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Gwinnett redevelopment districts seek tax funding

By MICHAEL PEARSON

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A south Gwinnett business group unveiled plans Thursday for two tax-funded redevelopment districts to help pay for major projects between Jimmy Carter Boulevard and Beaver Run Road along I-85.

The tax allocation districts, or TADs, would raise as much as \$1 billion over 25 years by diverting collections from rising property values within the district to a special fund used to pay for redevelopment costs, according to projections by the CID's consultant on the project.

"This will give us an advantage over parts of the county that don't have TADs," said Emory Morsberger, a developer and member of the CID board. "It kind of levels the playing field for attracting new people."

The county's two other CIDs are also expected to present TAD proposals in time for County Commission consideration this year. Gwinnett Place CID unveiled a draft of its plan on Wednesday, showing a tax allocation district running from Gwinnett Place Mall over to I-85 to support four development nodes — high-rise residences, an entertainment district, a mixed-use district and a mid- to high-rise office campus. The Evermore CID, spanning U.S. 78 between Stone Mountain and Snellville, is still developing its plan, Executive Director Brett Harrell said.

The most high-profile project envisioned in the Gwinnett Village plan is redevelopment of the OFS fiber optics plant at Jimmy Carter and I-85, often described as a key redevelopment project for the county. A development company pulled back on plans to request rezoning of the site after a February Supreme Court ruling that rejected the use of school district funds in tax allocation districts.

Georgia voters will decide Nov. 4 whether to overrule that decision with a constitutional amendment.

CID officials say they want to go forward with the plans despite uncertainty over the inclusion of school funds, not to mention chaos in the economy that makes development along the scale discussed in the plans an extremely difficult proposition in the short term.

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"That way we've got all the tools in place when the economy comes around," said Joe Allen, executive director for the Gwinnett Place CID.

Other major projects mentioned in the Gwinnett Village plan include a mixed-use development on the southwest corner of Jimmy Carter and I-85, across the highway from the OFS site, a mixed-use development centered on what is currently an RV park at Indian Trail-Lilburn Road and another project near the Beaver Ruin exit on I-85.

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