



BrookhavenPatch

BUSINESS

Dresden Drive Becoming Brookhaven's Main Street

But with that growth, comes challenges down the road

By **Timothy Darnell** December 22, 2010

Once lined by shotgun houses and dilapidated laundromats, a major stretch of Dresden Drive is now home to a development featuring restaurants, bistros, and upscale retailers from wine markets and day spas to home design boutiques and manicure shops.

And more may be on the way, as the economy rebounds.

But with those developments come challenges and questions to be answered, and any crystal ball is sure to be clouded by economic uncertainties.

Running from Chamblee-Tucker Road to Peachtree Street, Dresden Drive runs through Brookhaven proper beginning at Clairmont and ending at the Brookhaven-Oglethorpe MARTA (<http://www.itsmarta.com/>) station. The heart of Dresden Drive's redevelopment is **Village Place Brookhaven** (<http://www.vpbrookhaven.com/home.php>), a mixed-use development on both sides of the street.

"Village Place Brookhaven is down to one remaining retail space," said Dillon Baynes, president of **Orinda Corp.** (<http://www.orindacorp.com>), Atlanta, which is handling the development's marketing and management. "And we have a couple of parties interested in that space. We have four office spaces remaining, and some of those will be closing before the end of the year."

Baynes said Village Place Brookhaven had about 15 residential sales in 2010, with about that many remaining. He estimated Village Place Brookhaven's residences will be sold out by mid-May 2011.

In June 2009, Orinda was brought in to manage Village Place Brookhaven after the project's developer, **Dan Woodley** (<http://www.danwoodleycommunities.com/>), defaulted on two loans totaling \$21 million. The loans were held by **Wrightwood Capital** (<http://www.wrightwoodcapital.com/>), Chicago, IL, and Orinda had worked with Wrightwood on several prior deals.

Woodley began buying up parcels along Dresden in the mid-1990s. The company applied for and received a rezoning of the area in 2005 and, two years later, started developing it.

"Brookhaven is phenomenal," said Baynes, whose office is located in downtown Atlanta. "If you look at the MARTA station and Peachtree as one bookend, and the eastern edge as the other, you have quality retail on both sides of Dresden Drive. Mass transit is only three blocks away [from Village Place Brookhaven], and you could easily exceed any infill plans within 20 years. And the **Brookhaven Peachtree Livable Centers Initiative** (<http://brookhavenlci.info/>) is helping to plan that growth."

But with that growth come concerns about traffic and safety around Village Place Brookhaven. "We still need a rear exit out of the complex where the **Haven** (<http://www.havenrestaurant.com/>) and **Valenza** (<http://www.valenzarestaurant.com/>) restaurants are located, and we need a stop light at that location," said Ronnie Mayer, the unofficial "mayor" of Brookhaven. "If we're not able to slow down Dresden's traffic, one night someone will pull out of a Village Place Brookhaven parking lot and there will be a horrendous accident."

"The challenges are two-fold," Baynes said. "First, you've got the traffic issues. It's 9 p.m. at night, and you've got a traffic jam. Second, you have to consider how Dresden neighborhoods are going to transition. A single-family home might have been a great idea in 1960, but now we've fast-forwarded 50 years. There has to be a discussion about whether there's a better use for that property for 2012 and beyond."

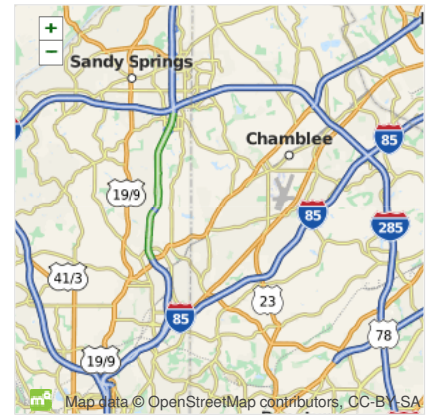
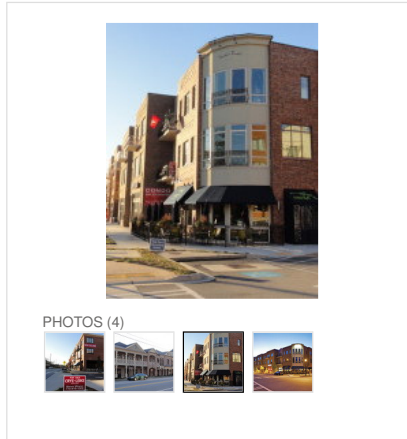
Mayer, for his part, is happy about Dresden's transformation. "As restaurants and retailers like Haven and Valenza go, so will the rest of Brookhaven," he said.

Do you see Dresden Drive as the new hub of Brookhaven? Tell us in the comments.

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Nick Gold

11:07pm on Monday, December 27, 2010

Great article about Village Place Brookhaven. Thanks for sharing it with your readers.