

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 24, 2001



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MAJOR PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT KICKS OFF TO RELIEVE CONGESTION, IMPROVE SAFETY IN PERIMETER AREA

A major pedestrian improvement project designed to reduce traffic congestion and enhance pedestrian safety was kicked off today (Sept. 24) by the DeKalb Perimeter Community Improvement District and DeKalb County Government.

A groundbreaking was held on the Perimeter Mall side of the intersection of Hammond Drive and Ashford Dunwoody Road, one of four intersections that will receive improvements as part of the project. The \$1.8 million project will also include building nearly three miles of sidewalks radiating out from the Perimeter Mall area.

“This is an historical event in DeKalb County,” Vernon Jones, DeKalb County CEO, told the crowd of Perimeter business representatives, state transportation officials, project planners and other stakeholders gathered for the groundbreaking.

“DeKalb County has collaborated with the DeKalb Perimeter CID for more than two years to reach this milestone,” Jones noted. “With this project being kicked off today, we are demonstrating that by working together we can improve mobility, pedestrian access and safety and provide overall traffic congestion relief in DeKalb County’s largest employment center.”

The other three intersections that will receive improvements are Ashford Dunwoody Road at Perimeter Center West; Hammond Drive at Perimeter Center Place and Perimeter Center Place at Perimeter Center West, said Roy Ashley, president of Roy Ashley & Associates, landscape architects and land planners. The Atlanta firm has handled projects for the '96 Olympics, Disneyland in Florida and California, Overton Park, Deerfield and the Candler Road revitalization in DeKalb County.

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Ashley said intersection improvements would include new crosswalks with special pavement, new turning islands for pedestrian “refuge” and new pedestrian crossing signals and traffic signals. Construction is expected to begin the middle to latter part of October and be completed by the end of 2002.

“It is important to get people out of their cars and provide them with alternative ways to take advantage of the amenities that Perimeter has to offer,” said DeKalb County District 1 Commissioner Elaine Boyer. “These improvements will not only encourage more pedestrian circulation, but will also increase use of MARTA by the improved access to the Dunwoody MARTA station,” Boyer said.

Noting that the Perimeter area is critically important economically to DeKalb County, Jones said it contains the largest number of Fortune 500 companies in Metro Atlanta with property representing a total appraised value of \$1.5 billion in DeKalb County alone. With 100,000 employees currently employed in Central Perimeter and 213,000 expected by 2008, “it is essential that we improve access and mobility in order to retain jobs and create a quality lifestyle,” Jones said.

PCID Board Chair John Sullivan said the Phase I improvements are the first of a series of major pedestrian improvements scheduled for completion in the Perimeter area during the next 18 months.

He called the project “a tremendous demonstration of the leveraging of private assets with public funds and of what CIDs can accomplish for an area.” A \$1 million Georgia Department of Transportation grant from federal Transportation Enhancement Funds will fund the Phase I intersection improvements along with approximately \$300,000 from the PCID. The sidewalks will cost \$500,000 funded through the state by federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds.

“These improvements will continue the transformation of the Perimeter Center market into a more pedestrian friendly, urban environment,” said Sullivan, who is vice president property management in the Atlanta region for Equity Office Properties Trust.

“We are now looking forward to a whole new perception of Perimeter as Metro Atlanta’s model for the new urban community.”

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