

Stone Mountain business group says tax paying off

by Andrew Cauthen
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For a year, some Stone Mountain business owners have been taxing themselves to help curtail crime, blight and empty commercial buildings along Mountain Industrial Boulevard.

Businesses owners in the year-old Stone Mountain Community Improvement District (CID) say their investment is beginning to pay off.

"Since the CID [was formed], we've seen an awful lot of improvements," said **Jim Boldt**, vice president of sales and marketing of the 67-year-old, family-run Deeks and Company.

"We couldn't be more pleased," said Boldt, whose company is a supplier of raw materials and containers to the paint, coatings, plastics and ink industries. Deeks and Company has been in the industrial park since 1961. "Our security is certainly better."

Once formed, the CID hired security guards and off-duty DeKalb County Police officers. Their presence has cut crime in the industrial park by 25 percent, said **Rusty McKellar**, director of land development at Pattillo Industrial Real Estate and CID board member.

The CID also hired a landscaping company that is out four times a week to remove trash and maintain Mountain Industrial Boulevard. Other areas of the CID are maintained at least once a week.

Crews are also in the process of completing traffic signal and signage upgrades throughout the CID. DeKalb County and the Georgia Department of Transportation are changing traffic lights in the industrial park from wired signals to new mast arms extending across roadways.

"The owners are excited about having the area upgraded," said **Emory Morsberger**, president of the CID. "It's nicer for your folks to come to work in a

nice place with nice trees and flowers and no trash and no people harassing them for money for malt liquor."

Morsberger said the main goal of the CID is to spur economic development.

"It does no good to have a bunch of very pretty, very secure empty buildings," Morsberger said. "That's kind of defeating the purpose. We are working to fill up these buildings. We are working to make this entire area a mecca for new business development."

To help with that goal, the CID has received an \$80,000 grant from Atlanta Regional Commission and \$20,000 from the DeKalb Development Authority.

"Our goal is to use that to bring new kinds of businesses in here," Morsberger said. "Our goal is to create 2,000 jobs by the end of 2013...by making the place look and feel good, marketing the area much more than it's been marketed in the past and by rebranding the area and identifying specific target industries that we want to attract here."

Morsberger said jobs would be created if the two million square feet of empty commercial space is filled. The largest empty area in the CID, which has six million square feet of commercial space, is a 63-acre tract that once housed a Sears processing center.

U.S. Rep. **Hank Johnson**, who visited Deeks and Company May 24, said CIDs "can pay close attention to the needs of that particular area and do things like security, lighting, streetscaping and other things that benefit that particular community."

"It's all to create an environment where jobs can produce the income that the surrounding residents can use to become prosperous themselves," Johnson said. "It's all about creating more business opportunity for the people that are in that particular district."

Johnson called the Stone Mountain CID a "hidden jewel."

"It's composed of a number of good businesses that people don't know are operating right there under their noses," Johnson said. "It's tucked back off the main roads so a lot of people don't get back here to see what's going on, but there are a lot of jobs back here."

"There are a lot of independent, small businesses here," Johnson said. "That's the backbone of our economy in this nation."

David Westcott, president of Pierre Construction Group, said before the CID was formed businesses in the industrial park were ignored by the county government.

"We've got some clout now," said Westcott, whose company moved to the industrial park five years ago from Clarkston.

"As a group of owners, we feel like we are better organized," Westcott said. "As individuals we really didn't have any clout."

"What we're able to do with this is to use the money we would pay for property taxes for projects that specifically fit our needs," Westcott said. "We're improving out property values here."

"Our idea is to create jobs over here," Westcott said. "We're all in business. DeKalb County recognizes that we're good for DeKalb."

By upgrading the area, Westcott said, more businesses will want to relocate to the industrial park.

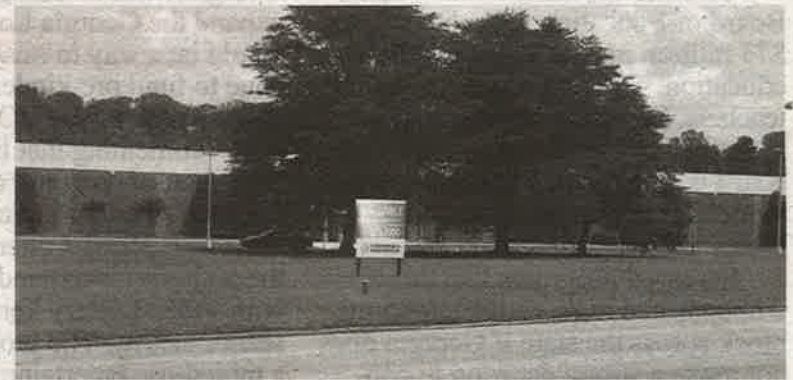
"That's the hope and prayer," he said.

Larry Callahan, CID board chairman, said the business owners are working to make the industrial park "as vibrant as it can be."

"Raising the employment base and attracting new companies is the best that we can do for the area," Callahan said. "It's a very positive thing."



Improved lighting and increased security are two main benefits of the year-old Stone Mountain Community Improvement District which has a goal of creating 2,000 jobs by the end of 2013. Currently, the district has two million square feet of empty commercial space in the district. Photos by Andrew Cauthen



CITY OF DORAVILLE PUBLIC NOTICE Fiscal Year 2013 Budget

Notice is hereby given that the proposed budget for the City of Doraville shall be available for public inspection, in the City Clerk's office from 8:00 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at City Hall, 3725 Park Avenue, Doraville, GA.

A special called meeting shall be held on the 25th day of June at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, 3725 Park Avenue, Doraville, before the Mayor and Council of the City of Doraville at which time the Fiscal Year 2013 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) budget shall be approved and the budget ordinance adopted in accordance with O.C.G.A. 36-81-5. All citizens of Doraville are invited to attend.