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WINTER 2009

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## INSIDE ...

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- Global Living in the Peach City
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# Making Atlanta

## Your Home



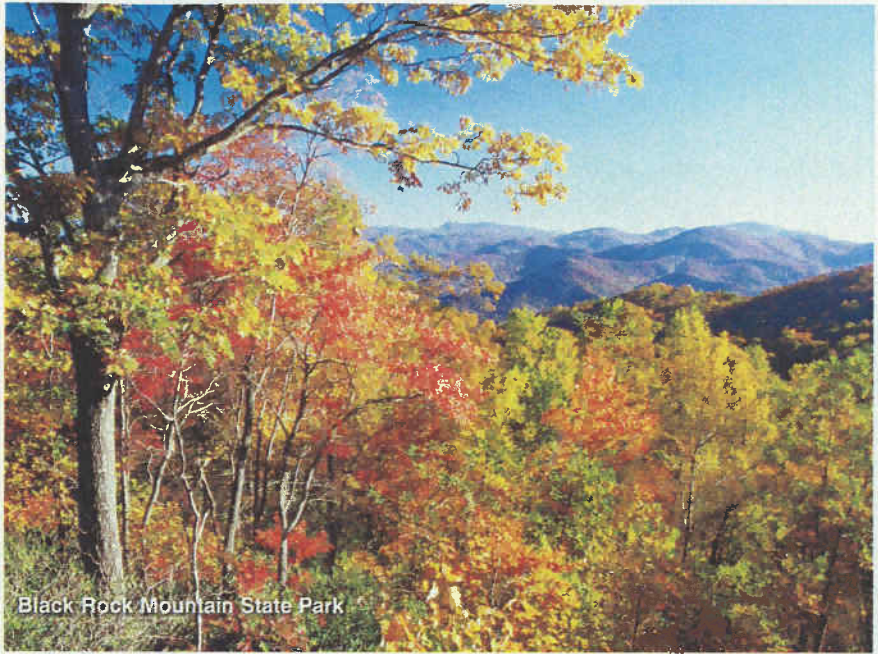
Atlanta has much to offer new residents, including a great location and a variety of home styles. With its promising potential and lower housing prices, living in the big Peach may be sweeter than you thought.



By Brittaney Carter

Atlanta has long been the activity hub of the South, but its reputation is quickly crossing regional lines and entering the national consciousness as a city of opportunity. Georgia's capital offers just as much action as other big cities while still maintaining its old Southern charms. Mikel Muffley, president and founder of Muffley & Associates, has 20 years of real estate experience, and he has worked in the Atlanta market for six years. He offers his view of a changing Atlanta. "The city's becoming more and more like a downtown Chicago or a downtown New York with a live-walk environment. But you still have your parks, you can still ride horses," he says.

Because of its proximity to both the foothills of northern Georgia and the coastline of the southern Atlantic, Atlanta is the perfect starting point to a peaceful escape.



Black Rock Mountain State Park

In addition, the state capital boasts a prime location for enjoying the region's diversity of geography and varied vacation spots. Because of its proximity to both the foothills of northern Georgia and the coastline of the southern Atlantic, Atlanta is the perfect starting point to a peaceful escape. "In a short three-hour drive you can be sitting on the beach with your toes in the sand in Savannah, or head north

and in two hours be in the North Georgia Mountains to enjoy the radiant fall foliage display," says Tina Huber, an exclusive buyer's associate broker for Exclusive Relocation of Atlanta.

A home in Atlanta promises this unique

blend of personalities and locale, all packaged with remarkable housing costs. Although the current housing market is shaken by uncertainty, Huber says the South offers a sweet spot in investing for those who wish to relocate. "Atlanta offers

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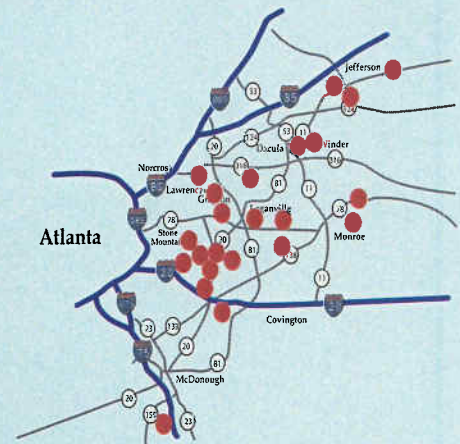


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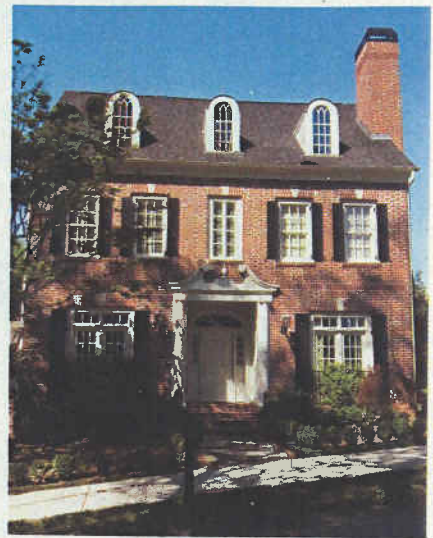
quality built homes at affordable prices below the national average," she adds. "There is still plenty of good news on the Georgia real estate market. Forbes recently named Atlanta as No. 4 on the list of the top 10 cities for jobs, also mentioning that Atlanta is plentiful in transportation, distribution and financial services careers."

Taking into consideration all of these factors, Muffley also makes a strong case for the city's most valuable asset—its po-

tential for growth. "Atlanta is just scratching the surface," he says proudly. "It's just beginning."

### Home Styles

When it comes to architecture, Atlanta offers a range of choices, from charming Southern-style houses to upscale metropolitan condos. As Midtown becomes more of a pedestrian community, in-town housing options are becoming more popular. However, Atlanta is also surrounded



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by a wealth of suburban neighborhoods that offer the solace of quiet comfort just minutes away from the excitement of Downtown.

Muffley elaborates on the two sides of the city. "You have all forms of living you could want from single family homes to high-end condos. Whether you're a single person or a family of five, there's something for you," he says.

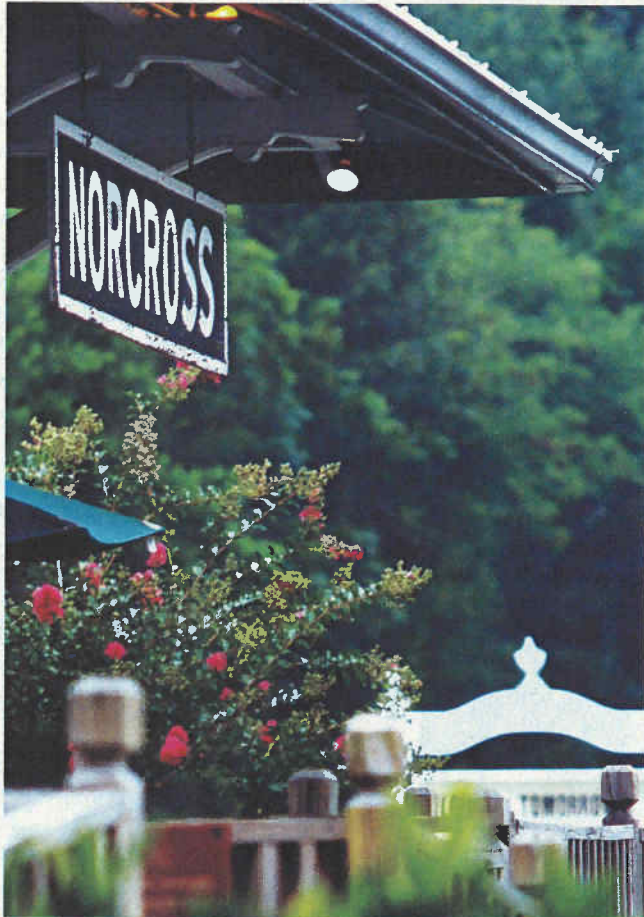
Many professionals with families may

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# Neighborhood Spotlight: **Norcross**



The center of Norcross life is its vibrant and historic downtown, where residents satisfy their appetites, stretch their legs and indulge in its mix of shopping opportunities. Lined with brick buildings, street lamps from yesterday and benches made for friendly afternoon conversations, the area beckons its visitors to stay awhile and discover the secrets of Norcross. And the best way to start is by slicing into its rich restaurant scene.

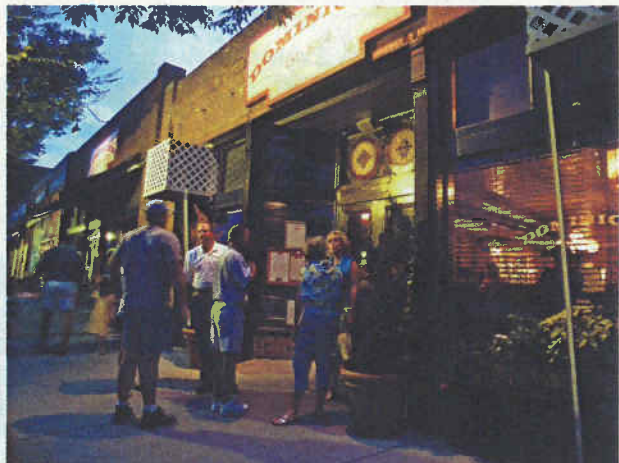
Steven Bush, economic development manager for the City of Norcross, talks up one of his personal favorites. "When you talk about downtown, one of the restaurants that you hear about is Dominick's Little Italy," he says, but he also praises the area's other cuisine. "One of the nice things about downtown Norcross is there's a mix. We also have Mojito's, which is a Cuban restaurant, and that's something you don't get everywhere. It's nice to have something different—that's what makes a community special."

Explore the city center and you will find that crepe myrtle and dogwood trees shade the sidewalks. Norcross has been designed so that there is a hint of green for pedestrians to enjoy everywhere they go. There are green spaces we've cut out so that there's always a place for people to sit and get away from everything," Bush says. However, the city is also working on several new development projects, including downtown condos and restaurants and the conversion of Lillian Webb Field into a new park. Set to be finished in July 2009, Bush says the park will be the centerpiece of Norcross's downtown area. "This is a place for you to walk around and exercise. This is a place for you to have a picnic," he says. "I

definitely think Lillian Webb Park will create a healthier community for people."

For residents and visitors who enjoy being indoors, Norcross is also home to a cluster of sidewalk shops and theme stores. "Downtown has unique shops and nice art like Labaire's pottery," says Bush. Shoppers will also find antique galleries, flower shops and home décor stores. Peachtree Parkway also offers more commercial options such as Ann Taylor Loft, J. Crew and Pier 1 Imports. "You get the best of both worlds. You can have a little downtown and then you can go out," Bush says.

Housing in Norcross is a bit like the shopping. The contrast continues, with traditionally styled homes and more modern dwellings existing in harmony. Bush explains that developing neighborhoods take on a different feel than the historic Norcross that gave the city its character, but both are welcome. "You find mature trees and covered sidewalks with benches, and you get that old Southern charm. But in different areas of the city we've added new neighborhoods. It's new urbanism—houses built with a slightly different model," he says. As with all of its pleasing characteristics—the food, the shopping, the common areas where neighbors meet and mingle—the small town north of Atlanta has found room for growth while still clinging to its traditional housing and beloved history. "We have the space to do both here in Norcross, both the old and the new," Bush says.



search for detached, single-family homes on the outskirts of the city, and for them the benefits of this type of investment will far outweigh other types of housing. Muffley offers a number of reasons to buy a single-family home. "It will have better and faster appreciation, there's green space and it's something you can call your own," he says.

For homebuyers looking for a shorter commute and more convenience, a town-home would be a better fit. Purchasing one of these units allows residents to own the

home they live in and sometimes the lot that it sits on as well. Another convenient option would be to purchase a condominium with the added benefit of front-desk security. However, owning a condo is often accompanied by homeowner's association fees.

For an even more modern take on in-town living, search for a loft or a flat. These urban dwellings are available for rent or ownership, and they are slowly catching on in Atlanta, offering more open space and high ceilings. "They have a real com-

mercial feel with exposed duct work and floor systems," says Dan O'Dwyer, president of O'Dwyer Homes.

## Where to Invest

Among up and coming neighborhoods that would be great for Georgia newcomers who want to build a new home, O'Dwyer recommends Tributary, a community just east of Atlanta. Existing homes in the area feature a style reminiscent of the 1940s, and strolling down its wide sidewalks evokes a feeling of nostalgia. "Tributary is surrounded by state parks and has all kinds of great amenities," says O'Dwyer. The new community also has plenty of space for homebuilding.

Just northeast of the perimeter sits another one of Muffley's favorite Atlanta neighborhoods, Ashford Park. This community is defined by its 1950s-built ranch houses and family-oriented atmosphere. If you are looking for a small family home or like the idea of adding on to an older home with classic architecture, this is the perfect area for you.

For potential Atlanta residents who want to live inside the perimeter, Muffley recommends Buckhead. Two newly built communities in this area are City Park townhomes and The Reserve at City Park. Located at the edge of Buckhead near Midtown, this community is an urban oasis among the hustle and bustle of Atlanta. City Park boasts tall oak trees, a soothing brook and its own Ardmore Park. Open the door to a City Park home and you will find a decidedly chic and metropolitan décor.

Another centrally located neighborhood known for its arts and entertainment is historic Virginia-Highland. Considered an eclectic enclave of music, dining and—especially—shopping, this neighborhood is located a few minutes northeast of downtown Atlanta. Virginia-Highland has been around for more than a century and has carved out seven villages connected by rows of charismatic bungalow homes.

One of the most popular areas of the city is Midtown, known for attracting residents with truly cosmopolitan tastes. Because the area borders downtown, Buckhead and Virginia-Highland, a Midtown address will ensure that you never run out of things to do. Graced by Atlanta's famed Peachtree Street, Piedmont Park and Atlantic Station, this is the destination for residents

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who want to live and play among the most quintessential Atlanta landmarks. Midtown maintains a mix of business and residences and is recognizable by its high-rise condos and townhomes.

The most important thing to keep in mind when searching for an Atlanta neighborhood to call your own is that the city is defined by its diversity in culture and its vast range of living options. These are just several of Atlanta's wealth of neighborhoods. Muffley highlights his favorite charms from each. "You've got several little nooks and crannies in Midtown. You've got high rises coming up in Buckhead and cute historic neighborhoods like Norcross where there are town squares and coffee shops," he says. "You can't go wrong investing in these neighborhoods."

### Finding an Agent

Because the city has so many neighborhoods, all offering their own twist on Atlanta living, a real estate agent is your best bet when getting to know the market. A representative can be your advocate and protect your interests when looking for

a home. Huber explains, "With the current instability in the real estate market, a buyer needs even greater protection. An exclusive buyer agent with experience can navigate the murky waters of today's real estate market."

Before turning the first key, O'Dwyer recommends getting to know your agent or representative to find out if he or she is the right match. "You should always be able to ask an agent about their experience, and you should always be able to ask an agent for references," he says. In addition, try to find someone who is well-versed in the specific areas that you are interested in so that you can narrow your search and take advantage of their market knowledge.

You should also give your agent the opportunity to get to know you, says Muffley. "The first thing I try to do is find out what they like. What are their tastes? What fits them best?" he says. He also suggested making a list of things to consider when you are negotiating relocation, such as upgrades for amenities packages and features you want to include if you're building a new home. ■



The Lodge at BridgeMill

## A Choice for Active Adults

The mild weather, affordable housing, lower taxes and transportation hub that Atlanta offers makes the metro area a natural choice for baby boomers. If you're looking to retire in Georgia, you'll find a bevy of neighborhoods and communities designed around your needs. Many of Atlanta's active adult communities offer a variety of housing—everything from luxury apartments, ranch-style condos, brownstone townhomes—and resort-style amenities. The Lodge at BridgeMill in Canton, a northside suburb, brings together maintenance-free living with highly appointed surroundings. Residents are treated to a country club lifestyle with English manor-styled apartment homes overlooking the 16th hole of the BridgeMill Golf Club course. Fine dining is offered in your home, at the lodge's dining facility, the upscale English pub on the main floor or al fresco in the Lodge's garden setting. Your social calendar can be as full as you'd like it to be with monthly events, group exercise classes, craft workshops, golf outings, day trips, wine tastings and concerts. The Lodge at BridgeMill also offers 12 floor plans and a 24-hour maintenance service staff. If you'd like to learn more about this community visit [thelodgeatbridgemill.com](http://thelodgeatbridgemill.com) or call (770) 479-4639.