



## **GATEWAY MARIETTA COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

### REVIEW OF EXISTING AREA PLANNING DOCUMENTS MAY 15, 2018

#### **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Georgia Conservancy, Inc. was contracted by the Gateway Marietta Community Improvement District (CID) to perform a review, synthesis, and assessment of relevant previous plans and studies that resulted in recommendations for the CID area in the topics of urban design, mobility, planning, economic development, and landuse. Georgia Conservancy was also asked to interview some CID Board members and other stakeholders as a part of this project. (Georgia Conservancy was not tasked with ascertaining the implementation status of previous recommendations, although some more recent plans did supply partial information on past plan recommendations in this regard, which was noted and included in this work, as available. Georgia Conservancy was also not tasked with undertaking any new planning efforts.)

The purpose of this project was to assist the CID in understanding key aspects and recommendations of previous professional studies and major concerns of Board members and stakeholders such that the CID can best leverage this information in directing its efforts and expenditures towards improving conditions in the CID area. This memorandum discusses documents reviewed, task methodology, findings, and recommendations for the CID's consideration.

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## METHODOLOGY

Georgia Conservancy undertook review of the requested list of previous plans and studies (Table 1). Document review consisted of reading each document; noting the intended purpose of each, the study area, and the major themes; noting topics not addressed or not fully addressed. Additionally, the team conducted three site visits to the CID and performed mapping exercises of area assets. (In cases where recommendations valid at the time of the report are no longer relevant because conditions have dramatically altered, Georgia Conservancy did not carry forward such recommendations in the synthesis nor consider them in overarching suggestions for the CID.)

A second exercise involved synthesizing the feedback informed by stakeholder interviews in a format that allowed comparison for commonalities and conflicts. These stakeholders included:

- Daniel Cummings, *Economic Development Director, City of Marietta*
- Jeremy Becker, *Vice President, JLL*
- Roger Davis, *CEO, Red Hare Brewing*
- Rube McMullan, *Owner, McMullan Properties*
- Laura Keefe, *Executive Director, YELLS*
- Milton Dortch, *Partner, Stowers and Company*

The third and final exercise involved research and interviews with a limited number of other metro Atlanta CIDs. This step was undertaken to ascertain general understanding as to how some other CIDs have evolved over time; invested in planning and design resources; utilized branding and marketing; and managed internal organization and decision-making, all with the intend of identifying potential ideas and inspiration for consideration by Gateway Marietta. Georgia Conservancy firmly believes Gateway Marietta is a unique geography with unique assets and challenges. However, with many mature CIDs in the metro Atlanta area, much can be learned from observing successes, investments, and decision-making by these other CIDs.

Synthesizing plan recommendations, interview feedback, and research into select other CIDs revealed common themes (**People, Place, Perception**) around which Georgia Conservancy has identified specific recommendations.

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## RELEVANT GATEWAY MARIETTA CID DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Document	Year	Preparer	Document Focus
The City of Marietta Delk TOD LCI Study	2004	Basile Baumann Prost & Assoc., Inc., Tunnell-Spangler Walsh & Assoc., Wilbur Smith Assoc., Strategic Planning Initiatives LLC	Determine if the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station planned for the Delk Road area can stimulate the revitalization of the area surrounding the station.
Franklin / Delk Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) - Five Year Update	2009 + 2011 Amendment	City of Marietta and Cobb County	Required update of 2004 LCI Study (2011-2016)
Marietta University Enhancement District (MU <sup>2</sup> ) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)	2013	Jacobs	To develop an implementable plan that will serve as a blueprint for addressing transportation, land use, economic development and community design issues for the community surrounding the SPSU and Life University/
“Live Rotten” Rottenwood Creek Trail Scoping Study	2015	Stantec, Smart Landscapes, Edward Pitman	Study to expansion of the current City trail network by developing an alternative to facilitate connection to Bob Callan, Mountain to River, and Silver Comet Trail networks.
Franklin / Delk Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)	2017	City of Marietta and Cobb County	10- and 5-year update of LCI Study (2017-2022)
City of Marietta Comprehensive Plan Update	2017	Atlanta Regional Commission	Required update of the 2006-2030 plan

Table 1

## SUMMARY

An initial list of six previous studies were requested to be reviewed, ranging in dates of performance from 2004 to a planning processes completed this calendar year. Documents reviewed are identified in the table on page 3.

The original 2004 City of Marietta Delk TOD LCI Study, along with the 5-year update in 2009 proved to be less useful in future recommendations, as many of the topics and projects presented in these plans have been cancelled due to lack of political will, shift in City focus, or other reasons.

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There are several issues that are critical today for the CID area that were not addressed, or not fully addressed, by the previous studies either because the preparer was not so tasked or the issue was not a pressing one at the time of the work. As such, the Conclusions section contains both suggestions of actions to undertake as previously recommended as well as suggestions of areas needing further study.

In short, it was found that some **pressing needs were commonly mentioned across stakeholder interviews and within previous plans**. These reiterated needs included projects and long-term policy for improving the function of the CID area as a vibrant, safe, mixed-use district. These needs focused primarily in improving the public infrastructure and public realm as foundational elements to the way the CID area is experienced and perceived, laying the groundwork for the attractiveness, competitiveness, and functioning of the area as a whole and for individual private property.

Repeated project and policy recommendations included:

- *Improvements to main corridors*
- *Key investments at critical intersections*
- *Leveraging the future Rottenwood Creek Trail for connectivity and economic development purposes*
- *Protecting existing single-family neighborhoods and creating vibrant mixed-use nodes through application of appropriate zoning, and*
- *Increasing the inventory of public gathering spots, with an emphasis on the need for more greenspaces*

Sufficient professional documentation of these project and policy needs, alongside robust public engagement and some instances of formal adoption, make these specific recommendations a natural priority consideration for the Gateway Marietta CID.

**Topics either not addressed or not fully addressed in the reviewed plans included housing diversity and affordability; identity and marketing; connectivity of and purpose of green assets (including stormwater management); and development/redevelopment potential needs.** A last topic that was not fully discussed in many reviewed plans was a method by which to establish and maintain internal and external relationships. The importance of these topics to the CID’s long-term success as a true community, and the interrelatedness of these topics to the success of the reiterated recommendations, make these topics appropriate for near-term investment through additional studies or exploration.

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## CONCLUSION

The document review, stakeholder interviews and limited CID research were informative exercises that should greatly assist the CID in identifying and prioritizing future projects and policy initiatives. Several points from these efforts are worthy of note:

- Opportunities for CID to lead, partner, or support various efforts
- Relationships are critical
- Identity, branding, and marketing are critical
- A full mix of land uses will be the marker of the CID’s long-term success
- Recreation and natural greenspaces; transportation options and access; and a spectrum of housing choices will be the cornerstone of the CID’s resilience over time
- A Master Plan combined with a Strategic Planning effort will best position the CID for long-term decision-making and future success

As previously mentioned, the themes of People, Place and Perception became evident through the three project tasks and offer an orderly way to consider future activity and focus areas for Gateway Marietta. People, as considered in the context of this project’s recommendations, is defined as residents, workers and visitors to the CID. Recommendations related to this theme are intended to address needs of these groups and individuals. Recommendations listed under the Place category are considered to address the

longevity of the CID and it how it raises property values and continues to meet needs of residents, workers, and visitors. Finally, recommendations identified under the Perception category are intended to address the image, familiarity, and identity of the CID area by CID property owners, residents, and visitors.

A table of specific recommendations is organized by the themes People, Place, and Perception and can be found attached to this document. Note that the recommendations reflect items included in previous plans as reviewed; common and major items from the stakeholder interviews; and need gaps as determined by best professional judgement of Georgia Conservancy. Recommendations offer opportunities for Gateway Marietta to lead, partner or support and also identify a subjective short-, medium- and long-term consideration as to when a particular recommendation should be pursued. In this way, the recommendations are hoped to be meaningful, organized and prioritized, but also leave much room for flexibility for an organization that is still youthful and growing in its budget, internal structure, and relationship-building with area partners.

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## PRIORITY: PEOPLE

(addressing the needs of residents, workers, and visitors to the CID)

ISSUE	RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME			ROLE	NOTES / IMPACT
		SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG		
Relationship Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule/hold regular meetings with key institutions (KSU, City staff, Yells, Atlanta United FC, Dobbins AFB)</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Proactive meetings will support knowledge sharing and leveraging opportunities
Youth Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to support YELLS, programmatically and/or financially (direct funds support or rallying funds support by others); schedule focused meeting with YELLS to hear priority needs with aim to identify one area of assistance for 2018</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Documented reduction in area crime with success of YELLS afterschool programs; good relationship building and marketing opportunity; adds dimension to security measures CID is pursuing already and furthers investment in a stable community
Spectrum of Housing Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create housing choice for a resilient workforce and area marketability</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead / Support	
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue successful relationship with Marietta Police Department to reduce crime; hold regular meetings to ascertain MPD needs and identify appropriate opportunities for CID to support</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Partner	Maintain momentum through new and different reduction and prevention measures
CID Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain opinions and feedback from surveys and CID tenant interviews to inform strategic plan and communications plan</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Utilize data available to CID in Metro Atlanta Speaks ARC survey; schedule X number of CID tenant interviews with consistent questions and format to obtain low-cost, non-scientific feedback

## PRIORITY: PLACE

(addressing the longevity of the CID and how it raises property values and continues to meet needs of residents, workers, and visitors)

ISSUE	RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME			ROLE	NOTES / IMPACT
		SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG		
Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake CID master plan based on 2017 City of Marietta Comprehensive Plan</li> </ul>	X	X		Partner	Seek opportunity to fund master plan with urban design component to drive additional development interest
Greenspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion and use of Rottenwood Creek Trail</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Support	Utilize communications and membership interaction opportunities to laud trail vision and completion; feature trail use, safety, and access as regular communications features; assist City in eventual ribbon-cutting within CID; identify future low-cost programming opportunity on the trail for CID responsibility to plan and execute (ex. fun-run, costume parade, YELLS fundraising cycle or run event)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure greenspace is a priority as CID continues to build out</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Partner	Supporting City-adopted Comp Plan priorities for recreation and greenspace; important area where value can be added or lost; asset likely in demand of existing CID residents, workers, and visitors and viewed as competitive difference across Metro Atlanta; less costly to plan now than retrofit later
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with appropriate City department to support city-wide watershed management</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Partner	Stormwater issues affect property and safety; addressing where possible through green infrastructure has heightened impact via visible greening of CID; proactive address of future issue

## PRIORITY: PLACE

(addressing the longevity of the CID and how it raises property values and continues to meet needs of residents, workers, and visitors)

ISSUE	RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME			ROLE	NOTES / IMPACT
		SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG		
Mobility	• Completion of Franklin Road Extension project	X	X	X	Partner	Significant opportunity to add to mobility connections and options for CID
	• Understand traffic and safety implications of coming high-volume car tenants	X			Partner	Utilize City knowledge of site plans to gain full understanding of potential traffic and circulation implications, as they may drive future infrastructure needs
	• Be prepared to potentially undertake CID traffic and circulation study, depending on Board's feelings and understanding from separate data review		X	X	Lead or Partner	Aim here is to position CID as proactive on mobility issues before they negatively impact area competitiveness
	• Explore opportunity for future transit needs		X	X	Support	Growth opportunities and trajectory bring mobility challenges; less costly to plan with transit of some type in mind than to retrofit it; advance awareness of the opportunity by keeping transit on the collective radar
Development / Redevelopment	• Utilize results of I-75/S. Marietta Pkwy Interchange study to inform that portion of a CID master plan	X	X		Partner	East side of CID is natural opportunity for next phase of focus; housing opportunities here advance additional goal of increasing choice
	• Maintain, regularly update, and host on website vacant or under-utilized property inventory	X	X	X	Lead	Board expertise and knowledge makes this an achievable task; demonstrates a clear and proactive effort

## PRIORITY: PERCEPTION

(addressing the image of the CID and area extents by members, residents, workers, and visitors)

ISSUE	RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME			ROLE	NOTES / IMPACT
		SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG		
CID Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold Board meetings at rotating locations across the year</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Inexpensive method to raise awareness of CID; easy way to ask members to get more involved as you ask them to host one meeting a year; host gets first 5 minutes of non-administrative agenda time to discuss his/her company
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt goal of each Board member bringing a guest to 5 meetings a year</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Inexpensive method to raise awareness of CID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold annual gathering (State of the CID Report)</li> </ul>		X	X	Lead	Elevates awareness of CID and CID's importance as year's accomplishments reflected and upcoming priorities are announced; seek keynote speaker to increase attendance (tremendous opportunity to draw from CID membership for this role - Atlanta United, KSU, IKEA, Home Depot, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a strategic planning process for CID Board and staff</li> </ul>	X			Lead	Necessary to determine "who we want to be" which then allows logical identification of necessary projects/tasks to advance property values and elevate leadership value of CID organization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue vigorous execution of existing CID communications, with evolution as necessary to reflect strategic plan (once complete)</li> </ul>	X	X	X	Lead	Advance awareness of CID; ownership and control of CID narrative; opportunity to continually document value of CID

## **PRIORITY: PERCEPTION (CON'T)**

(addressing the image of the CID and area extents by members, residents, workers, and visitors)

ISSUE	RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS	TIME FRAME			ROLE	NOTES / IMPACT
		SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG		
CID Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider establishing Board committees</li> </ul>					Monthly conference call meetings could amplify the level of progress and feed up to monthly Board meetings. Committee focus areas could be: security, planning, infrastructure, marketing, recruitment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete CID boundary expansion</li> </ul>	X	X		Lead	Completion of important task already underway. Adds important additional property and revenue stream with additional value of branding opportunities

### **ROLE DEFINITIONS**

**LEAD:** Own all or significant percent of responsibility of project creation and execution, and potentially funding.

**PARTNER:** Have a shared or equal leadership and management role with relevant other partner, government, or other entity; potentially sharing of funding, as well.

**SUPPORT:** Lend time and voice of Board and/or CID staff to advance a project or opportunity through communications, expertise, meetings, and relationships.

### **KEY**

Items in **GREEN** denote appearance or support in previous planning document.