

“Using Photovoice as a Means of Data Sharing: The Story of Fort McPherson”

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Elizabeth J. Fuller is a senior research associate at the Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Much of her work is in the intersection of research and policy and the translation of scientific findings to multiple audiences and stakeholder groups. At GHPC, she provides research support for health insurance exchange planning for the Georgia Governor’s Office, manages the center’s Affordable Care Act’s analysis team, and participates in center-directed work, which includes health impact assessments and support of health in all policies. She completed her doctorate in public health in 2007 from Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. Prior to attaining her doctorate, she received a BA in political science at Emory University, worked as a legislative aide on Capitol Hill, and received a master’s in public health from the University of Alabama–Birmingham.

Summary and Findings: Fort McPherson was an Army installation in Atlanta, Georgia, that closed in 2011 as part of the U.S. Department of Defense’s (DoD) Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program. Conversion of the 488-acre base from the military to civilian domain represents a significant redevelopment that could have profound economic and health implications for new residents, neighboring communities, and the region. In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) engaged the Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) in a multiphase project to study the impact of the Fort McPherson redevelopment on the surrounding communities. The redevelopment of the property is a source of anxiety for many in the surrounding communities, which already face numerous economic, social, and health challenges. Relationships between community members and those in charge of the redevelopment plan have been strained at times. For one component of the multiyear project, researchers at the GHPC used the Photovoice methodology to enable community members to document their concerns about redevelopment and share those concerns with decision makers in a constructive way.

Implications for Policy and Practice: The results of the Photovoice project have been distributed through multiple channels. The GHPC unveiled the work through a presentation “Fort McPherson: Opportunities to Improve Health in the Context of Change” at the Georgia State Visualization Wall. This event brought together many groups, including community members, CDC researchers, state legislators, developers, and city officials. Special presentations were made to the Fort McPherson Redevelopment Board and the Community Engagement Committee. The photographs were also displayed in the final report produced for CDC and have been highlighted in multiple publications of the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. In addition to these formal channels, Photovoice participants have used the photographs to initiate discussions about their hopes for the redevelopment with potential developers and city officials.