

Man About Downtown

More than a decade ago, visionary David Marvin convinced people to stay and play on Atlanta's less-traveled city streets.

| By Karina Timmel | Photography by Yvonne Boyd |

From boats to buildings—that's the story of David Marvin's buoyant career. Once an engineer who worked on nuclear submarines in a naval shipyard up north, Marvin never envisioned that he'd later end up investing hundreds of millions of dollars into downtown Atlanta real estate.

"I always enjoyed creating and building," says Marvin, founder and president of Legacy Property Group and founder of downtown's Luckie Marietta District. "Transitioning from construction to development 10 years into my career required taking a step back, but I found that more interesting [than staying where I was]."

After moving here from California in 1993, Marvin witnessed that—unlike some other cities—Atlanta's crowds of visitors were heading downtown to attend sporting events and conventions, but then would jet out of the area to eat, imbibe or stay overnight in Buckhead or Midtown. "I also knew the Olympics and 21 acres of green space were coming soon, and the profile of the area would be elevated," recalls Marvin. It took a lot to convince investors, but he began planning and driving for Legacy Property Group's first development—Embassy Suites, overlooking what is now Centennial Olympic Park.

When it opened in 1999, it was the area's first new hotel in 15 years. "It was a fairly pioneering location on Peachtree Street," Marvin explains. "My thesis was: If we build it; they will stay." And stay they did. The commercial success of Embassy Suites was immediate fuel for his next project, and so it has continued.

Marvin has since developed \$250 million in downtown real estate (including saving the historic Glenn Hotel building from being demolished after it laid vacant for 20 years, as well as completing the \$100 million Park Pavilion mixed-use development). He also has assembled property for an additional \$500 million of planned future projects around town. Get ready to see your city evolve even more, Atlantans.

This project pioneer seems to have drunk some of his own Kool-Aid, too. He works and lives—with his wife and children—in Centennial Park West in the Luckie Marietta District. You might spot him at Der Biergarten, Legal Sea Foods or Ruth's Chris Steak House in the 'hood; they are a few of his regular hangouts.

Next on this mover and shaker's agenda? Stepping outside his downtown digs for a minute. He currently has two irons in the fire in Midtown: A pair of restaurants are slated to open this month in the former TROIS space on 14th Street near Crescent Avenue. Olmstead, located on the main plaza level, will be open for a classic American lunch and brunch; after which, it will be available for special events. Article 14, a chef-driven, farm-to-table resto, will take up the lower-level space and will be open for lunch and dinner.

If his migration up Peachtree Street has any pattern, Brookwood Hills or Peachtree Battle could be next on his list for an overhaul. We'll see.



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW
David Marvin on a
helipad that overlooks
the Luckie Marietta
District he helped build.