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King Carpet



*CEO/Chairman Robert E. Shaw
Of Dalton's Shaw Industries,
World's Top Carpet Maker*



Mira Bergen is president of A Store is Born Inc., a commercial real estate firm active in the Castleberry Hill Historic District. She markets the area as "Southern Fried Soho," a Dixie version of New York's Soho artist colony. One focus: attracting new restaurants.



The most startling evidence that downtown is literally being recreated is found in Atlanta Public Schools (APS), a long-maligned system that has made considerable improvements in the past several years. How attractive Downtown Atlanta ultimately will be rests in large measure on a continued rise in school performance.

cent agreement between APS and the East Lake Community Foundation that creates a hybrid school on the east side of downtown that is neither private nor completely public, yet clearly a unique continuation of a public education program. The new \$17 million Drew Elementary School will be a charter school for 700 students. The facility will have an attached YMCA serving the community.

"What we get out of the deal is a state-of-the-art school at no cost to APS," says Axam. "I'd like to see more partnerships like this one, but they need to be full partnerships, so that we assure a public education."

APS also stands to gain from new bonds to be generated by extending the tax allocation district on Downtown's west side. The district freezes property tax revenue flowing to government and funnels additional tax dollars generated by new investment back into the district, improving infrastructure and helping developers offset costs.

"We committed to the school board that the first \$5 million from the first bond issue — providing it's for at least \$15 million — will go to the school board," says Kevin Hanna, president of the Atlanta Development Authority. Funds will assist beleaguered downtown schools in need of immediate and substantial help.

both of which attract over 750,000 visitors a year.

In pre-Olympic days, \$11 million was set aside to build a visitors' parking lot, a new National Park Service Visitors Center across the street from the King Center and acquire exhibits for display inside.

Ebenezer Baptist moved into a new 1,800-seat, \$8 million sanctuary in March, so that the original historic sanctuary could accommodate tourists without disrupting the congregation. The National Park Service has a 99-year lease on the sanctuary but as yet no money has been set aside for restoration.

The Historic District Development Corporation, meanwhile, in collaboration with NationsBank, is renovating houses on Auburn Avenue that are currently selling between \$96,000 and \$260,000. Free-standing homes increasingly will be a key to Downtown, as the e-people age and bear children.

On Downtown's Southside, the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership is working with various groups to spur revitalization in the Vine City, Summerhill and Mechanicsville neighborhoods, as well as around Auburn Avenue.

One example of recent strides is Centennial Place Elementary School, part of the rebirth around Centennial Park and the model for APS' technology program. A 450-student school next to Georgia Tech, Centennial Place is an educational experiment for the system and its partners, which include Tech, Coca-Cola, NationsBank and BellSouth.

"There are those who would say that we built a school where there is no population," says Clara Axam, deputy superintendent for operations at APS. "Others of us would say that we built a school in partnership to help build a community."

Further evidence is found in the re-



Statue of Olympic founder Pierre de Coubertin with Embassy Suites in background