



From the Mayor's Desk

July 2021

Nearly a Decade has Passed Since Our City was Founded

For those of you who were here in 2011, you no doubt remember when the referendum to form our City passed. It was a momentous occasion. I recall announcing to a jubilant crowd of supporters that November evening after the polls had closed and the count completed that the referendum to incorporate had passed.

I think back on that pivotal moment in our history and am amazed at all we have accomplished in just nine years. But just as important is remembering the core reasons for incorporating. Our community was under pressure to urbanize rapidly and without direction, as more and more large retailers, businesses, and companies saw the strategic value of locating in Peachtree Corners.

Our proximity to major highways and Atlanta's international airport made our community extremely attractive. Yet other areas in the community badly needed attention. Tech Park Atlanta, the crown jewel office park of the 80's, was experiencing a high vacancy rate which threatened our entire community. Empty strip malls along Holcomb Bridge and run-down apartments along outer Peachtree Corners Circle begged for redevelopment.

Yet, we had no mechanism to control that growth or address those redevelopment needs, or to decide how our community would look decades later. Without incorporating as a city, it meant we were at the mercy of others who had no direct ties to our community. The founding of the City of Peachtree Corners was the single most important decision our residents made in determining the fate of their community. Without local control, choice land would have been annexed leaving the remaining properties in our community subject to reduced values over time.

Standing up a new city is a remarkable achievement in itself as new processes have to be put in place so that a city can begin operating immediately. When I think back, I'm amazed at all of the details that had to be taken care of in those early days. But our efforts paid off for everyone.

Through incorporation, we were able to control our fate, to implement processes allowing us to plan for our future to ensure desirable businesses locate here and redevelopment would be done in a careful, thoughtful way. Developing a strategic plan is a vital tool for any local

jurisdiction to ensure priorities set by City Council are conveyed and developed to meet its community's needs.

An interesting result of municipal incorporation is that residential property values are more likely to increase. In fact, according to a [Georgia State University study](#), property values can rise 12 to 13 percent over time just from incorporation alone. That has certainly been the case for Peachtree Corners: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, home property values are up 18 percent since 2011.

The development of our Town Center was a remarkable feat as our city was barely six months old when we learned that the 21-acre wooded property across from The Forum was to be redeveloped into 265 garden-style apartments. Because Peachtree Corners was incorporated, it had the ability to change the direction of how this sizeable tract would be developed. In the summer of 2017 ground was broken on our Town Center and today we have a beautiful community gathering place for our residents and visitors.

Also memorable was the creation of Simpsonwood Park in 2016 and the permanent preservation of those 227 wooded acres. The United Methodist Church was evaluating a much higher offer for the property from a developer intent upon clearing the land for homes while the County was bidding a lesser amount to preserve the land as a park. The City contributed \$2 million, no small sum now, but a huge amount for a new City, which tipped the balance in favor of the County's bid, assuring that tree canopy will be preserved for our descendants.

Successful economic development plays an important part in the quality of life for residents. As more businesses open, it provides funds to use for more parks, multi-use trails and other desirable amenities. There is another valuable outcome -- ultimately a city with a robust economy will experience increased residential property values.

The City's Curiosity Lab was developed as an economic driver. Since its official opening in the fall of 2019, high-profile companies including Brightree, ASHRAE and Soliant selected Technology Park to relocate their headquarters to Technology Park because of synergy that Curiosity Lab brought to the City. The additional energy surrounding Curiosity Lab has also increased business at our local hotels and restaurants and has even brought a brand-new annual conference here.

In just two short years Curiosity Lab has already been recognized for its smart city technology including testing technologies that will perfect the deployment of driverless vehicles. Additionally, Technology Parkway is fitted with smart cameras, an artificial intelligence-controlled infrastructure, and millions of internet-of-things sensors. Curiosity Lab is drawing interest from technology-focused companies worldwide.

In December 2020, the city's new Redevelopment Authority was formed which will provide renewed focus on reinvigorating the Holcomb Bridge corridor and other areas of the city. This Authority is comprised of nine board members, all are Peachtree Corners residents. This body

can plan, administer, and implement redevelopment and community improvement projects. Additionally, the board can aid in identifying and obtaining public funding for industrial, commercial, or residential improvements or expansion project. The Authority brings new tools which, we hope, will bring developers interested in investing in this highly visible and important gateway to our city.

I think it's also important to note that all of this was done while maintaining a zero-millage rate.

Initially our residents responded to the simple question: who should decide our future? You answered: we should! We've come a long way in just nine years – with your support, we have a bright future ahead of us.

***Stay Safe,
Mike Mason
Mayor***