



City of Norcross

Monthly Newsletter

December 2010

Perspective on Annexation

by Charlie Riehm, Norcross Council Member



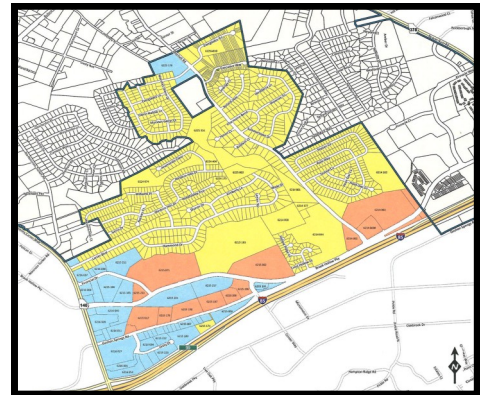
Council Member Charlie Riehm

The council's proposal to annex several areas to the east of Buford Highway was presented at a Town Hall meeting on Nov. 29th in the Norcross Community Center. The objectives and details of this proposal were presented, and concerns addressed about how annexation would impact taxes, property values and the city itself.

The council envisions annexing the areas from current city limits down to I-85 and over to Jimmy Carter—and it's much more than just "cleaning up the borders"! The primary motivations are public safety and property values. Citizens living adjacent to the proposed areas are currently impacted by the crime and deterioration that exist there today, and they have requested the proposed annexation. Also, public perception of this area is a detriment to the current property values and salability even in areas currently within city limits.

The only proven way to stop further deterioration in this area and to change these negative perceptions is to provide effective police response and diligent code enforcement. Better police protection and stricter code enforcement will attract more stable homeowners and more citizens who will want to contribute to the community as a whole, improve our schools, and improve property values for everyone. It's interesting that some Chamblee residents just voted to double the size of their city for these very reasons—better police protection against a crime element that was not only intimidating, but could potentially defeat their progressive development efforts.

If we look at this annexation as a long-term investment, as encouraged by Chuck Warbington of the Gwinnett Village CID, there are other major incentives for annexation. This area near I-85 is ripe for aggressive economic development and is in a key location for the planned light rail train route. By taking this area within city limits, Norcross can manage its own future by controlling the type of development in that area, giving developers and businesses more incentive to invest in Norcross, and better safeguarding of our borders.



A scaled drawing of the proposed annexation and color key is available for viewing at City Hall, 2nd floor.

The costs of annexing have been thoroughly assessed by City staff and council. The results were encouraging; we can propose a "revenue-neutral" mix of residential and commercial annexation where the cash flow and costs will be covered annually by tax revenues from just the annexed area. There should be no impact on the current citizens within the city limits.

We hope you will agree that this annexation proposal makes good sense for Norcross and its future. Contact the mayor or any council member if you have questions or concerns on this initiative. Recall that "raising the quality of life east of Buford Highway" was listed as a goal in our 2030 Comprehensive Plan! This annexation would be another positive and pro-active step towards achieving that progressive vision.



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.



Happenings

SPARKLE!

Through Dec 22

Month long celebration of holiday magic.

Downtown Historic Norcross
Full schedule online
aplacetoimagine.com

Al Karnitz'

Antique Toy Exhibit

Come see some wonderful toys and meet the "big kid" who has collected it!

Exhibit Opening

December 4, 11a.m. - 1p.m.

Welcome Center

Author Tim Green

Book signing

December 4, 7p.m.

Norcross Cultural Arts & Community Center

LIONHEART THEATRE

December 16—19

"The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe"

www.lionhearttheatre.org

Service with a Smile

By Rudolph Smith, City Manager

Why is good customer service at City Hall important to this community? We aren't selling a product you can buy, and people have to come here to do business whether the employees are nice to them or not.....or do they?

I recently asked myself these questions, and found answers that reinforced my conviction that great customer service is a top priority for the city. First, it is an underlying old-fashioned regional value. Generally speaking, Southerners are known for their hospitality, and Norcross itself is recognized for its strong sense of community. Walk into the coffee shop most mornings and people there either know each other, or act as if they do. Sit on a bench in the playground long enough while your kids play, and you'll find someone to talk to, probably the parent of someone your child has already raced with down the slides. Visitors often comment on the friendliness of the people they encounter here, a friendliness that has become one of the city's trademarks. It is one of the reasons people move their families and businesses here, and why many visitors choose to return.

So I realized that not only is quality customer service simply a matter of good manners, it is a reflection on what and who we are as a community. And when people come into City Hall and interact with the people who work there, they are meeting the faces who represent this city and all it stands for. If they have an exceptionally good experience, they'll associate that positive feeling with the whole community. If they have a poor experience, they will tell anyone who listens.

As City Manager, my goal is to ensure that the residents and business owners who choose to be here are supported courteously, and to provide a positive experience for visitors. With this in mind, employees have regular customer service training, clearly defining the high standards that are expected of them. We wear name tags so that people know with whom they are talking. The phone system was recently updated so that callers can easily reach a real person and aren't left on hold for unreasonable lengths of time. The municipal website (www.norcrossga.net) was updated this year and contains a large volume of valuable information and documents for easy access. Department managers are accessible and held accountable for the quality of their team's service. In fact, if there is a problem, I *encourage* people to contact them, as well as contact me, and every effort will be made to address concerns.

The city team strives to support the people who make this such a dynamic community. My commitment is to continue delivering the kind of service that reflects the finest attributes of the Norcross community, and reinforces its reputation as an exceptional place to live, work and play.



City Manager Rudolph Smith makes customer service a priority at City Hall.

Property Tax and Storm Water Bills were due by 5pm, November 16th. All those not paid have received a 10% penalty and 1% interest fee added to the balance due. Those not paid by December 15th and each month thereafter, will receive a 1% interest fee on the balance due and will have a lien levied against the property. This lien will be filed with the Gwinnett County Superior Court (Storm Water Fees will be turned over to a Collection Company for processing).

Norcross SPARKLES in December!

SPARKLE! is Historic Norcross' annual celebration of holiday magic. It's a time when the whole community is radiant with decorations, seasonal music and a flurry of activities. Whether your holiday wish is to reconnect with friends, play with your kids, or remember your own childhood holidays, Norcross is a charming and easy place to find a bit of magic! Local shops are filled with unique "perfect gifts" and the restaurants are filled with savory specials and live music. Below is a list of special activities in December - for more details and updates, visit aplacetoimagine.com



December 1- 22:

Carriage Rides Every Tues/Wed/Fri, 6p.m. - 9p.m. Climb aboard in front of Taste of Britain (free)

Photos with Santa Every Tues/Wed/Fri, 45 South Café, 6:30p.m. - 8:30p.m.

December 3: Community Tree Lighting in Thrasher Park, and **Santa** comes to town! At dusk.

December 4:

Teddy Bear Tea. Bleu House Market. Tea times 2p.m. and 4p.m. \$7.95 pp reservations 770.595.9846

Al Karnitz' **Antique Toys Collection**, Welcome Center Exhibit Opening 11a.m. - 1p.m.

December 11 & 18: Free Gift Wrapping 11a.m. - 3p.m. 27 S. Peachtree Street. Bring all your gifts!

December 11:

Celebration of Lights & History Tour in City Cemetery, 5:30p.m. Stories from the past, amidst glowing luminaries.

Outdoor Movie in Thrasher Park! "How The Grinch Stole Christmas" and "Claymation Christmas", plus hot chocolate, roasting chestnuts and marshmallow toasting. 5:30p.m.

December 18: Caroling Downtown (time to be confirmed)

This holiday, please support your downtown merchants by shopping locally for gifts. Not only is there a wide selection of treasures to choose from, the gifts will be unique! And shopping downtown is a whole lot less stressful than going to a mall. Shop, then duck into one of our great restaurants for a break. Treat yourself to lunch, dinner, or just some java and dessert. There's room for parties, too, if you want! Our merchants work hard to keep downtown vibrant...please support them this holiday season.



Dinner and a carriage ride through Historic Downtown Norcross makes a perfect "date night"! Photo courtesy of Neva Spell. Local holiday greeting cards with her photos available in the Norcross Barber Shop.



May you and your loved ones have a happy and blessed holiday season!



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

- The holidays are coming up....schedule the Norcross Police Dept. (NPD) for a **Home Security Watch** over your residence or business while you're on vacation. You can also sign up for **Nixle**, (www.nixle.com), and receive any community alerts on your cell phone while you are away. These are free Services, courtesy of our police department.
- Beginning January 1st, 2011, all credit card transactions

processed on-line or over the phone will incur a \$5 convenience fee.

■ Just a reminder that the City-contracted company, ImageScapes, will be picking up yard debris and tree limbs each Monday on a bi-weekly basis through December 20th. For details, visit the website under "Public Works & Utilities".

■ Due to budget constraints, there will be no hard copy city calendar for 2011.





Positive Vision in a Tough Economy

Maintaining and growing a strong municipal business base is especially difficult in a recession. To address this challenge in a creative and progressive manner, the City of Norcross recently hired Rusty Warner as its new Economic Development Manager. With several successful past business ventures in his portfolio, Mr. Warner knows firsthand the types of challenges business owners face; his experience and versatile marketing skills enable him to bring an exceptional perspective to the position.



Rusty Warner, Norcross' new Economic Development Manager

According to Norcross' City Manager, Rudolph Smith, "Rusty will serve as a liaison between the City and our existing businesses, also focusing on potential business investors and developers. In addition, he will be working directly with entities like the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Norcross Development Authority (NDA) and the DDA Downtown Manager, plus be an advocate for Norcross with county-level organizations including the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, the Community Improvement District (CID) and any other group directly involved with promoting growth of the local economy."

In the nation's current economic environment, many developers and potential entrepreneurs are sitting back until they perceive an upward turn. Mr. Warner sees this lull in development as an opportunity to market the city and strengthen relationships between local businesses and citizens. "By getting businesses involved in their community, it not only generates a sense of pride, it also means better retention and a better chance of attracting new businesses," he recently commented. "People want to work in a positive, attractive environment that attracts good employees and customers who will support them. Norcross offers that sense of community, with lots of great opportunities to grow."

In the early 70's and 80's, and even in the 90's, the City of Norcross attracted a number of industrial pockets around its perimeter. According to Mr. Warner, identifying more economically feasible ways to use these areas is one of his goals. That strategy includes identifying creative ways to re-use the space, and aggressively marketing the city to businesses looking for new property. By partnering with the city's public relations and marketing department, Mr. Warner envisions a pro-active effort that will support Norcross' brand as an exceptional place to live and work. "We already have a really great town here," he commented. "It's a matter of getting the word out to people who want to grow their business in a unique setting. By providing the information owners and developers want, and having a solution-oriented, open approach, I will make sure the citizens and business owners in Norcross know they have someone working for their success."

Because Norcross offers much in the way of economic initiatives, public services and lifestyle, there is an ongoing interest in opportunities within the business community, in spite of a tough economy. The Mayor and City Council are constantly working on progressive approaches for maintaining and growing our economic strength, an effort which will be enhanced by the experience and expertise Mr. Warner brings to the table. The City of Norcross will continue to earn its reputation as an exceptional community with a strong economic base.

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

