

# PROGRESS

Chronicling Smart Growth and Development in Fairburn

February 2009, Volume 2, Issue 1

## Livable Centers Initiative Study to Commence

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The Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is a program offered by the Atlanta Regional Commission that encourages local jurisdictions to plan and implement strategies that link transportation improvement with land use development strategies to create a sustainable, livable community with regional development policies.

Fairburn was awarded an \$80,000 LCI grant to produce a study which would look at the present state of downtown Fairburn in order to recommend strategies and policies to create a safe, prosperous town center. Fairburn will contribute an additional \$20,000 in matching funds.

The LCI study will help develop a master plan identifying opportunities and projects that will enhance Fairburn's Downtown Historic District. The primary goal of the study will ultimately enable residents in our downtown area to live, work, shop and play and have access to transportation enhancements contributing to a sense of place and quality of life.

The study will analyze relevant characteristics of the downtown area such as demographics, land use, housing, infrastructure, economic development and urban design.

The City will contract with a team of professional planning, urban design, and engineering consultants to assist stakeholders in the study's development. The team will be responsible for developing a master plan for Fairburn's Historic Downtown District as addressed in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The LCI study will address three key components:

### **Diversity of mixed income residential neighborhoods, employment, shopping and recreation choices.**

Opportunities exist within our downtown area for the establishment of medium and high density housing including affordable and mixed income housing in proximity to shopping, employment, recreation, and transit. Mixed density residential development will address the increasing market for urban housing and provide housing alternatives to a variety of income groups. There are also opportunities to provide pedestrian and bicycle access within the downtown historic district to connect nearby residential and other activity areas.

### **Access to a range of travel options**

With the provision of sidewalks, crosswalks and other facilities, destinations within the study area and surrounding areas can easily and efficiently be reached. The study will provide recommendations for a pedestrian transportation system providing access to all areas within the downtown historic district and to activity centers outside the study area. It will encourage alternatives to automobile use, enhance existing streetscape improvement efforts and redevelopment efforts.

### **Community stakeholders**

The Fairburn LCI study will employ a process that involves as many stakeholders as possible. Town hall meetings will be conducted to discuss goals of the project and to obtain input by stakeholders on the various issues, opportunities, and choices discovered during the course of the study.

All Fairburn residents, building and business owners and others with a vested interest in our city are strongly encouraged to take part in this important project.

This quarterly newsletter is designed to inform Fairburn residents, property owners, business owners and others about events, challenges, changes and facts relating to Development in our City. This publication will keep you up-to-date on all development issues including news, highlights, events, business tips and tourism efforts.

## Member Spotlight

In each issue of PROGRESS we'll provide information about members of the Authority who serve our city and our citizens.

**Jim Williams**, Fairburn's City Manager also serves on the Development Authority. A graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in Architecture, Jim holds a Master's Degree from Georgia Tech in City Planning. Prior to accepting the City Manager's post in Fairburn, Jim served for 15 years as Director of Development Services in Peachtree City. Jim regards the Fairburn Educational Campus in Fairburn and the Avenue project and Path and Green Space programs in Peachtree City among his highest accomplishments.

What follows are excerpts from a recent interview with Jim Williams.

### Can you tell us what you believe to be the biggest accomplishments in the past year?

Jim Williams: 2008 was a great year and 2009 promises to be even better. We ended the year with 14 million dollars in the bank and a balanced budget. We opened our Educational Campus and not only made a significant improvement in our educational base but also made a major step in economic development as the campus provides 80 new jobs and 600 new customers for our local businesses.

During the past year our tax base increased by 21 percent and while there was virtually no residential development there was slow but steady commercial growth. Our population more than doubled to almost 14,000 residents while at the same time our tax base has grown by an astonishing 700 percent enabling us to keep our millage rate at a low 5 Mills. At a time when most communities are desperately struggling to avoid bankruptcy Fairburn continues to make progress in all aspects of its infrastructure and service delivery system.

### What are your goals for 2009?

Jim Williams: There are six major areas the City will focus on in the coming year.

**Recreation:** We seek to complete phase I and phase II of our Youth Activity Center and initiate programs at the center. The City wants to negotiate a long term lease for Duncan Park and initiate improvements and expand programs at the park.

**Economic Development:** We will complete the LCI plan, establish and staff an Economic Development Office, promote commercial and industrial development along with the Championship Fields project and a new Bio-Diesel Project. We will also develop a plan for downtown parking facilities.



**Education:** The City will continue to build the base of our educational facilities and complete the construction of Phase I at our campus. We will secure tenants for Building # 2 and prepare plans for Buildings # 3 and # 4 and complete permanent parking facilities at the campus.

**Environment:** We seek to create a Development Program for our Nature Preserve and to secure approval of a Mitigation Bank at the Preserve. We're going to establish an office and designate a Trustee for our Nature Preserve and we're going to coordinate an Environmental Program with GMC Community College.

**Community Development:** With the help of our community we will initiate a Keep Fairburn Clean program and will negotiate a new sanitation contract to help support the program. The City will continue to update zoning ordinances and maintain our tax rate at 5 Mills and seek to secure funding for improvements to Bohannon Road and Johns Rivers Road.

**Water Resources:** We will establish a program of water independence for the City and focus our efforts on securing the necessary permits for the Bear Creek reservoir.

### Those six areas represent a substantial agenda. What makes you think you can accomplish it all?

Jim Williams: Six years ago we set some aggressive goals.

- **Build a small highly professional staff**
- **Put the brakes on out-of-control residential development**
- **Balance residential growth with a strategic industrial and commercial development effort**
- **Develop first class police and fire departments**
- **Operate with balanced budgets and establish a significant cash reserve**

We accomplished all of this and more. It spotlights the competence, character, courage and common sense of our City officials and staff. I'm confident we'll exceed our goals in 2009 and beyond.

The Atlanta Business Chronicle recently contacted Mayor Hannah to ask about development on the Southside. Here are the Business Chronicle's questions and Mayor Hannah's responses.



**Some of Atlanta's most prominent developers are planning major mixed-use projects in the Southside market, such as Jacoby Development's plans for the old Ford site. How will these redevelopment efforts affect the overall development and identity of the region?**

These new mixed use developments, especially the high profile type represented by the Ford site in Hapeville will increase the interest in the area. The plan clearly puts a spotlight on South Fulton County. These developments show that the Southside is becoming a player in the market.

**What will be key to attracting new businesses and jobs to the Southside in the coming years?**

Certainly better schools and smarter workers will be key. The greatest determinant in bringing jobs, business and industry to a community is the availability of an educated workforce. That is why we are so proud of our new Educational Campus. It will assist area residents in becoming highly skilled graduates, ready to meet the demands of the future.

**What are the major challenges facing the Southside market moving forward?**

The greatest challenge is attracting the right combination of jobs, people and prosperity. Until recently, growth on the Southside has to some degree lagged behind the North side but we are rapidly catching up. We still need to work harder to improve schools in order to provide a better educated workforce so that ultimately we're able to attract corporate headquarters and office development projects. Easy access to I-85 and Hartsfield-Jackson Airport coupled with the CSX intermodal terminal are all positive assets for us.



## Additions to Downtown

**Wonderous Works Catering and Dining** is now open at 22 W. Broad Street. Owned by Betty Freeman and Ilene Densley, **Wonderous Works** specializes in Gourmet Southern Cooking.

The facility is available for parties and events and you can dine in or take food out. The restaurant is open every day of the week except Monday. Stop by and say hello to Betty and Ilene at this newest addition to our Main Street.

**The Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority meets at 4:00 pm on the third Monday of every month at City Hall. The public is encouraged to attend. We're on the web at [www.fairburn.com](http://www.fairburn.com). The Authority is composed of seven (7) members appointed by the City Council and recognized by the State of Georgia as a public corporation with a specified set of powers and a specific purpose and mission to:**

- Revitalize and redevelop the central business district
- Develop and promote for the public good and general welfare, trade, commerce, industry, and employment opportunities
- Finance projects within the central business district that will develop and promote the public good and general welfare
- Issue bonds to finance projects

**Authority Members :** Ray Hannah, - Chair, Jean Barkley Russell, - Vice-Chair, Hal Shields, Secretary-Treasurer, John Carr, Sr., Jeff Couch, Steve Thomas, Jim Williams

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## Main Street Program Committee and Volunteer Opportunities

Throughout the nation, communities are using the Main Street approach to revitalize their traditional commercial districts. The success of the Main Street approach is based on its comprehensive nature. By carefully integrating four points into a practical downtown management strategy, a local Main Street program will produce fundamental changes our community's economic base. The Main Street program coupled with the Livable Centers Initiative will shape the future of our downtown.

The Development Authority is seeking a group of dedicated and supportive volunteers for four key committees.

The **Design Committee** will be concerned with finding ways to enhance the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging supportive new construction, developing sensitive design management systems, and long-term planning.

The **Organizational Committee** will seek to build consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals who have a role in the revitalization process. Volunteer Development, Strategic Planning, Fund Raising, and Advocacy will be part of this process.

The **Promotions Committee** works in the areas of Marketing and Public Relations, Image Development, Retail and Business Promotions, and Special Event Planning

The **Economic Restructuring Committee** will seek to strengthen the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities and challenges from outlying development.

Opportunities abound for interested residents, business leaders and others to assist in our efforts. Volunteers are asked to commit a minimum of at least three to five hours per month. We invite you to add your talents to help make the Main Street Program a rousing success. Volunteer application forms are available at City Hall. You may also access the form on the Development Authority webpage at [www.fairburn.com](http://www.fairburn.com).

This newsletter is published by the Development Authority of Fairburn to promote the affairs of the Authority as well as to highlight programs and activities of affiliated groups. You can direct comments, suggestions and questions to Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority at [econdev@fairburn.com](mailto:econdev@fairburn.com) or call 770.969. 6315. Editor: Patrick Pallend