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## Developer speaks on future of Village Place Brookhaven

by John F. Schaffner

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Dillon Baynes prefers to manage and market real estate developments rather than talk about them.

But the soft-spoken Baynes, president of Orinda Corporation, was the speaker at the Jan. 12 meeting of the Brookhaven Community Connection, discussing the present and what might be the future of a development along Dresden Drive.



Orinda Corp. President Dillon Baynes recounts the development of Brookhaven.

He has learned a good bit about the Dresden area, and much of heart of Brookhaven, for that matter, since his firm took over the management and marketing of Village Place Brookhaven last June. That came after developer Dan Woodley defaulted on two loans totaling \$21 million that were held by an affiliate of Chicago-based Wrightwood Capital.

Baynes has had a history of working on projects financed by Wrightwood and was called upon to manage the completion of Village Place Brookhaven and then fill its spaces—retail, office and residential.

Since Orinda was founded in 1998, Baynes has developed a total of about \$100 million in projects—residential properties in Decatur, mixed-use projects in northwest Atlanta, apartment conversions to condominiums in Buckhead, and the Studioplex condo loft renovation of a warehouse in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward, to name a few.

His first experience with Dresden Drive in Brookhaven was when he sought out Haven restaurant at Village Park Brookhaven, which Woodley had built in 2003.

Now years later, Baynes is steadily moving forward to lease out the street-level retail spaces of Village Place Brookhaven, located across the street from Village Park, and sell out its second-floor office condos and 41 residential condos on the top floor of the three-story neighborhood-scale development.

In addition to what has already opened at Village Place, he said Yoforia yogurt is to open in March and J. Christopher's "will open sometime soon."

He speaks well of the Woodley's vision for the two developments that occupy a small section of the approximately six blocks of Dresden Drive between Peachtree Road and Camille Drive. He talked of how moving the buildings to the street have created an urban-style live/work/play neighborhood environment in what was predominantly a single-family home neighborhood.

"There is almost a dialogue between the buildings on both sides of the street," Bayne told those at the BCC meeting,

"The change from the early 1900s to today has been very interesting in terms of different uses," Baynes said.

He recounted that the MARTA rail station was built in 1984 and there has been ongoing talk of how that might spur future mixed-use development in the area surrounding it. He pointed to the new development of residential condos and townhomes and office space in the square blocks immediately below the MARTA station as an early start to what may expand as the economy improves.

However, he explained that 90 percent of those who use MARTA head north across Peachtree Road when they leave the station. Only 10 percent head south of Peachtree down Dresden in the direction of Village Place Brookhaven.

He foresees the six-block area along Dresden between Peachtree and Camille will change over the next five to 10 years, but he indicated to the group that he does not visualize exactly how it will change.

While he feels those six blocks of Dresden is the area to watch, one real estate agent at the meeting offered that the area of Dresden below Camille is "difficult to sell as residential," and wondered why all of Dresden to Clairmont should not be redeveloped as commercial properties.