

A Tale of Two Small Area Plans

2026 Fall GPA Conference – Augusta, GA

Agenda

- Introduction to the Plans
 - Bells Ferry LCI Plan Update
 - Pearridge Small Area Plan
- Why Now?
- Community Engagement
- Focus on Preservation
- Partners serve as Catalysts
- Coordination & Implementation
- Challenges and Lessons Learned

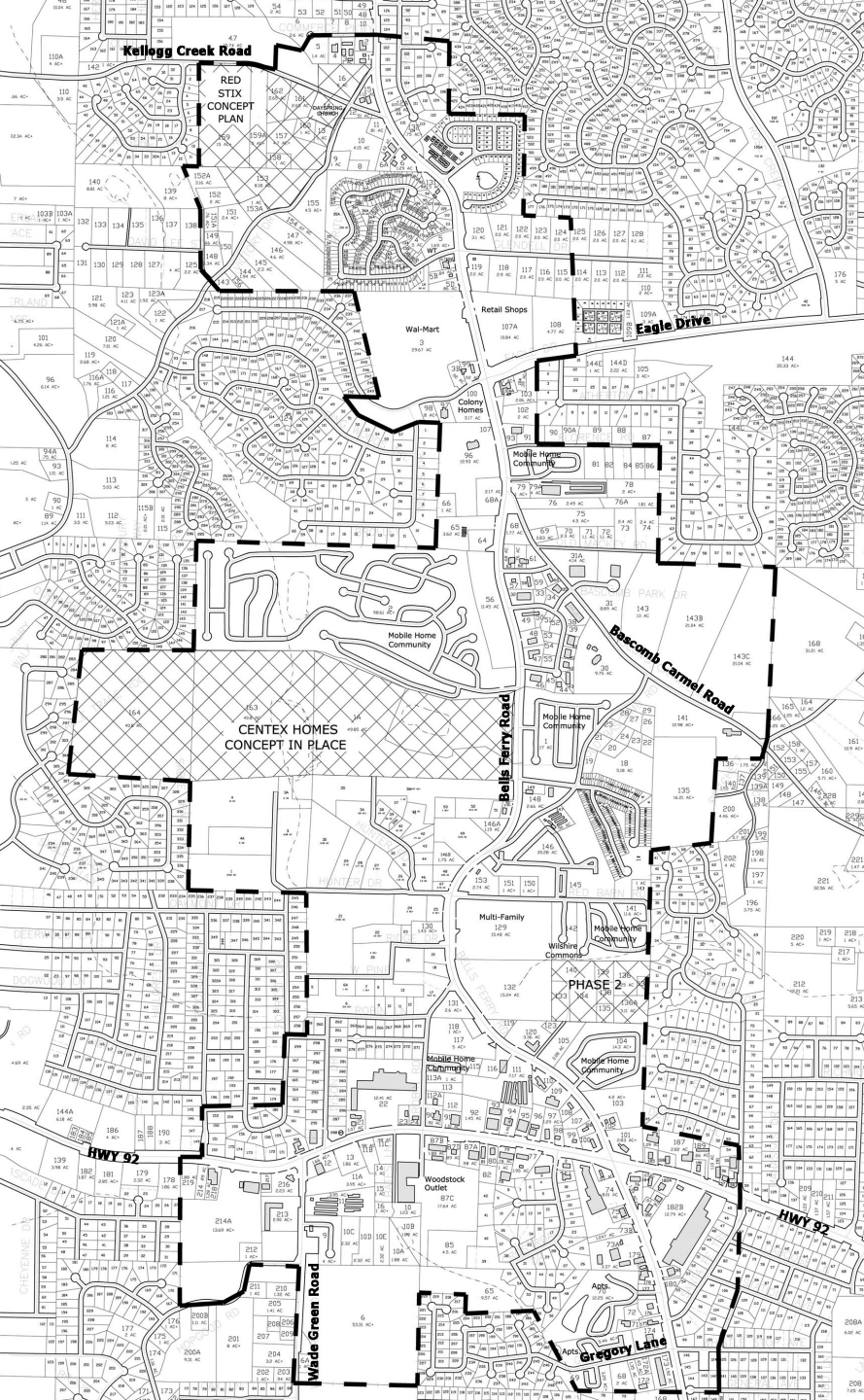
Introductions – Bells Ferry LCI

By the Numbers

- 3+ miles along Bells Ferry Road, 1+ mile wide Hwy 92
- 1,511 Acres

2005 LCI Study + 2007 Overlay District

- Large, under-developed tracts
- High concentration of MHP, Multi-Family, Townhomes, SFD and Commercial
- Blight and disinvestment
- Good transportation infrastructure & sewer
- Additional residential choices wanted
- Redevelopment of the existing commercial



Introductions – Bells Ferry LCI

Status in 2024

- 20 years since original study
- 2,350 new homes with 700 under development
- Little change in commercial
- Patriots' Park opened in 2017

2025 LCI Update Goals

- Reengage the community
- Reach broader group of residents
- Focus on the next chapter for the area
- Study feasibility of expanding transit

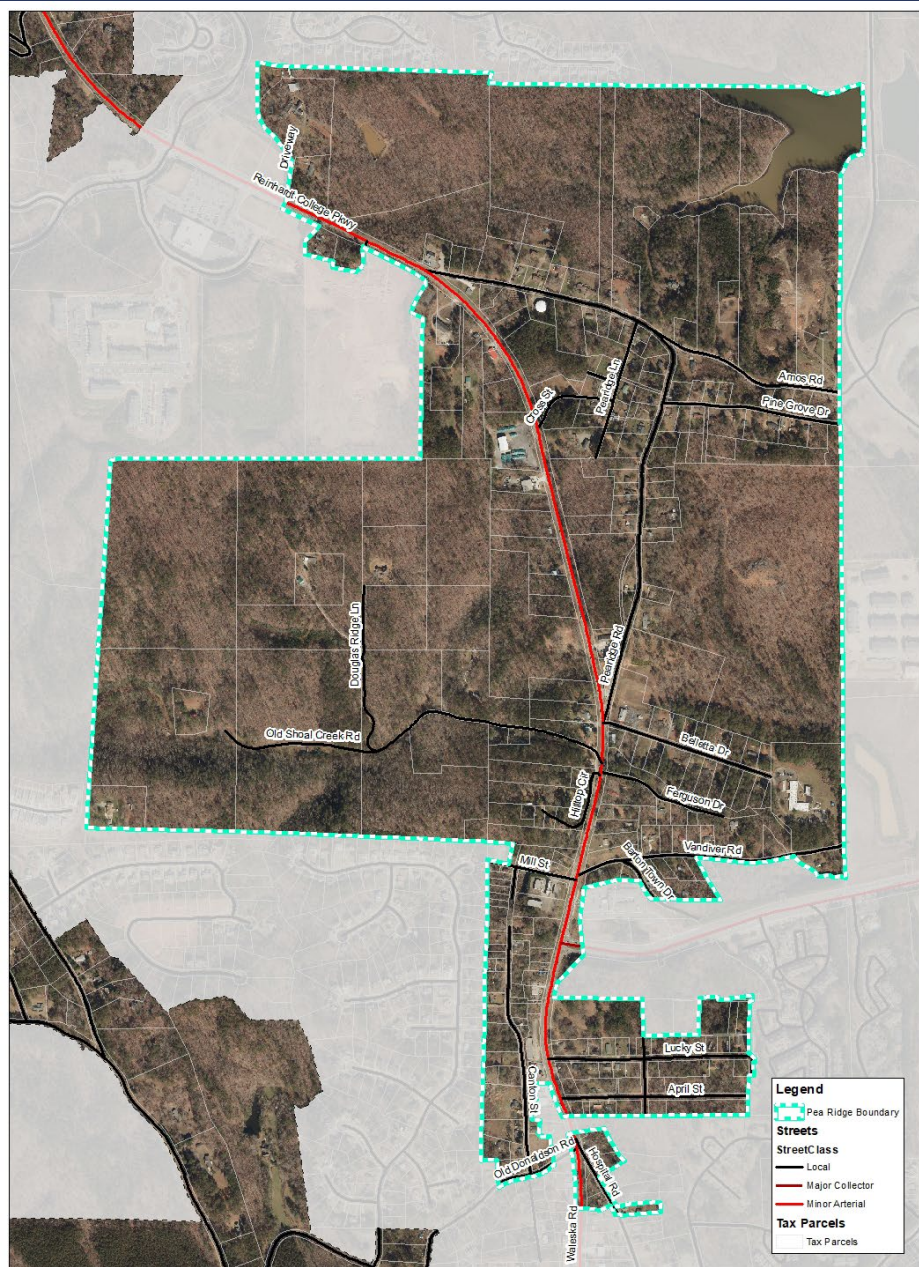
Introductions – Pearridge

By the Numbers

- 931 Parcels within area
- 215 Acres

2020 - Early Work

- Unincorporated Island from 1989?
- Keith Plantation descendants
- Churches and Fire Station at the heart of community
- Significant vacant properties
- Recent demographic changes



Aerial Imagery Map
PEARIDGE COMMUNITY



0 250 500 1,000
Feet

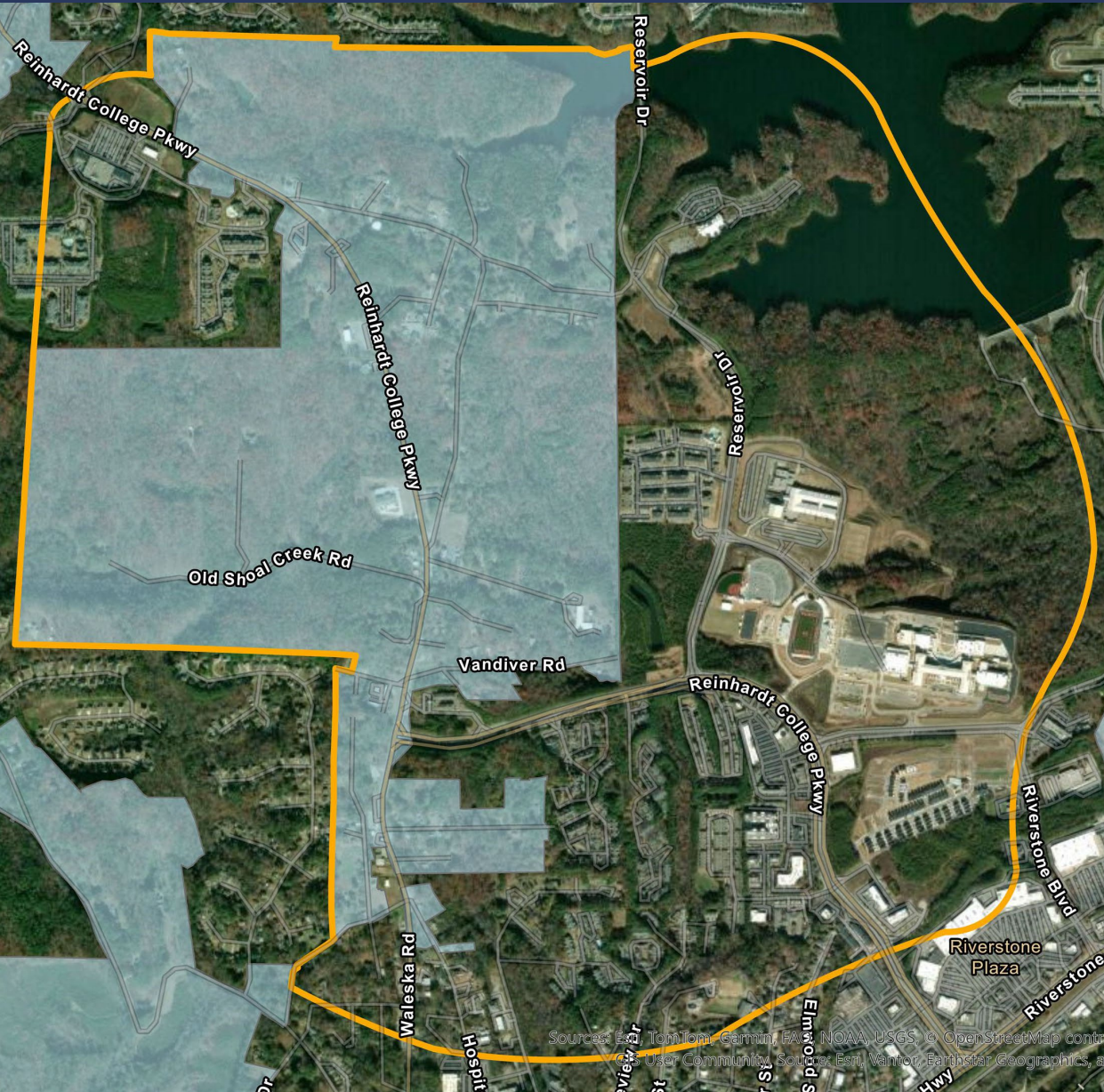
Introductions – Pearridge

2025 CDAP Application

- Assistance from the Atlanta Regional Commission
- Partnership with Charlie Ferguson Community Center
- Expanded to include areas in Canton limits

2026 Pearridge Plan

- Focus Areas
 - Housing
 - Land Use
 - Infrastructure
 - Community Services
 - Historic Preservation



Why Now?

- Comprehensive Plan Implementation
 - Tackling Relevant Issues (land use, housing, transportation, historic preservation, economic development, community services, etc.)
- Improved County-City Relationships
- Stronger Internal County Department Collaboration
- Fulfilling Promises Made to Communities
- Availability of Funding & Resources

Bells Ferry LCI Plan Update

Part of “A Tale of Two Small Area Plans”

Georgia Planning Association Fall Conference

September 25, 2026

Engagement Elements

Structured to reach diverse participants

- Pop-ups
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Focus groups
- Walking tour
- Agency coordination meetings
- Community workshop
- Online engagement – mapping and survey
- Community open house
- Presentations to boards and commissions



Participant Diversity

- Long-term residents and new arrivals
 - Even people who were part of the 2005 plan!
- Community members and stakeholders
- Kids to older adults
- Businesses and residents

Schools

Residents

Civic
Associations

County
Agencies

Business
Owners

Faith Based
Community



Community Values

- Support diversity of people
- Diversity of shopping, housing, entertainment, and recreation
- Variety of transportation options



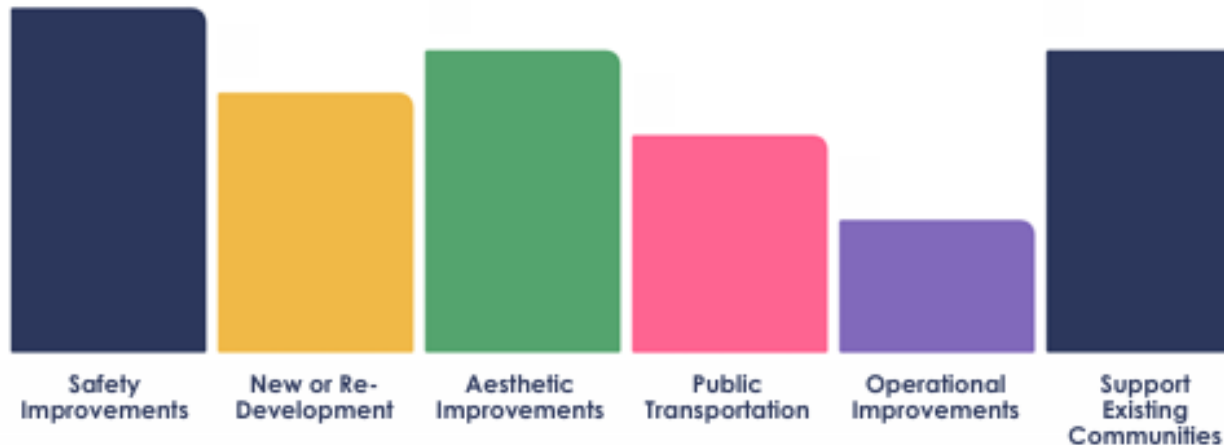
Study Goals

- Support **diversity of people** – ages, incomes, social and cultural backgrounds.
- Increase **job opportunities** for area residents.
- Provide **diverse choices** in **shopping, housing, entertainment and recreation**.
- Change the **image** of the community, to one of a **thriving and vibrant** area.
- Provide multiple **transportation alternatives**.
- Create a **regional "gateway"** to Cherokee County.

Community Values *(continued)*

"Patriots Park is the closest park for a lot of neighborhoods but there is no way to walk there from Kellogg Creek or Woodstock Rd. It would be very nice if we could safety walk on a sidewalk to the park."

What are the biggest needs along Bells Ferry Rd?



A word cloud of community values and needs. The most prominent words are 'walkable' and 'vibrant'. Other words include 'welcoming', 'inviting', 'mixed use', 'housing', 'efficient', 'family', 'fun', 'safe', 'community', 'walkability', 'orderly', 'attainable housing', 'cultural vibrancy', 'affordable', 'transportation', 'healthy', and 'maintained'.

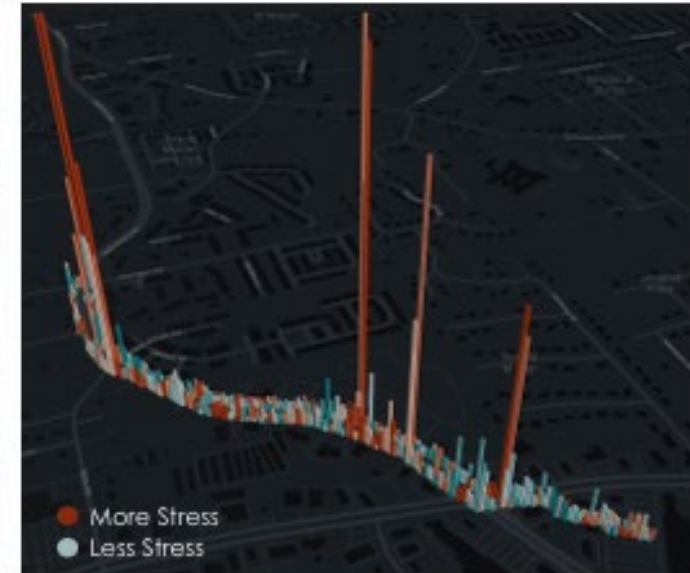
Intentional and Direct

- Recognized need for Spanish language engagement up-front
- Worked with trusted community members (who had existing relationships)
- Range of platforms/activity types
- Tried to meet people where they were – in their community



Innovative and Engaging

- Invited stakeholders to join us for a walk audit to gauge stressful points along the corridor
- Wearables measure heartrate to detect where people experience stress – help inform potential design ideas and recommendations



Priorities

Preservation

- Sense of community
- Local businesses
- Housing – at a variety of price points

Redevelopment

- Balance – not too much density
- Commercial development to support residents
- Economic diversity and increased opportunity

Transportation

- Pedestrian and bicycle options
- Address speeding
- Prioritize safety



Priorities: Preservation

- Preserve the sense of community
- Support and local businesses (new and existing)
- Provide housing at a variety of price points to keep residents in the area



Priorities: Targeted Redevelopment

- Balanced approach – “gentle density”
- Commercial development to support residents
- Economic diversity and increased opportunity



Priorities: Transportation

- Comfortable pedestrian and bicycle options
- Address speeding
- Access management
- Prioritize safety



Future Opportunities

- Trail system
 - Build on work already underway
- Microtransit
 - Start with a pilot
- Foster redevelopment
 - Update the Design District



THANK YOU!

Primary Contacts

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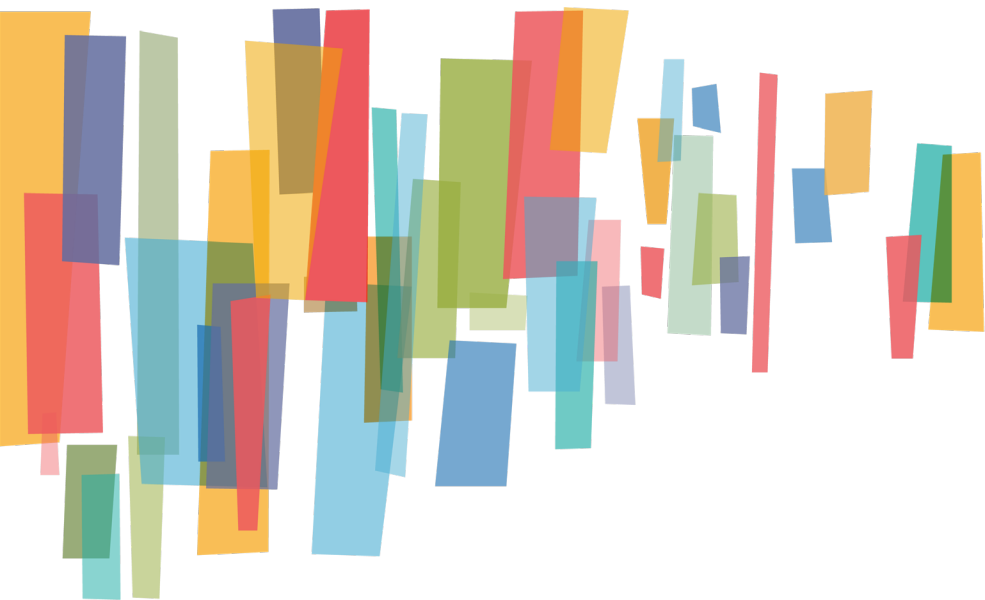
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Pearridge Community Engagement Insights

Describe the Pearridge Community in One or Two Words.

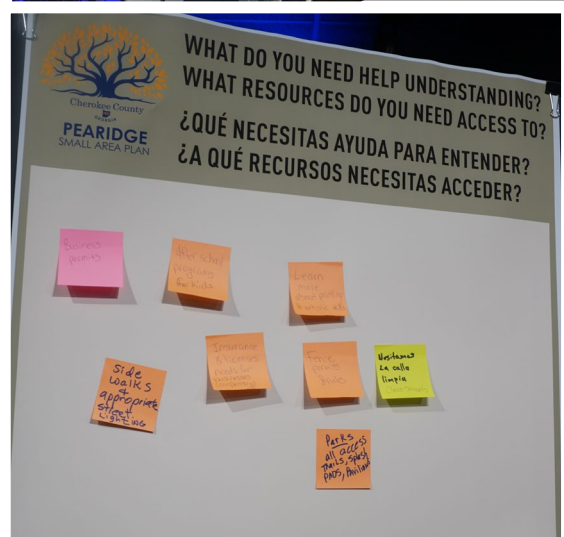


Who Makes Up the Pearidge Community Today?



Intentional and Direct Engagement

- Evolving population and primary languages
- Translated activities into Spanish
- In-person translators
- Utilized visuals to support land-use explanations
- Offered creative and artistic ways for youth residents to depict their vision
- Asked specific questions to gauge which technical planning and zoning terms may get lost in translation

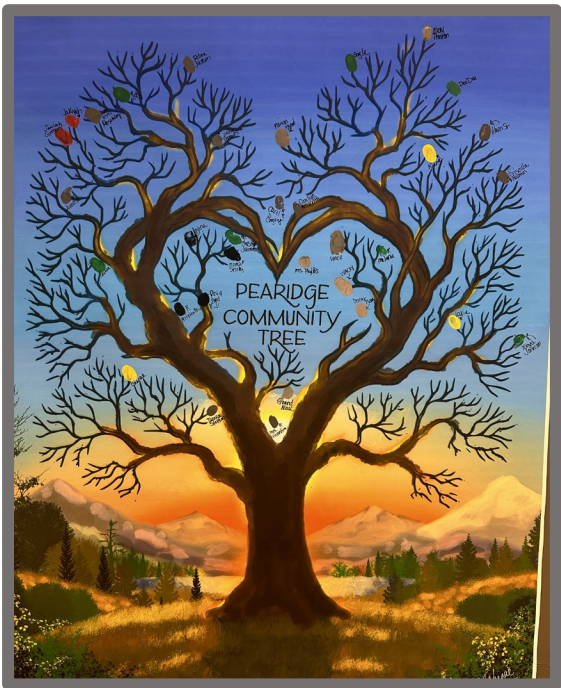


Pearidge Community Values

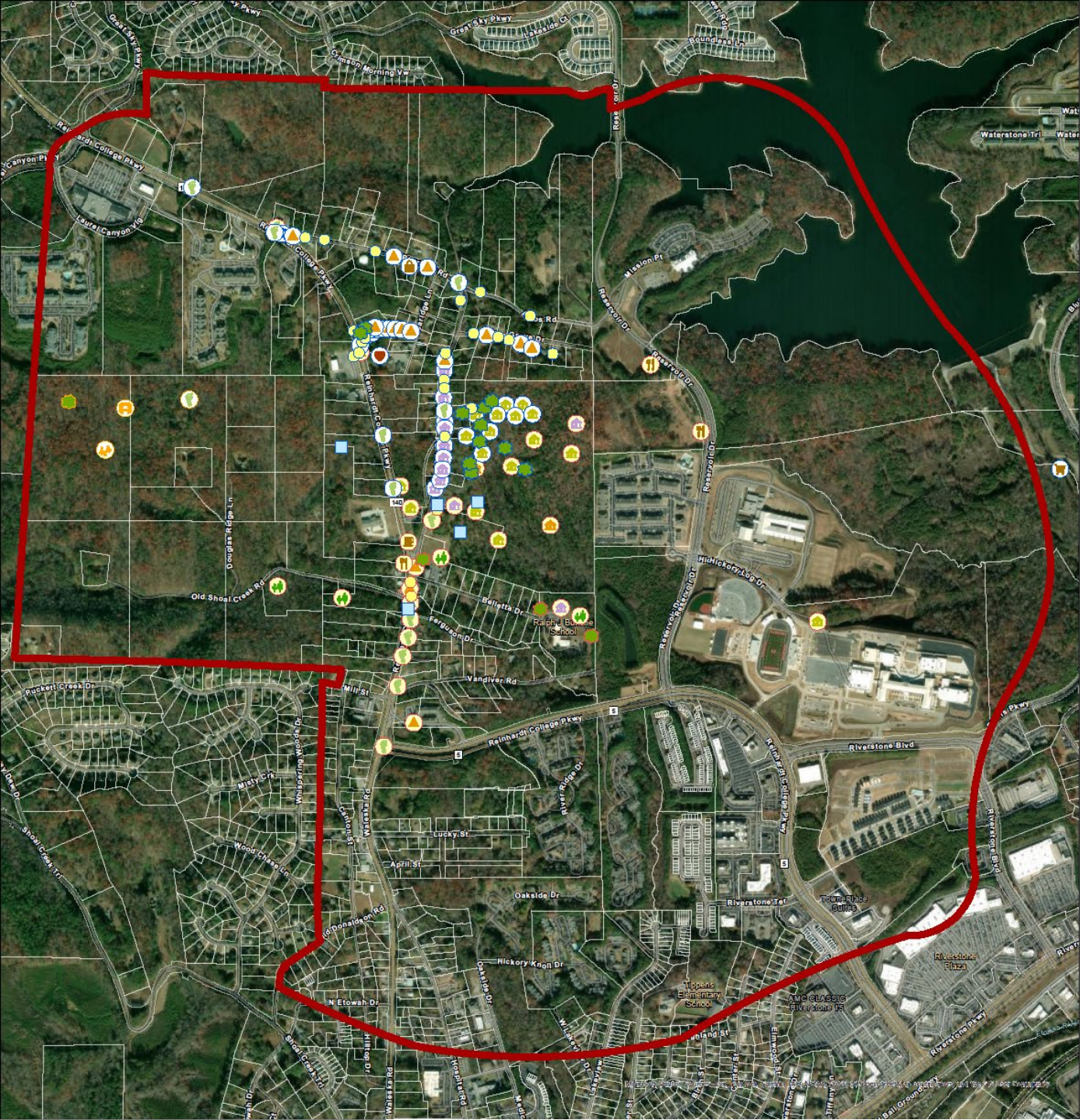


Cherokee County
GEORGIA

PEARIDGE
SMALL AREA PLAN



Pearidge Community Vision



Public Engagement Results

Steering Committee Results

Response

- Attainable Housing
- Single Family Housing
- Duplex Residential Housing
- Coffee Shop
- Community Garden
- Road Improvements
- Sidewalks/ Walkability
- Restaurants
- Lighting/Streetlights
- Parks and Greenspaces

Public Meeting Results

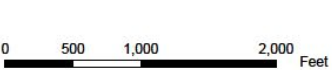
Response

- Attainable Housing
- Single Family Housing
- Bus Stop
- Grocery Store
- Medical Office
- Sidewalks/Walkability
- Store
- Road Improvements
- Lighting/Streetlights
- Parks and Greenspaces
- post it - see notes

Kids Map Results

Response

- Parks and Greenspaces
- Slide
- Soccer Field
- Sidewalks/ Walkability



Pearidge Community Preservation

Preserving physical assets

- Hickory Log Cemetery
- Ralph Bunche Center
- Keith Plantation
- Two Big Trees

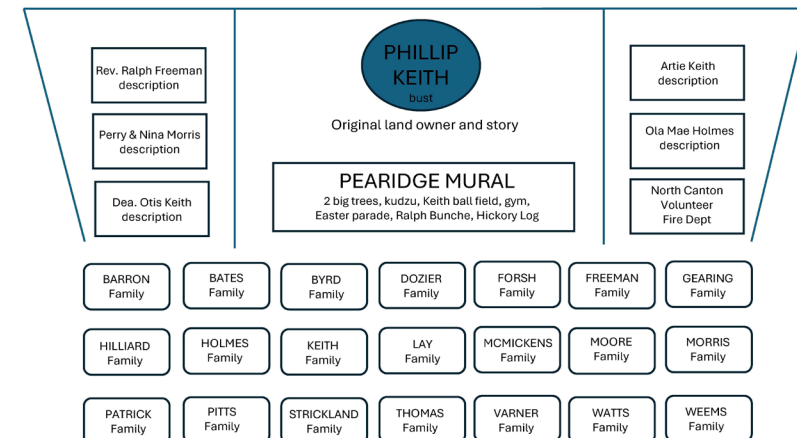
Honoring the founding families

Rehabilitation of older homes

Affordable housing available for legacy residents



PEARIDGE PARK



• Pearidge Mural designed by Raymond Pickens

• Bust of Phillip Keith Created by Raymond

High Priority Future Opportunities

Two Big Trees

- Historic and significant community asset
- Heritage Tree program through Cherokee County

Preserving in Place

- Development of an existing housing inventory
- Preservation of existing homes (i.e., rehabilitation)

Affordable Housing Pilot Project

- Ensure future development is compatible and within the community's vision
- Development proposals within Pearidge will have further discussions

Transportation Infrastructure Needs

- Repaving roads to fix potholes and narrow areas
- Extending sidewalks along the internal, core roads
- Adding streetlights
- Potential expansion of CATS micro-transit

Pearidge Community Partners and Catalysts



HISTORY CHEROKEE



IGLESIA
EMMANUEL
MANTENIENDO FAMILIAS SANAS Y COMPLETAS



Coordination and Implementation - Bells Ferry LCI

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Measures of Success

- Recognized need for update
- Diversity of community members: existing and new
- Continued pursuit of community goals
- Integration of additional planning documents
- Boots on the ground and data collecting technology
- Reaching community members in their arena

Coordination and Implementation - Pearidge Small Area Plan

Measure of Success

- Planning discussions led to pursuit of CDAP
- Utilize data and existing data analysis
- Diversity of community members: existing and new
- Strengthen existing relationships
- Strong community leaders
- Community Vision is catalyst for collaboration

Common Challenges

- Community engagement
 - Ready made environment doesn't mean engagement opportunity
 - Capturing all age ranges
 - Social media
- Partnership availability
- Productive conversations with the community
- Difficult to maintain relationships

What Did We Learn?

- Understand your audience early to strategize
- Identify gatekeepers
- Embrace the community's goals and how they can be incorporated
- Leveraging skills of your team members
- Recognize opportunities for educational workshops for community (residents, businessowners, etc.)
- Being open and flexible to valuable conversations

Takeaways

- The Power of Area Plans
 - Community-Driven
 - Worth the Effort
 - Flexibility is Key
 - It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint

Questions

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