

The tools to help you fight identity theft.

ajc.com
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



[ajc.com](#) > [Metro](#) > [North Fulton/Forsyth](#)

PERIMETER TOWN

Living high life close to work

By [CHANDLER BROWN](#)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Published on: 08/12/06

Late one night a couple of years ago, Hope O'Reilly-Weir was cruising the Internet for a new home that would be closer to her job at a Dunwoody hair salon.

She came across a luxury high-rise condo building planned near Perimeter Mall.

"I woke my husband up and said, 'You've got to come look at this,' " O'Reilly-Weir, 40, said recently. "We knew this is where we wanted to be."

Evidently, others feel the same way.

Nearly three years after it was announced, the sprawling mixed-use development known as Perimeter Place is a reality — and just about full of tenants.

Condo high-rises outside I-285 are becoming increasingly popular in metro Atlanta, with one under construction in Cobb County and developers considering such plans in Gwinnett County.

Perimeter Place sits squarely in the heart of an office-retail-entertainment district, known as the Perimeter Area, which straddles the Fulton-DeKalb County line.

Over the past half-century, the area, which was once farmland, has sprouted into a hub of shopping and working made more accessible by three nearby MARTA stations and two major highways.

The area has always been home to relatively little housing. That's forced more people to drive to work in the Perimeter area, which, of course, adds to congestion.

But Jessica Coy, who lives in Buckhead and works near Perimeter Place, says the development has actually increased congestion because of the new retail that came with it.

"You can hardly get in here during lunch hour," Coy said Friday as she munched on a vegetable spring roll at Tin Drum, an Asian cafe in Perimeter Place.

"It took us 10 minutes to find a parking place."

Live-work-play

Perimeter Place is a city center of sorts with dozens of shops and restaurants lining brick-paved streets, wide sidewalks and crosswalks, an apartment complex, a SuperTarget and the Manhattan, the 27-story tower that O'Reilly-Weir, her husband and about 400 others will soon call home.

In recent years, mixed-use developments have popped up in communities around metro Atlanta: the Centennial Olympic Park area, the Edgewood Retail District in Atlanta and the Mall at Stonecrest in south DeKalb. Others are in the works in Cobb, Gwinnett, Fulton and elsewhere.

But it's a new idea for the traffic-choked Perimeter area, generally the area at the intersection of I-285 and Ga. 400.

And it addresses a long-standing concern in the Perimeter area, which is home to 4,000 businesses and more than 100,000 jobs, most of them in the technology and medical fields.

About 115,000 people work in an area — yet, there are only 30,000 houses, apartments and condos, according to the Perimeter Community Improvement District, a self-taxing business district that serves the area.

With average commute times there inching toward one hour, traffic on the north end of I-285 is a routine rush-hour nightmare.

Walk to work — or fun

Over the years, the Community Improvement District has put in sidewalks and encouraged smart growth, but Perimeter Place, just north of the mall, is the perhaps the largest concerted effort to get people to walk to their jobs — and their fun.

Stores and restaurants — including Office Max and Taco Mac — began opening in the spring. The Manhattan, the final phase of the project, is set to be complete in September.

With its U-shaped pool with cascading waterfalls, rooftop lounge and large fitness center, the Manhattan is 95 percent sold out, said Todd Oglesby, development manager for Southeast Capital Partners, which teamed up with the Sembler Company to build the high-rise.

At the Manhattan, prices range from the low \$200,000s to more than \$1 million for a penthouse. In the same development, there's The Place at Perimeter, a 323-unit apartment complex where rents range from \$950 to \$2,100 a month.

The goal, said Yvonne Williams, president of the Perimeter Community Improvement District, was to provide housing options for people of different income levels.

"We have a good mix of apartments, townhouses and condos, I think, to address the need," Williams said, "but it will always be a challenge."

Shortening commutes

Getting people to live closer to work is a mission the city of Atlanta embarked on about 15 years ago, said Richard Orr, spokesman for Central Atlanta Progress, a downtown business association.

The downtown Atlanta area hosts about 200,000 workers and students everyday, but has only 25,000 housing units.

Some 7,000 new housing units are expected to come online in the next year, Orr said, including a Georgia State University dorm community on Piedmont Avenue that will house 2,000 students.

Mark Randall, a regional director for developer Wood Partners, said developers are just now meeting a demand for mixed-use projects that has been around for a long time.

"Certain people like more privacy, but when you're appealing to young professionals, especially those in their late 20s early 30s, [they realize] it's a lot of fun," said Randall, who's developing Horizon at Wildwood, Cobb County's first high-rise condo tower.

Right now, Perimeter Place's retail space is 98 percent leased, said Sembler spokeswoman Amber Overby.

That kind of success can only mean one thing — expansion.

In the next few months, said Jeff Fuqua, Sembler's president of development, the company hopes to file plans for another high-rise condo mirroring The Manhattan on the Perimeter Place property.

"I like that you don't have to get in your car to get everywhere," said Gail Walker, who lives about a mile away and was visiting a portrait studio with her grandson in Perimeter Place.

"This place is great."

Atlanta Major Activity Centers / 2005 Population and Employment

Location	Population	Employment
Buckhead	8,355	58,592
Cumberland-Galleria	36,761	67,097
Downtown-Midtown	29,282	198,181
Fulton Industrial District	7,302	33,630
Gwinnett Place	4,944	29,968
Perimeter Center	28,618	111,168
Town Center	11,309	24,907
Windward Parkway Center	8,673	21,645

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission