

**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.

**GDOT Speaks Out About the Highway 78 Median Project and Community Improvement Districts**

The ultimate success of the Highway 78 median project depends greatly on the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Mr. Keith Golden oversees safety design projects, access management, and other operational issues in GDOT's Office of Traffic Safety and Design. He plays a key role in advancing the Highway 78 median project by coordinating his office, the District Office in Gainesville, Georgia, and GDOT's design consultants.

Mr. Golden recently responded to questions presented by the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association regarding the median project and the Association's efforts to form a Community Improvement District.

**Q: The Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association is forming a Community Improvement District (CID). Based on your experiences, what are the reasons to form a CID?**

A: The authority to enter into contracts with state agencies is very important. The opportunity to have common goals within the business community and leverage funding to achieve them is another key benefit. Funding generated through a CID can be used for engineering costs, new construction, reconstruction, and general maintenance of your infrastructure investments.

**Q: What types of outreach efforts to property owners, business owners and residents does GDOT conduct when commencing a project such as the Highway 78 median?**

A: The U.S. 78 project is a safety project and does not require public information meetings, but the Department recognized the importance of input from both businesses and residents in the area. We held our first public information meeting to determine the support for our proposed concept. The decision to move forward was not made until after we received an overwhelmingly positive response at our November 2001 public information meeting. We plan to hold another public information meeting after the preliminary design is well under way.

**Q: In what ways is the Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association able to assist GDOT in communicating with property owners, business owners and residents?**

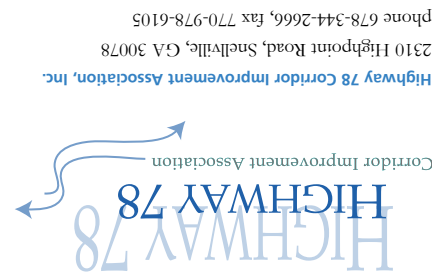
A: It is very difficult to coordinate with as many businesses and land owners as there are in the U.S. 78 corridor. The ability to correspond directly with the Association Board is a great benefit to the Department. We are aware that the Board does not represent every business or resident, but certainly provides us with general insight into community goals.

**Q: GDOT is receiving "safety funding" for the median project along Highway 78. What is safety funding and how does it impact the project plans?**

A: Safety funding is a source of funding that is a "set-aside" amount of federal funds received by the state from the Federal Highway Administration. The funds can be spent only on projects that demonstrate the potential for reducing accidents. Safety projects must have benefits that exceed the actual cost of construction. The Department will have to control costs to keep this project eligible for federal-aid safety funds... *Continued on page 3.*



View a full-length video about the median that will replace the reversible lane system and the benefits of forming a Community Improvement District at [www.highway78.org](http://www.highway78.org).



**Zoning Improvements on Highway 78**

The Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association has been paying attention to how great the Mall of Georgia area looks. How did they accomplish the great landscaping and design? They developed an Overlay Zoning District! With Gwinnett County and the city of Snellville's support, the Association hired ROSS + associates to develop its own overlay zoning district in the Highway 78 corridor area.

The purpose of the Highway 78 CID Overlay District is to encourage and support land use development that provides for traffic safety while maintaining business accessibility and creates a visually appealing, economically strong, and vibrant area. The purpose of the district is specifically intended to address such problems as higher vacancy rates, absence of green space, the presence of graffiti, lack of pedestrian connectivity, visual clutter, and lack of architectural standards.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please contact [Highway78@mindspring.com](mailto:Highway78@mindspring.com).

Corridor Improvement Association

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

## Association's Highway 78 Beautification Plan Now Under Review by GDOT

In September, the Association presented the Highway 78 Access and Beautification Plan to GDOT. The plan's recommendations complement the GDOT median design plans to fulfill the Association's **Transportation Goal: *Ensure the development and implementation of coordinated transportation improvements that prioritize safety and maximize consumer access to businesses, contributing to the long-term vitality of the Highway 78 corridor.***

The Highway 78 Access and Beautification Plan includes two elements: the Access and Safety Plan and the Landscape Plan. The November 2002 newsletter summarized the Access and Safety Plan.

The Landscape Plan includes recommended landscape and streetscape standards to be applied to the GDOT plans for road improvements along the Highway 78 corridor. The plan proposes adding plant materials, sidewalks, and lighting along the right-of-way and in the median to create gateways at the start and finish of the seven-mile corridor, as well as an activity node at the intersection with the Yellow River.



Before and After: Recommended landscaping and plant palette along the Highway 78 corridor.

### Landscaping

A typical section of the corridor is used as an example in the Landscape Plan to depict the recommended designs. The plan allows for plantings to be expanded or decreased based on the available space. Plantings are also meant to be adjusted to fit with the specific property conditions: evergreen plants to hide undesirable views, or plants that can be seen through, over or between to allow views to store fronts. The plan provides recommendations for enhanced landscape planting at key or primary intersections that drivers can appreciate when stopped at the traffic lights or slowing down to take corners.

The plant materials selected for median and turn islands will look attractive and still comply with GDOT safety requirements and sight distances. The plant material is the type that grows low enough to see over from a car or can be limbed up high enough to see below the branches.

Bright, colorful, and bold landscaping at the gateways will reveal the uniqueness of the area to visitors as they enter or leave the corridor. In addition to intensive landscaping, sculptural elements will also be incorporated into the gateways to attract positive attention and physically mark the entrances to the corridor. The west gateway is located where the elevated highway enters Gwinnett County, just past Stone Mountain and in the block west of East Park Place. The east gateway is located at the intersection of U.S. 78 and S.R. 124, or Scenic Highway.

Similar to the proposed gateway landscaping, the plan recommends enhanced landscaping for the Yellow River activity node. It also includes proposed parkland at the river's edge that connects to a greenway trail that runs along the riverside.

### Plant Palette

The plant palette will create a unifying landscape along the corridor right-of-way so that it has signature appearance, unique to this section of Highway 78. The selection of plant material for the plant palette was based on a number of characteristics. The recommended plants are native, or at least hardy in this region and in the harsh environment of a highway, to reduce the level of maintenance necessary to establish the plants. The plants were also selected based on the plant form, leaf color, and bloom color. The intent is to provide a collection of plants that can work together in many different arrangements of small or large groupings.

## Increasing Support for the Community Improvement District

### Background

The Association is actively signing up property owners in order to activate a Community Improvement District (CID) along the Highway 78 Corridor from the DeKalb/Gwinnett County line eastward through a portion of the city of Snellville. A CID is a self-taxing district created through the cooperation of nonresidential property owners and local government entities. The revenues generated from the proposed CID are used for planning and construction improvements within the district.

The Association is required to receive written consent from a majority of property owners representing 75 percent of the value of properties within the proposed district. Once formed, the CID will continue the Association's current coordination efforts and accomplish improvement projects along the corridor. The CID will remain intact beyond the median completion to fulfill the Association's long-term goals of creating a safe corridor to drive through, an upscale destination area and a first-rate living environment.

### CID Progress as of November 15, 2002

There are 578 parcels in the proposed district. Property owners of 184 parcels have signed CID consent forms, representing 32 percent of all parcels and 29 percent of total property value in the proposed district.

## The Association Buzz

### Meeting with GDOT

The Association's Executive Team met with county and state representatives from the Department of Transportation on November 15, 2002, to review the status of the median project. The Executive Committee obtained information from GDOT concerning how they plan to integrate the Association's proposals for additional median breaks, traffic lights and right-turn lanes into their construction plans. A recap of the meeting will be featured in next month's newsletter!

### Membership Progress as of November 15, 2002

Ninety-five property owners are now members of the Association!

### Merchant's Corner

The Highway 78 Corridor Improvement Association is planning to develop a Highway 78 Corridor Merchant's Association shortly after formation of the CID. This will be a great marketing and support tool for area businesses, with such ideas as:

- A Merchant's Association web site with a directory and links to individual web sites
- Joint sales flyers/mailers
- Joint sales days
- Common holiday theme decoration
- Special events organization

If you have any thoughts or would like to be a member, please e-mail [Highway78@mindspring.com](mailto:Highway78@mindspring.com).

### GDOT Speaks Out, continued from page 1

#### Q: What is a "right-of-way" and is there any required for the median project?

A: Right-of-way is typically referred to as the land the Department owns or will require to construct a project. Additional right-of-way throughout the U.S. 78 corridor will be needed to construct left-turn lanes at signalized intersections. The construction of sidewalks may also require additional land or easements.

#### Q: How do you think the Association can best ensure that Highway 78 becomes a safe corridor to drive through as well as an upscale destination?

A: Taking a proactive effort in working with the Department, Gwinnett County and residents to identify short- and long-range needs based on community priorities should achieve both of these goals.

## Association Board of Directors

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*"[Community Improvement Districts] are a great tool to help influence policy. Governments typically could not spend money for developing an idea or designing a project in the concept stage. What a CID does is kick-start projects."  
—George Barry, Vice President, Cousins Properties*