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OUR VIEW: Perfect timing for Partnership Gwinnett 2.0

A punishing economy has left broken homes and shattered dreams in its wake. In Gwinnett County, times are tough but could have been worse without the benefits of some homegrown remedies.

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A punishing economy has left broken homes and shattered dreams in its wake. In Gwinnett County, times are tough but could have been worse without the benefits of some homegrown remedies.

Namely, those are the Community Improvement Districts — the county now has five — and Partnership Gwinnett — the Chamber of Commerce's economic development initiative that's replaced a large chunk of the jobs the economy washed away.

CIDs are commercial areas in which property owners agree to tax themselves in order to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhood. Those additional tax dollars are used in economic development efforts including improved landscaping and general cleanup, public safety issues and economic development.

The CIDs have gone a long way in preserving and enhancing some of the more "mature" commercial districts in Gwinnett. These areas have faced many challenges and the recession could have been catastrophic for the businesses within. But these CIDs — Gwinnett Village, Gwinnett Place, Lilburn, Evermore and Braselton — have tempered the blows of a punishing economy.

Another weapon in this county's recession battle has been Partnership Gwinnett, the Chamber of Commerce initiative credited with bringing 10,000 new jobs and helping with more than 200 expansions and relocations since its inception four years ago.

Again, while the economy has been tough, imagine the local damage had PG not been in place.

A weak U.S. jobs report for May — only 55,000 jobs added — has fueled talk of an elongated or double-dip recession. If this is the case, the announcement of PG's renewal last week was perfect timing.

The steering committee for "Partnership Gwinnett 2.0" held its initial meeting Thursday, kicking off the initiative's second strategic development cycle.

PG2 is not meant to be a continuation of the original program. Rather, PG2's goal is to move Gwinnett forward by setting new courses based on new information. A lot has changed since 2007.

Economic research indicates that more people are drawn to communities in which employment opportunities are increasing. Private and public sectors benefit from a high average payroll and the ensuing increased demand for goods and services. This is the environment PG can help sustain.

As the recession lingers, Partnership Gwinnett continues to give the county an edge others don't have in these difficult times.

Contributions to Partnership Gwinnett are considered an investment in the community.

To learn more about Partnership Gwinnett 2.0 or support the cause, contact the Chamber or visit www.partnershinawinnett.com