



City of Norcross

Monthly Newsletter

January 2011

Norcross Positioned for Another Fiscally Strong Year

by Rudolph Smith, Norcross City Manager

In May of 2010, I reported that the city was successfully keeping its expenditures in line with projected revenues and had stayed within budget the first quarter of 2010. The article reporting this was titled, "Norcross in the Black When Other Cities Seeing Red", which underlined an achievement not every municipality could enjoy at the time. In it, I cautioned that in spite of that current success, we still had several months of business ahead and that - in this economy in particular - it is dangerous to spend without keeping a careful eye on actual revenues versus those that were projected. I am glad to report that now, as the city closes its books on 2010, we are still operating in the black.



City Manager, Rudolph Smith

Credit for achieving this financial stability is due to a number of factors. City employees took on additional responsibilities; as a position opened due to someone retiring or moving away, it was not filled again. The duties of 13 positions were absorbed by the remaining workforce, without compromising the city's ability to service residents in a timely and effective fashion. In addition, I emphasized the importance of regularly evaluating and prioritizing expenditures. The department heads were encouraged to find creative ways to minimize expenses without negatively impacting city operations, with some very positive results. Technology was introduced that allowed the mayor and council to go paperless, saving the city approximately \$15,000. We also saved an additional \$18,000 by reducing our printing and centralizing department printers. A building inspector was hired instead of using outside contract labor, so that revenues from permits were retained in the city coffers whereas before, 80% of the collected fees were paid out to the contractor. In summary, thousands of dollars were saved by simply re-evaluating the budget expenditures on a regular basis and maintaining a philosophy of prudent financial management.

When the planning for 2011 began last July, more creative ideas were generated to increase revenues without raising taxes or millage rates. The city had been absorbing almost \$58,000 in credit card fees each year. By adding a service charge for using a credit card, like most businesses do, the goal is to offset that cost and trim the budget accordingly. However, realizing this is a service that many people enjoy, we made sure that there are other convenient payment options, such as no charge for checks and automatic debit from a bank account.

Council approved the 2011 budget in early December, setting the stage for another fiscally strong year ahead. Once again, this budget was figured using very conservative estimates for projected income. Perhaps 2011 will reveal an improving economy and actual revenues will exceed projections. This did happen for the City Planning Dept. in 2010, when several unexpected, large commercial projects came through and actually exceeded projections by 100%. To be safe, however, the conservative approach was maintained for 2011 planning, as will be the philosophy of constantly evaluating and prioritizing expenditures throughout the new year.



Mayor

Bucky Johnson

Mayor Pro Tem

Ross Kaul

City Council

Andrew Hixson

David McLeroy

Charlie Riehm

Craig Newton

City Manager

Rudolph Smith

City Clerk

Susan B. Wuerzner

Deputy City Clerk

Monique Lang

City Hall

65 Lawrenceville Street
Norcross, GA 30071
Mon.—Fri. 8a.m.—5p.m.

In late November, a public Town Hall meeting was held to communicate the facts and goals of the annexation proposal. To see the presentation and review the related facts, please visit www.norcrossga.net and click on "Municipal", then "Community Development". You can also contact City Development Director, Chris McCrary, at cmccrary@norcrossga.net, or 678.421.2067. A map of the proposed area is also available online or at City Hall, 2nd floor.



Happenings

Steve Berry Book Signing
January 15, 7p.m.

Meet this best-selling author
& get a copy of his latest
thriller, "Emperor's Tomb"
Norcross Cultural Arts &
Community Center

Exhibit Opening

"Parallel Journeys: The
stories of the youth who were
witnesses, participants &
victims of WWII &
the Holocaust"

January 20

5p.m. - 7p.m.

Norcross Welcome Center

Filmmaker's Showcase

January 22, 7p.m.

Norcross Cultural Arts &
Community Center

Coming!

February is Norcross'
"Open Your Heart" month,
a "CAN" Do campaign
to fill local food pantries

For details on all events, visit
www.aplacetoimagine.com

Filmmaker's Showcase Comes to Norcross

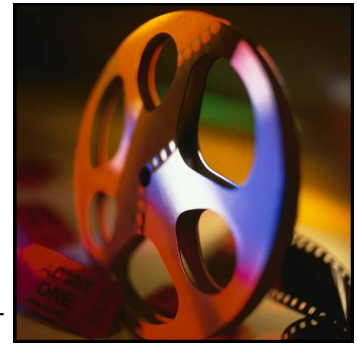
An opportunity for local, independent filmmakers (and people who enjoy seeing their work!) is being introduced in Norcross. The Filmmaker's Showcase, hosted by the Norcross Arts Alliance (NAA), is a free event scheduled for **Saturday, January 22**, from 7p.m. to 9:30p.m. in the Norcross Cultural Arts & Community Center (NCACC). This showcase features work produced by several filmmakers who produce throughout the Atlanta area and call Norcross "home," in some cases because they are literally residents of the city, and others who run their businesses in the area.

Residents Suzan Satterfield and Allen Facemire are veterans in the film-making business; since 1989, they have been producing several series for HGTV and DIY networks, and pursuing television projects with "great storytelling angles, larger-than-life characters, and the potential to open viewers' minds and hearts to new ideas." Another veteran, Emmy-award winning David Duke, produces films for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Georgia Conservancy, Columbia Theological Seminary, the Arthur Blank Foundation, and many others. David's film *Summer Hill* is currently running on national public television.

Comparatively new on Atlanta's filmmaking scene and also presenting at the Filmmaker's Showcase are producers John Duke, Kris Valeriano and Daniel Flaherty. These young producers are seriously multi-talented, in most cases having written, directed, shot and even acted in their productions. Flaherty is also a musician, and for his film, "Water of Life," he composed and performed the soundtrack on solo violin as well.

Each of the filmmakers will be on hand at the showcase to answer questions about their work and engage in audience discussion about the topics. The Norcross Arts Alliance is proud to be introducing these talented filmmakers, and anticipates continuing these showcases as a regular feature of the Norcross arts community. According to NAA Chairman, Charlie Riehm, "The NAA's goal is to utilize the creative outlets and energy Norcross offers to promote a diversity of art forms, including performing arts, fine arts, filmmaking and any other expression that is unique and creative. We're very pleased with the diversity of stories being shared in this first showcase, as well as the quality of the work. Hopefully, it's the beginning of an ongoing film experience here in Norcross."

The NAA will have refreshments for sale, and of course, it's the perfect opportunity to make it a unique Norcross evening by having dinner downtown then walking to the movies! For details about the filmmakers and their work, visit www.aplacetoimagine.com



Update on the Arts

This is an exciting time for the Norcross Arts Alliance (NAA), as they continue to develop and fine tune their commitment to enhancing the arts in Norcross.

At the December City Council meeting, members approved the design shown here for a large mosaic to be installed by the pavilion in Thrasher Park next spring. The winning design was crafted by Anne La-baire, a Kudzu artist and former downtown shop owner. Jennifer Freeman, the artist who installed the mosaic in

Duluth's town hall, will do the tile design for the mosaic.

In addition, the NAA is actively planning many other projects, including a proposal for "Sustainable Sculpture" in Mauldin Park, an art incubator, a "bistro" happening for February, art decorations on utility boxes, and other public art. If your creative juices are stirring, please see the alliance's web site (www.norcrossartsalliance.org) and/or talk to any NAA Board member to learn how you can join in on the fun!

Success Saturdays Launch at Summerour

By Ranae Heaven, Norcross Cluster School Partnership

Summerour Middle School has launched a Success Saturday program. This program is specifically for students who need more time and opportunity to master their math and reading curriculum. In addition to providing classroom support, the program provides breakfast, snacks, and after-class activities.

Summerour is committed to creating a culture of excellence and giving the best education possible to our students. The Norcross Cluster Schools Partnership (NCSP) is working to find mentors and tutors who can help support the goals and visions of Summerour and this program. The Success Saturdays program has lots of opportunities for you to come and be a part of what we are doing. We need help in covering the cost of breakfast and transportation for the students. In addition, we would love for you to volunteer to participate in the after class activities. If you want to come by and play basketball with some kids, do an art class, or share a hobby or interest with them, we welcome you.

Please contact Suzette Daniel via email at suzette_daniel@gwinnett.k12.ga.us or by phone at 770-417-2488 to discuss ways in which you can support the Success Saturday program and help create a culture of excellence for the students at Summerour.

Another local school, Stripling Elementary, helps children through "Power Lunch", a reading mentoring program offered through the non-profit organization, "Everybody Wins! Atlanta". Many Norcross businesspeople and residents have thoroughly enjoyed reading to a child during his or her lunch break, once a week. There are currently 15 students remaining at Stripling without a mentor...it's a rewarding and positive way to spend your lunch hour, too! For info on how to become a mentor, visit www.everybodywinsatlanta.org or call the program director, Janet Kinard, at 404-745-2584. To learn more about the NCSP, please visit www.norcrosscsp.org



Free Help During Tax Season!

Preparing a tax return isn't easy for a lot of people, yet preparing one properly is important. It can possibly increase the refund received or reduce the amount of taxes owed. From February 1st through April 10th, 2011, the Gwinnett Village Community Alliance (GVCA) Financial Services Center is offering a program called "VITA" (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) to help people with low-to-moderate-incomes get their taxes filed properly by qualified professionals, at no cost.

VITA is a national initiative of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that offers FREE tax preparation to individuals and families making \$48,000 and below for Tax Year 2010. IRS certified and trained volunteers, sponsored by various organizations, help prepare basic tax returns and help working families receive special tax credits such as Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Credit for the Elderly for which they may qualify. All VITA sites offer free electronic filing.

The VITA program in metro Atlanta is managed by the Atlanta Prosperity Campaign, an initiative of the Atlanta Community Food Bank, in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service. To find out more about this free program, and other services provided through the GVCA, please visit www.gwinnettvilleage.com/alliance or call their financial center at 770.449.6515 (they are located in Norcross at 5855 Jimmy Carter Blvd, STE 122). The GVCA leverages partnerships with local governments, businesses, schools, residents and nonprofit organizations. They actively engage in programs that strengthen the local economy, enhance education, strengthen neighborhoods, and promote a rich arts and cultural community.

And the Winner is.....

Over 90,000 readers of *Gwinnett Magazine* voted in this year's "Best of Gwinnett" contest, with the winners announced in the magazine's January issue, on stands now. Norcross won "**Best Downtown**" and "**Best Arts and Cultural Scene**". This is the second time Norcross has won the "Best Downtown" award. In the past, Mayor Johnson was voted one of Gwinnett's "Most Favorite Elected Officials", and "The Shops of Antique Traditions" has won recognition as "Best Antique Shop". Go Norcross!





In December, City Code Enforcement had the pleasure of joining Adelaide complex residents at their Open House and Holiday Pot Luck Dinner. Thanks to Manager Vaddas R. Dianderas M., Assistant Manager Jay Shaw, and Leasing Consultant Stephanie Bolt for organizing a fun celebration!

CITY NUMBERS

Business License
678.421.2061

Community Center
678.421.2025

Courts & Tickets
770.448.2173

Economic Development
678.421.2023

Yard Debris Pick-up
678.421.2057

Permits & Signs
770.449.4062

Police Non-Emergency
770.448.2111

Property Tax
678.421.2061

Street Lights
678.421.2000

Streets & Paving
678.421.2018

Trash Pick-up
770.448.3447

Utilities Service
770.448.2122

PR/Downtown Manager
678.421.2033

Norcross Wins the Silver for Being Green



Thanks to the diligent efforts of Sustainable Norcross and city officials, Norcross was recently certified as a silver award recipient in the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Green Communities Program. Only three metro Atlanta governments have achieved the Silver level: the City of Norcross, Cobb County, and the City of Roswell. For the complete story on this exciting and impressive award, visit www.norcrossga.net and look under "Community News". Pictured here (left to right) Sustainable Norcross Commission member Heather Royston, Committee Chairperson Connie Weathers, and Norcross City Manager, Rudolph Smith.

The Gwinnett Convention & Visitors Bureau (GCVB) recently hosted a "Diaper Drive," a charity effort to support the Norcross Ministries Co-Op. Gwinnett's hospitality community collected 6,500 diapers, several hundred cans of food, as well as a \$250 Kroger Gift Card donated by Kroger. The co-op's board president, Jesse Joyner, noted "Diapers are in huge demand at the Co-op, and this generous donation is tremendously appreciated." The GCVB is Gwinnett County's official tourism organization and is dedicated to strengthening Gwinnett County's economy by marketing the county as a destination for conventions, sporting events, meetings and leisure travel through sales, marketing and promotion. Special thanks to them for making the holidays better for a lot of Norcross babies!

Community Briefs

- Christmas trees will be picked up Jan. 3rd and 17th if placed out at the curb. City will mulch them!
- Leaf vacuum service continues through Jan. 30th. Each street will be vacuumed every 7 to 10 business days.
- As of January 1, a \$5 service charge will be assessed to any payments made at City Hall using a credit card (checks accepted without additional service charges)
- For discounts on natural gas rates, sign up with Gas South today! Call 1-866-563-8129 and give them the promotional code #970 to get special low pricing.

