

Mixed-use planned on southside

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Loft apartments above retail storefronts overlooking wide sidewalks fit for strolling and punctuated with benches and trees have become common features of many intown mixed-use developments. Now those features of high-density living are being incorporated into a development in Atlanta's traditionally underserved southside.

Developer **Priske-Jones Southeast Co.** is preparing to transform a 104-acre tract near Greenbriar Mall into a community that is laid out like a traditional village. **Coventry Station** is expected to include up to 68 single-family homes, 200 townhouses, 324 garden apartments, 166 senior residences, a commercial village and 60 lofts above commercial establishments.

The first phase of residential units will be available in 2006, with



Smart growth: Jim Knight, vice president and division manager at Priske-Jones, from left, and Charles Bryant, chairman of Neighborhood Planning Unit-P.

the entire project expected to be complete by 2008 or 2009, said Jim Knight, vice president and general manager for Priske-Jones' Atlanta office.

Situated on the other side of Interstate 285 from Greenbriar Mall, Coventry Station represents "a high-end African-American area that is experiencing tremendous residential and retail growth," said Knight. "So we feel we're perfectly positioned between those two corridors."

While the southside area has seen little economic development in past years, this situation has been changing with more business moving into the area, Knight said.

"I think there's been a perception in the past that the area was rough," he said. "And I think that other developers who may have avoided the area were just wrong in their assessment. If you drive around the area, I think you'll see that people take care of their lawns. They take care of their homes. There is a pride of ownership. It is a nice

area, and I think the people who developed Camp Creek Marketplace opened a lot of people's eyes."

The new development will incorporate many of the elements of smart growth recommended by the **Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)** in its Livable Centers Initiative. Wide sidewalks with benches that encourage residents to stroll are one aspect of the plan that focuses on getting people out of their cars and either walking, riding bikes or using other alternative means of transportation to get to work, shopping or recreation.

Coventry Station residents will have at least some of those elements, including "sidewalks on both sides of the road," Knight said. "You'll have porches on houses that are close to the street. ... You're going to have a development that encourages pedestrian activity and neighbors knowing each other."

Some analysts caution that not all mixed-use development is smart. Steven P. French, director of the



Source: Staff research

Traditional village

Coventry Station, a mixed-use community on a 104-acre tract near Greenbriar Mall, will include single-family homes, townhomes, garden apartments, senior residences, a commercial village and lofts.

Center for Geographic Information Systems at Georgia Tech, said most smart-growth developments serve their purpose when they are intown.

"If you do a project that has a lot of New Urbanism characteristics and you stick it out in Paulding or Forsyth County, people have to drive to where the jobs are, and it's hard to call that smart growth."

Although such developments might allow people to walk if some shopping is incorporated into the development, residents still are being forced to undertake a lengthy commute to their jobs.

Local governments in more urban areas have turned to smart growth as a means of reducing traffic congestion and air pollution caused by motorists commuting long distances from job to home. Time will tell just how many of Coventry Station's residents will be able to commute to jobs nearby.

Other developments have set the pace for smart-growth developments, such as **Glenwood Park**, a nearly completed development by

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Charles Brewer's **Green Street Properties LLC**, which is just south of I-20, east of Grant Park and west of East Atlanta Village.

Alpharetta-based **Hedgewood Properties Inc.** is constructing an upscale development called Vickery just off Georgia 400 in Forsyth County that also incorporates elements of high-density development with smart growth principles.

Many of these communities offer less affordable housing than more traditional subdivisions, in part because they are more expensive to build. Coventry Station's units will range in price from the mid-\$100,000s for condos to the mid-\$200,000s for single-family homes,

in an area where housing prices tend to be on the lower end of the housing spectrum.

Another mixed-use community on Atlanta's southwest side, **Serenbe**, caters to a much more affluent homeowner. Situated further outside Atlanta than Coventry Station, and straddling Fulton and Coweta counties, Serenbe's town-house price ranges from \$290,000 to \$500,000.

Because of their predominately urban locations, smart-growth developments tend to appeal to certain demographic groups, said Larry Keating, a Georgia Tech professor of city and regional planning.

"I think we know in the city that it's folks without kids, and the composition of that population is varied," he said. "They range all the way from gay folks to people who decided to live a single lifestyle to people who are empty nesters to couples that are not going to have kids or couples that are going to hang in the city for a while and then have kids."