FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

Converting Our Neighborhood to a Gated Community

Preliminary planning analysis for a 102-lot neighborhood in Cobb County, Georgia

Purpose: identify the legal, engineering, access, operating, and financial implications that should be resolved before a gated-community proposal is considered.

KEY PLANNING ESTIMATES

Estimated upfront capital $1.56 million	**Estimated annual operating cost** $495,000
Capital per lot $15,277	**Annual cost per lot** $4,853

Important: These are preliminary planning allowances, not contractor bids, engineering estimates, or a determination that the proposal is legally or technically feasible. Actual costs and requirements could differ materially.

Executive Summary

Converting the neighborhood to a gated community would be much more than purchasing and installing a gate. The roads are understood to be public and maintained by Cobb County. A conversion would require a formal process to determine whether the County would relinquish the roads, legal and property work, engineering and survey work, access and emergency-response approvals, and a long-term plan for private-road maintenance and security.

The most consequential site-specific complication is the shared entrance arrangement. The only neighborhood access is from Stilesboro Road onto Marietta Country Club Drive. The Country Club's separate entrance is approximately 100 yards farther along that road. Because the residential turn and Club turn occur at the shared junction, the proposed neighborhood gate cannot simply be placed beyond the Club entrance without affecting Club access. This analysis assumes, for planning purposes, that the Club would need a new independent entrance directly from Stilesboro Road and that the neighborhood would bear that cost. This must be tested with the Club and the appropriate transportation authority; it is not a finding that a new entrance would be approved.

Using preliminary allowances, the illustrative upfront capital estimate is approximately $1.56 million or $15,277 per lot. Estimated annual operating and reserve costs are approximately $495,000, or $4,853 per lot per year (about $404 per month), before inflation or unusual major repairs. Current dues of $175 per lot per year generate only $17,850 annually across the 102-lot neighborhood.

The figures are intended to show scale and identify questions that need answers—not to substitute for bids, legal advice, engineering, or County decisions.

Bottom line: before the HOA spends significant money, it should establish whether road privatization is legally available, whether the necessary access changes are approvable, what the Club's position would be, and whether owners would support the potential assessments and permanent obligations.

1. Current Conditions and Key Assumptions

- **Neighborhood size:** 102 lots.
- **Current HOA dues:** $175 per lot per year, or approximately $17,850 per year across all 102 lots if every lot pays.
- **Road status:** roads are understood to be public and maintained by Cobb County; confirm through County records.
- **Entrance:** one access point from Stilesboro Road onto Marietta Country Club Drive serves both neighborhood traffic and the Club.
- **Country Club entrance:** the Club's separate entrance is approximately 100 yards down Marietta Country Club Drive.
- **Recent paving:** the County recently paved the roads. This estimate assumes no immediate repaving cost; it does not remove future maintenance obligations if roads become private.
- **Staffing:** continuously staffed gate, using $30/hour as a wage-equivalent starting point and a higher annual allowance for employment overhead and coverage.
- **Club access:** budget includes a $750,000 allowance for a new Club entrance from Stilesboro Road, potentially paid by the neighborhood. This is a major unverified assumption.

2. Public Roads Cannot Simply Be Gated

If the roads are public, the HOA cannot assume it may install a gate and restrict public access. The first step is to ask Cobb County what legal process would apply and whether the County would consider relinquishing the roads. Georgia law and County procedures may require formal review, notice, hearings, and official action. Approval is not guaranteed.

Depending on the County's determination and the facts, the process may involve:

- Formal road-abandonment or relinquishment request and supporting justification.
- Legal descriptions, plats, maps, and identification of affected property owners and easements.
- Notice to affected parties and potentially public notice and a hearing.
- Review of whether roads serve a public purpose or provide access to other properties, utilities, or facilities.

- County action and recording of required documents if approved.
- Agreement on responsibility for pavement, drainage, signs, rights-of-way, and other infrastructure.

A Georgia attorney experienced in local government, real estate, and HOA matters should verify applicable statutes, County procedures, required votes, and documents before the HOA commits to engineering or construction.

3. HOA Documents, Owner Approval, and Liability

The HOA's declaration, covenants, bylaws, plats, deeds, easements, and assessment provisions need legal review. The required owner-vote threshold cannot be assumed without reviewing those documents and applicable law.

- Can the HOA legally accept ownership or maintenance responsibility for roads and related infrastructure?
- What owner vote or covenant amendment is required to privatize roads, install gates, change access, or impose assessments?
- Would a special assessment or substantial dues increase be permitted, and under what procedure?
- What liability would the HOA assume for accidents, blocked access, pavement defects, drainage problems, or gate malfunctions?
- Would insurance be available at an acceptable cost, and what exclusions or limits would apply?

4. The Country Club Entrance Is a Major Feasibility Issue

The neighborhood and Marietta Country Club share the entrance from Stilesboro Road to Marietta Country Club Drive. At the junction, traffic turns toward the residential neighborhood and toward the Club. With the Club's separate entrance approximately 100 yards farther in, the gate location cannot be evaluated as if the neighborhood entrance were independent.

For this study, the cost estimate assumes the Club would need a new, independent entrance directly from Stilesboro Road. That could require:

- Transportation-authority review of access spacing, sight distance, turning movements, roadway safety, and whether a new access point is allowed.
- A survey, civil and traffic engineering, and potentially traffic counts or a traffic-impact analysis.
- Property rights or easements, clearing and grading, drainage and stormwater work, utility coordination, curb and pavement work, signage, lighting, and landscaping.
- Potential turn lanes, deceleration or storage lanes, pavement markings, or other roadway improvements if required.
- Coordination with the Club on design, construction, access, cost allocation, and ongoing maintenance.

A new entrance only about 100 yards from the existing access could face significant access-spacing constraints. Only the appropriate transportation authority can determine whether an acceptable design is possible. The $750,000 allowance is a rough planning figure, not a quote or evidence that approval is likely.

5. Engineering, Surveying, Permits, and Public-Safety Review

A public-to-private conversion would need coordinated review of the road system and the land beneath and beside it. Scope and approvals depend on existing plats, ownership, drainage, utilities, road geometry, and County requirements.

- **Survey and plat work:** define road rights-of-way, boundaries, sidewalks, drainage areas, utility easements, and common property.
- **Civil and traffic engineering:** evaluate entrances, sight lines, vehicle turning, queue storage, traffic patterns, drainage, pavement, and safe access.
- **County reviews:** confirm applicable road, planning, land-disturbance, stormwater, plat-recording, and other requirements.
- **Fire, police, and EMS:** establish approved emergency access, gate overrides, adequate clear width and turning geometry, and reliable operation during power or equipment failure.
- **Utilities:** preserve access for water, sewer, electric, gas, cable, fiber, and stormwater maintenance.
- **Legal and insurance review:** define ownership, maintenance duties, indemnification, liability, and access rights.

The preliminary budget includes allowances for legal/road-conversion work, engineering, surveying, and County reviews. Replace those allowances with written scopes and proposals before any owner vote on funding.

6. Daily Access and Gate Operations

A staffed gate must handle more than residents and invited guests. It needs a clear, safe, dependable process for routine deliveries, contractors, service providers, and emergency responders.

- USPS, Amazon, UPS, FedEx, food delivery, rideshare, guests, and event traffic.
- Landscapers, cleaners, pool or pest services, plumbers, electricians, HVAC technicians, roofers, and other repair contractors.
- Utility crews, County personnel when authorized, garbage and recycling service, and emergency responders.
- A process for visitors who are not pre-registered, residents who do not answer calls, deliveries outside normal hours, and recurring vendors.
- Resident credentials such as RFID or other access devices, visitor-management software, intercoms, cameras, and potentially license-plate recognition.
- Vehicle stacking space so visitor check-in does not back traffic onto Stilesboro Road.
- A written plan for power/network outages, equipment failure, staffing shortages, and emergency override.

If the HOA wants a staffed gate 24 hours a day, the operating budget must cover shifts and relief—not simply multiply one employee's hourly wage by the hours in a year. Hiring, benefits or payroll costs, holidays, vacation, sick leave, training, turnover, supervision, and overtime can materially increase the cost.

7. Gate and Security Infrastructure

A complete project could include:

- Guardhouse or staffed control point with safe working conditions.
- Clearly managed resident and visitor/service lanes, automatic gates, and a safe exit arrangement.
- RFID or other resident access, visitor-management software, intercom, cameras, and networking.
- Emergency access controls, fail-safe or fail-secure decisions approved by fire officials, and backup power.
- Lighting, signs, landscaping, drainage, pavement, utility connections, and vehicle queue storage.
- Maintenance contracts, software subscriptions, repairs, replacement parts, and periodic system upgrades.

The preliminary capital budget groups the gate, guardhouse, and security system into one allowance and site work into another. A final design and vendor bids are needed to determine actual costs.

8. Preliminary Upfront Capital Budget

The table uses planning allowances to estimate order of magnitude. The $750,000 Club-access allowance is especially uncertain and should be treated as a critical feasibility question.

Capital item	Planning allowance
Legal, HOA, and road-conversion work	$60,000
Civil and traffic engineering	$75,000
Surveying and re-platting	$30,000
County reviews and permits	$15,000
Gate, guardhouse, and security system	$350,000
Entrance site work, utilities, and landscaping	$75,000
New Country Club access from Stilesboro Road	$750,000
Subtotal	$1,355,000

Capital item	Planning allowance
15% contingency	$203,250
Estimated upfront capital total	**$1,558,250**

Estimated upfront capital per lot: $1,558,250 ÷ 102 = approximately $15,277 per lot.

This budget excludes financing costs, unanticipated land acquisition, extraordinary environmental or drainage work, major off-site road improvements beyond the allowance, and other unidentified items. The 15% contingency may be insufficient if access design or permitting proves difficult.

9. Estimated Annual Operating Costs

Operating item	Annual allowance
24/7 staffed gate, including coverage and employment overhead	$350,000
Gate/security maintenance and software	$20,000
Additional HOA/liability insurance	$25,000
Gate utilities, landscaping, and miscellaneous expenses	$15,000
Road, drainage, and infrastructure reserve	$75,000
Additional legal, accounting, and administration	$10,000
Estimated annual total	**$495,000**

Estimated annual cost per lot: $495,000 ÷ 102 = approximately $4,853 per lot per year, or about $404 per month.

The annual figure is a planning allowance, not a bid. It does not guarantee $75,000 per year will be enough for long-term road and drainage needs. A pavement-condition assessment and reserve study should establish likely maintenance cycles and costs.

10. What This Means Compared With Current Dues

Measure	Amount
Current annual dues per lot	$175
Current annual dues across 102 lots	$17,850
Estimated annual operating cost for gated community	$495,000
Estimated annual operating cost per lot	$4,853
Monthly equivalent per lot	$404
Annual operating budget compared with current total dues	About 28 times
Estimated upfront capital per lot	$15,277
Illustrative first-year per-lot cost: capital + annual operations	**$20,130**

The first-year illustration adds estimated capital of about $15,277 per lot to first-year operating cost of about $4,853. Actual payment timing could differ depending on financing, assessments, reserves, and phasing.

These estimates do not include future inflation or major unexpected repairs. An assessment plan would need to explain whether owners would pay a one-time capital assessment, borrow funds, increase annual dues, or use a combination.

11. Road Ownership Creates a Permanent Obligation

The County's recent paving may reduce immediate capital needs, but it does not eliminate the long-term cost of private-road ownership. Once roads are private, the HOA may have to plan and pay for pavement repairs and resurfacing, potholes, curbs and gutters, sidewalks, drainage and stormwater facilities, road signs, pavement markings, lighting, and related infrastructure. The exact assets and obligations must be identified in the conversion documents.

Before proceeding, the HOA should obtain a pavement and infrastructure condition assessment, confirm drainage and utility responsibilities, and prepare a long-range reserve plan. Otherwise, a seemingly manageable annual budget could be overwhelmed by a major resurfacing or drainage project.

12. Recommended Due-Diligence Sequence

1. **Review governing documents** — Have HOA counsel review covenants, bylaws, plats, deeds, easements, assessment powers, amendment requirements, and owner-vote thresholds.
2. **Ask Cobb County about road status and policy** — Obtain a preliminary answer on whether the County would consider relinquishing the roads and what formal process applies.
3. **Meet with the Country Club** — Determine whether the Club would support and help plan an independent entrance, and discuss access, land, costs, and maintenance.
4. **Seek preliminary transportation-authority input** — Ask whether a new Stilesboro Road access point appears feasible given spacing, sight distance, traffic safety, and roadway requirements.
5. **Commission scoped professional proposals** — If early screening is favorable, obtain written proposals for legal work, surveying, civil/traffic engineering, and an infrastructure assessment.
6. **Develop a concept plan and access study** — Show gate location, Club access, queue storage, emergency access, utilities, drainage, and traffic movements.
7. **Obtain vendor and construction estimates** — Seek comparable bids for gate equipment, guardhouse, security technology, site work, staffing, insurance, and maintenance.
8. **Prepare a long-term financial model** — Model capital funding, recurring costs, inflation, road reserves, contingencies, and the effect on each lot.
9. **Confirm owner approval and public process** — After preliminary work, determine the required owner vote, petition and notice process, hearings, and County decisions.
10. **Proceed only after approvals and funding are established** — Secure necessary easements, permits, agreements, insurance, financing or assessments, and a construction and operations plan.

13. Questions to Answer Before Spending HOA Money

- Will Cobb County consider relinquishing these roads, and what standards and procedures apply?
- What exact owner vote, covenant changes, or assessment authority would be required?
- Can the Country Club obtain a new entrance directly from Stilesboro Road, and would the transportation authority approve it?
- Who would own, pay for, and maintain the new Club entrance and related road improvements?
- What would actual gate construction and annual staffing bids be?
- What are the fire, police, EMS, utility, and delivery-access requirements?
- Can vehicles queue on private property without backing onto Stilesboro Road?
- What road, drainage, sidewalk, signage, and other assets would transfer to the HOA?
- What insurance coverage is available and at what premium?

- How would the HOA fund future resurfacing, drainage repairs, equipment replacement, and inflation?
- Would owners support the estimated capital contribution and annual cost, far above current dues?

Conclusion

A gated-community proposal for this neighborhood is not simply a gate purchase. It would involve a possible public-to-private road conversion, County and legal approvals, professional engineering and survey work, a major shared-access issue with Marietta Country Club, emergency and delivery logistics, a staffed security operation, and permanent private-road obligations.

On the assumptions used here, the preliminary estimate is about $1.56 million in upfront capital and $495,000 in annual operating costs. That equates to approximately $15,277 per lot upfront and $4,853 per lot per year for ongoing operations. The new Country Club entrance is a major uncertainty and may prove infeasible, require a different design, or cost substantially more.

The prudent next step is not to authorize construction or promise that a gate can be installed. It is to obtain preliminary answers from Cobb County and the appropriate transportation authority, review the HOA documents with counsel, and discuss the Club-access issue with Marietta Country Club. If those threshold questions cannot be resolved, further design spending may not be justified.

Important Qualifications

This document is a preliminary discussion and planning tool. It is not legal advice, an engineering opinion, a traffic study, a survey, a contractor proposal, a security plan, or a guarantee of approval. Cost figures are illustrative allowances developed for comparison and should not be treated as verified market quotes. Road status, applicable Georgia and Cobb County procedures, access spacing, emergency requirements, property rights, and all cost estimates must be independently confirmed by qualified professionals and relevant public authorities before any decision.