



From the Mayor's Desk

January 2021

Looking Ahead to a New Year

2020 was tough. Who thought we would face a pandemic that virtually turned our lives upside down? On one thing we all agree: we're happy to say good riddance to 2020! The new year brings us hope with the release of the COVID-19 vaccine. We eagerly await news from the Georgia Department of Health on when and where the vaccines will be available and will pass along that information as soon as we can.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus, the City accomplished quite a bit in 2020. We continued our efforts to keep you safe with the addition of 25 video cameras with license plate readers (installation to be completed in the first quarter of this year). For pedestrian safety, a bridge that carries walkers, joggers, and cyclists over Peachtree Parkway (S.R. 141) opened last fall. The bridge is part of the Corners Connector trail system that, when complete, will connect residents to shops, restaurants, and businesses around an 11.5-mile multi-use trail. In August we opened a new section of the trail that skirts Technology Lake in Tech Park. The scenic path winds along the lake's shore and will eventually encircle the entire lake.

On the business front, the city processed over 370 new business license applications in 2020. Additionally, CarMax announced an expansion last spring adding 200 additional positions at its location on Peachtree Parkway, and Soliant Health, a health care recruiting company, relocated to Tech Park bringing an additional 400 new jobs to our city.

In the fall, we were able to provide CARES Act funding to a number of small businesses that struggled to keep their doors open since the coronavirus struck. The city dispersed \$2.66 million in small business assistance grants to 118 local businesses.

Additionally, at its December meeting, the council appointed board members to the city's new Redevelopment Authority, that will provide renewed focus on reinvigorating the Holcomb Bridge corridor and other areas of the city. The Authority can plan, administer, and implement redevelopment and community improvement projects, as well as aid in identifying and obtaining public funding for industrial, commercial, or residential improvements or expansion projects. The Authority brings new tools which, we hope, will bring developers interested in investing in this highly visible and important gateway of our city.

The Authority board is made up entirely of Peachtree Corners residents who have broad backgrounds such as attorneys, real estate professionals, educators, and engineers. The members come from all geographic areas of the city and include men and women of different races. Councilmember Phil Sadd and Mayor Pro Tem Weare Gratwick will serve as ex-officio non-voting members.

Some of you have asked why much of the city's initial redevelopment efforts began with the Tech Park and Town Center area instead of the Holcomb Bridge corridor. With respect to Tech Park, it is important to understand its role as the economic driver for our city which supports the quality of life and high home property values we all appreciate. When the city was founded in 2012, however, some of its anchor businesses had relocated to newer technology parks in the surrounding metro area and the office vacancy rate was skyrocketing. By focusing our efforts on re-invigorating Tech Park, it re-established our city as the technology hub that Paul Duke envisioned some 40 years ago.

The development of Town Center is a similar story of necessity reprioritizing your best intentions. The city had only been established for about 10 months, when news that the 21-acre property across from The Forum was destined to be a 263-garden style apartment development. I can tell you, buying this land had not even been on our radar when the news came out that this undeveloped property in a prime location had been sold to an apartment developer. If we had not acted swiftly and purchased this tract, none of us would be strolling along the Town Center sidewalks to take in the shops, restaurants, and outdoor concerts we've all come to enjoy.

When we became a city just a little over eight years ago, our first thought was to focus on re-invigorating the Holcomb Bridge corridor. However, the situations we faced required us to redirect our efforts. Now with Tech Park and the Town Center well underway, we are now eager to take full advantage of the tools that our new Redevelopment Authority has at its disposal to identify residential, recreational, business, commercial and industrial areas that may benefit from reimagined uses which will enhance the quality of life for each of us who call Peachtree Corners home.

Happy New Year, wishing you a safe and healthy 2021

Mike Mason, Mayor