



Dewberry's dream: Midtown Square

For years, people thought John Dewberry was nothing more than a cocky young developer, and that's an easy, if prejudicial, assumption to make.

He's good looking, easy in his own skin and says exactly what he thinks, impolitic or not. And it doesn't help that he owns perhaps the best piece of undeveloped real estate in Atlanta, arguably in the Southeast — the 4-acre block at the corner of 10th and Peachtree streets.

But now, at 37, most people think at worst he's the lucky guy who first took a chance on Midtown and at best that he's something close to a visionary. "I think I'm the same guy I always was. I'm just losing my hair," Dewberry says with a shrug. "But I am confident in my dreams. God has blessed me with a vision, and because I have that vision, I say things that people see as bold."

And, to be fair, his vision *is* bold. Almost casually, he describes what amounts to a Michigan Avenue of high-end retail, cafes, offices and attractions stretching down Peachtree Street from the Fox to his new building, One Peachtree Pointe, which sits across from the new Equifax headquarters.

In Dewberry's vision, tourists will one day think a stroll down Peachtree Street in Midtown is the one essential thing to do here, and locals will consider the strip, whatever we come to call it, the center of the city's culture and identity.

Key to that center will be Midtown Square, what Dewberry's planning to build at 10th and Peachtree. In the next several years, it will be the site of a 750,000 square foot office tower flanked by a 210-room hotel with 100 tony condominiums and 180 apartments.

The momentum in Midtown is too strong to be quashed by a downturn, he says. "Midtown



is still going to be *the* place. It already is, in my opinion," he insists.

"But we take the long view. Everything we do in Midtown is going to be top drawer, and we're going to take our time," Dewberry says. "We're going to make sure people can come to me and say, 'Y'all did a good job.'"

That's perhaps the flip side of Dewberry's confidence: He wants to be well thought of. A preacher's son who admits to "my share of sinning," Dewberry wants to be the developer wearing the white hat. One of his great idols is Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A.

"Too many people are in this business for the almighty dollar, but the truth is if you take your time and build a high-quality project, you'll also be very profitable," he says.

And, perhaps because he's deeply invested in the community (he was Tech's starting quarterback in the 1980's) he wants his developments to have a positive legacy. "Everything I've done has been to leave my mark on the city," Dewberry says. "We have a higher calling, and we have a higher calling to Atlanta."

John K. Dewberry

President, Dewberry Capital