



Action Requested/Required:

- Vote/Action Requested
- Discussion or Presentation Only
- Public Hearing
- Report Date: 6/18/26
- Hearing Date: _____
- Voting Date: _____

Department: Atlanta Regional Commission **Presenter(s) & Title:** Jillian Porter-Willis
Senior Planner with ARC

Agenda Item Title:

Presentation of Pearidge Small Area Plan - Atlanta Regional Commission Senior Planner Jillian Porter-Willis

Summary:

In May 2025, Cherokee County and the Charlie Ferguson Community Center were granted the opportunity to participate in the Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and advised by the City of Canton. This partnership resulted in the creation of a small area plan for the project's target area. Jillian Porter-Willis, a senior planner with ARC, will present this document. Please note this document was presented to the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, June 16, 2026.

Budget Implications:

Budgeted? Yes No N/A

Total Cost of Project: Check if Estimated

Fund Source: General Fund Water & Sewer Sales Tax Other:

Staff Recommendations:

N/A

Reviews:

Has this been reviewed by Management and Legal Counsel, if required? Yes No

Attachments:

1) Pearidge Small Area Plan



Cherokee County
1831
GEORGIA

PEARIDGE COMMUNITY

Small Area Plan

Adopted Month Day, Year



Prepared by the



Atlanta Regional Commission

Acknowledgments

Pearidge Community Steering Committee

Tonya Riddick, Charlie Ferguson Community Center
 Tariah Welch, Charlie Ferguson Community Center
 Pat Tanner, Community Member
 Pastor Justin D. Lee, Hickory Log Baptist Church
 Shawn Gordon, Hickory Log Baptist Church
 Juan Paiz Garcia, Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God
 Chad Arp, Fire Marshal
 Bruce Baker, History Cherokee
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 Denise Watts-Gay, Pearidge Resident
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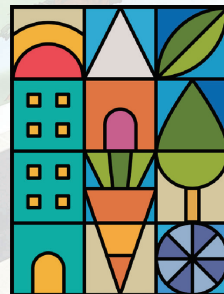
City of Canton

Kevin Turner, Community Development Director
 Jakob Allen, Planner

Project Partners



The project team would also like to acknowledge TSW for their mapping and engagement support throughout the process.



Community Development Assistance Program

The Atlanta Regional Commission's Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) provides planning assistance to local governments, CIDs, & non-profits across the metro Atlanta region. The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of those of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia, or the Federal Highway Administration. This publication does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. Prepared in cooperation with the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia, and the Federal Highway Administration.

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HICKORY LOG

MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

EST. 1872
CANTON, GA

A FAMILY THAT PRAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER

ISAIAH 41:10
"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

CHURCH HISTORY

Hickory Log Missionary Baptist Church was organized in August of 1872. Reverend Levi Greenlee was the chief organizer, along with Brother Phillip Keith, Brother William Brown, Brother Abe Brown, Jr., Brother Balis Nichols, Brother Sydney Roberts, Deacon Martin Cagle, Deacon Johnny Cagle, Reverend Silas Smith and two White congregants from Sardis Baptist Church of Waleska, Georgia.

Brother Abe Brown, Jr. was elected Church Clerk and Brother Phillip Keith and Brother William Brown were appointed Deacons. Deacon Phillip Keith donated two acres of land, one for the church building and one for the cemetery.

Reverend Silas Smith was the first pastor of Hickory Log Baptist Church, where he served the community for sixteen years. While under the Pastoral leadership of Reverend R. R. Freeman, the 13th pastor, plans were drawn up by Reverend Hugh Byrd for a new structure. In 1954, Pastor R.R. Freeman and Sister Emma Jean Freeman donated the land on which this building now stands along with the first one thousand bricks.

Opening day services were held in May of 1957, although construction was not completed. In May of 1960, dedication services were held and the mortgage was burned. Under the leadership

was established and is still
pastor, under
saved. On February 2
pastor of Hickory Log
rest in ship.

WWW.HICKORYLOGMBC.WIXSITE.COM/HABC

This is a picture from History Cherokee's Sacred Spaces: The Legacy of Black Churches in Cherokee County exhibit. This exhibit honored the people and historic churches that long served as more than places of worship.

REV. ROBERT RALPH (R.R.) FREEMAN

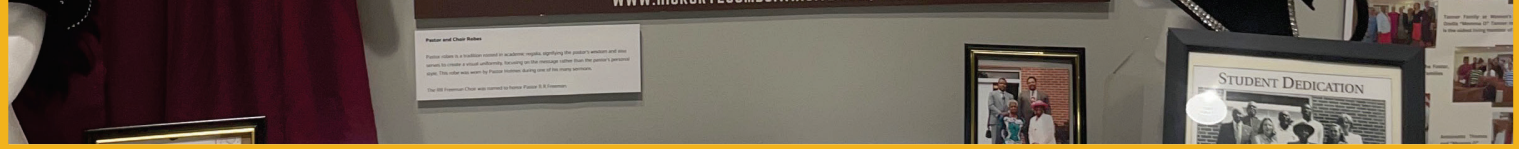
HICKORY LOG MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH: 1942-1974

Rev. Robert Ralph (R.R.) Freeman served as the 14th pastor of Hickory Log Missionary Baptist Church from 1942 until his passing in 1974. Originally located on Elm Street, the current church building was constructed in 1960, with its first service held on the first Sunday in May. Rev. Freeman generously donated an acre of land for the new church, while his wife, Emma Jean, contributed the first 1,000 bricks to begin construction.

During his leadership, Rev. Freeman established the Senior Choir, Usher Board, Youth Department, and several other ministries that enriched church life. Beyond the pulpit, he served as Moderator of the American Missionary Baptist Association and held leadership roles in both the State and National Baptist Conventions. Locally, he was President of the Ministerial Alliance.

Rev. Freeman was also a trailblazer in the community—he served and organized the first Black-owned service station in Cherokee County and played a key role in organizing the integration of the Canton Theatre.

Pearidge History 01



Before Pearidge...



Image of Cherokee Country map from History Imagined: For Readers, Writers, and Lovers of Historical Fiction. Blue line indicates 'Limit of Original Cherokee Claims', red line indicates 'Cherokee Boundary at Close of Revolution', and the green line indicates 'Cherokee Boundary at Final Cession'.

History of Displacement: Native American Land

Before the Scottish Keiths, and even the formerly enslaved Keiths, the land that housed the Plantation and Pearidge Community was home to Native Americans. As depicted in the map (dark blue line), the Cherokee Country was vast and spanned Kentucky, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Alabama, Virginia, and Georgia. Specifically in Cherokee County, Georgia, there is archaeological evidence of village sites along the Etowah River and across the County spanning centuries. It is believed the river itself gets its namesake from the Native American word for 'Village' or 'Town'. In the Cherokee language, it could mean 'good' and 'tree', while also translating to 'mounds'.

This land, cultivated for feeding people and nestled along trade routes, sets the stage for prosperity and abundance. During the course of the last 200 years, the demographics, names, cultures, and practices have rapidly changed into what we know now as Pearidge. The Cherokee land, which once faced displacement at the hands of European settlers, has since been reclaimed by the formerly enslaved. However, the area is once again facing the pressures of displacement.

The Scottish Keiths, the Plantation, and the Cherokee Native Americans

The lineage to present-day Pearidge does not begin with its establishment. It dates to the mid-1700s across the sea in Europe. The Keith family, originally from Scotland, was removed from European land during the 1746 Battle of Culloden. The Battle of Culloden resulted in the end of Scotland’s fight for independence and the Jacobite cause. Thus, during what is known as the Highland Clearances, *Jacobite* supporters, including the Scottish Keiths, were either impoverished, arrested for vagrancy, or relocated.

Records indicate these supporters were exiled to Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and the American Colonies. In these records, there is evidence of the Scottish Keith family relocating to Virginia. Due to their impoverished conditions and transgressions, some of the Scottish Keiths were forced into indentured servitude. The indentured servants would serve the merchant who paid for their passage until both the debt and penalty were repaid. After the sentencing, these indentured servants had their rights restored and were given a small compensation to make a life in their new home.

In the 1830s, back in Cherokee County, Georgia, the local militia built a stockade known as Fort Buffington. This place was used by the Federal and State troops during the Cherokee Removal in 1838. Many Native Americans from the local area were held at the Fort Buffington stockades until they were permanently forced out. The Native Americans who survived the living conditions at the stockades were forced to make an 800-mile journey west. From the stockades to the extended journey, as many as 4,000 Cherokees may have died. This entire ordeal is known as the “Trail of Tears”.

Battle of Culloden
Image from National Army Museum



Historic Note:
The picture above depicts the Battle of Culloden, which was the end of the *Jacobite* cause. Jacobites, in British history, were supporters of the exiled Stuart king James II (Latin: Jacobus) and his descendants after the Glorious Revolution. The political importance of the Jacobite movement extended from 1688 until at least the 1750s.

Fort Buffington Plaque - Trail of Tears
Image from National Park Service



Keith Plantation in 1952
Image from North Georgia History



Civil War
Image from History



After their indentured servitude, the Scottish Keiths would find a home in the American Colonies. They would work, have children, and migrate to other states. Although the timeframe is not certain, around the 1840s, the Scottish Keiths would move to Georgia. There are records of them in multiple parts of the state, but their involvement in Cherokee County is significant to the establishment of Pearidge. Once Native American land, the Scottish Keiths owned a large estate in Cherokee County. It was speculated that this land stretched from present-day Pearidge to what was colloquially coined Keithsburg, after the Keith Plantation. The Scottish Keiths established a Plantation along the Etowah River, crafting the bricks that would make up the historic plantation home out of the clay from the riverbed. In the 1850s, Keithsburg was established along the railroad, slightly northeast of Canton, by plantation owner and family, Mackey Anderson Keith. The plantation and the Keith family were very involved in the community. They were well-known and wealthy. However, the plantation faced conflict during the Civil War.

In 1864, the Union Army targeted the City of Canton, Georgia, where the Georgia Governor at the time resided. The Union Army ordered soldiers to burn down the Governor's home and wreak havoc on the small community. In the chaos, the Keith Plantation was notified of the Union Army's intentions, and Mackey A. Keith, Jr., instructed his slaves to hide food and valuables in the trees and underground. The soldiers discovered the plan and decided to burn the plantation home and hang Mackey A. Keith, Jr. There were multiple recollections on how he survived, but the hanging was unsuccessful. Some accounts state that the rope snapped, whereas others believe the plantation slaves cut down their owner. Along with potentially saving Mackey, the slaves also put out the house fire. In 1865, slavery ended, but the majority of the formerly enslaved continued to work as sharecroppers at the Keith Plantation. Some of the formerly enslaved individuals even helped to rebuild the heavily damaged home.

Pearidge Formation

The Keith Plantation owner, Mackey Anderson Keith, Jr., passed away in 1872. When he passed, it is believed that the Scottish Keith family parceled out land to their former slaves as payment and a gift for those who stayed after the Civil War. Accounts of how the former slaves of the Keith Plantation received the land have not been consistent. However, History Cherokee's article, *The Unsuccessful Hanging of Mackey Anderson Keith*, found that Keith is a common surname in the Black community that lives here. Descendants of the former slaves have stated, "My great, great, great grandfather was given 160 acres, some of which is still in the family today."

Historic Note:

Upon arriving in the American Colonies, those who were forced into slavery commonly had their birth last names erased or left off the records. These individuals would then take the last name of their owner and typically keep it after the abolishment of slavery.

The former slaves who received land and established one of Cherokee's first free Black settlements were Amos, Philip, and Dave Keith. These men used their land to create spaces for the formerly enslaved and the families they built. In 1872, Philip and Dave Keith donated a portion of their land for the establishment of a church and cemetery, known as the Hickory Log Baptist Church and Hickory Log Cemetery. The church was founded under the direction of Reverend Levi Green. But Reverend Silas Smith served as its first pastor for sixteen years. Nearby, Amos Keith donated some of his land to create a school for the local Black community known as the Hickory Log School. From there, the formerly enslaved Keiths continued to build their community. Sources say the area they settled in was known as Keith's Ridge.

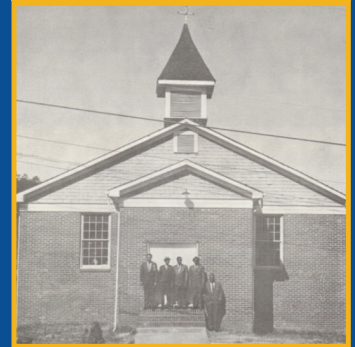
Original Hickory Log Baptist Church

Image from History Cherokee



Current Hickory Log Baptist Church

Image from History Cherokee



Hickory Log Cemetery

Image from Find a Grave

Historic Note:

There are two cemeteries that are traced back to the Keith name. The Keith Cemetery, which is located at the corner of Canton Highway and Liberty Boulevard, and the Hickory Log Cemetery, which is located on the site of the new Cherokee High School. The Keith Cemetery was where the Scottish Keiths, the family of Keith Plantation owner, Mackey Keith, were buried, and the Hickory Log Cemetery was where the formerly enslaved Keiths were buried. Both cemeteries are believed to be on land that once belonged to the Plantation.



Pearidge Life Then and Today

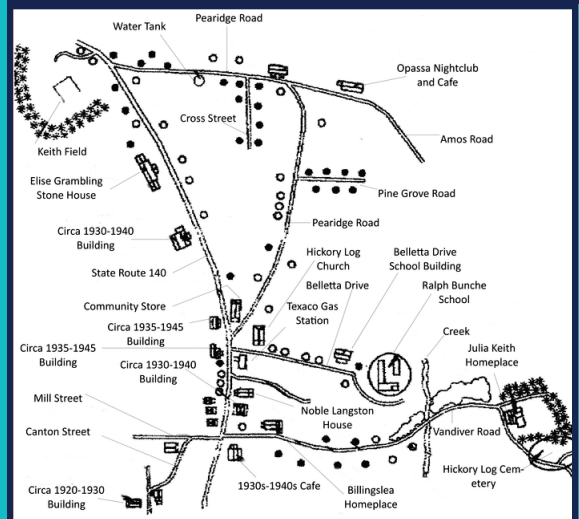
Continued Development of the Pearidge Area

Not long after the war and the removal of the Cherokee Native Americans, the Canton area saw major infrastructure and land use changes. In 1879, a railroad and highway were added to increase the efficiency of shipping goods. Thus, Canton grew in agricultural uses, mining, and manufacturing. Before the 1940s, SR 140 was established. This roadway cuts right through present-day Pearidge and replaced the major Waleska to Canton thoroughfare at the time, Pearidge Road. Despite these changes, the formerly enslaved Keiths established families that lived in the area for decades and even to this day.

For what was originally known as Keith's Ridge, life in the 1950s was rich with growth and community. Local businesses were started by nearby residents and members of formerly enslaved families. These businesses included a movie theater, a barber shop, cafes, a community store, a nightclub, and the first Georgia Texaco station owned by an African American. Sometime in the 1950s, Keith's Ridge was renamed Pearidge. The story goes that a local resident was teased by a friend when he saw that his pea patch was not producing. According to accounts, the friend had said, "This place is so poor it won't even grow peas!" From that point on, the area was called Pearidge.

Over time, the original church and school structures faced changes. In approximately 1951, the Hickory Log School, established on donated land by Amos Keith, was replaced by the Cherokee County Training Center. Six years later, in 1957, the log cabin near the Hickory Log Cemetery that housed the Hickory Log Baptist Church was replaced with a new structure. Reverend R. R. Freeman, Sr., donated the land for the brick church that was built on Belletta Drive. Along the same road and for the second time, the local school changed. In 1961, the Cherokee County Training Center was replaced by the Ralph J. Bunche School. It started as a segregated school and was integrated in the 60s.

2002 Core Pearidge Map
Image from Cherokee County

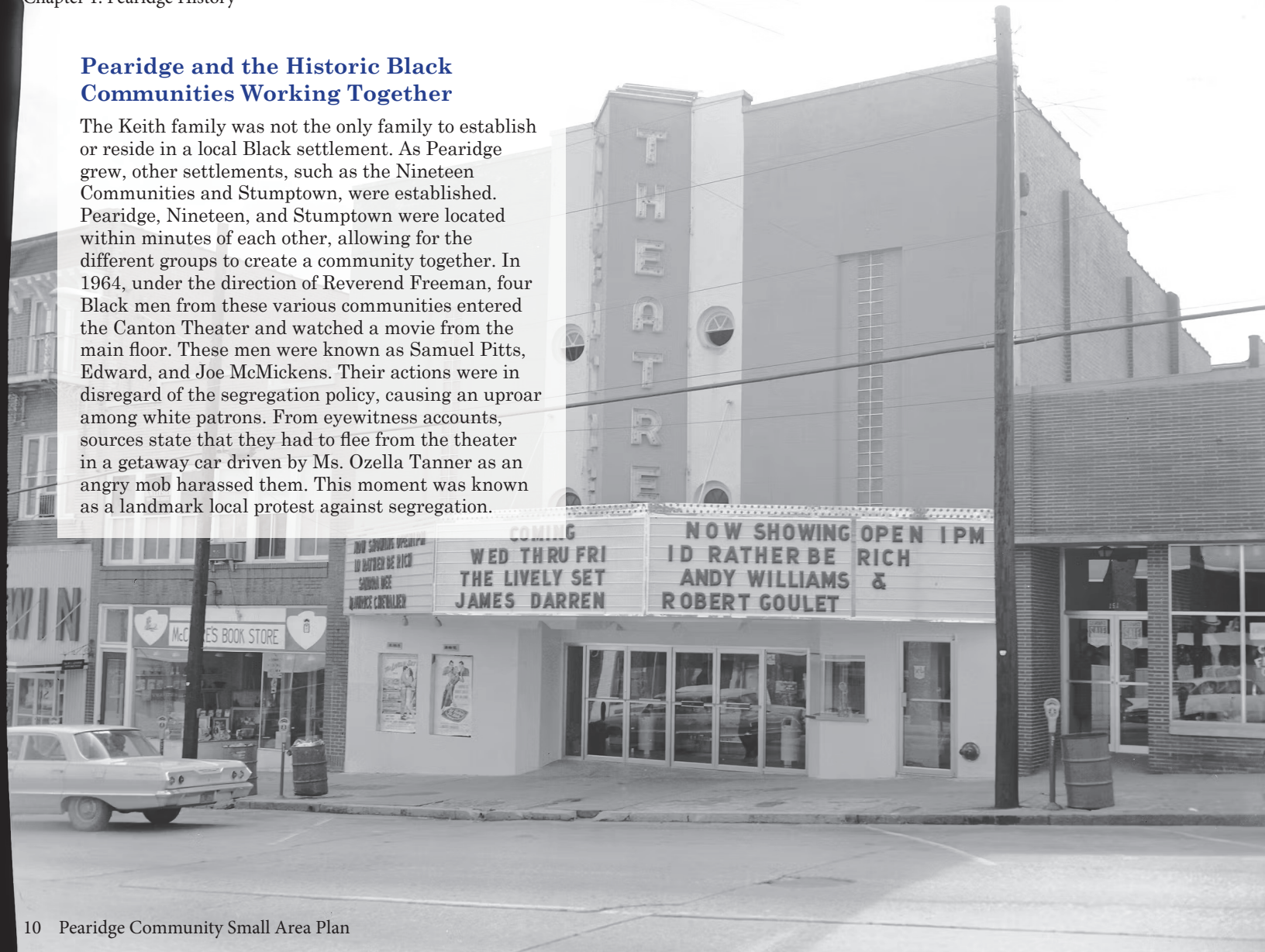


Ralph Bunche Center (Formerly Hickory Log School and Cherokee County Training Center)
Image from Cherokee County School District



Pearidge and the Historic Black Communities Working Together

The Keith family was not the only family to establish or reside in a local Black settlement. As Pearidge grew, other settlements, such as the Nineteen Communities and Stumptown, were established. Pearidge, Nineteen, and Stumptown were located within minutes of each other, allowing for the different groups to create a community together. In 1964, under the direction of Reverend Freeman, four Black men from these various communities entered the Canton Theater and watched a movie from the main floor. These men were known as Samuel Pitts, Edward, and Joe McMickens. Their actions were in disregard of the segregation policy, causing an uproar among white patrons. From eyewitness accounts, sources state that they had to flee from the theater in a getaway car driven by Ms. Ozella Tanner as an angry mob harassed them. This moment was known as a landmark local protest against segregation.



The County continued to grow, forcing a need for safety services. In 1973, the government opened the Cherokee County Fire Department. However, local Pearidge residents felt there was a larger need for fire services that the County's department could not provide. Thus, in 1982, an all-volunteer fire department was established. This effort was Georgia's first African American volunteer fire department. Charlie Ferguson served as the first Chairman of the corporation, and Tony Ferguson was the first Fire Chief. The department remained volunteer-based until 2001, when the County took over the services of the facility. Despite the County incorporating the all-volunteer station, which eventually dissolved, the impact of the North Canton Volunteer Fire Department will continue to last.

As of 2020, the station has been replaced with a brand-new facility across the street, and, through the endeavors of passionate community members, the original structure was donated back to Pearidge. In 2023, a CDBG grant and SPLOST funds were used to replace the original structure with a brand-new facility, the Charlie Ferguson Community Center. Today, the center stands as a symbol of the Pearidge Community and the formerly enslaved who established the community.



Historic North Canton Volunteer Fire Department Managed by the Community

Image from Charlie Ferguson Community Center



North Canton Fire Department Mural

Image from Charlie Ferguson Community Center



Charlie Ferguson Community Center (Previously North Canton Volunteer Fire Station) Opening

Image from Charlie Ferguson Community Center

Pearidge Historic Timeline



PEARIDGE COMMUNITY PAST, PRESENT, ...

1700s
The Story of the Pearidge Community Starts Here

1746
Scotland's fight for independence and the Jacobite cause resulted in the "Highland Clearances". An abundance of Jacobite supporters were removed and relocated to areas such as Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and the American Colonies. Among these supporters was the Keith Family, whose records indicate their migration to Virginia.

1766
Battle of Culloden

1831
Cherokee County Formed

1833
The town, today known as Canton, was incorporated as Etowah (Edawah).

1834
Etowah Changed to Canton
The City of Etowah changes its name to Canton as a reference to China. Some of the citizens dreamed of making Canton the center of silk production.

1838
Trail of Tears
One-half mile north is the site of Fort Buffington, built in the 1830s by the Cherokee Nation. It was used by Federal and Cherokee soldiers. In 1838, 7,000 Cherokee soldiers joined over 15,000 Cherokee men, women, and children on the 800-mile journey to their destination known as the "Trail of Tears".

1840
George Keith, the Father of Mackey Keith and the Son of Cornelius III, Headed West to Georgia (timeframe unknown) and was buried in Forsyth County

1850s
Keithsburg
Keithsburg, an area northeast of Canton, was established and stated to be named after the Keith family and the owner of the Keith Plantation, Mackey Anderson Keith.

1864 - 1865
Civil War in Canton
In 1864, the Union army came to Canton due to the Governor of the time being a Canton resident. The army sought to set fire to the entire town and the Governor's home. During this, they also went to the Keith Plantation.

1864 - 1865
At the Keith Plantation, Mackey, the plantation owner, instructed his slaves to hide food and valuables. Learning this, the Union soldiers chose to burn Mackey and set fire to the home. The story of how he survived is inconsistent. One tale is that the rope snapped from being caught on a branch. Another states that his slaves cut him down and saved him. Regardless, Mackey survived, but the home faced severe destruction.

1864 - 1865
After slavery ended, in 1865, the vast majority of the Keith slaves remained on the plantation working as sharecroppers and rebuilding the Keith family home from Etowah River's clay.

1870
Hickory Log Baptist Church and Cemetery
Hickory Log School Believed to be Founded on Donated Land by Amos Keith

1872
Former slaves of the Keith Plantation, Philip and Dave Keith (uncle and nephew), acquired a large parcel of land. The rumor is that after the death of Mackey Anderson Keith, the plantation owner, his slaves were given land. They donated a portion of it to provide space for a church and a cemetery. This became known as the Hickory Log Baptist Church. It was located near the cemetery, which is currently on the land designated for the new Cherokee High School. The church was founded under the direction of Reverend Levi Greer, with Reverend Silas Smith serving as its first pastor for 16 years.

1879
Transportation Expansion
The forceful removal of the Cherokee Native Americans paved the way for new uses in the area. The territory was used for agriculture, the mining of gold and marble, the making of moonshine, and the manufacture of cotton and rope. With this rapid growth, a railroad was built.

1932
Keith Family Reunions Began
Rumored to be due to the Great Depression (1929-1941), the Keith Plantation was sold to Pierce Cline

1934
The Keith Family, made up of the freed slaves of the Keith Plantation, began to hold annual family reunions. These reunions still happen to this day.

Prior to the 1940s
Archaeological Findings
State Route 140 Became the Major Thoroughfare Between Waleska and Canton Replacing Pearidge Road

1940s
Archaeologist Robert Wa investigated the Keith pr in the 1940s. According report, there was a Na American village site property a half mile p the Keith Plantation at the Etowah River. There evidence of arrowhea stamped and checked pe the Early Woodland Pe Along with the artifact large boulder was found property. The interpreta the boulder is not cons but it is thought to be re the Native American vil The Cline Family, who ow land, donated the bould Funk Heritage Center (Re University).

Keith Plantation as of May 2026

Although not located within the Pearidge Community, the Keith Plantation remains a part of the history. The plantation is only a remnant of what it once was. It was speculated to span 3,300 acres. Now, the plantation home sits on only 10 acres along the Etowah River. The rest of the land has either been donated, sold, developed, or held for future opportunities. Many residents have petitioned for the preservation of the home and land. However, of what remains of undeveloped land, it is under private ownership. Thus, the future of the property is currently not certain.

Keith Plantation Home Image from Old House Dreams



1950s

- 1950**: Keith's Ridge Called Pearidge
- 1950**: Keith Plantation Deeded to Clyde Teague
- 1951**: Around this time, documents show that the Hickory Log School was renamed to the Cherokee County Training School.
- 1951**: York Family Moved In
- 1951**: Hickory Log School Renamed
- 1952**: Clyde Teague's daughter, Marjorie, married Dutch York. Shortly after, Marjorie and Dutch moved to the Keith Plantation.
- 1957**: The church, which was originally a log cabin near the Hickory Log Cemetery, was relocated on Belletta Drive in Pearidge. The land for the new church was donated by Reverend R.R. Freeman, Sr.
- 1957**: Hickory Log Baptist Church Relocated

1958

- 1958**: York Family Obtained Ownership of the Plantation

1961

- 1961**: The Ralph J. Bunche School replaced the Cherokee County Training Center. It started as a segregated school and was integrated in the 1960s.
- 1961**: Cherokee County Training Center Renamed

1964

- 1964**: Under the direction of Reverend Ralph Freeman of Hickory Log Baptist Church, four black men entered the theater and watched the movie from the main floor in disregard of the segregation policy. Samuel Pitts, Edward, and Joe McMickens participated in the landmark protest.
- 1964**: Theater Protest

1973

- 1973**: Cherokee County established its fire department.
- 1973**: Cherokee County Fire Formed

1980 - 1982

- 1980 - 1982**: Thanks in part to a donation of land by Elizabeth Stone, and a donation of \$50,000 from Cherokee County, the all-volunteer fire department was erected, opening its doors in January of 1982, making it the first African American Volunteer Fire Department in the State of Georgia. Charlie Ferguson served as the first Chairman of the Corporation, and Tony Ferguson became its first Fire Chief.
- 1980s**: Keith Plantation Caught Fire
- 1980s**: North Canton Volunteer Fire Department

2001

- 2001**: Cherokee County Fire Staffs Volunteer Station

2002

- 2002**: North Canton Volunteer Fire Department Dissolved
- 2002**: Pearidge Map

2005

- 2005**: New Canton Fire Station Built

2020

- 2020**: With the rapid growth of the area and the need to bring the original North Canton Fire Station up-to-code, Cherokee County built a brand new fire station, Station 9, across Rainhardt College Parkway and the location of the volunteer station. In recognition of the history of firefighting in this area, Station 9 is dedicated to Charlie E. Ferguson, Jr., who was the organizer of the North Canton Volunteer Fire Department.

2023

- 2023**: When Cherokee County decided to build a new station for Canton, Station 9, the community banded together to request that the former fire station be donated back to the community that manned it. In 2023, after a couple of years of renovations, the Charlie Ferguson Community Center, named after the first Fire Chief, opened. Since its opening, it has provided numerous services to the community. These services include, but is not limited to, chair exercises, food drives, health fairs, family reunions, and overall a space for the community to convene.
- 2023**: Charlie Ferguson Community Center Opened

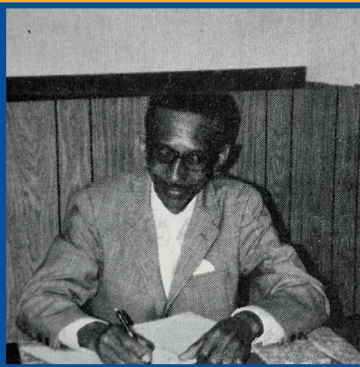
2025

- 2025**: Pearidge Today
- 2025**: Currently, the Keith Plantation is still owned by the York Family. It has been placed on the market but has not been sold in its entirety. The Keith family home is on a 10-acre parcel surrounded by approximately 250 acres. Its private property and the future of the buildings is unclear.
- 2025**: Keith Plantation Today

2025

- 2025**: Charlie Ferguson Community Center, Cherokee County, City of Canton, and ARC Partner on Small Community Plan for Pearidge

Pearidge Historic Figures



Ralph Freeman

Reverend Ralph R. Freeman donated the land, as well as the first 2,000 bricks, for the second Hickory Log Baptist Church, which was built in 1957. The original church was a log cabin, then later a clapboard structure, near the Hickory Log Cemetery. Now the brick church is located on Belletta Drive, where he also served as the Pastor for numerous years. Along with his religious services, he also formed the 'Freedom League'. He used the league to focus on local integration efforts around Cherokee County. One of the most notorious efforts was the Canton Theater protest that he organized, and his son participated in.

Artie Keith

Artie Keith, a member of the Keith and Strickland families, was a midwife. As a midwife, she delivered most of the Pearidge Community babies. Also, she was known as the community's natural healer and herbalist.



Otis Keith

Otis Keith was the Chairman of the Hickory Log Baptist Church Deacon Board, father figure to many, community barber, and Boy Scout Leader. He would offer free haircuts to those who could not afford to pay.



Phillip Keith

Phillip Keith was formerly enslaved at the Keith Plantation. He received land either as a gift for continuing to work on the Plantation after the Civil War or through the government as reparations. The land he was given covers the majority of what is now known as Pearidge. He donated two acres of the land to establish the original location of the community's oldest Black church, the Hickory Log Missionary Baptist Church. From stories, it is also believed he donated land to other Keith family members and other families, such as the Bates and McMickens.



James Perry Morris and Nina Morris

James Perry Morris and his wife, Nina Morris, were staples in the Pearidge Community. James Perry was the Scout Master for the community's Boy Scout Troop, and Nina led the Girl Scouts. James Perry was the second and last Fire Chief and was a strong leader in the attempt to establish a community center from the previous North Canton Volunteer Fire Station.

Andrew Jack Moore

Andrew Moore is part of the Watts family, who were one of the original Black families in Waleska that migrated to Pearidge. He provided the grading and foundation for the original fire station and now community center, as well as grading and septic services to the community. His family owned and operated a local restaurant known as Mo Ribs, which is now demolished.



John Heard

John Heard is a community leader who was Canton's first Black City Councilman. He was also Chairman of the Hickory Log Deacon Board and Board of Trustees. He was honored with a donation of AED and CPR kits to the Charlie Ferguson Community Center in 2024. He was the leader of Ralph Bunche School's 1963 state champion basketball team.



Ola Mae Holmes

Ola Mae Holmes, affectionately known as "Ma Ma Holmes", was a mother figure to the entire community. She led the Hickory Log Missionary Society for many years. She was the sister of Reverend W.E. Stevenson, the father of Ozella Tanner.



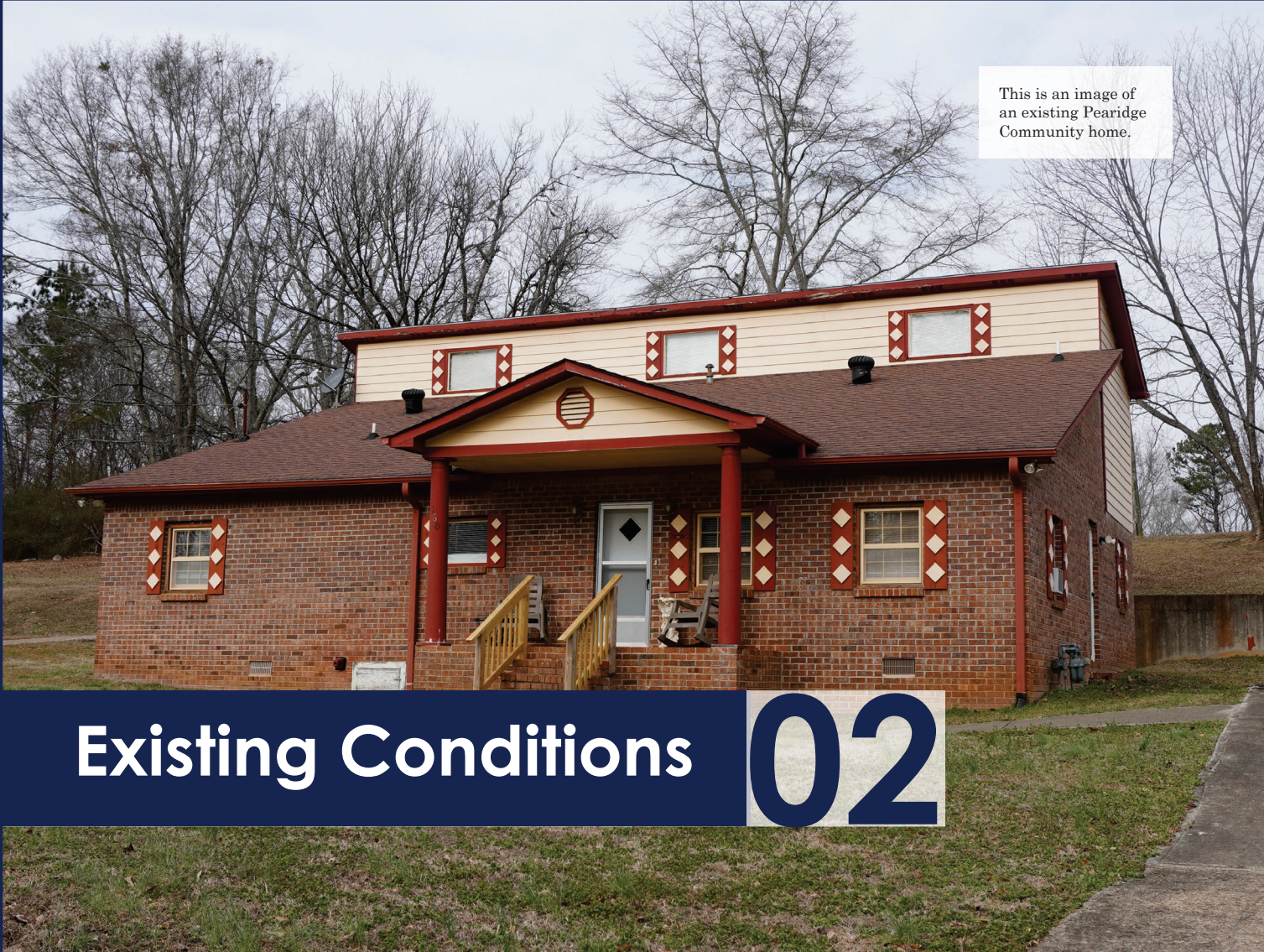
North Canton Fire Department Founding Members

- Charlie Ferguson
- Dilliard Austin
- Betty Anne Holmes
- Doris Keith Morris
- Kenny Tanner
- JD Weems
- Reverend Allen Patrick

Other Pearidge Historic Figures

- Deacon Roscoe and Beatrice Forsh, Musicians
- Pastor Robert and Mildred Holmes, Hickory Log Missionary Baptist Church
- Emma Clark, Two Big Trees
- Pastor Allen Patrick, Community Store Owner
- LW Washington, Sheriff
- Arfellow Gates, Coach
- Deacon Curtis Hampton, Hymnist
- Pop Varner, Taxi Service
- Deacon Charles Gearing, Entrepreneur
- Suvilla Bates
- Robert McMickens
- Pat Tanner, Canton City Council
- Bell and William Billingslea, Ralph Bunche School
- Nellie Keith, Yellow Haven Cafe
- Margarie Pitts, Cassadena Cafe
- Jimmie Johnson, JRC Cafe
- Rubin Hilliard, Opasa Cafe
- Moore Family, Mo Ribs

This is an image of an existing Pearidge Community home.

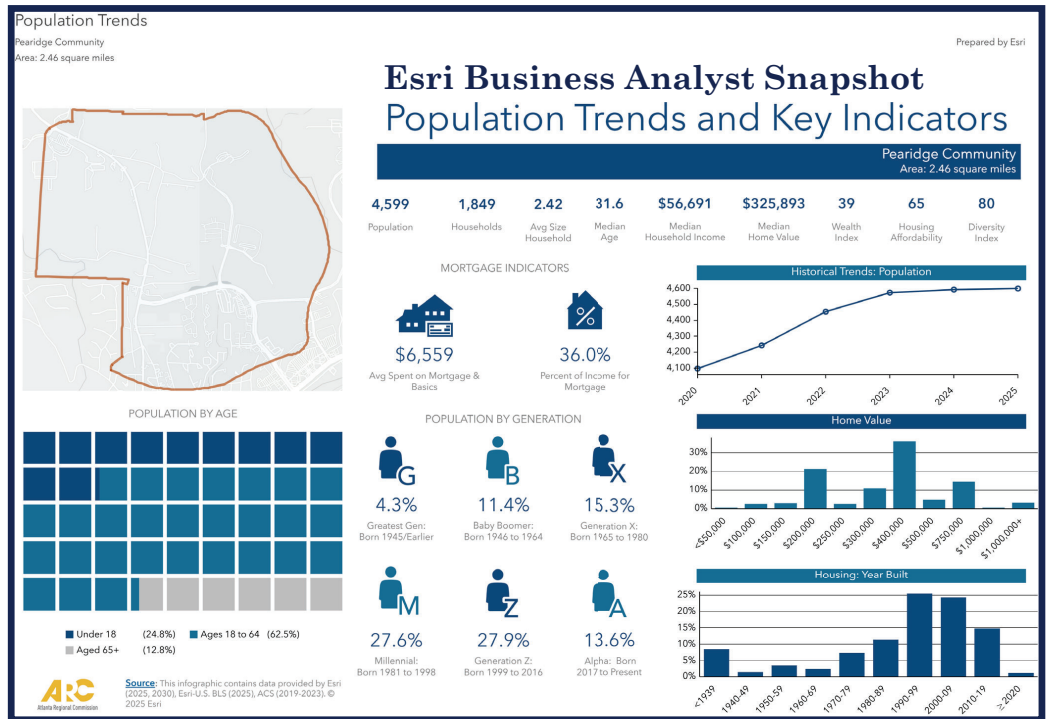


Existing Conditions 02

Community Data

The exact boundary of Pearidge has been lost to time. Despite knowing that former slaves were given approximately 100+ acres, how the land was divided through generations is uncertain. It is assumed that Pearidge included a vast stretch of land that included Pearidge Road, Pearidge Lane, Belletta Drive, Pine Grove Road, and Vandiver Road, which still houses significant historic spaces. For instance, the cemetery established on donated land by Amos Keith is on the site of the new Cherokee High School. However, through sporadic **annexations** and development, it is inferred that the land has steadily been condensed to a short circumference around Pearidge Road. This area is considered what is left of 'historic Pearidge'.

Annexation Definition:
Annexation is the formal act of acquiring territory by a municipality and incorporating it into its existing jurisdictional boundary.



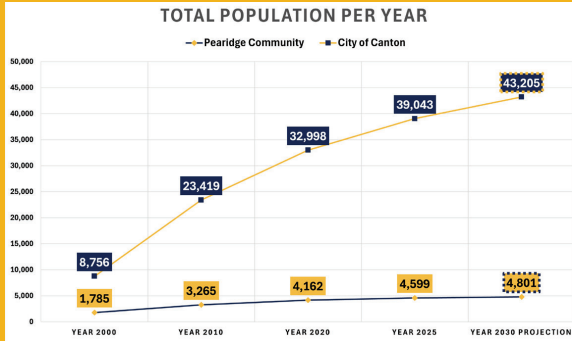
For data collection purposes, the project team decided to create a primary research area for the existing conditions data. The primary research area was designed to incorporate the broader community that it once was, rather than simply what is left. This area is referred to as the 'Pearidge Community'.

Since the project area is not supported by the current Census geographies, a data aggregation tool was used to pull the majority of the demographic and economic information. The project team utilized Esri Business Analyst to aggregate Census, consumer behavior, spending habits, points of interest, and other data sources for the specified area. Therefore, it is significant to understand that this data is not a complete picture and requires further in-depth surveying to increase accuracy. A brief summary of the extrapolation can be seen in the next pages.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Snapshot

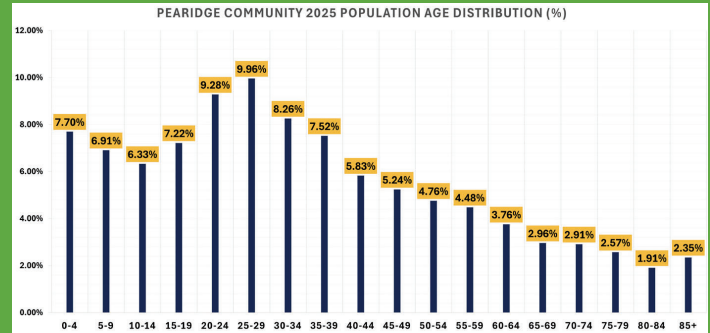
Total Population

The current population of the Pearidge Community is estimated to be 4,599. The community is only estimated to grow by 202 residents by 2030. However, the surrounding City of Canton is expected to increase by 4,162.



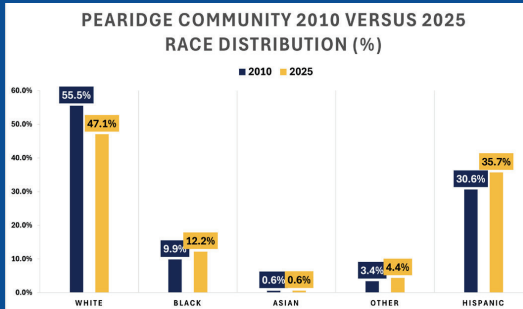
Age Distribution

The age of the Pearidge Community tends to lean on the younger side. The percentage of the older population decreases steadily as people age 40 years and older. It is significant to recognize that the data may include recently built multi-family that skews the data younger. This may indicate that the community has seen a shift with more young adults and children coming to the area. Historically, the core of the Pearidge Community, Pearidge Road and Amos Road, was older consisting of legacy Pearidge residents.



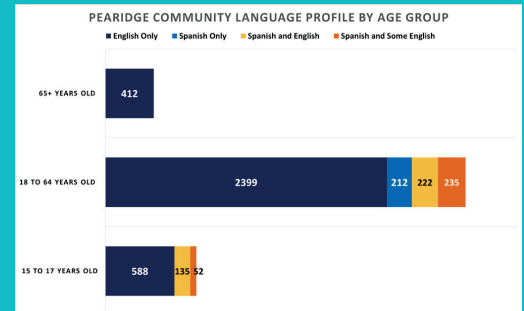
Race Distribution

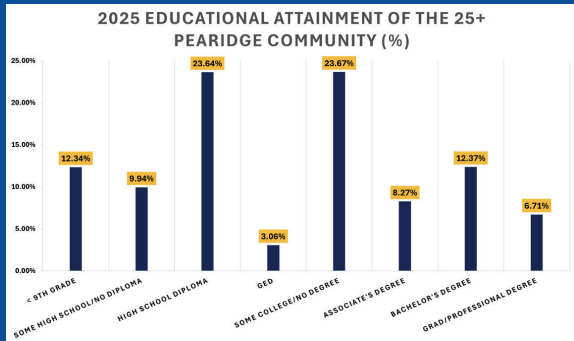
The Pearidge Community race distribution differs significantly from the surrounding area. The community is more diverse as it has a higher percentage of Black (12.2%) and Hispanic (35.7%) populations. Despite Pearidge's extensive Black history, today the community is 47.1% white, making it the predominant race. However, more than half of the population is not white and is either Black, Asian, or Hispanic.



Language Profile

In the Pearidge Community, the predominant language is English. However, around 669 residents either speak both English and Spanish, Spanish and some English, or Spanish only.



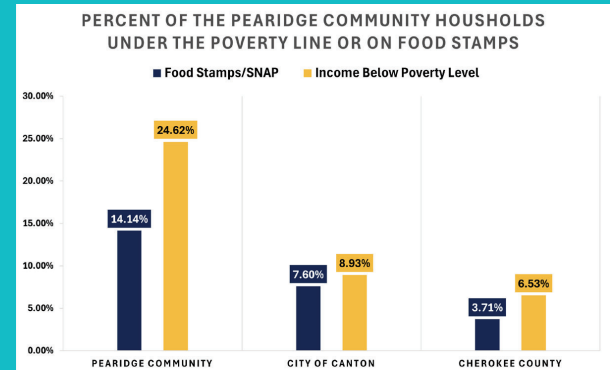


Educational Attainment

More than 75% of the Pearidge Community has a High School Diploma or higher. Out of that percentage, 27.35% have some level of a college education (Associates, Bachelors, and Grad/Professional degrees).

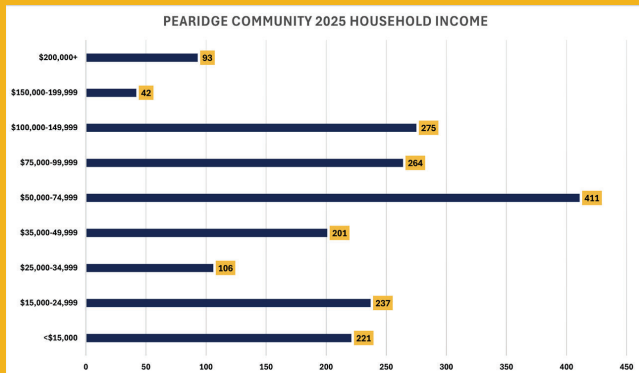
Households in Poverty and on Food Stamps

More than double Cherokee County and the City of Canton, a significant number of Pearidge Community members are either on food stamps/SNAP or have income below the poverty line. Around 24.62% of the population is below the poverty line, and 14.14% are on food stamps.



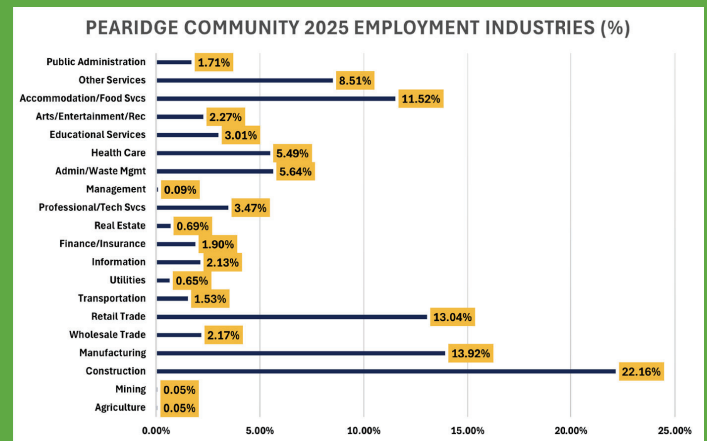
Household Income

The median household income for the Pearidge Community is \$56,691. This number represents 50-60 percent of the Area Median Income as defined by HUD for the Metro Atlanta area. Historically, the core of the Pearidge Community, Pearidge Road and Amos Road, is known for even lower incomes.



Employment Industries

The primary employment industries for the Pearidge Community are construction (22.16%), manufacturing (13.92%), and retail trade (13.04%). This means that people who live in Pearidge, regardless of where in the region, are primarily employed in one of those industries.



Development Analysis

The map below displays the rezoning cases processed by Cherokee County within the project area. The rezoning map indicates that rezonings have been slow with only 12 requests over 20 years.

Cherokee County Rezoning Applications

Resolution #	Zoned From	Zoned To	Acreage
2005-R-091	R40	GC	6.22
2006-R-063	R40	NC	1.03
2007-R-011	R40	GC	0.34
2007-R-095	R40	GC	0.78
2009-R-024	R40	GC	1
2001-R-118	R-40	GC	2.2
2011-R-015	R40	GC	0.22
2011-R-035	NC	GC	1.1
2015-R-035	GC	R40	0.78
2019-R-087	R40	GC	0.94
2020-R-080	R40	NC	0.78
2021-R-058	R-40	AG	3.75

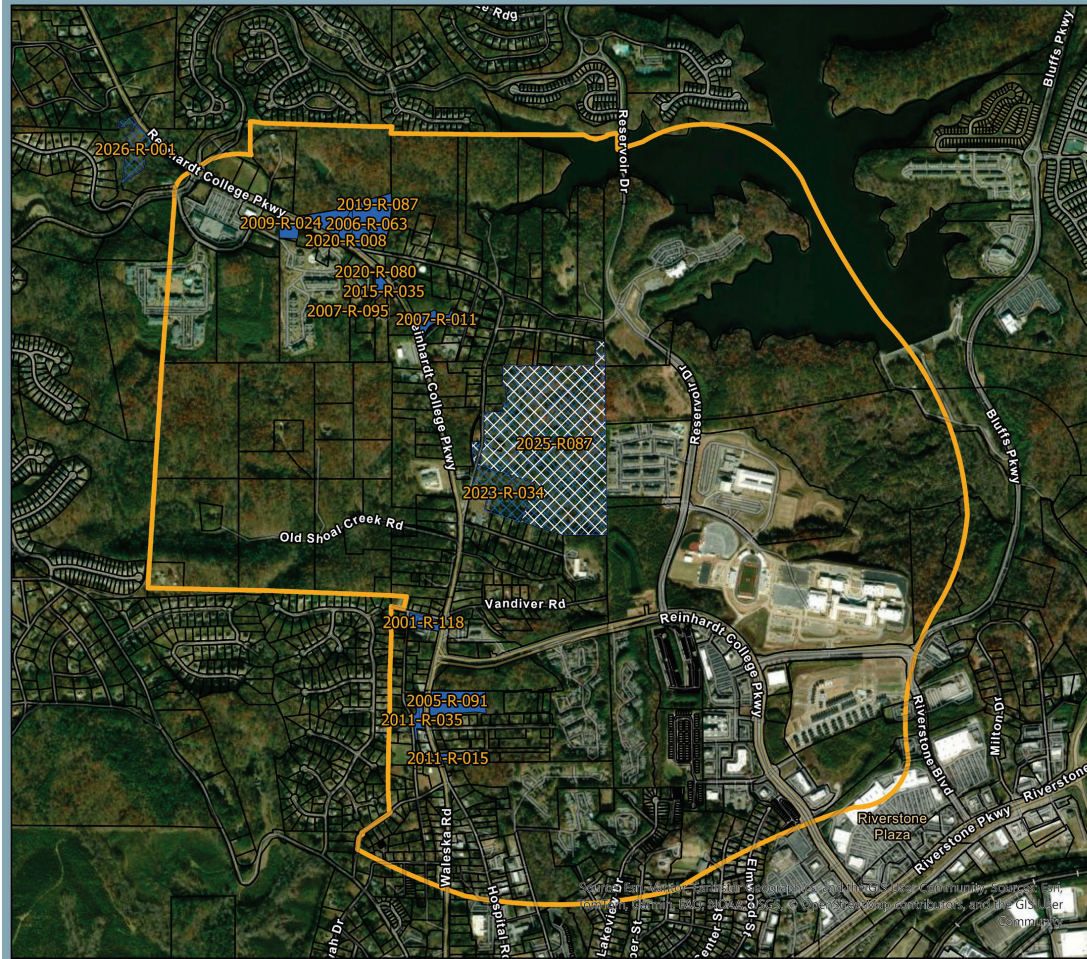
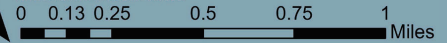
Legend

- Pearidge Study Area
- Approved Rezoning
- Parcel Lines
- Denied Rezoning
- Under Review

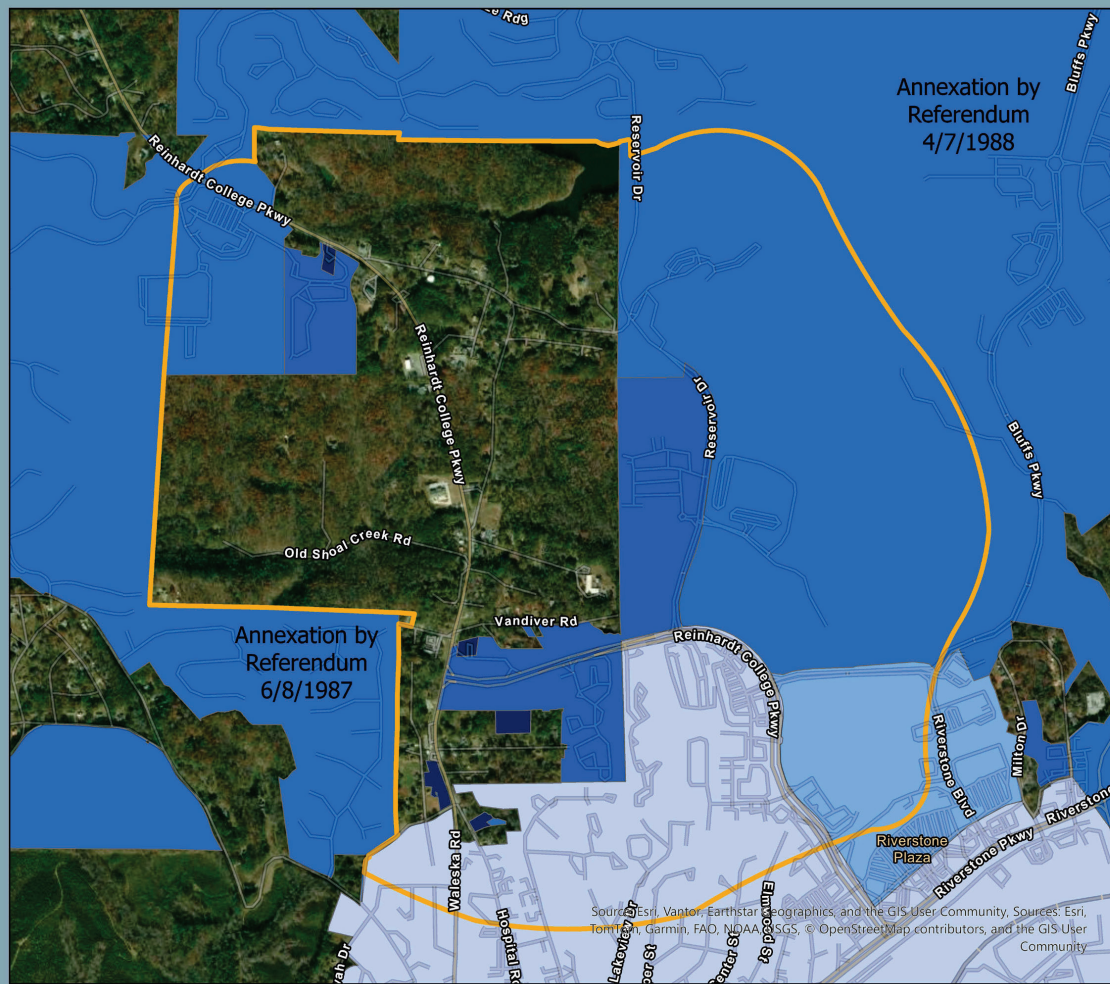
Notice: Cherokee County's tracking of denied zoning requests only go back to 2019. Further County tracking of approved zonings only go back to 2006



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History of Annexations



Legend

Pearidge Study Area

Canton City Limits

- 2025
- 2000
- 1990
- 1980
- 1975

Source: Esri, Vantor, Earthstar, Geographics, and the GIS User Community, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, and OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

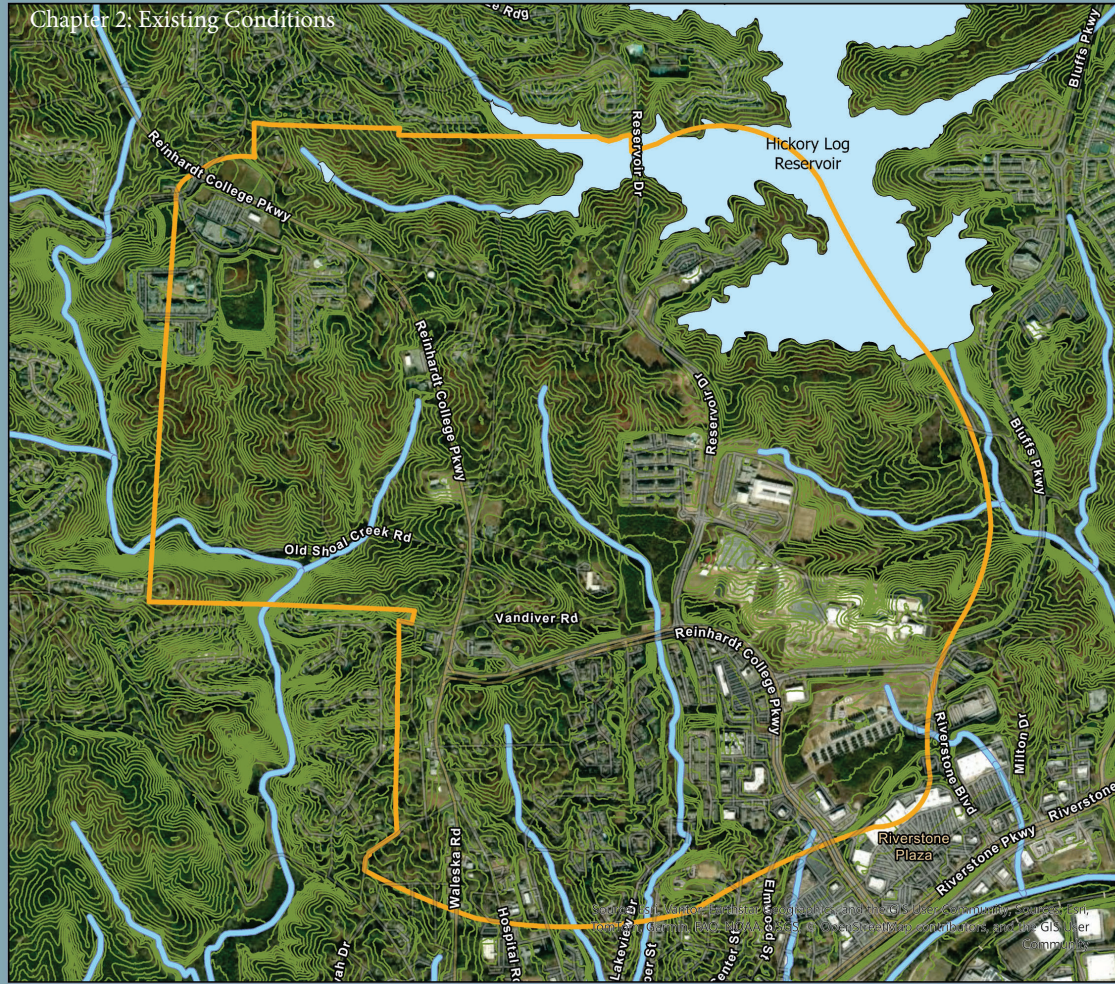
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0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Annexation History Map

This map looks at the annexation history of the Pearidge Community. Over the years, the area has seen only a handful of annexations. However, the annexations have been expansive in nature. In other words, more than half of the Pearidge Community has been annexed into the City of Canton.

Topography & Waterways



Legend

- Pearidge Study Area
- Lakes
- Streams
- Contours 2019

N

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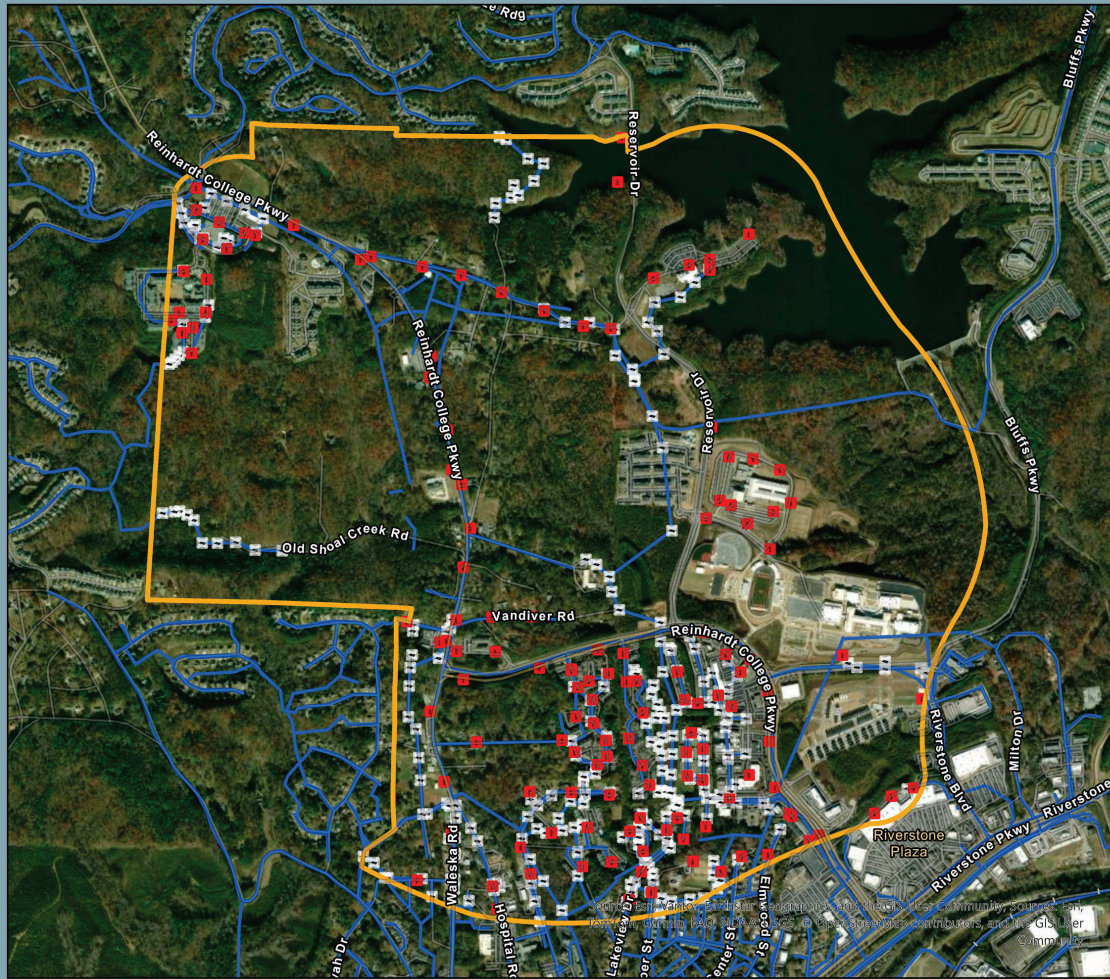
Topography and Water Map

Water and topography (displayed as contours) are important elements that impact development. Contour lines that are closer together indicate that a property is steep. Contour lines that are farther apart indicate that a property is less steep.

Utilities

Legend

-  Pearidge Study Area
-  City of Canton Water/Sewer Lines
-  Canton Sewer Combined Nodes
-  Active Fire Hydrants

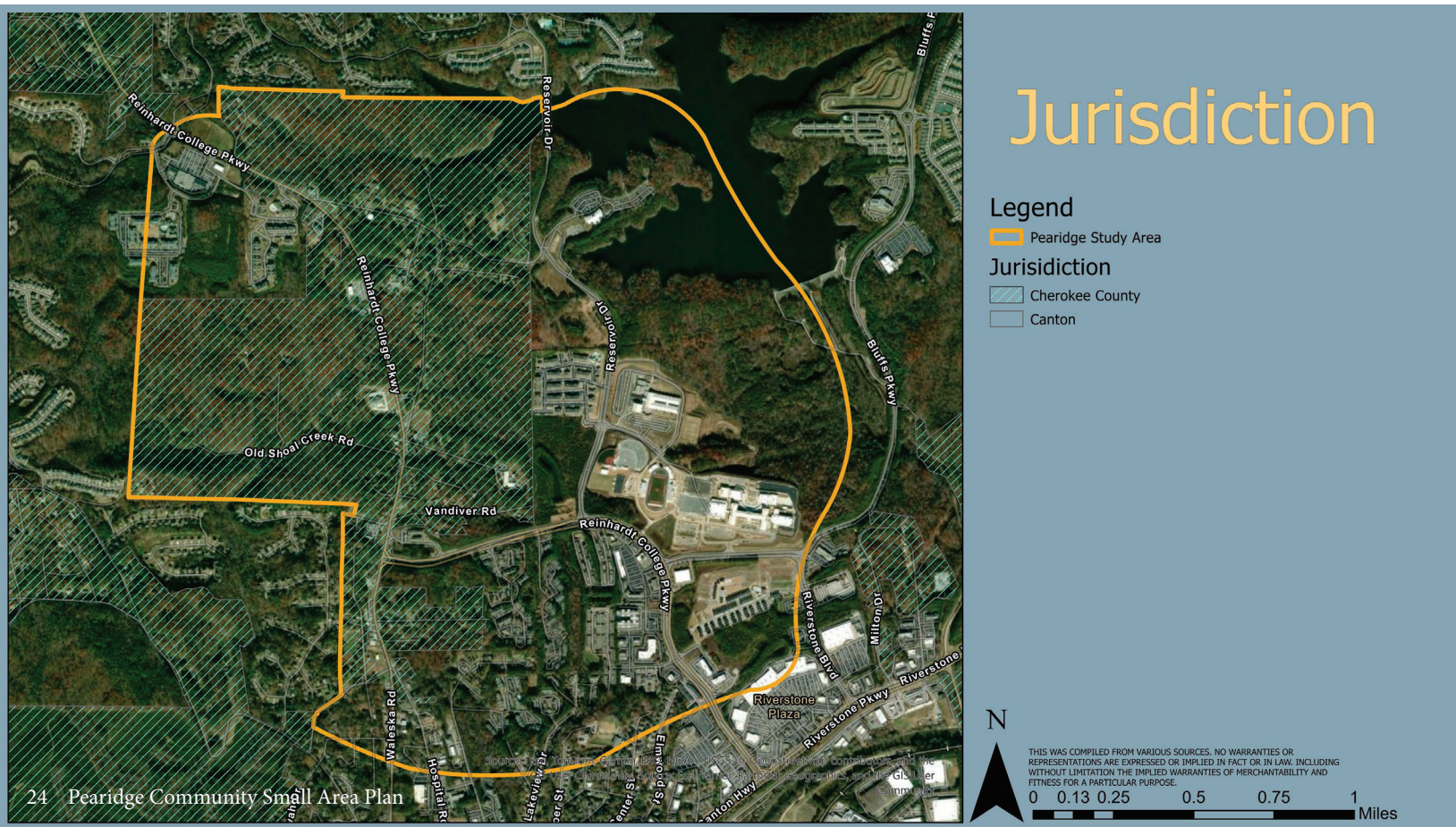


Utilities Map

This map highlights the different water and sewer lines and hydrants accessible to the Pearidge Community. Utility availability is significant to future developments.

Land Use Analysis

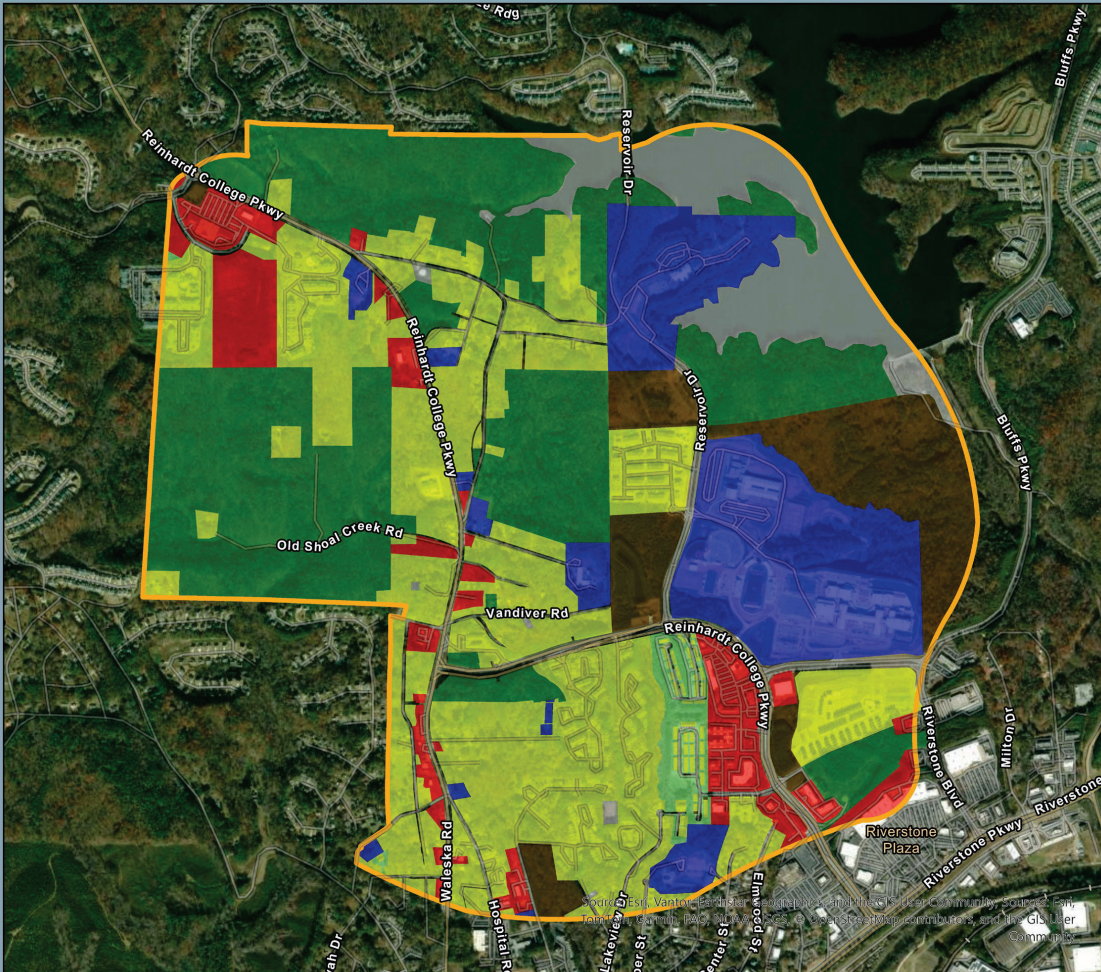
The Pearidge Community is comprised of 1,574.4 acres, which is equivalent to 2.46 square miles. It is located within Cherokee County and is divided by jurisdictional oversight. Some of the community is located within the City of Canton, which occurred through an annexation process (see Development Analysis). Some of it is within unincorporated Cherokee County. This means that not all the land within this area has the same zoning regulations and potential land use opportunities. Understanding the existing land use, conditions, and future character areas across both jurisdictions is essential to curating the community's vision for Pearidge.



Existing Land Uses

Legend

- ▭ Pearidge Study Area
- ▭ Residential Accommodations
- ▭ General Sales or Service
- ▭ Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade
- ▭ Transportation, Communications, Infrastructure, Utilities
- ▭ Arts, Entertainment, Recreation
- ▭ Education, Public Administration, Health Care Institutions, Religious Institutions
- ▭ Construction-Related Business
- ▭ Mining, Extraction
- ▭ Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting
- ▭ Under Development



Zoning

Legend

Pearidge Study Area

Canton City Limits

Cherokee County Zoning

AG (General Agriculture)

R40 (Residential 40,000)

NC (Neighborhood Commercial)

GC (General Commercial)

Canton Zoning

GC (General Commercial)

O-I (Office or Institutional)

PD-Mixed Use

R-10 (Residential 10,000)

R-4 (Residential 4,000)

RA-6 (Residential Attached 6 du/ac)

RA-8 (Residential Attached 8 du/ac)

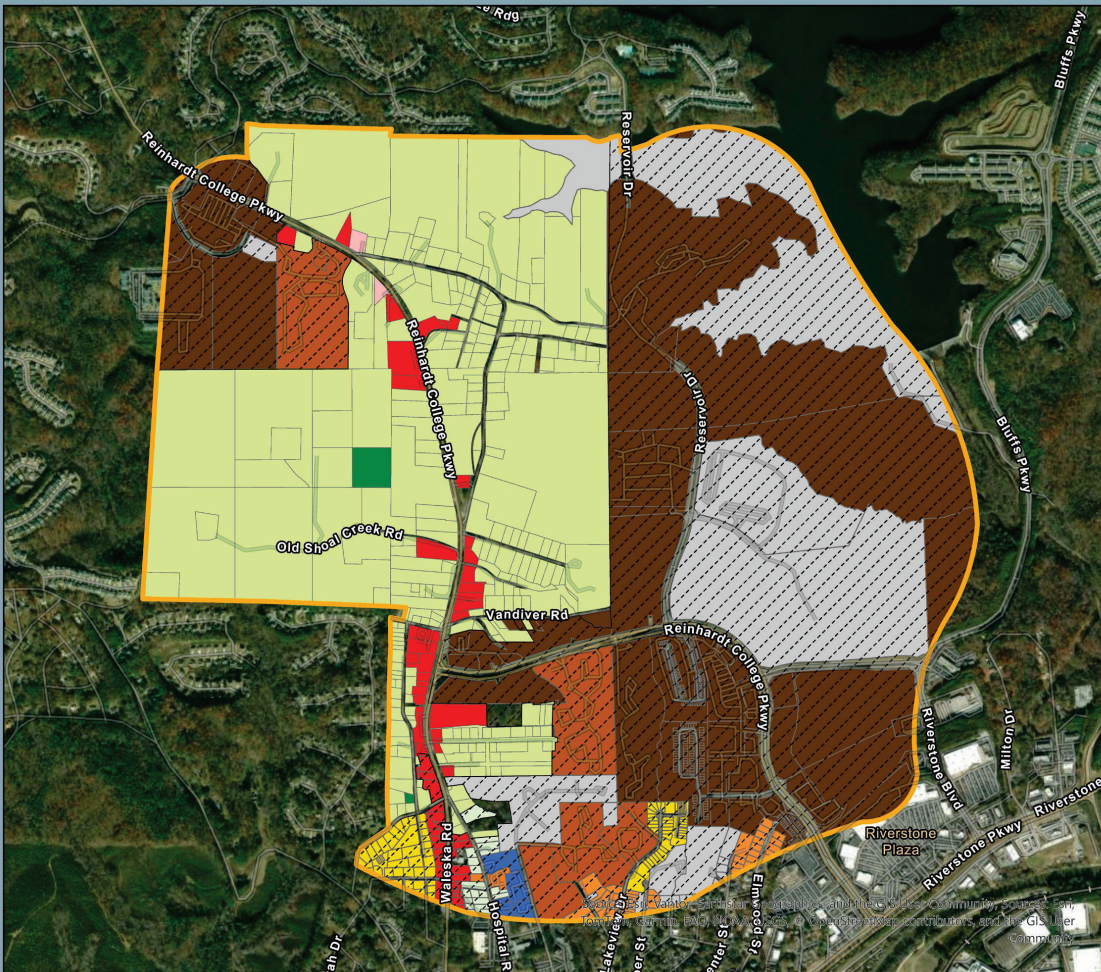
RM-15 (Multi-Family Residential 15 du/ac)

SU (Special Use & Utilities)

N

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0 0.13 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles



Zoning Breakdown

The zoning breakdown is made up of County and City of Canton parcels that are mostly and fully within the study area. Percentages detailing commercial, mixed-use, and residential zoning districts were calculated by dividing the acreage of each parcel by the overall acreage of the parcels in the study area. In other words, the total acreage will look different than the 1,574.4 acres defined above, as it only includes parcels fully within the boundary.


Out of 1,356.42 acres, the current zoning breakdown is as follows:

R40 41.74%	RA-6 0.50%
PD - Mixed Use 32.99%	R-4 0.45%
Special Use (SU) 12.15%	Office and Institutional (O-I) 0.42%
RM-15 6.10%	Agriculture (AG) 0.29%
General Commercial (GC) 3%	Neighborhood Commercial (NC) 0.13%
R-10 2.13%	RA-8 0.10%

Current and Potential Pearidge Community Zoning District Descriptions


AG

AG (General Agriculture):
Commercial: limited to live animals, plants, and produce raised on the property.
Residential: two-acre dwelling, Single-Family, "For Sale" Lots or larger.




GC

GC (General Commercial):
Creates centers or concentrations of commercial activities.
Examples: retail, fast food, restaurants, auto repair services, beauty salons, coffee shops, gas stations.




NC

NC (Neighborhood Commercial):
Allows limited retail activities, commercial sales, personal services, and professional offices; has a max floor space of 10,000 sq ft per acre.
Examples: restaurants, beauty salons, and florists.




OI

OI (Office Institutional):
Allows limited retail businesses and service activities with the exception of storage and processing centers.
Examples: office, institutional, medical and educational development.




Residential Districts

Low-to-Medium density, "For-Sale" residential developments, and For-Sale Communities.
Supported up to 3 units per acre and includes RD-3, R-15, R-20, and R-30 zoning districts.



RA

RA (Residential):
Allows for single-family detached and multi-family dwellings like duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, and townhomes.
This is similar to the RA-6 & RA-8 zoning districts in the City of Canton, which allows 6 and 8 units per acre.





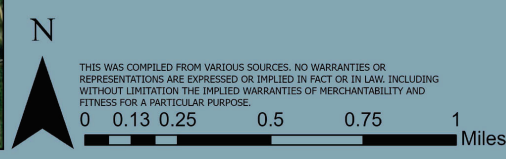
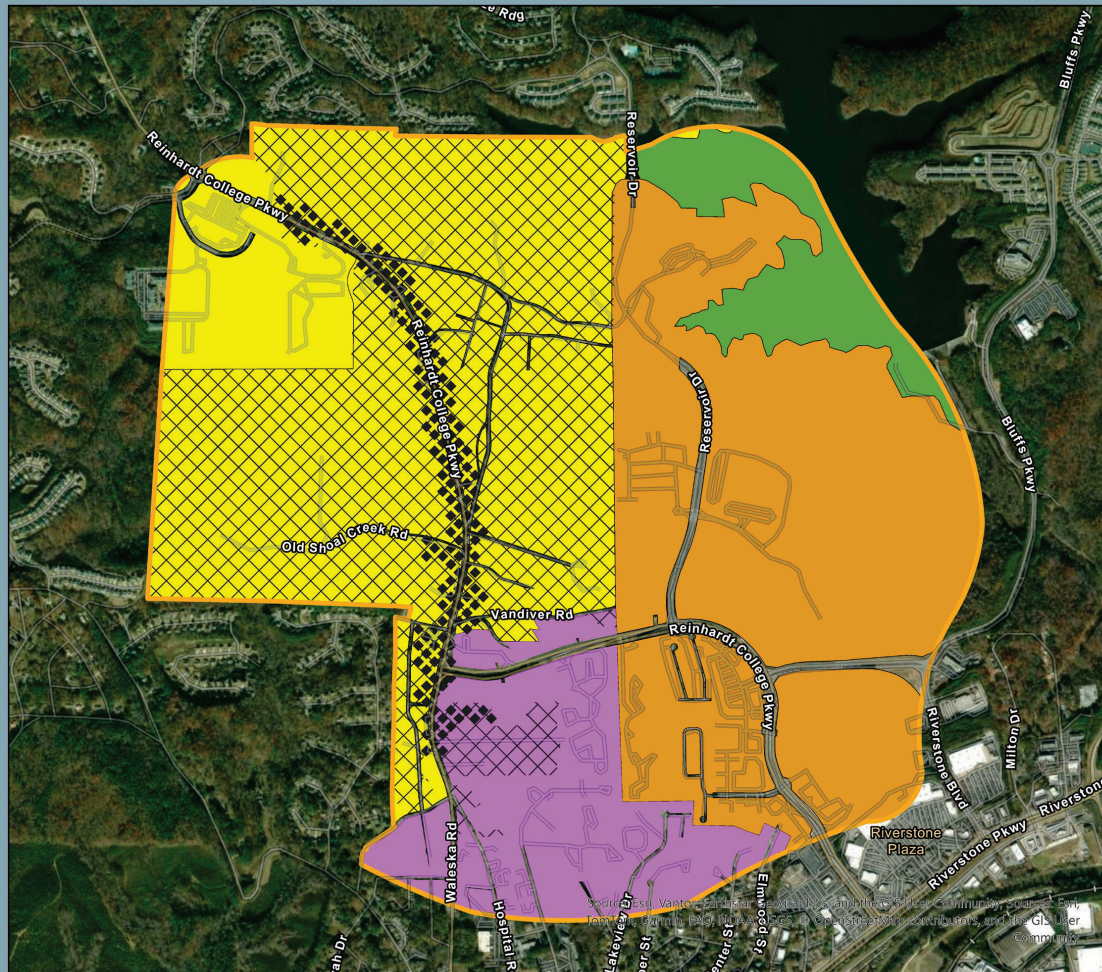
Future Development

Legend

-  Pearidge Study Area
- Canton Future Development Map**
-  Community Level Mixed Use/Retail Center
-  Natural Area
-  Suburban Development
-  Traditional Neighborhood Redevelopment Area

Cherokee County Future Development Map

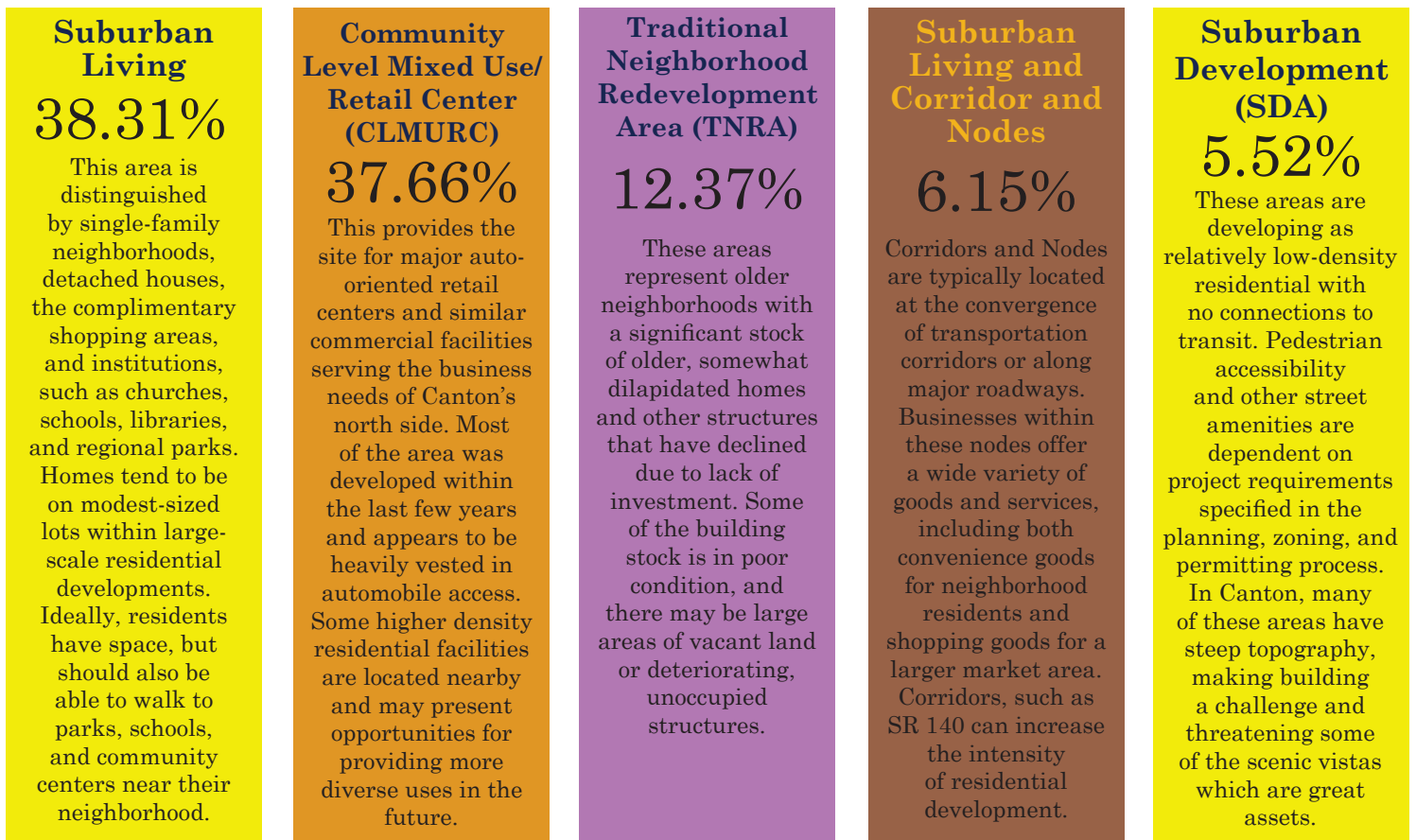
-  Suburban Living
-  Corridor and Nodes



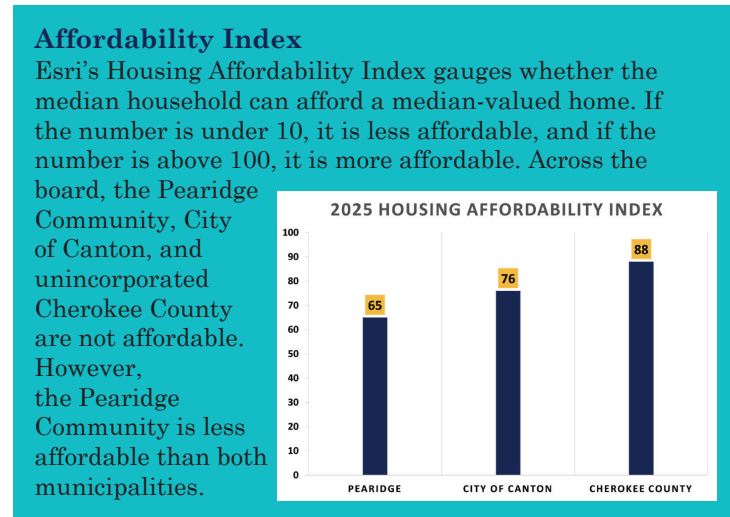
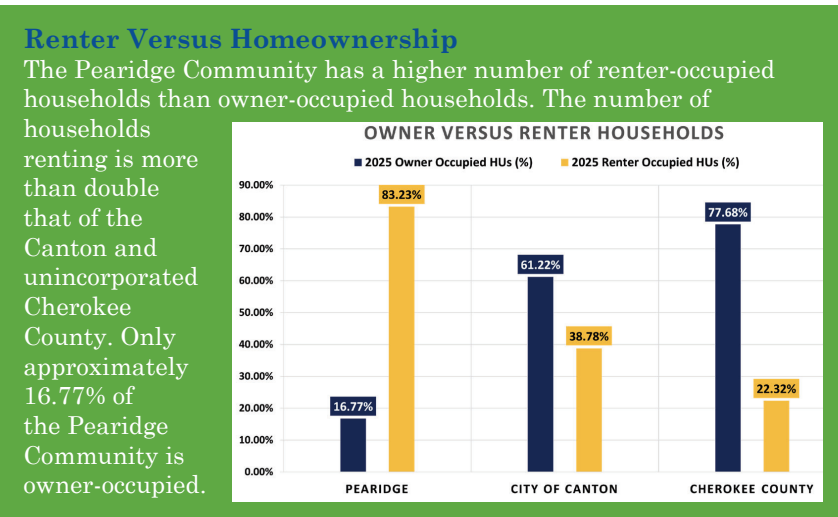
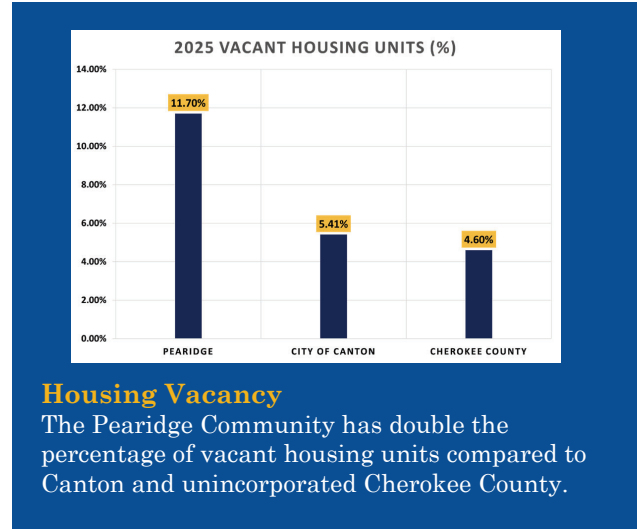
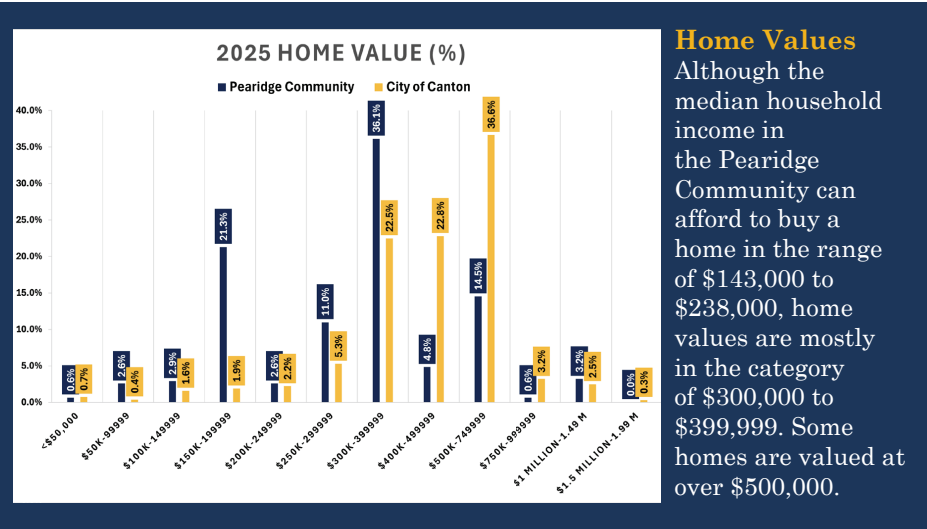
Future Development Map Breakdown

The future of the Pearidge Community is highly dependent on the current land use, rezoning potential, and overall quality of what is available for development versus redevelopment. Similar to the zoning breakdown, the future development analysis is based on the parcels that are mostly or fully within the study area. Therefore, the total acreage is 1,356.42, and this will be used to determine how much is designated for residential, mixed, or commercial development.

Out of 1,356.42 acres, the future development breakdown is as follows:



Housing Snapshot



Affordability based on the Pearidge Community Median Income

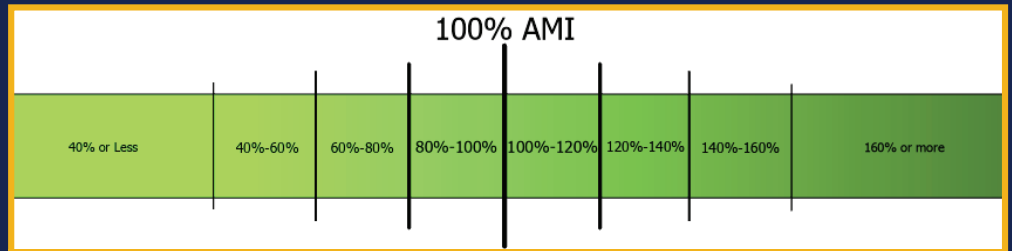
The median income in Pearidge is \$56,691, which places owner and rental housing affordability at 50 to 60% of the 2025 Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell MSA, GA HUD Metro FMR Area Median Income (AMI) of \$114,200. The AMI is a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculation that indicates the midpoint of a specific region’s income distribution. 50-60% AMI means a household’s total annual income is between 50% and 60% of the midpoint income for their specific geographic region.

For owner occupied housing, the maximum price that is affordable for the Pearidge Community is around 60% AMI.

- Efficiency - \$143,910
- 1 Bedroom - \$154,260
- 2 Bedroom - \$185,066
- 3 Bedroom - \$214,637
- 4 Bedroom - \$238,447

As for rental housing maximums, the maximum price that is affordable for the Pearidge Community is around 50 - 60%.

- Efficiency - \$1,000 - \$1,199
- 1 Bedroom - \$1,071 - \$1,285
- 2 Bedroom - \$1,285 - \$1,542
- 3 Bedroom - \$1,490 - \$1,788
- 4 Bedroom - \$1,656 - \$1,987



Area Median Income Scale
Image provided by Cherokee County

Max Sales Price at:	Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
120% AMI	\$287,820	\$308,520	\$370,132	\$429,274	\$476,894
100% AMI	\$239,850	\$257,100	\$308,443	\$357,728	\$397,412
80% AMI	\$191,880	\$205,680	\$246,754	\$286,182	\$317,930
60% AMI	\$143,910	\$154,260	\$185,066	\$214,637	\$238,447

Maximum Owner Housing Prices for the Pearidge Community
Image provided by the Atlanta Regional Commission

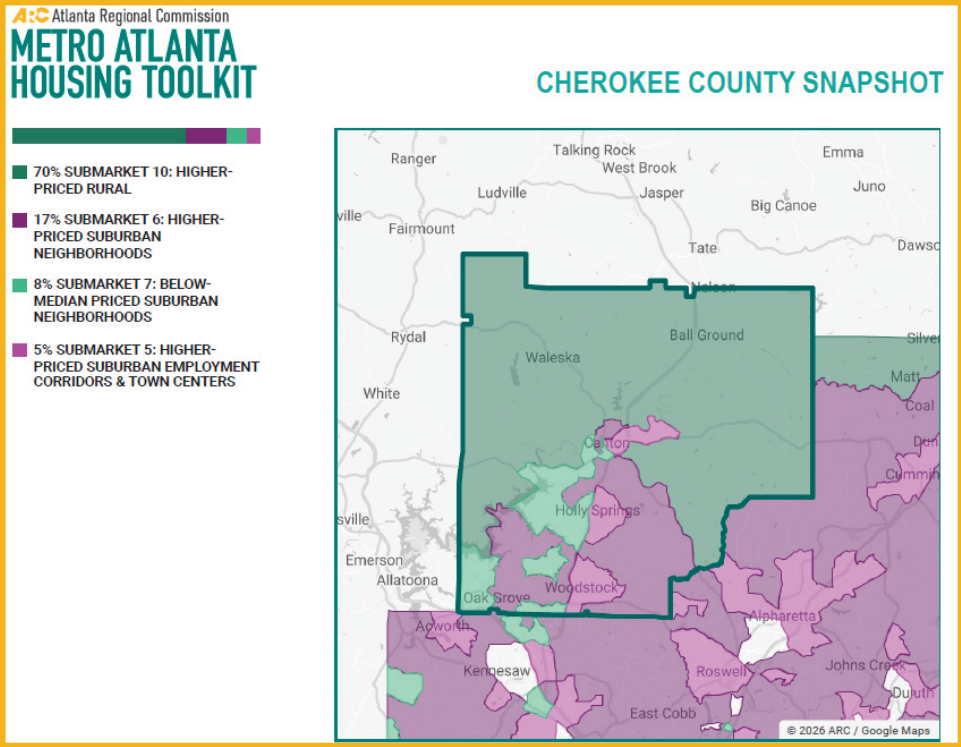
Max Rent at:	Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
100% AMI	\$1,999	\$2,143	\$2,570	\$2,981	\$3,312
80% AMI	\$1,599	\$1,714	\$2,056	\$2,385	\$2,649
60% AMI	\$1,199	\$1,285	\$1,542	\$1,788	\$1,987
50% AMI	\$1,000	\$1,071	\$1,285	\$1,490	\$1,656
30% AMI	\$600	\$643	\$771	\$895	\$994

Maximum Rental Housing Prices for the Pearidge Community
Image provided by the Atlanta Regional Commission

Metro Atlanta Housing Toolkit

The Metro Atlanta Housing (MAHS) Toolkit indicates that Pearidge is made up of Submarkets 6 and 10. Submarket 6 is known as the higher-priced suburban neighborhoods, which become more prominent down at Reinhardt College Parkway and Riverstone Parkway. This submarket is characterized by low proportions of residents in poverty, mostly owners, mostly single-family housing, and low proportions of cost-burdened households. Submarket 6 only makes up a small portion of the Pearidge Community with submarket 10 making up the majority. Submarket 10, also known as higher-priced rural, is characterized by higher proportions of 65 and older residents, a smaller proportion of renters, and multi-family housing units.

The information used for the Metro Atlanta Housing Toolkit is based on Census Tract data. Therefore, these submarkets are not fully representative of the Pearidge Community. Both submarkets indicate a far higher average household income than that of the community. Based on the more centralized aggregation of data through the Esri Business Analyst Tool, the core of the Pearidge Community is not necessarily characterized by high-priced, high-income, and low poverty rates. However, the top housing actions and steps for the two submarkets can be useful for the Pearidge Community when addressing maintaining affordability and a mix of housing types.

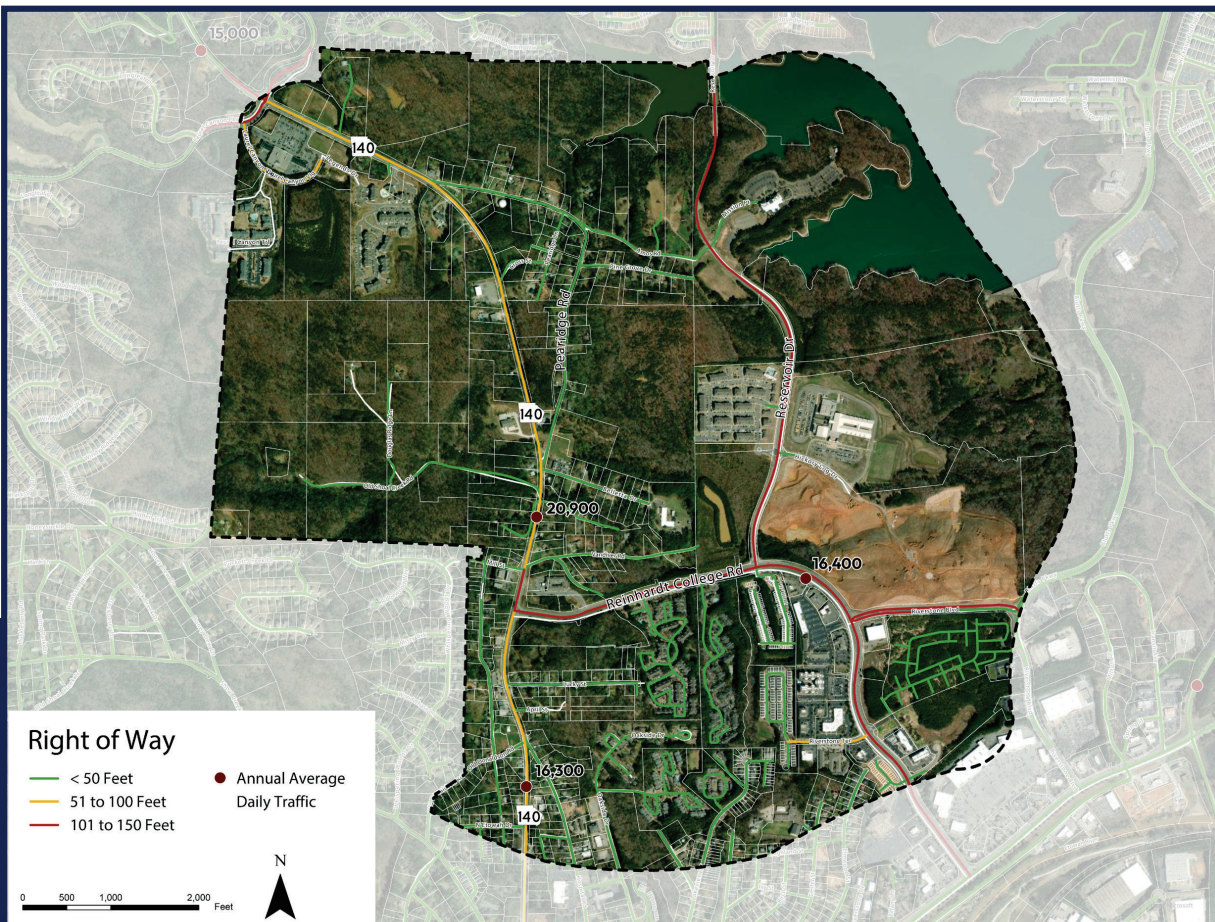


- Top Housing Action Initiatives Based on MAHS Submarkets**
1. Connect property owners with resources
 2. Inventory affordable housing stock
 3. Establish local housing funding resources and programs
 4. Create preservation programs and partnerships
 5. Leverage funding resources for preservation
 6. Establish housing stability policies and programs
 7. Support smaller homes and ownership opportunities
 8. Identify and educate on housing instability
 9. Increase walkability

Transportation Analysis

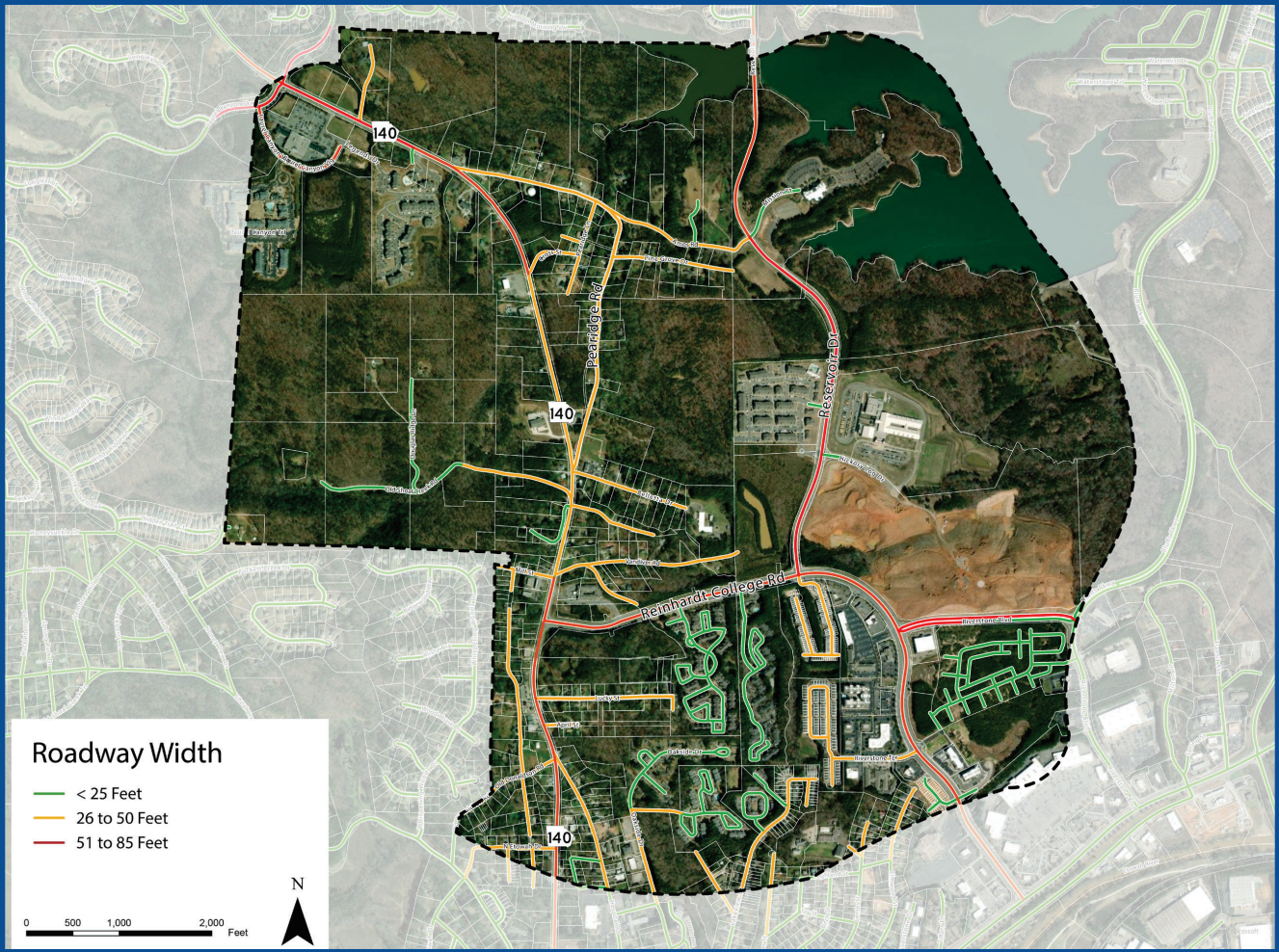
Right-of-Way (ROW) Map

Right-of-way is the property required for the public use of roads, sidewalks, and utilities. Some transportation improvements may require a “right-of-way acquisition”, which is the donation or purchase of additional land for right-of-way.



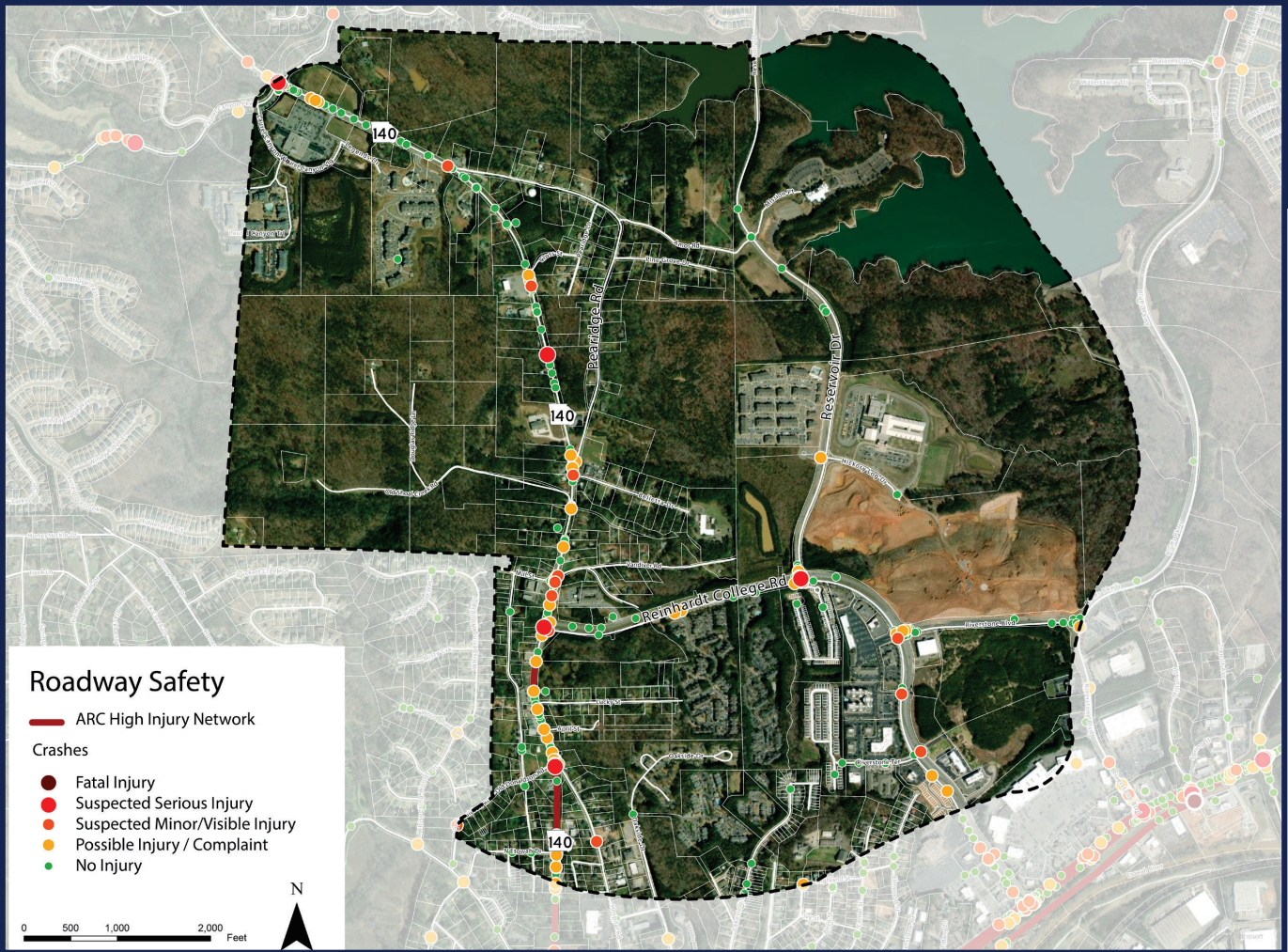
Roadway Width Map

Community members reported narrow roads, an inability to make safe turns, and crumbling infrastructure as their primary concerns. The map identifies where road widths vary, but the ability to widen a road depends on how much right-of-way is available for development.



Roadway Safety Map

SR 140 experiences an abundance of crashes, varying from no injury to fatal injury. This map infers that there are multiple crucial intersections along SR 140 that could require intervention.



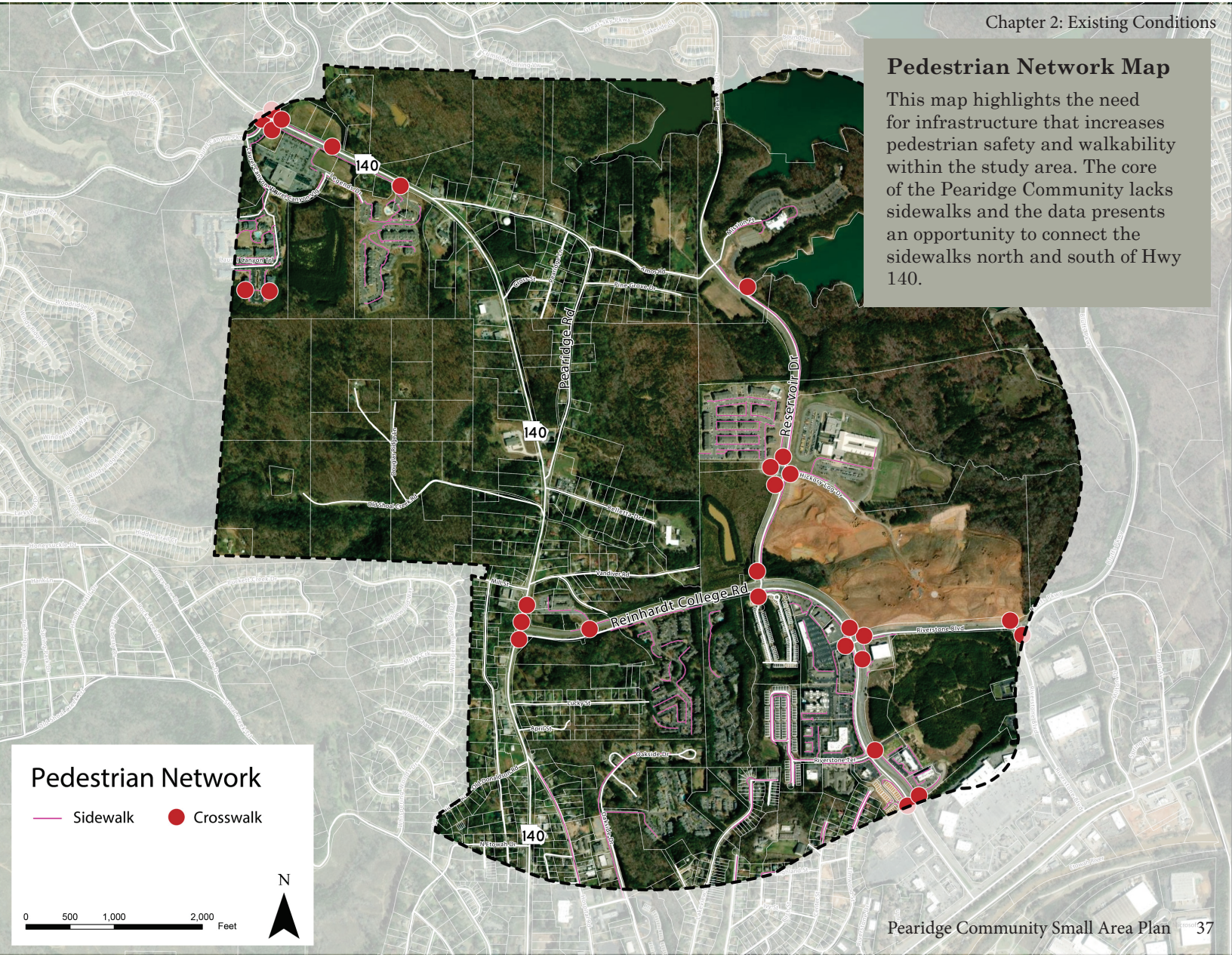

Pedestrian Network Map

This map highlights the need for infrastructure that increases pedestrian safety and walkability within the study area. The core of the Pearidge Community lacks sidewalks and the data presents an opportunity to connect the sidewalks north and south of Hwy 140.

Pedestrian Network

- Sidewalk
- Crosswalk

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet



Upcoming Roadwork Map

As of the adoption of this plan, this map depicts upcoming roadwork within the Pearidge Community extent.

Pearidge Community Transportation Projects

SR 140 Intersection Improvement @ Belletta & Pearidge

Design intersection improvements to reduce traffic friction. This project is led by Cherokee County.

Mejoras en SR 140 y Belletta/Pearidge

Diseñar mejoras en la intersección para reducir la congestión del tráfico. Este proyecto está encabezado por el Condado de Cherokee.

Canton Street Connection

Connect the dead end of Mill Street to the dead end of Old Donaldson Road. This project is led by Cherokee County.

Conexión de Canton Street

Unir el extremo sin salida de Mill Street con el de Old Donaldson Road para mejorar la conectividad vial. Este proyecto está liderado por el Condado de Cherokee.

SR 140 at Reinhardt College Parkway

Replace T-intersection with multi-lane roundabout. This project is led by The City of Canton.

Intersección de la SR 140 con Reinhardt College Parkway

Sustituir la intersección en "T" por una rotonda de varios carriles. Este proyecto está siendo encabezado por la Ciudad de Canton.

SR 140 Intersection Improvement at Hospital & Old Donaldson

Align roads to make a cross shaped intersection and improve turn safety. This project is led by Cherokee County.

Mejoras en SR 140 y Hospital/Old Donaldson

Reconfigurar las vialidades para formar una intersección en cruz y reforzar la seguridad en los giros. Este proyecto está encabezado por el Condado de Cherokee.

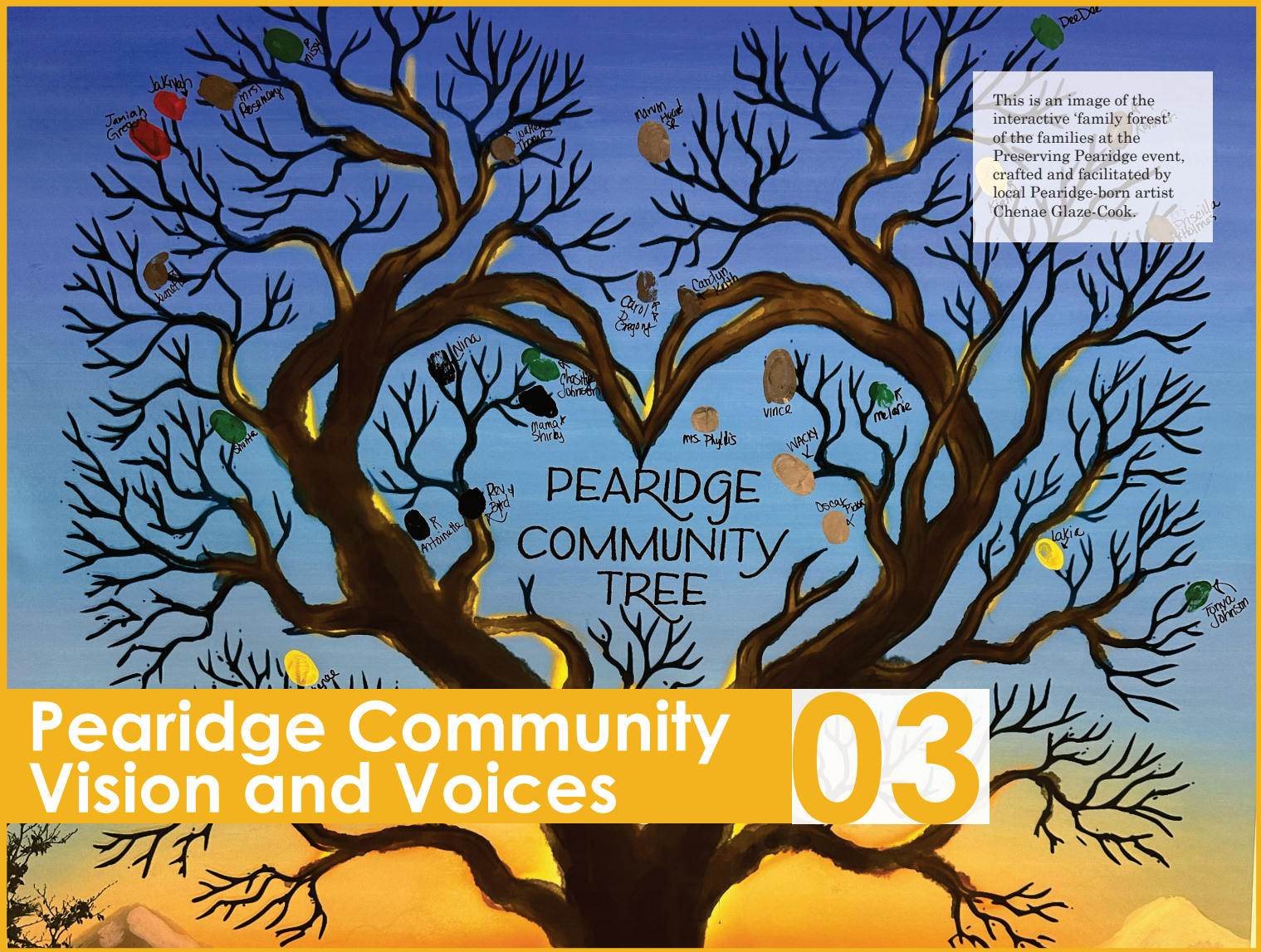
Legend - Leyenda

- ★ Planned Road Improvements - Mejoras Viales Previstas
- ▭ Study Area - Área de Estudio

Prepared by Cherokee County Planning and Zoning, Canton, Georgia 5/15/2026

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0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



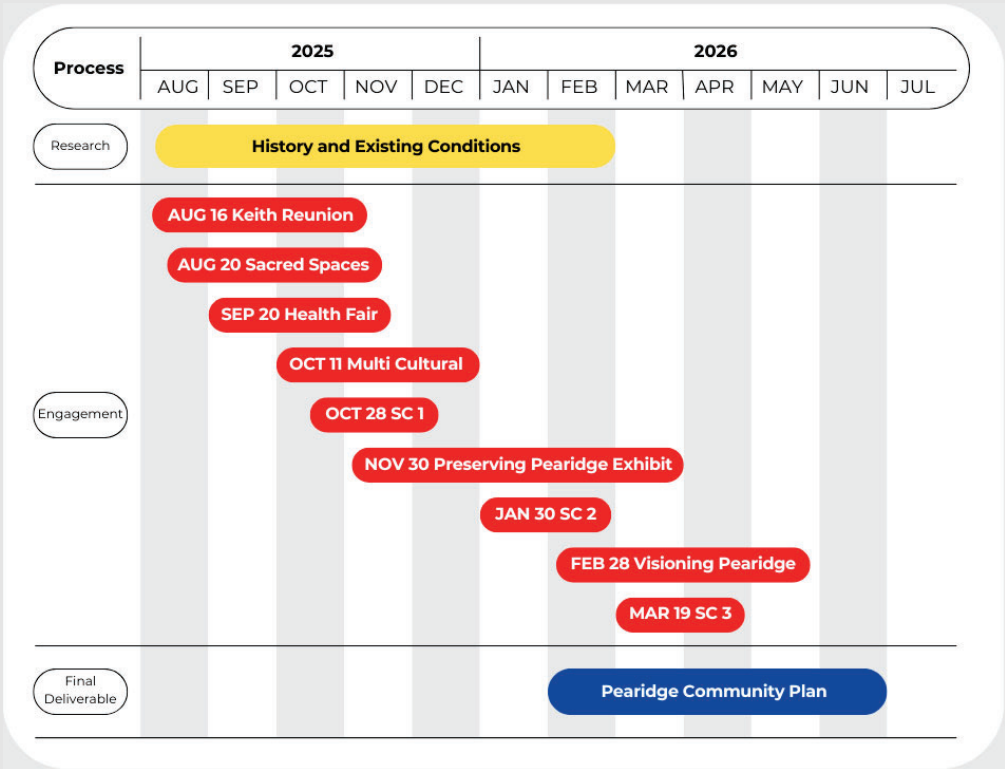
This is an image of the interactive 'family forest' of the families at the Preserving Pearidge event, crafted and facilitated by local Pearidge-born artist Chenae Glaze-Cook.

Pearidge Community Vision and Voices

03

Engagement Process

Staff conducted two engagement events, three collaborative Steering Committee meetings, and attended two major community events: Health Fair at the Charlie Ferguson Community Center and the Multi-Cultural Fest at Harmon Park. The two community open houses were co-created events with multiple partners, like the Charlie Ferguson Community Center, Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God, History Cherokee, City of Canton, and Cherokee County. A Steering Committee was established before the community engagement events. A Steering Committee is an advisory board that provides strategic direction for major projects and initiatives. The Pearidge Steering Committee was made up of legacy residents, community leaders, elected officials, County staff, and City of Canton staff, and tasked with guiding the project forward. The Steering Committee consolidated the input, comments, and concerns collected from the community, into tangible goals and action items. More details regarding the two open houses and the three Steering Committee meetings can be found in this chapter.



**Steering Committee Meeting 1
October 28, 2025**

The initial Steering Committee meeting established communication and collaboration between city, county and community members, and involved discussion around existing conditions, history, and goal setting. Staff used this time to discuss potential engagement activities that would fill knowledge gaps, collect community input, and provide historical context and imagery that would enhance Pearidge small area plan recommendations.

Creating cohesion between elected officials and Pearidge community leaders was essential to bridging the perceived divide between the parties. As part of the preparation for the first public engagement, the Project Management Team had the attendees partner together to participate in a Pearidge trivia game. Teams were asked to draft questions regarding their knowledge and understanding of the area. Through this activity, attendees, who all have their own connection to Pearidge or the broader community, shared stories and learned about community features that were not common knowledge.

Steering Committee Response to “What is something you think would benefit the Pearidge Community?”

Park	Park
Affordable housing	A survey of the written and spoken languages within the Pearidge Community.
Preservation	Safe streets with sidewalks A park
Affordable but nice houses that fit into the culture	Parks
Park, sidewalks, creative art, small businesses, community garden	Road improvements
Affordable housing	Safe streets
Parks sidewalks	Creating spaces for the community and maintaining Pearidge's culture to sustain potentials
Side walks	Access to a grocery store
Sidewalks Park Affordable housing Traffic Regulations	Affordability.

Steering Committee Response to “What is the biggest threat to the Pearidge Community?”

Over development	Gentrification
Gentrification	Development
Gentrification. Loss of identity	Gentrification
Helping each other to make it bigger and health fair is always great to help families	Developed looking to build near the new high school
New development	Over development
Traffic	Loss of its cultural diversity
Development that doesn't match the community's vision Loss of ownership of homes by the Pearidge community	Loss of existing homes to other owners
Under development	



First Open House - Preserving Pearidge November 30, 2025

The Charlie Ferguson Community Center hosted the Pearidge Community and legacy families for an interactive exhibit that focused on collecting and confirming historic information, established current conditions, and speculated on the future of the Pearidge area. Attendees provided context and information to supplement the community timeline, identify historic figures and locations, and envision a future that honors these histories.

The Past Included:

- An archive station for artifact preservation.
- Historic figures boards highlighting the people central to Pearidge’s story.
- Historic sites map.
- An interactive ‘family forest’ of the legacy families, crafted and facilitated by local Pearidge-born artist Chenae Glaze-Cook.

Preserving Pearidge Opening
Photo Features Historic Figures Boards and Historic Sites Map

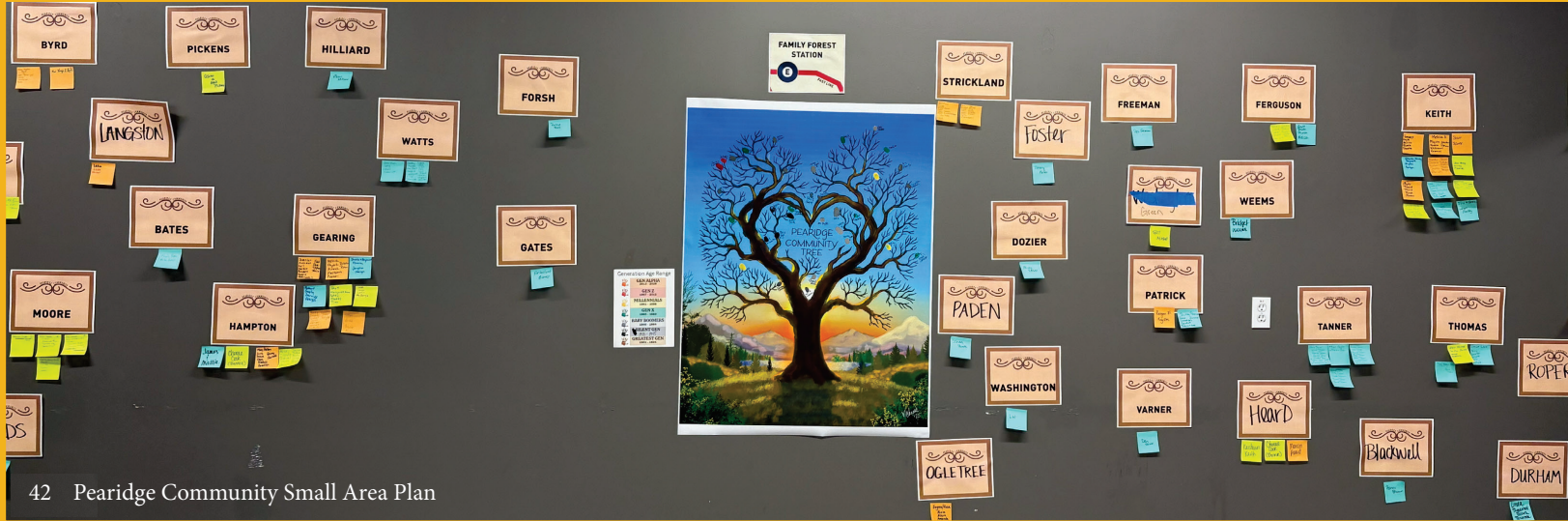


Over 75+ attendees!

Preserving Pearidge Photo Gallery



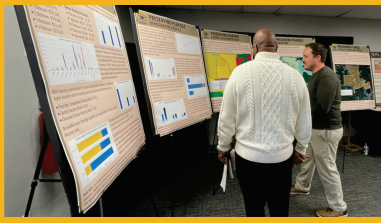
Interactive Family Forest of Legacy and New Pearidge Community Residents



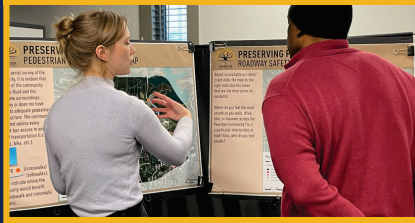
The Present Included:

- Socio-demographic data and existing conditions.
- An interactive education level and occupation board.
- Informational maps of current land use, future development, pedestrian network, and roadway safety.

Existing Conditions and Data Boards



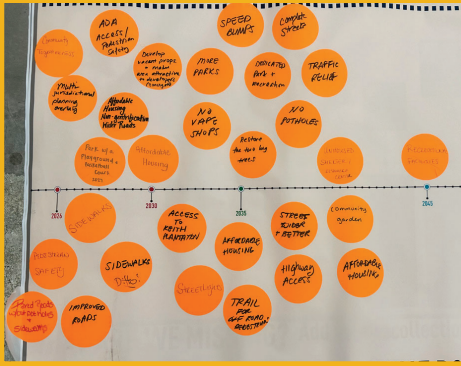
Pedestrian and Roadway Safety Activity Boards



The Future Included:

- An interactive timeline sharing the area’s history, feedback on historical inconsistencies, and add their vision of the future (depicted on page 12-13).
- A postcard to the future Pearidge Community.

Responses to “What Does the Future Hold?” and “What Do You Want to See in the Future?”



Postcards to the Future!



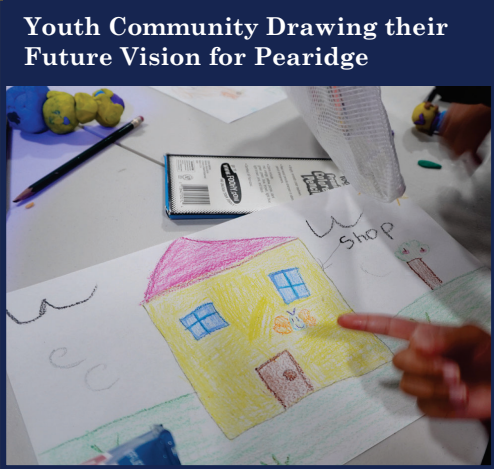
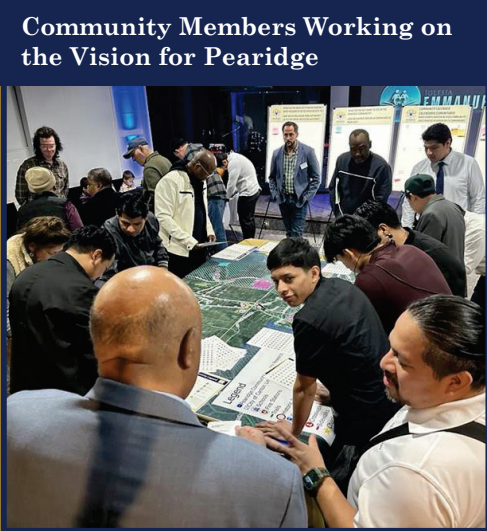
Steering Committee Members Working on Activity for Second Open House



**Steering Committee Meeting 2
January 30, 2026**

The Steering Committee reflected on the November engagement event, discussed the primary topics of concern, and planned for the second engagement meeting. The November event was a hit but missed a core group of the Pearidge community, many of whom spoke some or no English. Staff recognized there may be communication challenges with the specialized land use and planning and zoning terms. To be proactive and intentional, staff crafted a picture-based sticker activity that allowed participants to provide feedback on a map of the study area, to convey desired land uses. The Committee fine-tuned the activity and utilized it as the primary mode of engagement for the second community engagement event.

Visioning Pearidge Open House at the Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God



Over 70+ attendees!



**Second Public Open House - Visioning Pearidge
February 28, 2026**

The Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God hosted the final public engagement event. The Senior Pastor's suggestions were central to ensuring that the information and primary event activities were well-received and community led. Translation assistance from a teen volunteer and a Spanish-speaking ARC staff member, improved the communication and translation of terminology and concepts, and further contributed to a successful engagement experience.

The core activity involved interactive maps and stickers depicting various types of land use. Community members placed stickers on the map indicating what type of land use activity they wanted to see in Pearidge. The open house also included multiple stations with information on housing, land use, transportation, and community events and a space for the community to share business cards and services.

Additionally, children in attendance were invited to create their community vision through hands-on activities and the use of emotion-based stickers. The kids engaged by commenting on their favorite places to play; types of play including tag, hide-n-seek, the monkey bars, swings, slides, water features and riding bikes.

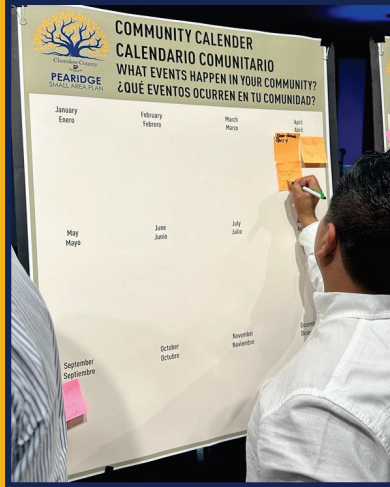
**Steering Committee Meeting 3
March 19, 2026**

The Steering Committee met one final time to review the information collected from the open house and pop-up engagement events, and to finalize the recommendations and to the small area plan. The community's input fit into four major topics: Land Use, Housing, Community Services, and Infrastructure. The Committee worked in small groups to discuss each topic and solidify actionable recommendations.

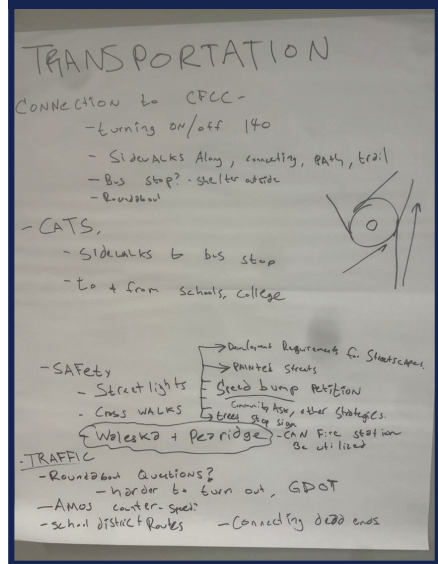
Community Members Identifying Significant Community Places



Attendees Adding to the Community Calendar



**Steering Committee Members
Brainstorm Recommendations**



Overall Engagement Insights

The Steering Committee also recognized the importance of leaning on community voice to deliver an accurate understanding of the needs and vision for how this area should develop and prosper. Through the multiple touch points, this is what the community had to say.

Community Assets

1. Charlie Ferguson Community Center
2. Hickory Log Baptist Church
3. Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God
4. Ralph Bunche Center
5. Two big trees (located at the intersection of Pine Grove and Pearidge Road)
6. Hickory Log Cemetery
7. Vacant, underutilized land ripe for development that supports the current community
8. Community togetherness and partnerships
9. Significant land and community history

Two of the Prominent Pearidge Community Leaders

Tannish Welch (Left) and Juan Paiz (Right)



Community Concerns

1. Access and protection of Hickory Log Cemetery situated between Teasley Middle School and the new Cherokee High School.
2. Access and preservation of Keith Plantation for educational and recreational uses.
3. Protection of the two big trees located at the end of Pine Grove Road.
4. Disjointed growth and redevelopment that does not support the community.
5. General affordability of the Pearidge Community and fears of displacement.
6. Local food access and support.
7. Inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and a lack of connectivity to the broader Canton community.
8. City's pump station, which causes significant odors on Pearidge Road.
9. Residents account that between church traffic on Sundays and after 5 PM on weekdays, getting out of the church or the Charlie Ferguson Community Center feels impossible and extremely unsafe.
10. Speeding along internal roads, like Amos and Pearidge, as well as along SR 140.
11. Undesired land uses for the Pearidge Community:
 - a. Data centers
 - b. Storage facilities
 - c. Vape shops
 - d. Strip malls
 - e. Liquor store
 - f. Specific high-density housing (i.e., apartments)

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

The Vision for the Pearidge Community

As part of the engagement, we had the community map out their future vision for the area. The Steering Committee engaged first and got to compare their responses to the broader community. To ensure the vision was holistic of the Pearidge Community, a separate, but similar activity was done with the youth population to gather their thoughts.



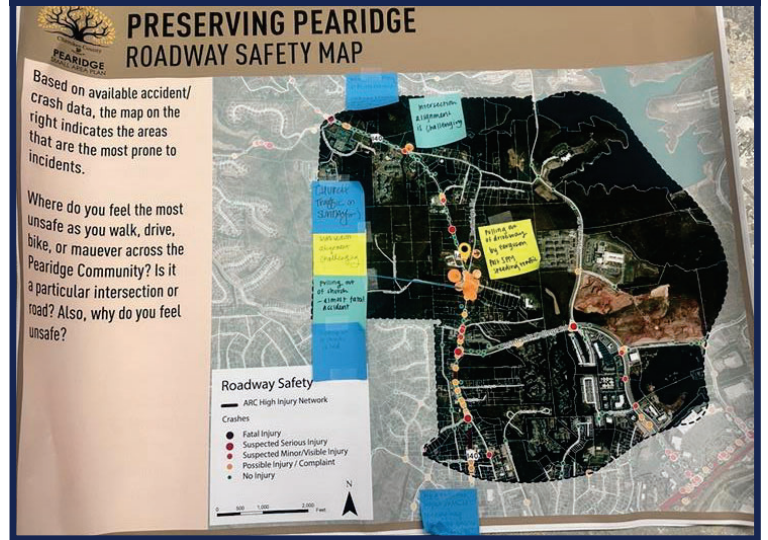
Infrastructure Needs

1. Expanded and maintained pedestrian infrastructure, such as streetlights, sidewalks, crosswalks, pavilions, and bus shelters.
2. Sidewalks along SR 140 from Legends at Laurel Canyon down to North Etowah Drive, as well as within historic Pearidge along Pearidge and Amos Road. Also, a complete sidewalk network along Reservoir Drive from Amos Road down to Reinhardt College Parkway.
3. Expanded pedestrian access down to the intersection of Waleska Road and Riverstone Parkway, where CVS is located, as well as Downtown Canton and shopping centers like Riverstone Plaza.
4. Public safety upgrades to the intersection of SR 140, Pearidge Road, and Belletta Drive. There needs to be better intersection alignment, wider roads, and overall traffic calming to reduce speeding along SR 140.
5. Repaved roads within the Pearidge core to cover potholes.
6. Speed bumps along internal roads, such as Pearidge Road, to slow cars down.
7. Better connectivity through additional means outside of sidewalks, such as trails and bike paths to and from schools, parks, and neighborhoods.

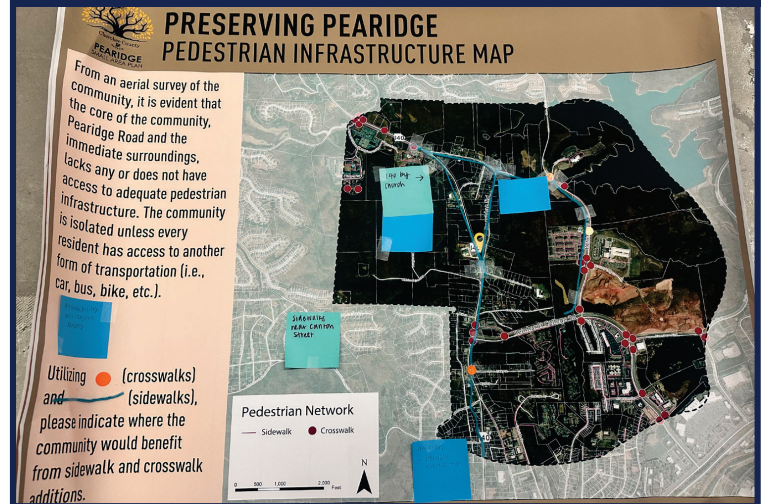
Housing Needs

1. More mixed income housing opportunities.
2. Shelter and resources for the unhoused.
3. Preservation and rehabilitation programs or funding to maintain aging homes and infrastructure.

Roadway Safety Concerns from First Open House



Pedestrian Infrastructure Needs from First Open House



Land Use Needs

1. Access to recreational facilities, such as a community park. Residents expressed interest in basketball courts, trails, playgrounds, splash pads, and other recreational amenities.
2. Community ran garden for better food access.
3. Access to Keith Plantation for its historic value.
4. Preservation of the two big trees, which are a prominent symbol of the Pearidge Community.
5. Potential of a multi-jurisdictional planning overlay, as well as the need to develop vacant properties and attract development. On the same hand, community members also expressed the need to prevent gentrification and displacement.
6. Other specific land use requests:
 - a. Library
 - b. Salons, beauty retail
 - c. Cafe, food, small shops

Community Needs

1. Access and support for community services offered at the Charlie Ferguson Community Center, such as family services (childcare), financial services (rent and grocery support), after-school programs for kids, and hobby groups and training (crafts, woodworking, etc.).
2. Better education and dissemination of additional transportation services. For instance, more focus and attention on the Cherokee Area Transit Service (CATS) micro-transit program.
3. Access to education on county/city regulations and ordinances.
 - a. Multilingual information on business permits, license and insurance needs.
 - b. Multilingual information on fence permits, what can or cannot be done on residential property, and the regulations.

First Joint Community Event Between Significant Community Partners

Opening of Food Pantry at the Charlie Ferguson Community Center

Image from Charlie Ferguson Community Center



Overall Community Values

The Pearidge Small Area Plan started with two core ideas: preserving the historic value of Pearidge and addressing the housing concern. Engagement with the community affirmed that the demographic and culture of Pearidge has shifted therefore expanding the initial goal into five core values:

Historic Preservation

As evident in Chapter 1: Pearidge History, this part of unincorporated Cherokee County and the incorporated city of Canton has rich historic context. From the physical monuments to the descendants of the formerly enslaved Keiths, this history is still alive today.

Community and Cultural Cohesion

Historically, Pearidge was a prominent and lively Black community founded by the formerly enslaved Keiths. Now, the demographics and resident identities have changed. Pearidge has welcomed people from all sorts of cultures and backgrounds. Hence, it is significant to the current community to create cohesion.

Sustainable Growth

Through sporadic annexations and developments, historic Pearidge has become disjointed. The core of the community contains aging homes and historic properties, whereas the surrounding area has seen an increase in single-family subdivisions, apartments, and commercial shopping centers. This imbalance in services and amenities, as well as the isolation of the Pearidge core, has resulted in residents seeking investment. However, the community seeks to develop sustainably without displacing current residents.

Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming

As the community evolves, it is vital that services and programs reflect the broader public. The Pearidge Community is home to artists, skilled-workers, educators, children, and more across multiple cultures and races. Programming and providing services that are compatible with these groups is significant to the community's cohesion.

Community Safety

Across the board, there are concerns of aging infrastructure, unsafe intersections, unmaintained roads, and other safety measures. The community wants to be able to navigate from their homes to the schools, parks, and shopping centers. They want to get to these services without having to wait an unnecessary amount of time to make a left turn or walk the side of the road for miles due to a lack of sidewalks. Addressing the infrastructure inadequacies, as well as adding lighting and seating features are significant to everyone.

Image provided by
the Charlie Ferguson
Community Center.



Implementation and Action Plan

04

David Barron-Forward, Oscar Pickens-Forward. **STANDING:** Tommy Bla
-Center, and John Durham-Guard.

Implementation Matrix

During the community engagement events, there were several topics that were frequently discussed. These community values include historic preservation, community and cultural cohesion, culturally reflective community services and programming, community safety, and sustainable growth. While the CDAP application features historic preservation and housing, the remaining community values will align with the following recommendations gathered during the project.

Housing Tasks					
Action Item	Recommendation	Next Steps	Stakeholders	Community Values	Timeframe
Preservation in Place	With the development of an existing housing inventory, pursue resources to support the preservation of existing houses in the Pearidge Community.	Pursue funding from grants, public private partnerships and other funding sources with likeminded community organizations. These projects can be part of a larger community service volunteer day. (Funding resources may include CDBG funding, AARP grant, etc.). Learn about the ARC Community-Centered Design Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Ferguson Community Center Cherokee County City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth Historic Preservation Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Pursue Updates to Zoning Ordinances, Policies, and Procedures	Cherokee County and the City of Canton will consider updates to existing ordinances and consider new policies and procedures.	Refine Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance to be used for families. Consider additional policies to incorporate more housing diversity and flexible requirements. Meet with the community to discuss priorities of ordinances, policies and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County City of Canton Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth Historic Preservation Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Pearidge Community Housing Survey	Coordinate a community-driven housing survey to identify the existing housing and desired housing in the project area.	The Charlie Ferguson Community Center may lead a community-centered housing survey with History Cherokee and community stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Ferguson Community Center Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God History Cherokee University of Georgia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Preservation Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming Community and Cultural Cohesion Sustainable Growth 	Mid-Term (6-10 Years)
Housing Diversity	Create educational material on housing diversity to provide information on housing types and compatibility with existing zoning and potential policy updates.	The County and City will co-create multi-lingual educational and surveying tools to provide the community with housing information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Mid-Term (6-10 Years)
Affordable Housing Pilot Project	Cherokee County and the City of Canton will work with the local community to ensure future development is compatible and within the community's vision.	Development proposals within the Pearidge Community will have further discussions with the local municipality and the Charlie Ferguson Community Center Board of Directors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Ferguson Community Center Cherokee County City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth Historic Preservation Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Long Term (10 Years+)

Land Use Tasks					
Action Item	Recommendation	Next Steps	Stakeholders	Community Values	Timeframe
Community Stakeholder Coordination Meeting	Hickory Log Baptist and the Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God have plans for future growth of their properties. It is recommended that these parties meet to collaborate and discuss future plans at the Charlie Ferguson Community Center.	Schedule quarterly meetings between faith-based organizations and the Charlie Ferguson Community Center Board of Directors to discuss future land use and opportunities for collaboration. Analyze desired land use in the community and desired commercial and residential uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith-Based Organizations Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and Cultural Cohesion Sustainable Growth 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Preserving the Trees	Utilize the Heritage Tree program through Cherokee County to protect the two big trees at the intersection of Pine Grove and Pearidge Road.	The Charlie Ferguson Community Center will facilitate a discussion with the property owner to ensure their willingness to have the Two Big Trees marked as Heritage Trees. The Pearidge Community will evaluate other opportunities for a historic marker or placemaking for the area. Submit Heritage Tree Designation Application.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County Planning and Zoning Current Property Owner Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Preservation Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Access to Recreation and Services	Create a community plan to convert the Ralph Bunche Center into an additional community space with recreational and educational services.	Cherokee County may facilitate meetings between the Charlie Ferguson Community Center and the Cherokee County School District on the future of the Ralph Bunche Center. This may involve community meetings and engagement to include in future Master Plans. Discuss community needs with Recreation and Parks staff as they prepare for the next Recreation and Parks Master Plan. This may include staffing, programming opportunities, and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Ferguson Community Center Cherokee County School District Cherokee County Recreation and Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Preservation Community and Cultural Cohesion Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming 	Long Term (10+ Years)

Chapter 4: Implementation and Action Plan

Community Services Tasks

Action Item	Recommendation	Next Steps	Stakeholders	Community Values	Timeframe
Zoning, Planning, and Permitting Education	<p>Create county and city zoning information available in multiple languages and explain specific terminology through illustrations.</p> <p>The Pearidge Community indicated a barrier to understanding annexation, how to conduct building projects, fences, and other associated businesses and other opportunities.</p>	<p>County and city staff may continue to update its documents and website to include Spanish translation. The jurisdictions may offer quarterly workshops or office hours to engage with the local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Ferguson Community Center • Iglesia Emmanuel Assembly of God • Cherokee County • City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Cultural Cohesion • Sustainable Growth 	<p>Short Term (0-5 Years)</p>
Hickory Log Cemetery Preservation	<p>Ensure the preservation of the historic cemetery at the new Cherokee High School and allow access to community members.</p>	<p>The Charlie Ferguson Community Center, Hickory Log Baptist Church, City of Canton, and Cherokee County School District will coordinate the preservation and access to the Hickory Log Cemetery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Ferguson Community Center • Cherokee County School District • Hickory Log Baptist Church • Cherokee County • City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Preservation 	<p>Short Term (0-5 Years)</p>
Cherokee County School District and Pearidge Community Partnership	<p>Work with the Cherokee County School District to encourage the teaching and remembrance of the Pearidge community with existing curriculum and special events.</p>	<p>The Charlie Ferguson Community Center Board of Directors will meet with the Cherokee County School District to discuss partnership opportunities between stakeholders.</p> <p>Schedule a meeting with the Cherokee County School District Academics and Accountability Division.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherokee County School District • Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming • Historic Preservation • Community and Cultural Cohesion 	<p>Short Term (0-5 Years)</p>
Food Insecurity	<p>Coordinate efforts with faith-based and non-profit organizations and local businesses to address food insecurity in the Pearidge Community.</p>	<p>The Charlie Ferguson Community Center will support and coordinate efforts of community stakeholders to provide assistance with resources and address food insecurity.</p> <p>Explore the possibility of a community garden. If determined to be a community objective, coordinate a working group and consult with the UGA Extension Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Ferguson Community Center • Cherokee County • City of Canton • Community stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming • Community Safety • Sustainable Growth • Community and Cultural Cohesion 	<p>Mid Term (6-10 Years)</p>
Potential Library Pop Up	<p>Explore library and youth programs through an innovative collaboration with Sequoyah Regional Library System.</p>	<p>Establish a meeting between the Charlie Ferguson Community Center and the Sequoyah Regional Library System to discuss the potential of a pop-up library at the Charlie Ferguson Community Center.</p> <p>Explore and pursue funding options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequoyah Regional Library System • Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming • Sustainable Growth • Community and Cultural Cohesion 	<p>Long Term (10+ Years)</p>
Local Business Initiative	<p>Create a sustainable model of sharing space, resources, and community with local business start-ups.</p>	<p>The Charlie Ferguson Community Center Board of Directors will collaborate with the Cherokee Office of Economic Development Director of Talent Development to discuss existing and potential resources including Startup Cherokee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Ferguson Community Center • Cherokee Office of Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Growth • Culturally Reflective Community Services and Programming • Community and Cultural Cohesion 	<p>Long Term (10 + Years)</p>

Transportation and Infrastructure Tasks

Action Item	Recommendation	Next Steps	Stakeholders	Community Values	Timeframe
Pearidge and Amos Road Safety	Collaborate with the appropriate stakeholders to analyze road safety options and review the Safe Streets and Roads 4 All plan for Cherokee County.	The Charlie Ferguson Community Center will meet with stakeholders to discuss and learn more about available options. Cherokee County and/or the City of Canton can provide insight into roundabouts, speed tables, streetlight, signage and street markings. Consider bicycle infrastructure and safety. Install bike racks at nearby institutional uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlie Ferguson Community Center Cherokee County City of Canton Georgia Department of Transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Safety Sustainable Growth 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Street Grid System and Development Requirements	Evaluate and improve the street grid to support connectivity and safe mobility in the Pearidge area.	Coordinate with Cherokee County and City of Canton to assess street grid improvements. Work with the community to analyze streetscape and other development requirements to ensure efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth Community Safety 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
CATS Micro-Transit Service and Demand Response Service Expansion and Education	Extend the CATS service area to reach Pearidge Community residents and local churches, for the micro-transit and demand response services.	The County and CATS will work with the Charlie Ferguson Community Center to improve awareness and access for these transportation services. This may include future consideration of a bus stop with a shelter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CATS Cherokee County Charlie Ferguson Community Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Safety Sustainable Growth 	Short Term (0-5 Years)
Pearidge Community Pedestrian Connections	Coordinate a Master Plan and vision for pedestrian connection in the Pearidge Community.	The Charlie Ferguson Community Center and stakeholders may draft a plan to connect the Pearidge Community to significant historic aspects and community amenities. The planning document may include recommendations for shade structures, lighting, accessible path materials, benches, and other pedestrian amenities that convey a safe, comfortable walking experience. The Charlie Ferguson Community Center may establish a committee to address connectivity and implementation of placemaking with staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County City of Canton Charlie Ferguson Community Center History Cherokee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Safety Sustainable Growth Community and Cultural Cohesion 	Long Term (10+ Years)
Water Infrastructure	Coordinate water needs for projects with appropriate jurisdiction and stakeholders.	Identify water capacity needs and opportunities for efficient service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority City of Canton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth 	Long Term (10+ Years)
Sewer Infrastructure	Coordinate sewer service capacity in the area.	Identify sewer capacity needs and opportunities for efficient service delivery. Expand sewer service area as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherokee County Water and Sewer Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Growth 	Long Term (10+ Years)

