

INTO THE WEST

Ground broken for Atlanta BeltLine's Westside Trail

By Collin Kelley
INTown Editor

The Westside Trail, the next major milestone for the Atlanta BeltLine's network of trails, transit, parks and green space, broke ground last month hoping to be a revitalization catalyst just like its Eastside forerunner.

The three-mile Westside Trail will run from University Avenue in Adair Park to Lena Street at Washington Park.

"This is a historic moment for southwest Atlanta and the entire City," said Mayor Kasim Reed. "The Westside Trail represents an unprecedented \$43 million investment in the future of southwest Atlanta, and its construction will move us closer to our goal of fully building out the Atlanta BeltLine to connect every corner of our city. It is a game-changer, and it will bring new vitality and investment to the Westside's historic neighborhoods."

The design of the Westside Trail project was led by Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. in partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation and support from a design team led by Kimley-Horn and Associates. The initial phase of a project this complex

normally takes two years to complete. Yet the process took only nine months with the help of a unique partnership between the City of Atlanta, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the USDOT Federal Highway Administration, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. and its design team. Construction of this project is expected to take approximately 24 months.

When completed, the Westside Trail will have a 14-foot wide concrete multi-use trail along the former railroad corridor. The project will also include the construction of 14 access points, 11 of which are ADA-accessible, along with lighting, security cameras, signage, way-finding, mile-markers, and underground infrastructure.

An expansion of the Atlanta BeltLine arboretum will blend with hundreds of large, native trees and integrate more than 30 acres of inviting and usable new green space. The project will be constructed in preparation for future transit that is currently in the planning stages. The Westside Trail connects four schools and four parks, as well as the residents of 10 southwest Atlanta neighborhoods to public transit, existing community businesses and future economic development sites.

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded the City of Atlanta



A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Atlanta BeltLine Westside Trail on Nov. 12 near Adair Park.

Handling the shovels were (l-r) Jamie Kennedy, a Board Member at Cox, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, Paul Morris, President of BeltLine, and Atlanta Police Chief George Turner.

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Phil Mosier

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Photos by Phil Mosier
 ABOVE: Dist. 6 Fulton Commissioner Joan Garner (black and white checked jacket) shows her neighborhood unity by holding hands with fellow attendees for the Westside Trail groundbreaking event. BELOW: New homeowner in the Capital View neighborhood Joe Miller rode his bike to event. He was the first bicyclist to arrive and secure his bike on the racks provided for the ceremony.

an \$18 million TIGER V grant to help fund construction of this \$43 million phase of the Atlanta BeltLine. The grant significantly expedited the construction of the Westside Trail. The Georgia Department of Transportation enabled the purchase of the land via a \$9.5 million local match. The remaining costs are funded by both public and private sources, including a lead gift of \$5 million from Jim Kennedy, honorary co-chair of Atlanta BeltLine Capital Campaign Committee, through the James M. Cox Foundation and PATH Foundation.



"This groundbreaking represents the fulfillment of a long-held promise to the neighbors of west Atlanta, made possible through a remarkable public and private partnership at the local, state, and national levels," said Paul Morris, President and CEO of Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

West End resident Danielle Carney said she hopes the new trail will spur more economic development and housing, just as the Eastside Trail has done for the Old Fourth Ward.

"The BeltLine is only two blocks from my home, so I'm excited about it and so are my neighbors," Carney said. "The Westside Trail is going to expose people to neighborhoods they didn't know anything about."

Carney said she's also looking forward to the transit aspect of the BeltLine.

"I don't take MARTA very often, because it doesn't stop exactly where I want to go, but if I could hop on a streetcar and take it to the Target

on Moreland Avenue, that would be amazing," she said.

Another Westview resident, Ayana Gabriel, said she bought her home in the neighborhood specifically for access to the BeltLine. Her property borders the future Enota Park and she can see the trail from her back deck.

"I'd never heard of the BeltLine until I came over here and started looking for homes," Gabriel said. "When I found out about it, it spurred me to buy my house. I started attending Enota Park planning meetings before my house was even under contract."

Gabriel was so taken by the idea of the project, that she eventually joined the board of the BeltLine Task Force Allocation District.

She wants to see more homeowners in the neighborhood and better housing options for people of all ages.

"We all love our neighborhood and we want people to come, buy homes, raise families and open businesses," she said. "We're excited."

For more about the Westside Trail project, visit beltline.org/westsidetrail. 

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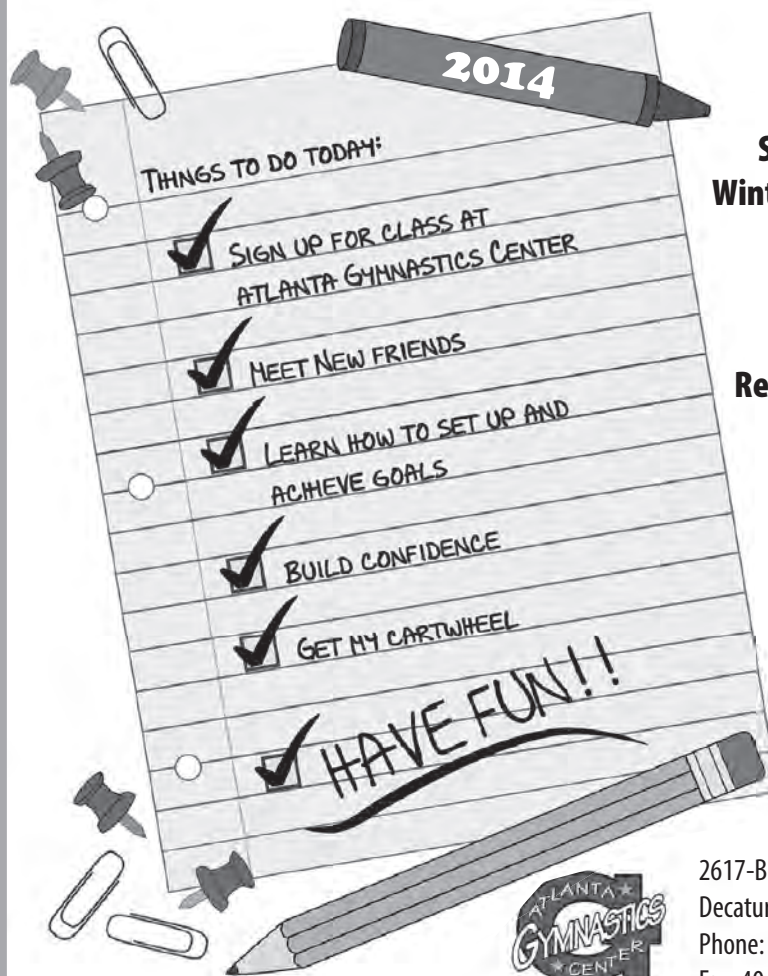
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