



From the Mayor's Desk

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Trail systems drive economic prosperity

Update on Corners Connector

Peachtree Corners is fortunate to have the Chattahoochee River, various lakes and well established trees within its confines. These natural features attract people and businesses from near and far. The City is capitalizing on these natural gems by connecting them together via a multi-use trail system called the Corners Connector.

In Peachtree Corners, the Corners Connector Trail System will one day consist of more than 11 miles of trails that crisscross the city, connecting people with jobs, neighborhoods, and recreational areas. Trails and greenways bring job growth in not only the immediate construction and maintenance of the trail but also tourism, retail and restaurant opportunities, according to a National Park Service study.

The economic potential of these trail systems is no secret. We've seen it here in Peachtree Corners with ASHRAE, the Parkside Partners adaptive reuse project, Cortland apartments, and Anderby Brewery. Businesses want to invest where investment is being made. The National Association of Homebuilders points to three factors that home buyers want: walking/jogging trails, proximity to a park, and to reside typically in a suburban area. The demand for these amenities is growing.

Many communities find that trails and greenways provide the tools to turn environmental resources into community landmarks that become points of civic pride and attract new businesses and residents. Here is an update on where we are on the Corners Connector Trail System.

Over the last six years, a number of location and feasibility studies have been completed that serve as the foundation of planning for the ultimate build-out of this trail. The Peachtree Corners Livable Centers Initiative, finished in February 2015 and funded by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), was one of the first projects that identified this ultimate trail system. That project was followed later by studies for the Winters Chapel Road and Holcomb Bridge Road corridors. Later, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Innovation Hub Master Plan and the Innovative District Trails Study reinforced and further developed the idea of a master trail system in Peachtree Corners.

Most recently, the ARC funded a feasibility study for part of the Corners Connector along Crooked Creek from Spalding Drive east to Peachtree Parkway. The Corners Connector Crooked Creek project is a long-range plan that will ultimately provide nearly three miles of trail at a cost of approximately \$13 million. This project involves environmental permitting and procurement of easements, so the timeline is fairly lengthy.

Corners Connector Town Center is under construction now. This project is directly adjacent to the recently completed pedestrian bridge over Peachtree Parkway and the Lazy Dog Restaurant. This trail will connect those areas to the eastern most portions of the Town Center and Town Green, along with connections to Peachtree Corners Circle and the development to the south of the stream. Stream connections and a

boardwalk along the stream's banks will connect with a skywalk, providing a bird's eye view of the stream below. It will add 2,400 feet to the Corners Connector system, and with its connection to Peachtree Corners Circle, the system will have a connection along Medlock Bridge Road and South Old Peachtree Road to existing multi-use trails in Duluth.

Corners Connector Engineering Trail is another segment under development. This portion of the system is proposed to connect Engineering Drive south to Woodhill Drive for approximately 4,900 feet of additional trail. An existing segment of the Corners Connector currently ends at Engineering Drive and Peachtree Parkway in front of the Corners Fine Wine & Spirits and RaceTrac, and this project will extend that trail infrastructure south to the Chick-fil-A area and its adjacent shopping centers.

The City is also in the planning and engineering phase of a segment of the Corners Connector along East Jones Bridge Road. This segment will connect Jones Bridge Park east to the existing multi-use trail along Peachtree Parkway. There is a narrow sidewalk along the shoulder of the road that will be enhanced to a 12'-14' wide path to provide accommodations for more pedestrians and cyclists. This project is part of the Chattahoochee Riverland, which includes a trail system that connects Newnan to the Buford Dam along the Chattahoochee River corridor (www.chattahoocheeriverlands.com).

Our portion of the project along East Jones Bridge Road will be just over 9,200 feet long. We are excited to have a portion of such a large-scale project that will connect a number of jurisdictions to the remarkable Chattahoochee River amenity areas in the metro-Atlanta area.

A new opportunity for funding came to light recently when Congresswoman Carolyn Bordeaux held a press conference here at Jones Bridge Park to reveal her proposed national grant program to fund greenway expansion. The overall project called, FutureFit the Suburbs, has an initiative called the National & Regional Greenways Act, which would create a grant program to fund active transportation projects, including the construction and connection of national and regional greenways. This sounds promising and may offer an opportunity to have our tax dollars come back to our community!

With some investment, the natural beauty of the city will be realized for generations to come. Trails support and create jobs, increase property values, reduce commuter costs, increase commerce, and provide low-cost health benefits. As you can see, exciting things are underway.

Stay safe, Mike Mason, Mayor