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Gwinnett pursues urbanist redevelopment



Partnership Gwinnett, in cooperation with The Council For Quality Growth, hosted the Third Annual Gwinnett Redevelopment Forum (watch video) at Gwinnett Place Marriott in Duluth to educate and inform attendees about Gwinnett's local and regional redevelopment opportunities. The forum hosted more than 200 real estate developers, engineers, architects and government officials.

Panelists explored new urbanism, redevelopment financing, best practices, and community case studies. Keynote speaker, Christopher B. Leinberger, president of LOCUS, Responsible Real Estate

Developers and Investors and senior fellow, Brookings Institution, joined the forum to share urban land use and downtown redevelopment strategies.

"The real estate demand in metro Atlanta and Gwinnett County in the coming decades is for compact, walkable urban development, which works best with rail transit. Gwinnett understands this, and is helping to ensure they are at the forefront of this trend by using this Forum to highlight the potential for redevelopment in the county," said Leinberger.

With the lowest unemployment rate in Metro Atlanta's core counties for the past 31 consecutive months, the stable business environment found in Gwinnett provides companies looking to create or recreate their presence in the region with a highly educated workforce and an exceptional quality of life.

"Gwinnett County is positioned for significant investment in the form of positive redevelopment," said Chuck Warbington, Executive Director of the Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District. "Gwinnett's leadership has done a tremendous job of laying the foundation for redevelopment by evaluating current zoning ordinances, development regulations and incentive packages in an effort to make redevelopment more economically feasible."

Since 1970 Gwinnett County's population has grown by more than 1,000 percent (1970, 72,349; 2005, 727,000). With a population set to eclipse one million in the next decade and dwindling availability of undeveloped land, county and municipal leaders have come together through new initiatives to develop innovative strategies aimed at adopting the latest techniques for leveraging urban density.

"Gwinnett County's prime location in Metro Atlanta and the State of Georgia make it a great choice for someone looking to harness local redevelopment opportunities," said Alan Durham, Director- Office of Economic Development at Gwinnett County. "Our focus collectively as a community is to work to ensure that we are highlighting these sites and educating brokers, developers and architects on their availability and use."

Statewide and county leaders along with local leadership engaged in proactive economic development gave details on the incentives currently available, and why they feel the time is right for redevelopment.

"Over the past several decades Gwinnett has grown and reinvented itself," said Joe Allen, Executive Director, Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District. "Now we have the opportunity to breathe new life into those older developments to create the new urban suburbia that is necessary to attract businesses and talent in today's economy."

Gwinnett has prospered from Atlanta's outward expansion with millions of square feet of retail, office and industrial development serving its rapidly growing population. As some of those properties have outlived their initial purpose and stand ready for redevelopment to serve the needs of a new era, Gwinnett is proactively working to ensure that these properties are successfully reused.

"Gwinnett County has a strong foundation of support and vision for redevelopment," said Kellie Brownlow, Director of Economic Development for the Gwinnett Chamber Economic Development and Partnership Gwinnett. "This Forum allows us to educate developers throughout Metro Atlanta about the opportunities in our community and the actions necessary to utilize these properties to their fullest potential."

Other speakers at the forum included: Gwinnett County Commission Chairman, Charlotte Nash; Senior Vice President of Economic Development and Partnership Gwinnett at the Gwinnett Chamber, Nick Masino; Director, Office of Economic Development-Gwinnett County, Alan Durham; Executive Director, Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District, Chuck Warbington; President, Council For Quality Growth, Michael Paris; and Executive Director, Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, Joe Allen.

Panelists included: Gary Mongeon, vice president of Bleakly Advisory Group; Tom Owens, vice president of Morgan Keegan & Company; Fergal Brady, principal of Main Street Resources; Houston Bass, senior vice president of BB&T; Walter Brown, senior vice president of development & environmental affairs at Green Street Partners; Krissy Venneman, associate at North American Development Group; Mary Douglas Hirsch, City of Greenville, S.C.; and Denise Brinson, economic & community development director, City of Suwanee.

Among the program's sponsors and supporters were: The Council for Quality Growth, Gwinnett Village CID, Braselton CID, Gwinnett Place CID, Evermore CID, Lilburn CID, The City of Norcross, The City of Suwanee, Georgia Power, CNU Atlanta and BB&T.

The event also offered a platform for the Gwinnett Chamber Economic Development Council to release its Revitalize Gwinnett Brochure, a list of the top 12 sites available for redevelopment in the community. The brochure also provides a comprehensive overview of the revitalization tools available in the area. For a copy of this redevelopment resource, please visit www.revitalizegwinnett.com.