

The Park at Fort Gillem Project Update

July 21, 2025

Who is Partnership for Southern Equity?

Founded in 2008, the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) **advances policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity** for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South.

Through trainings, forums, research, and engagement efforts, **PSE brings together the regional community to advance just, sustainable, and humane practices** for balanced growth and opportunity.



The Project Team

City of Forest Park

Kimberly James

City Council Member, URA Board
Chair

Rochelle Dennis

Interim Economic Development
Director, Main Street Manager

Charise Clay

Economic Development Staff
Assistant

Ricky Clark

City Manager

Partnership for Southern Equity

Kaziem Woodbury

Just Solutions Director

Jennifer Cobb

Just Solutions Manager

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Jr. Management Analyst

Resident Advisory Committee

Angela Hernandez

**Carolyn Harris-
DeLaney**

Delunda Cobb

Antinette Wilson

Phillisa G.

Joann Thomas

Josephine Martin

Raven Dean

Ronneka Wilson

Background

In 2012, the City of Forest Park, through its Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA), purchased Fort Gillem as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative.

- Acquisition included **125-units of former military (Wherry) housing**, repurposed by the Army as naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), namely The Park at Ft. Gillem
- **Stipulation:** Honor the pre-existing third-party property management contract until its conclusion in October 2025
- The **URA partnered with PSE** to understand who lives here, their needs, priorities, and lived experiences, so future decisions reflect the people most impacted



PROJECT OBJECTIVES



Project Objectives

1. **Ensure transparency, equity, and inclusivity** in stakeholder engagement.
2. **Collect qualitative and quantitative data** to gain a comprehensive understanding of residents' experiences, perspectives, and needs.
3. **Identify opportunities to mitigate resident hardships** that may arise through the URA's decision-making process.
4. **Equip the City of Forest Park and the URA Board with robust data and insights to guide future decisions** regarding Park at Fort Gillem.

Project Activities to Date

Phase I: Discovery, Assessment, & Training (Jan – Jul)

- ✓ Objective 1: Finalize the work plan
- ✓ Objective 2: Equitable Development and Anti-displacement Training
- ✓ Objective 3: Survey design
- Objective 4: Thriving Communities Technical Assistance – *in progress*
- Objective 5: Site History & Existing Conditions Assessment – *in progress*

Key Phase I Activities:

- Facilitated 3 hour in-person training with four URA board members and two Economic Development staff
- Engaged with affordable housing developers interested in redeveloping the property
- Reviewed background documents regarding site history and current payroll

Project Activities to Date

Phase II: Community Engagement (Mar – Oct)

- ✓ Objective 1: Form Resident Advisory Committee
- ✓ Objective 2: Communications Strategy Roadmap Design
(*codesigned with committee*)
- ❑ Objective 3: Community Engagement Activities – *in progress*



Key Phase II Activities:

- Drafted an introductory letter to inform residents about the engagement efforts and distributed door-to-door
- Supported a community block party kick-off event in April and completed door-to-door canvassing to promote awareness and attendance
- Designed and distributed a survey with a 43% response rate from leaseholders
- Recruited a committee of 10 residents and facilitated 6 meetings to-date
- Hosted one resident meeting and planning for the second event on July 24th

Project Activities to Date

Phase III: Findings (Jul – Oct)

- ❑ Objective 1: Community Findings Report – *in progress*
- ❑ Objective 2: Technical Assistance Advisement – *in progress*

Key Phase II Activities:

- Finalized survey results and created a plan to share findings with URA
- Reviewed and analyzed data shared by city attorney to inform recommendations within the Community Findings Report
- Began developing case studies and best practices research in equitable development of BRAC sites

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS



Site Snapshot

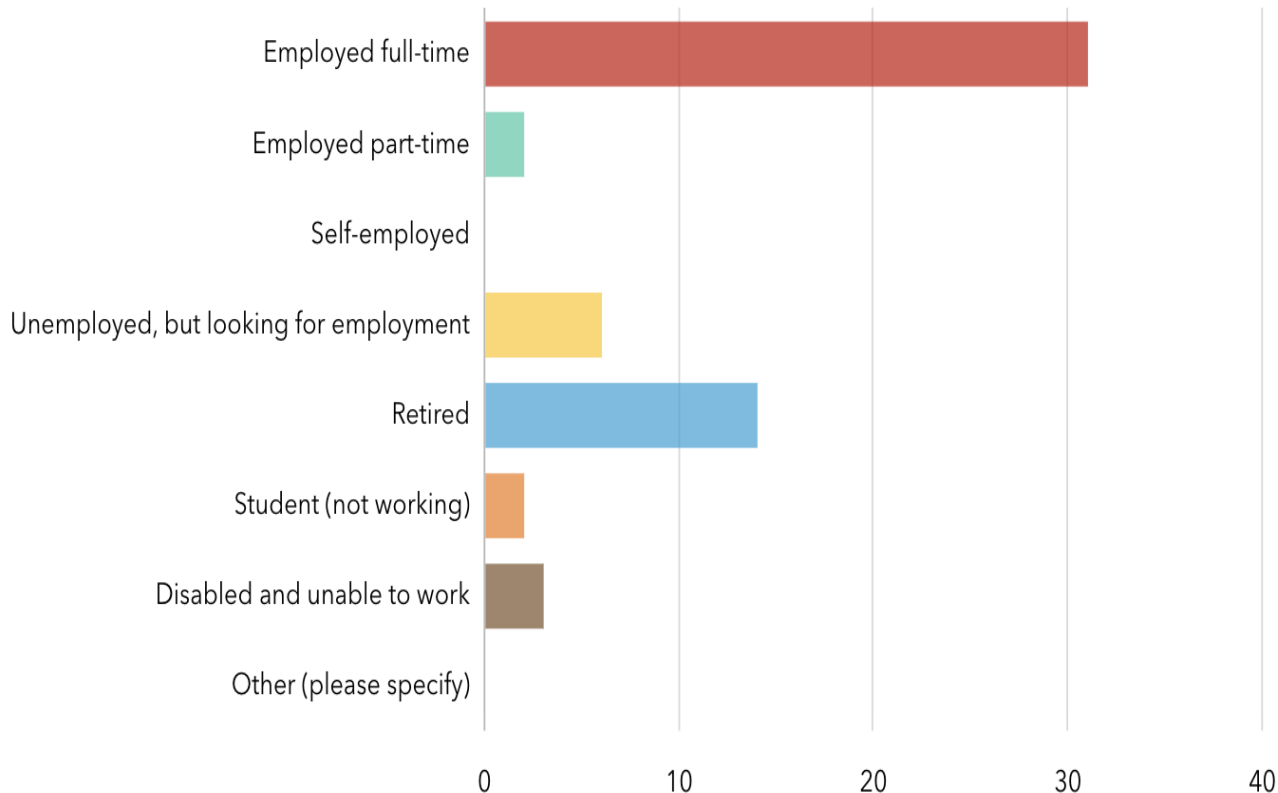
- The estimated site area ranges between **31.26 – 34.34 acres**.
- There are **113 of 125 (2-3 BD)** units occupied as of March 2025.
- Average rent charged is **\$611.93 per month (simplex/duplex)**.
- Average household size is **2.33 people per household**.
- The **most reported issues** were high utility costs, missing insulation, outdated windows, accessibility, pest problems, poor air quality, and lack of general upkeep.
- Visible presence of mold and deteriorated roofing conditions. Sidewalks and roads are visibly **cracked and uneven** due to overgrown tree roots and lack of upkeep.
- Residents appreciate the open space, but the majority would like to see a **designated play area** and **communal space**.
- The most common phrases used to describe the neighborhood were “**peaceful**”, “**quiet**”, and “**safe**”.



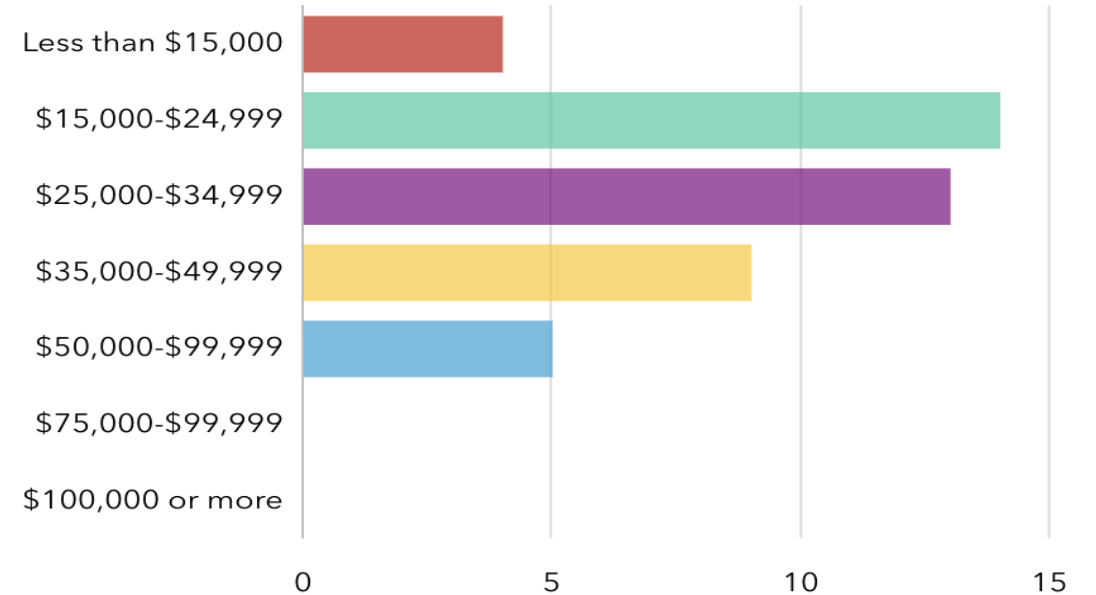
WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR: Demographics

51 completed surveys; 44 are leaseholders representing a total of 93 household members.

What is the current employment status of adults (ages 18 or older) living in your household?



What is your total household income?



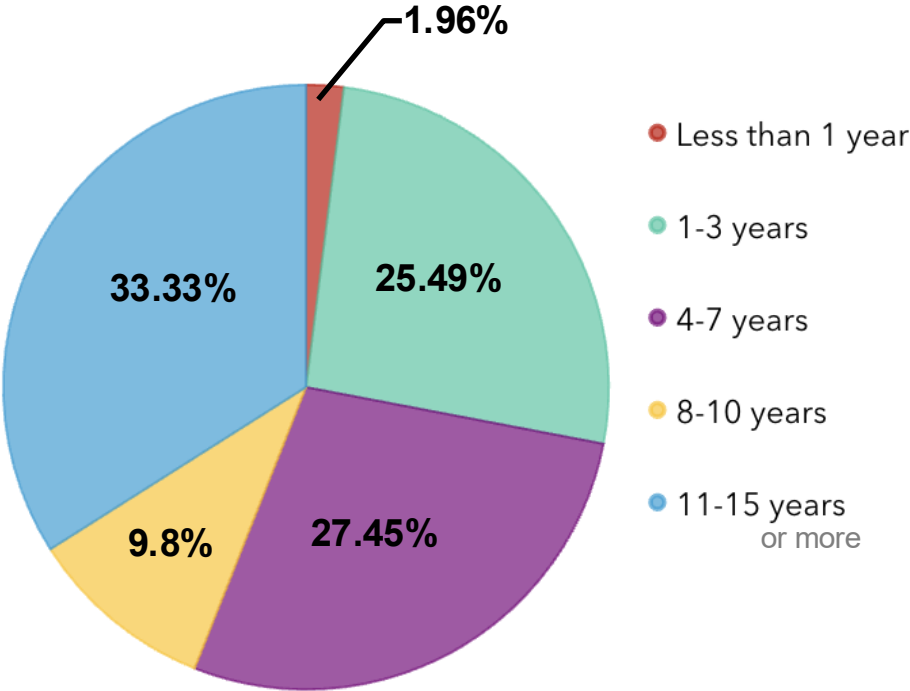
2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines for a Family of 4 is \$32,150

Over 60% of residents reported a household income below \$35,000, with 35% of residents earning less than \$25,000.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR:

Housing Experience

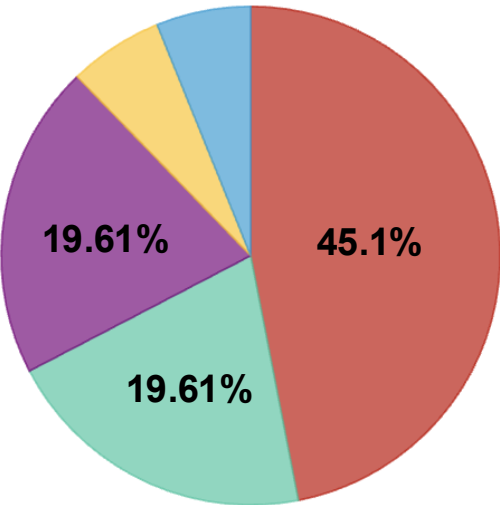
How long have you lived in this housing development?



- Residents reported enjoying living at The Park at Ft. Gillem.
- Residents reported having good relationships with their neighbors, feeling safe, and believe it is a good place to raise kids.
- 70% of residents have lived in Ft. Gillem for at least 4 years, some as many as 30 years.

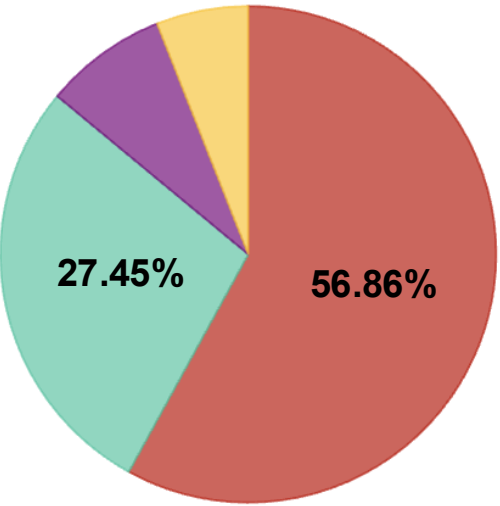
Is your current residence an improvement over your prior residence?

- Yes
- No
- About the same
- Not applicable
- Prefer not to say



How satisfied are you with your current housing situation?

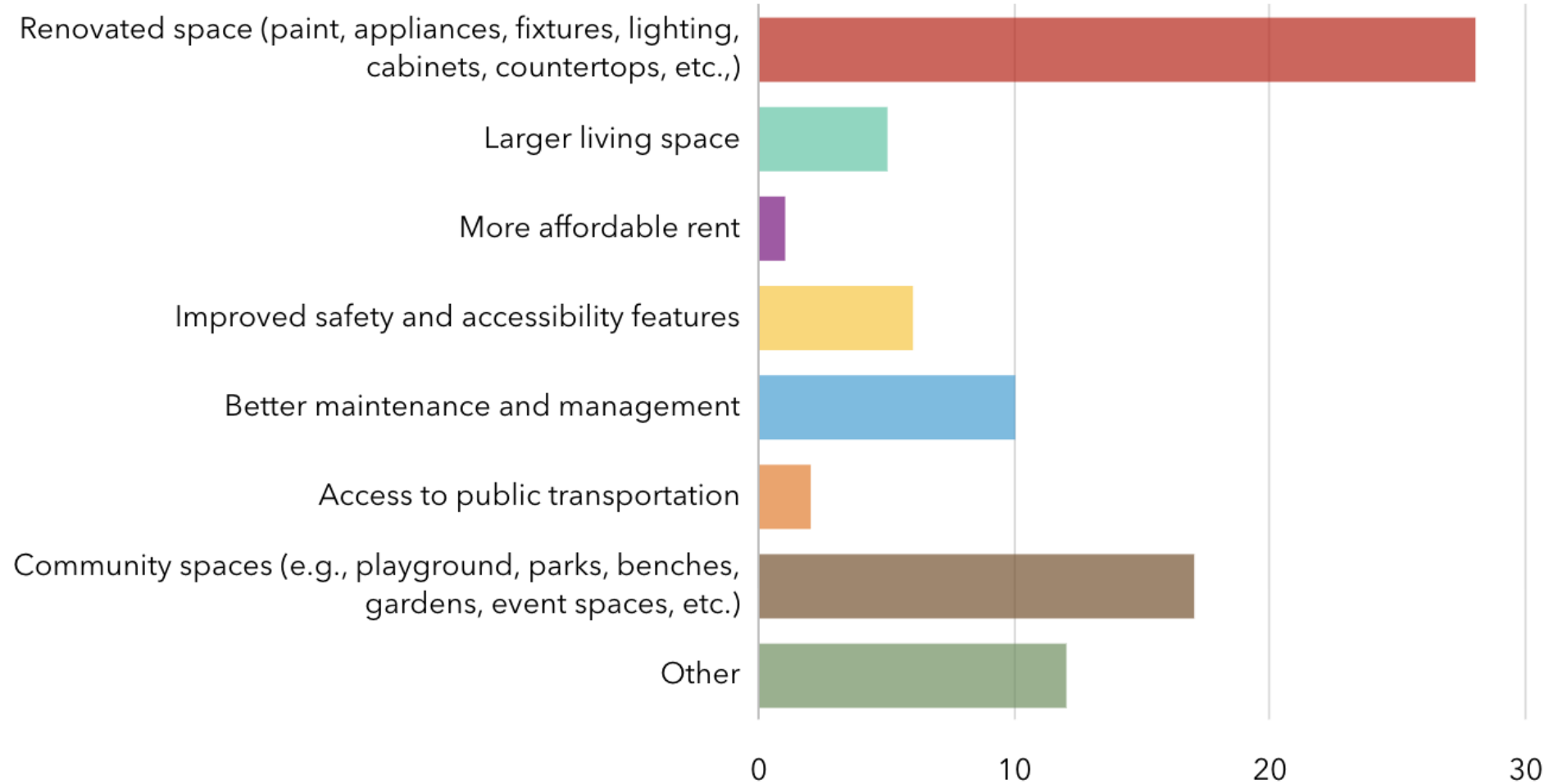
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied



WHAT WE'VE HEARD SO FAR:

Goals & Aspirations

What improvements would you like to see in your home or residential community, if any?



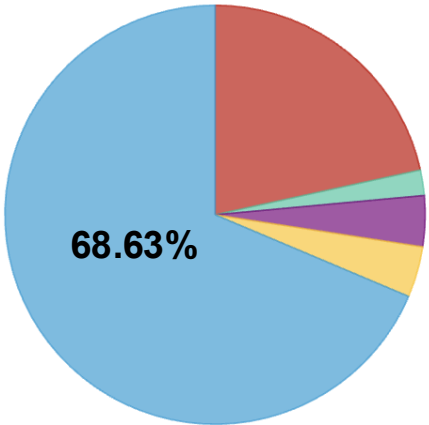
"More could be done to bring [our homes] up to *livable conditions*."

CONCERNS WE'VE HEARD SO FAR:

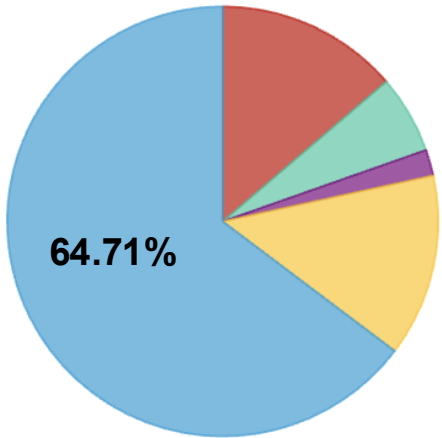
How concerned are you about the following issues if redevelopment occurs?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

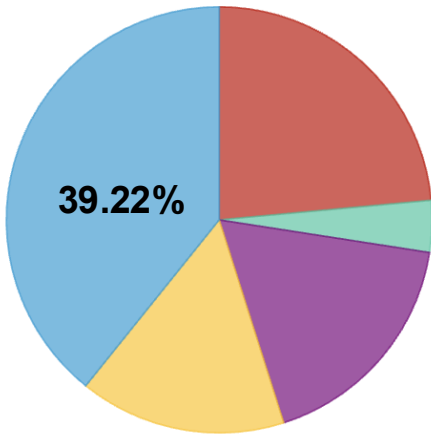
Eviction/Displacement



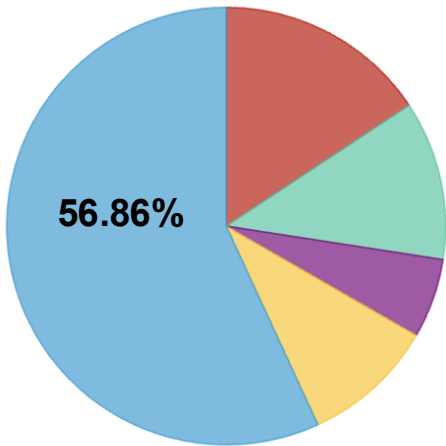
Lack of Affordable Housing Options



Loss of Community



Higher Rent/ Utility Costs



NEXT STEPS



Next Steps

- ❑ Complete and share the **Findings Report**
- ❑ Assist the URA with a **community-informed** property management transition plan
- ❑ Host the **second community meeting July 24th** and **share resources** with residents
- ❑ Advise the URA and the City on how to **communicate and implement final decisions** with The Park at Fort Gillem residents

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Communications Channels



Resident Inbox: ftgillem@psequity.org

PSE Team

- Kaziem Woodbury: kwoodbury@psequity.org
- Jennifer Cobb: jcobb@psequity.org
- Phoebe Milledge: phoebe.milledge@psequity.org