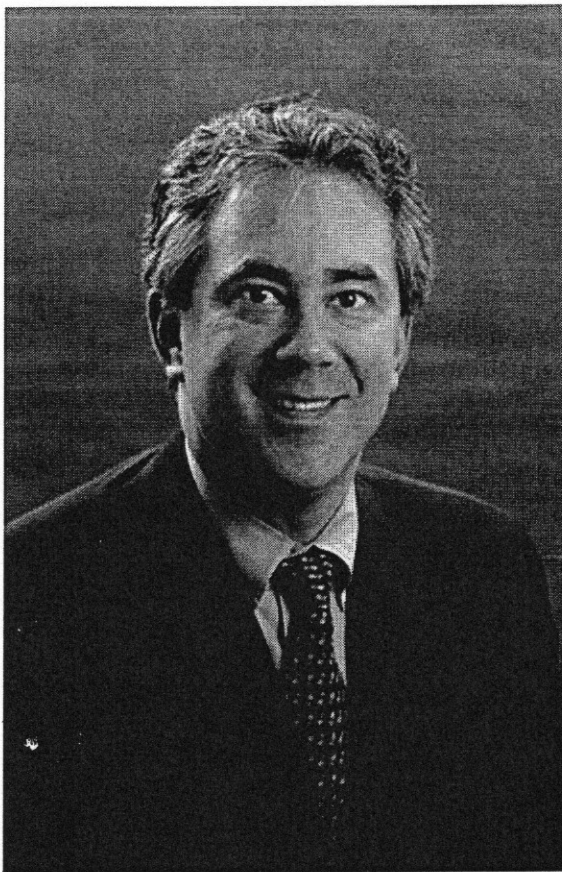


WIENER: Future of Gwinnett tied to revival of Gwinnett Place

Want daily summaries and Breaking News alerts?

As of Saturday, September 15, 2012

© Copyright 2012 Gwinnett Daily Post



Sierra Exif JPEG

On the evening of Aug. 28, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners took a bold step forward and endorsed a future vision for the Greater Gwinnett Place area -- Gwinnett County's central business district and the strategic heart of our community.

For the past year, the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District (CID) has worked in close concert with Gwinnett County, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, area stakeholders and concerned citizens to craft proactive strategies that can dramatically transform greater Gwinnett Place, functionally and aesthetically, into a vibrant mixed-use activity center. The resulting recommendations are market-driven and are aimed at re-establishing the area as the thriving nucleus of Gwinnett County.

Launched in partnership with Gwinnett County and the Atlanta Regional Commission, the Gwinnett Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is a roadmap that will create a new type of community in Gwinnett's central business district. Successful implementation of the market-driven recommendations of this

plan will require a true public-private partnership. Through the LCI process, stakeholders gained an understanding that doing nothing or maintaining the status quo would lead to failure because it places the area at a disadvantage relative to other competing communities. Gwinnett Place must evolve and remake itself if it is to be competitive again in the marketplace.

To achieve this vision, the concept plan recommends the implementation of new economic development strategies such as opportunity zones and tax allocation districts. Also, the plan calls for the revision of local land-use policies/regulations and new infrastructure investments aimed at changing the current suburban development pattern. Central to this implementation strategy is the creation of what has been called the Great

Lawn, a signature gathering place that can provide an outdoor venue for public gatherings, art, entertainment and recreation. This would be a central green space or public park that will span both sides of Pleasant Hill Road, and promote sustainable development while providing a much-needed pedestrian-friendly environment in this urban setting.

Another key element of the plan's implementation strategy are its transportation recommendations that stress the need for more multi-modal transportation facilities, as well as additional roadways and bridges to provide greater connectivity and mobility. Pedestrian elements that improve walkability are also part of this plan, with recommendations for streetscapes and the conversion of auto-orientated streets into complete streets that accommodate all forms of transportation.

The LCI is only the first step in a long journey to transform the area. There are still many details to be worked out. We are just now taking our first steps toward transformation and re-emergence. It will take a high level of cooperation and engagement between all parties, both public and private, to see this vision become a reality. But the stakes are too high for us not to succeed. The very future of the Gwinnett community will be determined along the streets of Pleasant Hill Road and Satellite Boulevard.

To review the LCI plan, please visit www.gwinnettplacecid.com.

Leo Wiener is chair of the Gwinnett Place CID Board of Directors and a principal and partner with Glenwood Development Co. LLC, which specializes in acquisition, development and asset management of multi-tenant retail properties.