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\$20K grant to boost tourism along U.S. 78

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SNELLVILLE - Not only do businesses along U.S. Highway 78 have their own cheerleader, but soon they will also have their own tourism program.

Last month, the Evermore Community Improvement District, a consortium of business owners who agreed to tax themselves, was awarded a grant from the Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The business group will share \$20,000 in grant funding with CIDs for the Gwinnett Village and Gwinnett Place, according to a press release.

Evermore's director, Brett Harrell, said he plans to use the funds to put together a map and tourism brochure that highlights the fun places to visit along the highway.

Those include the Yellow River Game Ranch, Stone Mountain Park, Briscoe Park and hotels and restaurants nearby.

Harrell, the former mayor of Snellville, said the corridor has a lot of hidden gems, such as the E.R. Snell ballfield, which hosts regional hockey tournaments bringing in hundreds of tourists. The crown jewel, of course, is Stone Mountain Park, the internationally known monument that hosts 4 million visitors a year.

"We really do have a lot more than people would imagine," Harrell said.

In all, the three CIDs have 40 percent of the hotels in Gwinnett, said the visitors bureau Executive Director Caryn McGarity.

"Sometimes, you don't realize that some of your strongest partners are already in your own backyard," McGarity said of working with the CIDs, which have made improvements in infrastructure, transportation and crime issues in their regions. "All three should be commended for the hard work and progress they have made."

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