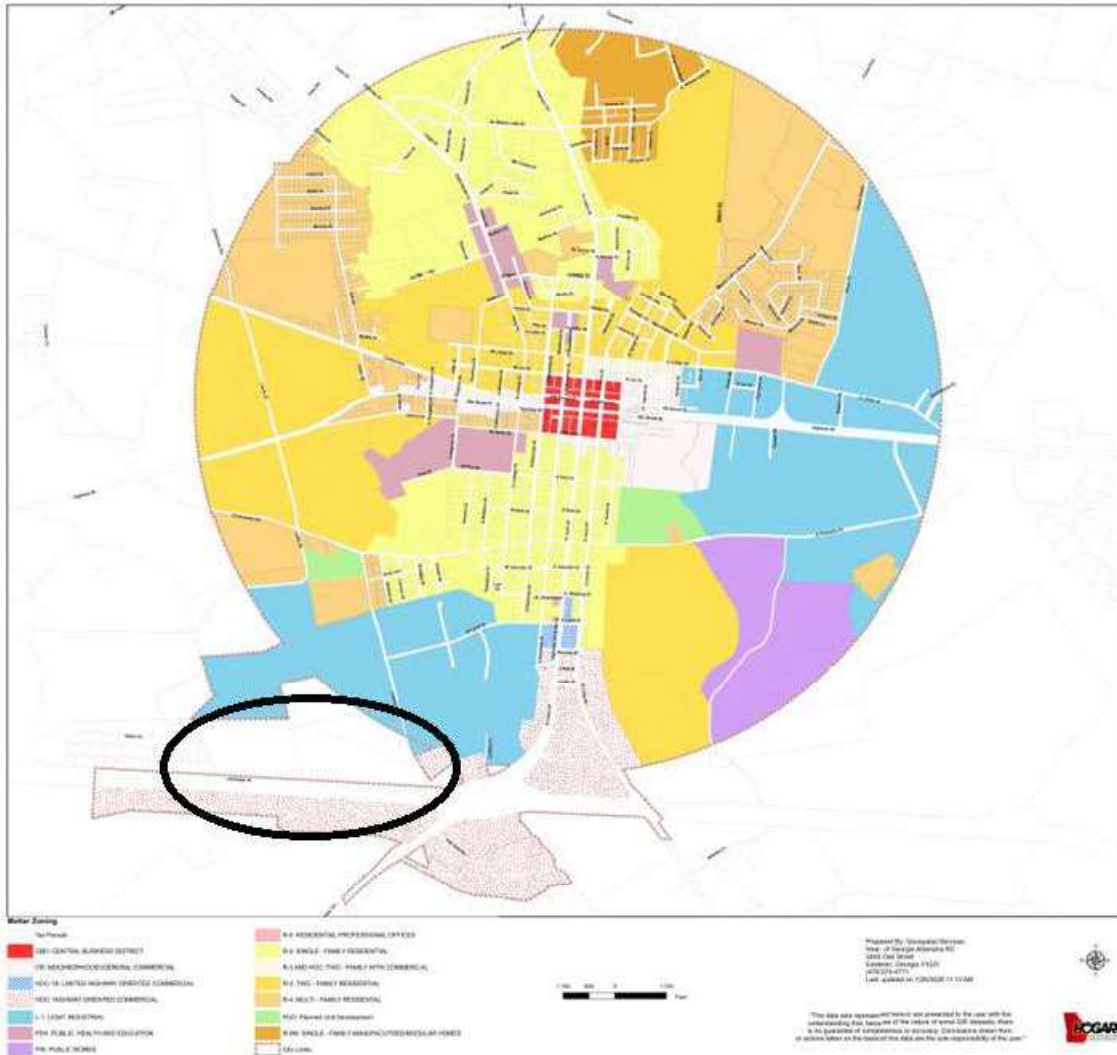
Proposed Zoning: L-1 (Light Industrial)

Candler County Future Land Use: Commercial



Location: <https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=799&LayerID=11965&PageTypeID=1>

City of Metter Zoning Map



Candler County Future Land Use

Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- County Boundary
- City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads

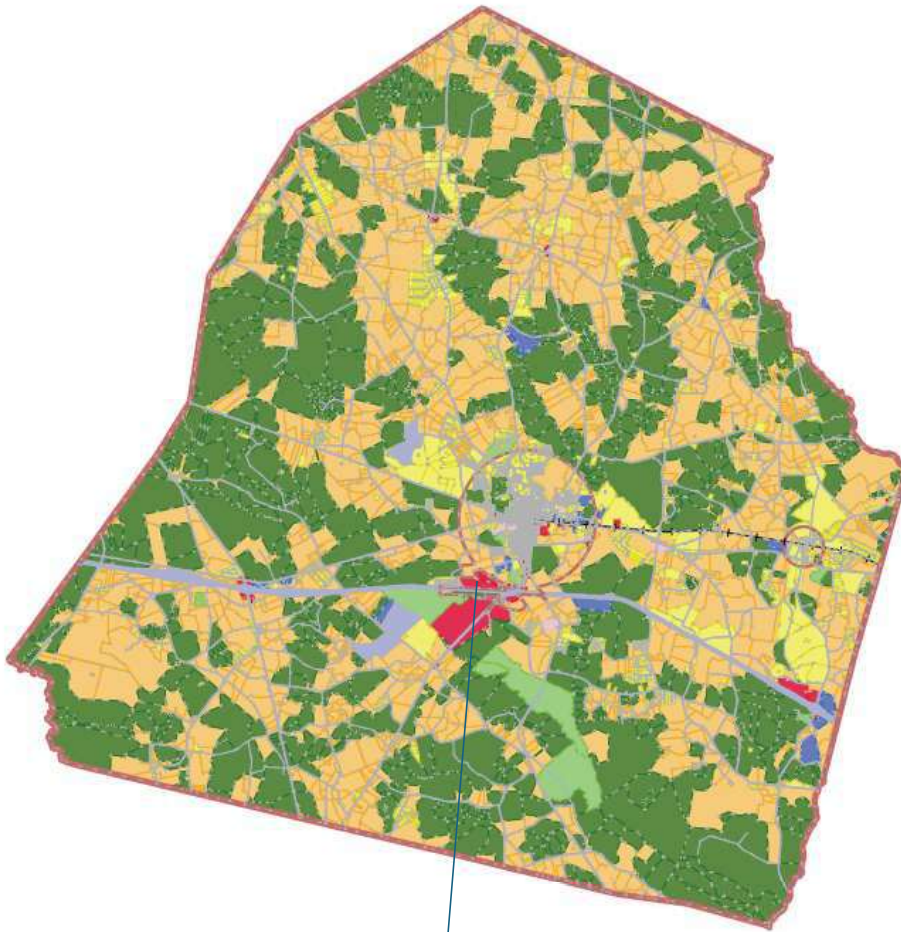
0 2 4 8 Miles



"The data sets represented here-in are presented to the user with the understanding that, because of the nature of some GIS datasets, there is no guarantee of completeness or accuracy. Conclusions drawn from, or actions taken on the basis of this data are the sole responsibility of the user."



Date Saved: 7/29/2022
Path: Candler LocalPlan COMP GDS GWP



Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- County Boundary
- City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads



City of Metter Future Land Use

Future Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forestry
- Industrial
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Metter City Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Rail Roads
- Roads

0 0.35 0.7 1.4 Miles

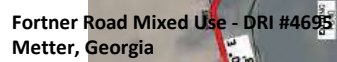


"The data sets represented here-in are presented to the user with the understanding that, because of the nature of some GIS datasets, there is no guarantee of completeness or accuracy. Conclusions drawn from, or actions taken on the basis of this data are the sole responsibility of the user."

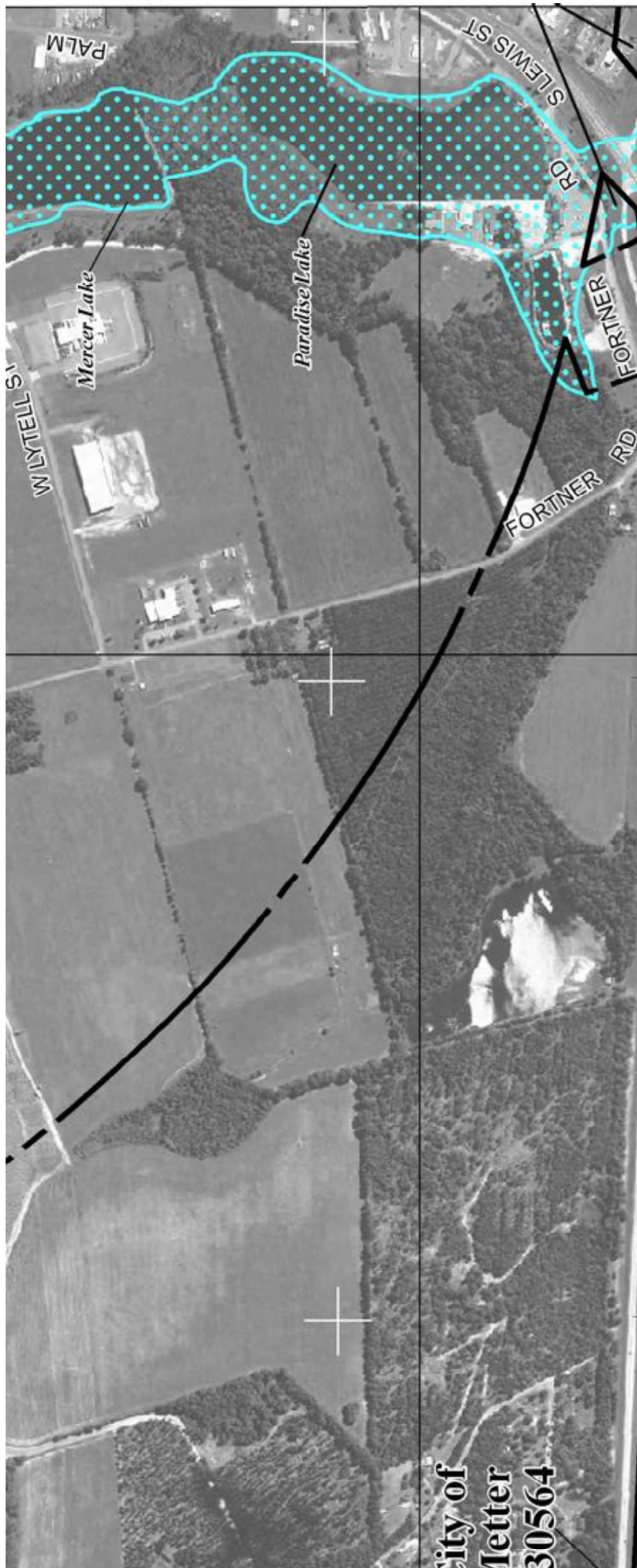


Date Saved: 7/29/2022
Path: Candler LocalPlans_COMP_SDS_SWP









Fortner Road Mixed Use - DRI #4695
Metter, Georgia

2. DRI Determination/Comment Period

This DRI Project #4695 was determined to be a non-metropolitan-tier mixed use development under DRI thresholds established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Date	Action
April 17, 2026	Determination was made by the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission that this project warranted regional review after submission of DRI Information Forms 1, 2, a conceptual master plan, and additional information as provided.
April 23, 2026	Comment period began. Emailed prescribed information packet to about 106 stakeholders and potentially interested parties. These included all local governments surrounding Metter and Candler County, local economic agencies, adjacent regional commissions, state/federal agencies, state representatives, appropriate tribal governments, conservation groups, and utility/transportation entities.
May 7, 2026	Comment period closed.

Fortner Road Mixed Use - Metter DRI #4695
Interested/Affected Parties List

Name	Title and Agency	Email
Rashida Taylor	Mayor, City of Metter	rdanieltaylor@cityofmetterga.gov
Scott Wood	City Manager, City of Metter	swood@cityofmetterga.gov
Angie Conner	City Clerk, City of Metter	aconner@cityofmetterga.gov
Developer	Evans Real Estate Investors	eva@eg20.us
Teresa Concannon	Director of Planning, City of Metter	tconcannon@cityofmetterga.gov
Bryan Aasheim	County Manager, Candler County Board of Commissioners	baasheim@candlerco-ga.gov
Kellie Lank	County Clerk, Candler County Board of Commissioners	klank@candlerco-ga.gov
Paul Greene	Mayor, City of Pulaski	townofpulaski@pineland.net
John Jordan	Candler County School Superintendent (beginning 26-27 school year)	jjordan@metter.org
Bubba Longrear	Candler County School Superintendent (thru 25-26 school year)	blongrear@metter.org
Heidi Jeffers	Director of Economic Development, Metter DDA/City of Metter	hjeffers@cityofmetterga.gov
Hannah Mullins	Executive Director, Candler County Industrial Authority	hannah@selectcandler.com
Marcus McCray	Executive Director, Metter-Candler County Chamber of Commerce	metterchamber@gmail.com
Zane Grennell	Associate Planner Regional Programs, GA DCA	zane.grennell@dca.ga.gov
Jon West	Director, Office of Planning, Research, & Mapping, GA DCA	jon.west@dca.ga.gov
Juli Yoder	Senior Planner, Local Programs Lead, GA DCA	juli.yoder@dca.ga.gov
Dionne Lovett	Coastal RC, Executive Director	dlovett@crc.ga.gov
Andy Crosson	Central Savannah River Area RC - Executive Director	acrosson@csrc.ga.gov
Aaron Carpenter	Planning Director and Assistant Planning Director - Coastal RC	acarpenter@crc.ga.gov
Lynn Ashcraft	Region 9 Representative, GA DCA	region9@dca.ga.gov
Casey Burkhalter	County Administrator, Evans County Board of Commissioners	countyadministrator@evanscounty.org
Leah Edwards	County Clerk, Evans County Board of Commissioners	countyclerk@evanscounty.org
Amy Kraus	City Clerk, City of Bellville	cityofbellville00@gmail.com
Brad McCooley	Mayor, City of Bellville	mayormccooley@hotmail.com
Terry Branch	Mayor, City of Claxton	mayor@cityofclaxton.net
Brenda Conley	City Clerk, City of Claxton	bconley@cityofclaxton.net
Eddie Ball	Mayor, City of Daisy	Daisymayor2022@yahoo.com
Gena Roberts	Mayor, City of Hagan	haganadmin@pineland.net
Frank H. Murphy	County Manager, Tattnall County Board of Commissioners	murphy@tattnallcountyga.gov
Sheila Mills	County Clerk, Tattnall County Board of Commissioners	smills@tattnallcountyga.gov
Danny Ray Collins	Mayor, City of Cobbtown	cobbtownusa@pineland.net
Charles Rushton	Mayor, City of Collins	cityofcollins@windstream.net
Emily Mixon	City Manager, City of Glennville	cm@glennvillega.gov
Bernie Weaver	Mayor, City of Glennville	mayor@glennvillega.gov
Tonya Edwards	Mayor, City of Manassas	manassasgeorgia30438@gmail.com
Vickie Nail	Mayor, City of Reidsville	mayor@cityofreidsvillega.com
John Jones	County Manager, Toombs County Board of Commissioners	ijones.toombsco@bellsouth.net
Willis D. NeSmith, Jr.	Mayor, City of Lyons	mayoroflyons@lyonsga.org
Jason Hall	City Manager, City of Lyons	jhall@lyonsga.org
Donita Bowen	Mayor, City of Santa Claus	mayor@cityofsantaclaus.org

Fortner Road Mixed Use - Metter DRI #4695
Interested/Affected Parties List

Name	Title and Agency	Email
Kellie Murray	City Clerk, City of Vidalia	kmurray@vidaliaga.gov
Josh Beck	City Manager, City of Vidalia	jBeck@vidaliaga.gov
L. Guy Singletary	Emanuel County Manager	jgsingletary@emanuelco-ga.gov
Halei Lamb	Emanuel County Clerk	hlamb@emanuelco-ga.gov
Sandra Bailes	Mayor, City of Adrian	mayoradrianga@gmail.com
Tabatha Fowler	City Clerk, City of Adrian	adriancityclerk@gmail.com
Tommy Paul	Mayor of Garfield	garfield@pineland.net
Michelle Wimberly	Mayor of Nunez	cityofnunez@pineland.net
Courtney Soley	Oak Park City Clerk	OPCityclerk3857@gmail.com
Regan Slater	Mayor of Stillmore	regan.slater@yahoo.com
Rhonda Turner	Stillmore City Clerk	stillmorecityhall@yahoo.com
Linda Kirkland	Summertown City Clerk	lindack47@yahoo.com
Herman Middlebrooks	Swainsboro City Administrator	hmiddlebrooks@cityofswainsboro.org
Lillie Ann Brown	Mayor, City of Swainsboro	lbrown@cityofswainsboro.org
Matt Donaldson	Mayor of Twin City	mDonaldson@twincityga.com
Eugenia Ducker	Twin City- City Clerk	clerk@twincityga.com
James Pope	Planning and Development Director, Bulloch County Board of Commissioners	jpope@bullochcounty.net
Chris Eldridge	County Manager, Bulloch County Board of Commissioners	celdridge@bullochcounty.net
Justin Williams	City Planner, City of Statesboro	justin.williams@statesboroga.gov
Charles Penny	City Manager, City of Statesboro	charles.penny@statesboroga.gov
Jonathan McColiar	Mayor, City of Statesboro	mayor@statesboroga.gov
Billy Boggs	Mayor, City of Portal	mayor@cityofportal.com
L.W. Gwinnett, Jr.	Mayor, City of Brooklet	nicky.gwinnett@brookletga.us
Lori Phillips	City Clerk City of Brooklet	lori.phillips@brookletga.us
Donnie Roberts	Mayor, Town of Register	cityofregister@gmail.com
Jason Gatch	District Conservationist, USDA NRCS	Jason.Gatch@usda.gov
Terrance Rudolph	State Conservationist, USDA NRCS	terrance.rudolph@ga.usda.gov
Bruce Foisy	District Manager, GA DNR, EPD Coastal District	bruce.foisy@dnr-ga.gov
DNR	DNR Environmental Review Box	Nongame.Review@dnr-ga.gov
Olivia T.S. Martin	Environmental Engineer, Floodplain Unit, GA EPD	olivia.martin@dnr-ga.gov
James Capp	Branch Chief, Watershed Protection Branch, GA DNR	james.capp@dnr-ga.gov
Jeff Cown	Branch Chief, Land Protection Branch, GA DNR	jeff.cown@dnr-ga.gov
David Crass	Division Director, Historic Preservation Division, GA DNR	david.crass@dnr-ga.gov
Jennifer Dixon	Environmental Review and Preservation Planning Program Manager, DCA	jennifer.dixon@dca-ga.gov
Bryan Tucker	Archaeology, Education and Outreach Section Chief, GA DNR	bryan.tucker@dnr-ga.gov
Anne Kaiser	Georgia Power, Community & Economic Development	ahkaiser@southernco.com
Excelsior EMC	Excelsior EMC	eeemc@excelsioremc.com
Vincent Cardinal	General Manager, Georgia Central Railway	vincent.cardinal@gwrr.com
Haydn Blaize	State NFIP Coordinator, GA DNR	Haydn.Blaize@dnr-ga.gov
Fletcher Sams	Executive Director, Altamaha Riverkeeper	fletcher@altamahariverkeeper.org

Fortner Road Mixed Use - Metter DRI #4695
Interested/Affected Parties List

Name	Title and Agency	Email
Keith Dixon	WIOA Director, Job Training Unlimited	keith.dixon@jobtrainingunlimited.com
Andrea Taylor	Project Manager, Georgia Department of Economic Development	ataylor@georgia.org
Kimberly Thompson	Coordinator, Pine County RC&D	kthompson@pinecountyrctd.org
Michelle Boone	GSWCC Region 4 Regional Representative	michelle.boone@gaswcc.ga.gov
Sam Smith	Community Forestry, Candler County, Georgia Forestry Commission	ssmith@gfc.state.ga.us
George Bird	Chief Ranger, Candler County, Georgia Forestry Commission	candlercounty@gfc.state.ga.us
Matthew O'Connor	Regional Forester, Georgia Forestry Commission, Region 4	moconnor@gfc.state.ga.us
Anna Yellin	Environmental Review Coordinator, Nongame Conservation Section, GA DNR	anna.yellin@dnr.state.ga.us
Ben Yahola	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town	Ben.Yahola@alabama-quassarte.org
Kristian Poncho	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana	kponcho@coushatta.org
Robin Soweka	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Muscogee (Creek) Nation	section106@muscogeenation.com
Troy Pittman	District Engineer: Southeast Georgia District, GA DOT Jesup District Office	trpittman@dot.ga.gov
Janine Miller	Director, GDOT Office of Planning	jaMiller@dot.ga.gov
Dr. Jon Ambrose	GA DNR, Wildlife Resources Division, Nongame Wildlife & Natural Heritage Section	Jon_Ambrose@dnr.state.ga.us
Don McGowen	GA DNR, Region Operations Manager, Game Management Division	don.mcgowan@dnr.ga.gov
Lizann Grupalo	Deputy Commissioner, GA Dept. of Economic Development, International Trade	lgrupalo@georgia.org
Mark Jaronski	Chief Marketing Officer, GA Dept. of Economic Development	mjaronski@georgia.org
Ben Hames	Deputy Commissioner, GA Dept. of Economic Development, Workforce	bhames@georgia.org
Andrew Capezzuto	Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel, GDEcD	ACapezzuto@Georgia.org
Kristi Brigman	Deputy Commissioner, Global Commerce, GDEcD	KBrigman@Georgia.org
Attention: CESAS-RD	Regulatory Specialist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers- Savannah Branch	cesas-rd-c@usace.army.mil
Jeff Cown	Director, EPD Division, GA DNR	Jeff.Cown@dnr.ga.gov
Ted Will	Director, Wildlife Resources Division, GA DNR	Ted.Will@dnr.ga.gov
Scarlett Woods	Planning Director, GA Department of Highway Safety	swoods@gohs.ga.gov
Judy Shurling	Secretary to District 2: East Central	jushurling@dot.ga.gov
Ben Hyer	Project Manager, Rural Water Resources & Watersheds, GSWCC	Ben.Hyer@gaswcc.ga.gov
Greg Walker	Project Manager, Rural Water Resources & Watersheds, GSWCC	Greg.Walker@gaswcc.ga.gov
Mike Mitchell	Division Director, Regulatory Compliance, DDS	mbmitchell@dds.ga.gov
Shevondah Leslie	Division Director, Governmental Affairs & Communications, DDS	shevondah.leslie@dds.ga.gov
Susan Sports	Public Information Officer, DDS	ssports@dds.ga.gov
Gail Franklin	Chief Transit Officer, GA Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA)	gfranklin@srtga.ga.gov
Ericka Davis	Chief Communications Officer, GA Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA)	edavis@srtga.ga.gov

3. Comments Received

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission received comments from stakeholders and interested parties from April 23, 2026, to May 7, 2026, for review of the proposed Fortner Road Mixed Use Development – Metter DRI #4695 located in Metter, Georgia.

A total of four responses were received during the comment period regarding the proposed Fortner Road Mixed Use Development – Metter DRI #4695. Comments were received from the following entities: Candler County Industrial Authority, Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Environmental Protection Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife Resources Division, and the City of Santa Claus.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Floodplain Management Unit provided information regarding the flood risk within the area of proposed development. The proposed project lies outside of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) and is an area of minimal flood hazard.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources division offered comments and concerns regarding protected species that have been identified near the proposed development site and provided recommendations for steps that can be taken for species conservation. The Georgia DNR also noted that a portion of the proposed development lies with a Conservation Opportunity Area (COA).

Hannah Mullins, President/CEO of the Candler County Industrial Authority, commented that the project will be a positive stimulus for economic growth and work well with the already existing Interstate 16 industrial park.

Summary of Comments:

**A. Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Environmental Protection Division, Floodplain Unit
Olivia Martin, Environmental Engineer**

“From inspection of the effective Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the proposed project is located outside of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), in Zone X (unshaded), an area of low flood risk. A Floodplain Snapshot Map showing the designated floodplain impacts in the vicinity of the project location, accompanied by the relevant extract of FEMA’s FIRM are attached.

Please note that this response addresses issues related specifically to the possible effects of the project on floodplains in the area and does not override or supersede any State or local procedural substantive provisions which may apply to floodplain management requirements associated with amendments to State or local floodplain zoning ordinances, maps, or State or local procedures adopted under the National Flood Insurance Program.”

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources conducted a Floodplain Encroachment Review for the proposed Fortner Road Mixed Use Development project location. This review can be found on page 21.

**B. Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
Johnny Stutzman, Wildlife Biologist**

“We have the following recommendations for the applicant to consider. We are concerned about streams and other sensitive habitats that could be impacted by the proposed project. We recommend that stringent erosion control practices be used during construction activities and that vegetation is re-established on disturbed areas as quickly as possible. Silt fences and other erosion control devices should be inspected and maintained until soil is stabilized by vegetation. Please use natural vegetation and grading techniques (e.g. vegetated swales, turn-offs, vegetated buffer strips) that will ensure that the project site does not serve as a conduit for stormwater or pollutants into the watershed during or after construction. These measures will help protect water quality near the project as well as in downstream areas.

Please be aware that the type of erosion control and/or soil stabilization material used during construction can impact wildlife. We strongly recommend using natural, biodegradable materials such as ‘jute’ or ‘coir’. Mesh strands should be movable, as opposed to fixed. Use of plastic netting or fencing frequently leads to wildlife entrapment and death.

We advocate green growth, which focuses on environmentally sustainable development and leaving open space in newly developed areas. By clustering development and minimizing infrastructure, such as paved surfaces and utilities, conscientious design can help protect natural habitats from fragmentation and habitat degradation. Development should occur away from sensitive environmental resources. Undisturbed buffers of at least 100 feet should be left surrounding any streams or wetlands at the site. We recommend that open greenspace be protected by use of a conservation easement or other legal agreement. The open space may be used for recreation, wildlife habitat, and/or stormwater control, and native vegetation should be incorporated or preserved. We recommend these developments set aside as much land as possible to remain in a natural state. This will allow for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources as well as recreation opportunities for residents of the planned development and surrounding communities. For more information on Green Growth Guidelines, please visit the Georgia DNR Coastal Resources Division website (<https://coastalgadnr.org/GGG>).

We recommend utilizing native vegetation or grass mixes where possible. The use of native vegetation in such instances provides potential wildlife habitat, improves stormwater management in the form of erosion control, and reduces the cost of maintenance for the facility. At a minimum, please implement best management practices (BMPs) endorsed by the State of Georgia for erosion, sediment, and stormwater control throughout the site during and after construction.

We encourage the applicant to consider deer-friendly fencing along residential or commercial property perimeters, especially in urban areas. Decorative wrought iron fencing

often poses unintended threats to wildlife. In the metro-Atlanta area alone, there are approximately 60-100 deer deaths per year due to this type of fencing. Deer attempt to scale the fencing or fit through the fence posts, resulting in entrapment or fatal injuries on the fence. Security fencing that incorporates barbed wire can also cause injury when scaled. Most animals caught in fencing, regardless of the fencing type, either die or must be euthanized.

For further information, several western states have published guidance on wildlife-friendly perimeter fencing that includes sections on residential fencing, such as this webpage from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources: <https://wildlife.utah.gov/news/wildlife-blog/1938-wildlife-friendly-fences.html>.

We strongly recommend constructing parking lots and access roads of porous asphalt that allows for stormwater infiltration rather than impervious materials that significantly increase runoff into the watershed. Place access roads carefully to provide for adequate parking and access. These measures will help protect water quality, protect sensitive habitats and native species, and provide for a more enjoyable recreational experience for the users.

The area of interest overlaps with and is adjacent to a Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) conservation opportunity area (COA), which represents large areas of wildlife habitat (hubs) and corridors that link those habitats across the landscape. COAs have no regulatory status but are a priority for the implementation of voluntary and collaborative conservation actions. Georgia DNR encourages the conservation of habitat for species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) within COAs. For more information on the 2025 SWAP, including maps of priority areas, conservation actions, and information on species and habitats, please visit the Wild Georgia Conservation Hub.”

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources conducted a wildlife conservation review for the proposed Fortner Road Mixed Use Development project location. This review and the full comments provided can be found on page 23.

C. Candler County Industrial Authority
Hannah Mullins, President/CEO

“This project will be a positive stimulus for economic growth due to its mixed use potential. It also provides opportunity to provide improved access and infrastructure in a much needed area. Synergies with the master design of the I-16 Industrial Park could help improve traffic flow.”

D. City of Santa Claus, Georgia
Donita Bowen, Mayor

“I don’t see any impact affecting the City of Santa Claus.”

FLOODPLAIN ENCROACHMENT REVIEW

To: Frank Kastl <fkastl@hogarc.org>

PROJECT NAME:	DRI 4695 Fortner Road Mixed Use Development	COUNTY:	Candler	COMMUNITY:	Candler County
LOCATION:	Please refer to the project location map.				
BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	The Development of Regional Impact (DRI) is the construction of a mixed-use development to be known as Fortner Road Mixed Use. The applicant proposes a non-metropolitan mixed-use development to include approximately 100 acres that will consist of developing retail and industrial uses along with the necessary infrastructure. The project is to be located at 990 Fortner Road parcel numbers 037 021 and 037 022.				
APPLICANT:	HOAGRC	APPLICATION DATED:	04/23/2026	APPLICATION RECEIVED:	04/23/2026

SFHA* ENCROACHMENT:	No	EFFECTIVE PANEL(S):	13043C0115A (Effective Date: 12/17/2010)	FLOOD RISK ZONE(S):	X
www.georgiadfirm.com		PRELIMINARY PANEL(S):	N/A	FLOOD RISK ZONE(S):	N/A
https://msc.fema.gov/portal		LETTER OF MAP CHANGE (S):	N/A	FLOOD RISK ZONE(S):	N/A
WATERSHED(S):	Canoochee (8 Digit HUC: 03060203)	COMMUNITY CONTACT:	<u>Candler County Tax Assessor</u> Address: 35 SW Broad Street, Suite E, Metter, GA 30439 Tel: (912) 685-6346		
COMMENTS:	From inspection of the effective Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the proposed structure is located outside of the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), in Zone X (unshaded), an area of low flood risk. A Floodplain Snapshot Map showing the designated floodplain impacts in the vicinity of the project location, accompanied by the relevant extract of FEMA's FIRMs are attached. Please note that this response addresses issues related specifically to the possible effects of the project on floodplains in the area, it does not override or supersede any State or local procedural substantive provisions which may apply to floodplain management requirements associated with amendments to State or local floodplain zoning ordinances, maps, or State or local procedures adopted under the National Flood Insurance Program.				
Prepared By:	Olivia Martin	Telephone:	(470) 845-1108	Email:	Olivia.Martin@dnr.ga.gov
Signature:	<i>Olivia T.S. Martin</i>			Date:	04/23/2026

*Special Flood Hazard Area – Area Inundated by the 1% Annual Chance Flood (Often Referred to as the 100-year Flood)

Attachments:

30439, Metter, Georgia



Property Flood Risk:
Low Risk

Flood Depths*:

Current Flood Zone:	X	0.2% ANNUAL CHANCE (500 YEAR) FLOOD DEPTH
Probability of Flooding (30-Year Period):	Not Available	Not Available
Base Flood Elevation:	Not Available	1% ANNUAL CHANCE (100 YEAR) FLOOD DEPTH
Lowest Adj. Grade:	Not Available	Not Available
Preliminary Flood Zone:	Not Available	10% ANNUAL CHANCE (10 YEAR) FLOOD DEPTH
Flood Zone Change Type:	Not Available	

(GRAPHIC NOT TO SCALE) *Base lowest adjacent grade

Location Information

Panel:	13043C0115A
Watershed:	Canoochee
County:	CANDLER
Community ID:	13043C
Map Status:	EFFECTIVE

* Flood Depths shown on this report are derived from FEMA RiskMAP products and are rounded to the nearest tenth of a foot. These depths are calculated from HEC-RAS modeling and represent the best available data. Only areas within a RiskMAP studied watershed will have this data available. Please check back if your area is not currently available. For more information, please visit the FEMA Map Service Center at <https://mssc.fema.gov/portal/resources/faq>

Nature Doesn't Read Flood Maps

Many people don't understand just how risky the floodplain can be. There is a greater than 26% chance that a non-elevated home in the SFHA will be flooded during a 30-year mortgage period.

The chance that a major fire will occur during the same period is less than 10%!

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, PLEASE VISIT: [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov)

Legend with Flood Zone Designations

Flood Control Structures	1% Flood - Floodway (High Risk)	1% Flood - Zone VE (HighRisk)	Floodway Decrease
Base Flood Elevations	1% Flood - Zone AE (High Risk)	Floodway Increase	100-Year Flood Zone Decrease
Cross Sections	1% Flood - Zone A, AH, or AO (HighRisk)	Area Not Included	100-Year Flood Zone Increase
Coastal Transects	0.2% Flood - X-Shaded (Moderate Risk)	Letters of Map Revision	Zone Change
FIRM Panel Index	Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard	Coastal Barrier Resource Area	
	Limit of Moderate Wave Action		

Disclaimer: This data is not to be used to determine any base flood elevations or flood zone designations for NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) purposes. For NFIP flood insurance and regulation purposes, please refer to the published effective FIRM (Flood Rate Insurance Map) for your area of concern. Values displayed for Current Flood Zone, Preliminary Flood Zone, Flood Zone Change Type, and Probability of Flooding over a 30-year period based on center of dot location, not extent of structure(s).

Floodplain Snapshot for the proposed project area



USDA, USGS The National Map: Orthoimagery. Data refreshed June, 2024. [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) Powered by Esri

PIN

- Approximate location based on user input and does not represent an authoritative property location

MAP PANELS

- Selected Floodmap Boundary
- Digital Data Available
- No Digital Data Available
- Unmapped

OTHER AREAS

- Area of Minimal Flood Hazard Zone X
- Effective LOMRs
- Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard Zone D
- Otherwise Protected Area
- Coastal Barrier Resource System Area

SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

- Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Zone A, V, AE, AR
- With BFE or Depth
- Regulatory Floodway Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR

OTHER AREAS OF FLOOD HAZARD

- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile Zone X
- Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone X
- Area with Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee, See Notes, Zone X
- Area with Flood Risk due to Levee Zone D

OTHER FEATURES

- Cross Sections with 1% Annual Chance Water Surface Elevation
- Coastal Transect
- Base Flood Elevation Line (BFE)
- Limit of Study
- Jurisdiction Boundary
- Coastal Transect Baseline
- Profile Baseline
- Hydrographic Feature

GENERAL STRUCTURES

- Channel, Culvert, or Storm Sewer
- Levee, Dike, or Floodwall

FEMA FIRM Extract



WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

CHRIS HARPER
DIRECTOR

May 1, 2026

Frank Kastl
Regional Planner
Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission
331 W Parker St.
Baxley, GA 31513

Subject: Known occurrences of natural communities, plants, and animals of highest priority conservation status on or near DRI #4695 - Fortner Road Mixed Use Development in Candler County, GA.

Dear Frank Kastl:

This is in response to your request of April 23, 2026. The following Georgia natural heritage database element occurrences (EOs) were selected for the current site using the local Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 10 watershed for elements whose range distribution is limited by aquatic systems and within 3 miles for all other EOs:

DRI #4695 - Fortner Road Mixed Use Development (-82.079738, 32.377001, WGS84)

Alburnops chalybaeus (Ironcolor Shiner) [HISTORIC] 0.9 mi N of site in Sams Creek
Anguilla rostrata (American Eel) 1.3 mi S of site in Canoochee River
Chologaster cornuta (Swampfish) 1.3 mi S of site in Canoochee River
Elliptio congrarea (Carolina Slabshell) [HISTORIC] 2.5 mi W of site in Canoochee River
Etheostoma serrifer (Sawcheek Darter) [HISTORIC] 2.4 mi W of site in Canoochee River
Etheostoma serrifer (Sawcheek Darter) [HISTORIC] 7.8 mi NW of site in Canoochee River

GA *Clemmys guttata* (Spotted Turtle) 0.8 mi SW of site in Canoochee River
GA *Clemmys guttata* (Spotted Turtle) 21.3 mi NW of site
GA *Astragalus michauxii* (Sandhill Milkvetch) 2.5 mi E of site
GA *Astragalus michauxii* (Sandhill Milkvetch) 2.6 mi SE of site
GA *Ellittia racemosa* (Georgia Plume) 2.4 mi E of site
GA *Ellittia racemosa* (Georgia Plume) [HISTORIC] 0.9 mi S of site
GA *Epidendrum magnoliae* (Greenfly Orchid) 2.3 mi E of site
GA *Epidendrum magnoliae* (Greenfly Orchid) 2.2 mi SE of site
Platanthera nivea (Snowy Orchid) [HISTORIC] 2.7 mi SE of site
Rhynchospora culixa (Georgia Beakrush) [HISTORIC] 0.6 mi SE of site
GA *Sarracenia rubra ssp. rubra* (Sweet Pitcherplant). 2.8 mi SE of site

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SECTION

GA *Sarracenia rubra ssp. rubra* (Sweet Pitcherplant) 1.8 mi W of site
Sporobolus teretifolius (Wireleaf Dropseed) 2.1 mi NW of site
 GA *Stewartia malacodendron* (Silky Camellia) 2.3 mi E of site
Plestiodon egregius similis (Northern Mole Skink) [HISTORIC] 2.7 mi SE of site
 GA *Gopherus polyphemus* (Gopher Tortoise) 2.3 mi SE of site
 GA *Gopherus polyphemus* (Gopher Tortoise) 2.1 mi W of site
Pituophis melanoleucus (Pine Snake) 2.9 mi W of site
Pituophis melanoleucus (Pine Snake) 1.8 mi W of site
Pituophis melanoleucus (Pine Snake) 2.8 mi NE of site
 GA *Cordulegaster sayi* (Say's Spiketail) [HISTORIC] 2.6 mi SE of site
***Gopherus polyphemus* Suitable Soils [Habitat] on site**
Drymarchon couperi Eastern Indigo Snake [Conservation Unit] 1.2 mi E of site
 Conservation Easement/Covenant [PRIVATE] 0.6 mi W of site
 Fifteen Mile Creek Easement.1 mi SE of site
 Conservation Easement/Covenant [PRIVATE] 1.2 mi S of site
 Conservation Easement/Covenant [PRIVATE] 2.4 mi S of site

Recommendations:

Please be aware that state protected species have been documented near the proposed project. For information about these species, including survey recommendations, please visit our webpage at <http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>.

The following biologists can provide additional recommendations and assistance regarding the following groups:

Plants: Lisa Kruse (Lisa.Kruse@dnr.ga.gov)
 Fishes: Brett Albanese (Brett.Albanese@dnr.ga.gov)
 Crayfish & Mussels: Matt Rowe (Matthew.Rowe@dnr.ga.gov)
 Reptiles & Amphibians: Daniel Sollenberger (Daniel.Sollenberger@dnr.ga.gov)
 Mammals: Trina Morris (Katrina.Morris@dnr.ga.gov)
 Inland Birds: Todd Schneider (Todd.Schneider@dnr.ga.gov)
 Shore or Water Birds: Fletcher Smith (fletcher.smith@dnr.ga.gov)
 Terrestrial Invertebrates: Anna Yellin (Anna.Yellin@dnr.ga.gov)

Species listed above that have no “GA” or “US” status are considered Georgia species of concern. Locations of these species are tracked until enough information is gathered to determine if they should be added to the state list or if their populations do not warrant tracking. It is important to consider these species when planning projects. Please let us know if you have any questions regarding Georgia species of concern.

The gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) eastern Distinct Population Segment is no longer a candidate for federal listing but remains listed as threatened under the Georgia Endangered Wildlife Act (1973). Although we have no records of gopher tortoises at the proposed project site, gopher tortoises or commensal species are in the vicinity and suitable habitat may be present at the

project site. If suitable habitat is present, we recommend pre-construction surveys for gopher tortoise burrows and/or individuals are performed. If gopher tortoises or their burrows are observed on site during pre-construction surveys or construction activities, we request that James Hunt (James.Hunt1@dnr.ga.gov) be contacted to discuss avoidance and minimization efforts.

We have the following recommendations for the applicant to consider. We are concerned about streams and other sensitive habitats that could be impacted by the proposed project. We recommend that stringent erosion control practices be used during construction activities and that vegetation is re-established on disturbed areas as quickly as possible. Silt fences and other erosion control devices should be inspected and maintained until soil is stabilized by vegetation. Please use natural vegetation and grading techniques (e.g. vegetated swales, turn-offs, vegetated buffer strips) that will ensure that the project site does not serve as a conduit for stormwater or pollutants into the watershed during or after construction. These measures will help protect water quality near the project as well as in downstream areas.

Please be aware that the type of erosion control and/or soil stabilization material used during construction can impact wildlife. We strongly recommend using natural, biodegradable materials such as 'jute' or 'coir'. Mesh strands should be movable, as opposed to fixed. Use of plastic netting or fencing frequently leads to wildlife entrapment and death.

We advocate green growth, which focuses on environmentally sustainable development and leaving open space in newly developed areas. By clustering development and minimizing infrastructure, such as paved surfaces and utilities, conscientious design can help protect natural habitats from fragmentation and habitat degradation. Development should occur away from sensitive environmental resources. Undisturbed buffers of at least 100 feet should be left surrounding any streams or wetlands at the site. We recommend that open greenspace be protected by use of a conservation easement or other legal agreement. The open space may be used for recreation, wildlife habitat, and/or stormwater control, and native vegetation should be incorporated or preserved. We recommend these developments set aside as much land as possible to remain in a natural state. This will allow for the conservation of wildlife and natural resources as well as recreation opportunities for residents of the planned development and surrounding communities. For more information on Green Growth Guidelines, please visit the Georgia DNR Coastal Resources Division website (<https://coastalgadnr.org/GGG>).

We recommend utilizing native vegetation or grass mixes where possible. The use of native vegetation in such instances provides potential wildlife habitat, improves stormwater management in the form of erosion control, and reduces the cost of maintenance for the facility. At a minimum, please implement best management practices (BMPs) endorsed by the State of Georgia for erosion, sediment, and stormwater control throughout the site during and after construction.

We encourage the applicant to consider deer-friendly fencing along residential or commercial property perimeters, especially in urban areas. Decorative wrought iron fencing often poses unintended threats to wildlife. In the metro-Atlanta area alone, there are approximately 60-100 deer deaths per year due to this type of fencing. Deer attempt to scale the fencing or fit through the fence posts, resulting in entrapment or fatal injuries on the fence. Security fencing that incorporates

barbed wire can also cause injury when scaled. Most animals caught in fencing, regardless of the fencing type, either die or must be euthanized.

For further information, several western states have published guidance on wildlife-friendly perimeter fencing that includes sections on residential fencing, such as this webpage from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources: <https://wildlife.utah.gov/news/wildlife-blog/1938-wildlife-friendly-fences.html>.

We strongly recommend constructing parking lots and access roads of porous asphalt that allows for stormwater infiltration rather than impervious materials that significantly increase runoff into the watershed. Place access roads carefully to provide for adequate parking and access. These measures will help protect water quality, protect sensitive habitats and native species, and provide for a more enjoyable recreational experience for the users.

The area of interest overlaps with and is adjacent to a Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) [conservation opportunity area \(COA\)](#), which represents large areas of wildlife habitat (hubs) and corridors that link those habitats across the landscape. COAs have no regulatory status but are a priority for the implementation of voluntary and collaborative conservation actions. Georgia DNR encourages the conservation of habitat for species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) within COAs. For more information on the 2025 SWAP, including maps of priority areas, conservation actions, and information on species and habitats, please visit the [Wild Georgia Conservation Hub](#).

Disclaimer:

Please keep in mind the limitations of our database. The data collected by the Wildlife Conservation Section comes from a variety of sources, including museum and herbarium records, literature, and reports from individuals and organizations, as well as field surveys by our staff biologists. In most cases the information is not the result of a recent on-site survey by our staff. Many areas of Georgia have never been surveyed thoroughly. Therefore, the Wildlife Conservation Section can only occasionally provide definitive information on the presence or absence of rare species on a given site. Our files are updated constantly as new information is received. **Thus, information provided by our program represents the existing data in our files at the time of the request and should not be considered a final statement on the species or area under consideration.**

If you know of populations of highest priority species that are not in our database, please fill out the appropriate data collection form and send it to our office. Forms can be obtained through our website (<http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>) or by contacting our office. If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Johnny Stutzman, Wildlife Biologist
Johnny.Stutzman@dnr.ga.gov, 706-318-3296

Data Available on the Wildlife Conservation Section Website

- Georgia protected plant and animal species profiles are available on our website. These profiles cover basics such as species physical descriptions, preferred habitat, and life history, as well as threats, management recommendations, and conservation status. To view these profiles, visit: <http://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern#rare-locations>
- Rare species and natural community information can be viewed by Quarter Quad, County, and HUC 8 Watershed. To access this information, please visit our GA Rare Species and Natural Community Information page at: <http://georgiabiodiversity.org/>
- Downloadable files of rare species and natural community data by Quarter Quad and County are also available at: https://www.georgiabiodiversity.org/portal/additional_data_resources

4. Project Consistency with Local/Regional Plans

Fortner Road Mixed Use Development – Metter DRI #4695 is consistent with the adopted Candler County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2022). Sections encouraging industrial and retail developments are included in the Vision, Community Goals, Land Use, and Long-Term Community Policies elements for Metter and Candler County as a whole. The proposed mixed-use development also tackles identified weaknesses within the Comprehensive Plan. This comprehensive plan also outlines the importance of compatible and planned development in the community.

The proposed project location lies within the AG-3: Agricultural zoning district of Candler County's zoning map. The proposed project is located in the commercial district for the Future Land Use Map of Candler County. The project location will require annexation into the city limits of Metter and rezoning. The future land use map, and character area maps for surrounding parcels already in the city limits of Metter support the development of these parcels. The Land Use district should be updated to mixed use should the project proceed. Developments of this type are encouraged in Metter, Candler County, and the HOGA Region. Future developments of this type should continue to be planned for in advance to mitigate any unintended or negative impacts.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027, produced by the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission was designed to facilitate the economic development growth of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. Through this development strategy, the region aims to create jobs, encourage development, and provide quality living conditions. The lack of jobs and industry is discussed throughout the document. The Fortner Road Mixed Use Development – Metter DRI #4695 is consistent with this planning strategy and the Quality Community Objective to “Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.”

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Plan 2040 (2024 Update) is a regional comprehensive plan for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, is a blueprint for the Region's future, and serves as a guide to its development. The regional plan identifies needs and opportunities, goals, and a program for implementation for the purpose of guiding development throughout the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. The HOGA Regional Plan identifies the regional goal to “Strengthen the Local Economy”. The plan outlines the growing need in the region for business attraction and retention. The Fortner Road Mixed Use Development – Metter DRI #4695 is consistent with the Regional Plan's economic goals and should be beneficial to the region.

Regionally Important Resources Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission

Green Infrastructure Network

- Corridor Types**
- Primary Corridor
 - Secondary Connector
- Conservation Lands**
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
 - Land Trust and Other Private Lands
 - Other State Lands
 - Protected Rivers

State Vital Areas

- Protected Rivers
 - Jurisdictional Wetlands
- Recharge Areas**
- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
 - High Pollution Susceptibility Recharge Areas

Potential Conservation Opportunity Areas

- >100
- PTVSC+SCDO, <100
- PTVSC+SCDO, >100
- Fort Stewart Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB)
- DNR Leased Lands

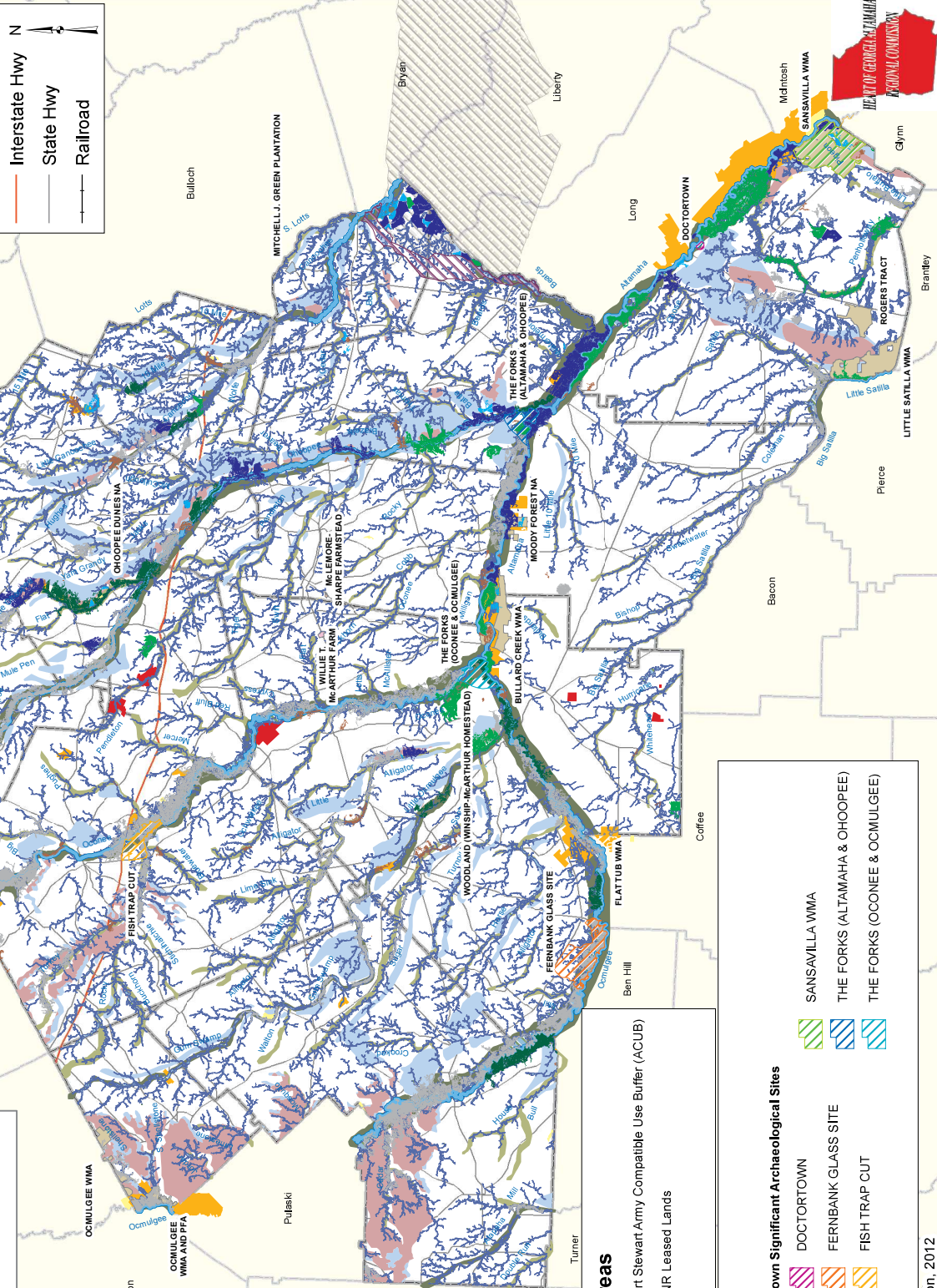
Cultural Resources

- National Register Rural Landscapes**
- MITCHELL J. GREEN PLANTATION
 - MCLEMORE-SHARPE FARMSTEAD
 - WILLIE T. MCARTHUR FARM
 - WOODLAND (WINSHIP-McARTHUR HOMESTEAD)

- Known Significant Archaeological Sites**
- DOCTORTOWN
 - FERNBANK GLASS SITE
 - FISH TRAP CUT

- SANSAVILLA WMA
- THE FORKS (ALTAMAH & OHOOPEE)
- THE FORKS (OCONEE & OCMULGEE)

- Reference Map**
- County Boundaries
 - Fort Stewart
 - Federal/State Roads
 - Interstate Hwy
 - State Hwy
 - Railroad



Prepared by: Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, 2012

5. Project Findings/Recommendations

Upon review of the Fortner Road – Metter DRI #4695 mixed use development proposal to be located in Metter, Georgia, The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission (HOGARC) determines that this project is consistent with local and regional plans and serves to enhance and implement expressed goals and policies of local plans. According to the supporting documentation and review, no negative impacts are expected to result from this development. The City of Metter's water supply, wastewater capacity, solid waste capacity, and regional workforce availability is sufficient to serve this project.

Roadway improvements may be necessary to serve this project. Emphasis should be placed on the results of the impending traffic study to determine what roadway improvements are needed. The construction of sidewalks and other safety facilities connecting the proposed development to downtown Metter should be considered to promote pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

As plans for the industrial site become available, portions of this DRI may need to be reviewed. The City of Metter should review their water supply and wastewater treatment capacity once plans for the industrial site are released. Additional review may be required by the regional commission if expansions to capacity are needed.

Proper implementation of the project will be beneficial to the City of Metter, Candler County, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, and nearby regions. The project will be beneficial in addressing the need for more industry, workforce expansion, and retail amenities within the region. The proposed project is also complementary to previously proposed residential developments within the City of Metter.

The Interstate 16 corridor is a major and expanding shipping and travel route that will continue to attract a wide range of commercial, industrial, residential, and mixed-use development opportunities. The proposed Fortner Road Mixed Use Development is well positioned to support planned housing growth, strengthen the local workforce, and enhance economic development throughout Metter, Candler County, and the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region.

Continued development along the I-16 corridor is anticipated as growth from Georgia's Coastal Region expands westward. Strategic planning and coordinated infrastructure investment will remain essential to ensure that future growth supports economic opportunity, housing availability, and quality of life for residents throughout the region. Public Involvement should continue to play an important role in guiding planning and development.

Development of the site should be consistent with local, state, and federal laws and regulations, and the applicant should consider the comments received for the proposed project.

Any agreements for the provision of necessary utilities and the setting aside of easements for utilities or other improvements should be formalized in writing.