

Prepared for the Effingham County
DRI #4290
Hinely Tract Planned Development
October 9, 2024



Prepared by:
Coastal Regional Commission
1181 Coastal Dr. SW
Darien, GA

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1.0 Applicant Information

1.1 Jurisdiction and Local Government Information

Effingham County, Georgia

Chelsie Fernald

cfernal@effinghamcounty.org

912-754-2128 ext. 450

1.2 Applicant

Hunter McClean – Josh Yellin

jyellin@huntermaclean.com

912-236-0261

2.0 Project Description

2.1 Summary

DRI #4290 is a proposed development known as Hinley Tract Planned Development near Sandhill Road in Effingham County. The development entails a Single-Family Detached Residential Planned Development consisting of 504 units and supporting infrastructure. Parcels involved in this development include 02980009

3.0 Parcel Data

3.1 Size of Property

The property is approximately 247.2 acres.

3.2 General Location

The property is near Sandhill Road in Effingham County.

4.0 Land Use Information

4.1 Site Map

The proposed site plan for the property is attached.

4.2 Built Features

The property is designated as rural, meaning no built features exist.

4.3 Future Development Map Designation (Land Use)

The Land Use Map provided by Effingham County designates the project site as Agriculture–Residential.

4.4 Zoning District

The existing zoning for the development area is Agriculture–Residential Districts (AR-1).

5.0 Consistency and Compatibility Analysis

5.1 Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

Effingham County’s Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2019 and is set to be updated again in late 2024. The provided Effingham County Land Use Map designates the parcel for Agriculture–Residential use. Therefore, the proposed development is generally consistent with the Land Use Map.

6.0 Consistency with the Regional Plan of Coastal Georgia

6.1 Summary

Since 1964, the Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia (CRC) has been dedicated to serving the ten counties and thirty-five cities of Coastal Georgia. The CRC region encompasses Georgia’s eastern shore, stretching almost 100 miles from the northern tip of Savannah to the southern city of St. Marys. The region is home to historic towns, industries, military installations, major ports, including the fourth busiest and fastest-growing container terminal in the U.S., and a thriving tourism trade, each driving some of the region’s economic engine. Equally important, one finds abundant wildlife, beautiful beaches, and over 2300 miles of tributaries and salt marshes.

In 2022, the CRC Council adopted the updated [Coastal Georgia Regional Plan](#) to satisfy planning requirements for regional commissions established under the Georgia Planning Act and the Department of Community Affairs’ Regional Planning Requirements. The plan aims to secure a successful future for the region’s communities and achieve a shared vision through comprehensive planning and collaborative implementation.

The CRC recommends that the applicant and local government review the Coastal Georgia Regional Plan to ensure that the proposed development is consistent with the Implementation Program in relation to:

- Water and Wastewater
- Stormwater
- Transportation
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Natural Resources
- Regional Growth Management
- Economic Development
- Tourism
- Quality of Life
- Coastal Vulnerability and
- Governance

6.2 Regional Land Use Map

The Regional Land Use Map analyzes current development patterns in terms of urbanization. Three categories represent these patterns: *conservation, rural, developing, and developed*.

Conservation areas are to be preserved to protect important regional resources or environmentally sensitive areas of the region.

Rural areas are not expected to urbanize or require urban services in the next 20 years. These areas are characterized by sparsely developed non-urban areas where the land is primarily used for farming, forestry, very low-density residential, or open space uses.

Developing areas are expected to urbanize and require provision of new urban services in the next 20 years. These services will include water and sewer service at a minimum.

Developed areas currently exhibit urban-type development patterns and have access to urban services. These areas typically include higher-density residential areas and industrial and commercial developments.

According to the Regional Land Use Map, DRI #4290 is in a rural area. Therefore, the proposed rezoning and development of the project are generally inconsistent with the Regional Land Use Map

6.3 Area Requiring Special Attention (ARSA)

The Areas Requiring Special Attention Map was developed by considering the Regional Land Use Map and incorporating local comprehensive plans and the regionally important resources map to evaluate land use trends within the region and identify areas requiring special attention. These areas include:

- *Threatened Regionally Important Resources:* Areas where crucial natural or cultural resources are likely to be impacted by development.
- *Rapid Development:* Areas where rapid development or change of land uses are likely to occur, especially where the rate of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation.
- *Redevelopment:* Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness.

The Areas Requiring Special Attention Defining Narrative includes lists of

- Recommended Development Patterns
- Types of Land Uses, and
- Implementation Measures

According to the ARSA Map, the location of DRI #4290 is in an *Area of Significant Natural Resources*. These areas are where Regionally Important Resources (green infrastructure, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, priority forests, floodplains, and conservation areas) are likely to be threatened by development.

6.4 Green Infrastructure

As part of the Conservation area in the Coastal Land Use Map, areas of Green Infrastructure include, but are not limited to, wetlands, flood plains, streams, endangered species and critical habitat and prime agricultural lands, federal or state listed species. These areas include essential buffers along streams and wetlands, and water bodies that require riparian buffers. Identifying and preserving coastal Georgia's Green Infrastructure network will support biodiversity and functional ecosystems, protect native plant and animal species, lessen the disruption to natural landscapes, limit invasive species, which in turn will enhance and support water quality, provide for quality growth land use planning, support the implementation of stormwater management plans and regulations, encourage the creation of transportation corridors and connections, foster ecotourism, tourism and outdoor recreation, enhance the business climate, and ensure a high quality of life for coastal residents.

According to the Green Infrastructure Map, DRI #4290 is in both a core and corridor area.

6.5 Wetlands

Much of the development site is covered by wetlands, and according to the regional flood zone map, it also falls within Flood Zone A. Designated by FEMA, Flood Zone A indicates a high risk of flooding, with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year during a 100-year flood event. These areas are often prone to rising waters from rivers, lakes, or coastal storms.

6.6 Coastal Stormwater Supplement

Approximately 15 % of the project site is expected to be impervious surface once the development is completed. The project will consist of vegetative filter strips, detention ponds, and level spreaders to meet Effingham County and State of GA Stormwater Management requirements.

7.0 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

7.1 Summary

The Coastal Regional Commission serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the region's six coastal counties and four inland counties as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA).

In accordance with EDA, a [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\)](#) is updated and submitted every five years. This important document sets the regional economic development planning process for 2017–2022. The CEDS brings together public and private sectors to create an economic road map to strengthen Coastal Georgia's regional economy.

The CEDS documents provide an analysis of the region's economy, which was used as the guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources. Implementing this strategy makes the region eligible for economic development assistance investment from EDA. This investment can help fund local infrastructure projects, technology-led economic development projects, and strategies to respond to sudden and severe economic situations.

7.2 Population and Employment Trends

County	2000	2010	2020	2030
Effingham	37,535	54,478	71,685	79,935

Source: U.S. Census; Georgia Coast 2030: Population Projections for the 10-County Region

The county's population is expected to grow from its 2000 level of 37,535 to 79,935 by 2030, according to the US Census Bureau. The Coastal Region's population in 2030 is projected to be 962,956, which is an increase from the 2000 level of 558,350.

The Coastal Georgia region supported 312,400 jobs in 2000 and is expected to support 435,050 jobs in 2030. The Effingham County unemployment rate was 2.2%¹ In 2022.

7.3 Economic Impact

The estimated value of the project at build-out is \$200,000,000. The estimated annual local tax revenues likely to be generated by the proposed development is \$2,500,000. The applicant indicates that the regional workforce is sufficient to fill the proposed project's demand and will not displace any existing land uses.

8.0 CRC Resources

8.1 Georgia Coastal Regional Character Design Guidelines

[The Georgia Coastal Regional Character Design Guidelines](#) applies primarily to design elements and improvements that influence the public realm. Generally, focus on those influences that impact viewshed, identity, microclimate, sustainability, and, in limited cases, public safety. It should be understood that these guidelines are recommendations only, not development standards, legal ordinances, or conditions that constitute approval or disapproval. They are a suggested framework to meet the State of Georgia's regional planning goals and implied procedures to implement portions of the *Coastal Georgia Regional Plan*.

The guidelines' primary constituents are the articulation of mass, form, materials, theme, and design methodologies. The public realm is best represented as those areas associated with public rights-of-way and public space. Highways, streets, roads, corridors, trails, thoroughfares, greenways, blueways, and parks are the viewpoint. All areas adjacent to these elements are the viewshed: development parcels, road shoulders, and the edges of private and public lands. In its simplest form, the guideline elements addressed from the viewpoint of the viewshed are as follows:

- Utilizing Vegetation and Landscape
- Signage
- Pavement Surfaces
- Lighting
- Enclosures, Walls, and Fences
- Accessory Structures

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Selected Economic Characteristics. *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP03*.
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2022.DP03?t=Employment&g=050XX00US13103>.

According to The Coastal Character Design Guidelines, the proposed development is in the *Tidewater Hearth* Character Region and may utilize the Character Key for *Industrial Areas*.

8.2 Regional Commission Recommendations

The following comments from the CRC are recommendations. The CRC is not the approving body for new developments in Effingham County, that authority rests with locally elected representatives. The CRC provides public notice, an opportunity for public comment, and recommendations based on existing comprehensive plans and best planning practices.

The CRC has reviewed the materials provided and concludes that the proposed development is generally consistent with the Land Use Map provided by Effingham County. The development is however generally inconsistent with the adopted Regional Comprehensive Plan and is located in a Rural area and an area of *Significant Natural Resources*. The parcel in question contains wetlands and floodplains. If the proposed development is approved, the presence of various natural features necessitates careful planning and conservation efforts in order to reduce any negative impacts on the adjacent area and broader region.

8.3 Public Comment

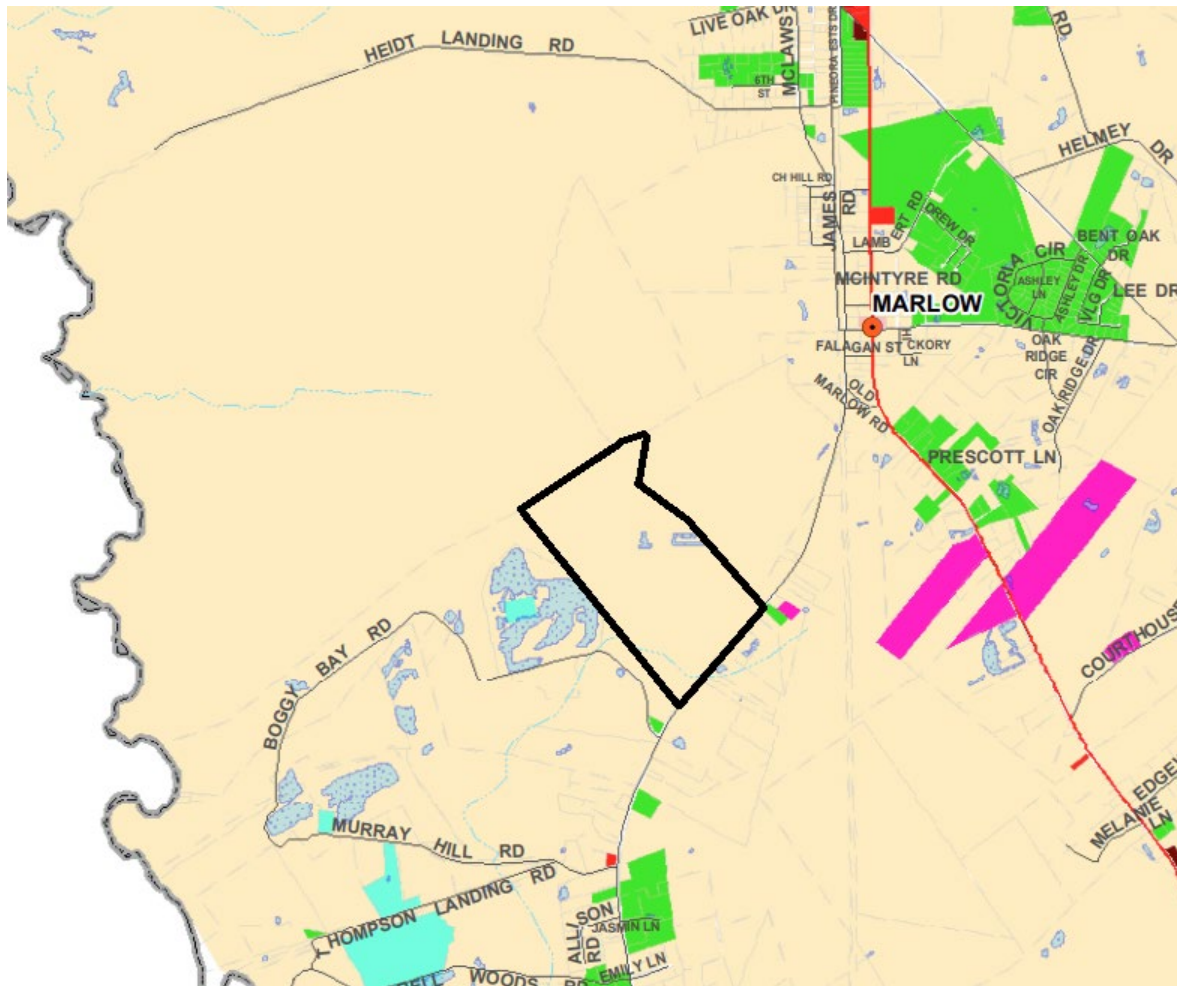
Public comment was received by 10/02/2024.

For technical assistance, contact Skye Lewis, Regional Planner, at Slewis@crc.ga.gov.

CONCPET PLAN – APPLICANT PROVIDED

LAND USE MAP

ZONING DISTRICTS MAP



ARTICLE IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICTS

4.1 Zoning of districts. For the purpose of this ordinance the area of Effingham County, Georgia, is hereby divided into the following zoning districts:

- AR-1 / Agricultural residential districts (five acres or more)
- AR-2 / Agricultural residential districts (less than five acres)
- R-1 / Single-family residential districts
- R-1-A / Single-family residential district (alternative)
- R-2 / Two-family residential districts
- R-3 / Multifamily residential districts
- R-4 / Planned manufactured home community districts
- B-1 / Neighborhood commercial districts
- B-2 / General commercial districts
- B-3 / Highway commercial districts
- I-1 / Industrial districts
- FH / Flood hazard districts
- CP / Conservation preservation districts
- PD / Planned Development

Overlay District

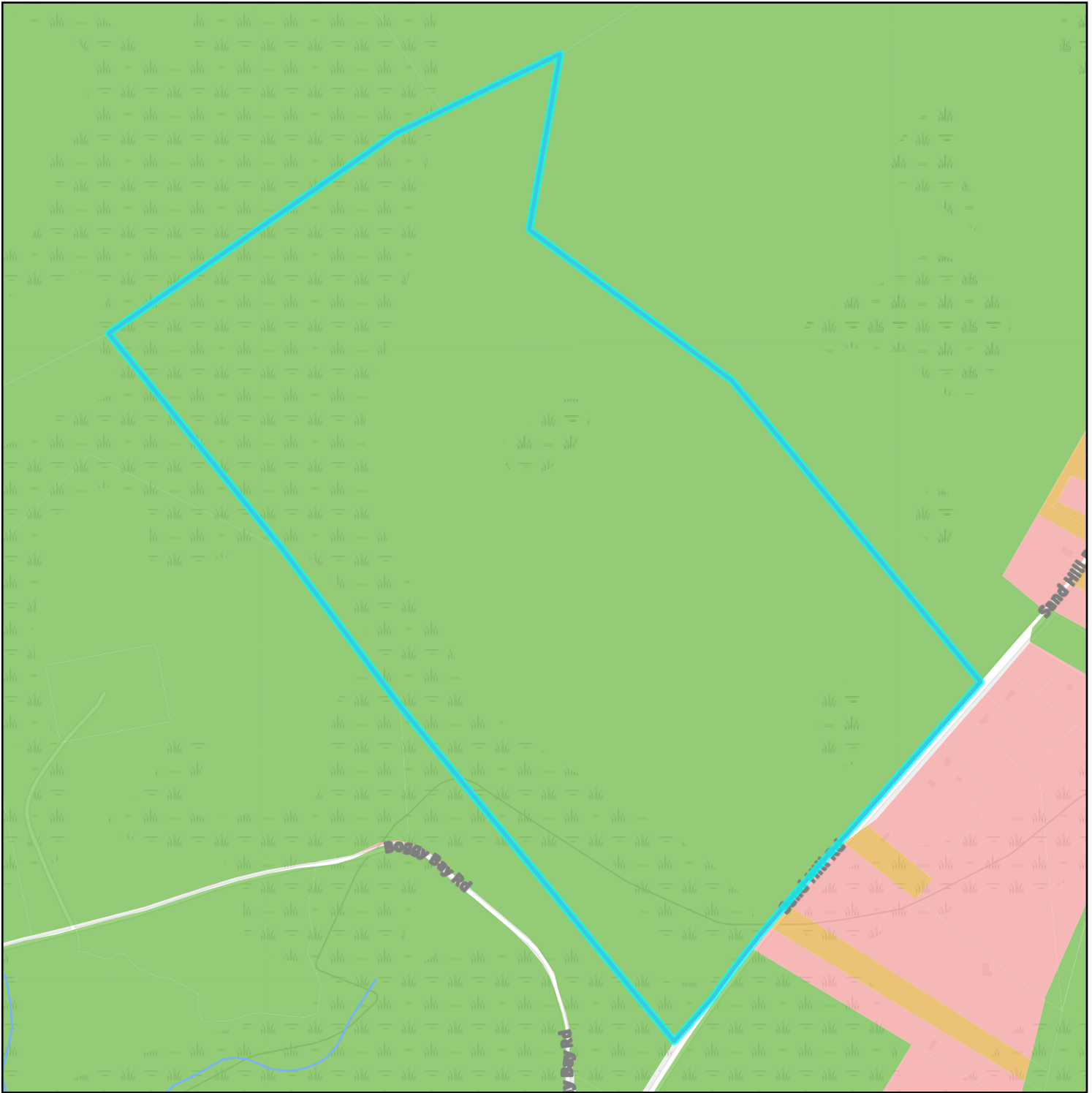
Historical Village Overlay District

- ▨ Meldrim

REGIONAL IMPACT MAPS

DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract Planned Development
County: Effingham

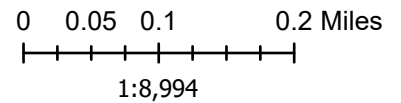
Future Development Map



Date Exported: 9/16/2024

Map Coordinates: 81.40379°W 32.25629°N

- Rivers
- Future Development**
- Developed
- Developing
- Rural



DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract Planned Development





County: Effingham

ARSA Map




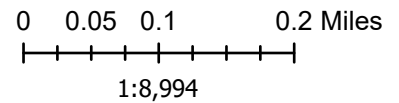
Date Exported: 9/16/2024

Map Coordinates: 81.40379°W 32.25629°N

-  Rivers
-  Areas Requiring Special Attention (Preferred Use, Updated Annually)
-  Areas Requiring Special Attention
-  Areas in Need of Redevelopment

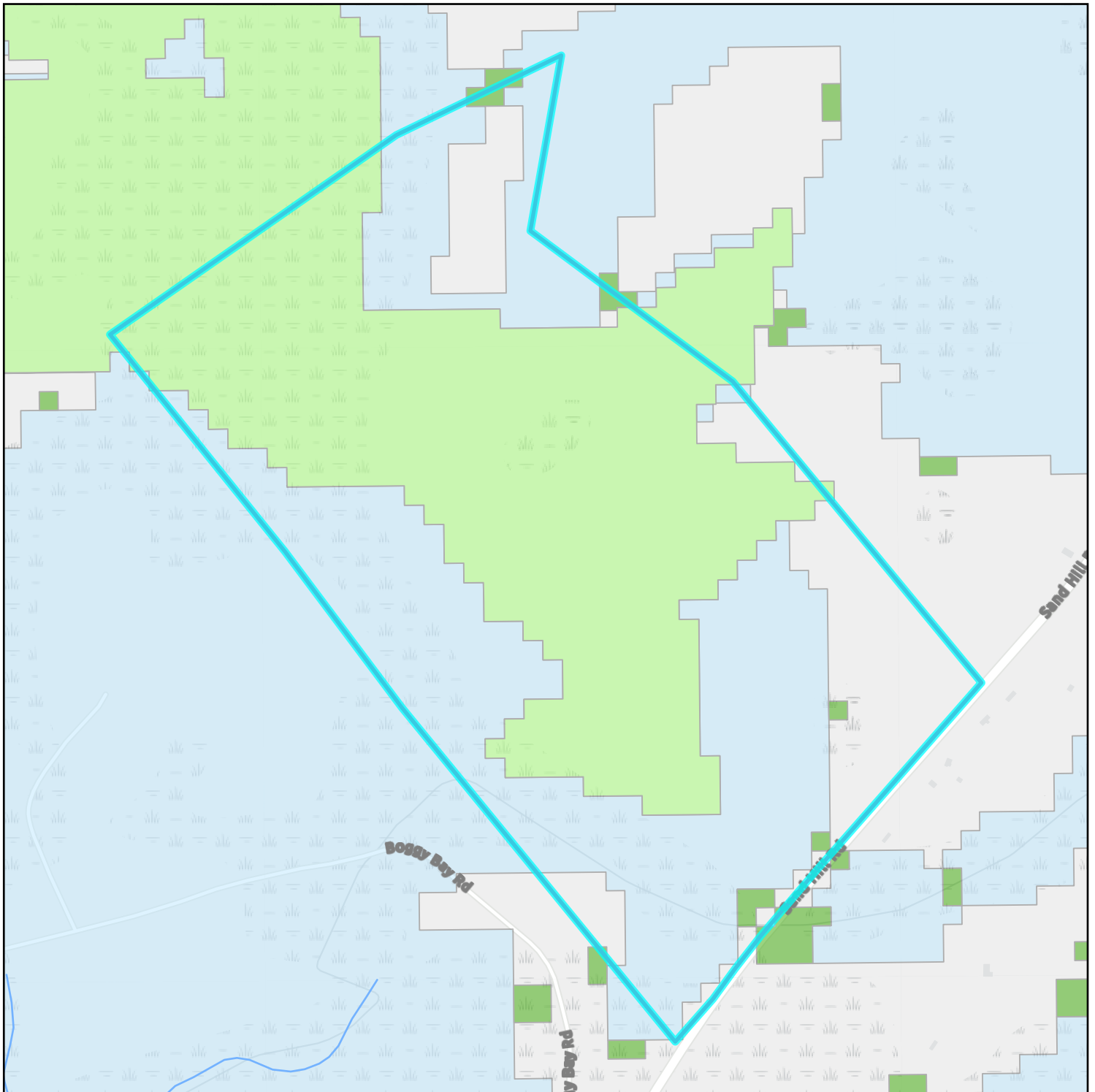
-  Areas of Rapid Development
-  Areas of Significant Infill
-  Areas in Need of Infrastructure
-  Areas of Significant Natural Resources

-  Large Abandoned Structures or Sites



DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract Planned Development
County: Effingham

Green Infrastructure Map

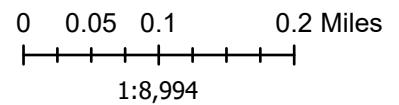


Date Exported: 9/16/2024

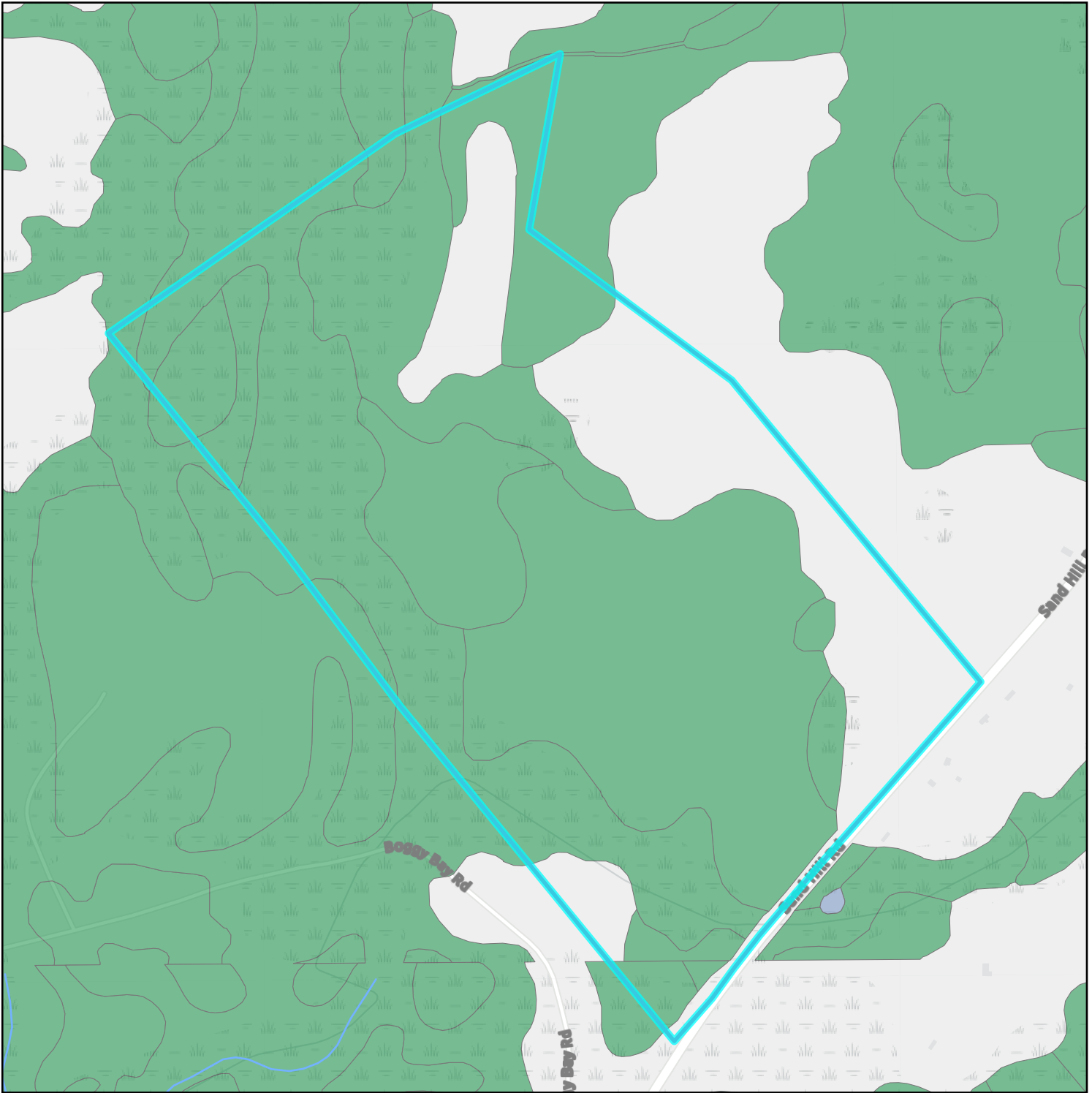
Map Coordinates: 81.40379°W 32.25629°N

- Rivers
- Green Infrastructure Class (Preferred Use, Updated Annually)
- Green Infrastructure Class
- Core

- Corridor
- Multi-Use Buffer Areas
- Sites



DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract Planned Development
County: Effingham
Wetlands Map



Date Exported: 9/16/2024

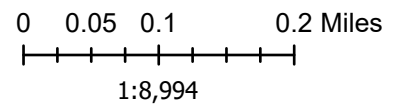
Map Coordinates: 81.40379°W 32.25629°N

— Rivers

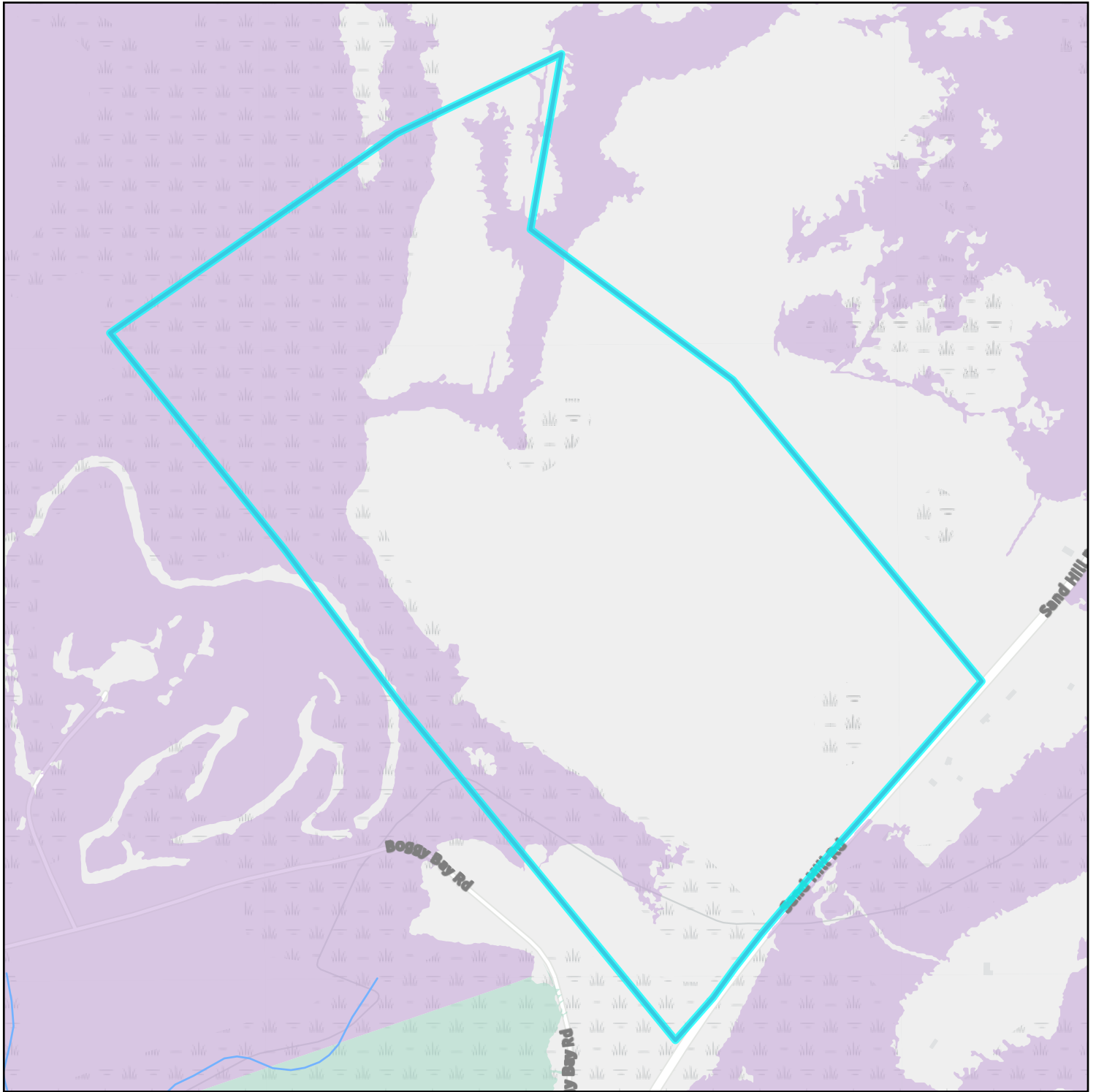
Wetlands

— Freshwater Forested/Shrub
Wetland

— Freshwater Pond



DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract Planned Development
County: Effingham
Flood Zone Map



Date Exported: 9/16/2024

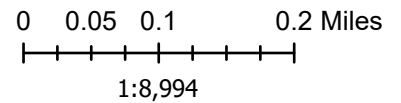
Map Coordinates: 81.40379°W 32.25629°N

— Rivers

Flood Zone

■ A

■ AE



PROPERTY RECORD CARDS

Effingham County, GA

Homestead Application

Please wait to apply for homestead until your name appears under the "Owner" section below.

[Apply for Homestead Exemption](#)

Assessment Notice

[2024 Assessment Notice \(PDF\)](#)

[2023 Assessment Notice \(PDF\)](#)

[2022 Assessment Notice \(PDF\)](#)

[2021 Assessment Notice \(PDF\)](#)

Public Comment Card

[Public Comment Card](#)

Sales Questionnaire

[Sales Questionnaire](#)

Summary

Parcel Number 02980009
Account/Realkey 2768
Location Address SAND HILL RD
Legal Description 247.20 AC (COMB 298-3CUV) 2017 CUVA
(Note: Not to be used on legal documents)
Class V5-Consrv Use
(Note: This is for tax purposes only. Not to be used for zoning.)
Zoning AR-1
Tax District 01-County (District 01)
Millage Rate 26.476
Acres 247.2
Neighborhood 02980: LAND: 00000 / BLDG: 00000 (000462)
Homestead Exemption No (S0)
Landlot/District N/A

[View Map](#)



Owner

[HINELY CASSIE MICHELE](#)
4455 HIGHWAY 17 SOUTH
GUYTON, GA 31312

Rural Land

Type	Description	Calculation Method	Soil Productivity	Acres
RUR	Ponds	Rural	2	2.65
RUR	Woodland	Rural	1	88.87
RUR	Woodland	Rural	2	59.92
RUR	Woodland	Rural	3	10.69
RUR	Woodland	Rural	8	82.03
RUR	Woodland	Rural	9	3.04

Conservation Use Rural Land

Type	Description	Soil Productivity	Acres
CUV	Timberland 93	2	85.5
CUV	Timberland 93	3	7
CUV	Timberland 93	6	61.5
CUV	Timberland 93	8	81.2
CUV	Timberland 93	2	2.5
CUV	Timberland 93	6	2.5
CUV	Timberland 93	7	3.38
CUV	Timberland 93	7	3.62

Accessory Information

Description	Year Built	Dimensions/Units	Identical Units	Value
FIRE FEE VACANT LAND	2019	0x0 / 0	24720	\$0

Sales

Sale Date	Deed Book / Page	Plat Book / Page	Sale Price	Reason	Grantor	Grantee
12/12/2012	2152 351	13 35	\$0	Year's Support	HINELY JAMES WARREN	HINELY CASSIE MICHELE
5/5/2006	1451 183	13 35	\$0	Unqualified - Vacant	HINELY JAMES WARREN	HINELY JAMES WARREN

Valuation

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Previous Value	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492
Land Value	\$1,274,557	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492
+ Improvement Value	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
+ Accessory Value	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
= Current Value	\$1,274,557	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492	\$727,492
10 Year Land Covenant (Agreement Year / Value)	2017 / \$133,826	2017 / \$129,929	2017 / \$126,145	2017 / \$120,229	2017 / \$122,471

Photos



No data available for the following modules: Assessment Appeals Process, Mobile Home Tac Notice, CUVA / FLPA Notices, Land, FLPA Report, Residential Improvement Information, Commercial Improvement Information, Mobile Homes, Prebill Mobile Homes, Permits, Sketches.

The Effingham County Assessor Office makes every effort to produce the most accurate information possible. No warranties, expressed or implied are provided for the data herein, its use or interpretation.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS



PO Box 16206
Savannah, GA 31416
Phone/Fax: 866-942-6222

www.ogeecheeriverkeeper.org
Working Together to Protect the Ogeechee, Canoochee and Coastal Rivers

September 30, 2024

Via E-Mail

Skye Lewis, Regional Planner
Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia
slewis@crc.ga.gov

Re: Comments on DRI #4290 - Hinely Tract PUD - Effingham

Dear Ms. Lewis:

Ogeechee Riverkeeper 501(c)(3) (ORK) works to protect, preserve, and improve the water quality of the Ogeechee River basin, which includes the Canoochee River, tributary streams, and all of the streams flowing out to Ossabaw Sound and St. Catherine's Sound. The Ogeechee River system drains more than 5,500 square miles across 21 counties in Georgia. ORK works with local communities to retain the ecological and cultural integrity of rivers, streams, wetlands, and related habitats throughout the Basin. One of ORK's primary roles is as watchdog on new land development projects throughout the watershed that could pose a significant threat to its water quality and aquatic environments.

ORK's comments on the Hinely Tract Subdivision and Planned Unit Development (PUD) fall into five overarching categories. First, the proposed development's conflict with the Joint Comprehensive Plan and other development maps should be fully considered. Second, all construction should be wholly avoided within floodplains and flood risk areas, and wetlands should be properly considered and preserved. Third, stormwater management should take a long-term view of projected demand over the whole life of the development. Fourth, water supply and wastewater treatment demand should be fully confirmed prior to any approval or construction. Fifth and finally, natural areas, wetlands and green spaces should be protected in order to preserve Effingham County's rural characteristics, ecosystem functions, and natural flood control. ORK urges careful consideration of these topics prior to any rezoning, permitting, or construction permission decisions from Effingham County. Ultimately, ORK urges the County to pause or deny this rezoning and development request until and unless all concerns are fully and sufficiently addressed.

1. Site Incompatibility with Planning and Future Land Use Maps

The proposed Hinely Tract PUD development conflicts with multiple planning and future use maps. Specifically, Effingham County's Future Land Use Map in its most recent Joint Comprehensive Plan,¹ the Coastal Region Commission's (CRC) Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map, and the CRC's Green Infrastructure Map all highlight the property's incompatibility with the proposed development. Prior to approving any development, Ogeechee Riverkeeper urges Effingham County to fully consider the apparent unfavorable suitability of this site for the proposed development and to deny any construction, rezoning, and comprehensive plan amendments that will be needed for the Hinely Tract PUD.

The proposed development does not comply with Effingham County's Joint Comprehensive Plan. As noted in the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) application materials and notice, the property is currently designated as "Agricultural" under Effingham County's most recent Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The county's Joint Comprehensive Plan states that the only compatible uses for Agricultural areas are "Agriculture / Forestry."² Currently, the property is zoned as AR-1,³ a compatible and conforming use. The proposed PUD does not appear to conform with Effingham County's current FLUM. As such, an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan will be necessary. Likewise, a PUD would not conform with Effingham County's current zoning for the site, as the AR-1 zoning requires 5-acre lots - well above what it planned for this PUD.⁴ Further, the location of this development ignores the "Future Land Use Guiding Principles" adopted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan. The PUD's isolation from other developments and services ignores the call for "consistent development types and characteristics within similar land use areas," fails to "transition between different land use areas such that there is a 'step down' or 'step up'" between different use areas, and would result in "development in areas not served by public water and/ or sewer."⁵ The Guiding Principles call for less intensive land uses in non-sewered areas, which, according to the Effingham County Water, Sewer, and Reuse map⁶ shows, is where the Hinely development is located. The development's incompatible use and its isolation from other similar land uses clearly shows its nonconformity with Effingham County's Joint Comprehensive Plan. ORK urges county decision makers to carefully consider this nonconformity prior to making any necessary changes or amendments.

The Hinely Tract is also poorly suited according to the CRC's planning maps for a PUD. This is most clearly shown in the Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) map, which designates the entirety of the property as an "Area of Significant Natural Resources." The wetlands and flood zone maps highlight this, showing nearly the entire property

¹ Effingham County 2020-2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan. Adopted October 2019. Available at: https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/effingham_county_final_reduced_with_resolutions.pdf

² *Id.* at page 28.

³ See

<https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=666&LayerID=11348&PageTypeID=4&PageID=4716&KeyValue=02980009>

⁴ Effingham County Code of Ordinance. Zoning Ordinance § 4.1. Available at:

https://library.municode.com/ga/effingham_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIIOFCO_APXCZOO_ARTIVESDI_4.1ZODI

⁵ Effingham County 2020-2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan. At page 27.

⁶ Effingham County Water, Sewer, and Reuse map. Printed March 1, 2013. Available at:

<https://www.effinghamcounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/617/Map-of-the-Effingham-County-Water-Sewer-and-Re-Use-System-PDF?bidId=>

covered in Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands and a Zone A floodplain, leading to a nearby Ogeechee River tributary. The Green Infrastructure Maps further highlights the poor suitability of this site for a PUD. It shows nearly the whole property being occupied by either “Core” green infrastructure or “Multi-Use Buffer Areas.” These maps tell a clear story that this property is environmentally important, sensitive, and will necessarily be impacted by the proposed development. ORK urges Effingham County to carefully consider the CRC’s maps in determining whether the proposed Hinely Tract PUD is a suitable use for this ecologically sensitive area.

Ultimately, in light of the incompatibility with the Effingham County Joint Comprehensive Plan, the isolation of the property relative to other similarly developed areas, and the likely impacts to sensitive environmental and ecological areas, this project should not be developed on the proposed property. ORK urges Effingham County to not amend its Joint Comprehensive Plan, rezone the property, or approve any permits related to the proposed Hinely Tract PUD development.

In summary, ORK asks that:

- Effingham County fully considers the proposed development’s incompatibility in light of Joint Comprehensive Plan,
- Effingham County fully considers the likely environmental impacts of the proposed development in light of the Coastal Regional Commission’s planning maps, and
- Ultimately, Effingham County does not amend the Joint Comprehensive Plan, does not rezone the property, and denies any construction or development-related permits for the proposed location and development.

2. Preserve Floodplains and Wetlands to Reduce Long-Term Flooding Risk

Whenever this tract is developed, the floodplains and wetlands present on the Hinely Tract site should be central in refining the final, approved design and construction of this development. A significant portion of the property is located in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) designated 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard area, also known as the 100-year floodplain or Zone A or AE. Of particular concern are the proposed developments in the western and northern portions of the property, as noted in the CRC’s Flood Zone Map. Likewise, the wetlands located on more than two-thirds of the proposed site are not properly delineated, enumerated, otherwise represented, or considered in the General Development Plan. ORK asks that the floodplains and wetlands present on the property are properly considered, guide layout and siting decisions, and are preserved wherever possible.

Flooding will be a concern for structures built on this property’s floodplains. While the “100-year” flood zone name implies that floods will only occur once every 100 years, this obscures the actual risk. Over 30 years, the actual flood risk is 26%⁷ - a more than 1 in 4 chance for properties in the 100-year floodplain. This creates risk and financial pressure for all future property owners who may face significant flood damage and subsequent increases in insurance rates. It is also important to remember that the FEMA flood zones are based on historic rainfall and flooding data. As storm frequency and intensity is expected to increase in the coming decades, the actual risk of flooding will likewise

⁷ See <https://savannahga.gov/FAQ.aspx?QID=332> and <https://www.floodsmart.gov/flood-zones-and-maps>

increase, multiplying the likelihood and damage from flooding events.⁸ As such, ORK urges Effingham County's decision makers to keep these flooding concerns in mind when making these planning decisions and to avoid allowing new structures to be built within the floodplain whenever possible. Specifically, ORK asks that no structures, including roadways or ingress/egress locations are built in the 100-year floods.

The developer's failure to show or overlay these floodplain locations on the General Development Plan obscures the potential impact of the proposed property layout. The floodplains should be a central metric in deciding where construction should be located. Building within known special flood risk areas unnecessarily creates risk and financial burdens for future homeowners, who will have to deal with frequent threats of flooding, flood damage, and increased insurance rates. As seen in Richmond Hill during the recent rainfall of Tropical Storm Debby, even areas not within floodplains are vulnerable to flooding.⁹ By failing to show where those areas of increased risk are on the General Development Plan, Effingham County's decision makers cannot as easily see those risks and what alternative layout options might be available. ORK asks Effingham County to require the developers to update its General Development Plan to delineate, reconsider the impact of those floodplains and riverine areas, and adjust site layout accordingly. None of these lots, areas, and features should be built in the 100-year floodplain.

The General Development Plan also poorly represents and fails to sufficiently protect the wetlands present on the property. While no exact number is given, it appears that over two-thirds of the 247-acre property contains wetlands. Without delineation, enumeration, and communication from the applicants, the exact number of total wetlands acres impacted is unclear. While it is possible that the General Development Plan includes this total number in the "Site Data" column, the poor resolution of the map prevents the public from seeing that number or many other features of the map. ORK asks that the public and the Effingham County decision makers are provided a readable and usable map prior to any decisions being made.

Effingham County should seek clarification from the developers on the question of wetlands by requiring a separate wetlands plan to be developed. Failing to delineate and enumerate the wetlands present obscures the actual impact that this development will have on the property's existing aquatic features and appears to show the developers lack of sufficient consideration of these wetlands in their planning. To address this apparent oversight, ORK asks Effingham County to require the developers to create a wetlands plan that, at minimum, (1) clearly delineates all of the wetlands present on the property and enumerates the acreage proposed to be filled and preserved, (2) prioritizes and details how the development preserves the wetlands present on the site, (3) adjusts the General Development Plan and site layout to avoid wetland fill wherever possible, and (4) mitigates any lost wetlands with on-site mitigation or restoration efforts as close to the site as possible to reduce localized impacts.

⁸ Savannah Morning News. "Dawdling Debby's Savannah stay follows trend of slow, increasingly wet tropical storms." August 16, 2024. Available at: <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/weather/severe/2024/08/16/debbys-georgia-stall-follows-a-tropical-storm-trend-experts-say/74815549007/>

⁹ Savannah Morning News. "FEMA flood maps left Richmond Hill residents unprepared for Debby's impact." August 26, 2024. Available at: <https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/environment/2024/08/26/debby-flooding-hit-unprepared-richmond-hill-residents-hardest/74921847007/>

In summary, ORK asks that:

- Effingham County does not allow construction within the 100-year floodplain,
- Specifically, any ingress and egress access points not be built in the 100-year flood plain,
- Effingham County requires the developers to create a wetlands plan that clearly delineates their location, prioritizes wetlands preservation, adjusts the site layout to avoid wetland fill, and mitigates wetland loss.

3. Require Forward-Looking Stormwater Management for Growing Management Demand

On-site stormwater management should be as resilient as possible. As noted above, storms are becoming stronger and more frequent. This, combined with addition of impervious surface cover on the properties, will increase stormwater management demand in the area. To reduce negative flooding and inundation impacts, the applicants should work to reduce pressure where possible. Reducing impervious surface coverage, constructing retention features well above minimum requirements, and preserving wetlands wherever possible will help to reduce this pressure.

ORK urges Effingham County to require the developers to go beyond the minimum required standards in constructing stormwater management facilities. In such a low-lying area, increased stormwater pressure can quickly lead to flooding issues on the proposed PUD property and onto neighboring properties. And with storms becoming more frequent, previous stormwater processing calculations are less intense than the retention ponds will likely be required to retain and process. To extend the functional lifetime of these retention ponds and to successfully prevent flooding, ORK urges developers and decision makers to go beyond minimum standards in constructing these stormwater features.

Further, Effingham County should take into account historic and future storm frequency and intensity when calculating stormwater demand and retention pond construction. ORK suggests basing management and construction on the 100-year and/or 500-year storms. Like with floods, these estimates are based on the likelihood of these storms occurring. Currently, the Savannah area's 100-year storm would add 10 inches of rain in a 24-hour period, with the 500-year storm raining 20 inches in 24 hours.¹⁰ In Effingham County, those numbers are 9.98 in and 13.6 in over a 24-hour period for the 100 and 500 year storms.¹¹ It is important to note that these storms are understood to be smaller than recent data show and future estimates predict, as the current NOAA calculations are based on 2016 data.¹² To extend the functional life of these features in protecting the area from flooding, ORK urges Effingham County to require stormwater features to retain 125% of the 100-year storm¹³ or 100% of the 500-year storm.

¹⁰ See Question 16 at <https://www.savannahga.gov/FAQ.aspx?QID=307>.

¹¹ NOAA Atlas 14 Point Precipitation Frequency Estimates. Available at: https://hdsc.nws.noaa.gov/pfds/pfds_map_cont.html?bkmrk=ga.

¹² See UGA

(<https://site.extension.uga.edu/climate/2020/05/has-the-100-year-storm-changed-over-time-it-may-depend-on-where-you-are/>) and Dudek Consultants (<https://dudek.com/will-your-flood-control-system-work-in-a-100-year-event/>).

¹³ 125% of a 9.98-in storm is 12.4675 in.

Additionally, impervious surface cover should be reduced as much as possible. These hard surfaces speed up stormwater runoff and prevent absorption into the ground, straining stormwater management facilities and increasing the risk of flooding. As such, Effingham County should require further reduction of impervious surface cover at the development.

ORK also calls into question the applicant's estimate of its expected impervious surface cover from the proposed development. According to the DRI application materials and public notice, only 15% of the property will be covered by impervious surfaces. This is exceedingly low compared to other recent DRI for PUDs, who have an average of 40% impervious surface cover.¹⁴ While Ogeechee Riverkeeper welcomes developments that reduce impervious surface cover well below the average, we urge Effingham County to confirm with the applicants and developers how it reached this estimate, especially on a comparatively small property with a large number of housing units.

In summary, ORK asks that:

- Effingham County ensures resilient construction of stormwater management structures able to process increasing storm intensity and frequency,
- Existing wetlands be preserved to ensure their continued role in natural, cost-free stormwater management,
- Artificial stormwater management structure be built to process either 125% of the 100-year storm or 100% of the 500-year storm,
- Impervious surface cover be reduced as much as possible to reduce increased stormwater pressure coming from the site, and
- Effingham County confirms how the estimated impervious surface cover was calculated for this development.

4. Confirm and Secure Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment Capacity

Both the water supply and wastewater treatment needs of any development in coastal Georgia must carefully consider its long-term impacts, implications, and viability. With existing restrictions on new groundwater withdrawals and large amounts of new housing developments being proposed, Effingham County should make a fully informed decision of the near- and long-term impacts and viability of this housing development in light of the additional strains it will place on groundwater resources. Likewise, wastewater treatment should take a forward-looking approach, interconnect into existing systems, and avoid on-site treatment options. ORK strongly urges Effingham County to require much more information about the developer's plans to meet these capacity needs and to condition any construction or occupancy on a water supply and wastewater treatment agreement approved by the County.

Any new water withdrawal demand should be carefully considered. Under the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Georgia Water & Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Salt Water Intrusion (2006 Plan), this

¹⁴ DRI #4242 = 35%; DRI #4239 = 20%; DRI #4217 = 39.36%; DRI #4207 = 50%; DRI #4212 = 40%; and DRI #4215 = 60%.

portion of Effingham County south of Highway 119 falls into the “Red Zone” management area.¹⁵ The 2006 Plan establishes withdrawal restrictions for this zone that include conservation and reuse considerations as well as a justification of need. Likewise, further withdrawal permit reductions are expected to be instituted in 2025. Continued overutilization of the Floridan Aquifer threatens to increase the rate of saltwater intrusion, endangering the region’s main drinking water supply.

In light of the region’s anticipated growth, demand, and strain on the aquifer will only increase if piecemeal permitting is used rather than a methodically considered approach. As such, ORK urges Effingham County to carefully consider how it utilizes this finite resource to meet all of its growth and future needs. Further, ORK urges Effingham County, as well as regional and state decision makers, to take a regional, long-term, and holistic view of the water supply demand issue and develop comprehensive and sustainable solutions that will allow future generations to thrive throughout Georgia’s northern coastal region. This should include quickly pursuing alternative, non-groundwater sources of water to offset industrial water demands to preserve groundwater for drinking water and agricultural needs.

Additionally, the vaguely stated reliance on a “Private Community Water System” to meet water supply needs raises concerns. As noted above, the proposed location is within the “Red Zone” and, therefore, is restricted from obtaining new groundwater withdrawal. This is in addition to further withdrawal reductions expected in 2025. With these limitations, having specific and detailed water supply plans is essential at this planning stage. If water cannot be provided, there is no reason to rezone, clear and grade the land, fill wetlands and floodplains, and begin construction. Likewise, if a private supplier is planning to serve this development, it should be identified now to ensure that it has the capacity and capabilities to meet expected needs in an economically viable manner. Additionally, Effingham County’s decision makers should have detailed and specific plans of who will be serving their citizens prior to making these decisions. Considering all this, ORK strongly urges Effingham County to require detailed plans and information from the developers about how water will be supplied to the proposed development.

Additionally, ORK asks for clarification of how wastewater treatment demand will be met at this proposed development. As noted above in Section 1, the proposed site is in a “non-sewered” area.¹⁶ While the DRI application materials state that “an extension of a sewer line will not be required” and that “there is sufficient wastewater supply capacity available to serve the proposed project,” it does not explain how wastewater demand will be managed and treated. Beyond stating that a “Private Community Water System” will provide treatment capacity, no details are provided. ORK has serious concerns about how wastewater will be treated. The property’s extensive wetland and floodplain coverage make septic and other on-site wastewater treatment systems unattractive options. Flooding and inundation prevent these systems from operating correctly, with failure threatening to pollute this property, neighboring properties, and nearby wetlands, streams, and tributaries. Likewise, on-site septic, land application systems, and “package” treatment plants¹⁷ all present expensive and long-term maintenance concerns for relatively small amounts of treatment. Interconnection into the existing Guyton Service Area system is a preferable approach, as environmental impact and maintenance concerns are reduced. ORK asks that wastewater treatment plans be clearly

¹⁵ Georgia Department of Natural Resources. “Coastal Georgia Water & Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Salt Water Intrusion” (2006 Plan). June 2006. *Available at:*

https://www1.gadnr.org/cws/Documents/saltwater_management_plan_june2006.pdf

¹⁶ See FN 6. See also: <https://www.effinghamcounty.org/356/Water-Waste-Water>.

¹⁷ EPA. “Wastewater Technology Fact Sheet - Package Plants.” Sept. 2000. *Available at:* https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/package_plant.pdf

explained, discussed, and consider long-term environmental, financial, maintenance costs, and the feasibility of interconnection into the existing service area.

In summary, ORK asks that:

- Effingham County confirms the private supplier's ability and detailed plans to meet water supply demand for this project,
- The applicant explains how the wastewater treatment demand will be met and why sewer interconnection is not the planned option,
- Effingham County not permit any on-site wastewater treatment facilities on the site, including individual septic, land application, and package plants, and
- Effingham County conditions any construction or occupancy on county-approved plans for water and sewer services.

5. Thoughtfully Preserve Wetlands, Natural Areas, and Green Space

In developing the Hinely Tract development, specific attention should be given to protecting and preserving the area's critical natural resources. The development should thoughtfully preserve the large amount of spaces designated as Areas of Significant Natural Resources in order to maximize these areas' positive benefits on the region and its residents through preserving its rural character, recreational activities, flood control, and ecological integrity. ORK asks the developers to proactively plan its open space, green space, and recreational areas.

While thoughtful open space, green space, and recreational areas can take many forms, ORK offers these suggestions for planning purposes. First, the existing wetlands and floodplains should be maintained and preserved for the reasons mentioned above. Second, other existing natural features, such as the riverine areas crossing the property, should be maintained, highlighted, and be the starting point for further development. Third, trees should be preserved and any cutting or clearing should be avoided. Finally, ORK suggests wherever possible that these open and green spaces are as contiguous as possible, avoiding a patchwork of smaller, less beneficial space.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration; please let me know if you have any questions:

ben@ogeecheeriverkeeper.org.

Ben Kirsch, Legal Director
Ogeechee Riverkeeper

Hello. Please find the City of Savannah's response for this DRI project #4290 copied below including the department's POC.

City of Savannah, Water Resources, foresees the primary impact of the proposed development DRI#4290 (Hinely Tract Planned Development- Effingham) relative to our interests, as a regional impact on coastal groundwater resources. This foreseen impact is enhanced for this particular proposed development because of its larger scale at approximately 0.16 MGD and by its location in groundwater management "Red Zone", closer to areas of saltwater intrusion. This impact would already be captured within regional groundwater use planning and regulation conducted through GAEPD. As a "red zone" area, it would be presumed that the capacity to meet this demand would need to come from an existing groundwater permit and that this withdrawal would be reasonably expected to have measurable negative impacts on the Floridan Aquifer from increased withdrawals in combination with other existing and planned withdrawals in the region.

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