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South side sees potential

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In the 2000 census, the city of Fairburn had a population of 5,500. Today, it has nearly 14,000 residents.

"That kind of growth changes everything," Fairburn Mayor Betty Hannah said.

The change that's coming to Atlanta's south side is not limited to Fairburn. The region has languished in the past 20 years compared with the city's north side, but those in the know can see that is about to change.

"It's going to be built out in 10 years," said Scott Brown, president of **CRB Realty Associates Inc.**

Brown's company is one of many involved in projects that will drastically alter the the south side in the next decade. They include the following:

■ **Grove Street Partners LLC** has a \$230 million mixed-use development that will add 1.1 million square feet of office, retail and hotel space to Gateway Center, next to the **Georgia International Convention Center**.

■ **Jacoby Development Inc.** is building a \$100 million, 122-acre mixed-use development — including 6.5 million square feet of offices, retail space, a hotel and a conference center — at the old Ford plant site in Hapeville.

■ Real estate developer Charlie Brown of **CRB Realty** also announced a

2,500-acre, \$2 billion project near the airport along South Fulton Parkway.

Add to that the fact that **General Motors Corp.** is looking to sell its plant in Doraville and the recent development along Camp Creek Parkway, and the growth potential is huge.

The **CRB** and **Grove Street** projects both hope to take advantage of traffic at **Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport**.

"If you're at Stonewall Tell and South Fulton Parkway, you can be on your way to China without hitting a traffic light," Brown said.

City and county officials must remain forward-thinking to create cohesion and balance in all the new developments, Fairburn's Hannah said.

The current projects will soon be joined by more, said Jack Hancock, a partner at **Freeman, Mathis & Gary LLP**. Why more developers haven't already considered the south side is a mystery to those who see its potential.

"Once the Atlanta money and influence started north many, many years ago, it became a matter of birds of a feather want to flock together," he said.

South side residents have noticed the change coming slowly, Hannah added.

"I think we were simply overlooked and now the focus has changed," she said.

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