

Atlantic Stations adds to Atlanta's appeal to shoppers, diners

BY LINDA LANGE
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ATLANTA — Georgia's supreme shopping destination is a holiday gift trimmed with lively entertainment, fine dining and exciting attractions.

Atlantic Station, a new retail, entertainment and residential center, illuminates with millions of twinkling lights. The central plaza glistens with a star-topped tree. In the glow of lantern light, people party-hop between restaurants and nightclubs, all resonating in the spirit of the season.

Shops at Atlantic Station include IKEA, Ann Taylor, Banana Republic, Victoria's Secret, White House Black Market, Dillard's and American Eagle Outfitters. Regal Cinema, a 16-screen theater, boasts 4,000 stadium seats. Patrons stream across the street to Strip Steaks and Sushi and other eateries, such as California Pizza Kitchen and Copeland's Cheesecake

Bistro.

With lampposts adorned with ribbons and shop windows festooned with evergreen garlands, one would not guess that this 138-acre redevelopment sits on a site once held by Atlantic Steel Mill. The urban property, praised as a national model for smart growth, has 1,000 hotel rooms and public parks adjoining the "live-work-play" district.

People will find new places to flash their plastic at Lenox Square and Phipps Plaza. The fashion meccas feature hundreds of stores including anchors Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdale's, Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue and Nordstrom. Atlanta's historic neighborhoods, such as Historic Virginia Highland, Little Five Points and Buckhead, are jam-packed with antiques emporiums, boutiques and art galleries. Perimeter Mall, Mall of Georgia, Discover Mills and the North Georgia Premium Outlets boast locations for America's top

retailers.

At the courthouse square

Retailers in the city of Decatur call their shopping district a "mallalternative." Situated on the east side of Atlanta just a 15-minute drive from Midtown, Decatur benefits from its connection to MARTA, Atlanta's rapid transit system. The station

is smack-dab in the heart of town so people can forget about cars and traffic and simply enjoy strolling between shops. Brick storefronts clustered around the historic courthouse showcase tantalizing wares — chocolates, jewelry, clothing, home decor and gifts. By Hand South overflows with the wares of 300 craftspeople. Niche magazine selected the gallery as one of the top 100 retailers of American crafts. Other shops reflect the cultural diversity of DeKalb County — "a blend of

Berkeley and Mayberry," says Linda Harris, Decatur's assistant director of community and economic development.

Once the gifts and goodies are bought, people find plenty of venues for seasonal fun and activities. Theatre Decatur will present Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales" Nov. 29-Dec. 23. The Decatur Holiday Candlelight Tour of Homes is set for Dec. 7-8. Townspeople will gather to sing carols at the holiday bonfire and marshmallow roast on the square on Dec. 20.

Decatur's dining scene has sparked a lot of attention because nationally known chefs have landed here. Chef Scott Peacock of Watershed Restaurant received the award for "Best Chef in the Southeast" by the James Beard Foundation. Patrons of the Brick Store Pub indulge on foods made from scratch and beers from Belgium. Dining and live entertainment



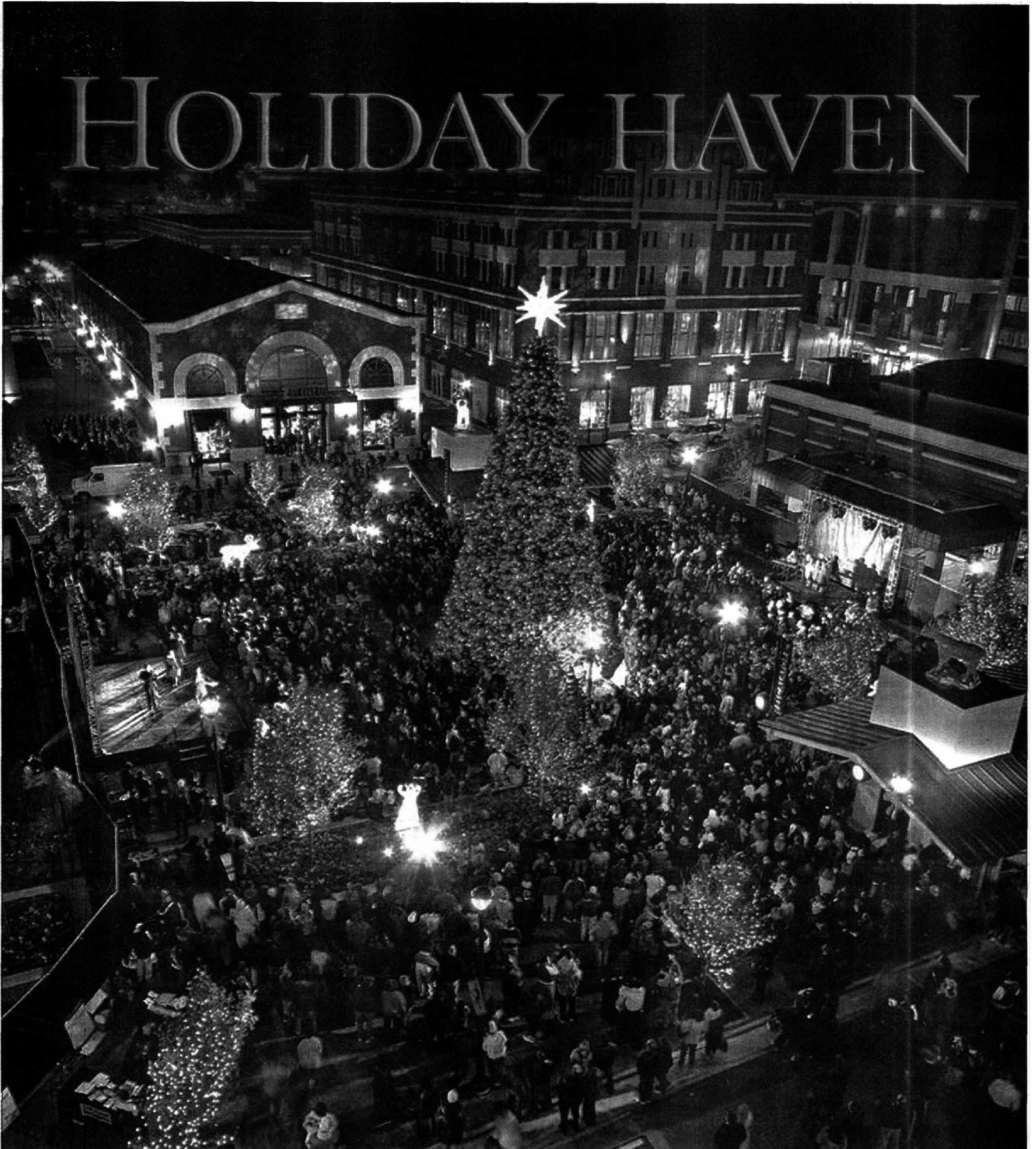
DEKALB CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Cafes dot the sidewalks of downtown Decatur, Ga. The courthouse square and historic district feature art galleries, gift shops and music venues.

INFORMATION

- Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800-ATLANTA, www.atlanta.net
- DeKalb Convention and Visitors Bureau, 800-999-6055, www.dcvb.org





A giant Christmas tree punctuates Atlantic Station's central plaza. The retail/residential area is a new Atlanta destination.

ATLANTIC STATION

go together at Birdi's and Sage on Sycamore, both connected to the town square. Music lovers flock to Eddie's Attic. Owner Bob Ephlin appreciates the talents of this artist-friendly community and provides a place for aspiring and accomplished performing songwriters.

Just a few miles east of Decatur, Stone Mountain rises above the rolling farmland. Stone Mountain Park offers a cornucopia of Christmas festivities. Two million lights create a magical atmosphere at the park's town of Crossroads. Gift shops feature glass ornaments, handcrafted candles, holiday decor items, candies and toys. Stage shows, highlighted by traditional tunes, complement the "Polar Express" 4D experience. Laser light displays and fireworks are choreographed to favorite Christmas songs. Stone Mountain Christmas, named one of the Top Twenty Events by the Southeast Tourism Society, is open on weekends through Dec. 14 and then nightly Dec. 15-30 (closed Dec. 24-25).

Christmas in the city

Hundreds of volunteer workers create dazzling light displays in Centennial Olympic Park. They put together a winter wonderland setting, simply called Holiday in Lights. People can skate around Atlanta's only outdoor ice rink and see sparkling decorations at several other downtown landmarks. The Atlanta Christmas Parade will wind through downtown on Dec. 1. Santa will lead a string of marching bands, giant balloons and colorful floats.

Crowds stream across Pemberton Place to reach the New World of Coca-Cola, a center overflowing with memorabilia, advertising, bottling line and merchandise. A 1880s soda fountain and 1930s Coca-Cola delivery truck are star attractions. Visitors have a chance to sample more than 70 different Coca-Cola products from around the world. Pemberton Place is also the home of the Georgia Aquarium. Holding

8 million gallons, it is the world's largest aquarium. It is a habitat for

more than 100,000 animals of 500 different species, including beluga whales, penguins and whale sharks. The Pemberton Place Pass, a combination ticket offers admission to the two attractions at a reduced cost.

The Atlanta Ballet will offer 18 performances of the holiday favorite "The Nutcracker" at the Fox Theatre in Midtown. The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will play "A Very Merry Holiday Pops" concerts at the Atlanta Symphony Hall at Woodruff Arts Center Dec. 20-22. The Atlanta History Center will host "Candlelight Nights — History Live!" in historic homes and gardens Dec 11-18.

Piano forte

The shining star of Midtown is the High Museum of Art at the Woodruff Arts Center. World-renowned architect Renzo Piano designed three new buildings to give the High Museum more exhibition and programming space. This project

more than doubled the size of the museum's landmark building designed by famed architect Richard Meier.

With the addition complete in 2005, the museum launched into a glorious three-year partnership with the Louvre of Paris. The distinguished French institution is allowing treasures from its collections to be displayed at the

High Museum in nine exhibitions. Now in its second year, exhibitions on view at this time are masterpieces from ancient civilizations and antiquities belonging to Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon. A 10-foot-long marble sculpture "The Tiber" depicts the river god, accompanied by Romulus and Remus, Rome's legendary twin founders.

Fragments of frescoes, bonzes, marbles, Greek vases and Egyptian sculpture, once seen at Josephine's country estate, Malmaison, indicate her passion for art. "In 1802 the King of Naples gave Napoleon a collection of antiquities unearthed at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The pieces were her inspiration for the style she created," says Cassandra Champion Streich of the museum staff.

A comprehensive survey that explores the influences of Old Master painters on Impressionist artists will remain on view through Jan. 13. Eighty-six works from more than 40 museum are shown side-by-side to allow comparisons. Monet, Manet, Renoir, Cassatt, Degas, Titian and Lorrain are represented in the exhibition "Inspiring Impressionism."

Visitors will quickly realize while walking through the galleries that the building is a work of art and part of the visual experience. Glass-enclosed bridges connect viewing areas. A roof system of 1,000 light scoops capture northern light and filter it into the skyway galleries.

A family fun extravaganza at the museum is scheduled for Nov. 23, the day after Thanksgiving. Live music, art-making activities, dance lessons and a special movie marathon is free with an admission ticket. "Hands on for the Holidays" art workshops are set for Nov. 24-25 and Dec. 26-30; a holiday craft show will be held Dec. 8.

Dining in Midtown

While at the Woodruff Arts Center, visitors can make the delicious choice to eat at Table 1280, an eatery overlooking the plaza. Art illuminates the room while contemporary place settings light up the tables. Peachtree Street in Midtown boasts many other convivial bistros. We love the hearty entrees and ambience of Sweet Lowdown, located a short stroll from the Fox Theatre. Favorites of the Piedmont Park area are Einstein's, a trendy place to enjoy pastas, seafood, sandwiches and salads, and One Midtown Kitchen, an evening gathering

place where light sticks hang from the ceiling. Superb service and innovative Southern cuisine make this a pleasurable dining experience. For breakfast, *The Flying Biscuit* on Piedmont Avenue is a pure delight. It's more than grits, sausage and scrambled eggs. Vegetarian fare is well-represented on the menu.

Visitors desiring a downtown hotel accommodation may want to book a stay at the new *Ellis Hotel*. Decorated with a pecan color scheme, rooms and suites have all the amenities desired by today's business and leisure travelers. It has a female-only floor with keyed entry. The hotel's *E Street Grille* overlooks *Peachtree Street*. (404-523-5155, www.ellishotel.com)

The boutique hotel's convenient location will gain paramount importance at the end of the year. The New Year's *Eve Peach Drop* will take place a short walk from its doorstep. *Underground Atlanta*, a six-block retail and entertainment district, sponsors a full day of family fun on Dec. 31. As dusk settles in, music groups will perform to bring festivities to a crescendo. Just before the clock strikes

midnight, an 800-pound peach will descend from its lighted tower.

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ATLANTA ATTRACTIONS

Atlanta CityPass features four headline attractions: *Inside CNN Atlanta Studio Tour*, *New World of Coca-Cola*, *Georgia Aquarium*, and the *High Museum of Art* with its landmark *Louvre Museum* exhibitions.

Two option tickets let people select more attractions: *Fembank Museum of Natural History*, *Atlanta Botanical Garden*, *Atlanta History Center* with the *Centennial Olympic Games Museum* and *Zoo Atlanta*.

Atlanta CityPass is priced at \$64 (\$116.93 value); \$45 for children. (www.citypass.com/city/atlanta)

■ *Atlantic Station*, located at the nexus of Interstates 75 and 85, www.atlanticstation.com.

atlanticstation.com.

■ *Georgia Aquarium*, largest aquarium in the world, 404-581-4000, www.georgiaaquarium.org.

■ *New World of Coca-Cola*, a multimedia experience, 800-676-Coke, www.worldofcoca-cola.com.

■ *High Museum of Art*, features *Louvre* and *Impressionist* exhibitions, 404-733-HIGH, www.high.org.

■ *Stone Mountain Park*, entertainment and shopping, 800-401-2407, www.stonemountainpark.com.

■ *Fembank Museum of Natural History*, "Frogs: A Chorus of Colors" exhibit, *IMAX Theatre*, 404-929-6300, www.fembankmuseum.org.

■ *Zoo Atlanta*, animals from around the world, including *Giant Panda* family, 404-624-WILD, www.zooatlanta.org.

■ *Imagine It!* The *Children's Museum* of

Atlanta, many creative, hands-on activities, 404-659-KIDS, www.imagineit-cma.org.

■ *Underground Atlanta*, entertainment and shopping district, 404-523-2311, www.underground-atlanta.com.

■ *Jimmy Carter Library and Museum*, historical artifacts, including *Nobel Peace Prize*, 404-865-7100, www.jimmycarterlibrary.org.

■ *Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site*, shows photographs, documents of *Civil Rights* struggle, 404-331-6922, www.nps.gov/malu.

■ *Margaret Mitchell House*, apartment where novelist wrote "Gone With The Wind," 404-249-7015, www.gwtw.org.

■ *Inside CNN Studio Tour*, opportunity to go behind the scenes, 877-4CNNTOUR, www.cnn.com/tour/atlanta.

— Compiled by
Linda Lange



LINDA LANGE/NEWS SENTINEL

A school group gathers at Sifly Piazza in front of the High Museum of Art. The museum's new galleries, including the Anne Cox Chambers Wing, were designed by architect Renzo Piano.



LINDA LANGE/NEWS SENTINEL

Display windows show elegant fashions for holiday parties at Atlantic Station in Atlanta.



DEKALB CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Celebration, a sculpture by Gary Price, exudes a friendly message to townspeople in Decatur.



Narrow streets and broad sidewalks make Atlantic Station a pedestrian-friendly destination.

ATLANTIC STATION