

NEWS & EVENTS

in District 2 with Commissioner Ben Ku

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January 2021



Hello!

It's a new year, which means an opportunity for us all to reflect on the challenges of 2020 and set goals for the year ahead. What are you hoping to accomplish?

Whatever your goals, we must all continue to work together to slow the spread of COVID-19. Learn more about the vaccine rollout and how you can share your COVID-19-related wisdom with others in our community below.

Happening Around Gwinnett

Meet our new commissioners

This January, District 4 Commissioner Marlene Fosque and I were joined by our newly elected Chairwoman Nicole Love Hendrickson, District 1 Commissioner Kirkland Carden, and District 3 Commissioner Jasper Watkins III.

Hendrickson served as associate director of the Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services before joining Gwinnett County Government in 2015 as director for the new Community Outreach Division, where she launched Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy (which I participated in under her leadership in Fall 2016), Dinner & Dialogue, and the Gwinnett Youth Commission.

Carden is a fellow Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy graduate. In his professional capacity, he has assisted state and local governments in developing, maintaining, and implementing transportation plans. Carden was elected to the Duluth City Council in 2017 and served on the Duluth Urban Redevelopment Authority. Carden has also worked as an urban planning technician.

Watkins is a nuclear pharmacist and is the principal/consultant for Watty Consulting, LLC. A retired lieutenant colonel in the Army, he received the Legion of Merit among other honors and helped coordinate responses to 9/11 and hurricanes Katrina and Andrew. He is also a graduate of Gwinnett 101.



Board passes 2021 budget

In our first major vote of the year on January 5, the Board of Commissioners approved the 2021 budget. The budget for 2021 totals \$1.91 billion, up 3.7 percent from the 2020 adopted budget. It consists of a \$1.47 billion operating budget and a \$441 million capital improvements budget, which includes funds from the County's SPLOST program.

Some aspects of the budget were tightened to reserve funding to deal with the uncertain impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and for new initiatives and improvements by the incoming Board of Commissioners, such as warming stations during periods of extreme cold and performance audits to increase accountability and efficiency. Read more about the adopted budget [here](#).

Learn about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout from GNR Health

Distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is finally here. The Gwinnett-Newton-Rockdale County Health Department is currently in [Phase 1A+ of the vaccine rollout](#), which includes hospital staff, public health clinical staff, first responders, long-term care facility staff, urgent care facility staff, and adults 65 and older (and their caregivers as applicable). Stay tuned for more information about the vaccine rollout as the supply increases in the weeks and months ahead.

Remember, even as the vaccine rolls out, it's important for everyone to continue using all the tools available to help stop this pandemic as we learn more about how COVID-19 vaccines work in real-world conditions. Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others, stay at least 6 feet away from others, avoid crowds, and wash your hands often. [Learn more from the CDC](#) about COVID-19 vaccination.

County purchases 39-acre Gwinnett Place Mall property

On December 15, the Board of Commissioners approved the Urban Redevelopment Agency of Gwinnett County's purchase of 39 acres of the Gwinnett Place Mall site. The property is being purchased for \$23 million from Gwinnett Place Mall GA, LLC, which has owned the parcels at the core of the 90+ acre retail development since 2013.



The purchase is part of a strategic effort by Gwinnett's government to create new opportunities for catalytic development in the area in partnership with the Gwinnett Place CID and local property owners. The acquisition is expected to close within 90 days, at which time management of the site will be transitioned to the URA, which was activated by the Board in 2009 with a focus on "rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment" of necessary areas within the county. [Learn more.](#)

What's New in District 2

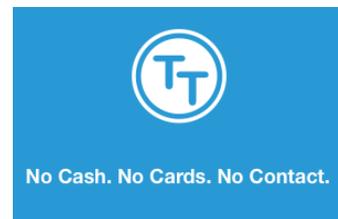


Serve your community in honor of MLK

Dr. King said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" Honor his life and legacy this Martin Luther King Jr. Day by participating in a service project. Volunteer Gwinnett is offering several outdoor service projects for a limited number of volunteers to keep everyone safe. See the projects and [sign up here](#). If the projects are full, consider other ways to help the community. Donate blood, clean up litter around your neighborhood or local park, or donate food or money to a local food pantry.

GC Transit launches mobile ticketing pilot

Gwinnett County Transit riders can now use their cell phones to pay their fares, avoiding having to handle cash or cards. This safe, secure fare payment option will reduce contact between GCT riders, drivers, and surfaces during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



[Get the Token Transit App](#)

Under the new Token Transit program, patrons can purchase mobile tickets through the Token Transit App, which is free and can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play. From January to February 2021, users can get 50 percent off their first purchase in the app. In addition to mobile ticketing, Breeze Cards and cash will continue to be accepted as fare payment. For more information on Token Transit and GCT's fare policy, please [click here](#) or call GCT Customer Service at 770.822.5010.



Are you a Gwinnett Mom? Let us know how you're staying safe

Throughout the #ListenToGwinnettMoms campaign, Gwinnett Moms have generously shared their wisdom, with a healthy dose of sass, to help us stay safe as we weather COVID-19 together. And we know they're just getting started. From keeping your hands AND germs to yourself to washing your hands before mom counts to three, they've been sharing their wisdom since day one.

Now, we want to hear from you! Please share your best "momisms" or words of encouragement for our community, and your advice could be featured in future #ListenToGwinnettMoms messages. So, like mom says, stop procrastinating and share your wisdom today at [GCGA.us/Momisms!](https://www.gcca.us/Momisms/) For more tips and COVID-19 resources, visit [ListenToGwinnettMoms.com](https://www.ListenToGwinnettMoms.com).

Bring One for the Chipper

If you still have your natural Christmas tree, there's an easy way to dispose of it. Through January 25, you can drop off natural Christmas trees at designated fire stations and other locations as part of Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful's Bring One for the Chipper event. The trees will be chipped into mulch for use at parks. Find the list of all drop-off sites or register to volunteer for the January 30 chipping event at Bethesda Park by visiting GwinnettCB.org.



Special Events and Happenings

Most events and activities are suspended due to the County's COVID-19 response.

Visit GwinnettCounty.com or follow the County's social media channels to learn about future events.

If you'd like to chat with me on any topic, please reach out to my office at Ben.Ku@GwinnettCounty.com to schedule a call or virtual meeting.

Ben Ku, District 2 Commissioner
Gwinnett County

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