



## **Atlanta Journal Constitution**

# **TADs are local, voluntary --- and beneficial**

**By Peggy McCormick**

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Jim Wooten's recent column ("Vote 'no': TADs set foundation for corporate welfare," @issue, May 20) misses some fundamental points voters should consider regarding the proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot in November that would allow school districts to once again participate in tax allocation districts (TADs).

As the redevelopment agent for TADs in the city of Atlanta, we at the Atlanta Development Authority want voters to know four key points:

1. The creation of a TAD is a local decision.

It is a mistake to believe that school districts are forced into a TAD. When a city or county creates a TAD, the respective school district has a choice and must vote "yes" to participate.

We find Wooten's position confusing, since he is an ardent supporter of locally controlled decisions.

2. School districts benefit from participating in TADs.

If a TAD is successful in attracting new investments, the improvements increase the economic vitality of communities surrounding schools. In addition, it has been our experience that a school district negotiates specific benefits for its participation in a TAD. For example, in the Westside TAD, the Atlanta Public Schools received \$7 million for the construction of Centennial Place Elementary, a top-performing school built on the site of the former Techwood Homes, just south of Georgia Tech's campus and Coke's headquarters.

3. The funding made available in a TAD comes from new investment, not from the status quo.

Without the new investments attracted by the TAD, the area will continue to be no-growth or slow-growth.

Does anyone remember what Atlantic Station looked like? Think back to the long-abandoned Atlantic Steel site, a recognized brownfield in Midtown. Remember the vacant warehouses and blighted areas where Centennial Olympic Park sits today? The creation of the TAD provided the ability to subsidize and lure private development to these areas previously ignored or plagued by a history of disinvestment. Today, Atlantic Station and Centennial Olympic Park are beacons of economic vitality.

#### 4. Economic development is very competitive.

As we saw last week at the annual conference of the International Council of Shopping Centers in Las Vegas, more than 2,500 representatives from cities, counties and states attended to persuade developers and retailers to consider their towns for investment. We are competing nationally with other cities for new investments, new retailers and restaurants. Tools like TADs play a significant role in attracting developers to blighted neighborhoods in our city.

TADs are not the menace Wooten would have voters think they are. TADs are a national best-practice redevelopment tool, used for more than 50 years in this country.

In 1985, the Redevelopment Powers Law was enacted thanks to the support of 71 percent of Georgia voters. Then, as now, people wanted governments to have a redevelopment tool to attract investment and jobs to corridors and communities long ignored by the marketplace. We ask voters to reaffirm this effective redevelopment tool and give back to Georgia school districts the opportunity to choose.

#### ➤ **Peggy McCormick is president of the Atlanta Development Authority**

