

# ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE

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## Retail shops flourishing in west Midtown area

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Atlanta's chic Midtown West continues to attract new retailers, including upscale furniture stores and a salon. Midtown West, which includes several neighborhoods in an industrial area of Atlanta, includes the areas around Howell Mill and Huff roads, now a burgeoning design market.

When Jim Weinberg, owner of **Jim Weinberg Lifestyles**, an interior design firm at 202 Townsend Place N.W., came to Atlanta eight years ago, Midtown West, or Westside as it is also known, was his first choice in which to locate his business because it "is an environment where there



**Weinberg**  
Jim Weinberg  
Lifestyles

is opportunity for design and creative people," he said. "Textile showrooms and craftsmen were in the area. We felt like we were in the pioneering stage of taking run-down buildings and turning them into opportunities."

The beauty of Midtown West is its easy accessibility, Weinberg said, because of Howell Mill Road, to Atlanta's downtown and Buckhead "without having to pay high costs for showroom space."

As residential units sprang up in the area, retailers and restaurants like Figo Pasta and Flip followed, he said.

Chris Sanchez and his brother, Max, plan to open Spa Sentio later this summer at 1170 Howell Mill Road.

Midtown West "has its own identity and is growing," Chris Sanchez said of the reasons to open a spa there. "That's what we found so alluring."

Midtown West has a young, hip demographic, said Max Sanchez, a hairstylist at nearby Dragonfly Salon.

"We think our concept fits perfectly in this part of town," brother Chris said.

The spa will offer "hotel-quality services," such as facials, massages, manicures and pedicures without the hotel prices, said Max Sanchez, who has worked at the Beverly Hills Hotel in California.

Midtown West really offers "a junction in the city that marries" northern and southern parts of Atlanta, said Michael Phillips, principal at **White Provision Development Co.**, a partnership with Jamestown. White Provision is redeveloping the White Provision meat packing building, at Howell Mill Road and 14th Street, which was built in 1910.



JOANN VITELLI

**Finding identity:** Max Sanchez and his brother, Chris, who are building Spa Sentio off of Howell Mill Road, like the Midtown West area's young, hip demographic.

"Atlantans don't really cross-pollinate in a shopping way," Phillips said.

Virginia-Highland residents don't really shop in Buckhead, nor do Buckhead residents shop in Virginia-Highland, he said. But residents of both areas seem to gravitate to Midtown West.

Westside Urban Market, at 1200 Howell Mill Road, is home to boutiques like Sid Mashburn, Star Provisions, B. Braithwaite Bungalow Classic and Sprout, and also top Atlanta restaurants Bacchanalia, Quinones at Bacchanalia, Taqueria del Sol and JCT Kitchen.

When Bacchanalia and Taqueria del Sol opened in that area 10 years ago, there were many nay-sayers, Phillips said, but customers have been intensely loyal and those restaurants have thrived there.

Phillips developed the Westside Provision District, centered on the east and west sides of Howell Mill Road between Atlanta Water Works to the north and Brady Avenue to the south.

That district includes the White Provision mixed-used development, which has attracted retailers Knoll, Dragonfly Salon, Seed Factory, Spa Sentio, and Room & Board.

White Provision is also home to West Egg Cafe, as well as the recently opened Abattoir, a new restaurant from chefs Anna Quatrano and Clifford Harrison.

New tenants also include Environment Furniture, Maison Atlanta and AVA Design.

Retailers in Midtown West have not been immune to the down economy, Phillips said, but the area remains a strong submarket, because it has "purpose-driven" retailers.



**Phillips**  
White Provision  
Development Co.

### Atlanta retail market

By the numbers

- Over the 12 months ending in first-quarter 2009, nearly 2.5 million square feet of retail space was completed.
- Planned projects total about 15 million square feet with nearly one-third in northern areas, such as Roswell and Alpharetta.
- Developers are forecast to complete 3.7 million square feet of retail space this year, down from 4.5 million square feet in 2008.
- Roughly 1.1 million square feet of space is expected to be delivered in the Sandy Springs/North Fulton submarket.
- The metro retail vacancy rate is expected to hit 12.6 percent by the end of 2009.
- Concessions were 10.6 percent of asking rents in first-quarter 2009, up from 9.5 percent a year earlier.
- Asking rents could drop an estimated 3.5 percent to \$16.84 per square foot.

Source: Marcus & Millichap

ment, because of its creative nature and businesses, said Weinberg.

"In times like this when you are seeing retail expand," he said, "it's giving you some pretty good signals."

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