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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Michael Starling, Director of Economic Development

Date: 12/3/2021

Subject: **Experience-making Fund**

BACKGROUND

Place-making has become an integral part of Economic Development for local communities and *Pop-Up Concerts, Yoga in the Park, Cornhole Tournaments, Interactive Art Installations, Festivals, etc.* are increasingly used by local communities to drive economic development and brand recognition. The "experience economy" that has been driving the retail market for the past decade is now crossing over into the office market as well, transforming how employers view their office space to help recruit and retain talent.

Place-making (experience-making) is not about buildings or development, it's about bringing the space between and around buildings to life so it adds to people's quality of life. Many of the new mixed-use projects like High Street and Campus 244 will create these events for their properties, which is great for Dunwoody, but we need an organization to coordinate these events and spread them across the entire community.

Most communities our size have a single downtown that is the focus of place-making activities and they typically have a Downtown Development authority or other organization that drives the experience economy for the City. Dunwoody is different because we have multiple "Downtowns", the Village is the acknowledged center of Dunwoody for most residents, but we also have Georgetown, Jett Ferry/Williamsburg, Winters Chapel and of course Perimeter Center. We need a unique partnership to match our unique geographic circumstances. Furthermore, numerous initiatives in the City are on-going relating to place-making and it's important that these activities and investments are coordinated, supported and amplified. Our challenge is how to bring it all together and elevate what our partners are under-taking.

The Dunwoody Development Authority recently approved a commitment for a five-year \$175,000 investment to support experience-making in Dunwoody, contingent on participation from Discover Dunwoody and the City of Dunwoody.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff will bring a proposal to City Council at the January 10, 2022 Meeting.

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