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## Highway 78 to get trees with median

06/28/2006 -

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LAWRENCEVILLE — Business owners along U.S. Highway 78 have gotten permission to plant trees and shrubs along parts of a concrete median the state will install next year.

Typically the state Department of Transportation does not allow landscaping in medians that are less than 5 feet wide, but in this case it granted a waiver to the Highway 78 Community Improvement District, said the group's executive director, Brett Harrell.

The greenery go-ahead dovetails with the self-taxing district's efforts to make the commercial corridor more attractive to shoppers and residents, Harrell said.

"There will still be plenty of concrete out there, but in 28 places it will be wide enough to get some greenery in there," Harrell said of the median that will replace the highway's aging reversible lane system.

Geared toward revitalization, the Highway 78 district convinced Congress this year to earmark \$9.7 million for upgrades along the busy route that links Snellville to Stone Mountain.

Part of that money will pay for the median landscaping, which will be installed at the same time as the median, Harrell said.

The district spent \$155,000 of its own funds on a consultant that designed the landscaped islands and picked the types of trees and plants, Harrell said.

Only five spots will be wide enough for trees, Harrell said. Crape myrtles were selected for those locations, while the remaining landscaped islands will be studded with low-growing shrubs, he said.

The Highway 78 district was formed by commercial property owners, who agreed to tax themselves and use the revenue for upgrades, including litter removal and security patrols.

It will pay for the upkeep of the landscaping.

Near Duluth, another community improvement district is taking steps to install trees, lamp posts, benches and other pedestrian amenities once the county finishes widening Satellite Boulevard.

A consultant hired by the Gwinnett Place district has finished a master plan

for the improvements, and the group will use it to pursue regional funding for some of the upgrades that would total \$5 million, said district's executive director, Joe Allen.

The plan calls for maple, juniper and holly trees in the stretch between Steve Reynolds Boulevard and Old Norcross Road.

Trees that lined the road were cut down before the county began adding new lanes to the thoroughfare.