



July 2024

Mayors discuss projects, safety, collaboration

The Southwest Gwinnett Chamber hosted a panel discussion with the mayors of Peachtree Corners, Berkeley Lake and Norcross on Friday, July 12, at the Hilton Atlanta Northeast. The mayors updated Chamber members about current projects, public safety issues and collaboration.

Current Projects

Berkeley Lake is working on overhauling ordinances, specifically development regulations, and creating a redevelopment plan for the Peachtree Industrial Blvd. and South Berkeley Lake Road area, said Mayor Lois Salter. Berkeley Lake is also improving a playground.

Mayor Craig Newton, of Norcross, said the city recently updated its comprehensive plan and is looking to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along Buford Highway and in the town center, while adding parking downtown. The city is constructing a multi-use, Greenway trail in the east Norcross area, a 3.3 mile trail from Beaver Ruin Road to Pinnacle Park to Baldwin Elementary School. Norcross is also adding another park near Mitchell Road.

"Our Buford Highway Master Plan is always in view, as we seek to expand eastward from our downtown," Newton said.

Mayor Mike Mason, of Peachtree Corners, said the city is studying the available office space, as it ponders at what level office workers will return post Covid. He discussed three distinct areas of the city: the Forum/Town Center, Technology Park, and the southside of the city, where there is a focus on revitalization. The city is engineering a trail starting near Jimmy Carter Blvd. and running along Crooked Creek north up to Spalding Drive.

Public Safety

On the subject of public safety, Mayor Newton said Norcross is increasing police presence in high crime areas and building trust through community policing efforts, including Neighborhood Watch. He said the goal for response time is within 3 minutes and within one minute if the call is from a school. The city partners with various organizations to support social services and programs for at-risk youth.

Mayor Salter said Berkely Lake has embraced Flock cameras, license plate readers that connect to a larger network, gathering data and transmitting it to local police departments. When a vehicle passes a Flock camera, a photo and/or video is taken. If the vehicle or owner is not suspected of a crime, the information is logged and can be searched before being deleted after 30 days. If the vehicle or owner is wanted by police, the location data is pushed to law enforcement immediately for a response. The cameras are located throughout Gwinnett County and have helped police solve a number of crimes. Mayor Salter said she is grateful that Berkeley Lake has very little crime, noting residents look after one another.

In 2023, Peachtree Corners started a marshal program, adding three marshals to the city. Peachtree Corners relies heavily on the Gwinnett County Police Department and technology. Mayor Mason said the city is using as much technology as it can, especially in the area of the Forum and Town Center.

Age demographics

When asked about what cities are doing to attract young families and retirees, Mr. Mason referenced the extensive playground equipment at the Town Center and the free events. He said the city has worked hard to create an environment where people of all ages want to live.

"In the area here, there is a lot to do and a lot to enjoy," Mason said.

Balance is important, but Mayor Salter recognized Berkeley Lake is skewed toward older people, adding the median home price is \$750,000. She said affordable housing is hard to find in her city.

Norcross is enhancing recreational facilities and offering community events that appeal to families with children. Norcross is creating housing aimed at families, and investing in transportation and housing options for seniors. Mayor Newton said the city focuses on improving educational offerings, and programs that benefit childhood learning. He said it is a diverse community that welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds.

Collaboration between cities

While Berkeley Lake has a great sense of community, Mayor Salter said the entertainment districts are in Peachtree Corners and Norcross. The mayors mentioned they meet regularly at meetings of the Georgia Municipal Association and Metro Atlanta Mayors Association. City staff also call each other to discuss new state laws, public health matters, and other issues.

"We talk all the time," Mason said. "If you think about our area, a rising tide does raise all boats."

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