



**Buford Highway Improvement Plan and Economic Development
Strategy**

Attendance and Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2014

Buford Highway Improvement Plan & Economic Development Strategy
City of Brookhaven
Meeting 1 - March 21, 2014

STEERING COMMITTEE - SIGN-IN SHEET/ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Affiliation
Susan Canon	City of Brookhaven
Marie Garrett	City of Brookhaven
Ben Song	City of Brookhaven
Susan Hiott	City of Brookhaven
Todd McKinney	
Susan Coker	Brookhaven Development Authority
Glionny Fagundo	Committee Member
Jim Eyre	Council
Pat Hoban	

**Buford Highway Improvement Plan & Economic Development Strategy
City of Brookhaven
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DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEMBERS & GENERAL PUBLIC - SIGN-IN SHEET/ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Affiliation
Latina Garnigan	Brookhaven Neighbor
Jerry Cooper	Cooper Carry
Susan Canon	City of Brookhaven
Marie Garrett	City of Brookhaven
Ben Song	City of Brookhaven
Susan Hiott	City of Brookhaven
Joe Earle	Reporter Newspaper
Bob Voyles	Seven Oaks Company
Carla Parker	Champion Newspaper
Joe Gebbia	Council

**Buford Highway Improvement Plan and Economic Development Strategy
City of Brookhaven, Georgia**

Buford Highway Steering Committee

Meeting 1 – Project Kick-off

Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2014 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Brookhaven City Hall - 200 Ashford North - Basement Conference Room

Steering Committee Members Present

See sign-in sheet located at end of document

Development Authority Members and General Public Present

See sign-in sheet located at end of document

Project Team Present

The Jaeger Company

Dale Jaeger, Principal Landscape Architect and Planner

Madie Fischetti, Senior Project Manager

Cameron Yates, Landscape Architecture Staff

Urban Partners

Jim Hartling, Partner

Welcome, Introductions and Overview

Marie Garrett, City Manager, City of Brookhaven

- Goal of study is to provide a plan that can be successfully implemented
- Final plan will go before the mayor and council for approval
- Plan will be part of the Comprehensive Plan in order for notice of changes and community approval to be required if plans are amended
- Cross Keys Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative and other project relevant studies performed by DeKalb County will be collected and provided to steering committee

- members for inclusion in project notebook; steering committee members are encouraged to bring the provided notebooks to each meeting
- Steering committee members are encouraged to attend meetings for other plans (Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan) in order for those members to be made aware of what is being discussed and implemented within the Buford Highway Improvement Plan and Economic Development Strategy and vice versa
 - Steering committee members will be made aware when the committees for other plans currently in production are taking place
 - Mark Kooyman's demographic findings are available and were provided at meeting, those wishing to take findings and add to notebook were asked to sign a waiver stating that these findings are only for the use of the steering committee and not for private purposes

Project Overview by Team

Dale Jaeger, Principal Landscape Architect, The Jaeger Company

- Provided meeting agenda, project team organization chart, and map of study area (agenda at end of document)
- Introductions to The Jaeger Company, Urban Partners, and Cranston Engineering
- Team will work together to produce final product, but specifically, The Jaeger Company will work on physical plans, Urban Partners will provide market analysis and economic plans, Cranston Engineering will work with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to ensure that the consultant team is up to date with the transportation plans along Buford Highway
- Reviewed project goals from original RFQ provided by city:

“City leaders and the broader community have an interest in the collective vision and future of Buford Highway, a gateway into the City of Brookhaven. This corridor currently contains a range of employment, living, retail, dining, and other options that warrant study to focus on sustainable redevelopment opportunities, safe and decent housing initiatives, and diverse workforce initiatives all in support of the health, safety, and general welfare of the community and economy. In short, the Buford Highway Improvement Plan and Economic Development Strategy aim is to provide an attractive, safe, and trafficable environment, with an emphasis on pedestrian accessibility and an action plan to stimulate the area to its full potential and long range sustainability.”

- Reviewed project schedule and confirmed dates for future meetings, listed below:

Public Meetings

Findings and Opportunities	June 12th
Final Plan and Adoption	August 12th

Steering Committee Meetings

Kick-off	March 21st
Project Findings	April 24th
Opportunities	May 29th
Final Draft Plan	July 14th

Note: All Steering Committee Meetings are open to the public.

- Has attained site information and GIS layers for production of base maps
- Will provide a “homework” assignment for steering committee at end of meeting
- During recent site visit, conducted a walk of the study area, along eastern side of Buford Highway, which was very enlightening
 - o Struck most by diversity of population and desire lines created by pedestrians; users seem very innovative, have added stepping stones to certain pathways
 - o New sidewalks near southern end of project were very comforting in comparison to northern portion with no sidewalks
 - o Noted that stubs are in place for light fixtures to be installed along sidewalk; would like to know what these would look like before installation
 - o Possible opportunity at southern end of project near creek crossing for open space and greenway system
- Opportunities will be discussed during next meeting

Jim Hartling, Partner, Urban Partners

- Large part of Urban Partners’ work is currently underway
- Preliminary observation is that there is strong housing development happening with positive market response; dense collection of rentals with varying levels of maintenance
- Residents are attracted to mass transit opportunities and retailing has responded to this as a market; this should be incorporated as a market niche; quality developers and real estate professionals seem to be working within this nich

- Crucial portion of the project is understanding how underdeveloped properties can become more attractive to developers; this will involve talking to businesses to see how interested/attracted they would be to establish locations within the project area
- Noted that there are issues with poorly maintained housing; noted that the city is currently working on code enforcement
- Mentioned that one possibility is to provide more dense and diverse housing

Issues and Opportunities Discussion

Marie Garrett

- One purpose of this study is to know from an economic recruitment standpoint that Brookhaven is the right fit for certain businesses and that the city will “knock on the right door” in the first place
- City will work on a way to incentivize development throughout the project area and create a way to reward the pioneers
- Buford Highway could possibly become a TAD (Tax Allocation District); this would take money used for improvements to local properties and place a specific amount within a bond
- There could be an opportunity to create a CID (Community Improvement District)
- Opportunity to create a BID (Business Improvement District)
- The key is that there are many possible tools and programs to allow for property owner buy-in
- Wayfinding and signage program would help identify the city limits and create a line of demarcation for Brookhaven; could refer to specific plant material, site furnishings, monuments to denote specific areas
- This plan will establish how the project area will look, how to attract people and businesses, and how to close the deal with developers

Dale Jaeger

- Wayfinding is important; need to know you are in a city and that city is Brookhaven
- Pedestrian safety is critical
- One specific challenge throughout the project area is that there may be little opportunity for slimming the roads; there are other ways to possibly slow traffic (i.e. brick crosswalks)

- Discussed previous projects where business owner buy-in allowed additional plant material to be installed on individual lots and parking to be realigned
- Noted that this is a GDOT route and that in the past The Jaeger Company has worked with GDOT to allow for certain aesthetic improvements
- Possibility for an overlay district as a tool to consider, would establish standards for future improvements to follow

Q&A Session – Overall Steering Committee Comments

- What are the project limits; what is the project scope? Dale Jaeger responded that the limits for the physical design are mainly within the public right of way; Jim Hartling added that the market analysis and economic study would extend beyond that area and stretch towards I-85
- Steering committee members introduced themselves and provided a little background information and their interest and relationship to Buford Highway
- How far along Buford Highway will current construction reach? Dale Jaeger responded that this information would be acquired from GDOT
- Is there a way to change name of Buford Highway to allow for easier wayfinding and to create a sense of place? Marie Garrett responded that many times there are named parkways or intersections and that it is a possibility
- It was stated that the renaming of Buford Highway could be viewed by many residents as a rejection of its international characteristics
- Jim Hartling asked if there had been much discussion with the Brookhaven community to bring in higher end international businesses. The response given was that this actually had not been discussed much within the Latin American community but that there have been great examples of this near the Perimeter within the Asian community
- The suggestion was made that the stretch of Buford Highway within the city limits be referred to as Buford Boulevard; importance of Curtis Drive and Corporate Boulevard as possible easing of traffic was noted. Dale Jaeger responded that the importance of these streets would be a great opportunity to discuss with the Comprehensive Transportation Plan design team. Marie Garrett mentioned that when there are open weeks between individual steering committee meetings that meetings involving all plan groups will be scheduled in order for all steering committees to discuss and review plans

Brainstorming Session - Overall Steering Committee Comments

- The plan should first identify and focus on the area that will have the greatest overall impact throughout the project limits
- The current residents should be kept happy, the market has spoken and the plan should work to enhance what currently exists
- There is a great workforce already within Brookhaven to be utilized for future development; pathways, pedestrian networks, parks are very important to residents; many residents enjoy gathering at parks for family events, which fosters positive interaction and can strengthen family values; without parks nearby, residents must drive to other locations for these activities
- Dale Jaeger mentioned that many times within the limits of this type of project there are leftover spaces that can be identified and used for public green space
- The project limits should extend to I-85; along Buford Highway; would like to see pedestrian pathways as well as bike lanes with separation from the roadway; City is currently looking into the possibility of a statement park at Peachtree Creek as well as a trail connection to the Atlanta BeltLine as the proposed BeltLine route passes within 1500' of southern project limits; would also like to see MARTA station within project area; many opportunities are being looking into for Cross Keys High School including a possible land share agreement and technical school partnership
- Buford Highway could be seen as a hub for cultural diversity within the Atlanta area; could be a place to experience cuisine and culture; typically travelers drive straight through the area without stopping but can become a destination
- Marie Garrett stated that the city needs focal points; places for open space; something as simple as going outside and eating lunch creates opportunities for residents to form relationships; looking to possibly find large tract of land for a park that could hold international festivals and a variety of programs, something to give people a reason to stop; create a more holistic community with open space and greater opportunities for citizens
- The importance of the viewsheds along the project area was noted; there are multiple opportunities to capitalize on the views towards Atlanta looking south along Buford Highway
- Renewed storefronts throughout the project area can create a domino effect and inspire other property owners to improve the aesthetic appearances of their businesses as well; need a way to slow people down and show them what Brookhaven has to offer; proposed idea of a street fair, giving people a reason to walk the project area, allowing them to slow down and learn about local businesses

- The presence of food trucks at Blackburn Park has been a huge success and has brought out many people; this is something that could also work along Buford Highway
- Jim Hartling stated that one goal of the project could be to reclaim Buford Highway from a route used to relieve I-85; this could result in road diets and other methods for adjusting the character of the route; offered the idea of adding pedestrian friendly routes perpendicular to Buford Highway as this can many times be easier to overcome given certain limitations to carry out road diets
- There could be height limitations put in place by the city to keep out large office towers that block views
- Developing an open line of communication with the Latin American community is critical; need to get feedback and understand their desires for the project
- Sandy Springs has been very successful after adding many multilingual officers to their police force; this has put residents at ease and fostered positive relationships between officials and residents
- To end the meeting, Dale Jaeger reviewed the homework assignment; steering committee members were asked to use the provided map to share any ideas for future development, names of specific areas, subareas or subdistricts, key features, etc. The project team is looking to steering committee members for identification of what they perceive as specific areas or neighborhoods as well as the names of these specific locations