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Lawmakers approve vote on tax allocation district funds
Georgians would decide if money can go to redevelopment

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Joe Allen's e-mail was buzzing Friday night during the waning hours of the General Assembly.

The executive director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District was getting updates from a lobbyist hired to push for passage of a constitutional amendment. That amendment would restore tax allocation districts' ability to use school funds on redevelopment projects.

Recent headlines: And the news was good.

Lawmakers approve vote on tax allocation district funds

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• Gwinnett County news:

Lawmakers approved a bill that would allow voters to effectively overturn a February state Supreme Court decision cutting off the flow of school funds for tax allocation districts, a funding tool that helped pay for the redevelopment of Atlanta's Atlantic Station.

Assuming Gov. Sonny Perdue signs the legislation, Georgia voters will consider the question in November.

The measure joins one the legislature previously approved authorizing another referendum allowing tax allocation districts in unincorporated parts of the county. Gwinnett voters narrowly rejected the idea in 2005.

Allen said both measures are important to Gwinnett, where tax allocation districts are viewed as one way to encourage redevelopment in older areas of the county, such as the Jimmy Carter Boulevard corridor and the Gwinnett Place Mall area.

"Instead of continuing to push things north, if we have tools in place that can promote redevelopment, you're hopefully going to push some of that development back this way," he said.

Tax allocation districts generate money by diverting revenue from rising property values to pay off redevelopment costs. The Supreme Court's ruling didn't invalidate the districts, but did take more than half of the funding available to them.

The impact of that decision is very real for Gwinnett: a developer planning a \$2 billion project at Jimmy Carter Boulevard and I-85 pulled back within days of the ruling.

Attorney Michael Sullivan said the developer is still "very much engaged" with the project, but that public funding is needed.

"With a legislative session that didn't get a whole lot done, I consider that a bright shining star for helping revitalization across metro Atlanta," he said.

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