

Downtown reshaped by new developments

Downtown Atlanta has increasingly become the neighborhood of choice for people seeking a vibrant urban experience. Its resurgence is exemplified by the redevelopment of several key areas.

With the construction of projects such as TWELVE Centennial Park, Capitol Gateway and Oakland Park, living in downtown has become accessible and affordable. These developments have attracted top-tier restaurants back to downtown, and retail isn't far behind.

Downtown remains the cultural and entertainment center of the region, with attractions such as the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola and the planned Center for Civil and Human Rights.

Capitalizing on the legacy of the Olympics, significant new development continues to occur around Centennial Olympic Park, transforming the area into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. Two distinct new downtown districts have emerged in the area around the park: Ivan Allen Plaza and the Luckie Marietta District.

Allen Plaza, funded in part through both the Eastside and Westside tax allocation districts, is a nine-plus-block mixed-use, transit-oriented development taking shape north of the park. Two new residential developments have recently been completed in the area: TWELVE Centennial Park and the W Residences Atlanta. Allen Plaza has also become a major employment center with the completion of two new office buildings.

Several new restaurants, including BLT Steak, Mellow Mushroom and Jimmy John's Gourmet Sandwiches, are meeting increased demand from residents and office workers. Future plans for the area consist of apartments, another hotel, additional office space and street-level retail, including a long-awaited grocery store.

The Luckie Marietta District, the new entertainment hub located to the east of the park, is the destination for visitors to the attractions at Pemberton Place: the Georgia Aquarium and the World of Coca-Cola. The Luckie Marietta District is also home to a number of new restaurants. The National Museum of Patriotism also opened recently in the Hilton Garden Inn, and the Center for Civil and Human Rights is scheduled to open at Pemberton Place in 2012.

The Center for Civil and Human Rights will be connected to Auburn Avenue by the marked Rights Trail through downtown. The Auburn Avenue and Edgewood Avenue corridors are also experiencing redevelopment and revitalization. Renaissance Walk at Sweet Auburn, a 160-unit condominium project with street-level retail, has inspired an artistic renaissance on Auburn Avenue and enlivened the street. Funded in part by Eastside TAD bond proceeds, Renaissance Walk is the first large-scale development on Auburn Avenue in over 30 years.

One block south, on Edgewood Avenue, a culinary renaissance is under way. Several new, locally owned bars and restaurants have opened within the past year, including Noni's Bar & Deli, The Bureau and Danneman's Coffee. Other standbys on the corridor include Edgewood Corner Tavern, Rolling Bones BBQ, Harlem Bar, Café 458, Café Circa and Dynamic Dish, recently named one of the country's top modern vegetarian restaurants.

Memorial Drive is another up-and-coming corridor that originates in the heart of downtown. The transformation

here began with the demolition and redevelopment of the former Capitol Homes, an Atlanta Housing Authority public housing project. Like AHA's other HOPE VI

revitalization projects, the redeveloped mixed-income community has catalyzed new investment in the area. Two major new projects have been constructed recently: Oakland Park, the first LEED-certified multifamily development in Atlanta, and The Jane, a creative mixed-use adaptive reuse project.

Both look across Memorial Drive at Oakland Cemetery.

Land acquisition is under way for the Memorial Drive Greenway Corridor Assemblage, a seven-block linear green space project that will eventually connect Oakland Cemetery to the state Capitol. This vision of a grand gateway to the state Capitol dates back to 1974, when it was included in a state of Georgia plan approved by then-Gov. Jimmy Carter. Thus far, 4.41 acres have been assembled, with land owned on all or portions of six out of the seven blocks. Funding for these acquisitions has come from the Eastside TAD, in addition to Quality of Life Bonds, Park Impact Fees and a donation from the Historic Oakland Foundation.

Although a considerable amount of new development has occurred in downtown in recent years, several key redevelopment opportunities remain. The largest contiguous

piece of underdeveloped property downtown is the Gulch, a broad path of railroad tracks where the rail lines that initially spurred Atlanta's growth converged.

Central Atlanta Progress' Green Line, a new plan for the corridor from the Capitol to Philips Arena, envisions a new multimodal passenger terminal, a public park and mixed-use development to be built over the tracks in the Gulch. The Green Line also sets forth a vision for a portion of the South Central Business District. Currently this area comprises surface parking lots and under-utilized historic buildings.

Its proximity to government employment centers make this area attractive for future residential and retail development.

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