



Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan



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This document has been prepared by Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc. in a strategic partnership with:

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Introduction

1.1 Project Impetus and Purpose

The Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan coalesces the desires of Brookhaven residents, City and DeKalb County officials, local businesses and non-profits to realize the development of a multi-purpose linear park along the North Fork of Peachtree Creek.

The Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan lays out the proposed details of the 2.98 mile linear park – envisioned to feature a series of nature trails, paved multi-purpose paved trails, and paved promenade trails dotted with residences, offices, restaurants, bike rental stands, coffee shops and picnic areas. The greenway’s alignment, amenities, design specifications and implementation strategy are set out in this report.

Like the multitude of similar linear parks being built around the country, the Peachtree Creek Greenway will cater to and enrich not only its immediate community of Brookhaven, but eventually areas beyond as part of a larger network of multi-use trails, tying into the BeltLine and PATH400 developments, among others.

The Peachtree Creek Greenway is the City of Brookhaven’s section of the larger proposed North Fork Peachtree Creek Trail that is envisioned to link to the wider Atlanta trail system. The concept for the 12.3 mile stretch of the North Fork Peachtree Creek Trail, proposed to run from Mercer University in unincorporated DeKalb County to near the new PATH400 trail in Atlanta’s Buckhead neighborhood, was first published by the PATH Foundation in DeKalb’s Greenway Trails: A Master Plan for Multi-Use Trails in DeKalb County, GA (2000).

It was not until late 2012, soon after Brookhaven became a city, that the idea for the greenway began to take shape when District 4 Councilman Joe Gebbia began discussing his vision for Brookhaven’s own segment of the bigger park as a recreation and business amenity. The non-profit

organization North Fork Connectors, now known as the Peachtree Creek Greenway, Inc. (PCG), was established in the fall of 2013 by resident Betsy Eggers, giving the idea further momentum. PCG brought the City of Brookhaven and the PATH Foundation together to share in the vision of expanding opportunities for walking, cycling and paddling along Peachtree Creek, and successfully lobbied for the greenway’s inclusion in the City’s 2014 Comprehensive Plan. The development of the Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan is likewise a product of the partnership forged between PCG and the City.

1.2 Project Process and Approach

The Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan was developed in three phases, described in the following sections of this report:

- 1. Existing Conditions Analysis.** The consultant team of Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc. and Perez Planning + Design, LLC worked with the City of Brookhaven to develop an understanding of the existing conditions and characterization of the corridor.

This section begins with an overview of the potential multiple economic, environmental, and social benefits the project can achieve. The section then provides a review of previously completed plans and an analysis of various corridor aspects, including its setting. This analysis was informed by various site visits and evaluations of elevation and natural terrain, topography, water quality and flood plain, vegetation, urban design framework, traffic, and land assembly. The section ends with a summary.

- 2. Proposed Greenway Master Plan .** The section begins with a summary of the public engagement findings obtained through the planning process that include ideas, concerns, issues, and opportunities from City of

Brookhaven elected officials, residents, and property owners. Public engagement techniques for the project included one-on-one interviews with elected officials, trail neighbors, residents, and focus groups as well as public meetings.

Additionally, the project included a Stakeholder Committee comprised of a diverse group of interested and vested residents and property owners that guided the consultant team through the study process.

Based on the public engagement findings, the section then describes a proposed Greenway Master Plan

for the corridor. The master plan includes existing and proposed plans, sections, and perspectives that illustrate the proposed vision for the corridor as well as the potential impact the trail can have on the redevelopment of the area.

- 3. Implementation Strategy.** The consultant team developed an implementation plan for the Peachtree Creek Greenway that establishes a cost estimate for the project and identifies phases of implementation, potential sources of funding, and proposes an action plan for the project.

Figure 1.2a - Peachtree Creek Near Western Brookhaven City Limit



1.3 Corridor Overview

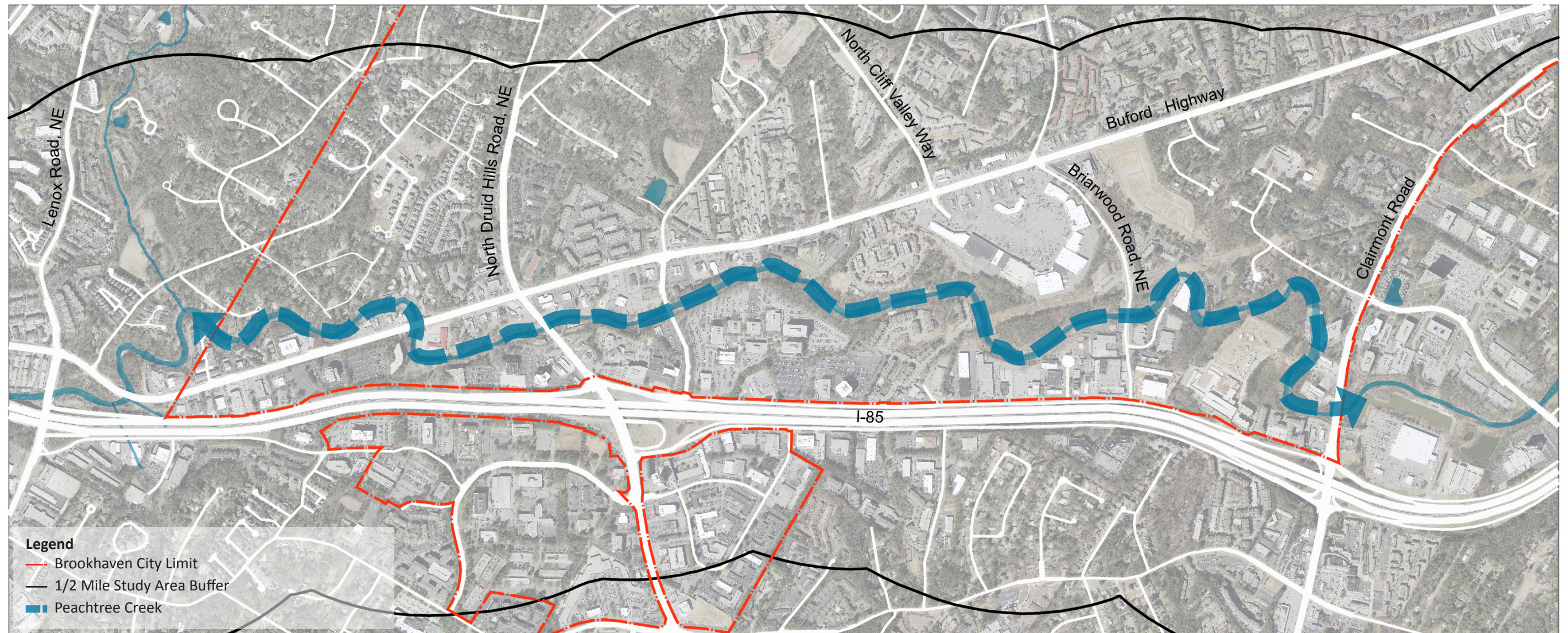
The waterway known as Peachtree Creek has both North and South Forks. The North Fork of Peachtree Creek begins outside of I-285 near Mercer University and flows southwest and generally follows I-85 until its intersection with GA 400, where it converges with the South Fork and becomes Peachtree Creek. The 2.98 mile-Peachtree Creek

Greenway is located along the North Fork within the City of Brookhaven. Century Center Office Park located in the City of Chamblee has committed to build approximately one mile of Greenway that will continue the City of Brookhaven Peachtree Creek Greenway northeast of Clairmont Road. Southwest of the Brookhaven Peachtree

Creek Greenway, a potential future 1.5 mile trail/park will continue into the City of Atlanta and will connect with the BeltLine and PATH 400. As noted by PCG, the Greenway will be the first significant in-town in the park along a waterway in the metro Atlanta area where commercial zoning already exists, facilitating the construction of

potential future restaurants and mixed-use development. Although not readily apparent, the portion of Peachtree Creek within the City of Brookhaven also has much to offer as a natural amenity. Today, it is a neglected waterway. Aging suburban strip center development backs onto its

Figure 1.3a - Study Area



banks. Damaged by erosion, strewn with litter, overgrown with invasive species and virtually inaccessible, the creek has been forgotten for many years, and its water quality has suffered for it. However, the City, PCG and other advocates for the space see its potential as a “jewel in the rough.”

Initial exploratory trips down the creek made by PCG reveal its value in terms of history, wildlife, green space, transportation and adventure for the community. While the vision for the Peachtree Creek Greenway is similar to that of the BeltLine, the opportunity for people to connect to nature and water along the corridor makes it particularly unique.

1.4 Project Potential

Investment in parks such as the Peachtree Creek Greenway can and should have benefits beyond casual recreation. A body of research¹ suggests parks and other aspects of the public realm can be developed as High Performance Public Spaces (HPPS), generating economic, environmental and social sustainability benefits for their local community. In addition to benefits commonly linked to parks and trails, such as increased access and mobility (thereby reducing air pollution and improving air quality through decreased reliance on personal cars), offering opportunities for healthier lifestyles and habitat conservation and improvement, the economics of the development of greenways can be impressive. Local examples include:

- The Silver Comet Trail, generating \$461 million in economic impact per year, including a combined \$57 million in recreation and tourism spending and \$182 million in property value increases. For every \$1 spent on the Silver Comet Trail expansion, Georgians gain \$4.64 in direct and indirect economic benefits. (Source: Northwest Georgia Regional Commission, 2013)

¹ Barth and Carr, Using a Delphi Method to Develop Criteria for High Performance Public Spaces that Contribute to Community Sustainability, 2014

- The Atlanta BeltLine/Eastside Trail, with \$775 million in private real estate development within ½ mile of the Eastside Trail. (Source: Atlanta Beltline, Inc., 2013)

HPPS characteristics, generated from the criteria listed in Figure 1.4a, have been integrated into the Peachtree Creek Greenway Master Plan. Some elements of HPPS instilled into the development of the linear park are:

- Links from the corridor to local schools, existing parks and playgrounds and other cultural institutions such as libraries and places of worship are proposed, facilitating walking and biking as a means to reach commonly frequented amenities.
- Business is primed to flourish along points of the greenway as investors seek to be close to and capitalize on the revitalized corridor.
- Water and environmental quality is set to be improved as funding for the reclamation of the creek is secured.

As the greenway is developed, these criteria can be revisited to confirm or improve upon the benefits being offered.

Figure 1.4a - High Performance Public Space Criteria

High Performance Public Space Criteria		
Economic Criteria	Environmental Criteria	Social Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The space creates and facilitates revenue- generating opportunities for the public and/ or the private sectors. • The space creates meaningful and desirable employment. • The space indirectly creates or sustains good, living wage jobs. • The space sustains or increases property values. • The space catalyzes infill development and/or the re-use of obsolete or under-used buildings or spaces. • The space attracts new residents. • The space attracts new businesses. • The space generates increased business and tax revenues. • The space optimizes operations and maintenance costs (compared to other similar spaces). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The space uses energy, water, and material resources efficiently. • The space improves water quality of both surface and ground water. • The space serves as a net carbon sink. • The space enhances, preserves, promotes, or contributes to biological diversity. • Hardscape materials are selected based on longevity of service, social/ cultural/ historical sustainability, regional availability, low carbon footprint and/or other related criteria. • The space provides opportunities to enhance environmental awareness and knowledge. • The space serves as an interconnected node within larger scale ecological corridors and natural habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The space improves the neighborhood. • The space improves social and physical mobility through multi-modal connectivity – auto, transit, bike, pedestrian. • The space encourages the health and fitness of residents and visitors. • The space provides relief from urban congestion and stressors such as social confrontation, noise pollution, and air pollution. • The space provides places for formal and informal social gathering, art, performances, and community or civic events. • The space provides opportunities for individual, group, passive and active recreation • The space facilitates shared experiences among different groups of people. • The space attracts diverse populations. • The space promotes creative and constructive social interaction.

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