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sion changed now we shop.
As consumers tightened belts,
we saw the rise of "fast fash-
ion." Retailers, like Forever 21
and Old Navy, became house-
hold names. The industry also
ushered in the outlet era. Well-
known outlet brands increased
their stores and full-price re-
tailers re-evaluated strategies.

Today, with so many eco-
nomic and political uncertain-
ties, we can expect to see the
popularity of value retail con-
tinue and to see "fast fashion"
expand into categories like
home decor. We will also see
the pace of outlet growth con-

cal. Because of their size, in
many cases more than 1 mil-
lion square feet, malls require
a tremendous amount of up-
keep. While updates can be
costly, they are important to
maintain the center's quality
and to attract and retain top
brands coveted by shoppers.
Clean aesthetics with modern
amenities add to the allure.

Finally, with limited non-
outlet mall development and
retailers well-schooled to sur-
vive in this economy, it's safe
to say the mall isn't going any-
where. It just might look a lit-

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GUEST COLUMN

Vision for Gwinnett Place transformation

By Leo Wiener

On Aug. 28, the Gwinnett
County Board of Commission-
ers took a bold step forward
and endorsed a vision for the
Greater Gwinnett Place area.

For the past year, the
Gwinnett Place Community
Improvement District (CID)
has worked with Gwinnett
County, the Gwinnett Cham-
ber of Commerce, stakehold-
ers and concerned citizens to
craft strategies that can dra-
matically transform greater
Gwinnett Place, functionally
and aesthetically, into a vi-
brant mixed-use center.

Launched in partnership
with Gwinnett County and
the Atlanta Regional Commis-
sion, the Gwinnett Livable Cen-
ter's Initiative (LCI) is a road
map that will create a new type
of community in Gwinnett's
central business district. Suc-
cessful implementation of the
market-driven recommen-
dations require a public-pri-
vate partnership. The LCI pro-
cess helped stakeholders gain
an understanding that doing
nothing or maintaining the sta-
tus quo would lead to failure.
Gwinnett Place must continual-
ly evolve and remake itself if it
is to be competitive again.

To achieve this vision, the
plan recommends strategies
such as opportunity zones and



Leo Wiener is chairman of the
Gwinnett Place Community
Improvement District.

tax allocation districts. The
plan calls for the revision of lo-
cal land-use policies and rules
and infrastructure investments
aimed at creating a more walk-
able development. Central to
this strategy is the creation of
what has been called the Great
Lawn, a public place that can
provide an outdoor venue for
gatherings, art, entertainment
and recreation. This would be
a central green space or public
park that will span both sides
of Pleasant Hill Road.

The LCI concept master plan
also presents two options for
the future redevelopment of
Gwinnett Place Mall. One op-
tion envisions the structure re-
maining intact with a redesign
of the facade, the addition of
parking decks and office build-
ings and residential develop-
ments, similar to improve-
ments made at Perimeter and
Cumberland malls.

The second option calls for
removing the mall's roof and
running local streets through
the mall's center. Macy's,
Belk, Mega Mart, JCPenney
and Sears would become free-
standing structures. This op-
tion would create a walkable
urban core for Gwinnett Coun-
ty similar to that of Atlantic
Station for downtown Atlanta.

It is important to know the
area's rebirth is no longer com-
pletely tied to the mall's suc-
cess or failure. In the last de-
cade, greater Gwinnett Place
has begun to evolve while the
mall declined. The area has
shown the vibrancy needed
to initiate a rebirth regardless
of the mall. This transforma-
tion has been evident over the
past few years with the reno-
vation of existing retail centers
and the investment in new de-
velopment. With or without a
revitalized mall, the Gwinnett
Place area continues to be a vi-
brant marketplace of many dis-
tinct cultures and experiences.

Greater Gwinnett Place's
strategic location in the heart
of the region's most vibrant
community has much of the
amenities, infrastructure and
transportation needed to com-
plement the area's rebirth.
With these advantages, even
greater transformation is pos-
sible, ahead of any rebirth of
the mall.