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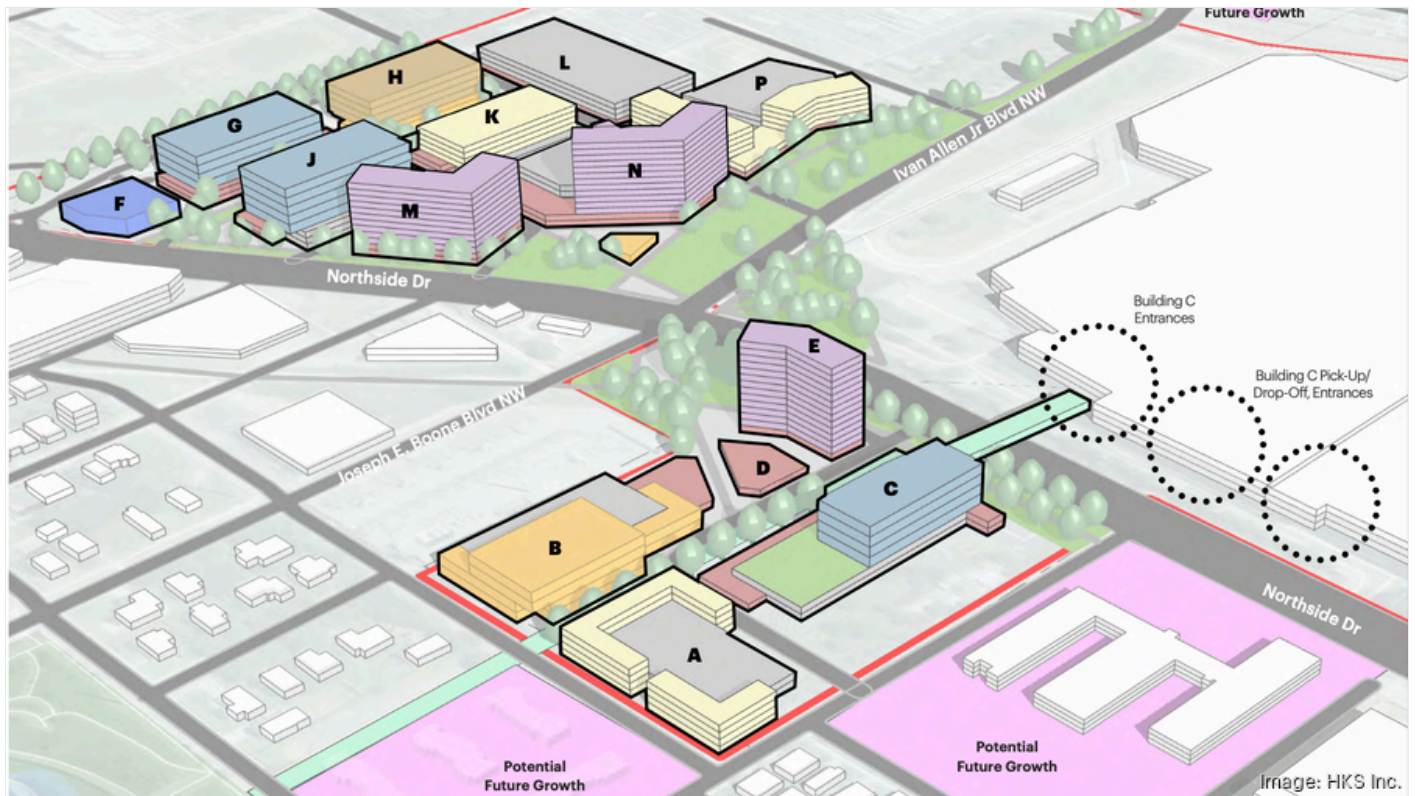
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Travel & Tourism

State officials unveil master plan for Downtown convention center campus



How mixed-use development could look on state-owned land along Northside Drive.

HKS INC.



By **Amy Wenk** – Staff Reporter, Atlanta Business Chronicle

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Another giant project is being envisioned for Downtown Atlanta, [according to a newly unveiled master plan.](#)

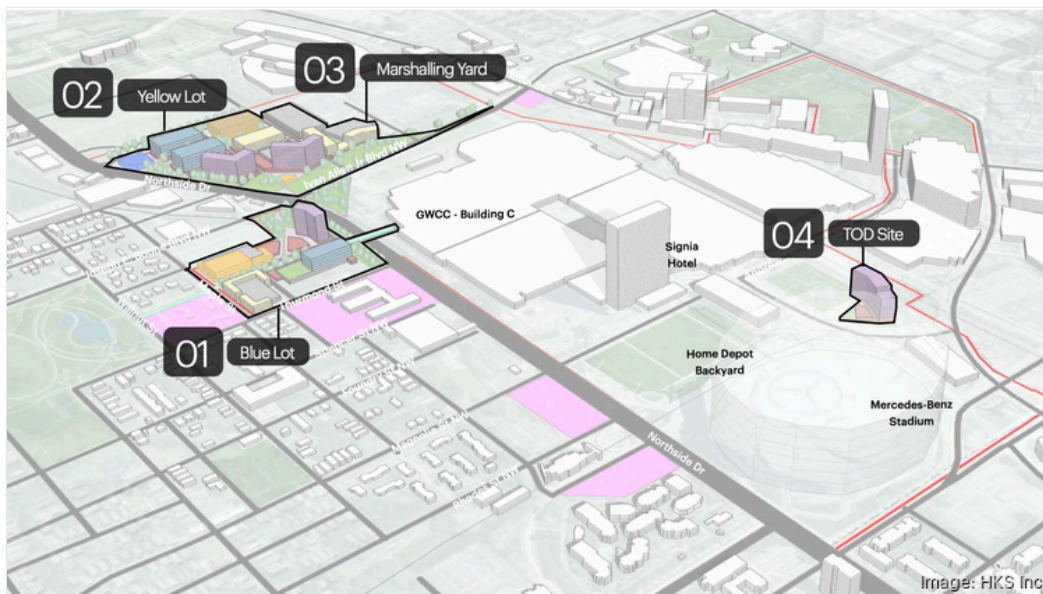
This week, state officials viewed plans to transform more than 20 acres of surface parking lots that line Downtown's sprawling convention center with new housing, hotel rooms, retail space and offices. They could link a piece of the redevelopment to the Atlanta BeltLine.

The Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) could infuse the state-owned land with more than \$1 billion of new development. The goal: boost its convention business and build up Atlanta's Westside.

The project would fill in gaps within the urban fabric. GWCCA Executive Director Frank Poe said the massive convention center along Northside Drive should no longer look like "an island unto itself but part of a larger planned development."

The GWCCA is a state agency that oversees the 220-acre convention center campus that also includes Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Centennial Olympic Park and [the Signia by Hilton Atlanta hotel that opened this year](#).

Atlanta-based architecture firm HKS Inc. is leading the master plan for the GWCCA. This week it presented recommendations to one of the agency's committees.



The Georgia World Congress Center Authority is considering redevelopment options for four sites.

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Master plan considers sites the state already owns

The master plan looks at four development opportunities. One targets the Blue Lot, a surface parking lot along Northside Drive. Another focuses on the Yellow Lot and an adjacent marshaling yard along Ivan Allen Jr. Boulevard. The master plan also considers property next to MARTA's GWCC/CNN Center station.

Mixed-use projects across those sites could cost between \$1.1 billion and \$1.3 billion if started in early 2026, according to estimates

in HKS' presentation obtained by Atlanta Business Chronicle.

Sheba Ross, partner at HKS, said the plans require a deeper dive that can "fine tune those numbers."

GWCCA said it has not discussed funding sources or whether to bring in development partners.

HKS will conduct more studies through the end of the year, according to the committee. GWCCA plans to delve into the ideas at its annual retreat in September.

The state agency is now considering [an entertainment district next to Mercedes-Benz Stadium](#) and recently put out a request for qualifications. Bids are due this month.



How new development and greenspace could transform Northside Drive.

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Mixed-use projects could help remake Atlanta's Westside

HKS' presentation shows how new projects could reshape Northside Drive, a corridor largely seen as unsafe for pedestrians and that creates a barrier to Vine City. [State officials have long desired to bring more equitable development](#) to historic Westside neighborhoods.

On the Blue Lot, early ideas include a bridge over Northside Drive to connect the convention center to new development, such as townhomes, a hotel and community gathering spaces. The site also offers an opportunity to create a memorable entry point into the [BeltLine's Westside Connector](#), a 1.7-mile spur trail that connects Downtown to the Westside.

"It's at the nexus of where the Atlanta BeltLine corridor comes in," Ross said. "No one else has this access."



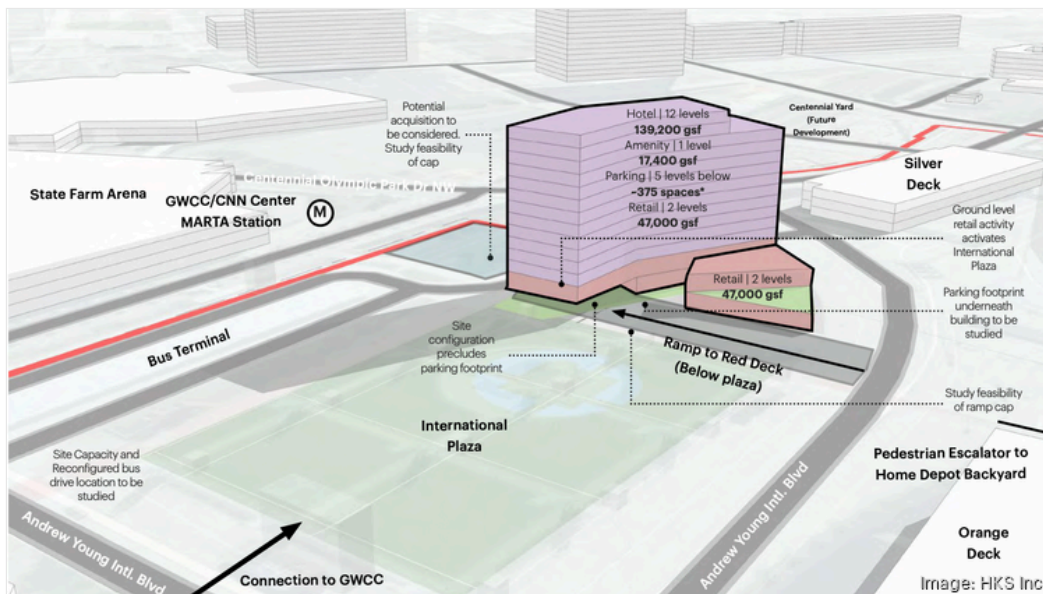
"An arrival experience from the Westside Beltline Connector presents opportunity for a key hotel use that can serve GWCC via a direct bridge connection over Northside Dr.," says HKS' presentation.

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The Yellow Lot and part of the adjacent marshaling yard could house more density. The presentation shows creative office space, apartments and a grocery store.

Greenspace could line Ivan Allen Jr. Boulevard, Poe said.

The site next to the MARTA station could be eyed for a new hotel and two levels of "signature" food and beverage spaces, according to the master plan.



How a transit-oriented development could look next to MARTA's GWCC/CNN Center station. "Ground level F&B options activate Andrew Young International Boulevard and have the capacity to serve GWCC users, as well as those who are visiting for events at Mercedes-Benz Stadium or State Farm Arena," says the master plan.

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Master plan comes as investment surges Downtown

The master plan emerges as new development begins to encircle the convention center.

The Gulch is being redeveloped as the \$5 billion Centennial Yards, with new residential and hotel towers already under construction. [The former CNN Center wants to bring in new tenants.](#) A swath of South Downtown has [new owners who want to turn the historic buildings into a startup city.](#) And to the north of the GWCCA campus, [Georgia Tech continues to expand.](#)

HKS said Tuesday that GWCCA should further study the new investment.

“We don’t want to create anything that is competing,” Ross said.

The GWCCA last completed a master plan in 2008. Since then, the state agency has completed billions of dollars of development. That includes Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the Signia by Hilton and [a 100,000-square-foot expansion of the Congress Center.](#)

T H E L I S T

Atlanta's 25 Largest Architectural Firms

2022 Atlanta gross architectural revenue

Rank	Prior Rank	Firm
1	1	Cooper Carry Inc.
2	3	Niles Bolton Associates Inc.
3	2	Perkins&Will

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