



MURPHY: CIDs extra ‘oomph’ makes a difference

April 19, 2025

There are things that make a community extra special — programs, organizations and well-intentioned citizens that provide that extra oomph needed to rise above the crowd.

Gwinnett County gets that extra pluck from its CIDs or Community Improvement Districts. Simply put, a CID is a defined area where property owners are willing to chip in some extra cash in order to improve their neighborhood.

And that’s the beauty of CIDs — property owners agree to voluntarily tax themselves in order to make their district a better place to live, work, play and shop. They decide what their community needs and provide the funding to make it happen.

Those self-taxed funds come via the property tax’s millage rate and are at times paired with available grants and other funding sources. But local control of those self-taxed dollars ensures the community gets the biggest bang for the buck.

Each CID is unique, with different personalities, assets and challenges. But they share some common goals: aesthetics, security and mobility — all focused on improving quality of life.

Whether it’s picturesque landscaping, hiring additional security, installing surveillance cameras to curb crime, or road projects, they’re all directed at creating a safe, welcoming and comfortable environment. Thoroughfare repair and improvements initiated by the CIDs are not only for motorists, but for pedestrians as well. Mitigating metro Atlanta snarl is a priority.

The Gwinnett Daily Post recently sat down with a group of CID executive directors to catch up on the progress in their respective districts.

Some of their efforts take the “fixing-broken-windows” approach. Neglected landscaping and graffiti-riddled walls send an unseemly signal. Conversely, groomed shrubbery, clean streets and well-lit areas serve as an attractive welcome mat.

“When people drive in, we want them to realize they’re someplace special,” said Gwinnett Place Executive Director Joe Allen.

Gwinnett County has six CIDs. Here’s info and a few projects in each:

Gwinnett Place CID consists of areas around the intersection of Interstate 85 and Pleasant Hill Road, including Gwinnett Place mall. Executive Director Joe Allen.

— McDaniel Farm Park Connector is a 10-to-12-foot multiuse path along Commerce Avenue. Construction anticipated to begin in late 2026

— Reconfigure lanes and upgrade signals along Steve Reynolds Boulevard to improve traffic flow.

— Intersection improvements including adding dual left-turn lanes on Pleasant Hill Road at Koger Boulevard/Crestwood Parkway.

Evermore CID lies along U.S. 78 from Snellville south to the Gwinnett County line. Executive Director Jim Brooks.

— Installation of 159 new street lights to reduce traffic accidents and improve pedestrian safety.

— Parallel road from Britt Dr. to Hewatt Road expected to open in November.

— The addition of a third left turn lane for East Park Place onto westbound US-78 and an additional southbound lane for US-78 at West Park Place.

Sugarloaf CID includes the Gas South Arena and entertainment district and the Sugarloaf Mills shopping mall, Executive Director Alyssa Davis.

— Bridging the two sides of I-85 to remove the feel of a barrier dividing the community.

— The “Synchronicity” Mural at the I-85 interchange underpass

— Began installation of the Sugarloaf Gateway Monument Sculpture that will serve as a welcome to the district.

Lilburn CID runs along Lawrenceville Highway (U.S. 29) and includes the city of Lilburn, Executive Director Tad Leithead.

— Efforts to make Lilburn more walkable and pedestrian-friendly.

- Efforts to interconnect parking lots for businesses to avoid motorists.
- Landscaping throughout the district.

Gateway 85 CID spans the I-85 corridor and is about 14 square miles starting about a mile north of I-285, Executive Director Emory Morsberger.

- On-demand microtransit service for just \$3 per ride within a designated service area.
- Increased surveillance by cameras, private security patrols, added police patrols and consistent graffiti and litter removal.
- Pedestrian lighting along Jimmy Carter Boulevard.

Braselton CID: The Gwinnett portion of this CID is the northeastern-most point of the county. The CID known as Braselton Lifepath and connects residential, retail and offices via a 10ft. wide concrete pathway.

Beyond the multi-million dollar projects, even the little things help. Allen says his Gwinnett Place CID returned about 100 abandoned grocery carts to their owners. At \$200 a pop, that's about \$20,000 in returned property.

Beyond these accomplishments, the CIDs act as ambassadors and advocates for the entrepreneurs doing business within their districts and often serve as liaison between those businesses and government agencies.

As aforementioned, each CID has attributes, but they also have challenges. Traffic congestion, pedestrian safety, crime, homelessness are common in densely populated, heavily trafficked areas. Consider, then, what these areas would look like without the lift CIDs offer.

The impact is obvious. Drive into a CID and you may well notice the vibrant landscaping, lighted streets and more security.

As Allen puts it, you're someplace special.