

## KNOWAtlanta Neighborhood Tour

## Serenbe

Traveling south through Fulton County, the cornerstone county of the City of Atlanta, you might expect to find the suburban outpour typical in most other areas around Atlanta. What's surprising when you get into the reaches of South Fulton County is that you don't really get to see much of the suburbs. Sure, there's the occasional clear-cut parcel making way



for homes, but for the most part South Fulton County is an unadulterated section of 40,000 acres of hill country along the Chattahoochee River.

Not too many years ago, retired restaurateur Steve Nygren looked south in this area for a place to relax and found a farm where he could create a bed and breakfast. But when a bulldozer started grading near his land, Nygren became interested in protecting the qualities he enjoyed in the area. Because he knew development was coming, he involved local landowners and preservation groups and decided to test a model of clustering higher density to help preserve more open spaces.

His test case is Serenbe, a community he is building on his own farm. The road for the community is already cut, and he's working with Pam Sessions of Hedgewood Properties to create cluster areas within the property that feature charming cottages, townhomes, and live-above/work-below spaces that resemble loft living. Hedgewood will bring earth-friendly building to this hamlet concept that blends urban pockets of retail and walkable living with wide open spaces.

**Location:** S. Fulton County  
**Phone:** (770) 463-9997  
**Web:** serenbecommunity.com  
**Prices:** \$100s to \$500s-plus

## Mount Vernon Point

Benchmark Homes is one of Atlanta's more focused builders. While you'll find plenty of companies that will build homes from Buford to Fairburn, the family-owned Benchmark Homes focuses simply on an area that's no more than 30 minutes from Douglasville, a town on Atlanta's western side, out I-20 in Douglas County.



Mount Vernon Point is a classic community of Benchmark's. It's close to Douglasville and features the signature style of the company: mid-size developments, with nice homes that are reasonably priced and are aimed at a family-type buyer. Located right across the street from Flat Shoals Elementary, Mount Vernon Point is located on one of the tallest ridges near the city, and with Douglas County building a 600-acre park for an aquatics center, plus the on-site swim and tennis amenities, buyers will find that Mount Vernon Point offers all the recreation they need.



Because the community represents the mid-point of what Benchmark builds, on-site builder Kirk Boggs encourages buyers to come with a wish list. While the community does have completed homes ready for sale, he says more and more people are wanting homes in Mount Vernon Point that toss in some customizations and upgrades.

**Location:** Douglasville, Douglas Co.  
**Phone:** (770) 577-3000  
**Web:** benchmarkhomesatlanta.com  
**Prices:** From the \$200s

## Laurel Park

Summer in Atlanta means outdoor living, one of Metro Atlantans favorite places to play is Lake Lanier.



Laurel Park, a community of 330 homes built by Ashton Woods Homes in northwestern Gwinnett County, is the kind of place that makes that easy. With basic boat storage available on the property, the builder knows exactly what people like about this loca-



tion that's just around the corner from Lake Lanier. And with a load of amenities, including a clubhouse, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a water-spraying "mushroom" for the kids, and miles of nature trails both in the community and in the adjacent lands of the Chattahoochee Nature Preserve, they know that the residents will like to play.

When it comes to the housing, you can expect to find homes with anywhere from three to six bedrooms, and priced from the \$190s for the simplest homes in the community all the way up the \$400s for estate-sized offerings. Brick, cedar shake and stone, accent these homes, which feature classic touches like front porches and neo-traditional touches like gables.

**Location:** Buford, Gwinnett Co.  
**Phone:** (770) 945-1192  
**Web:** ashtonwoodshomes.com  
**Prices:** \$190s to \$400s