

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

DeKalb districts study transit, improve roads

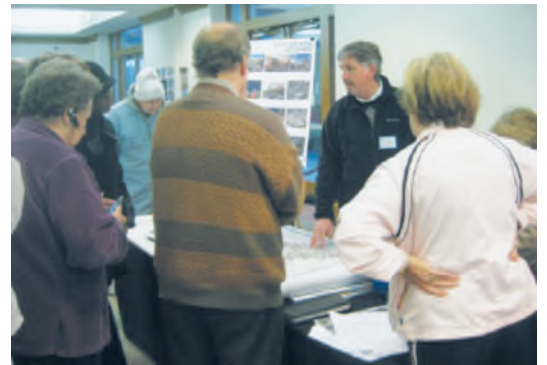
BY PHIL W. HUDSON
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DeKalb County's growth has left some of its roadways inadequate to handle traffic, making congestion relief a priority for commercial property owners.

The **Stone Mountain Community Improvement District** currently has nine projects in the works.

The CID has funded the construction plans for turn lanes to be lengthened and radius improvements to allow for trucks to make turns safely and to lessen traffic delays on East Ponce de Leon Avenue, east- and westbound. The project will be advertised to bid this year and construction activities are anticipated to begin this year, Stone Mountain CID President Emory Morsberger said.

"As these intersections are currently configured, heavy trucks and other commercial vehicles often have difficulties in making turns. The vehicles will strike curbs, drainage facilities and other parts of the infrastructure that are not designed to hold their weight," he said via email. "Trucks and their cargo could be compromised from these impacts. The CID has prioritized this effort to better serve the property owners and businesses who are dependent on commercial traffic."



Aerial view of Tucker-Northlake CID, left; Tucker-Northlake CID stakeholders meeting, above.

SPECIAL

The CID is also working on the conversion of the Mountain Industrial Boulevard center-turn lane near the Gwinnett County line into a raised landscape median with construction anticipated to begin 2015.

"The CID is establishing a gateway entrance that will set the area apart, emphasizing the presence and commitment of a distinct business community," Morsberger said.

"This effort works in conjunction with increased landscape maintenance, including the installation of hundreds of new trees planted to create a lined corridor. The tree effort is a partnership between the CID and the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Keep DeKalb Beautiful and DeKalb County Office of Planning & Sustainability."

Additionally, the CID is preparing construction plans to build 2,500-foot-long, five-foot-wide sidewalks on the west side of Mountain Industrial Boulevard from the Gwinnett County line to North Royal Drive. The project is expected to begin in 2016.

"Many segments of the CID experience high demand for pedestrian-focused facilities for accessing amenities. We are installing new sidewalks in an effort to encourage safe walking in some of the most traveled areas in the district. The more access that employees and visitors have to walkable alternatives, the fewer vehicle trips we will experience on already busy roadways."

The **Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District**, which is less than two years old, is in the very beginning stages of its transportation efforts, CID President Ann Rosenthal said.

The CID's inside-the-perimeter location and access to interstates 285 and 85 and Highway 78 make Tucker-Northlake very attractive to businesses and residents, she said.

"Over the years, we have grown in terms of population, leaving some of our roadways inadequate to handle the vehicle traffic," she said. "Increased regional volume on I-85 and I-285 can back up traffic onto our local roads, especially on La Vista Road and Lawrenceville Highway, where they intersect I-285. And, while we are fortunate to have extensive MARTA bus service throughout Tucker-Northlake, we do not (yet) have a MARTA train station in our community."

In January, the Tucker-Northlake CID kicked off a master plan process, and have contracted with Atlanta-based Sizemore Group to facilitate the effort.

"We are soliciting input from community stakeholders via an online survey and

through three public meetings," Rosenthal said. "There is a great deal of interest around transportation and connectivity, and Sizemore Group is in the process of conducting a transportation study."

When the master plan is completed, it will serve as the CID's roadmap for future development and redevelopment, and will help it identify opportunities for a variety of transportation improvements, Rosenthal said.

"We have already generated a number of ideas ranging from securing a MARTA rail station in the community to specific corrections regarding turn lanes, traffic signals, and road re-routing for specific thoroughfares," she said.

One of the CID's first projects was beautification of the La Vista Road/I-285 intersection.

"By planting hardy flowering shrubs and trees, along with annual and perennial beds at this interchange, we have created a colorful and distinctive gateway to the community in the heart of the Tucker-Northlake area," Rosenthal said.

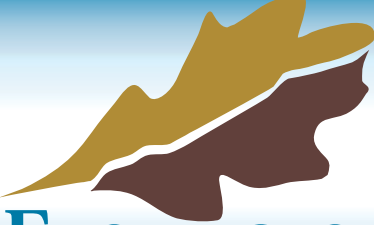
The **East Metro DeKalb Community Improvement District**, another young CID, also has focused on beautification of district gateways.

East Metro DeKalb CID Administrator Nicole M. Hall met with a Georgia Department of Transportation representative on March 2, but could not yet identify any projects to partner on.

"I was interested in any quick response-type projects but they do not have any at this time..." Hall said in an e-mailed statement. "The MARTA expansion along I-20 is definitely a discussion item."

Hall plans to set up a meeting with the DeKalb County Public Works Transportation Division soon to see if it has identified anything that the CID can assist with, she said.

"Currently there isn't a lot of tax revenue to put into a large transportation project, so small projects are of the most interest to us," she said. "Public safety and beautification are our main priorities at this time. As we gain new members and increase our tax revenue, we will have more money to leverage for transportation projects in the future."



Evermore

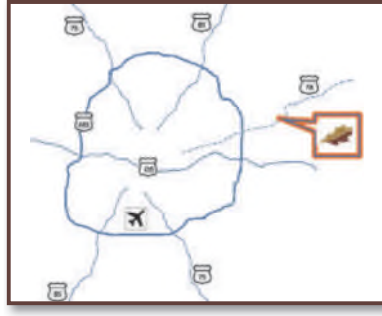
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COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Beauty & safety: How and why CIDs increase their districts' quality of life

BY JANET JONES KENDALL
Contributing Writer

This month, everything is coming up daffodils in downtown Atlanta.

In fact, more than 100,000 daffodils will be in bloom throughout the central city. Residents and visitors alike will be taking daffodil tours and participating in other daffodil-centric events.

Central Atlanta Progress Inc. and the **Atlanta Downtown Central Improvement District** (Downtown CID), in conjunction with Am Yisrael Chail, a non-profit Holocaust education and awareness organization, launched the Downtown Daffodil Project in support of the worldwide Daffodil Project memorializing the 1.5 million children who died in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II.

According to CAP President A.J. Robinson, the effort is just one of many that seeks to enhance the quality of life within the CID.

"The goal of a CID is to protect and enhance property values and life experience within an area," Robinson said. "The look, feel and vitality of a neighborhood directly affects the ability of that neighborhood to attract capital. Being happy with the overall experience and being

good stewards of CID operations are what CIDs are all about."

CIDs throughout metro Atlanta have initiated quality-of-life projects ranging from the redevelopment of blighted areas and public safety enhancements to the creation of paths and trails and landscaping.

One recent example is the **Gateway Marietta Community Improvement District's** contribution to the redevelopment of the blighted Franklin Road corridor.

"Properly engineered, streetscape work can improve traffic flow and drastically improve pedestrian access and safety," said **Boyd Johnson**, vice chairman of the Gateway Marietta CID board of directors, and owner, **Johnson Hailey Investments LLC**. "This has begun at the top and bottom of Franklin Road and will be completed as funds are raised. Not only will this benefit the existing residents and commercial companies, but it will attract new employers to house their operations here."

As a recently formed CID, the **East Metro DeKalb Community Improvement District** is working on public safety, infrastructure and beautification projects as an economic development tool. The group has requested funding for two gateway signs and also plans to bolster the aesthetics at each interchange of Interstate 20 within the district's boundaries, according to **Frederick L. Daniels Jr.**, chair of the board of directors and executive vice president and chief credit officer for Citizens Trust Bank.

"We are educating and promoting our CID to property owners and businesses in South DeKalb to let them know how beneficial a CID will be to the community," Daniels said. "We are conducting listening sessions during the month of March to build relationships and develop partnerships to be able to have united efforts to enhance the quality of life."



Frederick Daniels

Formed in 2013, **Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District** covers roughly nine square miles and represents approximately \$160 million in property value in DeKalb County. According to **Ann Rosenthal**,

Tucker-Northlake CID president and president of ARC Inc., a governmental affairs consulting firm, one of the CID's first projects was to partner with Keep DeKalb Beautiful on the LaVista Road/I-285 Gateway Beautification project. The initial results were so successful, the CID expanded its efforts to the Northlake Parkway/I-285 interchange and assumed the ongoing landscaping responsibilities from DeKalb County for LaVista Road through the business district, and for Northlake Parkway from Lawrenceville Highway to Henderson Mill Road.

"We know that successful communities



Ann Rosenthal

create a sense of pride among residents, business owners and workers, and beautification efforts enhance this community pride and help create a sense of place," Rosenthal said.

The **Buckhead Community Improvement District** contributed funding for the first two phases of PATH400, a 5.2-mile walk/bike path. The first phase from Old Ivy Road to Lenox Road opened in January; the second phase from Old Ivy Road to Wieuca is underway, scheduled to be completed in early 2016.

"If residents, workers and visitors love a place, they will want to be there," said **Jim Durrett**, Buckhead CID executive director.

► CID QUALITY OF LIFE PROJECT FUNDING

- Gateway Marietta CID is undertaking redevelopment of the blighted Franklin Road corridor with a \$68 million bond passed by the city in 2013.
- East Metro DeKalb CID has requested funding for two gateway signs at \$75,000 each under the Keep DeKalb Beautiful program and plans to apply for grants at the State Road and Toll way Authority as well as with the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Transportation.
- Tucker-Northlake CID partnered with Keep DeKalb Beautiful on the LaVista Road/I-285 Gateway Beautification project. DeKalb County provided a grant of \$107,000 while Tucker-Northlake CID contributed \$26,000.
- Buckhead CID's PATH400 walkable and bikeable path is being funded with approximately \$14 million in contributions, including land donations, \$3 million from the Buckhead CID, \$3.2 million from the PATH Foundation, \$750,000 from a Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank grant, \$200,000 from the city of Atlanta and \$100,000 from Park Pride. Livable Buckhead has launched a campaign for the remaining \$15 million needed. The CID's rebuilding of Charlie Loudermilk Park is funded partly by \$1.27 million in private donations and \$1.03 million in CID funds.
- Midtown Alliance's Midtown Blue public safety program 2015 budget of \$1.38 million is provided by the CID and supplemented by numerous public and private partners.

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