

# SidewalkTalk Newsletter



## Dates for 2009 Georgia Downtown Conference and Georgia Downtown Professional Development Day Announced

Mark your calendars for the 2009 Georgia Downtown Conference, which will take place **October 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>** in Roswell, Georgia. The Annual Georgia Downtown Conference is sponsored by the Georgia Downtown Association (GDA) in partnership with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

On **October 6<sup>th</sup>** in Roswell, GDA will host its third annual Georgia Downtown Professional Development Day. Exams for the Georgia Downtown Development Professional Program will be conducted during Professional Development Day, as will the Georgia Municipal Association / Georgia Cities Foundation sponsored Downtown Development Authority Basic Training course. Stay tuned for more details!



Downtown Roswell

## Georgia Downtown Development Professional Program

Downtown success depends upon many things: a safe and clean streetscape, ample building stock and savvy enterprises, a custom mix of land uses, perhaps a dash of tourism and special events, and a downtown professional. The Georgia Downtown Association (GDA) recognizes that downtown professionals – Main Street, Better Hometown, and Downtown Development managers– bring to a community a unique and extremely varied skill set.

Downtown managers focus on economic development exclusively in the downtown arena, which benefits directly from an ever-changing mix of best practices, financial and legal tools, and public-private partnerships. Georgia's downtown managers now have an opportunity to measure their downtown professional expertise and achievement through the **Georgia Downtown Development Professional (GDDP) Program**. Formally unveiled at the Georgia Downtown Conference in October, 2006, the GDDP program is sponsored by GDA.

**Why is professional development essential for downtowns?** People come to the downtown development profession from a variety of backgrounds. Downtown development is a very dynamic venture with an ever-changing mix of best practices, programs of assistance, allies and laws. GDA's professional development program is designed to provide a systematic approach for basic training and continuing education that encourages and recognizes a well rounded professional practice for the benefit of Georgia's downtowns. Professional development is an investment in a roadmap of success to establish and sustain a community's central business district and its "sense of place".

### What are the benefits of the program?

- The Professional benefits by having a system of progressive, structured improvement in professional practice and by receiving peer recognition for distinct levels of achievement.

- The Employer benefits by having evidence of the employee's professional growth.
- The Community benefits by having progressively valuable expertise that an increasingly successful professional brings to bear on the dynamic challenges of downtown development.
- The Profession benefits by having in place credible standards of excellence and by the increasingly valuable contributions of those actively engaged in the professional growth of their peers.

**What is the process?** The program is open to anyone in a profession related to downtown management, whether a development authority director, Main Street or Better Hometown Manager, city planner/manager, economic development service provider, etc. The program is completely voluntary and many of the program requirements can contribute to qualifications for other national professional certifications. The program structure includes three levels of successful downtown management, and candidates who successfully pass the written exam and oral presentation requirements will be formally recognized at the Awards presentation during the Annual Georgia Downtown Conference.

**Deadline to apply for  
2009 Georgia  
Downtown  
Professional Program  
is August 3, 2009.**

**What are the three levels of designation and how are they attained?** Each level requires and recognizes more professional success than the preceding level. On-the-job achievement, participation in professional activities and formal instruction are central elements of each designation level. GDA maintains an extensive list of training resources and organizations that meet designation requirements.

- **Level 1: Georgia Downtown Development Professional** – the professional demonstrates a thorough working knowledge in the professional practice of downtown development in Georgia, generally attainable within 2 to 3 years of on-the-job experience.
- **Level 2: Senior Georgia Downtown Development Professional** – the professional demonstrates proficiency in the application of critical knowledge, skills and tools in the professional practice of downtown development in Georgia. A minimum of 5 years' experience is required for this level.
- **Level 3: Master Georgia Downtown Development Professional** – the professional demonstrates mastery in the professional practice of downtown development in Georgia and significant contributions to the profession. This level requires a minimum of 10 years in the profession.

**What is the cost?** The cost to participate in this program is a minimal part of the investment normally made in professional development, and credit toward national certifications can be attained through some of the requirements. The application fees are \$100 for Level 1, \$200 for Level 2, and \$300 for Level 3.

**When?** The application deadline for 2009 is **August 3, 2009**. Exams will be conducted on Georgia Downtown Professional Development Day, which is October 6, 2009 in Roswell, Georgia. Newly certified professionals will be announced at the Annual Georgia Downtown Conference, which will be held October 7-9 in Roswell. To obtain a copy of the application please visit GDA's website at [www.georgiadowntownassociation.org](http://www.georgiadowntownassociation.org) or contact Alan Dickerson at [adickerson@gmanet.com](mailto:adickerson@gmanet.com) or by phone at (678) 686-6213.

**Who are Georgia's certified downtown professionals?** Currently, Georgia's certified professionals represent a select few of downtown professionals who have achieved credible standards of excellence and are committed to continuing professional growth. Certified Georgia Downtown Development Professionals include:

**Georgia Downtown Development Professional Certification - I**

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Hilda Boykin – Sylvania   | Ann Huff – Madison             |
| Pat Daniels – Gray        | Denise McKay – Hampton         |
| Lequrica Gaskins – Tifton | Mary Ann Norris – Wrightsville |
| Matthew Hill – Brunswick  | Billy Peppers - Woodstock      |
| Liz Hood – Cartersville   |                                |

**Senior Georgia Downtown Development Professional Certification - II**

- |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Monica Callahan – Madison | Heather Holder – Macon      |
| Sarah Harrison – Dalton   | Josephine Kelly – Covington |

**Master Georgia Downtown Development Professional Certification - III**

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ann Arnold – Rome         | Connie Tabor – Toccoa |
| Joe Burnett – Gainesville |                       |

As a reminder, the application deadline for 2009 is August 3<sup>rd</sup>. For applications or additional information please visit [www.georgiadowntownassociation.org](http://www.georgiadowntownassociation.org) or contact Alan Dickerson at [adickerson@gmanet.com](mailto:adickerson@gmanet.com) or (678) 686-6213.

## 2009 Annual Downtown Renaissance Award

### Purpose:

The Georgia Cities Foundation is currently accepting nominations for the 2009 Downtown Renaissance Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to the revitalization of one or more downtowns in Georgia.



### Who's eligible?

Individuals and organizations from the private sector, non-profit, civic, philanthropic and academic communities are eligible to receive the award. *Governmental agencies and their staff are NOT eligible.*

### Criteria for selection:

- ❑ The recipient has demonstrated a passion for vibrant, healthy downtowns or activity centers within the city and through his or her leadership efforts have played an integral role in the redevelopment of one or more Georgia communities.
- ❑ The recipient has committed significant financial or in-kind resources to projects that have stimulated quality development and investment in one or more downtowns in Georgia.
- ❑ The recipient has led innovative and forward-thinking approaches to planning, development, preservation, smart growth, quality of life, citizen participation, philanthropy or financing that have stimulated reinvestment in Georgia's cities.
- ❑ The recipient has partnered with municipal officials to create a vision for a city/cities and has actively worked with all elements of the community (business, civic, government, neighborhoods, etc.) to build community consensus and support for the vision.

### Deadline:

All nominations must be received by **Friday, April 24, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.** The winner will be notified during the week of May 25, 2009. The Renaissance Award will be presented in Savannah on Sunday, June 21st, at the Opening Session of the Georgia Municipal Association's Annual Convention.

### Selection:

The Renaissance Award recipient will be chosen by a Selection Committee consisting of members from the Foundation's Board of Directors.

### Previous Award Recipients include:

- Emory Morsberger, 2008
- Callaway Foundation, 2007
- NewTown Macon, 2006
- Hal and Priscilla Carter, 2005
- Ira and Libby Levy, 2004
- Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), 2003

### Nomination Form:

To obtain a copy of the Renaissance Award Nomination Form, please visit [www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org](http://www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org), or contact Perry Hiott at (678) 686-6207 or Alan Dickerson at (678) 686-6213.



**Emory Morsberger (l) accepts 2008 Renaissance Award from Georgia Cities Foundation President Mike Starr (r)**

## Toccoa Main Street Selected as Top 10 in the Nation

Toccoa Main Street is one of ten cities in the United States to be selected as a semi-finalist for the Great American Main Street Award. This national award recognizes communities who achieved exceptional accomplishments in revitalizing America's historic main street commercial districts.

"It's a great honor to be considered as a semi-finalist with the number of applicants that were submitted. In fact, there are only two Georgia cities who have won this award, so just being considered is a huge honor." said Toccoa Main Street Director Connie Tabor.



"We would have never received this designation if not for the work and excitement of local businesses and property owners who renovated their storefronts when the canopies were removed," she said. "This recognition is a testament to our local leadership and the private investments that have been made."

This highly selective competition is open to all nationally accredited Main Street communities throughout the United States. To participate in the competition, candidates fill out an extensive on-line application that includes statistical figures, a detailed narrative history of the organization and revitalization efforts as well as photographic documentation.

### Downtown Toccoa

Since 1990, Toccoa Main Street has championed downtown revitalization through economic restructuring, aesthetic appeal, community promotions and fundraising efforts. Since the formation of Toccoa Main Street, the city gained 101 new businesses, 294 new jobs, and 59 business expansions. In the past 18 years, more than \$9 million dollars was publicly invested in the town while more than \$22 million dollars was privately invested in our downtown district. Since the canopies were removed in 2007, 33 facades have been renovated.

The other semi-finalists include: Aledo Main Street, Inc.- Aledo, Illinois; Federal Hill Main Street- Baltimore, Maryland; Livermore Downtown, Inc.- Livermore, California; Main Street Fairmont- Fairmont, West Virginia; Main Street Oberlin, Inc.- Oberlin, Ohio; Main Street El Dorado- El Dorado, Arkansas; On Broadway, Inc.- Green Bay, Wisconsin; Rochester DDA- Rochester, Michigan; and Rehoboth Beach Main Street, Inc.- Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

The National Main Street Center announced the top five cities at the 2009 Town Meeting in March in Chicago, Illinois, and although Toccoa wasn't a top five, Tabor said she is already working to strengthen next year's application. Since 1995, 55 American communities have earned Great American Main Street Awards for their successful preservation-based downtown revivals.



Doyle Street pre-streetscape project



Doyle Street post-streetscape project

## A Seven Step Downtown Wellness Plan for 2009

By Billy Peppers

Woodstock Downtown Development Authority

GDA Board of Directors

Given the many lifelines being thrown out in this country as Washington tries to right the sinking economic ship of 2008, many wonder what can be done to help Main Street survive and help *real* people in our own communities. Below are

some steps that will help Georgia downtowns now and in the long-term. Some can be done locally, while others will require a much broader discussion and statewide policy change. The group most likely to benefit is listed after each step.

### **Step 1: Dump Double Taxes**

Most small businesses, especially those with large inventories such as the downtown furniture store, would love to eliminate inventory taxes, especially since the consumer pays the taxes on the items at time of purchase. A change in antiquated tax codes on a state level would leave local businesses with more money to create jobs, business investments and expand commerce. **Merchants Benefit**

### **Step 2: Adopt Easy Pay Plans**

Some municipalities expect full payment on alcohol license fees on January 1, amounting to thousands of dollars in business debt before the first customers of the year make purchases. Adopt a process of paying those fees quarterly throughout the year. You'd be surprised what a difference it makes to downtown restaurants. **Restaurants Benefit**

### **Step 3: Relax Permit Fees**

Some businesses need a little more advertising right now, especially during sales. Reduce or even relax additional sign permit fees during this recession. Limit the time the signs/banners can be displayed to protect the integrity of the downtown's natural beauty. Tax dollars generated from well-advertised sales can easily outweigh local revenues from fees. **Merchants Benefit**

### **Step 4: Host a Town Hall Meeting**

There is a reason some businesses have been doing business in your downtowns for generations...they involve smart business practices and an ability to survive economic downturns. Some of your new businesses might benefit from an open forum of discussion and brainstorming. **New Businesses Benefit**

### **Step 5: Partner with a Technical College**

Jobs will be lost. It is an unfortunate situation, but some businesses will have to cut back and that includes people as well. Partnering with the local technical college to offer counseling and skills training can make a difference for that unemployed person that will last much longer than this recession. **Unemployed Benefit**

### **Step 6: Keep on the Lookout for Grants**

Even if you don't like it, government, especially the federal kind, will use recessions as an opportunity to explode into new programs. Many of these programs offer grants that are distributed as quickly as they are advertised. Keep the line of communication open with your local Congressional office to know what is going on. **Local Governments Benefit**

### **Step 7: Bring back the Local Development Fund**

There is not enough pork to go around this state to help every downtown, but that should not mean that local projects flounder in a tough economy. A legislative appropriation of \$1 million into the local development fund grant program at DCA could benefit as many as 50 good downtown projects in Georgia that result in local private investments, jobs created, and distribution process based on need and not on politics. **Local Governments Benefit**

*Feel free to send me your feedback, questions and other ideas at [bpeppers@oldetownwoodstock.com](mailto:bpeppers@oldetownwoodstock.com)*

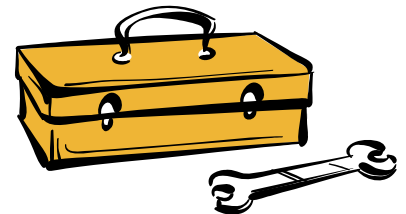
## **Having the Right Tools in Your Downtown Toolbox**

**By: Lequrica Gaskins**

**Executive Director, Downtown Development Authority of the City of Tifton / Tifton**

**Main Street**

**GDA Board of Directors**



Since the spark on the downward economy, many businesses have had to become innovative when it comes to retaining jobs and creating new projects that foster economic development. Small independent business owners generally have fewer resources and operate on a smaller scale than nationwide businesses. As a result, the ability to offer financial tools to downtown business owners can become very favorable. Ultimately, these kinds of tools can positively impact a business' bottom line.

Incentives like *Opportunity Zones* and other local abatement programs have become even more important in an uncertain business environment. Local governments which undertake redevelopment and revitalization efforts in certain older commercial and industrial areas can now qualify those areas for the State's maximum state job tax credit of \$3,500 per job. The incentive which is available for new or existing businesses which create two or more jobs are credits which can

be taken against the business's income tax liability and state payroll withholding. The credits are available for areas designated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) as *Opportunity Zones*. DCA will consider designations for areas that are within or adjacent to a census block group with 15% or greater poverty where an enterprise zone or urban redevelopment plan exists.

It's true that the economy has made it harder for small independent businesses to have the capacity or extra financial means to address some of the internal and external needs as identified in an effective business plan. As a result, we must become strategic in our approach and the method in which we now do business. The adoption of a new business paradigm is both motivating and encouraging as we strive not to address new problems, but as we take a swift look at how we can embrace endless opportunities. One of my favorite phrases is: *"Prepare for peace in the time of war"*. In other words, we must keep our focus, but in the meantime, we should identify resources that will help the downtown business districts. Exemplifying this perspective is the contingency of continuous improvement. Most communities understand that now is a pivotal time to emphasize the Main Street program's approach for positive economic impacts that expands the immediate dialogue of partnerships with the small business owners located in the downtown district. Having *Opportunity Zones* in your tool box will certainly allow downtowns the assurance that resources are available especially during these hard economic challenges.

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## **The importance of standing out in the crowd – a lesson for downtowns**

**By: Jan Sanchez**

"How will we know it's us without our past?" When Steinbeck posed that question in his 1939 classic, *The Grapes of Wrath*, its context was families being forced by hardship to leave their homes in the Depression-era Dust Bowl for an unknown future. They were leaving their past. But today in small towns and urban areas across Georgia and beyond, the same question is being asked by citizens who mourn the loss of their sense of community and cultural uniqueness and who feel that their past is leaving them. Meanwhile, national chains continue displacing locally-owned businesses around the nation. This trend is considered to be a symptom of our loss of community orientation, but could it also be a primary cause? Even before the downturn in the economy, people typically chose to do business where they felt they received the best value for their time and money. But along with that generalized trend came another: the human fondness for shortcuts even in decision-making often resulting in the increased influence of outside factors. It is true that successful advertising is defined as the ability for a company to convince you that their product alone can bring you happiness and, ipso facto, no other business can even come close. Expensive advertising campaigns employing varied types of media are often beyond the budget of local small businesses. Therefore, it is the national chain whose message consumers hear most often and this influences their decisions as to perceived value. Unfortunately, it is the local small retailer who suffers as a result.

The disappearance of locally-owned and operated businesses results in a social and economic void – it changes a community's quality of life in ways that are very difficult to reclaim. National chains present tempting promises of new jobs and increased tax revenue but often these benefits are offset by the damage done to the local business base. A big box chain store may create 300 jobs, but according to the American Independent Business Alliance, they often displace more than one local job for each (mostly part-time and lower wage) job created.

**According to a 2008 report of 2006 data published by the US Small Business Administration, small businesses represented 97.9% of Georgia's employers and 46.3% of its private-sector employment.**

Independent local businesses employ a wide range of supporting services. They hire architects, designers, cabinet shops, sign makers, and contractors for new construction or to adaptively re-use existing buildings. Once the business opens its doors, local accountants, insurance agents, computer consultants, advertising agencies, and attorneys are employed to help run it. Local retailers also source much more of their inventory from local or regional suppliers, thus resulting in more jobs for local producers.

In contrast, a new chain store is typically a clone of other units, thereby eliminating the need for local planning and limiting the need for local goods and services. A company-owned store's profits are immediately exported to the corporate headquarters while dollars spent with community-based merchants create a multiplier effect that, by most findings, typically amounts to three times that of a chain. A well-documented study by the Independent Business Association in Austin, Texas concluded that for every \$100 spent at a chain, \$13 remained in the community while \$45 remained when spent with hometown businesses.

How important are small businesses to our economy? According to a 2008 report of 2006 data published by the US Small Business Administration, small businesses represented 97.9% of Georgia's employers and 46.3% of its private-sector employment. In the category of new job creation, a US Census study determined that in 2000-2001, small businesses created all of the net new jobs in the US. More recently, the 2008 SBA study showed that small businesses in Georgia accounted for all of the state's net new jobs from 2004-2005. Firms with less than 500 employees saw a net increase in employment while large business employment decreased on net. The small business share of new job creation varies from year to year and reflects economic trends. In the 1990s, small business net job creation hovered between 60-80%. Having small businesses account for all of the new job creation for 2000-2001 nationwide is not an anomaly, during an economic downturn in the early 1990s, a similar result occurred.

What this means for our local business communities is that grassroots economic effort will play a large role in our economic recovery. Local independent retailers routinely sift through competing goods and services to find those which appeal to their customers. Because they understand the local market, small retailers can adapt more easily to changes in consumer preference than a national chain store can. While a single local shop may carry a smaller selection than a big chain, having a multiplicity of local retailers in a downtown creates great diversity. Niche marketing and niche businesses are the ones that are succeeding in today's economy. When the market becomes saturated with the products of the latest niche, it is the small independent business owner who can shake off the remnants of the old niche and seek out a new one.

Certainly chains bring name recognition with them and the perception that the product found in one location will offer the same level of satisfaction in another. But while this cookie-cutter approach to development has engulfed some cities around the nation, we need to recognize that the distinct advantage in today's economy belongs to the cities which stand out from the crowd. Independent businesses are unique businesses and such shops and restaurants are the foundation of a city's character. It is a community's uniqueness that motivates people's choices about where to buy a house, put down roots, and start a business. These factors might be cultural and natural amenities, but just as often they are the kinds of small businesses that make daily living more enjoyable.

## 2009 Heart & Soul of Georgia Bus Tour

The Georgia Municipal Association and the Georgia Cities Foundation will again be exploring the "Heart & Soul" of nine Georgia cities on a three-day bus tour in April. The bus tour, April 15-17 will show state agency heads, business leaders, downtown developers and philanthropists ways in which cities are revitalizing and capitalizing on their downtowns.



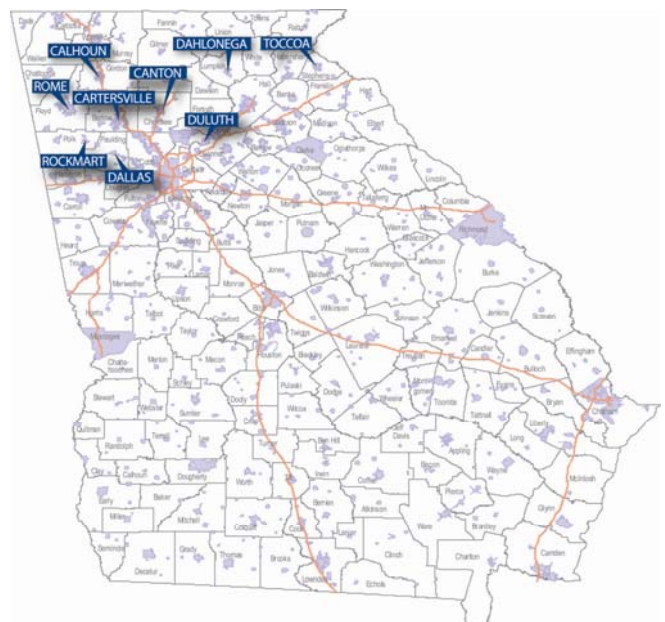
Participants will learn about downtown programs in Dallas, Rockmart, Rome, Calhoun, Cartersville, Canton, Dahlonega, Toccoa and Duluth.

"The Foundation's goal is to help cities through successful public-private partnerships," said Georgia Cities Foundation President Mike Starr, "and we will show nine very good examples of cities that have been successful in creating wonderful downtowns and vibrant communities through such partnerships."

The tour is part of an overall effort to educate and inform state leaders on the importance of successful downtown development and its role in supporting overall economic development efforts for regions and communities.

The Georgia Cities Foundation is a non-profit subsidiary of the Georgia Municipal Association and was created to make Georgia's downtowns more livable and economically prosperous. Through public-private partnerships, the Foundation will facilitate the redevelopment and reuse of downtown areas throughout Georgia. The Foundation will provide funding for capital projects through a revolving loan program.

"The Foundation has a proven track record of downtown development," said Starr. "In fact, the Foundation will be soon closing on four new loans that clearly demonstrate our



partnership with the state and the possibilities that exist in our cities around the state.”

Approximately 45 people will participate in the tour, with some joining the tour at particular stops along the way.

## GDA Welcomes New Board Members

The GDA membership recently voted to accept the Nomination Committee’s Slate of Board members to serve a two-year term beginning in 2009 and concluding at the end of 2010. New Board Members include; Monica Coffin, Main Street Manager, City of Conyers; Hasco Craver, Executive Director, Commerce DDA/Main Street Program; and Maria Jurado-Flynn, Executive Director, Cleveland Better Hometown. Josephine Kelly was elected to serve a second two-year term. Josephine is the Executive Director of Main Street Covington. Rolling off of the Board due to term limits are Sarah Harrison, Niki Knox, and Jan Sanchez. As Immediate Past President, Niki will continue to serve on the Board in an ex-officio capacity. The GDA Board thanks Sarah and Jan for their service.



During the January 9, 2009 GDA Board meeting, the Board of Directors elected Odessa Archibald to fill the unexpired term of Chuck Scragg. Chuck recently resigned from the Board due to new job responsibilities within Georgia Power. Odessa is a Community and Economic Development Manager with the Georgia Power Company.

Congratulations Odessa, Monica, Hasco and Maria!

## Downtown Development Authority Basic Training

The next Downtown Development Authority Basic Training class will be held on Saturday, June 20, 2009 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm in Savannah. The training session will be held in conjunction with the Georgia Municipal Association’s Annual Convention. To register, visit the Georgia Municipal Association’s website at [www.gmanet.com](http://www.gmanet.com).

## Dues Reminder!

Membership Renewal Notices were mailed out in February. If you have not done so already, please remember to pay your 2009 dues as soon as possible. If you did not receive a renewal notice, please contact us at (678) 686-6296.

### Georgia Downtown Association Board Members

Monica Callahan - President, Madison	Lequrica Gaskins - Tifton
Marcia Hampton - Vice President, Douglasville	Liz Hood - Cartersville
Bridget Lidy - Treasurer, Savannah	Heather Holder - Macon
Niki Knox - Immediate Past President, Georgia EMC	Josephine Kelly - Covington
Odessa Archibald – Georgia Power	Billy Peppers - Woodstock
Richard Bishop - Columbus	Karen Smith - Thomasville
Monica Coffin – Conyers	
Joel Cordle - Dahlonga	
Hasco Craver - Commerce	
Maria Jurado-Flynn - Cleveland	

### The Georgia Downtown Association Partners

Brenda Hayes - UGA’s Fanning Institute  
Perry Hiott - Georgia Municipal Association  
Jim Lenahan - Georgia Economic Developers Association  
Billy Parrish - Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Jordan Poole - Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

*Sidewalk Talk is a publication of the Georgia Downtown Association. Articles can be e-mailed to [adickerson@gmanet.com](mailto:adickerson@gmanet.com). You may contact GDA at 678-686-6296.*