



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Development Authority Attains GRAD Certification, Strengthening the Community's Competitive Edge for New Industry

Americus, Georgia – May 25, 2026. The Development Authority announced today that it has officially earned Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certification for its Southerfield Industrial / Paul V. Hall Industrial site, marking a major milestone in the community's long-term economic development strategy. Achieving GRAD status signals to prospective companies that the site meets rigorous state standards for readiness, due diligence, and speed to market.

GRAD certification—administered through the Georgia Department of Economic Development—requires extensive documentation, including environmental assessments, zoning confirmation, utility service verification, and property control. Only sites that meet these stringent criteria earn the designation, making them more attractive to companies seeking a fast, low-risk location for expansion.

What GRAD Select Means

While all GRAD Certified sites meet high standards, GRAD Select represents the program's most competitive tier. Select sites have completed enhanced due diligence, offer greater utility capacity, and are positioned to support accelerated construction timelines. They often feature larger or more strategically configured acreage and receive priority visibility in statewide marketing and consultant outreach. This elevated status signals to companies that the site is among Georgia's most development-ready industrial properties.

Seven category requirements were met to obtain certification: GRAD certification—administered by the Georgia Department of Economic Development—requires extensive documentation, including environmental assessments, zoning confirmation, utility service verification, and property control. Only sites that meet these stringent criteria earn the designation, making them more attractive to companies seeking a fast, low-risk location for expansion.

"GRAD certification reinforces the work we've been doing to position Sumter County for long-term success," said Rusty Warner, Executive Director of the Sumter County Development Authority. "Our goal has always been to remove barriers, strengthen our sites, and make it easier for companies to choose this community with confidence. Completing this level of due diligence not only improves our competitiveness—it shows that we're planning ahead and investing in the kind of growth that brings quality jobs and lasting opportunity to the county."

The newly certified site is positioned to attract greater interest from advanced manufacturing, logistics, and technology firms. With infrastructure, due diligence, and site control already in place, the Development Authority can now respond more quickly to project inquiries and meet the accelerated timelines required by many industries.

“This is a win for our entire community,” said Paul Hall, the Development Authority’s chairman and the property’s namesake. “GRAD certification not only validates the site’s quality but also demonstrates our commitment to growth, investment, and job creation.”

The site will now be promoted through the state’s economic development network, national consultants, and Sumter industry outreach. GRAD-certified sites often gain greater visibility in statewide marketing efforts and are frequently prioritized for project consideration. The Georgia Department of Economic Development has added the Park to its interactive GRAD site page, which will automatically place it in front of developers, corporations, and site selectors.

“GRAD certification is an important accomplishment for Sumter County because it reflects the kind of steady, responsible planning we’ve been committed to for years,” said David Baldwin, Chairman of the Sumter County Board of Commissioners. “Our long-term goal has always been to prepare sites—doing the due diligence up front, so companies know we’re serious, ready, and able to support new jobs. This certification strengthens our position, aligns with our vision for sustainable growth, and helps ensure that Sumter County remains competitive for the opportunities that will shape our future.”

The Southerfield / Paul V. Hall Industrial Park is the 15th in Georgia to earn GRAD Select certification and 1 of 73 certified sites statewide.

GRAD designation indicates the Industrial Park is market-ready and includes several state-level tools to assist in the marketing of the site, including:

- Program benefits on the Georgia Department of Economic Development website
- Highlighted listings on the industrial site databases of major electric utility websites
- Continued presence in the Georgia Allies electronic newsletter targeted to companies and location consultants
- Site awareness for statewide project managers and Georgia Allies partners

For more information about the GRAD program or the certified site, contact Rusty Warner, Executive Director of the Sumter Development Authority, at rustywarner@msn.com.

About the Americus Sumter Payroll Development Authority

The Americus Sumter Payroll Development Authority is committed to attracting and retaining business investment while advancing workforce development and infrastructure. With a highly engaged board and strong partnerships across the public and private sectors, the Authority champions innovative strategies that position Sumter County as a premier destination for commerce and industry.

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[View the state’s release regarding GRAD certification here.](#)