
Partnership gets first donation

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DULUTH — A countywide effort to create thousands of new jobs in the next five years Friday took its first step toward meeting a \$10 million fundraising goal.

Partnership Gwinnett leaders accepted an \$80,000 check from members of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, the first group to donate money to the organization that is working to add more than 65,000 new jobs to the county in the coming years.

"We wanted to set the bar," CID Chairman Mark Williams said. "We wanted to jump out there first with a sizable check and lead the way."

The money will be used to hire people who will promote the county to businesses, said Nick Masino, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce's vice president of economic development. In the past, he said, Gwinnett has not needed to promote itself, but times have changed.

Now, the county spends just half a million dollars each year to draw new businesses, Masino said. He wants to increase that number by \$2 million for five years.

"We're at a different point in our development," Masino said. "We need to be proactive."

The chamber has gotten pledges for hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said, but the CID was the first organization to actually give the money. It will donate \$20,000 a year for four years.

County Commissioner Lorraine Green said she is excited about the program. "It's the first of very many contributions to the effort, and the first one is always significant," she said. "They're willing to put their money where their mouth is. This is going to galvanize others."