



## State of the City

July 21, 2014

Thank you for coming out this morning. I appreciate it very much. This is an exciting time as we celebrate our second year as a city.

One of the things we did to commemorate our second anniversary was to distribute Frisbees at the Peachtree Corners Festival with a decal on the back labeled '24 Steps in 24 months.'

The Frisbees were just a fun way of letting the community know that while we don't have a long history as a city, we've still managed to get a lot done. So, in the spirit of the 2-year milestone, let me start off by sharing just a few of those 24 steps we've already taken:

- First, we set up a brand new city hall, hired staff, and appointed boards and commissions to take care of the city's day to day operation.
- Then, we put agreements in place with the county and other agencies to provide essential services that are outside of our charter like police, fire and emergency response.
- We established a municipal court, appointed a judge, and have already adjudicated several dozen cases.
- We transferred sanitation services from the County and negotiated better terms at lower rates for our citizens, including a recycling program with incentives.
- We also adopted a Comprehensive Plan to get the community's input on their vision for the future of our community.
- We purchased 20 acres across from the Forum to keep out an undesirable development.
- We became a designated City of Ethics.
- We were awarded Redevelopment Powers, a Town Center Livable Centers Initiative grant and a GateWay grant to help make improvements to key locations in the city.
- And last on this short list, but certainly not least, we adopted a zero millage rate and eliminated City property taxes.

That's not a bad start, but there's much more work that needs to be done if we are to achieve our vision.

And our vision, simply put, is to make Peachtree Corners the first choice as a place to live or do business in Georgia.

As we start the 2014-2015 fiscal year, there are several projects we'll focus on and some key, new initiatives we'd like to get underway.

The first one I want to talk about is actually a continuation of a project that we started last year when we acquired the property across from the Forum.

You may have noticed that the private property across from the Forum and in front of the city owned land is currently under construction. By the end of August, we expect to have Sprouts, a natural foods grocer, along with a couple of restaurants and several other retailers open for business. That development has been designed to share a road and tie into the city's property.

As you might have heard, our vision is that the cities' property be developed as a mixed-use, town center project. I will talk more about what that means in just a minute but the term 'mixed-use' is interesting when applied in the City of Peachtree Corners.

Today, everyone talks about developing mixed-use projects within mixed-use communities. But back in the 1960's when Paul Duke dreamed of a place where people could live, work, and play, that vision was really different from the way communities were actually being built. Back then, the federal government was well on its way toward spending over \$400 billion for the interstate highway system so that people could live in the suburbs and commute into the city. During that time, the American dream was to live in a place called "the suburbs" which was a family-oriented residential neighborhood that was close to schools and churches, but protected from the places where business was conducted – in other words, the city.

Do you see how visionary Paul Duke's concept really was? He wanted to bring families in proximity to jobs and businesses close to their work force.

But there is one thing that all successful cities share. At their heart is a town center: a convenient location where the community can come together for special events, fun activities, and even solemn occasions. This is where a community makes memories together.

And it's also the part of the city that's missing in Peachtree Corners.

That's why developing a mixed-use town center in a community that was founded on the principal of 'live, work, play' makes us feel like we've come full circle and are now completing Paul Duke's original vision. That is why the town center is our top priority.

At the Peachtree Corners Festival last month, we asked citizens coming by our booth to tell us what they wanted most in their town center. Your comments were:

- overwhelming support for an outdoor performance space,
- a place for live music,

- high quality restaurants with outdoor dining
- an ice cream parlor.
- more night life in Peachtree Corners,
- a place to go in the evening for dinner and entertainment.
- green space where kids could run around in safety.
- A place to picnic and throw a Frisbee
- movies on the lawn,
- a night-time farmers' market with cooking demonstrations,
- outdoor plays and musical performances,
- a battle of the local bands, and even karaoke night.

You also wanted us to develop a performing arts center to bring Community Theater to Peachtree Corners which also bring the opportunity for:

- a comedy club,
- music recitals, and
- drama camps.

So, we heard you! You want more places to just have fun and enjoy living in Peachtree Corners. These kinds of places improve the quality of life in a community and having a high quality of life is part of our #1 priority. That's why we're paying careful attention to the town center and hope to show you something soon.

There are other places in our community that also need attention. In January the Atlanta Regional Commission awarded the City one of only two Livable Centers Initiative grants issued this year for downtown development. The grant will help us design a plan for the area designated in our Comprehensive Plan as the Central Business District. That's the Peachtree Parkway corridor between Medlock Bridge and Holcomb Bridge, including the town center. Our consultant, Lord, Aeck, and Sargent, will be holding town hall meetings to get your input on this area I think starting in Sept. The study will show ways to focus our SPLOST dollars to:

- Identify the best locations to expand commercial nodes.
- link the land uses and transportation routes, and
- Integrate sidewalks, bike paths, and green spaces into the area.

Another of those important places in the city is the Holcomb Bridge Rd. corridor. The roadway itself is significant because of the volume of traffic that it carries.

But it's also important because if it's not redeveloped and fully integrated into the community, Holcomb Bridge can become a dividing line in the city.

We are already addressing one of the biggest concerns along Holcomb Bridge--and along Peachtree Corners Circle—which is that many of the apartment areas are older and starting to look worn.

For those areas, we've already experienced some success through regular apartment sweeps with our code enforcement officers. This has motivated several apartment complexes to commit to making improvements, but others have notified us that they will be putting their property up for sale. One has already been sold.

I was informed just last week that the new owner of a very old very large apartment complex is considering demolishing it and replacing with either retail or commercial use for that site. That is wonderful news and a very encouraging start to redevelopment along this important corridor.

Another important step toward redevelopment on that side of town is that the City of Dunwoody has agreed to do a joint comprehensive land use plan with us along the Winters Chapel corridor. Some of this area is in real need of redevelopment and beautification. And it is not clear what belongs to who up there because there are places along Winters Chapel road, where the border between the two cities splits subdivisions and businesses. Realtors tell us they have nice young couples looking for starter homes are walking away from them because of the appearance of the neighborhoods, lack of retail, few sidewalks, and they don't always feel safe. Since it effects both Cities we are very pleased the City of Dunwoody is willing to share the cost of this study with us. This is another opportunity to invest SPLOST dollars to revitalize an area that is at or near the tipping point.

Another location we have been targeting for redevelopment is the retail center at the southwest corner of Holcomb Bridge and Peachtree Parkway. Most people know it as where the Chick Fil A and IHOP are. This plaza is in our gateway and the current appearance doesn't make the best first impression, especially since the property across the street where Corner Bakery and Dick's Sporting Goods are, were successfully upgraded with new retailers and restaurants. Also like to commend and thank the PCF Committee for undertaking a beautification project at this location with the proceeds of the Festivals. They are a non-profit organization and anything they have left over they put into a beautification project for our city.

I am very pleased to say that I was contacted recently by a very prominent local development company who sees this as an ideal site for a mixed use development with new retail, office, restaurants and residential. This is another encouraging sign of the redevelopment potential in this area.

However, redevelopment is not our only focus. We know that to stay competitive in a business environment, we have to pay attention to economic development. In order to do that, we've hired the Pendleton Group, very well regarded economic development professionals, to help us create a *business game plan* for the city. While we'll always work to be the ideal location for corporate headquarters and major employers, we also know that most of the over 2400 businesses already in Peachtree Corners are small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. We want to help them succeed by doing things to maintain a business friendly environment.

We've also streamlined our business start-up procedures to make opening a new business in Peachtree Corners quick and easy. We would challenge anyone to find a location where they can get operational faster than in Peachtree Corners.

At the end of the day, we want Peachtree Corners to be the best place to do business for those already in the city and the first choice for businesses looking to relocate.

We've already had some successes with new businesses, mostly courtesy of the Gwinnett Chamber, and expect another major announcement to be made soon for a company that's bringing 150 manufacturing jobs to Peachtree Corners and will be operational by the end of the year.

In the meantime, there's lots of remodeling going on in office centers all around town in places like Technology Park.

Speaking of Technology Park, over the next few years, we'd like to see more improvements in Tech Park and not just to buildings.

Tech Park is not just an office park anymore. Young millennials like to live in condos or apartments near their work. We could see mixed use condo and high end apartments for millennials over new office space in Tech Park, which could help attract start-ups to this area.

We can also see:

- bike lanes,
- more sidewalks, and
- a walking a trail system along the common green areas and around the ponds.

In addition to creating our town center, encouraging redevelopment in key areas, and creating an economic development game plan, we also intend to create 'brand awareness' for the City. In the future, you will see:

- an upgraded city website,
- a city's e-newsletter and
- more activity on Facebook and Twitter.

Although we've put up city-limit signs, and we have one legacy gateway monument sign (courtesy of UPCCA), we plan to:

- install gateway monument signs at six key locations along major roadways leading into the city.
- place decorative banners on light poles in key locations to increase awareness of special events and places throughout the city.

We're also working on a new promotional initiative called '*Proud to be Peachtree Corners*' to help us increase awareness of our identity. We'll be:

- distributing *Proud to be Peachtree Corners* window decals to merchants and restaurants

- distributing *Proud to be Peachtree Corners* wrist bands to the kids.
- offering grants to Peachtree Corners business that currently use Norcross, Duluth, Dunwoody, or other city names in their business address. The grant money will help defray the cost of buying new stationery, business cards, and marketing materials that will have to be purchased when changing to the Peachtree Corners name.

One final thing to mention, as we work on improving our city, we have to keep in mind the need to have a sustainable community.

To that end, the city council has appointed a Green Committee whose job it is to help us be good stewards of the environment and do all we can to protect our natural resources, such as:

- identify ways to be more energy efficient
- To conserve water,
- maximize green space,
- reduce waste,
- promote recycling,
- become green in our building practices.

We want Peachtree Corners to become a lasting community, a place where children are not just born and raised—but want to return to work and maybe start their families. And our grandchildren as well.

In summary, we want Peachtree Corners to be the first choice for a place to live or do business. That is our goal. Let me end with a quote from former President Ronald Reagan:

“While I take inspiration from the past, like most Americans, I live for the future.”

We take inspiration from Paul Duke’s vision but we are now responsible for fulfilling that vision. The future is bright in Peachtree Corners, and with your help, it can only get brighter.

Thank you. Have a great day in Peachtree Corners.

*Mayor Mike Mason*  
*City of Peachtree Corners*