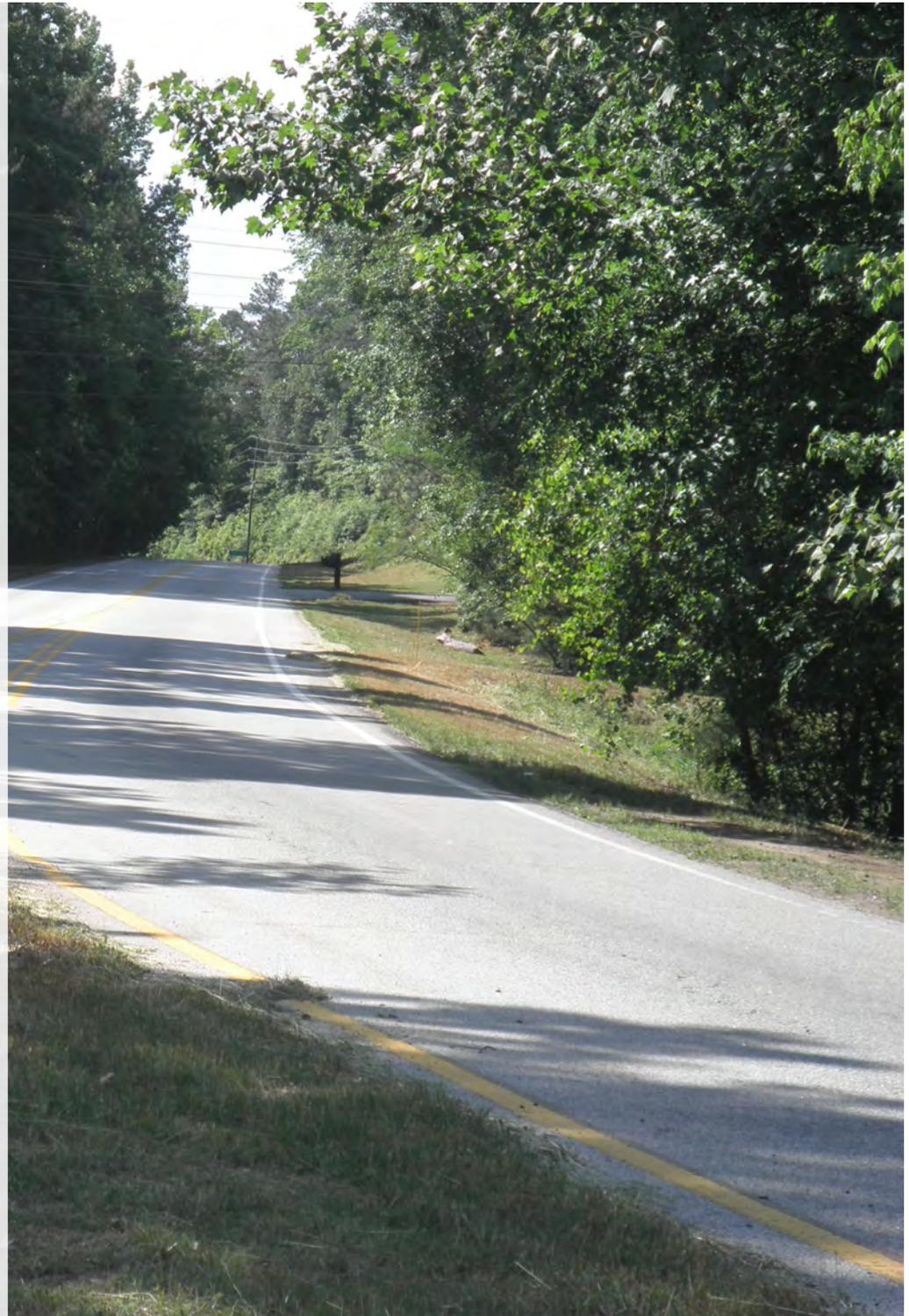


# Douglas County Highway 166 Conservation Corridor



DRAFT Presented July 2015





**Community Choices**

This document was prepared by the Atlanta Regional Commission through its Community Choices Program.

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# Acknowledgments

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Douglas County  
Highway 166  
Conservation Corridor  
Executive Summary

# Community Choices

Creating and sustaining quality communities is about providing balance and promoting choices. It is preservation, economic development, revitalization, transportation, neighborhoods and high quality services. It is the protection of community character and a place that residents call home. It is a safe environment in which citizens have a sense of unmatched spirit and pride.

Community Choices is a program of the Atlanta Regional Commission that provides direct technical assistance to local governments for the implementation of community plans and achievement of community goals. Local governments submit requests for Community Choices assistance directly to ARC. Local staff and elected officials work with ARC and our regional partners, alongside community members and other technical experts to fulfill the request in a timely and cost effective manner.



## Request for Assistance

With the support of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners, the following request was submitted to ARC for assistance through its Community Choices program:

Georgia State Route 166 is a scenic road that traverses through South Douglas County beginning at the Carroll/ Douglas County line heading in a slight northeasterly direction toward the Douglas/ Fulton County line. The road portion in question is approximately 23 +/- miles. Mostly rural in nature, the area is scattered with few subdivisions and larger lot single family residences; active and passive farming is also present. Small commercial nodes are existent, particularly where SR 166 intersects with Post Road, SR 5 and SR 92. Large sections of the highway are located within the Dog River Basin, a low lying area of the County with vast amounts of floodplain that is susceptible to heavy rains. The scope of the plan is to create a scenic byway/ overlay plan that serves to encourage land uses that protect the natural resources and viewsheds within the corridor.

The Dog River Basin is a recognized regional resource within ARC's PLAN 2040. According to this plan, the health of the Dog River Watershed in western Douglas County is key in the county maintaining water quality. As a result, the county has initiated efforts to protect land within the drainage basin of the Dog River Reservoir. In addition to water quality monitoring programs, the county developed a zoning classification that results in less impact from impervious surfaces and limited number of septic tanks. The county also imposes buffers and impervious surface limitations adjacent to rivers and streams. Furthermore, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan anticipates SR 166 becoming a scenic byway as part of the Georgia Department of Transportation's Scenic Byway's Program. If implemented, Douglas County could preserve and manage the SR 166 corridor's scenic attributes and promote the area for tourism.

## Alternative Outcomes

Working collaboratively with the Project Steering Committee and Douglas County Staff, ARC proposed three alternatives to explore through a process of citizen engagement over a period of 4 months.

- Develop a Small Area Plan to Supplement the Comprehensive Plan Recommendations
- Pursue Scenic Byway Designation for Highway 166 through GDOT's Scenic Byway's Program
- Identify Tourism and Economic Development Opportunities for the Highway 166 Corridor

Through a series of public meetings, an online survey, and interactive activities to collect feedback on various components of these three alternatives, this Summary Report has been produced. Next steps will be determined by direction received from Douglas County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners.

Douglas County shall continue to embrace its rural heritage, historical significance, ethnic diversity and small town feel while creating a sense of place that nurtures family, cultural values and educational opportunities.

Responsible stewardship of human, fiscal, natural and historic resources together with improved governmental transparency and accountability through open communications shall be continuing priorities.

2013 Douglas County Comprehensive Plan



# Process and Timeline

## Research and Data Analysis



## Public Review and Comment

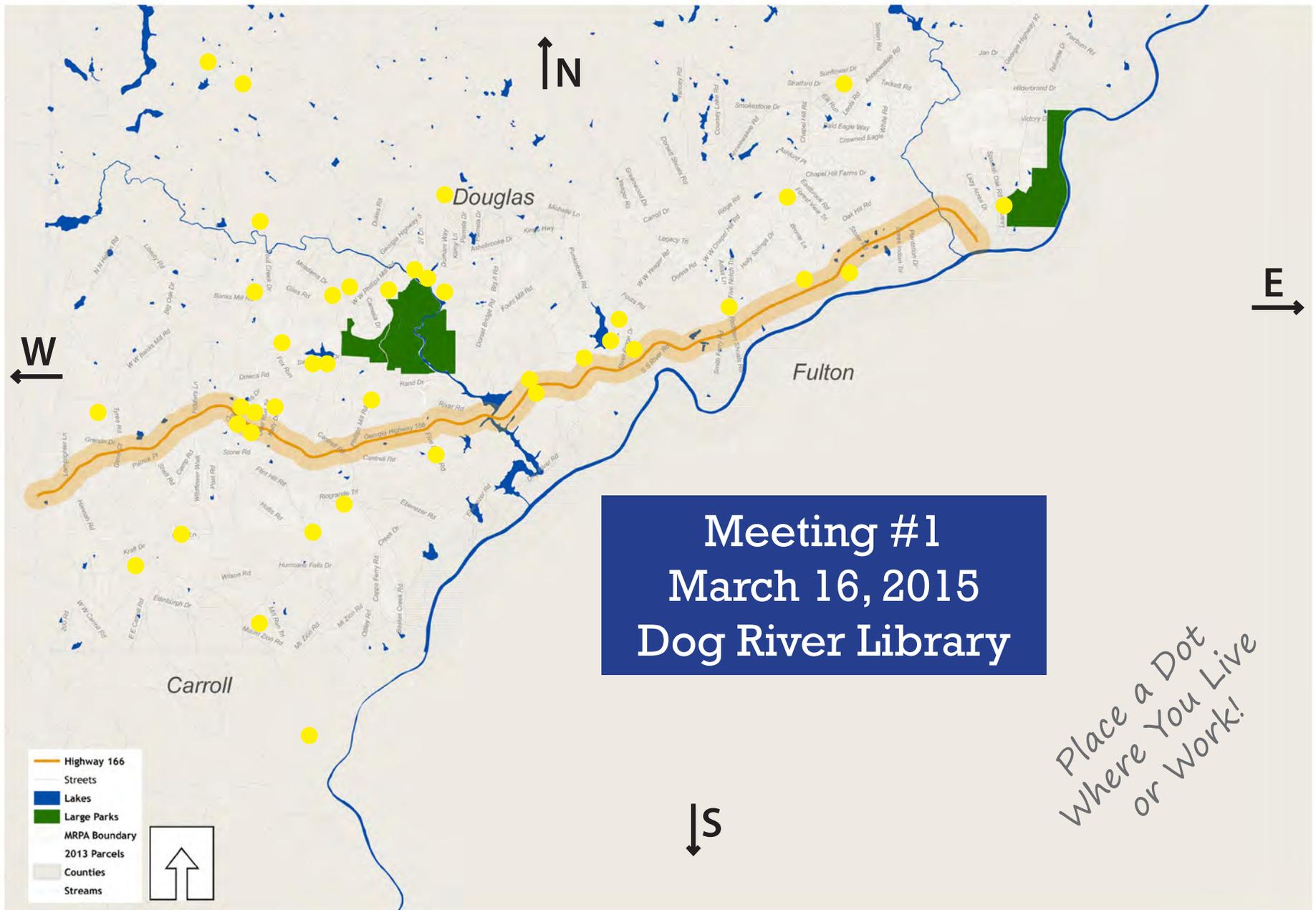
Date TBD

## Final Presentation of Findings and Recommendations

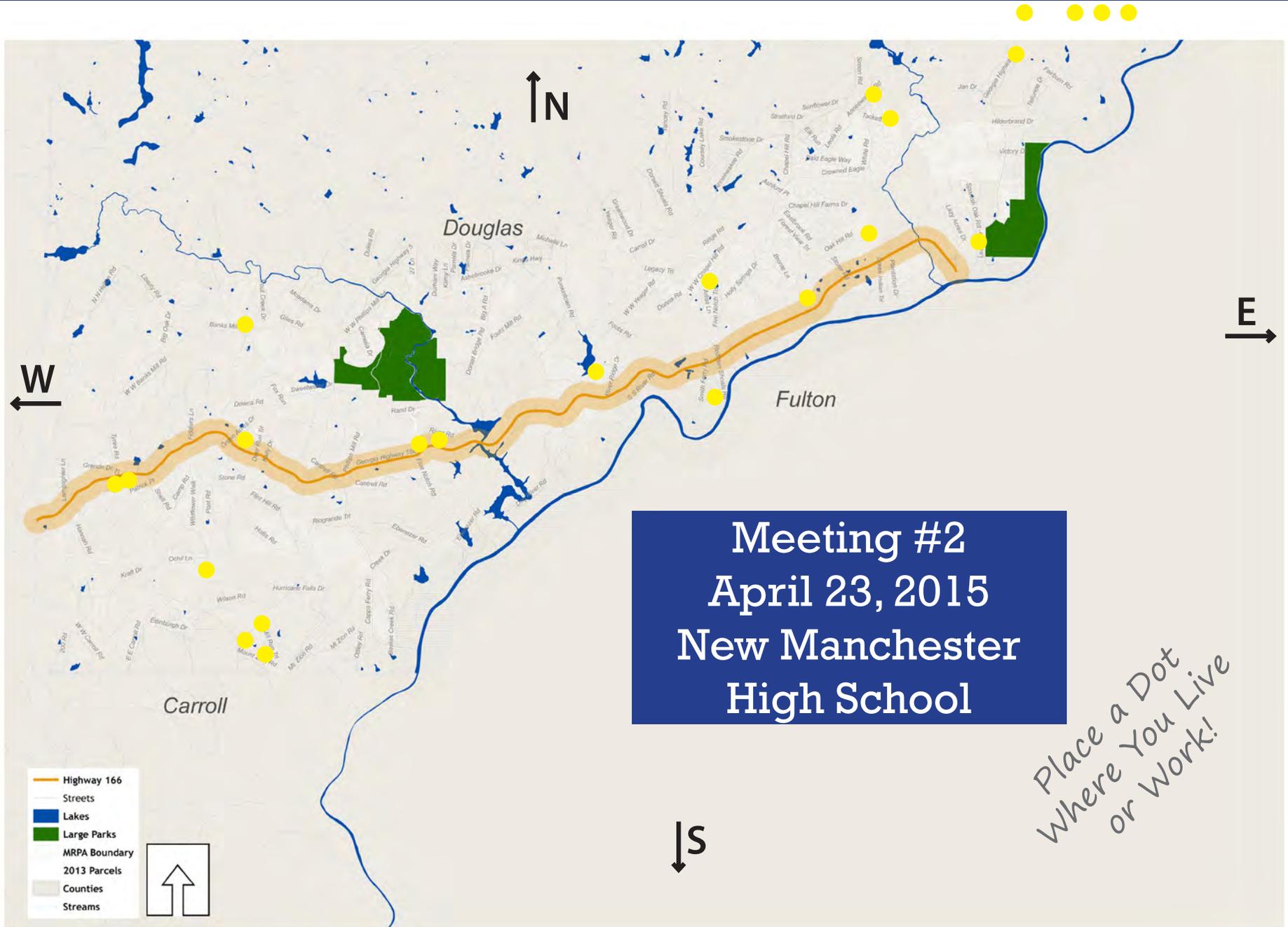
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Douglas County  
Highway 166  
Conservation Corridor  
Community Participation

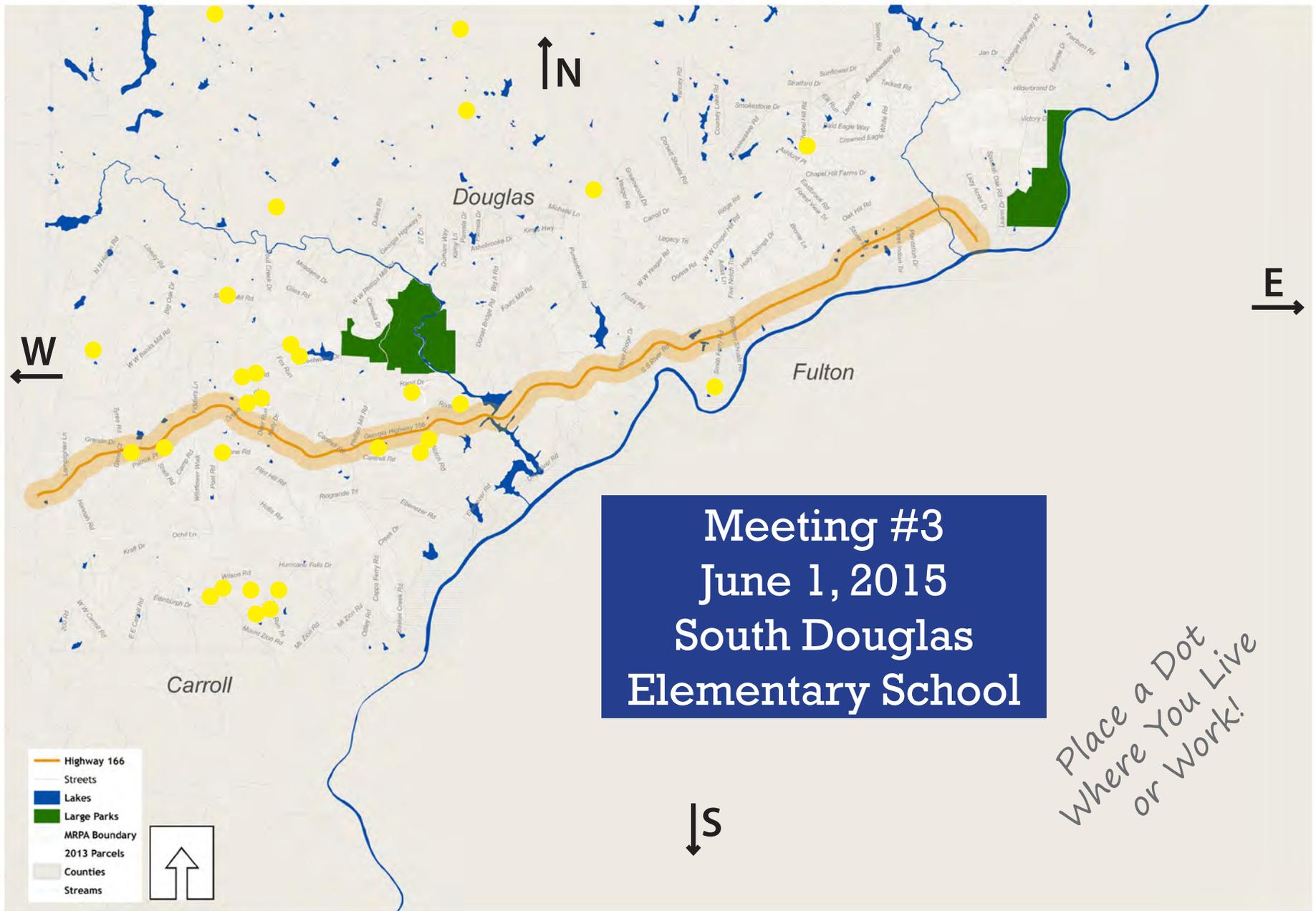
# Highway 166...Tell Us Where You Live or Work



# Highway 166...Tell Us Where You Live or Work



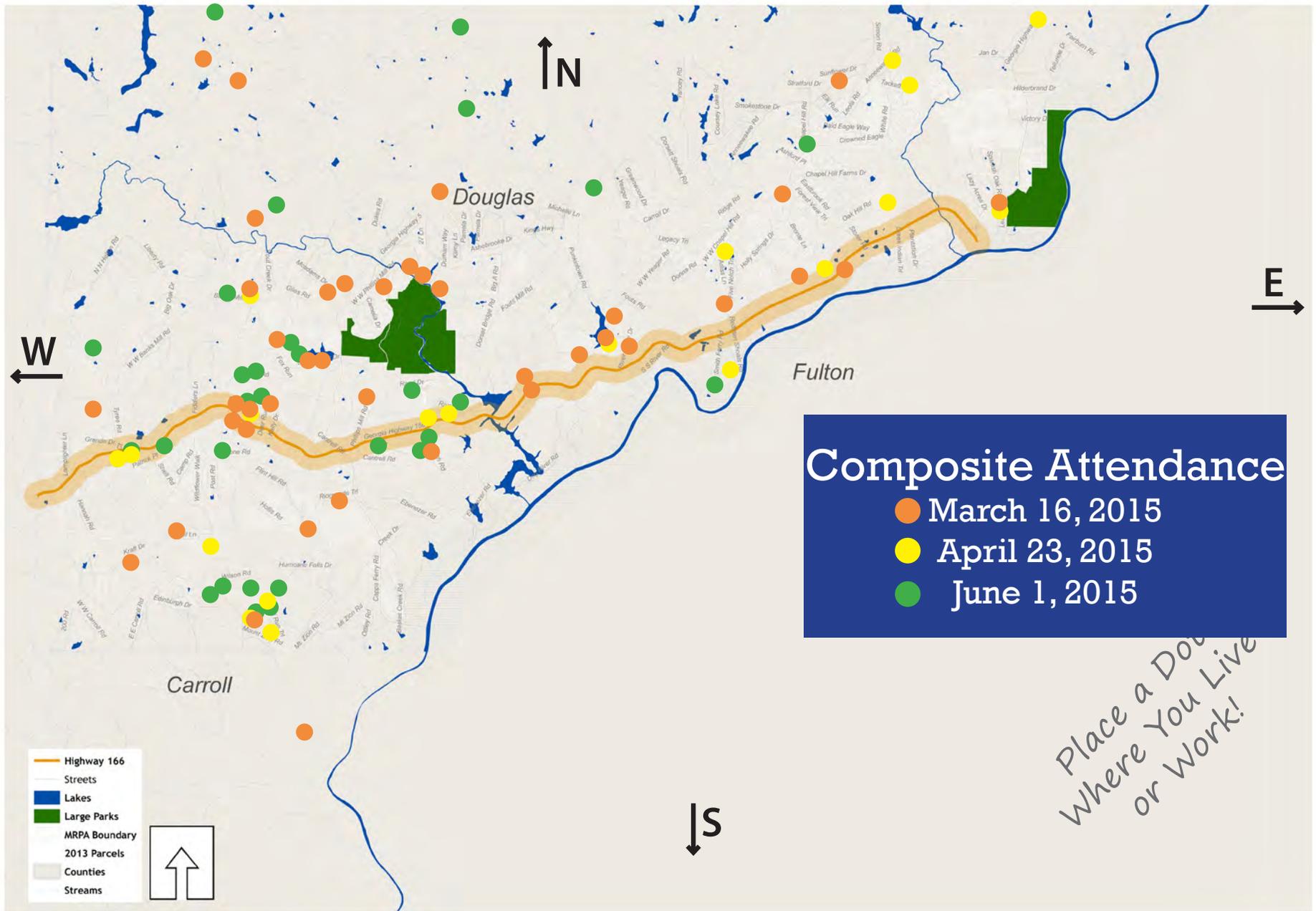
# Highway 166...Tell Us Where You Live or Work



Meeting #3  
June 1, 2015  
South Douglas  
Elementary School

*Place a Dot  
Where You Live  
or Work!*

# Highway 166...Tell Us Where You Live or Work

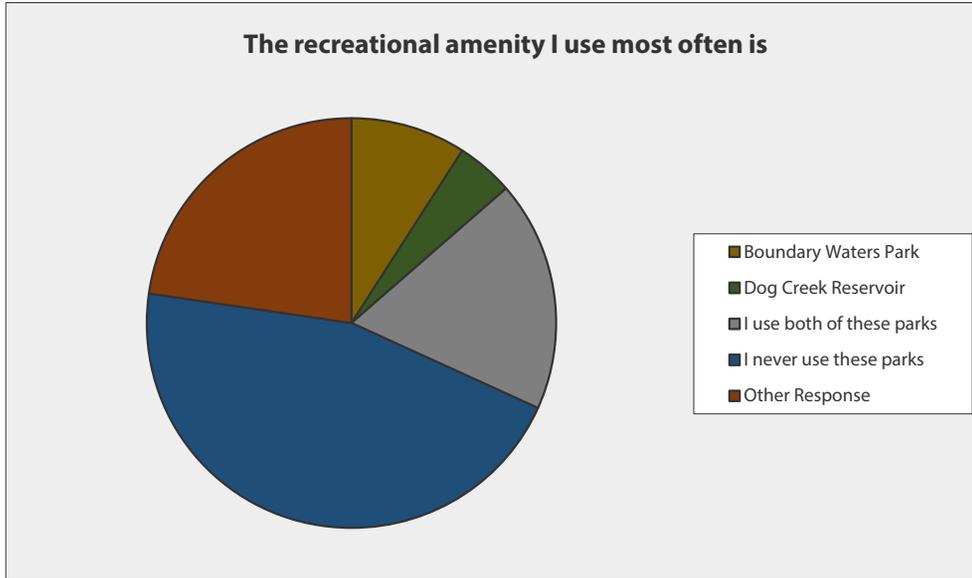




Douglas County  
Highway 166  
Conservation Corridor  
Community Survey &  
Feedback

# 1 The recreational amenity I use most often is

- Boundary Waters Park - **9%**
- Dog Creek Reservoir - **4.5%**
- I use both of these parks - **18%**
- I never use these parks - **45.5%**
- Other Response - **23%**

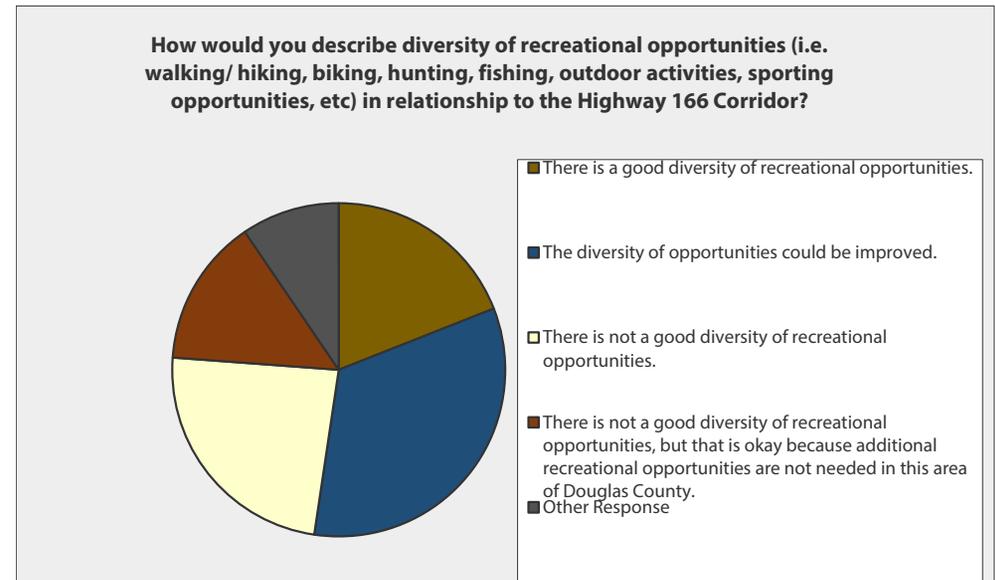


### Other Responses:

- We enjoy the Reservoir. Non-residents inhibited, and water quality preserved.
- I walk at the mall - very secure.
- Fairplay Park
- I have used Boundary Waters Park in the past, but use Fairplay Park the most.

# 2 How would you describe diversity of recreational opportunities (i.e. walking/ hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, outdoor activities, sporting opportunities, etc) in relationship to the Highway 166 Corridor?

- There is a good diversity of recreational opportunities - **19%**
- The diversity of opportunities could be improved - **33%**
- There is not a good diversity of recreational opportunities - **24%**
- There is not a good diversity of recreational opportunities, but that is okay because additional recreational opportunities are not needed in this area of Douglas County - **14%**
- Other Response - **10%**

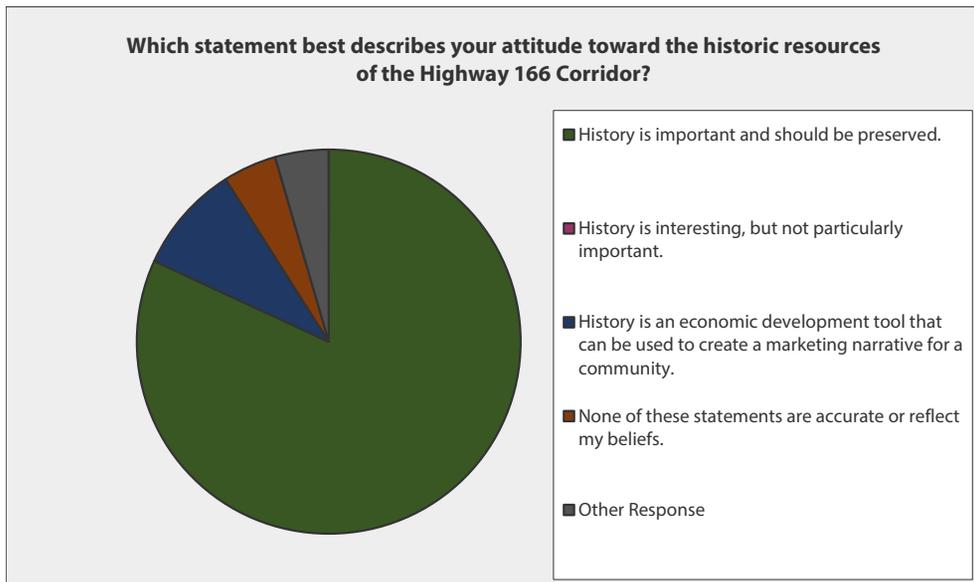


### Other Responses:

- We need more recreational opportunities in the Highway 166 area
- The diversity is fine, just need to fix up the older parks, like Fairplay and Bill Arp parks.

### 3 Which statement best describes your attitude toward the historic resources of the Highway 166 Corridor?

- History is important and should be preserved - **82%**
- History is interesting, but not particularly important - **0%**
- History is an economic development tool that can be used to create a marketing narrative for a community - **10%**
- None of these statements are accurate or reflect my beliefs - **4.5%**
- Other Response **4.5%**

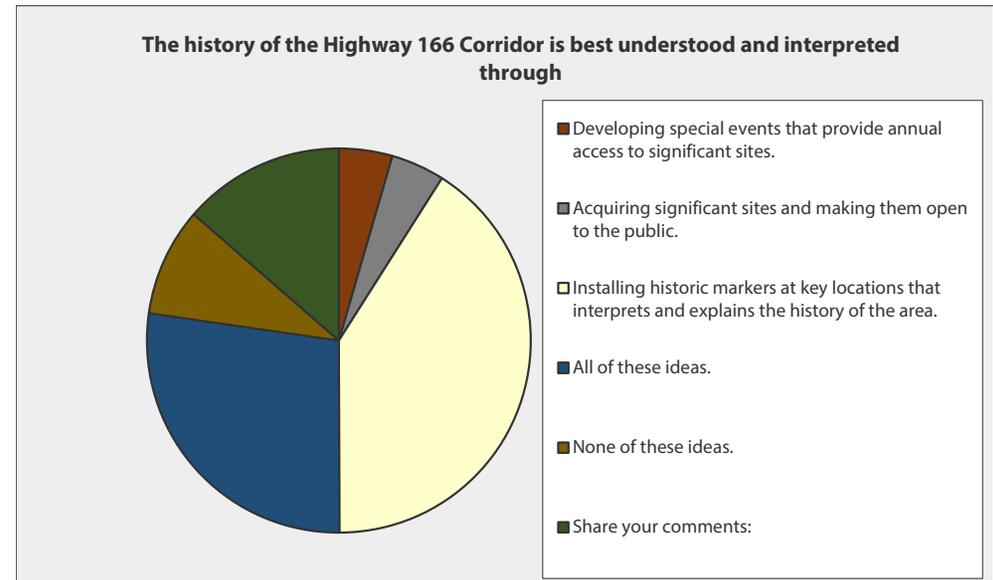


#### Other Responses:

- Love history. Use it as a tool? Okay. Let it drive development at no expense to residents. Otherwise, what's an asset for?

### 4 The history of the Highway 166 Corridor is best understood and interpreted through

- Developing special events that provide annual access to significant sites - **4.5%**
- Acquiring significant sites and making them open to the public - **4.5%**
- Installing historic markers at key locations that interprets and explains the history of the area - **41%**
- All of these ideas - **27%**
- None of these ideas - **9%**
- Other Response - **14%**

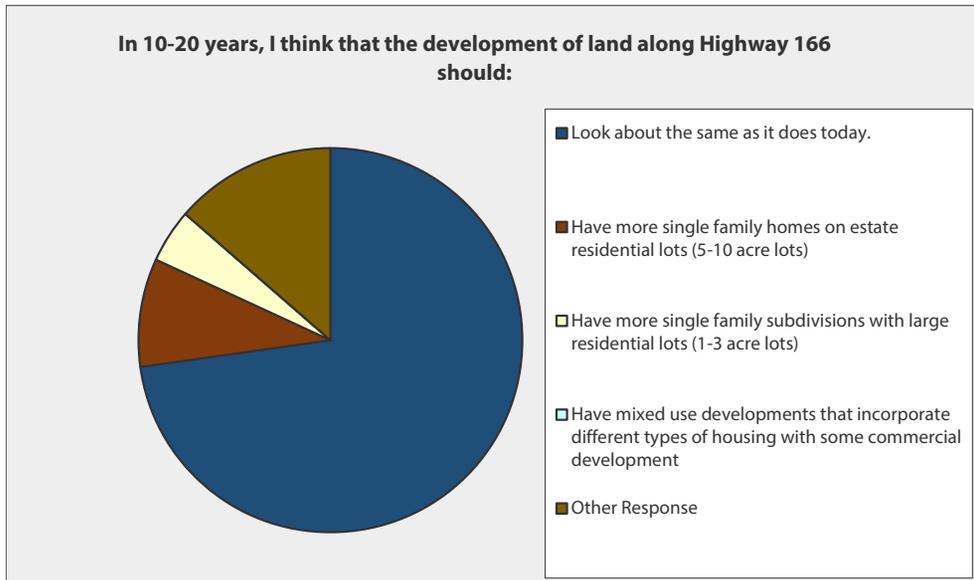


#### Other Responses:

- Install historic markers by all means, maybe it will slow down traffic, but increased draw and free access will decrease quality of life.
- Understanding the Community that has lived and died in this area for generations.
- Many of the historic areas have buildings that no longer exist or they are located on private property. Markers along a trail seem the best fit.

# 5 In 10-20 years, I think that the development of land along Highway 166 should

- Look about the same as it does today - **73%**
- Have more single family homes on estate residential lots (5-10 acre lots) - **9%**
- Have more single family subdivisions with large residential lots (1-3 acre lots) - **4.5 %**
- Have mixed use developments that incorporate different types of housing with some commercial development - **0%**
- Other Response - **13.5%**

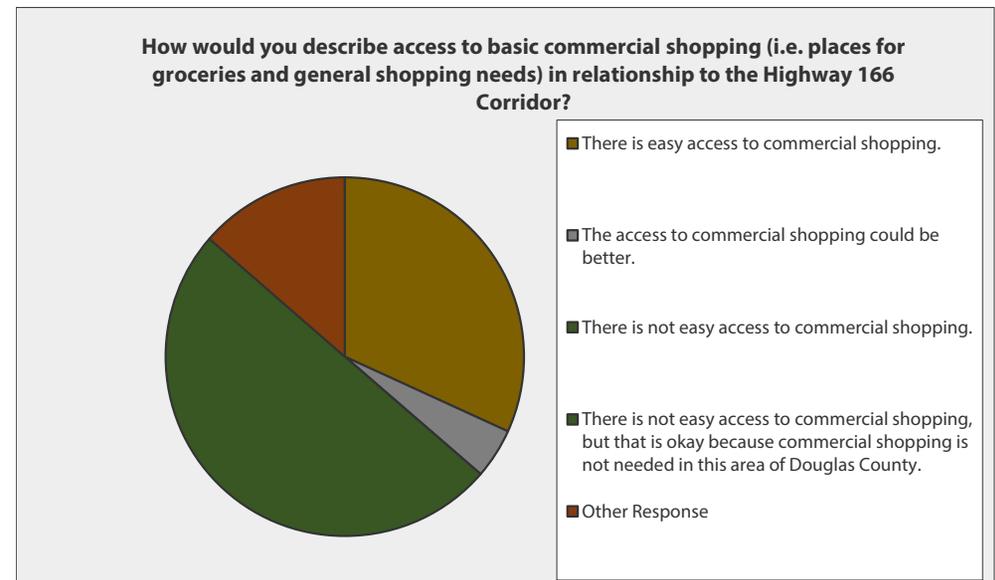


### Other Responses:

- 3-5/5-10 acres. Keep it rural, otherwise it won't be scenic. Mixed-use is a code word for second market rental and slum. Ownership requires maintenance
- Not sure, I don't believe Hotels and Strips Malls are what we need
- Maintain the overall appearance as it is developed to preserve a less populated feel

# 6 How would you describe access to basic commercial shopping (i.e. places for groceries and general shopping needs) in relationship to the Highway 166 Corridor?

- There is easy access to commercial shopping - **32%**
- The access to commercial shopping could be better - **4.5%**
- There is not easy access to commercial shopping - **0%**
- There is not easy access to commercial shopping, but that is okay because commercial shopping is not needed in this area of Douglas County - **50%**
- Other Response - **13.5%**



### Other Responses:

- Mom/ Pop shops aplenty. Prefer this to "visionary" village shopping at chains concept. Nothing scenic in Buckhead, or Vinings
- Access to shopping is sure to be a growing concern in the future. This being said, care should be taken to weave commerce carefully in to the natural surrounding
- We need access to quality shopping like Trader Joes or Whole Foods - NOT Dollar General stores

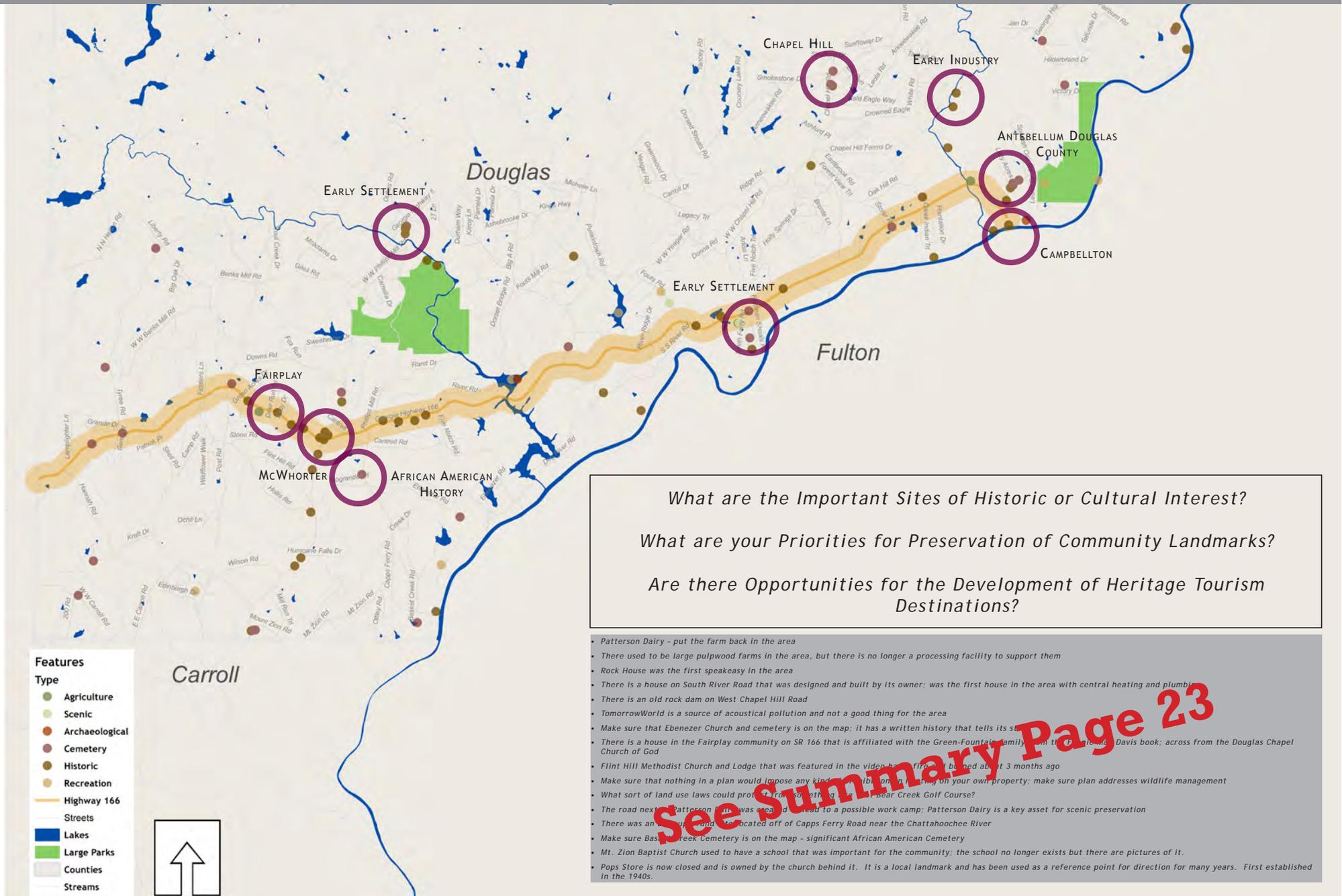
## 7 What do you find most desirable about the Highway 166 corridor?

- The lack of development, Keep it rural.
- The current condition of the area.
- The rural and natural appearance of the area.
- Rural and scenic beauty
- rural lifestyle
- Nothing
- Open spaces and woodlands.
- The fact that it is not as developed as other parts of the county.
- Scenic by-way.....that should be preserved
- The lack of commercial development.
- The Last undeveloped metro community in Douglas County. Open rolling hills and hearty forests. Lightly populate and mostly quiet.
- It's always been my home and ,I live here because its country . I work in the City ,I don't want to live next to one.
- I like the idea of the trail. It seems very useful for many people. I do not like the idea of a lot of development in the area.
- No strip malls and empty stores like many other parts of Douglas County. Still looks and feels like the country. If you want to live in the city with stores all around you, then move to the city.
- Leave it alone and quit trying to develop everything you see.
- No commercial development.
- As is, we enjoy the backset off R/W for privacy, and quick access to resources, and activities - elsewhere. Chose location 16 years ago, due to access, but not close proximity to, ATL (30-35 on a good day, not 10), UWG, I-20, US-27, and AL. My backyard is hiking, I can hear the zip-line, but I have owls, deer, and quiet. How are you going to improve that?
- The lack of commercial development.

## 8 What do you find least desirable about the Highway 166 corridor?

- Can't think of anything besides fixing up the 2 parks mentioned above.
- That it will change.
- New development.
- High rates of speed
- too many trucks, people driving too fast, not enough traffic enforcement
- Adds more traffic
- Too much traffic
- Any thoughts that large subdivisions or shopping venues might be built.
- Open large tracks of land are most likely being held as investment. The owners are hoping to profit and won't be so concerned about how the property is used when the best offer is placed. Significant Noise from Air traffic to and from Atlanta Airport. Currently Traffic on 166 would benefit from an occasional passing lane.
- That it has become the focus of the DCDA. I feel as though the DCDA is pinning the hope of DC on our rural area. I do not want to become Clayton ,DeKalb or the North End of DC.
- People trying to develop it. We moved here for a reason, leave it alone please.
- No good recreational/green spaces for walking, hiking, biking in Hwy. 166/Post Road area.
- GDOT refuses to regulate blind curves despite years of protests. Overweight commercial trucking uses it as a bypass for weigh station. Upslopes are ignored by state until last priority during icing conditions. As proposed, it is nothing but a land-grab for power and future annexation, no matter the lipstick.
- The increased traffic from large 18 wheel trucks.

# WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...



*What are the Important Sites of Historic or Cultural Interest?*

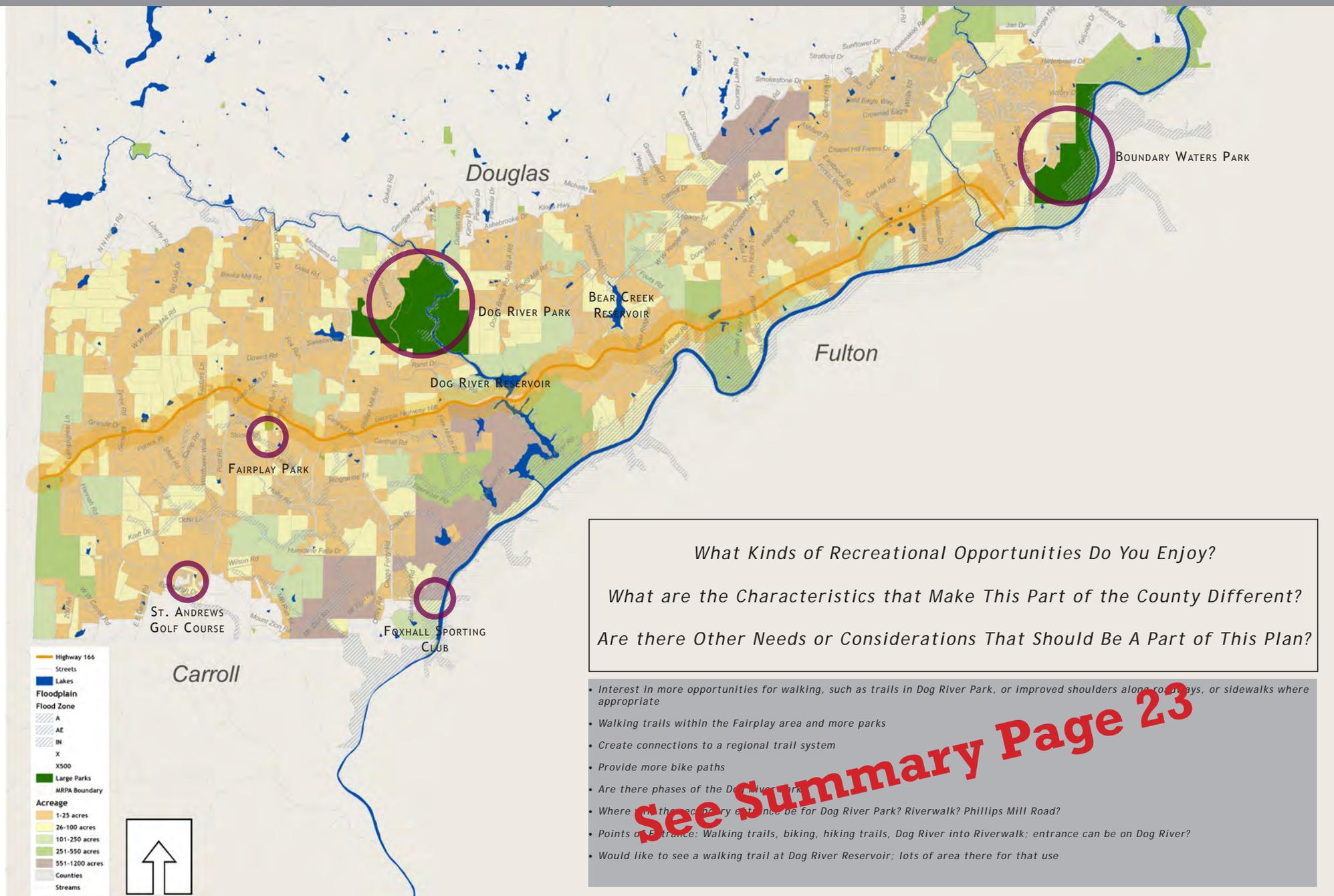
*What are your Priorities for Preservation of Community Landmarks?*

*Are there Opportunities for the Development of Heritage Tourism Destinations?*

- Patterson Dairy - put the farm back in the area
- There used to be large pulpwood farms in the area, but there is no longer a processing facility to support them
- Rock House was the first speakeasy in the area
- There is a house on South River Road that was designed and built by its owner; was the first house in the area with central heating and plumbing
- There is an old rock dam on West Chapel Hill Road
- TomorrowWorld is a source of acoustical pollution and not a good thing for the area
- Make sure that Ebenezer Church and cemetery is on the map; it has a written history that tells its story
- There is a house in the Fairplay community on SR 166 that is affiliated with the Green-Fontaine family from the Green-Fontaine Davis book; across from the Douglas Chapel Church of God
- Flint Hill Methodist Church and Lodge that was featured in the video by the firm - been closed about 3 months ago
- Make sure that nothing in a plan would impose any kind of restriction on anything on your own property; make sure plan addresses wildlife management
- What sort of land use laws could protect from something like the Bear Creek Golf Course?
- The road next to Patterson Dairy was created to lead to a possible work camp; Patterson Dairy is a key asset for scenic preservation
- There was an old road located off of Capps Ferry Road near the Chattahoochee River
- Make sure Bass Creek Cemetery is on the map - significant African American Cemetery
- Mt. Zion Baptist Church used to have a school that was important for the community; the school no longer exists but there are pictures of it.
- Pops Store is now closed and is owned by the church behind it. It is a local landmark and has been used as a reference point for direction for many years. First established in the 1940s.

**See Summary Page 23**

# WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO...



*What Kinds of Recreational Opportunities Do You Enjoy?*

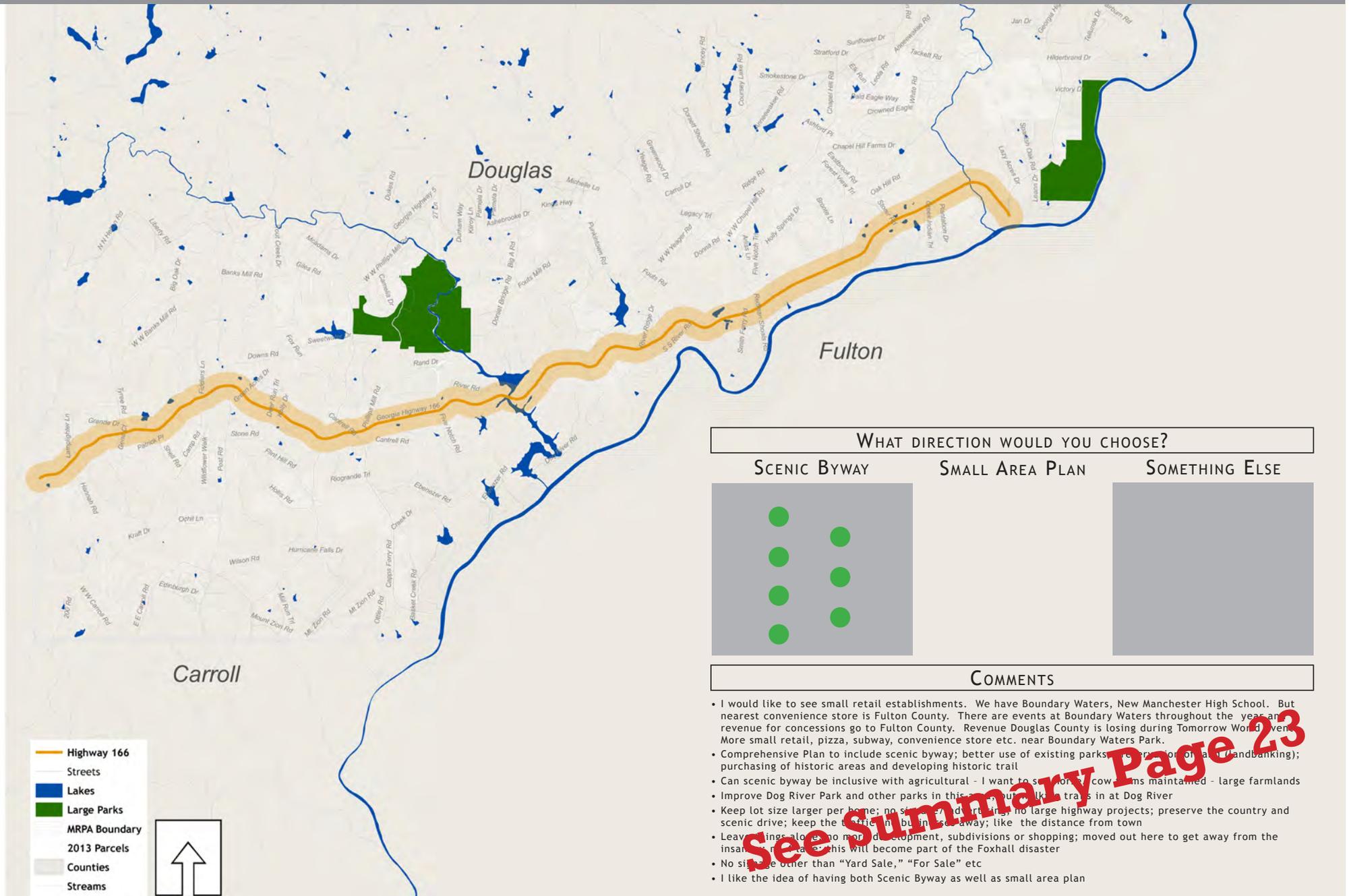
*What are the Characteristics that Make This Part of the County Different?*

*Are there Other Needs or Considerations That Should Be A Part of This Plan?*

- Interest in more opportunities for walking, such as trails in Dog River Park, or improved shoulders along roadways, or sidewalks where appropriate
- Walking trails within the Fairplay area and more parks
- Create connections to a regional trail system
- Provide more bike paths
- Are there phases of the Dog River Park?
- Where in the scenery entrance be for Dog River Park? Riverwalk? Phillips Mill Road?
- Points of Entrance: Walking trails, biking, hiking trails, Dog River into Riverwalk; entrance can be on Dog River?
- Would like to see a walking trail at Dog River Reservoir; lots of area there for that use

**See Summary Page 23**

# HOW DO YOU WANT TO GET THERE...



See Summary Page 23

# Summary of Comments

## Where It All Began: Important Historic and Cultural Sites & Preservation Priorities

- Patterson Dairy – put the farm back in the area
- There used to be large pulpwood farms in the area, but there is no longer a processing facility to support them
- Rock House was the first speakeasy in the area
- There is a house on South River Road that was designed and built by its owner; was the first house in the area with central heating and plumbing
- There is an old rock dam on West Chapel Hill Road
- TomorrowWorld is a source of acoustical pollution and not a good thing for the area
- Make sure that Ebenezer Church and cemetery is on the map; it has a written history that tells its story
- There is a house in the Fairplay community on SR 166 that is affiliated with the Green-Fountain family from the Fannie Mae Davis book; across from the Douglas Chapel Church of God
- Flint Hill Methodist Church and Lodge that was featured in the video had a fire and burned about 3 months ago
- Make sure that nothing in a plan would impose any kind of prohibition on hunting on your own property; make sure plan addresses wildlife management
- What sort of land use laws could protect from something like that Bear Creek Golf Course?
- The road next to Patterson Dairy was created to lead to a possible work camp; Patterson Dairy is a key asset for scenic preservation
- There was an EPA superfund site located off of Capps Ferry Road near the Chattahoochee River
- Make sure Basket Creek Cemetery is on the map – significant African American Cemetery
- Mt. Zion Baptist Church used to have a school that was important for the community; the school no longer exists but there are pictures of it.
- Pops Store is now closed and is owned by the church behind it. It is a local landmark and has been used as a reference point for direction for many years. First established in the 1940s.

## Where Do You Want To Go: Recreational Opportunities & Unique Character

- Interest in more opportunities for walking, such as trails in Dog River Park, or improved shoulders along roadways, or sidewalks where appropriate
- Walking trails within the Fairplay area and more parks
- Create connections to a regional trail system
- Provide more bike paths
- Are there phases of the Dog River Park?
- Where will the secondary entrance be for Dog River Park? Riverwalk? Phillips Mill Road?
- Points of Entrance: Walking trails, biking, hiking trails, Dog River into Riverwalk; entrance can be on Dog River?
- Would like to see a walking trail at Dog River Reservoir; lots of area there for that use

## How Do You Want To Get There: Strategies for Implementation

- I would like to see small retail establishments. We have Boundary Waters, New Manchester High School. But nearest convenience store is Fulton County. There are events at Boundary Waters throughout the year and revenue for concessions go to Fulton County. Revenue Douglas County is losing during Tomorrow World event. More small retail, pizza, subway, convenience store etc. near Boundary Waters Park.
- Comprehensive Plan to include scenic byway; better use of existing parks; Preservation of land (landbanking); purchasing of historic areas and developing historic trail
- Can scenic byway be inclusive with agricultural – I want to see horse/ cow farms maintained – large farmlands
- Improve Dog River Park and other parks in this area; put walking trails in at Dog River
- Keep lot size larger per home; no signage/ advertising; no large highway projects; preserve the country and scenic drive; keep the traffic and businesses away; like the distance from town
- Leave things alone; no more development, subdivisions or shopping; moved out here to get away from the insanity; no 4 lane; this will become part of the Foxhall disaster
- No signage other than “Yard Sale,” “For Sale” etc
- I like the idea of having both Scenic Byway as well as small area plan



Douglas County  
Highway 166  
Conservation Corridor  
Alternatives Analysis

# Agricultural Districts

Agricultural Districts designate areas where agriculture is the preferred land use based on various criteria, including farming, silviculture, viticulture, aquaculture, animal and poultry husbandry (with limitations) and agriculturally oriented businesses (with limitations).

## Who is Using this Tool?

Douglas County already has Agricultural Zoning. The Rural Agricultural District (AG) and the Residential Agricultural District (R-A) are examples of agricultural districts that are already on the books.

*The **AG Rural Agricultural District** is established to protect rural areas of Douglas County in which agriculture, farm operations, conservation land and timber stands on parcels of 10 acres or more are the established land use pattern, and to provide an environment which encourages residents to continue to live and practice agricultural operations without adverse impact arising from more dense development.*

*The **R-A Residential Agricultural District** is established to protect and promote a suitable environment for rural or "large lot suburban" family life, agriculture including the raising of livestock and poultry, and the development, and the development of natural resources and other uses requiring extensive areas of land. This District is required to protect the future development of land in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of the county as amended.*

## For Consideration

The majority of the study area (73%) is zoned R-A. However, in practical application, there may be some distinct differences within the existing zoning code that would encourage the rapid transformation from agricultural use to suburban uses in this area. These include minimum lot size requirements, restrictions on agricultural uses, and limitations on the amount of AG zoned land in the area to encourage agricultural uses.

Undertaking a thorough code audit of the County's agricultural and rural residential zoning uses would be an easy first step. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan and feedback from this planning process can serve as a guide to this effort. The zoning ordinance already covers a number of uses that should be considered: crop production, animal husbandry, country inns, farmers markets, roadside produce standards, historical sites, etc. A code audit will align these uses, and any necessary restrictions with the vision and goals that have been articulated for this part of the county.

Consideration of uses should also go along with consideration of development capacity. An analysis of the most recently available parcel data shows that 66% of the acreage in the study area is comprised of lots that are 10 acres or greater; 34% of the acreage is comprised of lots under 10 acres. Comparing this to a

previous parcel layer, (c.2000) 75% of lots were 10 acres and larger, and 25% of lots were smaller than 10 acres.

In both survey responses and community forums, the general preference favored limiting development in the area of Highway 166. 73% of survey respondents noted that in 10-20 years, development along Highway 166 should look about the same as it does in 2015. However, it is worth noting the pace of transition of land from large lot to small lot acreages if a community goal is to preserve the current look of the community.

Agricultural Districts can be used in combination with other zoning tools to produce the desired preservation outcomes. These include buffer and setback requirements, as well as provisions that would encourage cluster zoning or conservation subdivisions to preserve large greenspace areas.

## Buffers and Setbacks

Buffers and setbacks specify requirements for a strip of land with natural or planted vegetation located between adjacent land uses, buildings, or property lines, designed to separate and partially obstruct the view of adjacent land uses or properties from one another.

## Cluster/ Open Space Zoning

A zoning classification for commercial, residential or mixed-use development in which a significant portion of the site (e.g. 40% or greater) is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while the buildings are clustered on the remainder of the property. This typically requires establishment of ownership and a maintenance arrangement to govern common open space and qualified staff to administer the ordinance. It is also recommended that open space is protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement.

## Conservation Subdivision

A type of residential or mixed-use subdivision development in which significant portions of the site are set aside as undivided permanently protected open space, with houses clustered on the remainder of the property. The development plans must meet certain criteria specified in a zoning ordinance. It typically requires establishment of ownership and maintenance arrangement to govern common open space, and qualified staff to administer.

## Purchase of Development Rights

Purchase of Development Rights are an agreement in which a landowner sells the right to develop his property to a qualified non-profit, land trust, or government agency. A conservation easement is placed on the property permanently protecting the property from development. The landowner retains the land, and any rights not purchased as a part of the agreement.

## Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights enables landowners in an area planned to remain as an open space “sending zone” to sell their development rights for use in “receiving” areas of the community, where higher density development is acceptable or desirable. Buying these additional development rights allows developers in the “receiving” areas to build at a higher density than would otherwise be allowed. A conservation easement is placed on the property permanently protecting the property from further development. The landowner that sells their rights retains the land, and any rights not purchased as a part of the agreement.

## Who is Using this Tool?

Carroll County has been a leader in the effort to purchase development rights from private property. Through this program, Carroll County has preserved land for both agricultural and greenspace uses. Using resources collected through a local SPLOST and other public funds, Carroll County pays local property owners for 75% of the value of their land in exchanged for placing a conservation easement on their property.

Other jurisdictions in Metro Atlanta have opted for a Transfer of Development Rights Program, including the cities of Atlanta, Milton, Chattahoochee Hills. All three programs are structured differently and incentivize different models of land conservation.

## For Consideration

### Purchase of Development Rights

Determine the land preservation goals that the program would be designed to achieve. As an example, the Carroll County program focuses on acquiring greenspace, preserving farmland, protecting natural resources, and developing passive recreation areas.

Determine a funding source. As an example, the most recent Five Year Short Term Work Program for Carroll County identifies \$1,500,000.00 in SPLOST funds to be used to “Develop a Purchase of Develop Rights and Transferable Development Rights program and incorporate TDR provisions in to the development regulations” as an ongoing activity.

A conversation with local officials to understand the administration of the program would also be beneficial for county staff. Selection process and program administration will involve understanding details best learned from those who have administered the program over many years.

### Transfer of Development Rights

OCGA §36-66A outlines procedures governing transfer of development rights programs in Georgia, including the requirements for sending and receiving areas and other administrative provisions. Because of the complexity and nuance of the programs, it could be important to review existing ordinances and consultant with experts that have experience developing and calibrating the appropriate standards.

Beyond Metro Atlanta, there are communities all over the US that have used TDR programs to accomplish their land conservation goals. Identifying communities with similar characteristics and goals could be a good starting point for consideration of use of this tool for Douglas County.



# Scenic Byway Designation

Scenic Byway Designation identifies segments of scenic roads for special protection measures. Measures may include litter control, sign regulations, design guidelines, land use controls or other measures intended to maintain the rural character of the roadway. Measures are described in a corridor management plan that must be approved by the State Department of Transportation.

## Scenic Corridor

Scenic Corridor designation is put in place by a local government to protect scenic views by requiring land uses that complement rather than detract from the scenic experience. Scenic Corridor designation would require design guidelines and design review administered through the local government, and can add complexity to local zoning and land use regulations. Scenic Corridor designation may occur without being designated as a part of the State Scenic Byways Program.

## Who is Using this Tool?

Various jurisdictions in the State have designated Scenic Byways, but several consulted for this project include

- Altamaha Scenic Byway (City of Darien, McIntosh County and Glynn County)
- Cohutta-Chattahoochee Byway (Murray County and Whitfield County)
- Enduring Farmlands Byway (Pulaski County and Wilcox County)
- Soque Scenic Byway (Habersham County)

## For Consideration

Douglas County initiated Scenic Byway designation in 1999, and again in 2008. So far, it appears that the proposed route meets the eligibility criteria, per GDOT. The 1999 and 2008 applications do not include the same project extent (in 2008 a portion of SR 92 was included). So if Scenic Byway designation is pursued, the application should be updated and resubmitted. A Steering Committee for the project could help ensure that the application process is seen through to completion, including the development of the Corridor Management Plan.

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) includes some distinct components, including documentation of scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archaeological, and recreational qualities. The CMP will also identify a vision for the Corridor, and strategies for developing/ managing the Byway. More information on how this could apply to Highway 166 is found in the Recommendations portion of this document.

Douglas County could also use its local zoning powers to provide a greater degree of protection by imposing land use and design restrictions as part of a locally designated Scenic Corridor. However, this would be optional, and is not a requirement of Scenic Byway designation.



# Conservation Easement

A Conservation Easement is a legal agreement made by a property owner to restrict the type and amount of development that may take place on his or her property. A partial interest in the property is transferred to a qualified non-profit, land trust or governmental entity either by gift or purchase, often in exchange for a tax savings. As ownership changes, the land remains subject to the easement restrictions.

## Historic Preservation Easement

Historic Preservation Easements can be used to protect historic landscapes, battlefields, building facades, traditional cultural places, or archaeological sites. Under the terms of an easement, a property owner grants a portion of, or interest in, their property rights to an organization whose mission includes historic preservation. The individual retains private ownership of the property and may obtain financial benefits. The easement is binding on current and future owners.

## Who is Using this Tool?

Cobb County will hold conservation easements on community open space in subdivisions. There are also several non-profit organizations in Metro Atlanta that hold conservation easements, including the Southern Conservation Land Trust and the Piedmont Land Trust.

The Atlanta Preservation Center and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation both hold historic preservation easements.

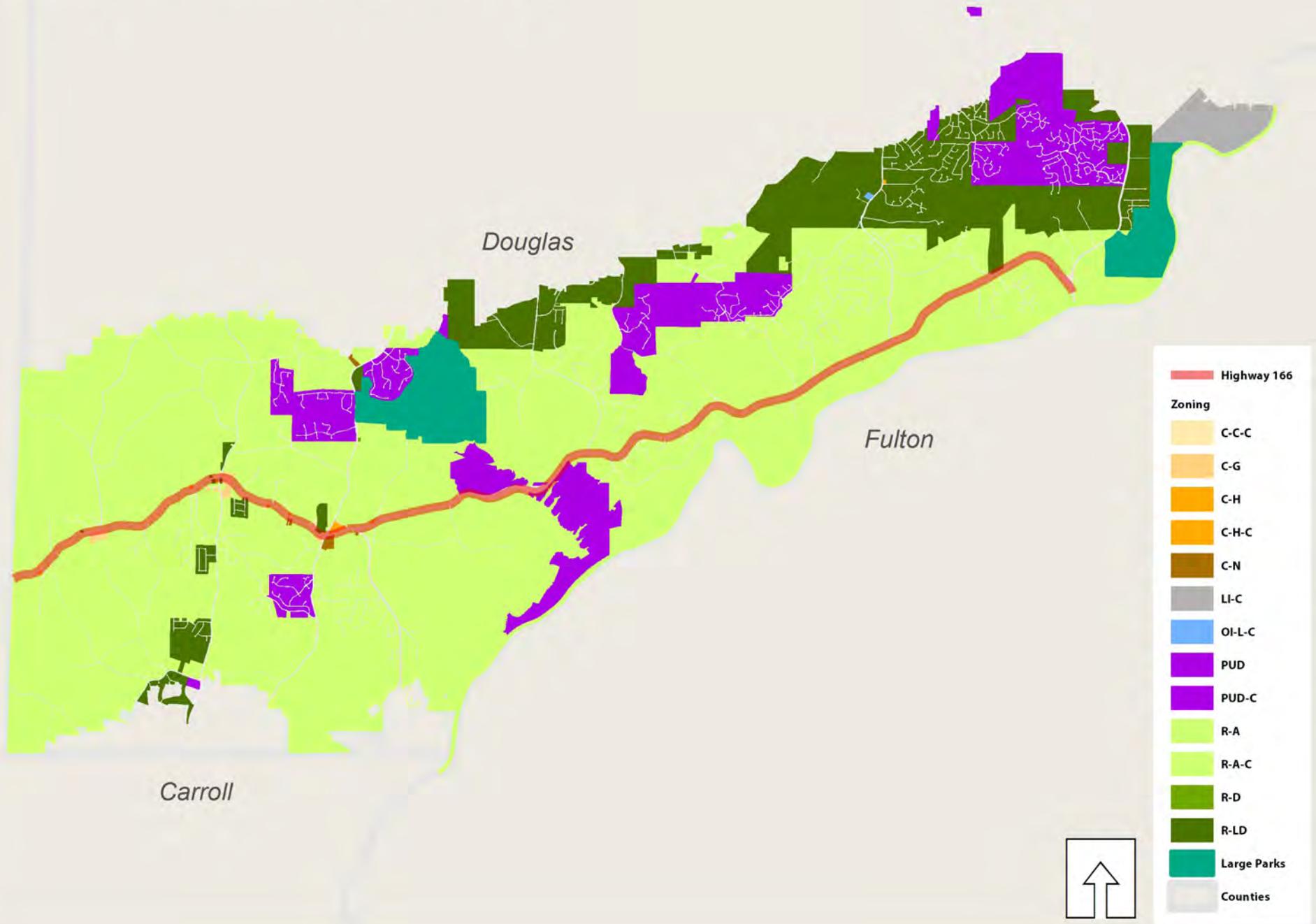
## For Consideration

OCGA §44-10 enables the donation of conservation easements in Georgia and specifies those organizations that are qualified holders of the easements. Numerous conservation easements are in place around Metro Atlanta for various reasons. Consideration should be given to whether Douglas County could take on the responsibility of holding easements in furtherance of local conservation goals. Otherwise, it could be a benefit to help local property owners to identify private organizations that would take conservation easements in Douglas County. The use of both conservation easements and historic preservation easements in combination could further community goals for preserving the character of this corridor.

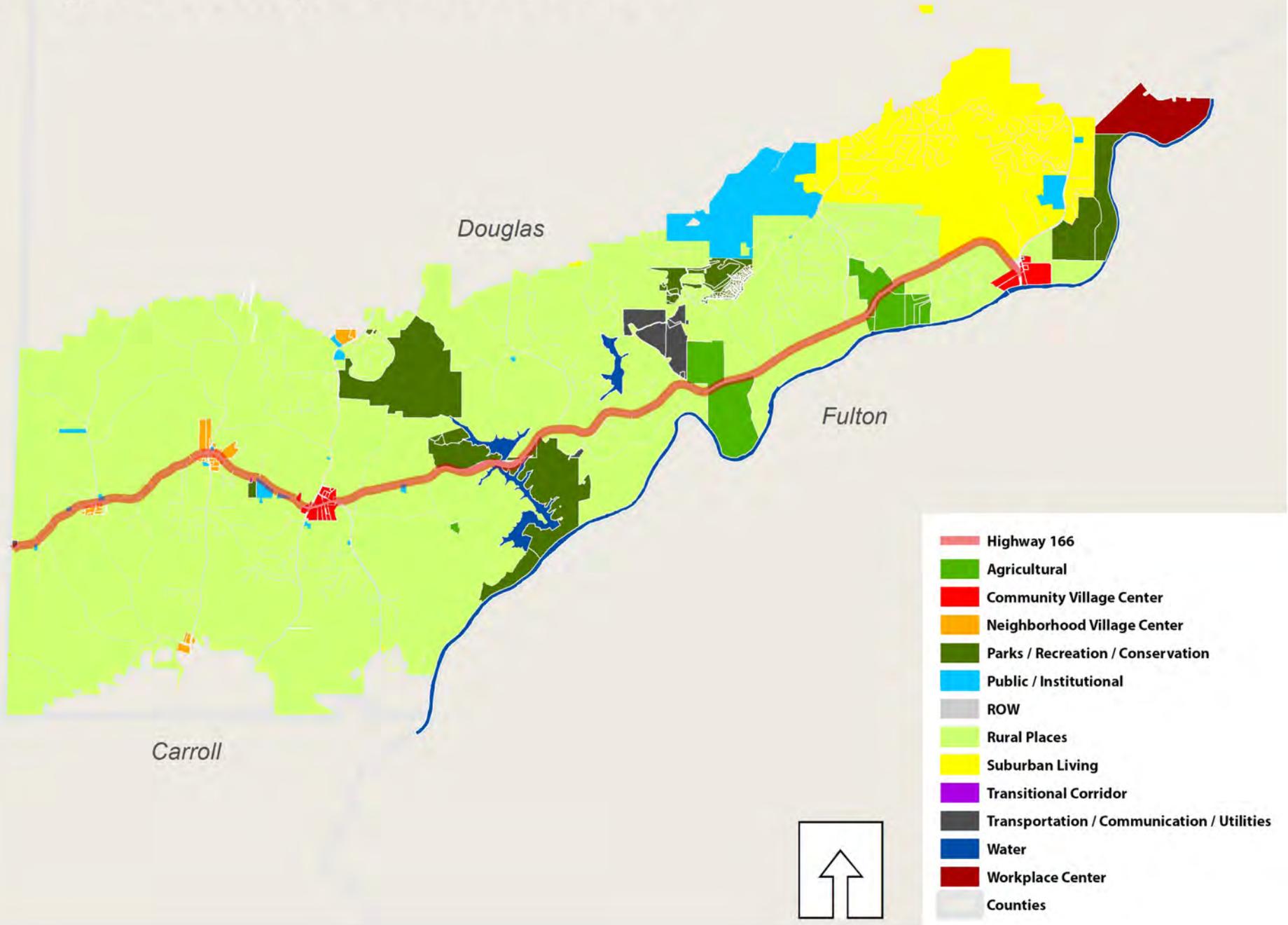
There are almost 50 historic preservation easements placed on significant buildings and sites throughout Metro Atlanta. Heritage preservation was an issue that garnered favorable responses from survey participants, 82 % identifying history as something that is important and should be preserved. 76% of respondents also favored the various approaches to interpreting public history, including the installation of historic markers, acquisition of historically significant sites, or special events that made historically significant sites open to the public.



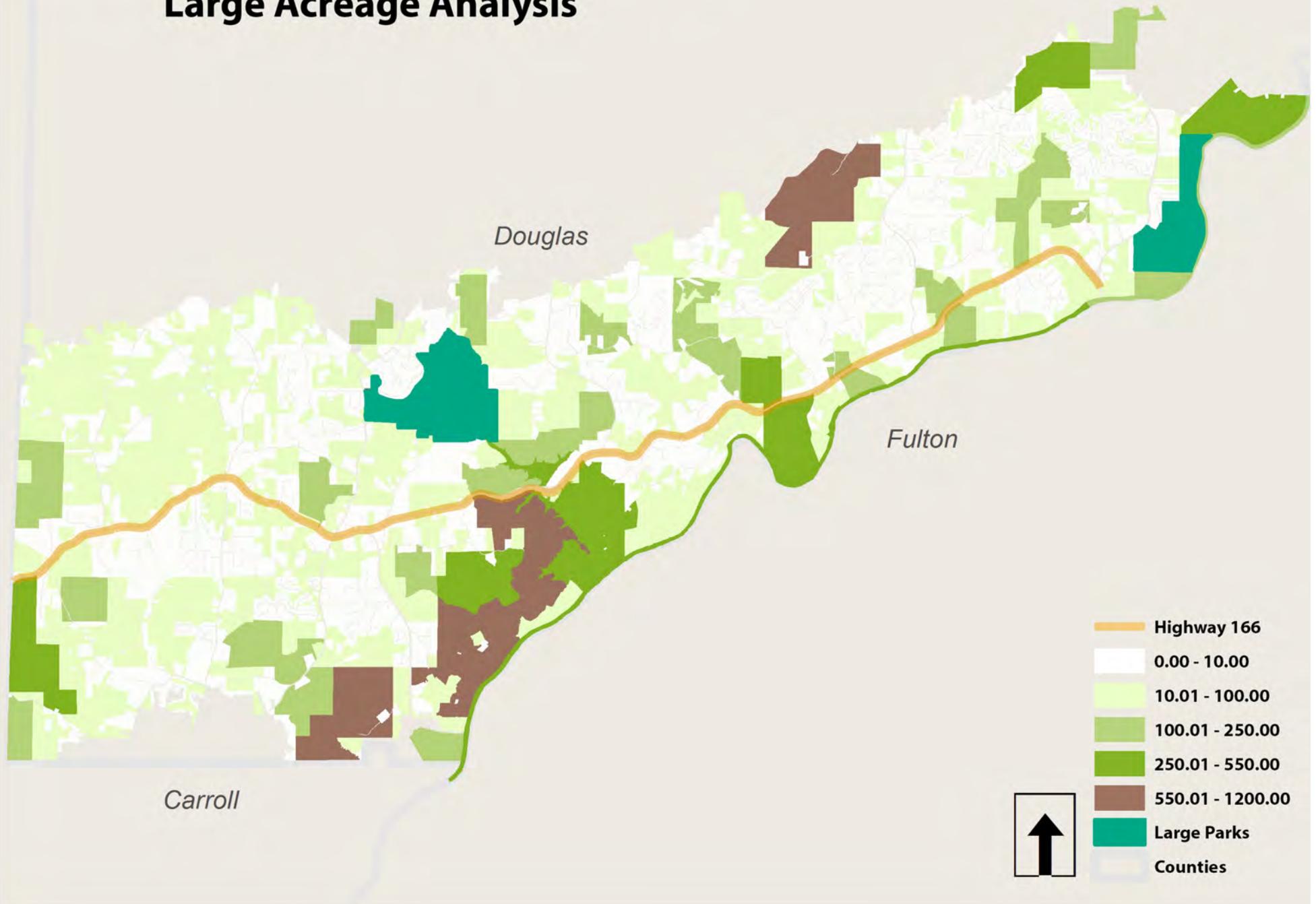
# Douglas County Zoning



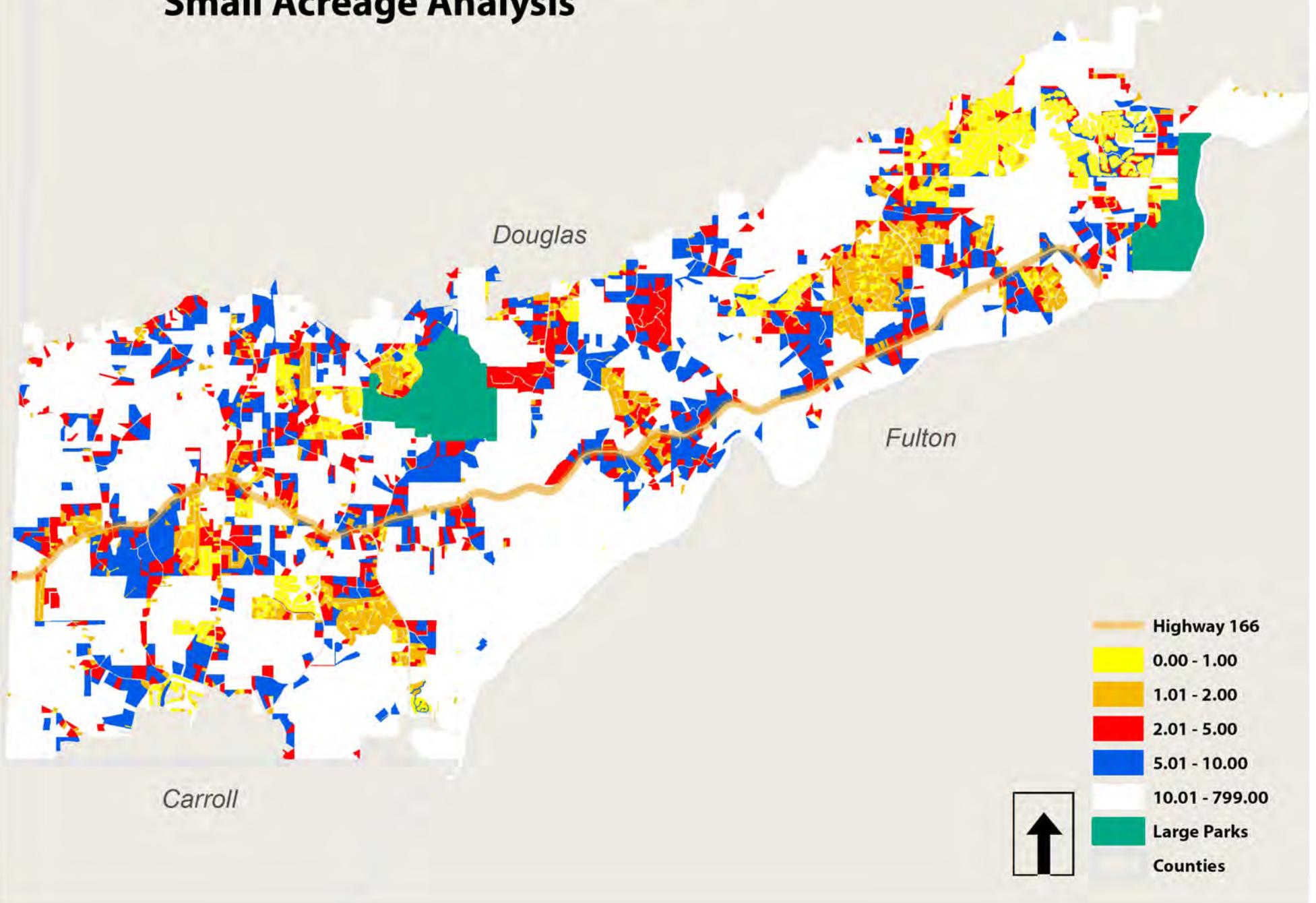
# Douglas County Future Land Use



# Douglas County Highway 166 Corridor Large Acreage Analysis



# Douglas County Highway 166 Corridor Small Acreage Analysis





Douglas County  
Highway 166  
Conservation Corridor  
Conclusions &  
Recommendations

# Conclusions

Through the course of the study, community responses favored limiting development and preserving the existing appearance of the study area to the greatest degree. Though the area looks like it has been largely removed from development pressures, an examination of maps and trends undertaken as a part of this study and included herein support some of the observations shared by residents through the course of this study:

- Large, master-planned projects can fail to build to designed capacity; amenities fail to materialize; and infrastructure can prove to be substandard, leaving the community on the hook for costly improvements.
- The area has been impacted by foreclosures and property values continue to lag behind pre-recession levels, even when other areas of metro Atlanta see improvement.
- Existing commercial developments, particularly along the I-20 corridor, suffer from vacancies and neglect; there should be a focus on redevelopment before moving into undeveloped areas.

The community has articulated an overarching sense of conservation and preservation values. Among ideas that were expressed by the community:

- Preservation of rural areas provide opportunities for wildlife protection and reduce possibility of wildlife/vehicular crashes.
- Reintroduce traditional agricultural uses and support permissive zoning for hobby farms, on-site sales and increased opportunities for animal husbandry.
- Support the on-going protection of the county's water resources and encourage opportunities to utilize low-impact design practices.
- Identify sustainable forestry practices that could be introduced into this area of the community.
- Understand the history and the families that can trace their roots back many generations and create the heritage of the area.

Pulling all of these ideas together, the following observations are offered in summary of the initial phase of this work:

The existing zoning generally seems to serve the area well in terms of overall density, but considerations of existing uses may need to be reviewed in the context of this document. Considerations about future development should prioritize high quality design aesthetics, generous lot sizes, and redevelopment of existing nodes. One of the most effective ways to set standards and expectations for desirable development in this area is to encourage a local, citizen-driven advocacy organization, working in partnership with local leadership. Scenic Byway designation along Highway 166 could set the tone for conservation planning in the vicinity of the corridor. The scenic byway could serve as a catalyst project to organize such a group, and their work could effectively continue beyond this project to encompass varied aspects of preservation and conservation planning within the Highway 166 Corridor.



# Recommendations

## Short Term Actions

- Code Audit of Agricultural Zoning Ordinance
- Creation of a Grassroots Conservancy or Conservation Advocacy Group
- Application and Corridor Management Plan for Highway 166 Scenic Byway

## Mid Term Actions

- Identify Boundaries of a Conservation District Around Highway 166
- Prepare a Comprehensive Plan Amendment that Provides Greater Detail on the Vision, Goals and Land Uses for the Highway 166 Corridor, Including Improved Recreational Opportunities
- Plan Field Trips/ Organize Peer Exchanges with Local Communities that have Successfully Implemented Conservation Planning Techniques

## Long Term Actions

- Undertake a Cost of Community Service Assesment
- Assess Specific Land Use Patterns as relates to the Long Term Success of Subdivision Development
- Consider a Moratorium at the Appropriate Time, if Necessary
- Draft Specific Design Criteria to Bring About Desired Growth in the Conservation District



**ARC**

