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The Bucks Stop Here

Community Improvement Districts are funded by property owners to make improvements in security, traffic, beautification and economic development

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Fly-by-night operators stapling "We buy used cars for \$400" signs to a DeKalb County utility pole were surprised when a man drove up and told them to stop. "There was some intense discussion," recalls Emory Morsberger. "They said, 'Who are you?' I said, 'I'm the president. You can't do that.'"

As president of the Stone Mountain Community Improvement District (CID), Morsberger made getting rid of blight his first order of business when the CID was formed a little more than a year ago. He even ran off two undesirables hanging around a gas station who begged for money for "bus fare," bought \$1.50 cans of malt liquor instead, and then resumed begging.

Morsberger called the Florida-based owner of the gas station, who told him selling beer a can at a time was how the operator made his money. "I explained that we're trying to get to a higher level," Morsberger says. "I'm not just a do-gooder here. I'm trying to make the value of his property and the properties around him more valuable."

Like those of most CIDs, the borders of the Stone Mountain district are easily discernible: Overgrown grass, weeds and trash scattered on the roadways suddenly give way to businesses with curb appeal.

The bucks, you might say, stop there. That's because CIDs are funded by property owners who tax themselves. The CIDs then leverage the money raised by applying for matching grants at the county, state and federal level.

"CIDs partner with other governmental entities to make things happen," Morsberger says, noting that much of the blight in

