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PRESS RELEASE
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Council for Quality Growth Honors Jim Vaught and A.J. Robinson with 2026 CID Awards

CID Industry Convenes to Recognize Leadership at 17th Annual Signature Council Event

ATLANTA, GA – On Thursday, November 12, 2026, the Council for Quality Growth held its 17th Annual Community Improvement District (CID) Recognition Event in honor of Jim Vaught, Chairman of Lilburn CID, and A.J. Robinson, President of Downtown Atlanta, Inc. Over 200 regional leaders and CID professionals gathered at Hotel Phoenix Atlanta, in the heart of Downtown Atlanta, to recognize the leadership shown by Vaught and Robinson over their long CID careers, and to celebrate the work of CIDs throughout the metro Atlanta region and state of Georgia. The 2026 CID Recognition Event was presented by Georgia Power, Lilburn Community Improvement District, and Pond & Company.



[From left: Ann Hanlon, A.J. Robinson, Jim Vaught, Tad Leithead]

For 17 years, the Council's CID Recognition Event has annually recognized the role our state's 32 and counting CIDs play in the growth of metro Atlanta and Georgia. Since 2016, the Council for Quality Growth has also presented the CID Leadership Awards to carefully nominated and selected CID leaders that have greatly impacted the region.

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Jim Vaught, Chairman of Lilburn CID, received the 2026 John Williams CID Leadership Award. This award is given to a CID leader that has volunteered their time to serve a CID, usually as part of its Board of Directors. Vaught has served as Chairman of Lilburn CID for nearly two decades, helping guide the CID through significant infrastructure, mobility, and community improvement initiatives.

Tad Leithead, Executive Director of Lilburn CID and the 2017 recipient of the John Williams CID Leadership Award, presented Vaught with this honor. In his acceptance, Vaught expressed his gratitude to the Council and reflected on the significance of receiving an award named in honor of John Williams, whose leadership established a lasting foundation for CIDs across the region. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between Lilburn CID, the City of Lilburn, and regional and state partners, recalling the successful $4.3 million Bryson Park and Hood Road project as a defining example of what these partnerships can accomplish. Vaught also thanked the city's past and present leadership and reflected on the personal fulfillment he has found through his years of service. “I'm grateful and moved to receive this,” said Vaught. “And to have it named after someone with the record and reputation of John Williams is even more remarkable and humbling, but it also gives us something to shoot for.”

A.J. Robinson, President of Downtown Atlanta, Inc., received the Council’s 2026 CID Professional Excellence Award. This recognition is reserved for a CID industry professional that has dedicated their career to serving a CID in a position of leadership. Throughout his 23 years of leadership, Robinson has advanced transformative projects and initiatives that have strengthened Downtown Atlanta’s public safety, infrastructure, connectivity, and economic vitality. His vision and commitment to collaboration have played a significant role in shaping Downtown Atlanta into a more vibrant, connected, and thriving urban center.

Ann Hanlon, Executive Director of the Perimeter CIDs and the 2021 recipient of the CID Professional Excellence Award, presented Robinson with this honor. Robinson credited the success of Downtown Atlanta to the hundreds of dedicated staff members, board members, and community partners he has worked alongside throughout his career, offering special recognition to longtime colleagues Jennifer Ball and Craig Jones. Drawing on nearly 50 years of experience working in Downtown Atlanta, he spoke about the evolving role of CIDs as growing density and infrastructure challenges make their work increasingly complex and essential. He encouraged CID leaders to learn from one another, embrace new challenges, and recognize the impact of both large-scale investments and smaller community improvements. “Don't miss a chance to take bold, calculated risks and be creative in an attempt to really invigorate your neighborhoods,” said Robinson. “This attitude has made all the difference in our work downtown and I hope it'll work in your neighborhoods as well.”

“Jim Vaught and A.J. Robinson represent the dedication, leadership, and collaboration that make Georgia’s Community Improvement Districts so impactful,” said Michael Paris, President & CEO of the Council for Quality Growth. “Their years of service have helped drive meaningful investments, strengthen community partnerships, and improve quality of life across our region. The Council is proud to represent and advocate for our CID partners as they continue to advance their communities, and we are honored to recognize Jim and A.J. for their outstanding contributions and lasting impact.”

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CIDs work year-round to enhance the quality of life here across metro Atlanta and Georgia. The Council is proud to partner with our regional CIDs and to support the newly established CIDs as they become activated across the state. Since the advent of CIDs more than 35 years ago, they have proven to be an economic catalyst for development, serving their communities through infrastructure improvements, transportation initiatives, beautification and trail projects, public safety support, and many other types of projects. This is the 17th year the Council for Quality Growth has held this event to convene and acknowledge the CID industry and the 11th year presenting the CID Award to deserving leaders.

For more details about Community Improvement Districts or the 17th Annual CID Recognition, please visit www.CouncilforQualityGrowth.org/CIDs.

A photo gallery from the event will be made available in the coming days at https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org/news-press/.

About the John Williams CID Leadership Award
The John Williams CID Leadership Award recognizes volunteers who have played an instrumental role in championing CIDs around the metro Atlanta region through their vision, leadership, and dedication. Previous award recipients include Governor Roy Barnes, Senator Johnny Isakson, Tad Leithead, Kerry Armstrong, Bob Voyles, Mason Zimmerman, David Allman, John Shern, Natalie-Tyler Martin, Dan Buyers, and John Heagy.

About the CID Professional Excellence Award
The CID Professional Excellence Award is given annually to a CID Executive Director, staff member, or contractor recognizing an individual's commitment to professional excellence through leadership in successfully investing in critical transportation infrastructure and quality of life improvement projects to enhance the district's economic vitality. In 2020, Gerald McDowell received the inaugural award, followed by Ann Hanlon in 2021, Emory Morsberger in 2022, Jim Durrett in 2023, Joe Allen in 2024, and Kevin Green in 2025.

About the Council for Quality Growth
The Council for Quality Growth is a trade organization that works to ensure continued growth and economic success for generations to come by providing advocacy, information, and education to its members. In its 41st year, the Council is committed to the mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth and is proactively involved in the formulation of policy and legislation critical to the growth and development industry. The Council addresses, head-on, strategic economic planning, infrastructure needs, and tough quality-of-life issues throughout the metro Atlanta region and state. For more information, please visit http://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org.

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