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Duluth council mulls changes in management

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DULUTH - With governments and community improvement districts nearby working to recruit businesses, Duluth officials are considering expanding the role of the city's downtown manager to include economic development.

Next week, the City Council will meet with Denise Brinson, a Suwanee staffer whose job was similarly expanded.

"We're trying to determine if one person can do those two jobs," Duluth City Administrator Phil McLemore said. "It's still to be determined by council."

The downtown manager, McLemore said, is a required position to be designated a Main Street City. While the position is vacant, that staffer would coordinate events and work with business owners in the city's downtown.

With an upcoming referendum to decide if the city can use tax allocation districts to revitalize areas and a study proposed for the Buford Highway corridor, McLemore said the city may shift some of its economic development focus outside of the downtown area.

In addition to Suwanee, Snellville and Lilburn have economic development leaders, and Gwinnett County last year began a program to grant incentives to companies locating there. McLemore said the city has also kept an eye on Gwinnett's three community improvement districts, including the Gwinnett Place CID, which borders Duluth.

"I don't know that we have (missed opportunities)," he said. "We're looking at redevelopment that would be kind of a new approach. We don't have that much available developable land."

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