



These five projects are set to change Atlanta's suburbs

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Over the next 20 years, Gwinnett Place Mall could be transformed into a walkable project with thousands of residential units, offices, shops, restaurants, greenspace and a cultural center



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For a long time, Atlanta's suburbs have been known for cookie-cutter homes and big-box retail centers only accessible by car.

That's starting to change. Several real estate firms are focused on remaking stale properties into walkable destinations with new housing options, restaurants and shops. These projects can't solve all of the issues associated with sprawl, but they are examples of how the suburbs are embracing alternatives way of growing.

Here are few of the redevelopment projects to watch in 2023.

Gwinnett Place Mall

In the 1980s, Gwinnett Place Mall served as a de facto downtown area. It fell into decline after other regional shopping centers opened farther up the Interstate 85 corridor. After several revitalization promises fell short, the county purchased most of the 90-acre property in 2020.

A team of local leaders and consultants have [crafted a 20-year plan for turning the mall into a mixed-use district](#) with up to 3,800 residential units, offices, shops, restaurants, greenspace and a cultural center. A revamped transit hub would service new bus routes, including a [potential bus rapid transit route running along Satellite Boulevard](#).

If it's pulled off, the \$1 billion redevelopment could serve as a model for using public-private partnerships to replace dead shopping malls. Construction crews could start tearing down the mall within the next few years, pending approval from Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners and the selection of a development team.

Doraville City Center

Doraville is a destination for its international cuisine, minority-owned businesses and grocery stores dotting Buford Highway. But the historic heart of the north Atlanta suburb fell into disrepair after the construction of Interstate 285.

Kaufman Capital Partners plans to provide a central place for residents, workers and visitors to casually interact with one another. [Doraville tapped the Atlanta-based firm to remake its city center](#) with apartments, offices, shops, restaurants and government facilities. By early next year, it expects to release a preliminary plan for the project.

Across the railroad tracks, Gray Television Inc. (NYSE: GTN) and its real estate partners are [turning the former General Motors plant at I-285 into a massive film and entertainment campus](#). It's unclear how the two projects could be linked. But they have the potential to turn the area around MARTA's Doraville rail station, the northern-most stop on the agency's Gold line, into more than a park-and-ride.

Medley

[Mark Toro](#), the mixed-use developer who brought Avalon to Alpharetta, has [crafted a plan for reimagining the site of a former State Farm campus in Johns Creek](#). Toro Development Co. envisions a 42-acre site at McGinnis Ferry Road and Johns Creek Parkway becoming 750 apartments, 137 townhomes, offices, shops, restaurants and public places for the community to gather.

The project would be called Medley, a nod to the diversity of the north Atlanta suburb and the variety of experiences that would be offered. Toro expects the project to serve as a catalyst for later phases of a 192-acre town center, something neighboring cities have established. It could serve as an example of what to do with deserted office parks. [Johns Creek City Council has already approved](#) the project.

East Point Commons

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In a few years, East Point could add the largest set of apartments in the city's history.

Chicago-based [Mynd Match plans to transform a 9-acre property steps away from MARTA's East Point rail station](#). It would add more than 300 apartments, 23 townhomes and 79,000 square feet of commercial space for office, restaurants and shops. Small business owners have welcomed the plan for its potential to add energy and customers to the downtown area.

The revitalization of downtown East Point is a signal to the effort to add residents and businesses in close proximity to transit. The southern suburbs of Atlanta are seeing an uptick of development activity, spurred by the high cost of living and low amount of untapped land to the north.

North DeKalb Mall

[North DeKalb Mall is another deserted shopping center](#) poised to become a mixed-use district. Early next year, Edens expects to start turning the 73-acre site at Lawrenceville Highway near Decatur into 1,700 apartments, 100 townhomes, 500,000 square feet of office and retail space, parks, trails and a 150-room hotel.

The apartment-heavy project is a test case for using a high concentration of residential density to support other uses. The addition of apartments can help create a built-in customer base for retailers, who otherwise would have to rely on visitors. It's a concept urban planning researcher Jane Jacobs listed as a necessity for supporting business diversity in cities.