

# BIG IDEAS! Atlanta

THE BEST OF WHAT'S TO COME

OUR INAUGURAL Groundbreaker AWARDS

By 2040, THERE WILL BE 8 MILLION PEOPLE IN METRO Atlanta. HERE ARE THE IDEAS THAT WILL SHAPE OUR CITY'S FUTURE



A ROBOT for GRANDMA

HOMEGROWN BIOFUELS



AUGMENTED REALITY!

ART in FLUX

CANINE COGNITION

An HIV VACCINE?

NANOSCISSORS

KASIM REED TELLS OUR Fortune

YES, the BELTLINE is actually HAPPENING!  
CHECK IT OUT ON PAGE 78



KUDZU-EATING GOATS

URBAN FARMING

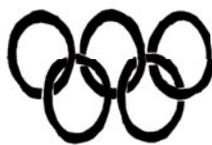
Will Save Us All!  
GERM-FREE TEXTILES



& DON'T FORGET Ponce City Market  
Advice from people A LOT SMARTER than us



LOOK OUT LONDON!  
A GLIMPSE AT OUR Olympians



★★★★

WHERE THE STARS DINE in the ATL (And what THAT says about THEM)  
Speaking of stars, WHO will be the FIRST to be spotted at The Spence, RICHARD BLAIS'S hot NEW place? (SEE OUR REVIEW on PAGE 39)

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# NEW

# GROWING



there's one characteristic that defines Atlanta, it's a can-do spirit. Our city's very existence owes itself to a scrappy willingness to build a town out of a railroad terminus and erect a city on the ashes of that town. In the past century, Atlanta has grown up and out and reinvented itself repeatedly. → That time has come again. The metro area will continue to grow (8 million by 2040!) and change (more diverse than ever, see page 68) as we all get older (one in four Atlantans will be over sixty in 2040, compared

to one in ten a decade ago). This means we cannot keep booming the way we have in the past; we have to grow and age and build smarter. → In the next fifteen pages, you will meet the inaugural class of **Atlanta Magazine Groundbreakers**—people and projects shaping the future of the city and tackling our future challenges. All of the Groundbreakers represent works in progress: smart ideas that are under way but still have years—in at least one case, a couple of decades—to go before their potentials are fully realized. That may sound idealistic, but we selected these Groundbreakers out of dozens of candidates because they combine imagination with pragmatism. They tackle real problems like childhood obesity and HIV/AIDS. They embody a shift in Atlanta development, from bulldoze-and-rebuild to repurposing—whether turning historic rail lines into new trails or transforming vacant lots into urban farmsteads. They're built on foresight about our changing demographics and represent an investment in the arts. And yes, at least one idea is futuristic: There *is* a robot.

Go to [atlantamagazine.com/future](http://atlantamagazine.com/future) to watch video of the Groundbreakers.

## GROUNDBREAKER FINALIST

ROSALYNN  
CARTERFOR PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF THE MENTALLY ILL  
by BETSY RILEYGOATS AS LAWN MOWER  
SUBSTITUTES

Gas-powered lawn machinery accounts for a sizable swath of all man-made pollution, according to the EPA. Here's a low-tech but viable alternative: goats. A team of **UGA students** started a project using goats to eat English ivy and privet at Tanyard Creek; **Trees Atlanta** has employed goats (and sheep) to clear kudzu from Chastain Park (see a cute picture on page 25) and Boulevard Crossing Park; and goat "crews" are being hired to clear private lawns. Watch out, John Deere.

## GREEN LEASES

Since the economy tanked, undeveloped land parcels—once imagined as bustling commercial enclaves or residential neighborhoods—have haunted Atlanta's streetscape. But in 2011 the **Midtown Alliance** embraced green leases, a low-cost, high-impact solution to these eyesores. The organization leases the vacant lot from the developer for \$1 per year, then uses its own maintenance crews and urban planners to transform the area into a "button park" with healthy grass, trees, benches, and (potentially) participatory artworks.

## HEART VALVE CENTER

About 5 million Americans have a heart valve disorder. When the blood doesn't move properly through the heart's chambers, there's a greater risk of heart failure, stroke, blood clots, and sudden cardiac death. Thanks to a recent \$20 million

**RICKEY WINGO, FIFTY-THREE**, suffered from schizophrenia and got agitated due to a side effect of his medicine. The final time it happened, workers at Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital pinned him to the ground and beat him to death, according to the state's chief medical examiner, who ruled Wingo's death a homicide. No staffers were charged or punished. Wingo's case was just one of 115 suspicious deaths and incidents uncovered in a five-year *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* investigation of Georgia's state psychiatric hospitals. No, this wasn't Jack Nelson's 1960 Pulitzer Prize-winning exposé about abuses at Milledgeville's Central State. This series was published in 2007. Do you remember it?

If you don't, you're not the only one. We can be apathetic about mental healthcare, a particularly paradoxical mind-set given that a mental disorder strikes one in four Americans every year. When the 2007 *AJC* series met a resounding local silence, Georgians were fortunate that the world's most prominent mental health advocate lives right here. Once again, as she has done for more than forty years, Rosalynn Carter fought for people with mental illnesses.

In 2009 the federal Justice Department sued Georgia for failure to protect citizens in state custody. Negotiations were headed toward an untenable resolution when the Carter Center's Mental Health Program—founded in 1991 by Rosalynn—got involved. The center helped broker an agreement between Georgia factions; after two years, the vested parties hashed out an unprecedented settlement agreement.

"Before the settlement, people were being discharged inappropriately to homeless shelters and automobiles," she said during the seventeenth annual Rosalynn Carter Georgia Mental

Carter testifying about mental healthcare. She has appeared before Congress four times, more than any other First Lady.



PHOTOGRAPH: JIMMY CARTER LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

# EUE/SCREEN GEMS

## FOR TURNING LAKEWOOD FAIRGROUNDS INTO A MOVIE-MAKING MONEYMAKER

by SCOTT HENRY



**THE FOLKS BEHIND THE DECISION TO TRANSFORM** the old Lakewood Fairgrounds into a thirty-three-acre film and television production campus want you to know two things: Part of the reason they came here was because of Georgia's vaunted tax incentives for moviemakers, but no, their company doesn't get a break on its own taxes. The crucial point is that, by creating the largest studio and soundstage complex in the state, EUE/Screen Gems has made it possible for lots of other filmmakers and TV networks to take advantage of the state's tax deals.

While the incentives upped Georgia's popularity as a destination for location shooting, there were few large local studios. Since Screen Gems opened in 2010, it has brought new business and bustle to town. The studio hosted production of the upcoming film *The Watch*, starring Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughn, as well as TV shoots by USA Network, Hallmark Channel, and Disney Channel. Stage 4 is booked through the end of 2012 for BET shoots.

Last year Screen Gems spent \$15 million to build Stage 5, one of the largest soundstages east of Hollywood, a 37,500-square-foot structure boasting forty-foot ceilings. Without interior columns, it is an ideal venue for shooting large-scale action and special-effects scenes. When the Robert Zemeckis-directed *Flight* opens this fall, theatergoers will watch Denzel Washington crash-land a commercial jetliner without a clue that the sequence was filmed indoors.

This February the campus expanded with the opening of Stage 6, a 30,000-square-foot facility that sits on the hill once occupied by the fairground's Greyhound roller coaster. (Movie trivia: That coaster was demolished in the climax of 1980's *Smokey and the Bandit II*.) Screen Gems now has a total of nearly 150,000 square feet of dedicated studio space to help attract film productions and commercial shoots to Atlanta, a lure that is aided by on-site grip and lighting services.

Don't be surprised if the Lakewood campus itself appears on a movie screen near you. According to Screen Gems executive vice president Kris Bagwell, who oversees the complex, the Spanish Mission-style architecture of the restored 1916 fairground buildings is so reminiscent of a golden-era Hollywood studio lot that several production clients have shown interest in filming exterior scenes. ■

Health Forum, held in Atlanta this May. "It is important to remember there is a real cost to doing nothing. Untreated depression costs billions of dollars in lost productivity, *billions*. Given the difficult economy, many states have stopped trying to improve their public mental health system at all. Because of our suit, we got some funding. Georgia can be a model for the country."

The first improvement was pulling behavioral health out of the monolithic Department of Human Resources and creating the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). The new department then closed Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital, beginning a statewide effort to move adults out of large psychiatric hospitals and into community care. To serve those consumers, the department added peer counseling centers, mobile crisis units, and other services; it also contracted with local hospitals for acute care. In just one year, the region's readmission rates went from nearly twice the national average to below average. Typical hospitalizations have gone from forty-seven days to fewer than five.

Despite start-up costs, the department is hopeful the new structure will cost no more than the former approach, if not less, says DBHDD commissioner Frank Shelp, M.D., M.P.H. The goal is rolling out the system to the entire state by 2015, when the settlement agreement expires. There are still formidable difficulties. The agreement doesn't apply to children, adolescents, or the elderly. And Medicaid reform presents challenges to hard-won progress. But so far, the Georgia legislature remains committed to the agreement.

"Without the Carter Center, I don't know if the settlement would have happened, but I do know that without the Carter Center, the settlement would not be nearly as strong. Nor would there be the trust and relationships on all sides to work toward successful implementation," says C. Talley Wells, an Atlanta Legal Aid Society attorney and key negotiator on behalf of consumers.

Carter has been an international voice for equitable mental healthcare since her husband's first run for governor. "Every day I campaigned, people would ask me what my husband would do for a mentally ill loved one at Central State Hospital. It's so exciting to me what has happened since I began." ■

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF EUE/SCREEN GEMS