

That's when our friendship blossomed. We spent many a lunch or nighttime phone call talking politics and business. Johnny was a great businessman and we were fortunate to find ways to have our two companies (his realty, mine commercial printing) work together. It was during that period I really saw how bright, dedicated, honest and funny is the real Johnny Isakson.

It was a sense of humor that kept him so grounded. In August of 1994 the two of us were invited to the White House for a ceremony honoring the Winter Olympians. Not being pros in D.C. we arrived way too early and did endless loops by ourselves between the Red, Green and Blue rooms, stopping for refreshments along the way. A few months later the movie "Forrest Gump" was released. Johnny joked that Forrest's visit to the White House to meet President John F. Kennedy must have been based on our aimless meandering there.

But in the end Johnny was no Forrest and could navigate the White House and the rest of D.C. like few others could.

He went on to replace Newt Gingrich in the U.S. House of Representatives and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2004. In both elected roles he was admired and considered a "go to" member to get things accomplished. His colleagues loved him because he worked with everyone in a humble yet effective way. His constituents loved

him for the very same reason.

But even the best of people can have something come out of nowhere to change their life. Back in 1996, the day before a runoff for the first unsuccessful Senate seat he sought, to shake off our nervousness, Isakson and I headed out in his famed old red pickup truck. We decided to put a few campaign signs out. The day had a crystal blue sky except for a lone harmless looking puffy cloud.

After we planted the signs we headed back to the truck only to be the victims of a torrential downpour from that one cloud. All of our signs fell victim too. "I don't think this is a good omen," Johnny joked.

But the omen did not keep Johnny from moving forward and to his ultimate success for Georgia in Washington.

While Parkinson's is much more than a rain cloud, it won't stop Johnny Isakson. He has one of the sharpest minds in politics and there will be so much left that he can and will do as a former U.S. senator. And with him around Georgia more, hopefully more people will get to learn first-hand that Johnny Isakson is not just better than they thought. He is the best public servant a person can be.

Matt Towery is the chairman and co-founder of James magazine and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.



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# CIDs PROGRESS MEANS ECONOMIC GROWTH

BY CINDY MORLEY

Since the inception of the first Community Improvement District (CID) in 1988, there's no question these self-taxing, public-private partnerships have become a popular method of promoting economic growth. And there are now 29 in Georgia!

Georgia CIDs grew out of the traditional business improvement district (BID) model augmented by the levying of an additional property tax or other fees. Both BIDs and CIDs provide supplemental services such as landscaping, street cleaning, public safety and transportation improvements. CIDs were developed as a mechanism for funding a wider scope of big projects and services like street and road construction, bridges, landscaping, new parks, water and sewage systems, signage and public transportation systems.

"Every CID has a different strategy," says Michael Parks, president and CEO of the Council for Quality Growth (CQG)—who added that 26 of the 29 CIDs are Council members. "Some focus on public safety, some on infrastructure, some on congestion relief, others on landscaping, and others on intersection improvements or even connectivity across the district."

Parks said CIDs in Georgia are serving as a national model because of the massive projects they have accomplished. And he expects to see more in the next few years. "The concept of private property owners taxing themselves to invest in their community has been extremely successful. These private property owners make the decisions on how the money is spent, and they see the direct results of their investments."

Each year the CQG hosts its Community Improvement Recognition event and presents the John Williams CID Leadership Award. The award recognizes those who have played an instrumental role in championing CIDs around metro Atlanta through their vision, leadership and dedication.

This year's honoree is Bob Voyles, principal of Seven Oaks, who dedicated over 20 years to advancing the mission of CIDs throughout metro Atlanta. Voyles successfully advocated for the creation of the Perimeter Community Improvement District (PCID) in 1999 and was instrumental in the expansion of PCID with the creation of a separate, adjacent CID called the Fulton Perimeter CID. This deserving recipient currently serves on two boards—Perimeter CIDs and Cumberland CID—and played a key role in the creation of the Chamblee-Doraville CID.

For this feature, *James* selected seven CIDs to give readers a glimpse of the incredible progress being accomplished by these partnerships that would have perhaps been unthinkable even 10 years ago.

### — NORTH FULTON CID —

"We're in the middle of a lot of major projects that will have a huge impact," exclaims state Sen. Brandon Beach, executive director and one of the North Fulton CID founders. One involves a CID partnership with the city of Alpharetta, the Department of Transportation, the State Road & Tollway Authority and Fulton County for construction of the second phase of the Windward Parkway interchange and corridor improvements.

This project converts the dual left turn from the Windward Parkway northbound exit ramp to a triple left

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and creates a third lane travelling westbound from the interchange to Westside Parkway/Deerfield Parkway. This will allow a greater traffic flow, faster travel times and reduced back up on the highly-congested GA 400 at the Windward Parkway northbound exit ramp. The CID is contributing approximately \$1.5 million of the \$7 million cost.

Other projects include:

Davis Drive Extension (Final Design). This project proposes to extend Davis Drive from Mansell Road to Westside Parkway, making the length of the connection approximately half a mile. The North Fulton CID took ownership of the project from Alpharetta in 2017. And in that same year, the North Fulton CID was awarded a \$2 million grant from the State Road & Tollway Authority for the construction of the roadway. The design is almost complete and construction funding has been secured.

Old Ellis Extension (Preliminary Design). North Fulton CID and the City of Roswell are designing an extension of Old Ellis Road from its current western terminus to connect with the recently constructed Sun Valley Drive. The project will include widening the existing Old Ellis Road from Old Roswell Road to its current dead end, incorporating a center turn lane and 4-foot bike lanes on either side.

## — BOULEVARD CID —

"It's a great time for us because we are beginning to see the results of all we envisioned seven years ago," says Executive Director Gil Prado. Landscaping has been a major priority for the CID, which takes in most of the Fulton Industrial area. Just over a year ago, he says, the CID completed the streetscape project at the intersection of I-20 and Fulton Industrial Blvd. This involved the addition of street lights, upgraded sidewalks and even a large butterfly abstract—a 16-foot by 11-foot steel sculpture completed in March.

Prado is excited about Fulton County's plan to invest \$150 million in the area. This includes \$90 million for Charlie Brown Airport—which should include an expanded runway over Fulton Industrial Boulevard, additional hangar space, the creation of a second government center and an animal shelter. This project will be ongoing for 15 years. The remainder of this funding will be used for the construction of a public safety training center and a major road resurfacing project at Fulton Industrial and Riverside.

Prado said plans are also underway for a streetscape project at the intersection of Camp Creek and Fulton Industrial, and a new gateway sign.



GATEWAY MARIETTA CID LANDSCAPING

## — SUGARLOAF CID —

Executive Director Alyssa Davis says the three-year-old CID in Gwinnett County is focusing on three areas: safety, connectivity and aesthetics.

A big project is the installation of 10 new solar-powered, wireless security cameras with automated license plate readers which were placed at key entry and exit points to the Sugarloaf CID. The CID partnered with the county police determine the best locations for the cameras, which use advanced technology to capture a vehicle's license plate day or night, plus the vehicle's make, model, and color. Timestamps are also included on the recordings, making it easy to spot specific vehicles.

According to Davis, the cameras have proven to be a valuable asset. Earlier in the year, for example, a one-year-old girl who was the subject of a statewide Amber Alert was found safe due in part to the CID's cameras. The vehicle in question was spotted by one of the cameras and the footage assisted police in their successful search.

Davis also notes traffic improvements are in the works for the intersection of Sugarloaf Parkway and Satellite Boulevard. And other major projects involve

creating connectivity throughout the community with enhanced sidewalks, purposeful trails, pocket parks, and multi-modal transit access, especially tying in the Infinite Energy Center. Future plans also include creation of a walkable living area—the Loop Trail—that would eventually connect the Infinite Energy Center with Gwinnett Place. It would be part of a larger 16-mile loop that connects to the Western Gwinnett Bikeway, which would run along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard.

## — GATEWAY MARIETTA CID —

This CID was founded in June of 2014 with the mission of establishing the area as a premier metro Atlanta business center. The district is conveniently located right off I-75 only a few miles north of I-285—within the city of Marietta—and is overseen by Executive Director Caroline Whaley.

The Gateway Marietta CID is currently focusing on improving the area through public safety, landscaping, and infrastructure improvements. For the upcoming year, though, Whaley says more focus will be on public safety. (In 2017, the CID worked with Marietta to install four license plate readers along Franklin Gateway and plans are in the works to expand this program.)

Starting in 2014, the Gateway Marietta CID began investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in re-landscaping both the Delk Road and South Marietta Parkway Interchanges. This project will continue in the upcoming year—carrying the project to Franklin Gateway.

## — SOUTH FULTON CID —

Joddie Grey serves as the Executive Director of the South Fulton CID which is located primarily in the I-85, Oakley Industrial Blvd, and Roosevelt Highway (US 29) corridors within the cities of South Fulton, Fairburn, Union City and Palmetto. This CID recently reached an agreement to spend \$1.47 million building a park and ride lot in hopes of eventually getting a MARTA bus stop to help get people to work. The 200-spot lot will be at 8100 Senoia Road, less than a mile from the busy Ga.74/I-85 interchange.

The South Fulton CID will reimburse Fairburn the majority of the \$1.1 million price tag. The rest—about \$374,000—will come out of the city's general fund.

Other projects include:

SR 74 at I-85 Interchange Reconstruction: 2022 Construction. The interchange is a gateway to one of the largest southeastern logistics corridors and SR 74 is a significant commuting corridor for Fayette County.

Renaissance Parkway. The CID is paying for civil engineering design for an access road to relieve more

traffic from SR 74 and connect to the park and ride. This badly needed project will include a 3-lane commercial access road with curb and gutter, sidewalks on both sides of roadway, lighting, storm drain system, and 80' right-of-way from the existing dead end.

## — GWINNETT PLACE CID —

This CID under Executive Director Joe Allen is working on projects under construction by the Georgia and Gwinnett County Departments of Transportation.

Other projects include:

The Venture Drive at Day Drive roundabout project, which began in June. Construction is anticipated to be completed in March 2020. The project includes the installation of lighting at the roundabout, curb and gutter, sidewalks and associated drainage improvements and is funded by Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) and the State Road and Tollway Authority's infrastructure bank.

The Venture Drive at Steve Reynolds Boulevard Intersection Improvement project will add a second eastbound through lane and extend the southbound left turn lane. The existing traffic signal located at the intersection will be replaced with a new traffic signal.

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## FULTON INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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Construction began in late June 2019 with completion date of March 2020.

The CID is also focused on redevelopment of the Gwinnett Place area. It is identifying emerging real estate development opportunities, creating a Gwinnett Place economic strategy and then crafting an implementation plan for redevelopment at the mall and surrounding sites.

### — BUCKHEAD CID —

The Buckhead CID, located in the bustling business section of Atlanta, is working with the state Department of Transportation to widen busy Piedmont Road with a generous streetscape from Peachtree Road to Lenox Road. The project is currently in design, and plans are 60 percent complete. The CID has also been coordinating the preliminary utilities and right-of-way phases of the project with Georgia Power and local property owners.

Other projects include:

Peachtree Phase Three. The project will run from Maple Drive to Shadowlawn Avenue and will create a more pedestrian-friendly environment through upgrades to sidewalks and crossings and improve the appearance of the street through landscaping, lighting, buried utilities, and granite curbs and medians. This is the third

phase of the project, with phases one and two completed in 2007 and 2012. The project has completed the acquisition of all right-of-ways and construction is scheduled to begin in early 2020.

"Revolutionary" Shuttle Vans. The Buckhead CID board approved a change for "The Buc" shuttle that will offer free rides to the Buckhead and Lenox MARTA stations. The on-demand shuttle vans, accessible through an Uber-style app, will offer free transportation to anyone traveling to or from one of Buckhead's two MARTA rail stations during morning and evening commute hours. The service will also be available for a small fee for trips not connecting to MARTA rail within the zone of service during regular hours of operation. The service will launch in January 2020 and will feature four 12-passenger vans.

West Village Streetscapes. The West Village Streetscapes project now includes fixing stormwater issues along Roswell Road and East Andrews Drive. Buckhead CID worked with Atlanta and the Georgia Department of Transportation to provide the additional funding for the stormwater solution; the city provided \$180,000 and the state \$420,000 to help fund the drainage improvements.

Cindy Morley is a staff writer for James and InsiderAdvantage Georgia.

**"These are exciting times for transportation in Metro Atlanta. We are proud to be at the forefront of infrastructure projects that drive the region forward and create a more connected North Fulton."**

■ Moses Brown, Vice Chairman



**NORTH FULTON**  
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

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# GEORGIA'S AIRPORTS

★ by Baker Owens ★

## THEIR INCREDIBLE IMPACT

When many metro Atlantans think of an airport, they think of Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport—the busiest airport in the world and one of the metro region's biggest economic powerhouses. Probably not at the top of mind, however, are any of the 102 airports across the state not named Hartsfield. Yet these airports are essential to the state's transportation and economic infrastructure, supporting diversified industries including technology, manufacturing, distribution, tourism and agriculture.

The Georgia Department of Transportation does an interesting airport economic impact study every decade. Consider that there are nine commercial service airports—and that means you could potentially book a ticket on Delta Air Lines or Southwest or other combinations at these airports. This is broken further down into 30 "Level 1" airports, meaning they have runways ranging in length from 2,500 to 5,000 feet.

Excluding Hartsfield, there are approximately 1.5 million annual boarded passengers, nearly a million commercial service visitors and another 1.5 million general aviation visitors. There are more than 500 on-airport businesses and the statewide economic impact of the non-Hartsfields is somewhere around \$5 billion.

Peachtree-DeKalb Airport (PDK) may be familiar to

many readers, but its impact is often overlooked. Besides being the headquarters for the WSB traffic copter, PDK is the third-largest payer of property taxes in DeKalb County. Responsible for an estimated 7,300 jobs, the airport generates approximately \$130 million in income for residents. Mostly filled with private planes, PDK has averaged 230,000 takeoffs and landings annually for more than 30 years. It is perhaps the second-busiest airport in the state, behind only Hartsfield. It has four aviation service companies, seven flight schools and two helicopter operations.

Many of the airports around the state started as military air stations born out of World War I or World War II. PDK started as Camp Gordon, a WWI era training camp, and then became the Naval Air Station Atlanta during WWII before finally being converted to civilian use in 1959. PDK is now classified as a general aviation reliever airport—one that is used to reduce congestion by providing service for smaller aircraft, such as shuttles from Charlotte or Cincinnati.

### AUGUSTA AND THE MASTERS TOURNAMENT

Then there's the important Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field. With daily Delta service to Atlanta and

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