

GWINNETT (GA) CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
2007 ACE Award Entry
5b. Economic & Business Development Program
February 2008

Gwinnett Chamber Economic Development Initiative – Partnership Gwinnett

Summary

In 2006, Gwinnett County recognized that it had reached a critical juncture in its history. Fueled by immense population growth, Gwinnett was now maturing into a dynamic urban community with a strong presence in the metro Atlanta region. Gwinnett needed to proactively reorient local and external perceptions to embrace the reality that – as the second largest county in the State of Georgia – Gwinnett had become a major economic player to be supported and respected by the state's and region's leaders.

To that end, the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce along with partners in government, education, health care and business, initiated the creation of its first-ever community and economic development plan – entitled **Partnership Gwinnett: A Shared Vision for the Future** – to develop a consensus vision for Gwinnett's future growth and an action plan to achieve it.

In less than a year, the Gwinnett Chamber (without any outside fundraising help) will raise more than \$10 million in new dollars and grants, making the initiative one of the largest funded first-time campaigns of its kind ever undertaken in the United States by a single county. These funds have produced Georgia's second largest economic development department, second only to the State itself. Three major relocations (Hewlett Packard, Horizon Software International, Meggitt Training Systems) and one major expansion (Cisco Systems) are a direct result of our efforts, positioning Gwinnett as a new technology job center for metro Atlanta.

Needs Identification

Entering 2006, it was obvious that Gwinnett had been reactive to economic development inquiries and had no formal strategy in place for success. The Chamber had only one trained economic development professional on staff. The region had continued to grow, but the growth was not focused or led to obtain positive economic results.

It was also obvious that we were not competing for tomorrow's jobs with our peer communities from around the nation. Compared to our \$500,000 annual investment in economic development, Fairfax County, VA was spending \$6 million; Nashville was spending \$3 million; and Austin TX was spending \$2.6 million.

It was evident that we needed a long-term strategic economic and community development plan that would ensure we remain a prosperous and thriving community. This would also help fulfill the Chamber's mission of creating jobs and wealth, growing local businesses, and strengthening our community.

Through a 9-month comprehensive, professional research study with the help of Market Street Services of economic and demographic trends in the area, specific strengths and challenges were identified to give foundation to the goals and objectives that would be developed.

Strengths

Gwinnett's job growth has been strong with wages above state and nation, strong employment concentrations in high-wage business sectors, solid small business dynamics and a strong trend for racial and ethnic diversification. However, challenges most readily existed.

Challenges

Gwinnett's tax base has significantly shifted from commercial to residential causing a loss of approximately \$.12 on every dollar spent. The average wage, although currently above the state and nation, is falling dramatically. Among Atlanta metro counties, the disparity between in-migrant and out-migrant incomes is the greatest in Gwinnett and poverty rates (while still among the lowest in the nation) are on the rise.

The research studies showed that in order to be successful in economic development, Gwinnett needed a focused long-term strategy focused on the community's most pressing needs and opportunities and the action steps necessary to achieve success. This strategy was called *Partnership Gwinnett: A Shared Vision for the Future*.

Objectives

Our two fundamental objectives were specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-sensitive. They were:

1 – Create a long-term economic and community-wide economic and community development strategy, with complete buy-in from the entire community that will produce high-wage jobs, strengthen our education systems, enhance our quality of life, and market Gwinnett globally beginning on July 1, 2007 and ending on July 2, 2012.

2 – Raise \$10 million over five years in public-private investments and grants to implement the strategy.

For both objectives, our target audiences were the top decision makers from across the community, including business, government, healthcare, and education.

These objectives were relevant to the Chamber's goals and our target audiences, because success in economic development would benefit all of our organizations. There was also an increased demand over recent years by our public school system to support their efforts to maintain high standards and scores despite incredible growth and diversity. There was also a demand from our government partners to do more to market Gwinnett to high-wage job prospects and increase our commercial tax base.

For Gwinnett, the objectives marked the first time in the community's history that any strategy of this kind had ever been undertaken. At \$10 million, it was also one of the largest initial economic development capital campaigns of its kind in the nation.

Methodology and Communication Pieces

A. Research and Background

The Partnership Gwinnett strategy is based on a six-month process led by one of the nation's leading economic development consultants, Market Street Services. A historic initiative, it involved more than 2,500 local, regional and statewide business and community leaders to develop the most comprehensive community and economic development strategic plan ever created for Gwinnett County. This strategy was developed based on an extensive research process which included the following:

1. Economic and Demographic Profile: The information presented throughout the Profile captured the most recent trends and current realities of Gwinnett's demographic and economic structure.

2. Competitive Assessment: Compared Gwinnett to three benchmark communities in four areas that are crucial to the economic development competitiveness of an area. The four areas of analysis were: education and workforce development, infrastructure, business costs and capacity, and quality of life.

3. Stakeholder Input Process: Market Street conducted three stakeholder meetings for key community representatives, a number of interviews and focus groups, and an online survey to gather as much public input as possible. A website was also developed – www.partnershipgwinnett.com – in order to provide broad access to the strategic planning process and its reports.

4. Target Business Analysis: This document presented an analysis of quantitative and qualitative research in order to determine priority target industry sectors for Gwinnett County to pursue. It included an analysis of current business concentrations, future projections and an assessment of Gwinnett's current workforce development capacity for each sector.

B. The Strategy

The goals, objectives and action steps in the Partnership Gwinnett strategy were carefully selected based on the findings of an extensive research process to identify Gwinnett's key strengths and competitive concerns. The following provides insight into these strategic components.

Goal I: Economic Diversification and Wealth Creation

Building a stronger Gwinnett will depend on growing job opportunities and earnings for residents at various skill-levels. Ultimately, Gwinnett's successful future will depend on developing an economy with the diversification to survive downturns in specific sectors and the creation of jobs that provide the wages necessary for local residents to thrive.

- ◇ **Objective 1:** Attract new opportunities in target business sectors
- ◇ **Objective 2:** Retain and expand existing firms

- ◇ **Objective 3:** Nurture entrepreneurs and small business opportunities
- ◇ **Objective 4:** Advance economic opportunities for international and minority business

The Target Business Analysis of this strategic planning process identified five target business sectors as the most viable areas to prioritize resources to foster quality job growth. These targets are: Health Care; Distribution and Trade; Headquarters, Regional Offices, and Professional Services; Information Technology; and Advanced Communications. Goal I focuses on strategies specifically related to generating and sustaining local jobs in the target business sectors, by addressing the three legs of the best-practice “stool” of economic development: recruitment (Objective One); existing business retention and expansion (Objective Two); and entrepreneurial and small business development (Objective Three). Additionally, it recognizes that Gwinnett’s diverse, growing minority population is one of its most distinguishable competitive advantages to be leveraged for local economic development (Objective Four).

Goal II: Education and Workforce Excellence

No economic and community development strategy is complete without addressing the key components of education and workforce training. Ensuring that Gwinnett’s public and private school students are prepared to enter the local workforce, and developing a seamless workforce delivery system linked to the opportunities and needs of local businesses are the most important means of ensuring competitiveness in today’s global economy.

- ◇ **Objective 1:** Ensure the pre-K through 12th grade educational system is able to serve local needs
- ◇ **Objective 2:** Maintain a demand-driven approach to post-secondary education and training

The first objective of this goal recommends ways to “go above and beyond” current student performance, instead of creating new programs or attempting to “reinvent the wheel” of local education. The second objective addresses the intersection between available post-secondary school training and local employers’ needs. The implementation of Goal II will bear much of the responsibility for ensuring Gwinnett will be successful in target-business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts, as workforce-related concerns are of paramount importance to many businesses today.

Goal III: Quality of Life Enhancements

Research suggests that firms and workers are increasingly placing a high priority on quality of life factors in their decision making processes on where to locate. Everything from the attractiveness of land use patterns to entertainment and recreational opportunities to crime rates have been found to impact location decisions.

- ◇ **Objective 1:** Promote redevelopment and more sustainable development patterns
- ◇ **Objective 2:** Enhance mobility in Gwinnett and throughout the region
- ◇ **Objective 3:** Strengthen arts, cultural, and recreational assets
- ◇ **Objective 4:** Improve public safety and code enforcement

Community input found that realities and perceptions of Gwinnett’s land use patterns, mobility, arts and recreational assets, and crime rates need to improve for the community to be more competitive. Participants called for progressive redevelopment (Objective One), strong actions to alleviate congested roadways (Objective Two), more pervasive awareness and support for further development of local cultural and recreational assets (Objective Three), and improved crime rates (Objective Four).

Goal IV: Marketing and Outreach

Gwinnett has reached a critical point in its growth where it has matured into a strong regional economic leader. As often occurs, perceptions have not kept pace with reality. Many in the county, region and state have yet to acknowledge Gwinnett’s critical role in local economic and demographic dynamics. Gwinnett must greatly enhance its marketing efforts to advertise to the region, state and nation its growing prominence, competitive assets and best-in-class companies. In addition, Gwinnett must engage in strategies designed to forge a greater sense of community, unity and collaboration among the county’s diverse neighborhoods and populations.

- ◇ **Objective 1:** Initiate an external marketing campaign
- ◇ **Objective 2:** Make Gwinnett attractive and welcoming for young professionals
- ◇ **Objective 3:** Expand community-building, involvement and outreach
- ◇ **Objective 4:** Partner with local and regional entities

The goal begins with an objective focused on developing a comprehensive external marketing campaign, promoting Gwinnett as an attractive place to live, do business, and visit. The second objective focuses on the specific target audience of young professionals. This socio-economic group brings vitality to the living environment and a more competitive workforce for target business sector growth. The third objective focuses on a number of best-practice community-building initiatives, as well as strategies to engage Gwinnett's minority and international communities in County leadership. Finally, this goal addresses Gwinnett's need to maintain strong partnerships with local and regional entities that can make positive contributions to the County's future.

C. Marketing the Campaign to Investors and the Community

We created the Partnership Gwinnett graphic identity and brand as a sub-brand of the Gwinnett Chamber, the organization leading the initiative. The logo featured the Chamber's fonts and the orange was from the Chamber's palette. The orange was selected for its warm, powerful and high-tech feel.

1. The Press Conference

First, the campaign was launched with a high profile press conference at the State Capitol where more than 50 community leaders attended and Lt. Governor Casey Cagle touted Partnership Gwinnett as the model 21st century economic development for communities in Georgia. The event garnered state-wide coverage and our proactive media relations campaign continues to this day.

2. The Prospectus

The most important collateral created to reach investors was the 18-page prospectus created in-house that introduced the theme, "Working Toward a Greater Gwinnett" and outlined the research, results, vision, and goals. Colorful graphs were also used to visually demonstrate where we currently stood in a number of key areas, and where Partnership Gwinnett would take us over the next five years. It also concisely communicates our main five year goals, what those jobs mean to different industry sectors, and on the last page, how this new investment allows us to 'get in the game' with our peers. All data is supported by the initial Market Street reports.

The shelf-life for the piece is over the five years of the campaign. Its main objectives are to educate the reader on the plan and encourage the reader to contribute financially. The piece can be used for sales or re-purposed as an education piece.

The print medium was selected as most appropriate as most sales calls would be in person for such a complex ask. This prospectus was meant to be used as a leave behind. The heavy cover stock and coated paper were meant to be durable, while also evoking a sense of quality to match the high investments requested.

The entire book cleverly and creatively mixed in graphs, local and stock photographs and text for a clean, uniform look without overwhelming the reader. Bullet points were used where possible to keep main messages brief and to the point.

The prospectus was supported by one page investor information that included a pledge form.

3. The VISION Newsletter

To report on our successes to these important investors, a quarterly newsletter called the VISION, reported the successes in our four goal areas. These newsletters also helped with new sales by showing prospects all the work we already had accomplished. Again, the brand's theme is carried through the piece.

4. The VISION TV Show

To get our message out to the entire community, we launched the VISION TV Show on local Channel 23 in partnership with Gwinnett County Government. Each 30-minute monthly episode features experts in the areas we are tackling with our strategy. This is an innovate approach as no program like this had been created in Gwinnett, focusing on economic development and what it means to the average citizen.

5. Special Events

We held exclusive special events for our Partnership Gwinnett investors throughout the year. The purpose was to add value and access to these investors of our programs while providing tangible real-world examples of how Partnership Gwinnett was helping the community. The two most prominent events were our 18th hole Sky Box at the PGA's AT&T Classic in Gwinnett last May, and the inaugural

Partnership Gwinnett Summit. The AT&T Classic event hosted 700 targeted industry guests that comprised an estimated potential for 700 net new jobs in the County (of which, 400 of those we eventually landed with the announcement of Meggitt Training Center's relocation). The Summit brought in national experts to address issues in each of our core issue. The most popular speaker, Tulsa Chamber VP Sheila Curley's address on their highly successful Young Professionals program, was the genesis for our own program to be launched this spring.

Budget

See attached budget for full details

Total Revenues	\$1,116,046.20
Total Expenses	\$835,704.78
Net Income	\$280,341.42

The Production Schedule

Research and Plan Completed	January 9, 2007
Prospectus Created	February 20, 2007
Press Conference and Soft Launch	February 22, 2007
Inaugural Partnership Gwinnett Summit	March 28, 2007
First VISION Newsletter dropped	April 1, 2007
AT&T Classic	May 17 – 20, 2007
Official Launch of Implementation/Fundraising	July 1, 2007
First Partnership Gwinnett hire made (Marketing Director)	July 1, 2007
Second VISION Newsletter dropped	August 1, 2007
First VISION TV Show Taped/Airs	November 14, 2007
Third VISION Newsletter dropped	December 1, 2007
All Partnership Gwinnett hires made (8 total)	February 20, 2008

Evaluation

Partnership Gwinnett is a five-year initiative, begun in July 2007. In the short amount of time since the initiative's launch, the following accomplishments in each of the four primary goals have been achieved. The information below is just a summary, as 78 actions steps are currently underway or have already been completed (See the full, detailed list of year one actions in the binder).

Below are specific, measurable results for Objective 1 – to create a long-term economic and community-wide economic and community development strategy, with complete buy-in from the entire community that will produce high-wage jobs, strengthen our education systems, enhance our quality of life, and market Gwinnett globally beginning on July 1, 2007 and ending on July 2, 2012.

1. Goal I: Economic Diversification & Wealth Creation

- a. The Economic Development staff for the chamber grew from 2 members to 9 employees and 2 intern positions in the last 9 months, employing four business development managers to focus on the five targeted industries outlined in the initiative. This makes the Gwinnett Chamber economic development department the second largest in the state of Georgia, next only to the state.
- b. Existing industry councils, comprised of industry-related business leaders, have been formed for each of the targeted industries and site visits are being conducted by the business development managers to generate research.
- c. Over 30 business expansions and/or relocations of business bringing jobs & wealth to the community have been recorded since the launch of Partnership Gwinnett representing more than 2,000 new high wage jobs. Major expansions included the announcement of a new campus facility for Cisco Systems (formerly Scientific Atlanta) for 500 new technology jobs.
- d. Three major incentive deals have been closed.
 - i. Hewlett Packard (250 data center jobs), Horizon Software International (500 headquarter and technology jobs), and Meggitt Training Systems (400 headquarter and technology jobs)
- e. Partnership Gwinnett has owned a skybox on the 18th green of the AT&T Classic, held at the Sugarloaf County Club in Gwinnett County. They will be hosting this event again in 2008 and have identified to invite the top 40 Gwinnett companies in each industry along with State economic developers, representatives from regional Chambers and economic development associations, and prospects on current projects being worked.

2. Goal II: Education and Workforce Excellence

- a. HOSTS program for elementary-age children has been implemented to assess learning impairment at an early age and craft tutoring programs to assist grade school children with learning disability in order to get them on track and keep them in school.
- b. The Gwinnett School of Math, Science and Technology recognizes accelerated learning talent at the 9th grade level and enrolls students, based on testing, who excel in these core areas of learning, providing them the opportunity to finish their high-school level courses in two years and start them on college-level curriculum by the 11th grade. The school currently enrolls 200 students and intends to add a grade until it reaches full high-school range of 9th – 12th, enrolling over 1,000 students and preparing them for the workforce even earlier than post-secondary education.
- c. Gwinnett Technical College and Georgia Gwinnett College are both working to develop programs around the five targeted industry sectors to education & qualify workers for specific careers in these industries. Gwinnett Technical College is already preparing to offer a two-year nursing program for Healthcare, lobbying for funds to build a Life Sciences building, and has established a program currently in session to train students in the area of Intelligent Gaming, a strong focus of advanced communication companies and a recognized cluster industry in Gwinnett County. Georgia Gwinnett College is lobbying for increased funds to hire staff for the development of a four-year college program. They have applied for accreditation and hope to complete it in 2009.
- d. The Gwinnett Daily Post has partnered with “Kidsville” news to distribute a grade-school newspaper to numerous schools, business offices, waiting rooms and restaurants in an effort to promote literacy at an early age.
- e. Gwinnett has become a certified “WorkReady” region, receiving \$500,000 in grants to develop a process for qualifying workforce for specific careers in the Life Science industry. These funds were secured by leveraging Partnership Gwinnett’s funds.
- f. Gwinnett Technical College is also engaged in a “Literacy Gwinnett” program designed to identify high-school age drop outs, provide them an opportunity to re-engage in learning and walk them through to the completion of their GED.

3. Goal III: Quality of Life Enhancements

- a. The Atlanta Braves have relocated their AAA league team to Gwinnett from Richmond, VA and will be building a professional stadium, surrounded by mixed-use development, to open in April 2009.
- b. Gwinnett is currently the leading participant among metro-Atlanta counties in car-pooling, partnering with the Clean Air Campaign.
- c. The Gwinnett Chamber now has two registered lobbyists who are lobbying for the legislative recommendations outlined in Partnership Gwinnett. To date, its top two legislative priorities have been achieved: the creation of a state water management plan favorable to Gwinnett and metro Atlanta, and new transportation funding bills to generate potentially \$800 million in new, annual dollars for traffic congestion relief in the region.
- d. Due to educational meetings conducted by Partnership Gwinnett, in coordination with its municipalities, the vote for “TADS” (tax allocation districts) passed in all 9 cities of Gwinnett where the motion lay on the ballot. TADs utilize the borrowing of future bond and tax increase dollars for the redevelopment of blighted properties to stimulate economic growth in these areas.
- e. There are three CIDs (Community Improvement Districts) in the Gwinnett area. All of these CIDs have come onboard as investors and partners of the economic development initiative, Partnership Gwinnett.

4. Goal IV: Marketing & Outreach

- a. Created a new economic development graphic identity, brand, and collateral around the county’s slogan, **Success Lives Here**. Ads being run in *Site Selection*, *Georgia Trend* and *Atlanta Business Chronicle* have been developed, a media schedule put in place and a budget approved to consistently promote in these publications. The logo appears on the ads.
 - i. Exposure of the Gwinnett name was provided through use in the logo.
 - ii. Regional strategy was promoted to through a complementary color palette to what the State of Georgia was utilizing.
 - iii. Modernistic appearance was developed through Tillman-Allen-Greer’s creative team and the Chamber in-house resources
- b. VISION TV has taped two episodes since the July 2007 launch.

- c. Partnership Gwinnett investor and promotion packets have been developed to thank our supporters for their contribution and encourage them to pass along the opportunity to others.
- d. The VISION newsletter has distributed two publications since the July 2007 launch. Each publication features the latest updates of the four goals outlined in the Partnership Gwinnett initiative.
- e. 10 national economic development contacts with publications have been identified and are currently receiving press releases and other communications from the Gwinnett Economic Development team.
- f. Over 300 media and editorial contacts are currently receiving all press release and communication information for Partnership Gwinnett and Economic Development in the community.
- g. A formation team has been developed to initiate the Young Professionals Program in Gwinnett. They have met twice and are in the processing narrowing down the group's choices for a name along with providing direction and leadership to the purpose and quality of the group's existence and development. The kick-off event for this new organization is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2008.
- h. In October of 2007, Gwinnett hosted the "Up With People" organization for a week. This group of young, diverse men and women enter communities, get involved in local service groups for a solid week and culminate with a week's end performance of music and dance promoting diversity and a globally-minded approach to community living.
- i. Efforts are being coordinated with Gwinnett's "Great Days of Service" for a broader participation to get involved in the community. In addition, the Cross Cultural Coalition has been formed and is assess priorities for how it can promote minority and international involvement in the community.

For Objective 2 – to raise \$10 million over five years in public-private investments and grants to implement the strategy, we have achieved the following in only 8 months:

- \$7 million in new financial commitments and pledges from public-private partners that include every city in Gwinnett, Gwinnett County, Gwinnett Public Schools, Gwinnett Technical College, Georgia Gwinnett College, and the Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau.
- \$500,000 in state grants to fulfill action steps outlined in the strategy.

The bottom line for the Partnership Gwinnett Initiative is that the Gwinnett Chamber (without any outside fundraising help) ***will raise more than \$10 million in its first year in new dollars and grants, making the initiative one of the largest funded first-time campaigns of its kind ever undertaken in the United States by a single county.*** These funds have ***produced Georgia's second largest economic development department, second only to the State itself*** – and this has been accomplished in only eight months. Three major relocations (Hewlett Packard, Horizon Software International, Meggitt Training Systems) and one major expansion (Cisco Systems) are a direct result of our efforts, ***positioning Gwinnett as a new technology job center for metro Atlanta.***