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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERS BEGIN WORKING ON CENTRAL PERIMETER MASTER PLAN

In the first DeKalb-Fulton partnership of its type, county government, commercial and residential stakeholders came together July 25th at the Dunwoody Library to begin the process of developing a master plan for the Central Perimeter area.

The meeting was held by the Perimeter Community Improvement District, which has received a \$95,000 Livable Centers Initiative grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission to develop a master plan that includes transportation, land use and green space. The Perimeter CID also has added \$23,000 of its own funds for the planning process.

“The Perimeter area is a critical element in DeKalb County’s economic health and the county wants to do what it can to make sure it continues to prosper,” Richard Stogner, executive assistant to DeKalb CEO Vernon Jones, told the crowd gathered for the LCI kickoff meeting. “We are committed to working with the PCID and this initiative to make sure it is a great success.”

“We have to work in concert,” stressed Ralph Daniels, chief of staff for Fulton County Commissioner Tom Lowe. He said Fulton anticipates implementing a community improvement district this year and then hopes to apply for grants to support the Livable Centers Initiative.

In addition to the planning grants, Tom Weyandt, director of comprehensive planning for the ARC, said that the ARC has made a \$350 million commitment to support implementation of the LCI plans over the next 10 years.

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With the LCI master plan, “We want to show Metro Atlanta what a model urban community should look like,” PCID Board member Dean Patterson, asset manager of TMW Real Estate Management, told the neighborhood residents, business owners and officials from MARTA, the ARC and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority who attended the first public meeting for the LCI project.

Better mobility was listed as the top concern in a survey of residents and office workers conducted by the PCID before the kickoff meeting. “The biggest problem is the traffic,” said one employee. “Maybe some companies can alternate work hours to help traffic flow.” Another person commented: “Create a light rail system that runs down the middle of the street between Dunwoody Village and 285 – a system similar to San Francisco’s, which doesn’t necessarily have rail stations, but merely bus stops.”

One person said “ideally each employer would provide showers and lockers as an alternative to providing parking space.” And another suggested that “any new large office building construction should be required to contain its own mini-mall with a drug store, dry cleaners, diners etc. to minimize the amount of driving errands people need to do at lunchtime.”

And a person remarked: “The best local transportation is walking! So put in sidewalks.”

Another major need that has been identified is a sense of place in the area – some key focal points where the community can shop, people-watch, read, hang-out, meet new people and walk the dog for instance, said Stan Harvey, managing principal of Urban Collage, which is heading the consultant team developing the plan.

Perimeter CID President Yvonne Williams said that a key part of developing a master plan for the Perimeter area will be reaching consensus on a vision. A steering committee of stakeholder representatives will meet monthly to provide input into the planning process. More surveys of area residents and employees will also be conducted and additional public meetings and workshops will be held. A visual presentation about the LCI project will be taken to several area groups such as the Dunwoody Neighborhood Association and in the next few weeks key area stakeholders and stakeholder groups will be interviewed for their ideas.

