

Fulton Industrial gets revitalization blueprint

By **Dave Williams**
STAFF WRITER

A once-thriving industrial corridor in Fulton County is looking to make a comeback.

An ambitious new master plan calls for a makeover of Fulton Industrial Boulevard, with particular emphasis on the Interstate 20 interchange.

Going well beyond the warehousing and distribution that was Fulton Industrial's claim to fame in the 1960s and 1970s, the plan calls for a diverse mix of commercial development that also includes office, retail and even a travel plaza to give the large numbers of trucks traveling the highway a place to park.

"Fulton Industrial is turning a page," said Gil Prado, executive director of

The Boulevard Improvement District, the organization of business owners along the corridor that oversaw preparation of the master plan. "We feel it's a transformative plan for the area."

In its heyday, Fulton Industrial Boulevard boasted the largest concentration of warehousing and distribution activity east of the Mississippi River. But by the 1980s, the corridor had begun to stagnate as the focus of industrial development in Atlanta shifted to the north and east. As the older industrial buildings began to deteriorate, Fulton Industrial morphed into a strip of cheap hotels with a high rate of prostitution and other criminal activity.

Spearheaded by owners of the larger properties along the corridor, business leaders formed a self-taxing community

improvement district in 2010 to finance needed improvements. The district's board hired Prado last year to head the effort.

For an area saddled with an older industrial building stock and a reputation for crime, Fulton Industrial Boulevard is surprisingly healthy economically.

According to a market analysis of The Boulevard Improvement District conducted as part of the master plan, the corridor running from Fulton County Airport-Brown Field south to Campbellton Road contains 579 businesses occupying 46.1 million square feet of industrial space and employing 19,544 workers.

Ken Bleakly, president of **Bleakly Advisory Group**, which prepared the market analysis, said the highway's negatives are concentrated in the northern end

of the corridor on both sides of the Fulton Industrial Boulevard/I-20 interchange.

"When you look at the corridor as a whole, it is doing quite well because of its locational advantages," he said. "It's close to labor [and] a lot of companies that want to move supplies. It's near [Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International] Airport."

But Bleakly said crime and an "outmoded inventory of buildings" are hurting Fulton Industrial Boulevard in the competition with newer industrial development happening on the other side of the Chattahoochee River.

"We're competing with Cobb County and Douglas County, which have all the available land we have but none of the issues," Prado said.

Prado said the master plan focuses on the I-20 interchange because that portion of the corridor is most in need of improving.

"We see the I-20 interchange as the front door of the district, the first impression," he said. "[But] that's where the crime is, the blight, the underutilized properties."

To clean up the interchange, the master plan makes specific land-use recommendations for each quadrant.

In the northwestern corner of Fulton Industrial and I-20, the plan envisions converting vacant or underutilized industrial sites into state-of-the-art industrial buildings that will take advantage of the interchange's "gateway" location.

The plan calls for institutional and office uses in the northeastern quadrant, possibly offices for the improvement district, government offices and/or a technical school to provide training for the corridor's workers.

The proposed travel plaza would be built in the southwestern quadrant of the interchange, allowing convenient access for trucks exiting the interstate and heading south on Fulton Industrial.

The southeastern quadrant would feature commercial businesses serving the needs of the district's employees and possibly a police precinct.

"It's still going to be an industrial
► Continued on next page



YOU CAN TRY TO FIT MORE CARS INTO YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYEE PARKING.
Or try the free services below.

More than 1,600 Georgia employers have learned one simple fact: Georgia Commute Options solve workplace challenges. These 12 free services help with everything from increasing productivity, lowering energy costs and reducing demand for parking. When employees carpool, vanpool, ride transit or choose any other commute option, fewer parking spaces are needed. When you think of ways you might fix your parking problems, Georgia Commute Options is your best option.

GaCommuteOptions.com | 1-877-9-GA-OPTIONS



Get More by Driving Less

1 Overall Program Consultation	2 Reporting Program Results	3 Commuter Survey	4 Onsite Events
5 Guaranteed Ride Home	6 Pre-Tax Benefits	7 Telework Consulting	8 Financial Incentives
9 Employee Ridematching	10 Idling Reduction Program	11 Employer Recognition	12 Seminars



3384 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 900
Atlanta, GA 30326
(404) 249-1000
Fax: (404) 249-1048
Newsroom fax: (404) 249-1058
atlanta.bizjournals.com

WEEK OF OCTOBER 25-31, 2013
VOLUME 36, NUMBER 13

Atlanta Business Chronicle (ISSN 0164-8071) is published weekly by American City Business Journals, Inc. Copyright © 2013 with all rights reserved. Reproduction or use, without permission, of editorial or graphic content in any manner is prohibited. Offices are located at 3423 Piedmont Road, Suite 400, Atlanta, GA 30305. Atlanta Business Chronicle is a publication of American City Business Journals Inc., 120 West Morehead Street, Charlotte, NC 28202. Whitney Shaw, President & CEO. Ray Shaw, Chairman (1989 to 2011). Periodicals postage paid at Atlanta, GA, and at additional office. This newspaper is designed to inform decision making executives, investors and managers on the trends, the growth and the new ideas important to commerce and industry in the 20-county Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area. Annual subscription rate is \$96.00. Information in Atlanta Business Chronicle is gathered from sources considered reliable but the accuracy of this information cannot be guaranteed. Neither that information nor any opinion which may be expressed here constitutes a solicitation for the purchase or sale of any securities. Opinions expressed in letters to the editor and commentaries are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Atlanta Business Chronicle. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Atlanta Business Chronicle is available on microfilm at the Atlanta Public Library, One Margaret Mitchell Square, Atlanta, GA 30303. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Atlanta Business Chronicle, 3384 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 900, Atlanta, GA 30326.

American City Business Journals THE BUSINESS JOURNALS
A DIVISION OF ACBJ

corridor," said Tom Flanigan, senior vice president of **Clarion Partners LLC** and chairman of the improvement district's board. "The other uses will be providing services needed for the large workforce population that's there every day."

The district received an \$80,000 grant from the **Atlanta Regional Commission** to pay for the master plan.

For a permanent source of funding the improvements the plan envisions, the district is asking the **Fulton County Commission** to create a tax allocation district (TAD) in the northern end of the Fulton Industrial corridor, including the I-20 interchange.

The city of Atlanta has used TADs to revitalize blighted areas of the city, notably **Atlantic Station** and the neighborhood

around **Centennial Olympic Park**. Local governments creating TADs redevelop projects with borrowed funds that are then paid back from the additional property taxes those improvements generate.

"There is some feeling on the [commission] that we have to be very careful that our investments in TADs meet our goals," said Fulton County Commissioner Emma Darnell, whose district includes the stretch of Fulton Industrial being eyed for a TAD. "[But] I don't anticipate we'll have any policy problems [with the Fulton Industrial TAD]. ... The revitalization of that corridor is something we've already invested in and will continue to support."

Prado said he hopes the commission will approve the TAD early next year.

Reach Williams at davewilliams@bizjournals.com.



New plan: Calls for a mix of commercial, office and retail, with a travel plaza for truckers.

SPECIAL/LAURA LINN

We're always working to help your business save money on natural gas.



A NEVER-ENDING WORK ETHIC AND COMPETITIVE RATES, TOO.

At SCANA Energy we're always working to meet the unique needs of your business. Whether you're a full service restaurant or a one-person shop, our dedicated business services team will listen to your needs and work tirelessly to find ways for you to save.

Call 1-866-498-0409 or visit scanaenergy.com/mybusiness.

SCANA Energy has been a Better Business Bureau Accredited Business since 1998 with an A+ rating as of October 2013.



SCANA
ENERGY

Commercial and Industrial Services

No drama. Just business.