

**Mission Statement**

To establish a vibrant, upscale destination area; improve business development opportunities; and enhance property values by developing and promoting coordinated transportation and community character improvements to benefit property owners, business owners, and residents along the Highway 78 corridor.

**Letter from President Emory Morsberger**

Highway 78 Property Owners, Merchants and Residents:

I would like to first thank each and every property owner who has recognized the importance of revitalization and development in our community. Each property owner along the Highway 78 corridor was given an option to directly contribute to their community and we are proud to say that over 200 property owners have chosen to electively tax themselves to fund improvements along the corridor. Since a majority of property owners (representing 75 percent of the assessed property values) consented to form a Community Improvement District (CID), almost every commercial property along the corridor from the DeKalb County line to Scenic Highway (SR 124) will be included in the CID. The Highway 78 CID was officially formed March 18, 2003 in Gwinnett County and March 24, 2003 in the city of Snellville.

The tax money collected will be used to leverage funding for transportation and sewer improvements, landscaping and streetscaping, enhanced safety and clean up in the corridor. We are already working to obtain over fifteen million dollars in federal funding to begin our improvements. Our CID goal is to make Highway 78 one of the best corridors, not only in Georgia, but in the entire country!

However, the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association isn't content to let the property owners have all the credit! We have had a great deal of support and enthusiasm from area business owners and in response to repeated requests by merchants the Highway 78 Merchant's Association is being formed. Imagine what we can accomplish with all the businesses along Highway 78 working together to market our goods and services and to promote activities in the area.

As you know, Georgia Department of Transportation will begin construction of the median in our corridor in approximately fourteen months. Rather than waiting until after the twelve month construction process, we are planning to immediately improve our "curb appeal". In early May we are going to begin an intensive clean up. This will involve intensified support from GDOT, Gwinnett and Snellville city crews. If necessary, our group will hire a contractor to remove dirt, weeds and trash from the median at the entry to Gwinnett and from our 7.5miles of gutters and right-of-way. We want 78 to feel clean and up-scale!

Thank you all for your support. Gwinnett is Incredible!

Emory Morsberger, Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association President

**Accomplishments To-Date**

- 326 property owners in the CID making this the largest CID in the State.
- The CID is valued at almost \$380 million.
- The Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association now has 116 members
- Draft Overlay Zone of Gwinnett County and the City of Snellville is complete.
- Association is coordinating with GDOT on median installation, specifically additional median breaks and right turn lanes.
- The Association has received County, ARC, GDOT and Congressional support for corridor enhancements.



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**Gwinnett County Revitalization Task Force and Highway 78**

Concerned about the signs of decline that are beginning to become evident in the county, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners established the Revitalization Task Force. The members of the Task Force were asked "to develop recommendations for a comprehensive program that will promote economic opportunity and vitality in those areas experiencing decline."

The President of the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association, Emory Morsberger, has chaired the Task Force since June 2001. Recently, to assist the Task Force, the county named a Technical Committee comprised of representatives of the various county departments and civic leaders who are actively addressing the issues of revitalization. The Task Force work program was organized to address three basic charges:

- Document the character and extent of decline;
- Analyze the governmental factors contributing to decline; and
- Recommend incentives that can be offered to encourage private investment in declining areas.

Gwinnett County Planning and Development is currently hiring consultants to develop a Revitalization Implementation Analysis for three key areas. We are happy to announce Highway 78 will be the first area reviewed! This analysis will provide invaluable information on the market conditions and infrastructure capacity of the corridor. Visit [www.co.gwinnett.ga.us](http://www.co.gwinnett.ga.us) for more information.

Visit [www.highway78.org](http://www.highway78.org) for additional information!

### Community Improvement Districts Are A Vehicle for Revitalization

Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) are innovative vehicles for commercial property owners to leverage public money for transportation, safety and beautification projects in designated business districts. Eight of these self-taxing districts already exist in Atlanta's urban areas of downtown, Midtown and Buckhead, as well as suburban business centers at the Perimeter. These established districts generate millions in extra property taxes annually to better their business areas.

Now, the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association is sitting on "ready" as they make preparations to have the first CID in Gwinnett County active by mid-May.

Currently, 55 percent of property owners along the seven-and-a-half mile stretch of Highway 78 from the DeKalb County line to Oak Road in Snellville have signed on to the self-taxing district intent on revitalization. The consenting property owners represent 76 percent of the district's assessed value (excluding residential). These results exceed the key criteria for creating a CID.

Plans to create the Highway 78 CID started when a group of business owners began to fear that the plan by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to replace the area's reversible-lane system with a median could risk their livelihood. In response, a group of business and property owners formed the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association in April of 2002. The objective of the Association has not been to protest the installation of the median on Highway 78, but to be proactive in organizing efforts that would enhance property values and the overall quality of business environment. It was clear to the Association from the start that the formation of a CID would "provide money for developing and implementing programs and policies that support the Association's goal of improving overall quality of life in the Highway 78 corridor," says Association Vice President Kenny King.

Once the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association began organizing in the community and establishing a vision for the area, business and property owners in the area quickly understood the value of forming a CID. "We want to maintain our property values at peak and not let them deteriorate," says Dennis Nash, who owns two acres of commercial property along Highway 78.

While Atlanta's eight established CIDs have a high concentration of white-collar employees and focus funds primarily on improving public services like security and maintenance, the proposed Highway 78 CID is mostly filled with used- and new-car dealerships and a mix of small businesses. The goal of the Highway 78 CID is to transform the area into a "vibrant, upscale destination to promote local business development and enhance property value" by leveraging their money to get more government funding to build projects. Priorities for 2003 include litter removal, increased code and police enforcement, enhanced security, signage improvements, planning and funding for future improvements, and conducting and implementing market study. The group is also asking GDOT to add more median breaks, right turn lanes, and to facilitate interparcel access where possible.

The Highway 78 CID is already valued at nearly \$380,000,000. With an anticipated tax rate of 5 mills, more than \$600,000 per year will be leveraged with other government and local funding. According to Dave Rosselle, Executive Director of the Highway 78 Association, the CID could pay for a \$100,000-to-\$150,000 study for landscaping and get government grants to pay for the materials and infrastructure, a cost of about \$10 million to \$14 million.

Existing CID's have already proven that government money used to improve local businesses is a good investment. J. Lynn Rainey, an attorney who represents six of the eight CIDs, calls CIDs advocacy groups for their communities. "These people have a common interest in the corridor," he reported to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* in January 2003. "A CID creates a method by which [property owners] can enhance the value of the property or maintain the value of the property, which maintains the tax base for the overall government, whether it's a city or county."

Source: Janet Frankston, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 2003

### Highway 78 CID Is a GO!

The County's first CID was approved on March 18, 2003 by the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner John Dunn, District 3 stated, "These pioneers pledged their fortunes for the future of Highway 78. I reject the notion of decline. I have always maintained that Highway 78 has merely had a case of the sniffles. The 78 CID represents the chicken soup for the soul of South Gwinnett."

On March 24, 2003 the Snellville City County approved the CID. Mayor Brett Harrell stated, "I believe the Highway 78 CID is an extremely positive initiative for Snellville.

Many favorable comments were made by county commissioners and city councilpersons. "We are very excited about being the first CID in Gwinnett County authorized by House Bill 654," said Dave Rosselle, executive director for the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association. "CIDs have been very successful in the greater Atlanta area as pro-active organizations that focus on planning and implementing valuable infrastructure and environmental improvement within their districts."

### Merchants Corner

- Logo development and a website are currently under development for the Highway 78 Merchant's Association.
- Highway 78 business owners should look for a questionnaire in the mail regarding what you would like to see the Merchant's Association accomplish.
- Sign up today! Contact: [info@highway78.org](mailto:info@highway78.org) for more information.

### Millage Rates of Atlanta's Established CIDs

Atlanta's Community Improvement Districts raise funds for everything from security to new sidewalks.

District	Millage Rate	Annual income
Cumberland	5 mills	\$5.6 million
Town Center	5 mills	\$1.9 million
Buckhead	3 mills	\$2.5 million
Midtown	5 mills	\$3.5 million
South Fulton	3 mills	\$172,000
Fulton Perimeter	2 mills	\$1.4 million
DeKalb Perimeter	2 mills	\$ 1.2 million
Downtown*	2.5 mills	\$3 million

\* 10 to 15 percent of the district overlaps with the Midtown CID, and that area is assessed at 2.222 mills.

Source: Attorney J. Lynn Rainey, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 2003

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