

Business coalition wants new master plan for Ga. 400

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A new master plan is being drafted to make sure a stretch of Ga. 400 develops into a nice place to live, work and visit.

Members of a business coalition in north Fulton County said Wednesday they intend to establish the first comprehensive effort to guide development —and manage its resulting traffic— on land flanking Ga. 400 from Alpharetta to Forsyth County.



Phil Skinner/AJC

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Members of a business coalition in north Fulton County said they intend to establish the first comprehensive effort to guide development along Ga. 400.

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To create such an overarching vision for growth, the business group tore a page from the planners at Midtown Alliance. Midtown's master plan, called Blueprint Midtown, is credited with fueling the economic renaissance that helped the once-blighted Midtown area rebound into a popular neighborhood.

"Just like Blueprint Midtown planned for the future of Midtown, this market has matured enough that we need a Blueprint North Fulton," said Ann Miller Hanlon, chief operating officer of the North Fulton Community Improvement District.

Signs of growth abound in a region that is less densely developed than the region to its south.

Just this week, the city of Milton approved rezoning for the final phase of a shopping center that will be half the size of Phipps Plaza in Buckhead. Deerfield Place is to open next autumn with retailers who want to a place in metro Atlanta's affluent northern market – Kohls, Target, Petco and Staples.

"The Ga. 400 corridor is known nationally as a great area," said Jeff Fuqua, president of Deerfield Place developer Sembler Co. "The average household income in the area exceeds six figures, which is pretty rare in the world."

The business coalition is made up of property owners who have agreed to tax themselves to improve the quality of life along Ga. 400 from Alpharetta to the Forsyth County line. The improvement district raises about \$2 million a year.

Its most recent venture was to provide about \$3 million to help widen a bridge on Westside Parkway. The bridge's total cost was about \$24 million, Hanlon said.