

# Six Flags Special Services District Comprehensive Market Study – Summary of Public Engagement

## Overview

Rooted in robust and meaningful engagement, the Six Flags Special Services District Comprehensive Market Study reached out to a broad spectrum of stakeholders who live, work and play in the study area. The key objectives of the approach for outreach were to educate, consult and collaborate with the community.

Stakeholders in the study area range in age and income. Therefore, it was important to implement a comprehensive approach that would reach all segments of the population. A combination of tools and techniques included convening a Steering Committee, hosting a traditional public meeting for the community, at-large, and an online survey, allowing broad public engagement opportunities that promoted inclusion.

## Schedule of Engagement Opportunities

<b>Engagement Opportunity</b>	<b>Date/Time/Location</b>
Steering Committee Meeting #1	December 16, 2019   3:00 – 5:00 PM Cobb County Government   1150 Powder Springs Street, Suite 400
Public Meeting	February 24, 2020   6:00 – 8:00 PM Riverside EpiCenter   135 Riverside Pkwy
Online Community Survey	February 24 – April 3, 2020
Steering Committee Meeting #2	April 13, 2020   2:00 – 4:00 PM Via WebEx Online Meeting/Conference Call
Steering Committee Meeting #3	TBD

## What We Heard

### Steering Committee Input

A Steering Committee of local residents and business owners was convened to provide insight into the process. The following individuals participated as Steering Committee members:

- Christopher Boyd, Word of Faith/Riverside EpiCenter
- Ron Davis, Austell Community Task Force
- Jason Gaines, Cobb County Government
- Marjorie Johnson, Riverside Community Resident
- Galt Porter, Cobb County Planning Commission
- Doug Stoner, South Cobb Redevelopment Authority
- Herschel Tolson, South Cobb Redevelopment Authority
- Marsellas Williams, Cobb County Government

The group met a total of three times during the project timeline:

- Meeting #1 (December 16, 2019): A kick off meeting to discuss the purpose of the study, project timeline and public engagement.
- Meeting #2 (April 13, 2020): This meeting provided the Steering Committee with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft market study findings and community survey results.
- Meeting #3 (DATE TBD): The purpose of the final Steering Committee meeting was to review and comment on the market study outcomes and findings.

### General Public Input - Public Meeting

Public input was collected at the public meeting and through the online survey. Attendees at the public meeting included residents, coalitions such as We Thrive in Riverside and the Austell Community Task Force, South Cobb Redevelopment Authority members, Cobb County staff, and local business owners. A total of 54 individuals signed into the meeting. The community survey was also launched during the meeting.

Outreach was conducted via the Cobb County website, the Steering Committee members, the Austell Community Task Force, and distribution of flyers to the following locations:

- Posting the community meeting info on the southcobb.org website
- Coordination with the Austell Community Taskforce to distribute the flyer and survey link
- Flyer distribution to the following locations in the study area:
  - LA Fiesta Restaurant

- Hilton Garden Inn West
- South Cobb Recreation Center
- South Cobb Aquatic Center
- Gateway Academy & Childcare Center
- Dollar General
- Marathon Gas Station strip mall:
  - NY Buffalo Wings
  - Barber Shop
  - Nail Capital Salon
  - Tax Services Office
- Wingate by Wyndham Hotel
- Rodeway Inn at Six Flags
- Whisper Wood Apartments Leasing Office (this is now Azure Apartments)
- Hunter's Grove Apartments Leasing Office
- Home2 (Thornton Rd)
- OK Cleaner (same strip as La Fiesta Restaurant)
- Shell/Food Mart (same strip as La Fiesta Restaurant)

The purpose of the public meeting was to introduce the Six Flags Special Services District Comprehensive Market Study to the public. The meeting included a formal presentation followed by a question and answer session. Some issues and concerns raised during the question and answer session included:

- The pros and cons of heavy industrial businesses in the area.
- How to get input from commuters who enter into the district for work daily.  
Making a Spanish version of the survey available.
- Potential impacts of crime on the community and economic development potential of the area.

Following the question and answer session, meeting attendees were engaged in an interactive open house where several activities collected participant input.

### **Live Work Play**

Meeting attendees were give three dots to mark where they live, work and play (i.e., shop, eat, run errands) in the study area. Most participants in this exercise live in the residential areas north of I-20. Most play at "The Walk at Legacy" at Discovery Blvd and Veterans Memorial Hwy.

### **On Site Survey**

Surveys were made available for meeting attendees to complete on site. These paper copies were identical to the online version. Surveys completed on site were incorporated into the online survey results.

### **Postcards from the Future**

This visioning activity asked attendees to think about the study area in 10 years and write a postcard from the year 2030.

### **Housing Visual Preference Survey**

Meeting attendees were asked to weigh in on the types of housing they preferred and disliked. Seven distinct housing types were shown and voted on. The most preferred type is single family detached followed by attached townhomes. The least preferred style is loft apartment over commercial space and multi-family apartment or condominium.

### **Transportation Features**

Meeting attendees were asked about the importance of several transportation features. All features were deemed "Very Important" however the feature receiving the most votes was new/improved sidewalks followed closely by traffic calming/slow down traffic speeds. Bike lanes (on street) ranked the lowest.

### **Community Features**

Meeting attendees were asked about the importance of several community features. All features were deemed "Very Important" almost equally, however, variety of jobs received the most votes.

### **Community Services**

Meeting attendees were asked about the importance of several community services. All features were deemed "Very Important" however the features receiving the most votes were public services (police, fire, and library) and youth services. Medical facilities ranked the lowest. Not listed but noted by several members of the public as an important community feature was "banking."

### **General Public Input - Online Survey**

The purpose of the online survey was to collect input from the community and stakeholders on community needs and desires, housing options, and transportation options in the Six Flags Special Services District. The questions related broadly to neighborhood qualities, services,

features, and amenities. Lastly, the demographic information of the survey respondents was collected. The survey was made available in both English and Spanish.

A total of 150 responses were collected over a six-week period. Surveys were submitted via the online survey platform as well as in hardcopy format provided at the public meeting. The survey was promoted through the following avenues:

- Promoted on [www.southcobb.com](http://www.southcobb.com)
- Distributed to and by Steering Committee members
- Provided in hard copy format at the public Kick Off meeting
- Laptop kiosk at the public Kick Off meeting
- Through direct email follow up to public Kick Off meeting attendees
- Distributed by the Austell Community Task force
- Via flyers distributed throughout the study area (see "General Public Input - Public Meeting" above)

This summary provides a high-level overview of the input received:

- Of the 150 surveys received, 46% of the respondents live in the Six Flags Special Services District. A small percentage work or own a business in the area.
- One third of survey respondents are new to the area, noting that they've lived, worked or owned property/a business in the community for less than 5 years. A combined 56% have lived, worked or owned property/a business in the SFSSD for more than 10 years.
- The community **quality** with the highest 'very important' ranking was having a safe place to live and clean and attractive. The community qualities of welcoming, walkable, and quiet/peaceful were also ranked as 'very important'.
- The community **services** with the highest 'very important' ranking were Public Service (Library, Police, and Fire), Education and Park & Recreation Facilities. The community services of Medical Facilities and Youth Services were also ranked as 'very important'.
- The community **feature** with the highest 'very important' ranking was having places to eat and drink. Having a variety of jobs, shopping opportunities, and housing diversity were ranked equally as 'very important.'
- When asked about issues of concern within the community, abandoned, vacant, and poorly maintained properties, litter on the ground and crime are the greatest **concerns**

of the majority of survey respondents. The presence of litter on the ground was also of great concern.

- Respondents want **more** full-service restaurants, renovation of existing commercial businesses and a neighborhood coffee shop/café.
- Respondents want **fewer** small discount variety stores (Family Dollar, Dollar General, etc.) and liquor stores.
- The majority of respondents (85%) have **no plans to change their residence** in the next 12 to 18 months.
- For those who do have plans to **change their residence** in the next 12 to 18 months, 62% plan to own that home. Of survey respondents who do have plans to rent their next home, 36% would like to pay from \$1000 - \$1499 for rent each month. A quarter would like to pay from \$750 - \$999 for rent each month.
- Regarding housing types, 62% of survey respondents **currently** live in single family homes with multiple levels. A very small amount of people who took the survey live in multi-family housing and no respondents live in senior housing.
- Most survey respondents would **prefer** to live in single family homes either with multiple levels (57%) or on a single level (31%).
- **Desirable amenities** in an apartment development include a fitness center, controlled access, in unit washer/dryer and a community clubhouse.
- Most (52%) of survey respondents **live in a one to two person household** and would prefer a home with three or more bedrooms.
- Most respondents (66%) **would consider** multiple level, single family detached homes or single level, single family detached homes (60%). Attached townhomes were somewhat likely options while more than half of respondents would definitely not consider cluster homes, multi-family apartments, or condominiums.
- **New and improved sidewalks** on local roads received the most support (77%) for most important transportation improvements.

Finally, demographic information was collected from survey respondents. Of the individuals who participated in the survey:

- The most responsive survey age groups were the 45 – 54 and the over 54 year old groups.
- Most (63%) were women of African American (71%) heritage; four respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino.
- Most (87%) are homeowners who live in homes with one to two residents (51%).

- Most (36%) have lived in their current location for one to five years.
- Most (41%) survey respondents have a combined household income of over \$100,000.

## Photos of the Public Input









