



All in the family
Shi Shailendra and his sons know a good deal when they see it.
9C

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Industry Focus

Section C



Midtown Mile: Community leaders and urban planners are developing Atlanta's signature street, Peachtree, into one of the world's great streets.

JAMES C. WAITS

Road to recognition

Peachtree must carve out a memorable path to become a world-renowned street

By Lori Johnston
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Broadway. Michigan Avenue. Champs d'Elysee. The world's great cities have great streets, and it's about so much more than pavement.

That's why urban planning expert Gary Hack believes Atlanta's signature street, Peachtree, has the makings of a roadway that's as well-known as Broadway.

The similarities are there, from the length (at 14.5 miles, the portion of Peachtree within the city limits is two miles longer than the island of Manhattan) to the diverse neighborhoods.

Atlanta's main street could become one of the world's great streets, with changes that include making Peachtree more pedestrian-friendly; improving mobility by offering several modes of transportation; adding green space; and increasing its cultural and retail opportunities, said Hack and local champions of Peachtree.

"Over the next 20 years, with the amount of growth there's going to be in Atlanta, you could actually create a wonderful street down the length of Peachtree," said Hack, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design.

Efforts already are under way by developers and community leaders to bring that vision to reality. The 16-member Peachtree Corridor Task Force,

formed by Mayor Shirley Franklin in November 2005, expects to have a final report on how to transform the corridor — with recommendations including a proposed streetcar — complete in March.

Tom Bell, co-chair of the task force, notes that it's time to focus on Peachtree because of the explosion of both population and commercial development.

About 150,000 residents are expected to be living along the Peachtree corridor by 2020.

"With that in mind, we said to ourselves, 'Are we just going to let the market work how it is now, or are we going to try to do this right in a

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Road to recognition

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way that will sustain the quality of life for all our citizens?" said Bell, chairman, CEO and president of **Cousins Properties Inc.**

Egbert Perry, co-chair of the task force with Bell, envisions a well-landscaped roadway with green space, a streetcar, wide sidewalks and cafés and high-density residential, retail and office.

"Peachtree is in effect our Broadway and Michigan Avenue and ... we probably need to be a little more deliberate and intentional about helping shape what that street is," said Perry, chairman and CEO of **The Integral Group LLC**.

Peachtree perceptions

The problems are there, from the congestion to gaps that Hack says could be used for pocket parks and mixed-use developments.

"There can't be big blank spots where there is nothing happening," he said.

Perry admits that Peachtree has areas that are a no-man's land.

"Some parts of it are viewed as very, very nice; some parts of it are viewed as, 'I wouldn't be caught dead there,'" he said.

The biggest obstacle: creating a brand identity for Peachtree. "My impression is that everybody knows Peachtree is in Atlanta," Hack said. "Nobody knows what it looks like."

Peachtree has the tremendous opportunity to play the role of Atlanta's "spine" because of the increased density, said Larry Gellerstedt, president of the multi-family/office division at Cousins Properties Inc.

"Peachtree has [been] and will continue to be the main corridor that people utilize and think of when they think of the city of Atlanta," said Gellerstedt, who recently joined Hack in discussing Peachtree at the Midtown Alliance's annual meeting.

A key aspect is creating a corridor that is easily recognized with a consistent feel but that still allows each district to maintain its distinct qualities.



Hack
University
of Pennsylvania

It can be done, said Hack, citing the differences among Broadway's theater district, Herald Square and the Lincoln Center area as one example.

For Susan Mendheim, **Midtown Alliance** president and CEO, the most encouraging idea from Hack is that

Broadway links together different unique environments in such a way that the sum total is much more exciting than each part, but each part is appealing on its own.

Midtown has its own character and personality, which includes plans to create a "Midtown Mile" with 1 million square feet of urban, upscale national and international retailers by 2010.

"Then downtown is a completely different kind of attraction and so is Buckhead and, of course, Sweet Auburn, and on and on. And that really makes it so much more exciting and interesting," she said.

Missing links

Hack also would like to see more entertainment and cultural options around The Fox Theatre; a public art program; lush landscaping; better traffic management; bicycle lanes and parks; as well as retail along Peachtree.

That's a major focus in Midtown, with projects such as 12th & Midtown and ViewPoint devoting space for two-story stores with 40-foot ceilings and prominent storefront displays.

"Flagship retailers want height and volume," Mendheim said. "They also like to have a unique look so that you remember them."

The look is going to be more like New York's Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue instead of the neon lights of Broadway, said Judd Bobilin, executive vice president with **Novare Group Inc.**, which is developing ViewPoint.

The 36-story condo space will have 30,000 square feet of two-story retail space on Peachtree (between Sixth and Seventh streets) in phase one, slated to be complete in spring 2008.

Bobilin said retailers could include Urban Outfitters, Starbucks and Apple.

Mendheim points out that Midtown has added close to 8,000 residential units in the past six years.



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On display: Public art at Atlanta's High Museum of Art, left, rivals that on Broadway in New York City.