

Building a blueprint

UPDATE TO GUIDE FOR MIDTOWN DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY

BY TONYA LAYMAN
Contributing Writer

Midtown Alliance is taking a step back to explore what has worked in terms of developing the district and what needs improvement as they embark on an update to its community-designed master plan, Blueprint Midtown. This next iteration of this document will guide development for years to come.

Originally created in the mid '90s, Blueprint Midtown was updated in 2002 and has continued to be refined with overlays including "Greenprint Midtown," which added a "green lens" to increase Midtown's sustainability; the Midtown Mile retail strategy; and the design and implementation of new streetscapes, road segments, bike lanes, pocket parks and plazas and a complete bike network plan, among others.

"It's time to update and consolidate Blueprint Midtown and all the overlays into one master plan and guiding document to create Blueprint Midtown 3.0," said Shannon Powell, executive vice president and chief operating officer at Midtown Alliance. "Since the plan was originally conceived in the mid '90s, we have not only experienced phenomenal growth, but we have also completed supplemental studies that have refined or added new elements around sustainability, retail, parking and open space."

When the planning process first began, more than 68 percent of the land was considered "ripe for redevelopment." Despite the more than 50 new private development projects since then, 25 percent of the land in Midtown remains ripe for redevelopment.

"What is striking is the amount of redevelopment potential that remains in Midtown despite \$5 billion in private development and over \$450,000 in public improvements. It reminds us that while Midtown has experienced a major renaissance, we are not done yet. There is still plenty of opportunity to shape this community," Powell said.

Expected to be done in March, Blueprint 3.0 is about building on the successes Midtown has had, incorporating all documents into one document rather than many, and refining site specific recommendations to reflect the changes that have occurred since the original unveiling.

"In this next iteration of Blueprint Midtown, we will add new sections such as sustainability and street-level activation that includes public art and games. These sections didn't exist the first time around, but add components that build off of our existing strengths in order to create a very unique Midtown flare," she said.

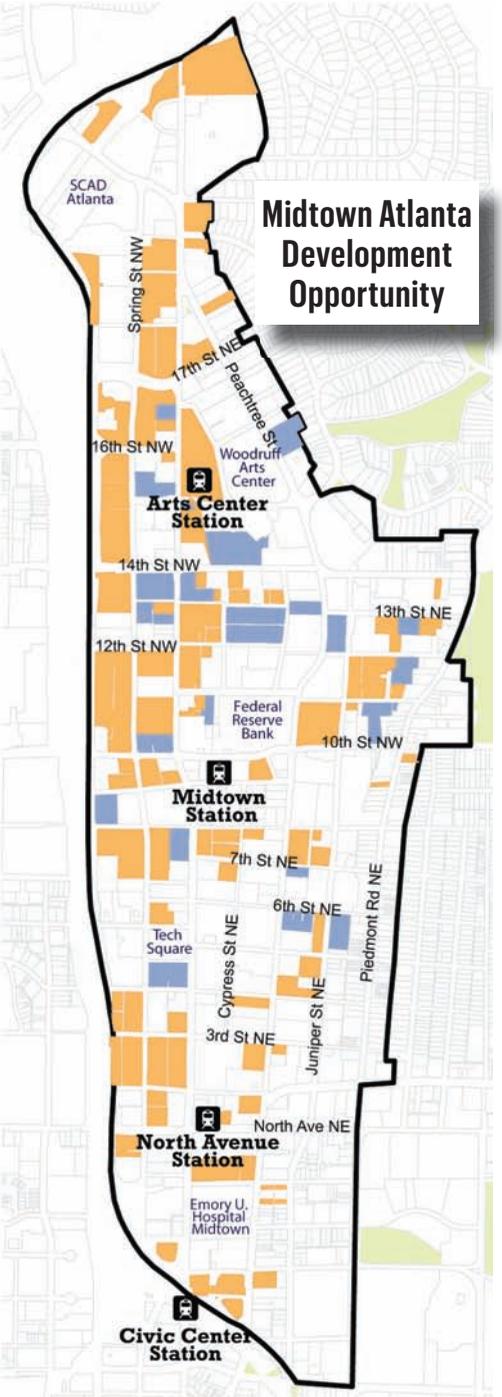
New design development guidelines



JOANN VITELLI



Shannon Powell of Midtown Alliance says work has begun on a consolidated master plan and guiding document, Blueprint Midtown 3.0.



Development Sites
Development Underway

1996: 68% developable land
2003: 39% developable land
2015: 25% developable land

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

with emphases on street level articulation, public spaces and parking will be included in the plan. To help communicate these efforts and best practice to developers, **Perkins + Will** helped the group create the Development Reference Guide to demonstrate a set of urban design guidelines.

"It is not just the plan that needs to be refreshed, but the tools we use to communicate the recommendations and implement the plan also need a fresh

perspective," Powell said. "The design guidelines are one of those tools and will include essential elements for private development with sections on streetscapes, site design and building design."

Mark Toro, managing partner at **North American Properties Inc.**, not only lives in Midtown but serves on the Midtown Alliance board and his company owns Atlantic Station. He is passionate about the

future of Midtown, specifically revolving around street level engagement.

"Atlanta is becoming a real city right under our nose. For first time we have a true urban environment with feet on the street that is now housing a significant critical mass of residents that are living, working and playing in Midtown," he said. "That move has been underway for



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MARKET REPORT

VIEWPOINT

Imagining the future of Midtown Atlanta

It's a crisp early morning in Midtown, circa 2025. You slip on your jacket, set its dial to 72 degrees and hit the sidewalk.

There's a confident hum to the city as vehicles whisk-by. One in three is driverless. These are interesting times, as Midtown's street network has been transformed into a 'mobility grid,' where vehicles communicate with each other and traffic signals seem to know exactly when to turn. Makes sense.

Walk? Bikeshare? Catch a ride? A couple of taps on your wrist calls up an array of on-demand transportation options. This same device is also your wallet, your keys, your vital signs, your regional transit pass, tonight's concert tickets and how you will cast your vote in the next election. Gigabit Internet speeds and being connected are the norm. But technology has faded into the background and is scarcely even mentioned.

You are only a four minute walk to the Arts Center MARTA Station, but you feel like a stroll. Another tap tells you that the 8:17 am train will be on-time at the Midtown MARTA Station, where you also know you can get a great cup of



Kevin Green is president and CEO of Midtown Alliance.

coffee, a fresh bagel and see the kinetic art installation you've been wanting to check-out.

The streets and sidewalks are starting to fill now with people heading to work. Three-quarters of them are millennials. Storefronts are also waking-up. Alongside a growing mix of stores and cafés are new modular pop-up shops, many of which seem to change-out every month as showrooms for touchscreen shopping. And with the sharing economy firmly taken hold, storefronts aren't just for buying. Need to rent a state-of-the-art kitchen for a couple of hours later this week? Take a class? Book that 4-D scavenger hunt? All are part of this new street-level economy.

As you look around, you marvel

at the changes over the last decade. Large surface parking lots are mostly gone. Parking decks have largely disappeared as they are wrapped by new development. New development projects have created a dynamic and engaging street scene. Pocket parks are tucked in to all the right places and interactive public art and games have become a signature of Midtown's unique streetscapes.

SoNo (South of North Avenue) has been completely transformed, with Emory University Hospital Midtown and the redevelopment of the Atlanta Civic Center serving as major catalysts. Significant new investment, public amenities and retail have taken hold – reconnecting Midtown and Downtown in a way that was long overdue.

As art and design takes center stage, SCAD Atlanta adds more programs and studios and the Woodruff Arts Center welcomes new state-of-the-art performance venues.

Meanwhile, Technology Square has cemented its status as a national technology and talent magnet and urban "main street" for the campus and community. Flexible workspaces enable start-ups from Georgia Tech incubators

and accelerators to grow and scale while staying close to the mothership. The Georgia Tech High-Performance Computing Center, positioned atop Atlanta's main Internet backbone, has established itself as a one-of-a-kind showcase for big data modeling and applications as well as sustainability. And NCR's global headquarters move to Midtown proved to be the bellwether of a decade of major announcements, with more on the way. Everywhere you look, you see a thriving and dynamic community that is second to none.

The scenario above may seem far-sighted to some and perhaps modest to others. But if the last 10 years is any guide, the next decade will be one of profound change.

Today, 25 percent of the land in the Midtown Improvement District is ripe for redevelopment. There a few places whose next phase of transformation seems as sweeping and imminent.

It's hard to know exactly what the future holds, but it is clear who holds the future. We own the opportunity to shape Midtown and our city into an even more exceptional urban experience. Let's make it happen.

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MARKET REPORT

New developments feed off each other in Midtown

BY MARTIN SINDERMAN
Contributing Writer

Midtown remains a prime example of a market in the expansionary phase of the real estate cycle, with a number of projects underway, especially apartments aimed at millennials and others who like the urban feel, walkability, green space, and 24-hour activity of this Atlanta submarket.

According to data supplied by **Midtown Alliance**, there are 1,474 multifamily residential units, both apartments and condominiums, currently under construction in Midtown. And there's a lot more on the way, with some 5,831 in the planning stages.

New retail square footage, predominantly in the form of ground-level retail associated with individual apartment projects, totals 284,000 square feet either underway or planned.

Apartments are going up, the base of major office properties is already there, people are moving in, and the retail is following.

"All of these

developments are feeding upon each other," said Dan Joy, a principal with the architect firm **Rule Joy Trammell + Rubio**. "And the result is that what we are seeing now is the densification of Midtown. If you look at an aerial map, it [Midtown Atlanta] is pretty underdeveloped compared to more mature cities such as Chicago, New York City, and Boston," leaving lots of potential for future development.

Apartment dynamics

The acceleration of traffic problems engendered by Atlanta's urban sprawl during the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in more people wanting to live closer to where they work, spurred a lot of interest in living in Midtown, according to Joy. Combined with millennials and empty nesters that enjoy an urban lifestyle, he said, this has resulted in a boom in multifamily development.

Unlike previous Midtown cycles, this multifamily surge is dominated by apartments, according to Ladson Haddow, vice president at real estate consultant **Haddow & Co.**

"In the last cycle,



BYRON E. SMALL

Midtown's monthly apartment rents nearly rival those of Buckhead.

out of the downturn, it's been virtually all apartments."

According to Haddow & Co.'s third quarter 2014 analysis of what it calls the "Midtown/Brookwood submarket," the 6,120 apartment units built here since 2000 were an average 97.8 percent occupied, well in line with occupancy within intown Atlanta as a whole. Monthly rents, however, averaged \$1.73 per square foot, second only to Buckhead/Brookhaven's \$1.79.

Newer projects have been blazing new trails when it comes to Midtown apartment rents. According to Haddow, 77 12th St., developed by **Daniel Corp.** and **Selig Enterprises Inc.**, was the first Midtown apartment project to break the \$2.50 per square foot/per month rent barrier. Rents at **Novare Group** and **Batson-Cook Co.**'s SkyHouse Midtown and SkyHouse South now both running in the \$2.40 per square-foot monthly range.

How much higher can rents go in Midtown? "There might be a little room for well located, top quality, high-amenity-base properties," said Daniel Corp. senior vice president Steve Baile, "but at some price, homeownership will prove to be competitive soon."



Dan Joy



Ladson Haddow

from 2005 through 2007, it [development] was all heavily condominiums," said Haddow. "But now, since coming

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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MARKET REPORT



SPECIAL

SkyHouse Midtown is just one of seven commercial projects that were completed in Midtown from 2013 to 2014, according to Midtown Alliance data.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

New office development

Employment generated by two recently announced Midtown office development deals that stand to have major impact on what this submarket, and the city as a whole, looks like in the future could play a huge role in supporting demand for new apartment units, and their higher rents, here.

In January, consumer transaction-technologies giant **NCR Corp.** (NYSE: NCR) announced plans to build a new world headquarters on roughly four acres at Spring and 8th streets. The site, Centergy North, is part of Georgia Tech's Technology Square innovation district, an eight-acre learning and conference center, established in 2003, which has since also become a hub for startups, many of them technology-based.

The news that NCR would be bringing some 3,600 employees to Midtown came on the heels of the announcement of **Georgia Tech's** 24-story, 695,000-square-foot High Performance Computing Center for Modeling and Simulation. Also located in Technology Square, the center would be anchored by Georgia Tech's computer-based research programs, and also feature space that could be leased for private companies.

The NCR relocation provides a high-profile example of the way Midtown has been changing, and how that will continue, according to John Heagy, senior managing director with **Hines**.



John Heagy

"Five years ago, I would have told you that Midtown is the submarket where attorneys and other professional firms are flocking," Heagy said.

But these days, millennials are the ones flocking to Midtown, to enjoy its walkability, 24-hour activity, and other

"...I think you are going to see more corporations looking closely at Midtown, and recognizing it as a location that gets them closer to the base from which they are trying to recruit employees."

JOHN HEAGY,
Hines

unique attributes, he said. "And I think you are going to see more corporations looking closely at Midtown, and recognizing it as a location that gets them closer to the base from which they are trying to recruit employees."

Companies looking for a location with a lifestyle attractive to a younger employee base continue to find Midtown a good fit, "and that is a trend that is going to accelerate," said Bob Mathews, president and CEO of **Colliers International Atlanta**.

Bob Mathews

Midtown's rail and roadway infrastructure, green spaces, restaurant and retail amenities, and overall ambiance are several of numerous reasons companies find the submarket attractive, said Mathews. And on the facilities cost side, in existing buildings, "They can still get a pretty good deal in Midtown compared to Buckhead."

Office developers eyeing Midtown sites for new class A buildings need to keep in mind that the costs of bringing a major new office building out of the ground in Midtown is high. According to Mathews, "They'll need to get rents running in the high \$30 to the mid \$40 range – and that's getting up there."

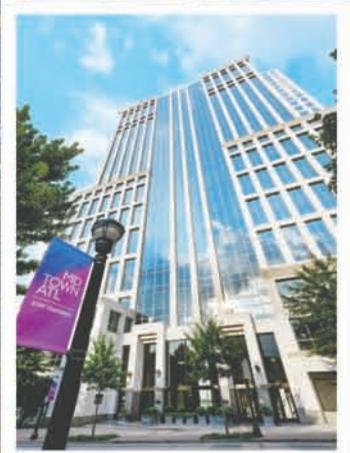
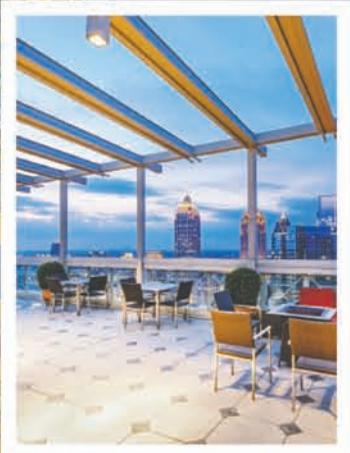
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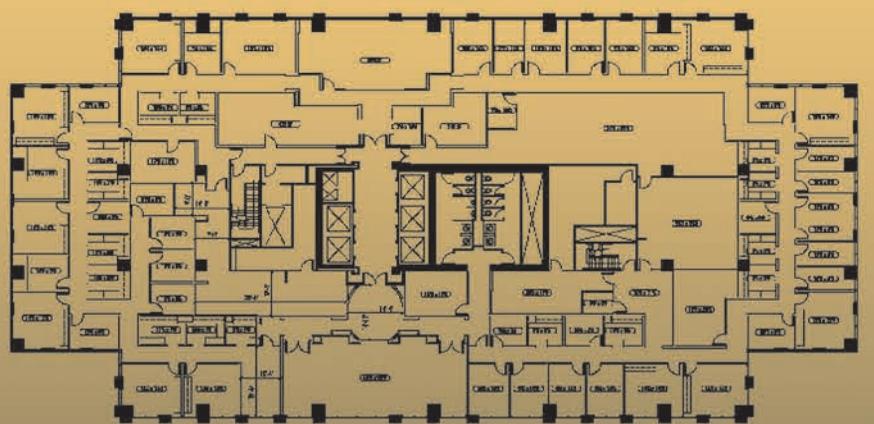
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MARKET REPORT

Area becoming innovation hub

BY DOUG DELOACH
Contributing Writer

Recent activities in and around Technology Square on the **Georgia Tech** campus point to the area's emergence as a magnet for science- and technologically-oriented businesses and entrepreneurs.

Opened in 2003, the \$380 million, 1.4 million-square-foot development is home to academic, research, hospitality, office and retail enterprises, serving as a model for urban planners around the U.S.

Last year, **The Home Depot Inc.** announced plans to open the company's first university-based research and development center in the area. Additionally, **AT&T Mobility**, **Panasonic Automotive Systems Company of America**, **GE Energy**, and **ThyssenKrupp Elevator Americas** are among a steady stream of companies that have established entrepreneurial outposts of one kind or another around Tech Square.

At the beginning of 2015, nearly six years after moving from Dayton, Ohio to Gwinnett County, **NCR Corp.** revealed plans to relocate its headquarters to Centergy North, which sits at 8th and Spring streets, near Tech Square. The move is expected to bring as many as 3,500 to



Marija
Zivanovic-Smith

4,000 jobs to the Midtown area.

"Under the leadership of CEO Bill Nuti, NCR has been reinvented over the last decade and today is one of the world's prominent technology companies," said Marija Zivanovic-Smith,

NCR vice president of global government programs. "As part of reinventing the company, we made the decision in 2009 to make Georgia our home."

Locating its global core facility in Midtown puts NCR in close proximity to an expanding hub of businesses focused on technological innovation, as well as near academic institutions such as Georgia Tech, **Georgia State University** and **Emory University**. Recruiting talented employees in such an environment should pose no problem for the human resources department.

"When you're hiring, it makes it so easy to hang a sign out the window versus having to go off campus," said Ashish H. Mistry, managing partner at **BLH Venture Partners LLC**.

BLH makes early stage and growth

investments in tech and tech-centric businesses, particularly information security, cyber security, e-commerce, and software and services companies. BLH also operates an e-commerce business called **Control Freak**, which is in the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), a startup incubator, at Georgia Tech.

While some companies are physically making the move to Midtown, **The Coca-Cola Co.** recently chose the district to test its latest mobile marketing campaign. Incorporating Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology and iBeacon, a positioning system, Midtown Red gives participating restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues the ability send special discounts and promotional offers in real-time to customers in the district who downloaded the mobile app.

"We wanted to leverage BLE technology, hardware and an app utilizing a smart phone in one hand to place a Coke in the other hand," said Peter Rohwer, director of equipment commercialization at **Coca-Cola North America**. The Midtown Red pilot program has received a "very positive response" from participating merchants, according to Rohwer, who said every offer that was entered into the system sold out.

At Technology Square, Georgia Tech

► CLOSER LOOK

Five goals of Georgia Tech's HPC project:

- Support economic development by creating jobs, new tax revenues and technology clusters.
- Promote Technology Square as Atlanta's most desirable neighborhood for technology- and scientific-based companies.
- Foster innovations in high performance computing to serve a diverse research community.
- Enhance scientific modeling and simulation at Georgia Tech.
- Create a new ecosystem based around a unique facility modeling high-end computational/network/data-intensive hosting.

officials recently announced details of the development selection process for the High Performance Computing (HPC) Center. The two-phase process will determine the developer of the 700,000-square-foot facility, which will house a data center and other business-oriented operations. "The selection process is scheduled for completion in May, with final presentations slated for April 13," said John Majeroni, Georgia Tech's executive director for real estate development.

CREATING PROPERTIES OF ENDURING VALUE IN MIDTOWN ATLANTA AND AROUND THE WORLD



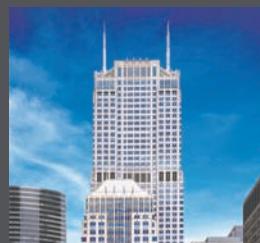
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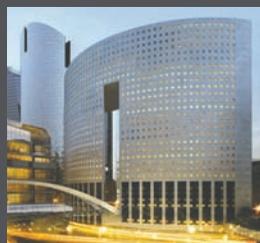
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TISHMAN SPEYER

MARKET REPORT

VIEWPOINT

Technology, creativity thriving in Midtown

It's been almost 30 years since I was an electrical engineering student at Georgia Tech. I've been amazed to see how much Midtown has changed in those years. For the past three years I've been working daily at Tech Square and now as Midtown Alliance's Innovation Council chair, I have seen, firsthand, the synergy forming between startup, corporate, academic, governmental, and residential interests and the opportunity for further growth.

On the startup side, a concentration of business incubators all within walking distance of each other are ensuring that new companies and ideas have the best chance of success. This year, Atlanta Technology Development Center (ATDC) will graduate its largest class of companies yet. In the last three years, three dozen graduates of Flashpoint's accelerator program have raised a collective \$65 million in venture capital. And, Venture Lab has been recognized as a top global university incubator. On a parallel track, private companies such as Tech Square Ventures, Core Venture Studio, and Tech Square Labs are locating in Tech Square to join the critical mass.

On the corporate side, a critical mass of innovation centers is forming between AT&T, Panasonic, Home Depot, GE Energy, ThyssenKrupp, and others. These companies represent a broad diversity of products and services that give Midtown a strong broad base for innovation.

On the academic side, of course, we have Georgia Tech. I think it's the best engineering university in the country but I'm biased. We also have two other successful institutions adding to the innovation landscape – Emory University and SCAD Atlanta. The Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering is a rare example of a private and public university collaboration between Georgia Tech and Emory that has resulted in one of the most successful bio-tech programs in the country. SCAD opened its Midtown campus in 2010 and has added a creative dimension to the innovation community particularly with its focus on digital media.

Finally, Midtown Atlanta is one of the few districts in any city that blends all this with a concentration of high-density residential and an office environment with over 16 million square feet of leasable commercial space. At the same time, the low density development along West Peachtree and Spring streets provides plenty of opportunity for growth.

Even with all these assets Midtown has not yet achieved the level of national recognition as an innovation hub that other districts around the



John Avery is engineering group manager at Panasonic Innovation Center.

country enjoy. This needs to change. As we continue to promote our collective successes, Midtown Alliance hopes to bring our district the national attention it deserves.

Within the district, Midtown Alliance, and specifically, the Innovation Council, is furthering Midtown's success through programs that promote cross-collaboration. One way we do this is by connecting ideas and people together through the Midtown Living Lab.

The Living Lab is a concept that brings innovation into the real-world in a way in which Midtown residents and businesses can be co-creators rather than test subjects. A good example is Midtown Buzz. This partnership between Georgia Tech and Midtown Alliance has introduced a set of mobile application development tools. Once fully developed, these tools will make it easier for the Midtown community at-large to develop hyper-local apps.

Another example of the Living Lab is Midtown Red, Coca-Cola's mobile app that gives residents, workers, and visitors access to special deals and custom offers from participating restaurants, retailers and attractions in Midtown. The pilot incorporates iBeacon technology, enabling businesses to provide real-time deals to users while they are in the immediate proximity of the business.

Second, Midtown Alliance can further Midtown's position as a hub for innovation by integrating civic-oriented innovations into Midtown Alliance's existing programs and initiatives—streetscapes, transportation, public safety, landscaping, and marketing. Showcasing creative concepts and technologies will have a significant and daily impact on the community and will, in turn, attract others to participate in this innovation economy.

Through these initiatives, Midtown Alliance hopes to be a model for how to engage the whole community around innovation. We are eager to work with individuals and companies who share this mindset and look forward to what we can do together as a community.

To learn more about Midtown's Innovation EcoSystem, visit www.MidtownATLInnovates.com.



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MARKET REPORT

Midtown poised to activate streets with public art

BY KAREN COHEN
Contributing Writer

Midtown Atlanta is commonly thought of as “the heart of the arts.”

With 25 different arts and cultural venues, more than 30 permanent performing arts groups, and 22 various entertainment facilities, Midtown features the largest concentration of arts facilities and organizations in the Southeast.

But, it is not just the museum exhibits, galleries, and theaters that make Midtown the cultural epi-center of Atlanta. It is also the public art that enlightens the streets of Midtown.

Public art is just that, art in public spaces. It is free and accessible to the community. But, public art is more than just a structure. It is a way to engage the community. It gives a community its identity.

Currently, Midtown hosts approximately 23 pieces of public art throughout the 1.2-square-mile Midtown district.



Ginny Kennedy

But, many of the pieces are tucked away on private property and not easily seen from the sidewalk.

And, after a decade of developing Midtown, community leaders such as Ginny Kennedy, director of urban design at

Midtown Alliance, are ready to take Midtown to the next level.

“Art is the next layer of enhancement that we will add to the street level experience in Midtown,” she said. “Our streetscape program has created a beautiful and functional framework for

► CLOSER LOOK

- Number of spinning tops in Los Trompos: more than 40
- Cost to host a spinning top on property: \$7,500
- Time it will take to install Los Trompos: a week and a half
- Number of visitors to Mi Casa, Your Casa: more than 100,000
- Georgia’s rank in public art funding: 49th
- Number of public art pieces in Midtown: 23
- Number of people who visit Midtown cultural centers annually: 6 million



Los Trompos will be at Woodruff Arts Center through November.

SPECIAL

pedestrians and now we want to create moments of curiosity along the way.”

But, Georgia currently ranks 49th in government funding for the arts. And,



Anne Lambert Tracht

Anne Lambert Tracht, president at **ConsultArt Inc.** and Midtown Alliance board member, knows more is needed to bring additional art to Midtown.

“There is little to no money from the public sector for art and we will need more private money to make this a more engaging city,” she said.

With the formation of committees such as the Midtown Street Activation and Public Arts Committee, community leaders are looking at how to bring more public art interactions to the streets.

“The goal of the committee is to involve and encourage more corporate engagement and public art displays,” said Tracht, who will sit on the committee. “All the great cities like New York and Chicago have public art programs. And, we want more of that to make Midtown an urban experience.”

Take for example, last summer the **High Museum of Art** hosted Mi Casa, Your Casa by Mexican designers Héctor Esrawe and Ignacio Cadena outside in the center of the **Woodruff Arts Center’s** campus on the Carroll Slater Sifly Piazza. The installation featured more than 40 three-dimensional, open frames in the shape of a house. It was a welcoming space where visitors played, created and relaxed in hammocks. The installation



Rockspinner is one of 23 public art displays throughout Midtown.

SPECIAL



Virginia Hepner

also became a stage for performances with local artists and performers across the Atlanta arts spectrum.

Virginia Hepner, president and CEO of the Woodruff Arts Center, understands the

importance of art in Midtown.

“Seeing pieces of art makes you think,” she said. “It is intended not to answer all the questions, but to give you an experience. Midtown is about experience.”

Now, coming off the success of Mi Casa, Your Casa, the High Museum will unveil this spring through November the second large-scale public art installation, Los Trompos, also by designers Esrawe and Cadena on the Woodruff Arts Center’s Carroll Slater Sifly Piazza.

Los Trompos (“The Spinning Tops”) draws inspiration from the form of a spinning top, a toy popular with children around the world. The installation will feature more than 40 three-dimensional, larger-than-life tops in a variety of colors and shapes. Visitors will be able to spin the tops and interact with the structure.

And, this time the High Museum, in collaboration with Midtown Alliance, presented Midtown business leaders with the opportunity to sponsor a top on their property for \$7,500. The hope is to line the streets of Midtown with interactive tops.

To date, Bank of America Plaza, Georgia Tech, Promenade, **Selig Enterprises Inc.** and the Midtown Alliance have agreed to host a spinning top on its outdoor property. And, more companies are expected to sign on as partners.

The **SLS Family Foundation** has approved the purchase of a spinning top at a Midtown location to be determined. And, Selig Enterprises and **Daniel Corp.** are evaluating another purchase for the 12th & Midtown project, as are other



Scott Selig

owners of buildings within the development.

Scott Selig, vice president of Selig Enterprises, sees the benefits of corporations sponsoring public art.

“Public art on your property draws people to your location,” he said. “It provides a point of interest and gives people a reason to stop and interact, sit, and play on your property. Anytime you can get people to stop, as a property owner, is a good thing.”

Selig looks out his windows and sees the cranes. But, he says it is not just shops, restaurants, and buildings needed to give Midtown unique character. “Now it is our job to make the in between streets more interesting, active, and alive.”

► CLOSER LOOK

Several pieces of public art are in and around Midtown. They include:

- “Rockspinner” by Zach Coffin, located at the northeast corner of Peachtree and 10th streets
- “Sabine Woman” by Dorothy Berge, located at the northeast corner of Peachtree and 14th streets

- “Playscape” by Isamu Noguchi, located in Piedmont Park
- “The Shade” by Auguste Rodin, located on the Woodruff Art Center campus
- “Trilon” fountain by Steffen Wolfgang George Thomas, located at the Arts District Plaza at Peachtree and 15th streets

- “Samuel Spencer” by Daniel Chester French, located in front the Norfolk Southern corporate office on Peachtree Street. French is the same sculptor who created the statue of Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.
- “Olympia” by Paley Studios, located in the Promenade II courtyard
- “Lift” by Andrew T. Crawford, located

at the Federal Reserve/MARTA Plaza on 10th Street

- “World Athletes Monument” by Anton Glikin, located at Pershing Point
- “Blooming Hill” by SCAD/Atlanta students with facilitation by Gregor Turk, located at the southwest corner of Juniper and 10th streets

MARKET REPORT

Midtown's Greenprint plan begins

BY RANDY SOUTHERLAND
Contributing Writer

The goal is ambitious. The **Midtown Alliance** wants to make this area of Atlanta one of the most sustainable and energy efficient in the nation.

To do that, the nonprofit organization has been busy implementing its Greenprint Midtown plan, a comprehensive sustainability plan. From planting trees to building bike lanes and installing “bios-wales” to minimize flooding, the plan is making significant reductions in the district’s use of energy and water.

“In the past we’ve looked at Midtown from the perspective of land use



Dan Hourigan

and development,” said Dan Hourigan, the Midtown Alliance’s director of transportation and sustainability. “The Greenprint gives us a new perspective on Midtown.”

The EcoDistrict is a central component of the sustainability master plan, which launched in 2012 after an extensive study and input from local residents and businesses.

“That plan really added a green layer or green lens to the existing master plan,” said Hourigan.

The Greenprint plan for this two and half square mile area of Atlanta reflects the desire of local businesses and residents to create a more sustainable environment in which to live. In fact, 90 percent of respondents to Midtown Alliance

surveys said that implementing these types of projects was very important to them, according to Hourigan.

The plan will improve quality of life in the district through projects that range from conservation efforts to infrastructure changes. These are changes that will help foster economic development in the long run.

“The market forces in general are favoring cities and districts that are vibrant, pedestrian-centric, transit-rich and green,” said Hourigan. “That (realization) was one of the impetuses for developing a plan around suitability for Midtown and then creating the Midtown EcoDistrict.”

He admits that Midtown is still a long way from being a sustainable community with very little waste, “but we are considered a very green community and getting greener every day,” he said.

One innovative project is in the testing stages and could make the district a great bit more sustainable once it’s fully rolled out. The alliance is building two storm water runoff catchment areas (called bios-wales) on Juniper Street. The test sites will determine the best design for the areas, which are intended to reduce flooding during heavy downpours and the amount of water going into the city’s sewers.

“We’re testing infiltration rates (for rain water),” said Adam Williamson, principal with **TSW**, the landscape architecture company building the bioswales. “We’ve done other bioswales, but not many have been done in Atlanta or in an urban district.”

The test for these bioswales will determine the best kinds of plants and materials for the basins to return the maximum

“We calculated the greenhouse gas savings from those [energy-efficient] buildings was equivalent to removing 3,500 cars from the road and the water saved just last year was enough to fill 25 Olympic swimming pools.”

DAN HOURIGAN,
Midtown Alliance

amount of water to the soil while removing pollutants from water.

This particular project is the latest component of the plan to transform Juniper into a “green street” with high-efficiency lighting, bike lanes, wide sidewalks and shade trees.

“(Bioswales) are really bio-detention basins in the street with planted areas along that help absorb and recharge the aquifers,” said Matthew Cherry an associate with **Lord Aeck Sargent**. “They take pressure off the city’s storm water system by filtering the storm water back into the ground before it gets to the pipes and the catch basins.”

Implementing the entire project for Juniper will cost an estimated \$4.2 million with most of that coming from federal transportation funding awarded by the **Atlanta Regional Commission**. Plans include barriers-separated bike lanes, energy efficient LED lighting and signage and curbside bulb-outs to reduce the

speed of vehicles speeding down the one way street.

Midtown has already made great strides in reducing energy use. Last year 19 of its largest buildings – representing more than 10 million square feet of space – won the Energy Star Certification. That figure is up from 16 the year before. In addition, 28 buildings joined the Atlanta Better Building Challenge and pledged become more efficient in their use of natural resources. These participants have already reduced energy consumption by 18 percent and water by 22 percent, beating the 2020 deadline for a 20 percent reduction.

“We see a steady improvement of energy and water efficiency for our buildings,” said Hourigan. “We calculated the greenhouse gas savings from those buildings was equivalent to removing 3,500 cars from the road and the water saved just last year was enough to fill 25 Olympic swimming pools.”

The Midtown Alliance has also developed its own local recognition effort for energy savers. The Luminary certification program highlights businesses and buildings in Midtown that make a significant commitment to green practices. So far 22 businesses and buildings have joined in implementing specific conservation initiatives.

Recycling efforts have taken off in a big way in Midtown. Among the completed projects have been the placement of 50 large recycling cans alongside existing trash receptacles. In addition, the alliance is using rain water collected from 3,000 gallon cisterns to irrigate Midtown trees and landscaped areas.

First ‘Luminaries’ begin to shine

BY LISA R. SCHOOLCRAFT
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The Midtown EcoDistrict Luminaries program kicked off in early 2014 as an effort to recognize businesses, buildings and organizations that are setting the pace for sustainability in Midtown.

The program came out of the Greenprint Midtown planning initiative completed in 2012, where survey data, interviews with stakeholders and ultimately a recommendation from the Greenprint Midtown Executive Advisory Committee led to its development.

Luminaries is a certification program designed to highlight businesses and buildings in Midtown that have made a significant commitment to green practices. Participants earn points in five categories by implementing specific conservation and sustainable initiatives. The program offers checklists for five categories: office buildings, residential buildings, hotels, office tenants, and restaurants. Participants are rated Green or Gold Level based on the points they score on the checklist.



SPECIAL

So far, 22 Midtown buildings or entities in the five categories are part of the program. They are:

BUILDING/BUSINESS

► 1075 Peachtree

- One Atlantic Center *
- Perkins + Will *
- Bank of America Plaza
- 1180 Peachtree *
- Promenade
- Centergy One

- Proscenium
- 1100 Peachtree Street

EMPLOYER

- Heery
- Invesco
- Working Buildings *
- Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta *
- Jamestown Properties
- Lord Aeck Sargent
- Triage Consulting Group
- Alston + Bird *

HOTEL

- Loews Atlanta Hotel

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

- Viewpoint

RESTAURANT

- South City Kitchen
- Ecco *
- Lure *

* Gold level luminaries, the remainder are green level luminaries

For more information about the program, visit <http://www.midtownatl.com/about/midtown-ecodistrict/luminaries-program>.

MARKET REPORT

Alliance works on transportation plan

BY DOUG DELOACH
Contributing Writer

Officials at the **Midtown Alliance** recently announced the launching of a new, comprehensive transportation study designed to help traffic engineers and city planners attain and sustain a more efficient, higher performing transportation system in one of Atlanta's fastest developing districts.

"It will be a robust study – streets and traffic flow, transit assets, bicycle lanes – everything that will ensure Midtown can be conveniently accessed regardless of transportation mode," said Kevin Green, president and CEO of Midtown Alliance.



Kevin Green

"The study is going to help us understand with much greater precision how the transportation network is being used and who is using it," Green said. "The data will go way beyond a simple traffic count."

Historically, traffic studies have been undertaken to support singular projects ranging from streetscape improvements and traffic signal monitoring to constructing a bridge across the I-75/I-85 interstate highway. In each case, incremental decisions were driven by local conditions and needs. In light of the accelerating pace of Midtown development and concurrent increase in population and vehicular traffic, Green and other officials decided it was time to take a more broadly considered view to determine the best route forward.

"We asked ourselves why we shouldn't treat Midtown as a small municipality with its own model, which would include every street, intersection and thoroughfare in the area, as well as in the immediately surrounding areas," said John S. McColl, executive vice president at **Cousins Properties Inc.**



John S. McColl

Officially, the **Midtown Improvement District (MID)** encompasses about 1.2 square miles. The southern border, according to Green, is "somewhere around Pine Street" while the northern edge is defined by the Peachtree Street bridge at the Brookwood split/Amtrak station. To the east, the MID stops at Piedmont Park. To the west, it hops across the connector to include the **Turner Broadcasting** campus. Laid out in a grid format, the MID's 1.2-square-mile footprint contains around 25 linear miles of streets and approximately 150 intersections.

Growth is surely on the way. Green estimated 1,500 mixed use residential units are under construction, and 6,000

units have gone through the development review process, in the MID. Those figures are complemented by 600,000 square feet of office and institutional space, along with about 350,000 square feet of retail space, currently under development.

"The new study will enable us to model the effects of this development on the transportation network and provide insight into which improvements will produce the best results," Green said.

Along with the Midtown Alliance, the **city of Atlanta** and **Georgia Department of Transportation** will participate in the study with guidance and input from area property owners and stakeholders. The study is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

"The multi-modal plan will build on previous work and ongoing programs," said Catherine L. Ross, deputy director of the National Center for Transportation System Productivity and Management at **Georgia Tech**.



Catherine L. Ross

Officials are about half way through one project, which began last year, to optimize around 100 signalized intersections in Midtown.

The project's primary goals are to ensure equipment functionality and coordinate signal timing to achieve the most efficient flow of vehicular traffic. Enhancements to the signal network will enable intersection modules to 'report' to a central command center, allowing engineers

► CLOSER LOOK

Over the last 12 years, the MID has contributed over \$20 million to leverage more than \$400 million in public and private funding to:

- Construct pedestrian and bicycle improvements
- Enhance transit accessibility and traffic flow
- Provide needed public park spaces
- Carry out other special projects including:
 - Routine pavement maintenance, such as sidewalk repairs, paver replacements, and driveway/ramp repairs
 - Landscape management including tree planting and replacement, water-wise gardens, tree well adoption, flower pots, and median landscaping
 - Multi-modal enhancements including bicycle rack installation
 - Management of trash and recycling, and placement of new receptacles
 - Public art
 - Amenities and urbanism initiatives including installation of Little Free Library locations

SOURCE: MIDTOWN ALLIANCE

to monitor and change the timing of signals based on dynamic conditions, something the Buckhead and the Downtown CIDs are already doing.

On 14th Street, a simple, short-term strategy has been proposed to alleviate a recurring bottleneck by eliminating the left-hand turn by westbound vehicles approaching the connector.

Other recently completed transportation projects include aesthetic enhancements to the three **MARTA** stations in the district: Arts Center, Midtown and North Avenue (four when Civic Center station is included); greenspace maintenance and fresh landscaping installations; pedestrian and circulation improvements including federally compliant access ramps, wider

curbs, streetlights, and trees; and the renovation of Pershing Point Park.

"The emphasis has been, and will remain, on quality of life," said Ross, who also serves on the Midtown Alliance board.

One transportation project with a significantly higher profile, which has already been favorably assessed by the Midtown Alliance, is an extension of 15th Street. Currently, the street stops at West Peachtree instead of connecting through to Williams Street.

Modeling for the project, which is estimated to cost \$2.5 million, has been completed. The project will be submitted for funding to the **Atlanta Regional Commission** when the agency issues a "call-for-project" in early April.

Impact of Peachtree Corridor in Midtown

In 2014, **Midtown Alliance**, **Central Atlanta Progress** and the **Buckhead Community Improvement District** collaborated to conduct a high-visibility economic and fiscal impact analysis of the Peachtree Corridor. The effort allowed the three organizations to tell of the collective impact of the corridor.

The report, by the **Bleakley Advisory Group**, examines the 8.4-mile Peachtree Corridor and the economic impact of Downtown, Midtown and Buckhead. It found the Peachtree Corridor's impact is both substantial and multi-dimensional – as a job center, destination for visitors, revenue generator and home to the millennial and Generation X demographic.

The Peachtree Corridor contains just 3.7 percent of the total land area of the city of Atlanta. But it produces:

\$87 billion

in annual economic activity. The Peachtree Corridor is an economic engine for the city, the region and Georgia.

7%

of the state of Georgia's annual revenue from income, sales and gas taxes.

29%

of the city of Atlanta's general fund budget

27%

of the Atlanta Public Schools annual revenue from property taxes

AND IT SUPPORTS:

58%

of the city of Atlanta's jobs

241,200

direct jobs in the corridor, and another 338,900 indirect jobs

70%

of the city of Atlanta's professional, science and technical jobs

THE MIDTOWN PORTION OF PEACHTREE:

\$5.9 billion

total value of real estate in Midtown

33.4 million

square feet of commercial space currently in Midtown

\$2.6 billion

value of new construction currently planned

2.7 million

square feet of office space currently in the development pipeline

7,375

apartments and condominiums currently in the development pipeline

28%

Projected jobs increase in next 10 years

75%

of Midtown residents are highly educated stats (68% have college degrees)

25%

of the city's professional, science, technology, management and IT jobs

MARKET REPORT

Bankoff brings leadership to alliance

BY LESLIE JOHNSON
Contributing Writer

Joseph Bankoff brings his longtime Atlanta leadership, perspective and appreciation for the arts, education, and business worlds to his new role as chairman of **Midtown Alliance**.

"I don't come to this with a separate agenda," said Bankoff, chairman of the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at **Georgia Tech** and former CEO of the **Woodruff Arts Center**. "I come to this



Dennis
Lockhart

Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Bankoff's involvement in civic and community affairs in Atlanta runs deep. He is the vice chairman of the **Georgia Foreign Trade Zone**, and previous board affiliations include the Georgia and Metro Atlanta chambers, the **United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta**, and the **Atlanta Speech School**, where he was chairman, and the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**, where he was vice chairman, among many others.

His approach to his latest responsibility isn't to reinvent the wheel that Midtown Alliance has set in motion, but to keep the innovative ideas rolling to ensure the area strengthens its position as a "walkable, livable, playable community."

"When Dennis asked if I could take on the role of chair I was elated to have the opportunity," Bankoff said, "but I can tell you my goal is to continue on the path we've set for ourselves, where Midtown is one of the stars of the whole region."

with an appreciation of what the Midtown Alliance and **Midtown Improvement District** have been trying to do."

He takes over the chairmanship from Dennis Lockhart, president and CEO of the **Federal**



Joe Bankoff wants to build on Midtown Alliance's work.

JOANN VITELLI

Vibrant urban district

Bankoff is "exceptionally qualified" for the chairman duties, said Lockhart, who during his time in the role brought more awareness to technology-oriented economic development and supported new leadership talent at the alliance, including getting Kevin Green on board as the leader of the organization.

"I think Midtown is on the move as a district," Lockhart said. "Midtown Alliance deserves some of the credit for that. I'd like to see them continue with what I consider a well-spread range of activities. Midtown has the opportunity to have the most vibrant urban districts in the whole country."

Bankoff spent 32 years as a senior partner at the **King & Spalding** and six years as president and CEO of the Woodruff Arts Center.

"Joe Bankoff has been a true leader in the transformation of Midtown which makes him uniquely qualified to be chair of the Midtown Alliance," said former chair Larry Gellerstedt, president and CEO of Atlanta-based **Cousins Properties Inc.**, through e-mail correspondence.

"Midtown is one of the most vibrant and exciting markets in the country and the Midtown Alliance has led and will

continue to lead Midtown's continued growth and success in the future. Being chair was a true honor and a lot of fun," Gellerstedt said.

Revival and renovation

Bankoff is inheriting a role in the middle of an arts, tech and development gem, but he remembers when Midtown wasn't the vibrant urban core that it is now.

It was an area largely characterized by blight, not boom. He was a young lawyer at King & Spalding, living in Midtown in a "pill box of an apartment."

"When I first came to Atlanta, Midtown was the place you came through with the windows rolled up," he recalled.

Changes began happening after the 1962 airplane crash in Orly, France in which several Atlanta art patrons were killed.

In their memory, the center that would become the Woodruff Arts Center was created, helping to catapult the city's arts community and offerings and to turn things around in Midtown.

"It really began a whole pattern of revival and renovation," Bankoff said.

Among the notable changes for Midtown, Bankoff said, were the relocation of several law firms moved to the areas

during the 1990s, the Federal Reserve's move to Tenth Street, the efforts to preserve the **Margaret Mitchell House**, and Colony Square development.

In recent times, Midtown's bragging rights include **NCR Corp.**'s decision to move its headquarters to Technology Square from Duluth; **Panasonic Auto**'s R&D center opening at Georgia Tech; and the opening of the **AT&T Foundry Innovation Center**.

In addition, the area has had more than \$4.5 billion of new investment since 1997, according to Midtown Alliance.

Transportation: "Very high on my list"

Addressing transportation and traffic issues remains one of Midtown Alliance's top priorities.

Bankoff said the city was designed when it wasn't thought that more than a million people would be in it, so it will continue to take a concerted effort to make the changes to meet Atlanta's growth.

"It's very high on my list but it's something Midtown can't do by itself," Bankoff said.

There has been progress. The Midtown Traffic Operations Program is a \$3 million traffic signal improvement effort. Started in 2013 and lasting over three years, it is focused on taking the pressure off traffic buildups and improve overall safety for those traveling through and around Midtown, and has already seen positive results in peak traffic times, according to information about the **Georgia Department of Transportation**-funded program on Midtown Alliance's website.

There are more discussions, and work, to be done.

"It's one of the issues I think is important for all three of the CIDs," Bankoff said. "I'm very much aware of the transportation problem and I think that's a critical issue. We run the risk of strangling on our own success if we don't find a way to fix it."

► CLOSER LOOK

Blueprint Midtown is a community designed master plan. It makes policy recommendations in the following areas:

- **Land Use** – promotes a balanced mix of uses with a focus on active uses at the street level
- **Street Framework** – develops a street hierarchy that categorizes streets into signature, primary and secondary streets to provide definition on where to best focus large-scale retail
- **Public Spaces** – includes art, parks, and street level activation
- **Transportation** – includes places to expand the street grid and to incorporate additional parallel parking, 2-way conversions, bike lanes, streetscapes, and transit
- **Historic Preservation** – identifies existing historic resources and neighborhoods and recommends the preservation and enhancement thereof

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

some time but accelerated quite a bit over the last five years with the advent of high rise residential. People are choosing to pay a premium to live an urban lifestyle."

Because of this, he believes now is the time to engage with developers to encourage street level engagement. "Part of what 3.0 is seeking to do is put more teeth in the requirements for people who are building on Midtown streets," he said.

He believes both the planners and developers can be happy with the results. Midtown Alliance wants energy on the street and the developers want their projects to be profitable and Toro said the two can work in concert with each other.

"I think we have missed the boat – not in all instances, but in some instances – engaging the pedestrian at the street level in the design and operation of our buildings," Toro said. "The one key differentiator of Midtown versus any other

community in the Southeast is that it is truly walkable."

Tony Rizzuto, professor and chairman of the architecture department at **Kennesaw State University**, member of the Midtown Alliance board of directors and president of **Midtown Neighbors' Association**, said it's important for a community to know where and how it wants to grow.

"What we are trying to do there is provide a framework for people looking to invest in the area, by establishing design standards and a framework for development. This helps everyone be on the same page about how development and growth comes together," he said.

Rizzuto believes promoting sustainability practices to implement in the district, maximizing current mass transit system, making the district more pedestrian friendly and improving the streetscape are all key elements to helping define the "spirit of the place" for the new residents of Midtown – the educated,

tech-savvy professional who wants to gather and socialize where they work and live.

Kristen Morris, vice president of realty at **Jamestown** and member of the Midtown Development Review Committee, believes as the economy strengthens this is a great time to plan for the next 15 years of development in Midtown.



Kristen
Morris

"Midtown Alliance already has a good plan in progress so seeing them take the care to pause to see where they are, assess the progress that's been made, the market condition and the developments that are taking place and then build on what they have already have is exciting," she said.

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