



August 7, 2023

Our City is in the process of **updating our Comprehensive Plan**, which sets guiding principles for the City's growth and development; and we need to hear from you. Public input is critical to making sure the plan is representative of the community's vision. The Atlanta Regional Commission is facilitating the update and has developed, with input from your neighbors on our local citizen steering committee, a [public input survey](#) to gather feedback. Please spend a few minutes sharing your thoughts and ideas to help shape the city's future. This survey will be **open only through August 31** so please don't miss the chance to let us know what you think. Also, please attend the **public meeting on Saturday August 26 from 10 AM to 12 PM** at City Hall for another opportunity to give your input. The more participation, the stronger the plan. We have arranged for our **Electronics Recycling and Drug Takeback Day to be on that same date and time** so you can just drop in after you drop off your stuff! Please save that date on your calendar. For more information about the Comprehensive Plan, visit berkeleylake.com. I thought as you consider all this you might like to see the borders of our city and other info [on this map](#).



painting faces, providing children's games, etc. Thanks also to the firefighters and police officers who came to help manage the parade and provide joy for the kids. Our staff members Lila Hunter and Rob Hiller worked hard both in advance and on that day to make everything go smoothly. And while I'm thanking people, please know how grateful I am to each of you who brought school supplies by my office to support our local police officers collection of

You may wish to share some **gratitude** with the following neighbors when you see them. I know we all appreciate the folks who helped make the special joy of our July 4 city parade: Scott Lee and Chip McDaniel who made the music and popcorn respectively, Anne Carpenter of Berkshire Hathaway Realty for popsicles and desserts and Berkeley Lake Dental for water and soft drinks, and of course Debbie Peters and her Georgia After School Program (GASP) folks for serving hotdogs,



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those. You made our officers feel great, as well as the kids who received the stuff they needed to start the year off right!

I am pleased to report to you that our **City Council recently approved a lowered millage rate which I and our Citizen Finance Committee recommended of 1.348 mills.** As an example, for a home with a fair market value of \$725,000 in 2022, the city property tax was \$421.95. For a home of the same value in 2023, the tax will be \$390.92, which represents a **7.35% reduction in taxes year to year.**

In other **important information about the city’s finances**, we always open all our information (financial and otherwise) yearly to an outside independent auditor. James L Whitaker, CPA of Snellville, Ga. spent a great deal of time studying everything about how our city functions and produced a 38-page report, which, of course, like all our other information is available to citizens who would like to study it. He professed himself to be quite impressed with our financial procedures and position, noting that “the City of Berkeley Lake has no long-term debt” and “continues to maintain a healthy financial position.” Also: “The 2023 budget reflects continued use of American Rescue Plan Act funds, which thus far have primarily been used for stormwater infrastructure improvements. The City continues to expend general, SPLOST, and ARPA funds in the operations of its own stormwater management program.” He remarked upon this because it’s unusual, since most cities collect stormwater infrastructure fees from all homeowners and businesses. As you know, we have continued to be able to avoid that.

Our city has scheduled an **election for November 7, 2023**, to fill the expiring terms of mayor and 2 council members. Bob Smith, Rebecca Spitler, and I are all committed to continue in serving you if that is your wish and will put our names on the ballot. If you would like to run also, please stop by City Hall between the hours of 9 AM and 4 PM Monday, August 21 to Wednesday, August 23. There you will be able to pay the necessary qualifying fee of \$150 for mayor or \$27 for city council. Advance in person voting will be available in City Hall from 9 AM until 5 PM on the following dates: October 16-21, October 23-28, and October 30 through November 3. On November 7 the polls will be open in City Hall from 7 AM until 7 PM. If there is a runoff, it will take place on December 5. If you need to register to vote in this election, you need to do that on or before October 10. As you can see, we will need a lot of help to manage all these hours of the election process, so, if you are able to help, please contact Leigh Threadgill who is our election superintendent and absentee ballot clerk. She can answer any questions about the election process.



Along with council members Rebecca Spitler, Bob Smith, Rodney Hammond, and Scott Lee, I recently visited the **new Gas South District** to check out the complete makeovers of the Convention Center, the Arena, and the addition of a new Westin Hotel which will open in February or March with 348 rooms, all kinds of amenities, and a rooftop bar. There’s also a new park with a greenway walk and pretty wetlands. We heard all about the impact of the **film industry which brought \$4.4 billion into Gwinnett** last year. There are now 3 major film studios here and

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520 “film friendly locations” with Norcross leading the way. The “Will Trent” and “Ozark” series have been filmed locally as well as 80 other shows. Berkmar and Meadowcreek high schools are training kids in all kinds of film support jobs through a liaison with a company called Fresh Films. With this kind of local economic impact, everybody is hoping that the strike (primarily regarding residuals and AI) will be resolved soon.



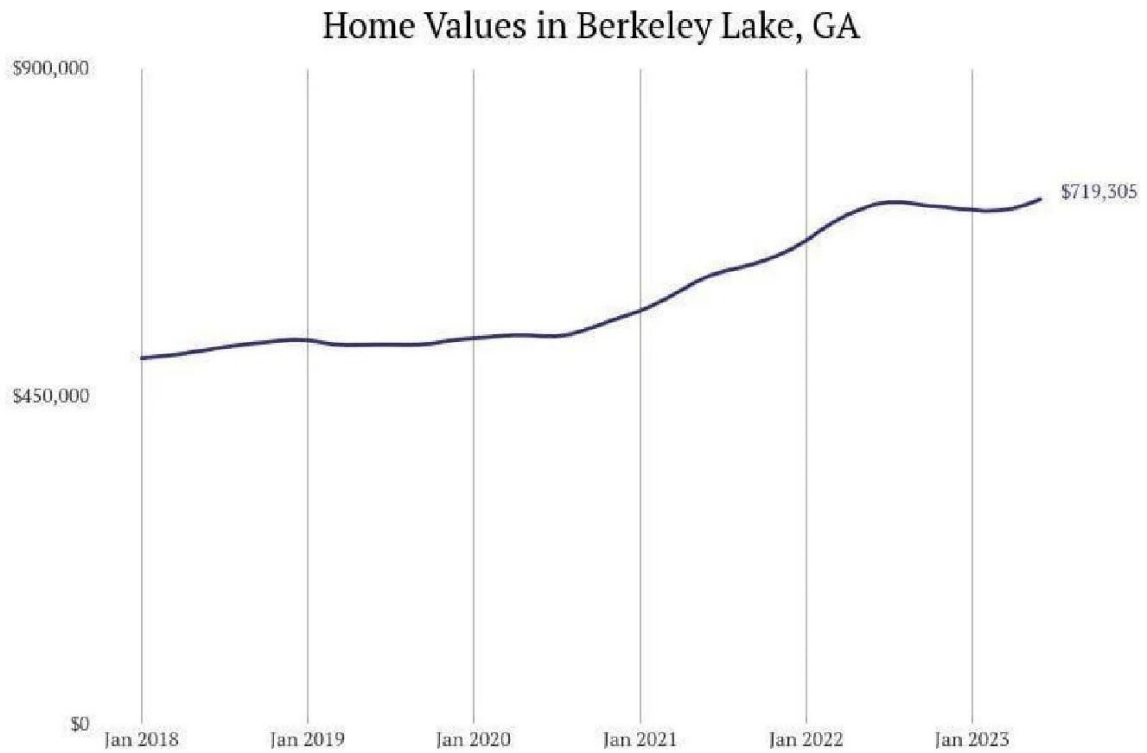
Our Berkeley Lake Elementary School recently won a **School Champions award** from the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Extension Office for the **Pollinator Gardens** that a local group of volunteers created 3 years ago and are maintaining at the back of the school. This was a lot of hard work for Barbara Geier, the Project Leader, as well as a number of other Berkeley Lake citizens, including Margaret Bergeron, Lu Sykes, Collette Bingham, and retired

teacher, Kathy Bentley, who taught so many of our Berkeley Lake children over many years and whose idea it was to create the gardens. Thanks and congratulations to these ladies and to the new BLES principal, Ashley Coughlin.

The Gwinnett Emergency Call Center has a **new geo-location tool which can locate a caller wherever they are** without an address, even out in the woods somewhere. It’s an app and website that has divided the world into three-meter squares, each of which is identified by a unique combination of three words. The app can be downloaded for free to any smart device or via web browser at what3words.com. For more information visit GwinnettCounty.com/What3Words

The Gwinnett Office of **Emergency Management** wants to hear your ideas and concerns about hazards and disasters in our county. They do (in my opinion) a good and important job for us, and I hope you’ll take their Hazard Mitigation Survey at GwinnettCounty.com/MitigationSurvey. Feedback is always valuable.

People certainly continue to seek homes in our city. I thought you might like to see this chart with information about our **rising property values**.



Source: Zillow. Data represents monthly typical home value

- 1-year price change: +\$7,047 (+1.0%)
- 5-year price change: +\$206,243 (+40.2%)
- Typical home value: \$719,305 (#2 most expensive city in metro)

This month’s Fun Fact about Berkeley Lake:

In a recent listing of cities with the most expensive homes in the state, Berkeley Lake was #2. Milton was #1 and Brookhaven was # 3.

Enjoy these last days of summer!

Lois D. Satter