

Community Improvement Districts: Models of Excellence in the Metro Region The Centers of Influence and Infrastructure

Over the past 25 years, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) have emerged as significant centers of influence in the Metro Atlanta region. By utilizing self-imposed tax revenues from commercial businesses within their districts they are dramatically changing their communities in many ways. From bold new infrastructure improvements to traffic mitigation, private security and the transformation of commercial streets into pedestrian friendly corridors to the creation of new parks, trails and greenspace, CIDs are enhancing the urban and suburban landscape. These have improved the standard of living throughout the region and will continue to do so at a rapid pace, as evidenced by recent history.

However, the history of this transformation is surprisingly short, starting only in 1985, when then-State Representative Johnny Isakson and then-State Senator Roy Barnes pushed state legislation to allow for the creation of CIDs. The first CID was the Cumberland CID which formed in 1988 and just celebrated its 25th anniversary. Fifteen more have been formed since then, with the youngest, Tucker, coming into existence only a few short months ago.

Among other things, CIDs leverage private dollars to create public ventures. They return control to stakeholders, improve the quality of life in their districts and dramatically strengthen their tax base. Major corporations have taken notice of the impact of CIDs and have specifically chosen to locate or expand in areas supported by CIDs. Numerous notable companies such as:

- Cox Enterprises
- GE Energy,
- Home Depot
- Jacoby Development
- State Farm,
- BlueLinx and
- UPS, have all publicly cited the influence and importance of CIDs in their relocation or expansion decisions.

The CID structure is unique. While the board members are elected by the property owners, they serve as volunteers. Moreover, since the property owners pay additional taxes to fund CIDs, you could say that the Board members actually *pay* for the right to serve. They are truly dedicated stakeholders committed to making decisions that are in the best interest of the assets and the communities that they represent.

The Council would like to recognize each CID for working to make the Metro Region a better place to live, work and play by highlighting just a few of the contributions that each has brought to the region.

Cumberland CID:

Formed in 1988, the Cumberland CID is the oldest CID in Georgia. Over the past 25 years, it has leveraged \$100 million in investments to generate an estimated \$500 million in returns in the form of critical infrastructure spending through 60 capital improvement projects and is home to major corporations such as The Home Depot and The Weather Channel, among others.

These notable projects include the \$300 million Cumberland Boulevard loop road and Kennedy Interchange and the \$53 million US 41 Bridge replacement, road widening & trail which will open in 2014. It has also recently attracted The Atlanta Braves to the CID, with plans to build a brand new ballpark by Opening Day 2017.

What is even more astounding is that the CID's economic impact totals 5.4% of the state's economy and 33% of the economy of Cobb County.

Central Atlanta Progress/Atlanta Downtown Improvement District:

The Atlanta Downtown Improvement District was founded next in 1996 by Central Atlanta Progress, and is transforming the Downtown region through projects like the Atlanta Streetcar, scheduled to go into operation in April 2014; the Traffic Signal Systems Upgrades and Operations Program; and the Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, a program designed to reduce water and energy usage by up to 20% in the Downtown area.

Another major success is the announcement that in 2014, both the College Football Hall of Fame and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights will open downtown.

Town Center Area CID:

Since 1997, the Metro Region's 3rd CID, the Town Center Area CID, has leveraged \$30 million of CID investment into \$133 million worth of valuable improvements in the district. Home to Kennesaw State University and McCollum Airport, some of the CID's key projects include the \$27 million Big Shanty Connector (which was completed last year) and the \$24 million Skip Spann Connector (which broke ground this year).

The CID is also focusing on projects to improve the quality of life in the Town Center area. Those projects include new parks and greenspace and the Noonday Creek Trail, a 7 mile, Silver Comet-type trail that will be completed in 2014. It runs through the center of the CID and will connect Town Center Mall to the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

Buckhead CID

The Buckhead CID was created next in 1999. Through projects such as the Peachtree Complete Street Transformation; the construction of the \$24 million GA 400/MARTA Pedestrian Bridge; and the creation of the \$10 million PATH400 Greenway Trail, the CID is making great strides to enhance the walkability of Buckhead, while also providing opportunities for workers and citizens to utilize alternative forms of transportation. In this way, it continues to fulfill its mission of transforming Buckhead into a more walkable, livable urban environment.

South Fulton

Created in 1999, the South Fulton CID has raised approximately \$5 million in property tax revenues to date. Two major projects currently supported by the CID are improvements to the Interchange between State Route 74 and I-85 and the Oakley Industrial Boulevard Upgrades, expected to break ground in the very near future.

Perimeter

Since their formation in 1999, the Perimeter CIDs have focused on improving traffic conditions in the Perimeter area, leveraging \$114.4 million for these projects, totaling \$145.5 million in value. In a district that is home to 5,000 companies, including UPS and Newell Rubbermaid, these investments have been crucial to ongoing development. Projects like the Ashford-Dunwoody Diverging Diamond Interchange – the first

constructed in Georgia - and the Hammond Half-Diamond Interchange, have improved safety and eased congestion.

Furthermore, the Perimeter Traffic Operations Program (PTOP) has saved 233,680 hours of travel time and saves 160,290 gallons of gas every year. PCIDs' commitment to programs like PTOPTOP has earned them the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's designation as a Best Workplaces for Commuters District.

Midtown Alliance

Midtown Alliance created its own CID – the Midtown Improvement District - in 2000, and it continues to transform Midtown Atlanta into a vibrant inclusive community with a special focus on environmental sustainability. Since its founding, the MID has raised \$71 million in tax revenue, investing more than \$65 million to fund projects valued at \$405 million in total. Notable project successes include: the installation of 14 miles of new streetscapes, the construction of the new 14th Street Bridge and streetscape enhancements, and the design of the 15th Street Arts District Plaza. In 2012, Midtown Alliance also embarked on a strategic plan to establish Midtown as the South's first urban eco-district.

North Fulton

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, the North Fulton CID has invested over \$15 million to fund projects valued at over \$78 million. This year, the North Fulton CID completed all of the Tier 1 priority projects that had been identified by their initial "Blueprint North Fulton" master plan. A new Blueprint 2.0 master plan is currently being completed, which will guide the North Fulton CID's transportation priorities and infrastructure investments over the next 7-10 years. The CID also recently completed a triple-left-turn lane from Mansell Rd. onto NorthPoint Parkway, improving traffic flow in the North Point Mall area and alleviating regional bottleneck for Ga. 400 commuters traveling northbound.

Evermore CID

The first CID in Gwinnett County, the Evermore CID continues its strong commitment to fostering growth and development along the U.S. 78 corridor. The Evermore CID has invested in notable projects, such as the completion of the \$66 million redesign of U.S. Highway 78, the Hewatt to Parkwood Parallel Access Street and the \$2 million McGee Cambridge Alignment project.

Gwinnett Place CID

Gwinnett Place CID encompasses the center of commerce in Gwinnett County, and is making substantial progress towards providing necessary transportation and infrastructure improvements. With projects such as the construction of Gwinnett County's first Diverging Diamond Interchange at Pleasant Hill Road over I-85, and the installation of miles of new sidewalks, streetscape elements and landscaping along Satellite Boulevard, Pleasant Hill Road and other roadways, they are surely succeeding. As a matter of fact, every \$1.00 invested by the Gwinnett Place CID in transportation infrastructure projects is yielding a nearly \$8.00 return on investment

CID community patrols have also led to a 49% decrease in tracked crime incidents, and a 56% decrease in area traffic accidents, since 2007.

Gwinnett Village CID

Gwinnett citizens scored another boost with the creation of Gwinnett's third CID, Gwinnett Village, in 6. It is a commercial hub offering incredible development and growth opportunities, with over 5,000 businesses employing over 60,000 workers within the CID and commercial property values over \$1 billion. Notable CID projects include the DDI at Jimmy Carter Boulevard and I-85, scheduled for completion in mid

2014, and the Norcross to Lilburn Multi-Use Trail, which will connect the historic downtowns of Norcross and Lilburn as well as connecting to a regional trail network.

Lilburn CID

In just three years, the Lilburn CID has invested \$575,000 and secured over \$5 million in leveraged funds to promote its goal to serve as the catalyst for development and improvement in Greater Lilburn. Projects supported by the Lilburn CID include the Main Street Realignment into the heart of Lilburn and the Monthly Landscape & Maintenance Program. In 2014, the CID will also roll out a Comprehensive Security Program, in partnership with the City of Lilburn.

Boulevard CID

Since its establishment in 2010, the Boulevard CID has invested over \$1.6 million into needed strategic planning and improvements. The CID recently completed a Master Plan for the district, and is currently seeking funding for future transportation projects to transform this old industrial corridor into a vibrant commercial hub.

Braselton CID

Though the smallest CID in the Metro Region, the Braselton CID is making great strides to enhance the connectivity of Braselton. In just three years, the CID has leveraged \$900,000 in funds for construction of the "Braselton Lifepath", which will enhance the walkability of the area, and revitalize and differentiate the business district within the CID by improving its connection to surrounding residential areas.

Stone Mountain CID

The Stone Mountain CID was only created two years ago, but has shown its value by leveraging \$5 million to promote economic development, increase public safety and fix broken infrastructure. A key success for the CID has been the creation and modernization of the region's best located Logistics Center.

Tucker CID

Tucker CID is the newest member of the CID family. We look forward to reporting its success at next year's CID Recognition Event.

Conclusion

These 16 CIDs, with over \$1.7 billion in investments, have relieved congestion on our roadways, improved the safety of residents and employees, and provided parks for our enjoyment and recreation. They have encouraged environmental sustainability and the use of alternative modes of transportation. They have provided bike and pedestrian pathways, and helped to foster a sense of community. They are bringing jobs to our communities and serving as a catalyst for economic growth.

They are truly the centers of influence, knitting the Metro Region together by engaging communities in their own development. Without their influence and efforts, the Metro Region would not be what it is today, and the Council for Quality Growth would like to commend each and every CID for the lasting impact they are making on our communities and on our state.

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