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## CIDs' plans lay out visions

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NORCROSS - Leaders of two local community improvement districts know what they want their areas to look like.

Now, they just have to make people do it.

The Gwinnett Village and Gwinnett Place districts are each creating plans that will offer developers incentives if they conform to the vision of the CIDs' leaders.

In Gwinnett Village, those visions for redevelopment include greenspace, high-rises near Interstate 85 and buildings that are close to the street, with parking behind. Chuck Warbington, the group's executive director, likened the plan to an overlay district on steroids.

Not only will it deal with architectural standards, he said - things like what a building is made of and the distance between trees - but it will define whether a developer can build houses, offices, stores or some combination on the land.

"We're going to tell the developer what the community wants," he said. "As long as it meets the parameters of the development plan, follows the general box, they can build it."

At a Sept. 13 meeting, Warbington expects the CID's board to pass the initial plan that details how many stories buildings should rise and what preferred uses would be. It will then be subject to what he called a multitude of community meetings, where residents can discuss more specifically what they want in particular areas.

Gwinnett Place is just beginning its planning, but executive director Joe Allen said he expects that document to be completed by March 31. The two plans will work in concert with each other, he said.

"We're sharing the same common concerns and the same common solutions," Allen said. "They're very similar."

Allen said his vision of Gwinnett Place as the county's urban core will be reflected in the eventual plan. While it will encompass the entire CID and even spread outside its boundaries, Gwinnett Village's plan will focus primarily on the I-85 and Jimmy Carter Boulevard corridors.

"That's the heart, where things are going to stem from," Warbington said. "Things on the edges are going to take care of themselves."

Warbington hopes a catalyst site - such as a much-discussed project that would add more than 1,000 residences and thousands of square feet of retail space to the OFS site - will kick off the area's revitalization.

And developers will have incentives to work within the plan. They will skip planning board meetings and county commission votes, heading straight for the permitting process because the community will have already approved details for the site. That takes the risk out of the situation, Warbington said, and saves developers time and money.

They will also get increased density or parking bonuses for doing things like adding greenspace or making road

improvements, he said.

Traditionally, developers approach the county to have their plans approved. Now, the CIDs will showcase and advertise what they want done to lure developers who want to work on predetermined projects. Those who want to do something else in the same area will have to go through normal measures.

Warbington said the idea first came from the city of Suwanee, which bought its town green, then master-planned the areas around it. While neither the CID or the county can afford to buy all the areas they would like to see changed, they can accomplish the planning aspect through zoning, he said.

In three to five years, Warbington said, he expects to see significant changes on the corridor. In the meantime, he doesn't share the same worries of some who are questioning whether the vision will include loopholes for developers to get around on land that is almost universally zoned for commercial use with no conditions.

"You cannot mess it up," he said. "That's the beauty of this."

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