

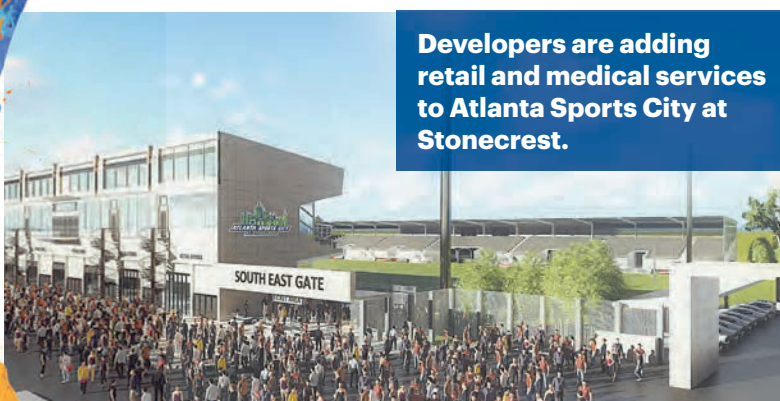
## ► CLOSER LOOK

- New grand entrance linking Atlanta Sports City and The Mall at Stonecrest will add an additional 250,000 square feet of restaurants, attractions, retail and green space as an open-air feature to the mall.
- The new entryway will cost between \$45 million and \$50 million.
- Construction on entryway should begin first quarter 2018.



BYRON E. SMALL

Developers are adding retail and medical services to Atlanta Sports City at Stonecrest.



RENDERING/SPECIAL

## GETTING THE BALL ROLLING

Medical, retail added to massive Atlanta Sports City complex

BY GARY MCKILLIPS  
Contributing writer

**A**tlanta Sports City, the second largest multi-sports complex in the Southeast, will now contain a sports medicine facility and a major retail component.

Second in size only to **Disney Sports Complex** in Orlando, Fla., Atlanta Sports City is collaborating with **Emory Healthcare** to anchor its Sports Medicine Pavilion and to create a Medical Office Health Park which will support the 200-acre facility adjacent to **The Mall at Stonecrest**.

Atlanta Sports City officials also announced a partnership with **Urban Retail Properties LLC**, manager of The Mall at Stonecrest. This partnership will involve construction of a new grand entrance and sports-themed pedestrian promenade, providing a seamless link between the mall and the sports complex. The new entryway, which will cost between \$45 million and \$50 million, will add an additional 250,000

square feet of restaurants, attractions, retail, and green space.

Patrick Henderson, CEO of **Atlanta Sports Connection**, which runs Atlanta Sports City, said with these new additions, “we are servicing the entire family which has been our emphasis and motivation since the start.”

The Sports Medicine Pavilion will be a 10,000-square foot facility with a high-quality MRI scanner. Scott Boden, chief medical officer for **Emory University’s Orthopaedics and Spine Center**, called the scanner “extremely unique for a competition venue of this kind.”

Boden also said **Emory Physical Therapy** will be located within the pavilion and offer recovery and rehabilitative services as well as providing therapists to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10C





## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## TOURISM

## New DeKalb attractions lure visitors

BY KAREN COHEN

Contributing writer

From forests to dinosaurs, DeKalb County families and visitors will find more to explore this summer with the opening of new exhibits and attractions.

**Stone Mountain Park** is a popular DeKalb County family attraction. New to the park this year is the Dinosaur Explore exhibit.

The collection includes more than 20 life-size dinosaurs with special effects allowing them to move and roar.

“Stone Mountain is always looking for new attractions,” said Jeanine Jones, public relations manager at Stone Mountain Park. “When we heard the Dinosaur Explore exhibit was available, we thought it was a home run.”

Dinosaur Explore features 20 dinosaurs representing 14 species, T. Rex meet and greets, baby dinosaur interactions and a dino dig play area. In addition, the Dinotorium includes a four-level indoor jungle gym.

The exhibit creates interactive opportunities for the whole family. “There is something unique about discovering and learning as a family,” said Jones.

Jones says families can spend a full day at Stone Mountain and stay for the nightly laser show. “DeKalb is home to some of the state’s best attractions. Dinosaur Explore is another reason to visit and stay in DeKalb County,” she said.

**Fernbank Museum of Natural History** brings science to life through its programming and exhibits. It is also home to Fernbank Forest, a 65-acre old-growth forest.

### Dinosaur Explore includes interactive adventures at Stone Mountain Park.



SPECIAL

Last fall, Fernbank opened its latest permanent exhibit, WildWoods, an interactive pathway connecting the inside museum to the outside forest.

An elevated walkway takes visitors through the tree-tops to enjoy scenic views. “WildWoods allows guest to connect with the natural world in a new way. Visitors will turn on their senses and experience the sights and sounds of nature,” said Jennifer Grant Warner, incoming president and CEO at Fernbank.



Jennifer Grant Warner

WildWoods includes interactive

exhibits, trailside experiences and educational programs. “WildWoods allows us to expand the hands on and enrichment activities at Fernbank,” said Warner.

Adding to the existing DeKalb recreational attractions, the county has a vision for a new 12-mile linear park and path along North Fork Peachtree Creek connecting northeast metro communities to each other and to the **Atlanta BeltLine**. The proposed Peachtree Creek Greenway is part of DeKalb County and **PATH Foundation**’s master plan created in 1999. The proposed pathway would go through the cities of Atlanta, Brookhaven and Chamblee and unincorporated DeKalb County.

The greenway would bring recreational advantages to its residents and visitors. “The pathway would get more

people outdoors and living a healthier lifestyle,” said Betsy Eggers, board chair of **Peachtree Creek Greenway Inc.**

Peachtree Creek Greenway Inc. is the advocacy group working to bring the proposed path to reality. The organization foresees the greenway enhancing the environment, encouraging economic opportunities and promoting healthy lifestyles. “The pathway would help with land erosion and watershed issues,” said Eggers. “In addition, there would be more oversight and eyes on the creek to ensure safe water quality.”

And, while many DeKalb residents have dealt with road infrastructure issues, the pathway offers an alternative to driving. “The Peachtree Creek Greenway is more than a linear park, it would be a transportation mode that follows I-85,” said Eggers. The **city of Brookhaven** has already committed to a three-mile linear park along Peachtree Creek in Brookhaven. Initial visioning, stakeholder involvement and planning started in 2015 for Peachtree Creek Greenway at Brookhaven. It is expected to cost roughly \$35 million.

Chamblee has also been working on its trail connectivity system. The city is looking to extend the current Chamblee Rail Trail, a 0.9 acre linear park constructed along abandoned railroad spurs.

A rail extension study was completed to design an extension that will continue to use abandoned railroad tracks that pass between downtown buildings from Chamblee Tucker Road to Chamblee Dunwoody Road. **Chamblee City Council** approved and adopted the study last summer. “This is a five-year phased implementation plan. The city of Chamblee is currently surveying all the land and working with MARTA regarding access through some of its property,” said Jodie Gilfillan, director of **Chamblee Parks and Recreations Department**.

*Dinosaur Explore at Stone Mountain Park and WildWoods at Fernbank Museum of Natural History are two new attractions in DeKalb County this year.*



JOANN VITELLI



SPECIAL

## ► CLOSER LOOK

## DINOSAUR EXPLORE AT STONE MOUNTAIN

- Dinosaur Explore features 20 dinosaurs representing 14 species
- 10 additional employee positions were added for the new Dinosaur Explore attraction
- Stone Mountain Park has 4 million visitors annually

## WILDWOODS AT FERNBANK MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

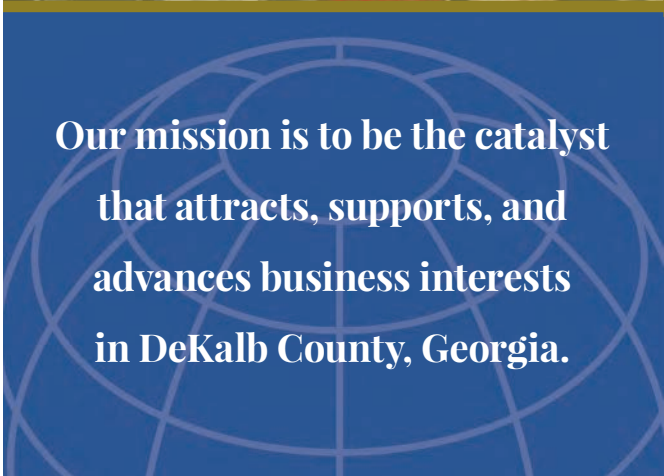
- WildWoods features 10 acres of woodland adventures
- The Montgomery High Line Trace in WildWoods takes visitors from the woodland floor to the incredible heights of the tree canopy – at some points 30 feet off the ground.
- At 65 acres, Fernbank Forest is the largest old-growth forest of its kind in a major metropolitan area

- Fernbank Forest is filled with 64 species of trees up to 300 years old and 156 feet tall—including 31 champion trees
- Fernbank Forest’s diversity includes 156 bird species, 13 mammal species, 92 native herbs and wildflowers.



# DEKALB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Large enough to serve you...small enough to know you



Our work is reflected in our four core focuses:



## 2017 PRIORITY GOALS

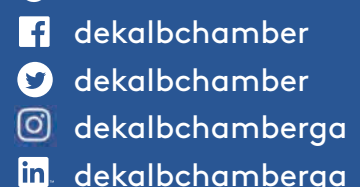
- Increase visibility of DeKalb Chamber's work in the community
- Define DeKalb Chamber as the resource portal for business information and connection
- Advocate for a business-friendly environment in DeKalb County and the metro Atlanta region
- Create an inviting environment that supports business expansion and growth of new entrepreneurs

### DeKalb Chamber of Commerce

125 Clairemont Avenue Road, Suite 235  
Decatur, GA 30030  
[www.dekalbchamber.org](http://www.dekalbchamber.org)  
404-378-8000

### Visit us at [dekalbchamber.org](http://dekalbchamber.org)

Follow us @





## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## REDEVELOPMENT

## Brownfields giving way to new projects



BY DOUG DELOACH  
Contributing writer

As the remaking of metro Atlanta continues apace, cleaning up and re-purposing some of the area's most problematic properties requires more than a motivated developer with a permit, a bulldozer and a construction crew.

In 2012, DeKalb County secured from the **Environmental Protection Agency** a \$900,000 Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant to spur reclamation of hazardous sites known as "brownfields." In 2015, the county received an additional \$300,000 to continue working on brownfields, which are properties where past use indicates the likely presence of contaminated soil or water. The RLF program is being administered by **Decide DeKalb Development Authority** (DDDA) through an intergovernmental agreement.

"Through the RLF program, EPA and DDDA are seeking to strengthen the marketplace by encouraging stakeholders in DeKalb County to leverage available resources to clean up and redevelop brownfields," said Roger Register, National Brownfields Practice Leader at **Cardno Consulting**.

RLF loans are made to private for-profit entities while subgrants are awarded to nonprofits or governmental organizations. When the loans are repaid, the funds are again made available to other eligible borrowers.

"The first step for any applicant is to get the property assessed to determine the potential contamination," Register said. "The RLF program can fund cleanup only after an assessment is completed."

To date, two projects in DeKalb County have been officially funded through the RLF program. One is the former Lithonia Shopping Plaza parcel owned by the **city of Lithonia**, which received a subgrant of \$182,000 to assist with the abatement of



PHOTOS BY JOANN VITELLI

asbestos in preparation for the development of Granite Crossing, a mixed-use housing project.

The public-private partnership between the city and **Wendover Housing Partners** calls for building 75 apartment units and completely transforming the plaza. Construction, which began in November 2016, is slated for completion by the end of the year.

"We are now researching to determine whether there are other opportunities to reclaim these types of sites," said Lithonia Mayor Deborah Jackson.

The other recipient of a loan from the DDDA-administered RLF program is the former Doraville GM Assembly Plant, which is under redevelopment by **The Integral Group**. Integral received approximately \$502,000 to assist with remediation of petroleum and hazardous waste in certain areas of the 165-acre site. The original loan, which paved the way for construction of the Nalley Collision Center, Nalley Infiniti and Nissan dealerships along I-285, was repaid with interest in 2017.

"The developer's vision is a walkable and transit-connected residential and business hub, which will bring new parks, restaurants and other amenities, as well as a sense of place, to Doraville," Register said.

The **East Decatur Greenway**, a nonprofit entity, recently received a favorable recommendation from the DDDA Brownfields Subcommittee for funding a subgrant in the amount of \$86,639. The funds will be used to complete remediation of petroleum-contaminated groundwater and soil at 890 Columbia Drive, site of an abandoned gas station originally built around 1941. During the past three years the greenway organization, which will provide \$21,325 in matching funds, has been working to transform the property into community greenspace and provide a trailhead for the new 1.1-mile segment of a **PATH Foundation** trail. Approval of the recommendation, which will be reviewed by the full DDDA board, is expected.

"The initial remediation occurred in November and December of 2015, but we

Michele Ritan of East Decatur Greenway is working to clean up an area off Columbia Drive. The site will become a trailhead for a new 1.1-mile segment of a **PATH Foundation** trail.

#### ► CLOSER LOOK

#### WHY DEVELOP BROWNFIELDS?

- Improves human and environmental health
- Protects water quality
- Increases the tax base
- Reduces sprawl
- Spurs economic development
- Creates jobs
- Eliminates blight
- Helps attract and retain businesses



SOURCE: DECIDE DEKALB DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

were unable to complete the work with the funds we had," said East Decatur Greenway founder and director Michele Ritan who has a background in nonprofit fund-raising in higher education. "The site was built on fill dirt and the petroleum had migrated into the ground in ways the contractors did not anticipate."

When Ritan contacted the **Georgia Environmental Protection Division** about registering the property in the state's brownfields program, the head of the agency suggested contacting Region 4 of the EPA, which is headquartered in Atlanta.

"They were already interested in the site," Ritan said.

The EPA extended about \$120,000 to dig up three 8,000-gallon underground storage tanks. In addition to contaminated soil and groundwater, asbestos was found in an abandoned convenience store, which had operated on the property for some years after the gas station closed.

Georgia EPD officials recommended installing a rain garden to help control storm water and facilitate phytoremediation. Phytoremediation is a cost-effective technique, which takes advantage of the natural ability of plants to accumulate, degrade or render harmless contaminants in soil, water and air. According to Ritan, the EPA sees the East Decatur Greenway project as a model for communities facing similar problems.

"The EPD and EPA have been tremendously supportive," Ritan said. "They believed in the project and wanted to see it completed."





# DISCOVER THE WORLD IN DEKALB



## Things You Should Know About Atlanta's DeKalb

- Over 75 Hotels | More than 8,900 Guest Rooms | Over 169,000 sq. ft. of Total Meeting/Exhibit Space
- Home to Stone Mountain Park and the Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort
- Convenient to the Emory Conference Center Hotel, Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University and the CDC
- Chartered, Commercial and Private Flights at PDK Airport, Georgia's second busiest
- Since the 1996 Olympics, DeKalb has been host to regional and national sporting events including NCAA competitions
- International shopping and dining along Buford Highway's International Corridor



### Discover DeKalb for your meeting and travel needs.

From boutique conferences in a resort location to small meetings in a university setting, you'll find the perfect meeting site just east of downtown Atlanta in DeKalb. Visitors and residents can always discover something old and new in DeKalb. Visit us at [discoverdekalb.com](http://discoverdekalb.com)

discover  
**dekalb**



#DISCOVERDEKALB



## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## SMALL BUSINESS

## DeKalb Chamber of Commerce declares 2017 'The Year of the Entrepreneur'

BY JANET JONES KENDALL

Contributing writer

In 2012, **Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs** (ACE) helped provide startup capital to the entrepreneurs behind **The Pine-wood** gastropub in Decatur, helping the neighborhood bar and grill create 12 full-time jobs and three part-time jobs.

The eatery has seen such success that within a few years, owners opened a second restaurant, **The Mercury**, in Ponce City Market.

Another DeKalb business, **Rainey Apparel Manufacturing Inc.**, a manufacturer and wholesaler of postoperative compression garments, received funding from ACE to purchase additional equipment to allow for higher production to meet demand, which resulted in the hiring of seven additional employees.

With offices in Atlanta, Cleveland and Norcross, ACE is a nonprofit organization that provides loans and business development resources to help its borrowers create and grow sustainable businesses which generate jobs.

In DeKalb County, ACE has proven itself to be of great benefit to area entrepreneurs.

"We already have a track record of helping grow businesses in DeKalb County," said Grace Fricks, president and CEO of ACE. "We have lent \$4.1 million over the last 10 years to 60 businesses."

As a result of its success there, starting this summer, ACE will work with DeKalb County to provide a microloan program (loans of \$35,000 or under) to residents who want to start or expand a small business and hopefully create at least one job.

"DeKalb County is providing the capital for its citizens and ACE is managing their capital, including prudent due diligence for loans," Fricks said. "The **Urban League of Atlanta** will be providing business training to help prepare the business owners to be successful and to use the microloans to the greatest advantage of the business. ...This program is going to enable DeKalb County, ACE and the Urban League to increase these numbers dramatically and help more businesses."

ACE is one of several successful entrepreneur support programs in place in DeKalb County.

The county has also partnered with **The University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center** (SBDC) to provide training, consulting, tools and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed and with **NOWAccount** which allows **DeKalb Chamber of Commerce** members to gain quick access to capital.

"These partnerships are vital to our overall goal of developing and growing 100 new entrepreneurial ventures in DeKalb County," said Fred Daniels, chair of the board of the DeKalb Chamber.



JOANN VITELLI

Grace Fricks, president and CEO at Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, right, visits Couleen LaGon, who runs The Marchen Sagen Academy in Decatur.

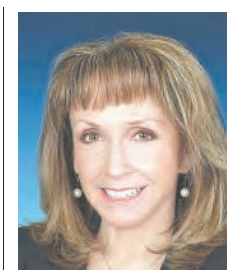
The chamber itself also works to help entrepreneurs get sure footing, Daniels said.

"We advocate on behalf of small businesses and work to hold DeKalb County accountable," Daniels said. "If a small business is having issues acquiring a business license, we work on their behalf and determine the next steps."

In addition, the chamber has plans to develop its website to act as the clearinghouse for business information, acting as a liaison for improving governmental interaction on issues such as acquiring permits, licensing, investment, financing and procurement opportunities.

"We believe that the chamber will continue to foster an innovative and diverse business environment that allows for growth throughout DeKalb County, while providing a significant return on our membership investment," Daniels said. "We have begun our strategic plan by declaring 2017 as 'The Year of the Entrepreneur' and thus our programming, seminars and events will incorporate entrepreneurship at every level into our value proposition for member success."

As area director for the SBDC who works out of DeKalb County, Sharon Macaluso works to provide technical assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs



Sharon Macaluso

through fee-based training programs and no-cost, confidential, one-on-one consulting.

Local chambers, congressional offices, economic development groups, banks, CPAs and other professionals

refer business owners to the SBDC as well when that owner is looking for access to capital, needing assistance with strategic planning to grow, looking for guidance on marketing, learning about government procurement or any other number of functions that will impact a business' sustainability and success.

All SBDC consultants are employees of the university and all have MBA degrees and several years of business experience, owning their own business, working in corporate America, or both.

"Our office works closely with other organizations and entities that are also focused on promoting economic development through entrepreneurship," said Macaluso, who also serves as co-chair for the DeKalb Chamber's Small Business Advisory Council. "These organizations include local chambers of commerce, county and city economic development groups, to name a few. We partner with these organizations to bring our services and resources to their communities and membership."

One of SBDC's signature programs is GrowSmart, a 35-hour, facilitated training program, which incorporates a peer-to-peer learning environment for businesses that have been in business three years or longer, have a minimum of \$300,000 in annual revenues and are focused on growth. The program is presented around the state and is available to DeKalb entrepreneurs in the metro area at least two times a year.

"We find that businesses that take advantage of our services outperform those businesses that do not," Macaluso said. "For example, in 2016, the average Georgia business grew sales 5.5 percent compared to those businesses that worked with the SBDC, whose sales grew by 12 percent. Employment growth of the average Georgia business was 2.9 percent, compared to the 15.5 percent average employment growth of businesses who worked with Georgia SBDC."

"A successful ecosystem for entrepreneurial growth helps not only the large companies but the small main street businesses as well," Fricks said. "Building out the entrepreneurial ecosystem at all stages of development is the goal. Our partnership is one of the first steps."

## ► BY THE NUMBERS

Through partnership with The University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center, DeKalb County is able to provide training, consulting, tools and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. As a result:

- In 2016, the average Georgia business grew sales 5.5 percent compared to those businesses that worked with the SBDC, whose sales grew by 12 percent.
- Employment growth of the average Georgia business was 2.9 percent, compared to the 15.5 percent average employment growth of businesses who worked with Georgia SBDC.
- In Georgia's fourth Congressional district – which includes DeKalb County – from 2012–2016, the SBDC consulted or trained 1,841 individuals that were current business owners or preparing to start a business.
- In the same district, the SBDC assisted in the start of 58 new businesses, and assisted clients in attaining almost \$14 million in capital to grow their businesses.
- Over the past five years, Georgia SBDC clients started 1,658 new businesses, created 12,472 new jobs, raised \$722 million in capital through loans and equity financing, and realized \$10.3 billion in sales.





# Decide DeKalb

Development Authority

- ▶ Bond financing
- ▶ Site selection
- ▶ Small business resources
- ▶ Workforce programs



Intown Locations: Emory Point



Business Districts: Perimeter



Industrial Locations: Doraville



New Developments: Brookhaven



Historic Districts: Brookhaven



Retail Spaces: Lithonia

Decide DeKalb serves as the primary economic development driving force to attract, expand and retain businesses in DeKalb County, Georgia.

We work with partners, stakeholders and the business community to spur capital investments, encourage job growth and create business sustainability.

DeKalb County...the perfect place for business.

To learn more about DeKalb's potential for your business visit  
**[DecideDeKalb.com/explore](https://DecideDeKalb.com/explore)**

 @DecideDeKalb



## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## VIEWPOINT

## DeKalb: A diverse place where business thrives

One of DeKalb County's greatest assets is diversity; not just in its people, but its educational opportunities, established industries, modes of transportation, neighborhoods and communities, landscape and so much more. These factors create an attractive and energetic ecosystem for businesses and their workforces and customers to thrive. Despite these longstanding assets, we face several challenges, and I am working with our county commissioners to enhance infrastructure that will spur economic growth.

**Dynamic workforce**

With more than 700,000 residents, premier higher education institutions and an array of businesses that call DeKalb home, including engineering, manufacturing and technology, DeKalb's citizens are well trained and equipped for employment. More than 100 languages are spoken and countries represented in DeKalb, providing global perspectives and resources.

We work with many partners including Decide DeKalb, local chambers of commerce and community improvement districts.

WorkSource DeKalb provides business solutions for hiring, training and retaining employees to businesses within the county. The organization helps its clients through recruitment and staffing, customized training and workshops, internships,



Michael L. Thurmond is DeKalb County CEO.

job fairs, market research and planning.

**Education**

DeKalb is home to 12 colleges and universities including Agnes Scott College, Columbia Theological Seminary, Emory University, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Georgia State University Georgia-Perimeter College and Oglethorpe University. These top-notch institutions prepare students to excel in trades, business, medicine and more.

DeKalb County School District is a leader in STEM curriculum, with 10 certified schools and programs in more than 90 schools. Students can receive tailored education with school choice options, such as theme, magnet, international baccalaureate and Montessori.

DeKalb is also home to City Schools of Decatur, which annually ranks in the top 10 districts in Georgia for SAT performance.

**Accessible transportation**

DeKalb County is a transportation and logistics hub, with easy access to

Interstates 285, 85, 675 and 20 as well as major state highways and county thoroughfares. It is easy to travel throughout the county or access DeKalb-Peachtree Airport, the largest commuter airport and the second largest airport in Georgia.

The county is also one of the few in metro Atlanta served by MARTA, with rail stations and a well-connected bus network. Several transit-oriented developments have been announced at MARTA stations in DeKalb, creating well-connected environments for residents and businesses.

**A place to thrive**

Diversity breathes life into the cultural, arts, shopping and dining scenes around the county. Cities and neighborhoods carve out distinct characteristics, each adding to the richness of life in DeKalb and ensuring that there is a place in which everyone feels welcome.

DeKalb is home to a lush tree canopy, large parks and natural wonders, such as Arabia Mountain and Stone Mountain, which is the largest tourist attraction in Georgia. Bicyclists and pedestrians benefit from a large PATH network of trails that connect residents to other cities, neighborhoods and attractions.

**Improving infrastructure**

As a county, we have experienced challenges including leadership, sewer

capacity and blight in residential and commercial areas. Those are challenges I am addressing head-on and have made a priority to ensure we never miss an economic development opportunity because of disappointing factors within our control.

We're addressing sewer capacity with a cleaning contract that targets major trunk lines – lines that haven't been cleaned in 50 years and have spots that are clogged with tree roots, debris and fats, oils and grease (FOG). We're cracking down on FOG with enforcement as well as educating businesses and residents on the detriment it poses to our sewers. DeKalb Watershed Management is addressing capacity with robust mapping and its capital improvement projects.

Addressing neighborhood and commercial-corridor blight is an on-going multi-departmental initiative in DeKalb.

Since I took office Jan. 1, I have worked alongside county leadership and officials to determine root causes of issues that have plagued DeKalb for years. Working together with municipalities and business leaders, we are building a DeKalb that showcases the assets it already has – its people, location and resources – while tackling the liabilities that have slowed growth. Now is a prime time to invest or reinvest with us as we reach our full potential.

## STARRING ROLES

## County forms commission to woo film industry

BY H.M. CAULEY

Contributing writer

The impact of the film and music industry in Georgia is evident in the growing number of crews filming on city streets and booking studios around the metro area.

It's seen in the movies and television shows that make Atlanta their home base and support the local economy while they're intown. Along with attractive tax incentives, the state created a dedicated film academy to train workers for the burgeoning business.

While the state's film office plays a significant role in connecting these productions to crews and locations, DeKalb County has taken the initiative to form its own film, music and digital entertainment commission to get in on the star-studded action. The all-volunteer group held its first meeting six months ago.

"This is a big step in the right direction that has been in the planning stages for quite a while," said Beth Talbert, vice president of studio operations for **Eagle Rock Studios Atlanta**, a production company based in Norcross. She was also named as one of the new commission's members. "It points the county toward having a presence in the film industry and presenting a united front to the film

and digital entertainment world. Now we're looking to make improvements to bring more arts into the area."

The idea to establish a commission to woo film projects to DeKalb was the brainchild of Andrew Greenberg, who now chairs the group. Greenberg came up with the concept after brainstorming ways to generate film, music and digital entertainment opportunities for county residents.



Andrew Greenberg

"We're not about getting a slice of the pie; it's about creating a much larger pie," said Greenberg. "Most people in the entertainment industry see that the state has a huge amount potential for expanding what's already in place. That's particularly true of digital entertainment; it's just exploded, going from eight studios to well over 100."

DeKalb has a wealth of locations for filming, recording and producing both films and music, said Greenberg, and has a willing workforce to support projects.

"We are already home to many people working in these fields," he said. "The main

union that crews movies has more than 600 people living in the county, but they work elsewhere in other parts of the state."

By promoting DeKalb as a destination, Greenberg hopes to draw more productions to keep those workers close to home. "We already have **Black Hall Studios** (off Constitution Road S.E.) and Third Rail in Doraville. Now the goal is to ensure more places like these become permanent opportunities for DeKalb residents."

The commission has set three main goals: to promote what DeKalb has in terms of workforce, facilities and locations; to improve those offerings; and to support the needs of the film and music industries by connecting them to a competent, local workforce.

"The new office acts as a hub for all these industries, bringing them together and promoting them or supporting their needs," said Greenberg. "Particularly on the film side, I think the state has done a great job of addressing workforce shortages, but on the game and digital side, we have a constant need for computer programmers, digital artists and designers."

The initial proposals the commission has put before officials revolve around meeting those workforce needs and marketing DeKalb to make it as attractive as possible to industry execs.

"We have to promote how strong this county is," said Greenberg. "That means bringing a lot of rather spread out groups together so they know what's here."

Talbert agrees that marketing is key to bringing more business to DeKalb. "We have to get the word out there that DeKalb is a major destination for location shooting in Georgia, with many locations that can double for other parts of the country or the world, if need be," she said. "One way to do that is to develop a film, music and digital entertainment district, and we're working on that now. A district that promotes film and music production will also support the tourism industry and bring more dining and shopping."

When it comes to wooing productions, DeKalb has already scored several successes, thanks in large part to a streamlined permitting process that makes it easier for crews to shoot in the county. The Netflix drama "Stranger Things" and sections of the "Fast and Furious" movies have been shot there, as have the TV shows "Devious Maids" and the upcoming "The Gospel According to Kevin."

"Too often, everyone operates in their own little bubbles," said Talbert. "But it's important for us to work together and have a united front."



## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## VIEWPOINT

## DeKalb County schools are evolving each day

Evolution rarely occurs in leaps and bounds. Rather, it is the sum of footsteps made over time, through a series of events. The goal is to make such progress that you fundamentally improve your station in your life, for all time.

That is the evolution of the DeKalb County School District. Each day, every step and every experience of our students moves them, our school district and DeKalb County closer to our ultimate goal. We will become the nation's foremost deep teaching and learning public school system, devotedly dedicated to graduating students that are college and career ready.

What a lofty goal, you say? Sure it is. And you don't get there with sweeping swings of a pendulum. You evolve over time, with a relentless focus and the resolve of someone terrified of remaining the same. You evolve with support that comes with Building TRUST, together, with the community.

And we refuse to wait until the future to reap our results.

Five years ago, the DeKalb County School District had been downgraded to "accredited probation" status by AdvancED, the global education accrediting agency. In 2016, the district's full accreditation was restored. Today, that accreditation has been recommended



R. Stephen Green is superintendent of the DeKalb County School District.

for a five-year extension, through 2022.

Two years ago, the district faced the uncertainty of the community's desire to renew its Education Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax (e-SPLOST). Today, we are building and renovating schools following a nearly 71-percent mandate by voters to renew the tax. In fact, DCSD was able to get a head start on those projects by issuing bonds, months before the tax is actually collected, with very favorable interest rates based on upgrades to its financial ratings.

One year ago, DCSD and other school districts in Georgia were threatened by the loss of local control over the turnaround efforts of challenged schools. Today, the district is charting its own homegrown turnaround path through a cutting-edge school leadership review system designed to raise the floor of achievement, and the Horizon initiative to inject underperforming campuses with a boost of student successes.

Again, evolution is a series of steps. A lot of steps. Here are some of our recent footprints:

► We are evolving through Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, with more than 20 schools to date that have been certified either through AdvancED or the Georgia Department of Education. This includes Henderson Mill Elementary, Georgia's first Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM)-certified school.

► We are growing through the delivery of our teaching and learning. Today's students demand teaching that includes heavy doses of project-based experience, and technology that aligns with their learning needs. In March 2017, DCSD took only the first of several planned courageous steps to replace its fractured, dated curriculum with a 21st century blueprint that provides the flexibility required to adjust to the learning needs of all students.

► Our evolution is marrying that curriculum blueprint with extensions of our Advanced Placement courses, and a laser-focus on our blossoming Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Programs. Students earn real-world work experience, and enroll in rigorous courses that help them become

college-ready the moment they leave our halls.

Perhaps most important is fundamental change that elevates the performance of our schoolhouses. Of the many achievements of DCSD recently, we were most pleased that five schools in the DeKalb County School District increased student achievement levels enough to exit the state's Focus and Priority lists for underperforming Title I schools. That only occurs through evolved student achievement.

In DCSD, we know what we are, and what we are not. While the sun is rising, it's not high in the sky just yet. We have much work ahead, and many more mountains of achievement to climb. To meet those challenges, we are becoming stronger, more efficient, and more focused.

The DeKalb County School District is evolving each day. From the moment we engage our students, we will set the standard. Students will learn in top notch buildings, be nurtured and enriched by effective teachers and administrators, with access to first-class tools and technology. We are not there yet, but the evolution is well underway.

We invite you to take note of the journey and to join the journey.

## FINDING SOLUTIONS

## Officials working on transportation needs

BY RANDY SOUTHERLAND

Contributing writer

DeKalb County's recent success in getting a new special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST) referendum to fund transportation through the **General Assembly** is one more example of how county officials, state legislators and the chamber are working together to advance common goals.

"It's hard enough try to move a piece of legislation through the General Assembly



Howard Mosby

and to work against your own local folks you're sitting yourself up for failure," said state Rep. Howard Mosby, who serves as chairman of the DeKalb County House Delegation. "It's best that we work together."

As chair of the Georgia House delegation, Mosby has worked to ensure that legislation affecting DeKalb County is in line with the county's proposals.

"We have to make sure we're on the same page as the county to advance the same agenda," said Mosby.

This year's SPLOST is projected to raise

\$110 million a year for road repaving, police facilities, fire stations, sidewalks, libraries and other infrastructure.

For issues such as transportation, the county engages in an extensive process of evaluation to determine where it needs to spend money.

"Overall we evaluated all of our nearly 2,000 miles of roads that we to determine whether they need repair or repaving," said DeKalb County CEO Michael Thurmond. "What we determined most recently was that 20 percent of our roads – about 400 miles – were in immediate need of repair and resurfacing and we used GDOT (**Georgia Department of Transportation**) standards to make that determination."

Thurmond said historically DeKalb has been "revenue starved" in terms of dollars for resurfacing.

"We worked very closely with the (DeKalb legislative) delegation and we were able to develop bipartisan consensus in the House and Senate," said Thurmond.

The **DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce** has been a supporter of transportation issues in the county. While the organization develops its own transportation agenda it also works to ensure that its needs of the county and state legislative delegation.

"We truly understand that transportation is one of those things that has in the past allowed the county to stand out, but also allowed us to be competitive



Katerina Taylor

within the region," said chamber President Katerina Taylor. "We really focus on what's good for business and how to continue to acquire new business opportunities, but also sustain the businesses that we have."

The chamber's initiatives typically are formulated by its transportation infrastructure committee. This body works with members and elected officials to formulate and support policy.

"It's an ad hoc group that meets during sessions and times when there is a lot of transportation talk, during times where maybe there is a SPLOST that we're trying to bring to the table or one that we're trying to support and get passed," said Taylor.

These issues typically emerge after extensive discussion among chamber members who are focused on transportation.

"We discuss it in the transportation

committee and we'll bring in an issue to the full board," said Taylor Wright, a vice president with **Atkins North America** who serves as co-chair of the committee. "We'll try to explain what's going on with regards to the issue, what it's about, what the implications are for the issue."

The county and legislative delegation are represented on chamber committees to ensure they have a voice as the organization develops its own initiatives.

"We look at those things and meet with people at the county and with other stakeholders," said Taylor. "All the people who serve on our board are business owners or work for a company that does business or is headquartered in DeKalb."

The chamber plays a vital role in issues, such as the upcoming SPLOST referendum, that must go before the voters. While county government can only provide basic factual information about the measure, the chamber can take an advocacy role to urge citizens to support a particular measure.

"The chamber is truly a convener," said the chamber president. "We will bring people together. We have one shot to make sure transportation happens in this particular way or order based on our goals and our shared vision for DeKalb and the region."



## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## GM REDEVELOPMENT

## Assembly projects should start soon

BY RANDY SOUTHERLAND

Contributing writer

It's been a long time coming, but redevelopment of the massive General Motors site in Doraville is beginning to take shape.

Businesses have already sprung up on parts of the 160-acre property and the site's main developer is making strides toward fulfilling a master plan that envisions a \$2 billion mixed-use redevelopment of offices, apartments, retail, and entertainment options.

Christened Assembly, the project is being led by Atlanta-based **The Integral Group LLC**.

The company has undertaken a massive effort to prepare the site for new development. In the past two years, more than 90,000 tons of material has been carried from the site.

The company has also been working with local governments to secure public funding for roads and other infrastructure improvements.

The size and possible scope of the project has generated considerable interest from both local and state officials.

The GM site has been pegged as an attractive site for corporate headquarters. Mattress giant **Serta Simmons Bedding LLC** is expected to consolidate operations at a six-acre parcel on the site. This new Doraville headquarters campus would employ about 500 workers, according to published reports.

The company has so far not officially confirmed the move and both Integral and local officials have been tight-lipped about the prospects of it or any other company committing to the location.

**Third Rail Studios is just one new project at Assembly.**



RENDERING/SPECIAL

"We have been negotiating with about half a dozen users of all types office, retail entertainment and we have projects lined up some of which will start later this year," said Integral Group founder and CEO Egbert Perry. "It hasn't been our view that we needed to be out there making a step-by-step announcements of what we're doing so much of what we're doing had to do with readying the project for aggressive vertically development."

When the GM plant closed, the city of Doraville and the region lost thousands of jobs and millions in taxes. Now local leaders such as the **DeKalb Chamber of Commerce** view the redevelopment as a means to replace at least some of those jobs.

"The chamber's focus on this project is purely economic development, job creation," said **Georgia Power** area manager John Kelley, who serves on the chamber's

board of directors. "That is really our ultimate goal of the GM site to see job creation in the community whether it's directly or indirectly related to the GM project."

Some of those jobs have already come back in the form of development on out parcels of the site. A subsidiary of Duluth-based **Asbury Automotive Inc.** purchased 20 acres for \$19 million and has placed a new car dealership on the site. Another parcel is home to the state's newest movie production facility called **Third Rail Studios**. The studio is named for the rail lines that served the shuttered GM Plant. Located in a former distribution center for General Foods, the 130,000-square-foot factory building was converted into sound stages, administrative offices, vendor spaces and mill shops to support production.

The plant's rail lines have been preserved in an additional nod to adaptive

reuse. The project was developed by **Capstone South Properties** in partnership with the Integral Group.

Among recent productions at the studio are the comedy, "An Actor Prepares," starring Jeremy Irons and the **New Line** feature film "Rampage," starring Dwayne Johnson, which will occupy the entire facility into mid-2017, according to published reports.

The more than 160-acre property has been regarded as one of the most promising redevelopment sites in the Southeast, but has been hampered by delays in gaining approval for public financing of infrastructure through a tax allocation district.

"It was slowed just a little bit with the need for more public dollars for infrastructure," said Kelly. "I think it could have happened a little faster if we could have gotten the school board to support the TAD [tax allocation district], but each entity has to make their own decision."

While progress was slowed, it never came to a stop.

"Now the perception that the project has ever been on hold is entirely incorrect," said Perry.

Along with increasing development on the site, local officials see a spillover effect as surrounding areas become more attractive to development. "We have a \$200 million mixed-use redevelopment planned on Buford Highway," said Doraville Mayor Donna Pittman. "We have a 34-acre town home and single family residential development gearing up across I-285. We have a 12-acre town center redevelopment slated to go out for RFPs later this year and a **New Metro City Bank** is being built on Buford Highway."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

cover all the Atlanta Sports City organized sports competitions and tournaments.

Finally, the Atlanta Sports City-Emory partnership will also involve a multi-specialty health park within the retail section of the project. The new health park will have primary care, cardiology, GI and multiple other specialties available to the community, said Bolan. The chief medical officer added the cost for the new additions will be upward of \$10 million "for the sports medicine and medical piece, but we're still developing and building out what the full program might look like."

Construction on the Sports Medicine Pavilion is scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter of 2018.

Craig Delasin, CEO of Urban Retail Properties, said because of the proximity of the mall to Atlanta Sports City, "We began discussions to make sure both entities were in alignment in areas such as security, maintenance, and traffic flow."

This led to the idea to join the mall and the sports facility.

"Retail is real simple," Delasin said. "It's foot traffic and having the generator to create foot traffic for the mall is a



**Deborah Young and Antonio Render look over the expansion plans.**

JOANN VITELLI

game changer."

The CEO said the addition of the grand entrance, slated to start in the first quarter of 2018, will allow the mall to provide extra services it doesn't have today including entertainment, food and beverage and sports-related retail.

As for the sports complex, ground-breaking is scheduled for the third quarter of this year.

Peter Sherrad, sports sales manager for **Discover DeKalb**, said the ground-breaking awaited the incorporation of Stonecrest as a city and the election of new city officials. With those actions completed, progress is being made toward the third quarter 2017 start with a completion in 2019.

The new DeKalb complex adds to the Atlanta area's already robust capability

to host amateur and professional sports. Atlanta Sports City will include 22 multi-use fields, seven sports diamonds, five indoor courts and 5,000- and 15,000-seat stadiums. The sports hosted by Atlanta Sports City will include soccer, football, flag football, lacrosse, basketball, baseball, field hockey, tennis, volleyball, wrestling and cheerleading.

The 15,000-seat stadium will be available for major sports events and, upon completion, will serve as home to professional soccer teams possibly from the men's **North American Soccer League** and **National Women's Soccer League**.

Trey Brantley, CEO of **First Team SC LLC**, an organization designed specifically to bring professional soccer to Atlanta Sports City, said an announcement regarding the pro soccer teams will come this summer but the men's team is expected to be playing in 2018. The 5,000-seat stadium on the Atlanta Sports City complex will serve as the team's home in 2018, until the larger venue is available. A women's professional team is expected to begin play at Atlanta Sports City in 2019.

Not counting the newly-announced additions, Atlanta Sports City officials expect to have a \$197 million impact in Georgia and will support 1,937 jobs.



## DEKALB COUNTY MARKET REPORT

## VIEWPOINT

## DeKalb Chamber working to create a pro-business environment

Since the founding of the chamber in 1938, myself, the members, investors, community partners and stakeholders have been committed to creating a pro-business environment for DeKalb County and the metro Atlanta region.

A strong business presence contributes to the health, viability and sustainability of the community. As we continue to shape and define the future of DeKalb, we remain well-positioned to advocate and serve thanks to the trust and support from our member investors and the region's business community.

At the core of our work, the staff and I, along with our board of directors, focus on ways to engage and support economic development; promote and cultivate education and workforce development; advance public advocacy; and provide more value around business member services.

This year, under the leadership of Frederick L. Daniels Jr. of Citizens Trust Bank as chair and Diane McClearen of Oglethorpe Power as past chair, a strategic plan was developed that will help us address specific areas with more intention. I have served as president and CEO just a little over two years and, with the



*Katerina Taylor is the president and CEO of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce.*

leadership of the chamber, knew it was time to get laser-focused. The chamber needed to be re-imagined, and people needed to experience the transformation taking place.

This year we look to increase visibility of DeKalb Chamber's work in the community; define the chamber as the resource portal for business information and connection; advocate for a business-friendly environment in DeKalb County and the metro Atlanta region; and create an inviting environment that supports business expansion and growth of new entrepreneurs.

Our strategic goals are crucial to moving DeKalb forward, and it's important for us to work with partners who share a vision for DeKalb. In order to drive success, I personally believe we must collaborate with the DeKalb County School District, CEO Thurmond

and DeKalb County government, as well as our partners in the cities, CIDs, development authorities and tourism.

I am proud that DeKalb is the fourth largest county in Georgia, as it offers rich resources and attractive assets. We are proud to be home to the state's No. 1 attraction, Stone Mountain Park, the state's second busiest airport, Peachtree DeKalb Airport, and the leading national public health institution, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Being close to downtown Atlanta and having an affordable cost of living, DeKalb remains a great place to live, work and play. As with any municipality or county, we have our challenges, but we are fortunate to have a framework that allows us to be the change and solutions. Our county is working to get people back in the workforce; increase housing values; create equity across the county; exert every option to support local entrepreneurs; and help pass a transit policy that works to elevate DeKalb and the region as a whole.

I currently serve as chair of the DeKalb Thrives Steering Committee, the committee responsible for the oversight of the county's strategic plan. I lead this

committee along with co-chair Bill Nichols, chief operating officer at the Task Force for Global Health, local entrepreneurs, business stakeholders, and education leaders. This five-year plan was implemented in 2014 and resulted in 63 tasks to be completed by 2018 with eight recommendations beyond 2018.

Its goals are to improve the business climate, enhance quality of life and revitalize commercial corridors and employment centers. With 90 percent of the short-term goals already met, the people of DeKalb are connecting in ways we haven't seen before.

As we continue our mission to be the catalyst that attracts, supports, and advances business interests in DeKalb County, we invite you to stay engaged with our progress in creating a thriving community. I invite you to visit our newest cities and witness the new developments in the cities of Tucker and Stonecrest. I invite you to ride to the No. 1 MARTA destination in the region (the Decatur MARTA Station) and observe why the right transit strategy for DeKalb is the right transit and transportation strategy for the metro Atlanta Region.

I invite you discover all that is DeKalb County.

## HOSPITALITY

## Discover DeKalb promotes activities with an international flair

BY DOUG DELOACH  
Contributing writer

In recent months, the **DeKalb Convention & Visitors Bureau** (DCVB) has embarked upon a campaign to promote the metro county's attractiveness as a destination for domestic travelers and international tourists, as well as younger visitors.

The campaign's most immediately visible manifestation is a new website launched in early May called Discover DeKalb. The site features lots of photos and stories submitted by visitors and interactive links with popular social media sites, such as Instagram and Facebook.

"We wanted something cutting edge in terms of design," said James Tsismanakis, executive director of the DCVB. "We also wanted the site to be tourism-, travel- and hospitality-oriented and not look like a chamber of commerce or business."

The decision to redefine the mission of the DCVB with a new look, feel and message stemmed in part from research, which indicated that visitors to the county were seeking a means by which they could share their stories and adventures. They wanted to see what other

people were doing and post about their own experiences at places like **Stone Mountain Park** and **Fernbank Museum of Natural History** on Facebook and other social media outlets.

"Bringing in that user-generated content, which authenticates the brand and the destination, is critical," said Tsismanakis.

The new strategy is also based on data and anecdotal reports showing an increasing interest among travelers from outside the U.S. in recreational and family-friendly attractions and events. Another consideration was the fact that, according to the **Georgia Department of Economic Development**, international tourists spend more money and stay longer than domestic travelers.

"DeKalb is taking advantage of the fact that we have the most traveled airport in the country with more than 70 flights per day arriving from outside the U.S.," noted Tracy Vaughan, director of international business development at the economic development department. "Plus, many of our international tour operators are looking for hotels outside of the downtown area, which tend to be too expensive for

leisure travelers."

Future plans for the Discover DeKalb site include a separate international component and a more comprehensive section for meeting planners, which will distinguish between categories, such as government-related activities or events sponsored by faith-based organizations.

"Our visitors' center staff has seen an increase in visitors from Australia and New Zealand stopping in looking for unique shops and restaurants, which has had a positive impact on the city of Decatur's local economy," said Decatur Mayor Patti Garrett.

Buford Highway in DeKalb County is home to a host of ethnic restaurants, retail shops and clubs.

"We are very keen on promoting international shopping, entertainment and food tourism, which can be experienced at places like Plaza Fiesta and in Chinatown," Tsismanakis said.

For visitors interested in shopping and eating their way around Mexico and other countries south of the U.S. border, Plaza Fiesta houses 280 retail and specialty stores, a dozen restaurants, plus health-care services, a fitness center and



*Julio Peñaranda*

a large indoor playground. Located at the intersection of Clairmont Road and Buford Highway, the 350,000-square-foot retail center draws 4.4 million visitors a year. "Most of our visiting customers are

coming in on the weekends from neighboring states – Tennessee, Alabama, the Carolinas – and cities and towns across Georgia," said Julio Peñaranda, general manager of **BJS Plaza Fiesta**.

Visitors to Plaza Fiesta often spend an entire day, according to Peñaranda. In a typical case, a family arrives in time to eat lunch, walks around the mall and attends a special arts and crafts exhibit or musical presentation. Then the family shares another meal and makes the 1- to 3-hour drive home. "It's an experience that bonds cultures and generations," said Peñaranda.



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