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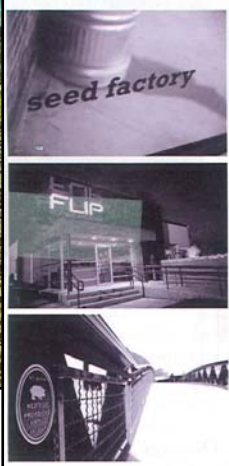
THE RADAR | REALTY

## Go West!

A second wave of creatives are converging in Westside, transforming this gritty, train-tracks nabe into a major arts and commercial mecca | By Katie Bernstein | Photography by Sarah Dorio |



Clockwise from top left: Developer Michael Phillips of White Provision and Janet Miller of Knoll; A Legendary Event's Tony Conway; Westside vignettes.



Within the triangle formed by Huff Road, Howell Mill and Marietta Street, you'll find one of Atlanta's most diverse microcosms: Bike messengers zipping through traffic; architects poring over MacBooks at Urban Grind; graphic artists downing fried chicken and collards at Carver's; interior designers picking up Saarinen Womb chairs from Knoll; and artists taking a break from their studios at the Contemporary to sip coffee at Octane. Who would've thought that this exceedingly gritty industrial zone known as Westside, built up around the Western and Atlantic Railways and a water-treatment plant, would become the new hotbed for Atlanta's rising creative class?

"It seems anytime the revitalization of a formerly industrial urban area takes place, the result is this wonderful, quirky, creative, somewhat funky, sometimes edgy place that people are naturally drawn to," says Suzanne Bair, president of the Marietta Street Artery Association and a Westside resident since 2000. "The first wave of chic vendors to pioneer the Westside came with the completion in 1999 of TurnerMott's pedestrian-friendly design haven. Westside Urban Market, which brought Bacchanalia, Star Provisions, B. Braithwaite, Kolo Collection—and later, Sid Mashburn and OwenLawrence to the nabe. Visionary developer Michael Phillips successfully established a "new Main Street" vibe with the project. Phillips, who has partnered with Chris Faussemagne as the principals

of White Provision Development Company, now is overseeing the White Provision Building next door. The handsome brick structure that once housed a meatpacking plant, has become home to a new collection of cachet businesses, including Knoll, emblem of all things sleek and modern, Room and Board, and Dragonfly Salon. Owners Kyoko Akins and Chaz Anderson recently opened their eco-friendly salon, which features polished concrete floors and L.A.-transplant stylist Max Sanchez, who cut his chops styling Paris Hilton's coif. Next door, at White Provision Residences, you can choose from one of 98 minimalist-chic apartments with exposed brick, floor-to-ceiling windows, sustainable Ipe or white marble flooring and pendant lighting.

Meanwhile, local and national foodies alike wait with bated breath for Anne Quatrano's Abattoir to open this month. What better place for a snout-to-tail concept than the historic stomping grounds of the first large-scale meatpacking plant in the Southeast? Chef Kevin Rathbun and partner Cliff Bramble confirmed that they've also been eyeing the Westside as a potential site for a future project—rumor has it that it's a modern speakeasy modeled along the lines of NYC's Pegu Club—but they've made no commitments for now. Ditto Bill Hallman, who has considered expanding his hipster fashion empire beyond Virginia-Highlands. Though neither of these top tastemakers has signed continued...

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...continued on the dotted line, the Westside is clearly drawing its fair share of inventive talent. Just down the road a bit, perpetual lines snake around Richard Blais and business partner Barry Mills' hip Flip Burger on Howell Mill. "The Westside is a neat conduit of dining," says Blais. "From Bacchanalia to Taqueria del Sol, there's a good vibe here. It's also in a good spot from the downtown hotel business and Buckhead." And architect Dan Maas and Joe Remling of the trendy firm ai3, who created Flip's playful, upside-down design, concur. "I think the textural quality of the historic spaces ties into the foodie movement in Atlanta, which really praises the connection between food and place," says Maas. Not only are the ai3 offices housed in a 6,000-square-foot former mill building in the area, but the architects are teaming up with local star chefs to design two brand-new Westside restaurants slated to open this fall. First up: Chef Steven Satterfield of Watershed is partnering with general manager Neal McCarthy of Fritti and Sotto Sotto to create Miller Union, a 70-seat dining spot on Brady Street with rustic found woods, ornate wallpaper and pocketed dining nooks. Satterfield, a Slow Food Atlanta and Georgia Organics member, plans to can fresh produce all summer long in order to embellish his autumnal menu. Think fried wild Georgia shrimp with hot pepper vinegar, red guinea hen with young carrots and parsnips, and hand-churned fresh-herb ice creams. Meanwhile, Local 3, a venture by Ryan Turner and Todd Mussman of Muss & Turner's and chef Chris Hall of 4th & Swift, will open in the Medici building later this year. Ai3 is working with the chef/owners to create a local everyman's eatery with a serious charcuterie program and a bar stocked with rare and exotic beers.

The Westside's affordable rents appear to make seemingly impossible urban real estate dreams come true, such as 5 Seasons' sprawling 15,000-square-foot brewery, organic garden restaurant, bar and biergarten in the brand new BrickWorks—a complex once used to stable livestock and tan leather. It now houses thriving businesses such as Eco Emporium, the go-to spot for chic green home décor, and Hop City, Atlanta's first craft beer specialty store. BrickWorks is the centerpiece of developers Richard Martin and George Rohrig's ambitious plans to re-adapt scads of historic buildings dating back to the 1880s. Dubbed Midtown West, this revitalization project, when completed in 2012, will encompass more than 600,000 square feet of loft-style office, retail, gallery and restaurant space.

Tony Conway, entrepreneur, philanthropist and CEO of design and catering powerhouse, A Legendary Event, is also a proponent of this pocket of Atlanta. He consolidated three workspaces when he moved into his 55,000-square-foot Westside headquarters near the King Plow Arts Center last July. With elegant tasting rooms, floral design galleries and industrial-sized catering kitchens tucked neatly behind motorized screens, Conway's clients can now see it, try it and taste it all before the big event. The lofty space is perfect for orchestrating the 1,200 events Legendary masterminds each year, including Ted Turner's 70th birthday party and Tyler Perry Studio's splashy opening fête, with appearances by Oprah, Sidney Poitier and Gladys Knight. Eventually, Conway's creative factory will back up to a major 300-acre Westside Reservoir Park. Phase one, slated to open at the end of 2010, will add a pleasant slice of green to Westside's urban grit.

Down the way, the stretch from Marietta up to 11th Street has a lock on the café and art scene with hip spots like Octane, Sandler Hudson, Kiang Gallery and Brian Holcombe's conceptual art hub Saltworks Gallery which relocated from O4W last August. More recently, Lloyd Benjamin of Get This! Gallery made the move. "I couldn't do what I do here anywhere else," says the 30-year-old. "I think we have a real cohesion here," he says. In fact, the close-knit Westside Arts District has even begun hosting an arts walk the third Saturday of every month.

Though the Westside seems to have a mystical allure, its success is due, in part, to intelligent design. For example, Phillips has taken great care to infuse White Provision with a sense of authenticity and place, and to improve iconic buildings instead of razing them for lifeless new ones. He also takes a meticulous "curatorial" approach to tenant selection, and the payoff is huge. "We're very engaged in the process of creating a community," he says. "There's a threadbare elegance and a sense of discovery here." ■



From left: Lloyd Benjamin of Get This! Gallery; Kyoko Akins and Chaz Anderson of Dragonfly Salon.



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