

Powers Ferry Corridor Study Kick Off Public Meeting #1

Date	Location	Number of Attendees
7/20/2009	Brumby Elementary School 1306 Powers Ferry Rd. Marietta, GA 30060	103 participants by head count 86 participants signed in
8/24/2009	Brumby Elementary School 1306 Powers Ferry Rd. Marietta, GA 30060	N/A
9/21/2009	Brumby Elementary School 1306 Powers Ferry Rd. Marietta, GA 30060	N/A



Summary

District 2 Commissioner Bob Ott started the evening by laying the ground work for what is expected to be a grass roots effort in building a long range plan for the Powers Ferry community. Planning Division Manager Dana Johnson introduced the study to the public as well as county staff responsible for facilitating the plan. Land use Planner, Phillip Westbrook, presented some of the existing conditions analysis concerning demographics, land use, parks & open space, community facilities, schools, housing and crime and Department of Transportation Planner, Larry Stokes, briefed the public on the existing conditions of the transportation infrastructure. Terrilyn Hannah from the county's Economic Development office concluded the existing conditions presentation with information regarding market information within the corridor.

A brief Q&A followed the presentation. The questions and answers are listed below:

Q: How do we get bankers to cooperate with developers in the area?

A: *There is no way, from a government perspective, to make this happen except for our ability to reduce risk. Risk can be reduced by encouraging market demand for different products, entering into public-private partnerships, and the use of financial incentives.*

Q: What have the stakeholders and focus groups done? Does that mean all the planning has already been done?

A: *The Stakeholder Group, which is a combination of individuals with a variety of interest in the corridor, has been established and will be going through the same participation process as the public. The objective is to evaluate ideas to improve the quality-of-life along Powers Ferry Road. The focus groups were a group of 3 residents and 3 business owners who went through 3 different focus group sessions answering questions related to land use and transportation, interactive mapping exercises and discussions on visioning, goals and implementation items related to the study.*

Q: Who in the audience are residential owners and who are business owners? Dana asked for a raise of hands.

A: *The majority of the audience was homeowners. There were about 10 business owners in the audience.*

Q: How about some incentives for business owners? Tax incentives?

A: *There is certainly an opportunity for that to occur. Currently, Cobb County offers the Commercial and Industrial Property Rehabilitation Incentive Program, which encourages property and business owners to rehabilitate older buildings and sites by funding improvements for revitalization or redevelopment. The incentive provides a 6 year phased reduction in ad valorem taxes for the value of the improvements that were made on the property. More information can be obtained about this program through the Economic Development Office.*

Q: How much buy-in does the CID have in the process?

A: *The Cumberland Community Improvement District does make up a large portion of the study area...mostly in the southern section of the corridor. It is critical that they participate and have a strong voice in the planning process. We do have a representative of the CID on our stakeholder committee and project management team.*

Q: There was some federal money for crime abatement. Where does that stand?

A: *I cannot comment with accuracy on this program, but I think the question refers to the City of Marietta Weed and Seed program, which is active along Franklin Road. This is a federal grant given to high crime areas trying to get community involvement in safety and neighborhood improvements. More information about this program can be obtained by contacting the City of Marietta.*

Q: What's the status on creating and connecting rail lines with MARTA?

A: *The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority's last attempt to bring regional transit to Cobb County focused on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along I-75. I don't think that program is moving forward any longer. Additional studies will need to be conducted in order to enter the federal "New Starts" program, which is one of the main vehicles for federal assistance in mass transit development. Honestly, it will take state support and additional financial resources if we are going to be able to have a regional rail system in metropolitan Atlanta due to the cost of developing the system. At this point in time, there is no agreement at the state level at how to move forward on this.*

Q: What projects are in the queue right now?

A: *Other than the projects that are currently under construction (Riverwalk @ Wildwood, Rivers Call @ Wildwood & The Oaks @ Powers Ferry) and another project in the Wildwood area which was rezoned 3 years ago and has not started development, there are no projects currently up for rezoning.*

Q: What is happening with The Oaks?

A: *The Oaks at Powers Ferry is a new 158 unit Townhome project developed by Beazer Homes and currently under construction. The Townhome development was a tear down rebuild of an old 182 unit Apartment complex known as Oaks at Powers Ferry. Due to the difficult housing market, the redevelopment was stalled, but as you can see out there if you drive by, they have made great strides in continuing the build-out of the project.*

Q: Is there going to be a new development at the northeast corner of Delk Road and Powers Ferry?

A: *There are currently no plans that the county is aware of for that particular parcel or parcels.*

Q: Is there any movement to encourage apartment conversions or demolition for redevelopment?

A: *There is a current ordinance that encourages apartments to tear down and rebuild as owner-occupied structures, but many individuals in the development industry do not feel that the density bonus provided through the program is sufficient to off set the costs of tearing down an existing development. This is the main problem with redevelopment projects; it that it is easier to build on "greenfield" lands because there is no costs to demolish, recycle, and remove existing structures, which greatly raises the cost of development.*

Q: Are there hard copies of the presentation available?

A: *Hard copies will not be available; however a copy of the presentation will be available on the study's website for download and printing. The website is <http://comdev.cobbcountyga.gov/powers-ferry>*

Following the Q&A session, the audience was split into three different groups to get individual feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the corridor and opportunities on

growth and quality of life objectives to move forward in the community vision for Powers Ferry. The following summarizes the participant's opinions on the positive and negative issues of the corridor and opportunities that should be taken advantage of.

Strengths

- Strong connection with scenic natural environment, Chattahoochee River, and ample tree cover
- Location access and attraction to regional assets, shopping, jobs, and entertainment
- Cultural and business diversity
- Low tax business environment with an active CID
- Highly traveled corridors that lead to various retail/business service opportunities, and high visibility for marketing

Weaknesses

- Noticeable level of criminal activity
- Larger quantity of rental vs. owner occupied housing with rental communities lacking reinvestment
- Too much vacant retail space
- Jurisdictional coordination between Marietta & Cobb County
- Large traffic volumes during peak hours
- Lack of urban design improvements – including bike/pedestrian multi-purpose paths, signalization, and aesthetics
- No identity to draw people to area
- Visual clutter with power lines and signs
- Lack of community services and high-end restaurants
- Existing government land use regulations inhibit quality growth

Opportunities

- Establish urban design standards criteria to improve aesthetics and complement CID initiatives
- Encourage a mixed use town square identity that can serve as a focal point for community interaction and expansion of public services
- Focus development and redevelopment incentives towards areas of apartments and/or retail assemblages with emphasis on green building practices
- Expand transportation opportunities that connect residential, commercial and park activities such as increasing availability of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and new roadway linkage between Leland Dr. and Bentley Road.
- Look at additional opportunities to relocate Brumby Elementary on a larger lot to accommodate expansion
- Develop consciousness of positive community attributes through a branding campaign that focuses on beautification, bicycle & pedestrian access and community improvements
- Cobb County to improve interdepartmental coordination and external coordination with City of Marietta and Cobb County School System