



Marietta

New Life on the Square

By Katie Kelly Bell

Marietta has the enviable mixture of traditional and modern energy that make it one of Atlanta's hottest "new old" places to live. Whether you consider the world class Theatre in the Square, the ample dining options, unique shopping, hoppin' weekend farmer's market or the newly restored Strand Theatre, the community is enjoying a vibrant resurgence. "There is some good cross pollination going on. It's exciting to see art museums, restaurants and shops in such close proximity to not one, but two, theatres. We rightly deserve a reputation as a destination for the arts," says Beth Sessoms, economic development manager for the city of Marietta.

Your Community FOCALPOINT

Many attribute Marietta's resurgence to the dual influences of the renovation of Glover Park and the emergence of Theatre in the Square (which alone brings in 60,000 patrons annually to the Square) as one of the South's leading theatrical playhouses.

"Years ago, when I'd leave at 5 p.m., the Square would be empty. Now when I drive home it's packed with theatre-goers, families idling in the park, or people out for a nice dinner," says Sessoms.

Today the Marietta Square and community offers over 70 specialty and antique shops, historic trolley tours, five museums, horse-drawn carriage rides and over 25 different dining options. The present buzz however is all about The Strand Theatre.

Song and Dance

In 1935 The Strand originally opened as a movie theatre, eventually succumbing to the rising popularity of the cineplex and shopping mall in 1976. In keeping with the community desire to retain the Square's



The Meeting Park development will act as an extension of the Marietta Square.

historic authenticity a fundraising drive spearheaded by Friends of The Strand Theatre initiated the restoration process. Now just mere weeks away from opening, The Strand has announced a partnership with The Lyric Theatre Company. The Lyric Theatre Company will produce and present six to eight musical theater productions at The Strand each year over the next

five years. This year's productions include: "Beauty and the Beast," "Smokey Joes Café," "The It Girl," "The Pirates of Penzance" and "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown."

Even though the doors have yet to open, the excitement is palpable. "We already have over 200 days booked with weddings and galas. We field an overwhelming number of calls from people wanting to know about upcoming programs or to volunteer. I think it'll be a gift to Cobb County. It's such a plus for the arts. Along with Theatre in the Square, which draws such a crowd already, the economic impact of two entertainment anchors on the square will be tremendous," says Earl Reece, executive director, of Friends of The Strand.

Reece characterizes the Square as Marietta's vintage mall with a charm that cannot be found in modern-day malls. The Strand will more than earn its keep, being open throughout the day with early morning movies for children, mid-day matinees and musical theater in the evening. Two banquet halls can be reserved for special events, one features a rooftop terrace with view of the Square. Grand Opening celebrations will take place the first two weeks in January. "[There are] at least four or five events [planned] that will show everyone what The Strand can do, and showcase and promote the arts in the community," says Reece.

Theatre in the Square also continues to expand meeting the growing demand. "We are nearing the end of our capital campaign and the net result will be our lobby renovation and expansion [featur-



*The Place YOU
Belong in Vinings!*


The Vinings Club

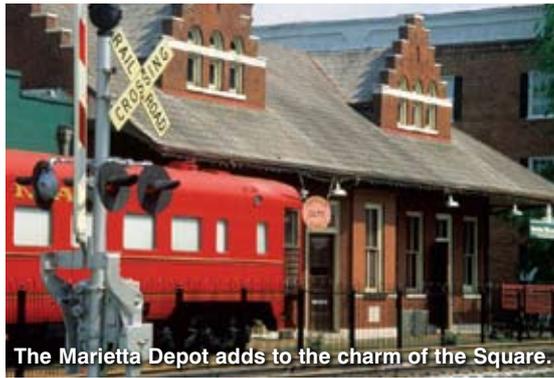
◆ SOCIAL ◆ ATHLETICS ◆
◆ BUSINESS ◆
◆ EXCEPTIONAL CATERED EVENTS ◆

Overlook III
2859 Paces Ferry Road • Atlanta, Georgia 30339
Phone: 770-431-9166 • www.theviningsclub.com

ing extensive food and beverage offerings], dedicated education and event spaces and a new façade.” explains Raye Varney, managing director of the Theatre in the Square. The education space will provide a classroom studio setting ideal for offering year-round classes to the community. The new event space will be “the perfect place for patrons to host a sit down meal or a cocktail reception before a show,” notes Varney. The planned façade improvements will give the theater a more visible presence on the Square while also unifying access to the two theater spaces (the Alley Stage and the Main Stage).

Other Influences for Growth

The surrounding redevelopment in Marietta is also having an impact on growth. Just a few blocks south the Meeting Park development wraps up work on its first phase of townhomes. Bob Silverman, chairman of Winter Properties, anticipates that Meeting Park will work, “as an extension of the Square. It is designed to reflect all that is so special and unique about the Square, much



The Marietta Depot adds to the charm of the Square.

like a village with narrow streets, townhomes and a park in the middle; a true reflection of a traditional neighborhood.” Silverman anticipates the development to add 500 to 600 new residents when completed.

Overnight guests will appreciate the newly renovated AAA four diamond Hilton Marietta Conference Center and Resort, which is doing its part to freshen up the accommodations in Marietta. “With the ongoing renovations to the guestrooms, facilities and dining areas, an 18-hole championship golf course and the Hilton name, this resort now offers a significant upgrade to the community,” says Steve Davis, general manager of the conference center and resort.

Bites and Browsing

Plays and musicals are all fine and good, but a “situation where you can park for free, walk to a meal and walk to the theater, that is just stellar,” says Varney. Indeed, Marietta’s culinary scene has risen to the occasion. The array of dining in Marietta rivals any intown location for variety and quality, with a meal for every mood and time of day. Visitors can debate between Slovakian, Chinese, Irish, Southwestern and Mediterranean cuisines. Of course one might just decide to stroll and snack, enjoying offerings such as pizza, ice cream, fine chocolates, tea and coffee. Capitalizing on the increased foot traffic, the Square now offers a monthly Art Walk—the first Friday of each month from 5 to 8 p.m.—as a time when art galleries and merchants display local, original works of art along with food and wine. Weaving together all of these influences creates a dynamic mix of visitors, conventioners, residents, theatergoers, foodies and shoppers seeking out Marietta. Clearly, Marietta’s once sleepy Square is a whole new scene. ■

MEMORY LOSS WON'T STOP THE MUSIC

When my husband’s memory loss became a challenge, our family found the answer at Hearthstone. Here he enjoys life’s many pleasures, like playing our favorite duet—and the family appreciates the peace of mind that comes from choosing Hearthstone.

HEARTHSTONE: MEMORY SUPPORT AT PRESBYTERIAN VILLAGE

- Assisted-living in private apartments and suites
- Resident-centered living, using effective Montessori care techniques
- Award-winning architecture, promoting safe and independent activity

For a complimentary in-home assessment, call 770-819-7000 today.

Open House every Wednesday, 3–5 pm.



2000 East-West Connector
Austell, Georgia
www.presbyterianvillage.org

