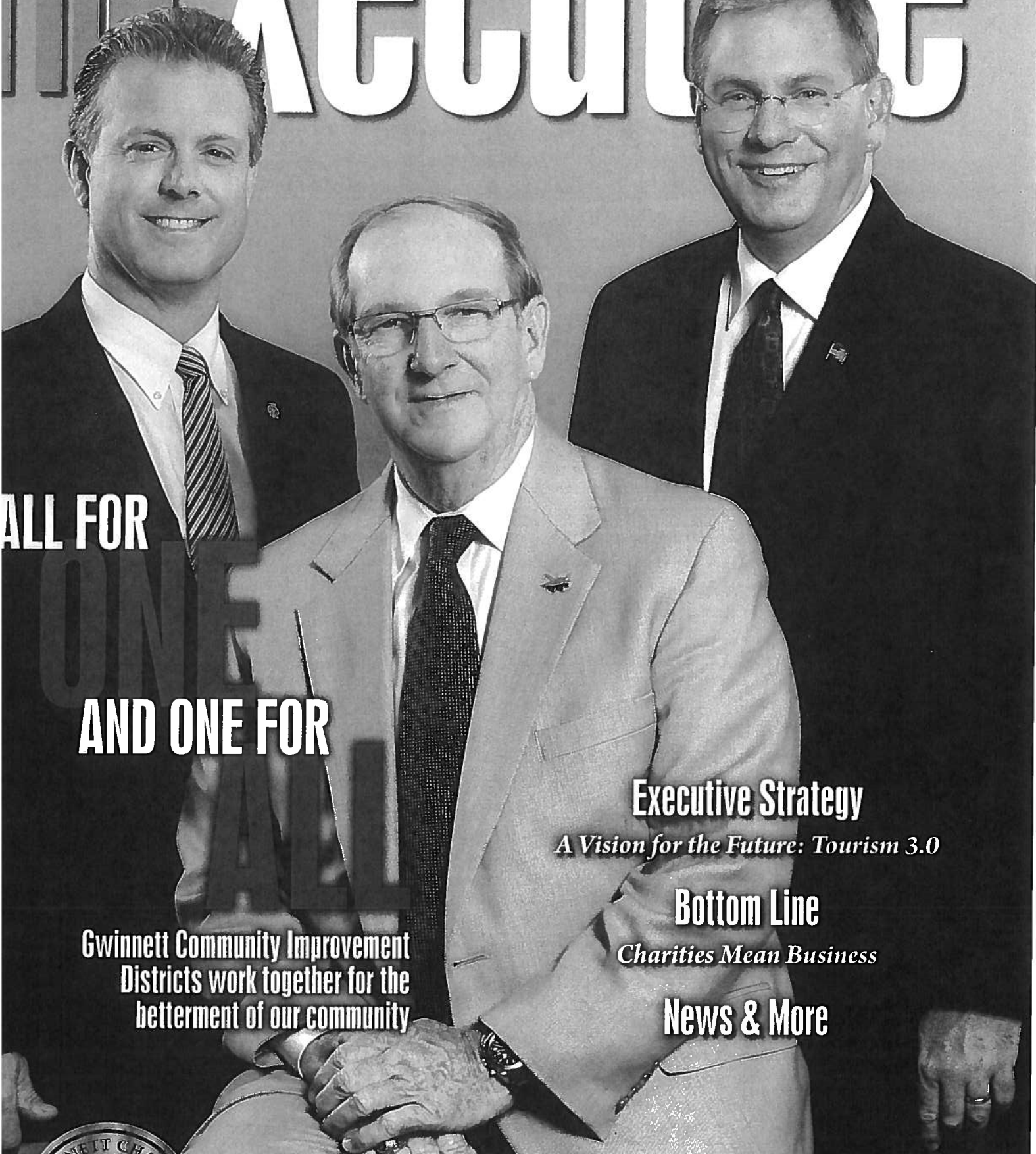


Q3
2015

The Executive



ALL FOR

ONE

AND ONE FOR

Gwinnett Community Improvement
Districts work together for the
betterment of our community

Executive Strategy

A Vision for the Future: Tourism 3.0

Bottom Line

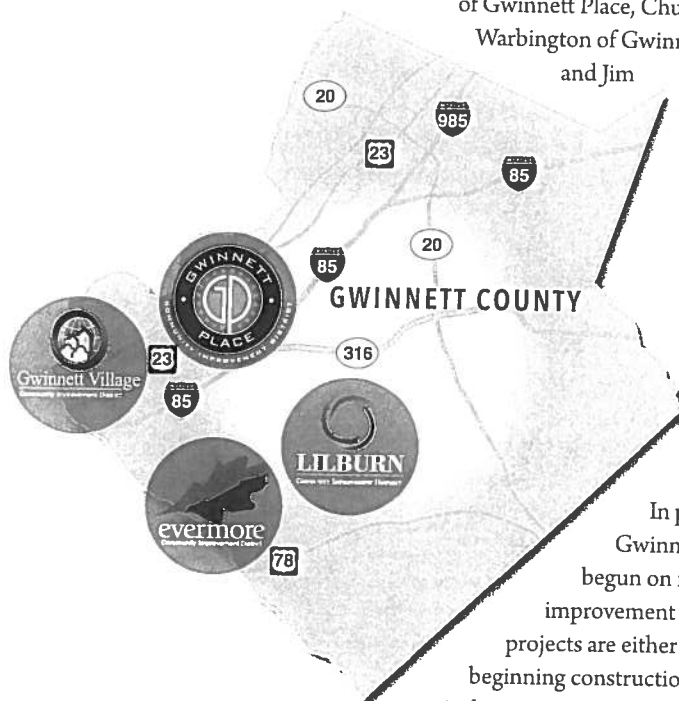
Charities Mean Business

News & More



ALL FOR
ONE
AND ONE FOR
ALL

Gwinnett Community Improvement Districts work together for the betterment of our community



A Community Improvement District (CID) is an organization created to cover a specific geographical area with certain limited taxing powers. These additional tax revenues are spent on area improvements such as roads, streetscaping, and revitalization. Georgia law regulates the creation of CIDs by requiring voluntary participation by a certain portion of property owners with a certain portion of the tax value in the area. Although an additional tax is collected by the County Tax Commissioner, a CID is created under state law by a majority of the area's property owners, not by the county.

Lilburn Community Improvement District interim Executive Director Taylor Anderson of Blue Landworks [Since the writing of this story, Emory Morseberger has been named as the Executive Director of the Lilburn CID.] recently sat down with the Executive Directors of Gwinnett's three largest CIDs – Joe Allen of Gwinnett Place, Chuck Warbington of Gwinnett Village,

and Jim Brooks

of Evermore – to ask a few questions about the challenges, wins, and goals for their respective CIDs.

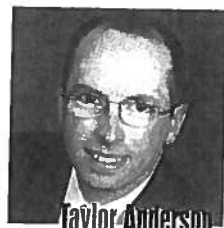
Taylor Anderson:

What was your biggest success over the past year?

Joe Allen:

In partnership with Gwinnett County, work has begun on five new intersection improvement projects. These projects are either in design or beginning construction. Another success is the new streetscapes along Gwinnett's Main Street, Pleasant Hill Road. We have

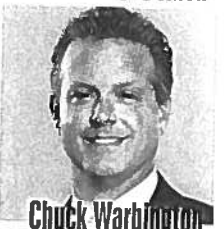
just completed phase 4 with new pedestrian lighting, landscaping, plazas and other pedestrian-oriented enhancements. We are in



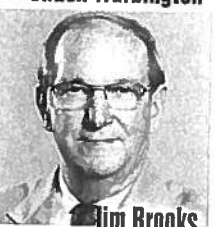
Taylor Anderson



Joe Allen



Chuck Warbington



Jim Brooks

the final design phase for another streetscape project along Satellite Boulevard, which we plan to have under construction very soon.

We have Russell Landscape out five days a week maintaining the 10 miles of roadway that form the CID, and we've removed over 25 tons of trash last year, over 1,100 illegal signs, and – actually a new stat we are starting to track – had removed over 50 illegal donation boxes. Those are just the stats for last year alone. Also, thanks to Gwinnett County Police and the CID-funded community patrols, the greater Gwinnett Place area continues to experience double digit crime reduction. The CID is committed to insuring that the district remains well-maintained and safe.

We held the ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the opening of Gwinnett's first diverging diamond interchange (DDI) at Pleasant Hill Road over I-85 last summer, and a few stats on that project: 51 percent decrease in

the average number of stops, 43 percent decrease in the total delay along that portion of Pleasant Hill Road, and a 20 percent reduction of accidents right there at the bridge.

We've been working for the past six months on what we're calling our "Catalyst Site Initiative," where we are talking with the larger property owners in the area, finding out 'what are your plans for that shopping center or piece of property.' We are now "match-making" those property owners with regional developers to share with them the opportunities available in Gwinnett's emerging urban core at Gwinnett Place in order to jumpstart the redevelopment process.

Chuck Warbington: Over the last year I think one of the results of a lot of the work we have put into the area came to fruition when we led the county in regards to tax



value increase – we were up 18 percent in 2014, which we are very proud of. A lot of that was a result of the announcement made related to the Atlanta Media Campus as well as Eagle Rock Studios. Those are two major developments which happened within several months of each other and it kind of brought in the whole presence of the digital media as well as movie and TV studios as well.

In 2014, the crossover of the I-85/Jimmy Carter Blvd DDI was under construction, and is currently 80-90 percent complete. In late March we implemented the crossover of traffic at that interchange; we are already seeing significant reduction of delay in the area.

Jim Brooks: I think if we look back in history of the CID, we've always had one primary objective: to add rooftops. Within 7 ½ miles, there are 596 businesses that need clientele. Last year, for the first time, we saw an increase in over 285 housing units started within the area. About 40 have been either completed or are near completion. That is going to be a significant draw to the local businesses. We have plans for our first new hotel as well.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the impact of the diverted left turn – you would know it as the CFI, but the feds don't call it that anymore. We're having our second construction meeting... I didn't say 'acquisition,' I said actual construction... of the diverted left turn. That's a \$35 million dollar project inside the City of Snellville at highways 124 and 78, and we think that's going to relieve a huge bottleneck. In 2011 on

Highway 78, we moved 42,000 cars through one intersection. Last year we moved 75,642 cars through the same intersection. That's the kind of traffic counts that businesses are looking for.

We are also about to announce the expansion of Heatcraft. They just received a multi-million dollar grant from the department of energy and they've got some pretty cool stuff that we can't yet talk about, but can you imagine an air conditioning system that doesn't have coolant in it? So that's what they're working to develop at this point, but there is a test lab required and that is about a \$4 million expansion of the existing facility. So what we are seeing is an overall turnaround in the economic conditions that I think affect all of us.

Anderson: What are your goals for the next 2-3 years?

Allen: I think our ultimate goal was best articulated by Chairman Nash during her 2015 State of the County Address when she said that we ultimately want to see a reinvented Gwinnett Place area that is the center of Gwinnett's downtown. Since last August we have been working on a master plan called 'Activate Gwinnett Place.' This plan is going to be the CID's marching orders for the next 2-3 years. Activate Gwinnett Place invites mixed-use investment by creating greater connectivity between commercial centers and public green space and offering transportation enhancements. The plan proposes a storm water management solution that can also serve as a public amenity.

As part of the process, we have been talking a lot about connectivity to McDaniel Farm Park – that is such a hidden jewel in the Gwinnett Place community. Workers in the area frequently comment that they would love to be able to jog or walk to the park during their lunch breaks, but they can't access it without getting into their cars. We're also discussing a grand promenade that connects and supports all the catalyst projects, creating more walkable areas that today's investors and consumers are seeking.

Warbington: We are going to focus our efforts around two words: sustain and capitalize. We want to continue sustaining some of the successes we have already seen, that is continuing with the crime reduction efforts, traffic reduction efforts, and property value increases throughout the area. At the same time, we want to capitalize on a lot of those successes as well, such as using the Atlanta Media Campus and Eagle Rock Studios to create a center for digital media – not just the center of movie making, but that creation of a mixed-use development around those two industries.

Finally, we have the most industrial property in the county so when you talk about movement of goods and freights it starts in our area. If there is any expansion of transit within the county it will come through our area. Our corridor has the most pedestrian activity in the county, and carries the most vehicles in the country. We are going to be working as a grass roots effort on the 'Great Exchange on Transportation' late August. It is a county-wide conversation with the businesses and residents, focused on what is needed in high-level transportation.

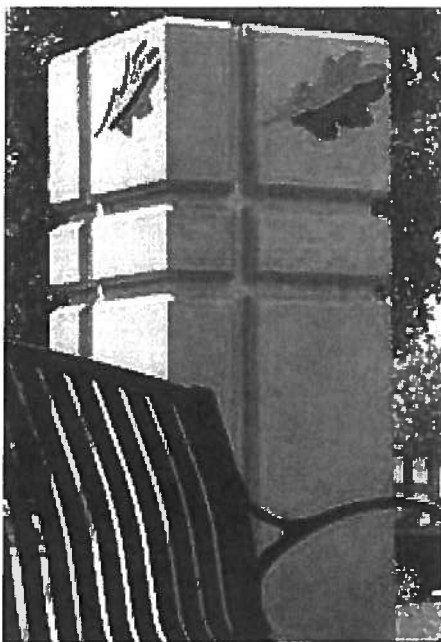
Brooks: We have a long-range strategic plan that deals with a 4.2-mile parallel road system, 2.2 miles of which is in some state of completion. Right now we are looking at projects list that would allow us to connect on two ends that would provide an alternate route when we have incidents on Highway 78. Public safety is very important to us and certainly when we're moving that many cars in that small of an area, it's challenging. When there is an incident of any kind it paralyzes 78.

continued on page 11

All for One and One for All (Continued from page 5)

And right now there is hardly any accessible alternate route because vehicles can't cross the concrete median to turn around and go the other way. It's been a real challenge for us and I think that's our top priority.

Secondly, we want to create opportunities for redevelopment, and we are seeing that with a \$20 million medical facility that will reside just past Killian Hill in an old restaurant. With the anticipated opening in October of next year, that is going to add about 150 high-wage jobs to the corridor.



Finally, the accoutrement that we try to add to is connecting two pieces of county space with a trail along the Yellow River, which would feature both tubing and kayaking. We have been working with the county and their leisure services division on that project. We continue to work on expanding the LCI that exists along Highway 78 to bring it all the way down to Yellow River. We have about 35 acres along the river which is going to open up for redevelopment and we want to put that infrastructure in place or at least get the plans on the ground to advance

those other parcels to get in place.

Anderson: What challenges need to be overcome to achieve these goals?

Allen: The greatest challenge for us is overcoming the perception about our area. But, as you peel the layers back, you see it isn't quite what people perceive. For example, many of the shopping centers along Pleasant Hill are 90-95 percent occupied. We've had new hotels open in the last couple of years, and the other hotels have gone through a multi-million dollar renovation. We're seeing a lot of entrepreneurs coming into that area and finding success. Many new businesses are opening such as K-1 Speed, America's premier indoor karting center; along with LA Fitness and Studio Movie Grill. The area is emerging as metro Atlanta's destination for those seeking unique dining options. With an increasing number of highly rated restaurants, greater Gwinnett Place is being recognized for its distinctive dining favorites. Thanks to the leadership of the CID's Board of Directors, we have a committed group of commercial property owners leading the charge to take Gwinnett's central business district to the next level of development and success.

Warbington: I think our challenge is centered around staying focused on long-term goals and visions. When you start having a lot of activity and a lot of folks in the area doing a variety of things, you want to make sure it fits into the long-term vision of what you want to do and not just settle on something that may just happen. We're having lots of conversations with people and businesses in the area, as well as the board. We have an ultimate vision about what we want to have in the area, what the vision looks like and requires, and we've got some great opportunities with some of the investments we've landed. We want to keep that momentum and our standards high moving forward.

The second part of that is just continuing



to make sure we have county-wide buy-in. That means voters and businesses in the northern part of the county, as well as elected officials, understanding that things that happen in the southern part of the county may be a little bit different than what needs to happen in the northern part of the county. But they need to happen nonetheless, for the benefit of Gwinnett as a whole.

Brooks: Our challenge is the same as Joe's: perception. People like to stand back and criticize, but when they get closer to the action and become more engaged, they understand. Some people fail to see long-term or share in the vision – like what Chuck said – and our progress may not fit their day-to-day activities. We try to add intrinsic value as much as dollar value. What does cutting the grass and trimming the sidewalk and sweeping the streets really do for a CID? It makes it look like somebody lives in a clean house. We are creating a sense of place; it's no longer simply a path from point A to point B. ♦