

Living

Senoia: View of 'good life'

Idea House drawing visitors to town in Coweta County.

Brownstone part of mixed-use project.

By **Katie Leslie**
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Until just a few years ago, the teeny Coweta County town of Senoia was standing still. Only a few businesses remained on Main Street, foot traffic was at a minimum and commercial development was largely nonexistent. And then something strange happened: Hollywood got involved.

Longtime Senoia resident and movie production company Riverwood Studios, now Raleigh Studios – Atlanta, struck a deal with the locals to buy commercial plots to restore downtown with historically accurate buildings. The Historic Senoia Project resulted in a new and improved Senoia, with Main Street space for new retail shops and restaurants.

But that's not to say that Senoia – pronounced "senoy" – has gone mainstream. Rather, it still feels as quaint as they come.

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The brownstone is within an 11-acre residential and mixed-use development off Main Street that will be used as a background for movies.



Newnan-based interior designer Jamie McPherson of Hearth and Home Interiors decorated the four-story dwelling.

Living

Spotlight shines on town

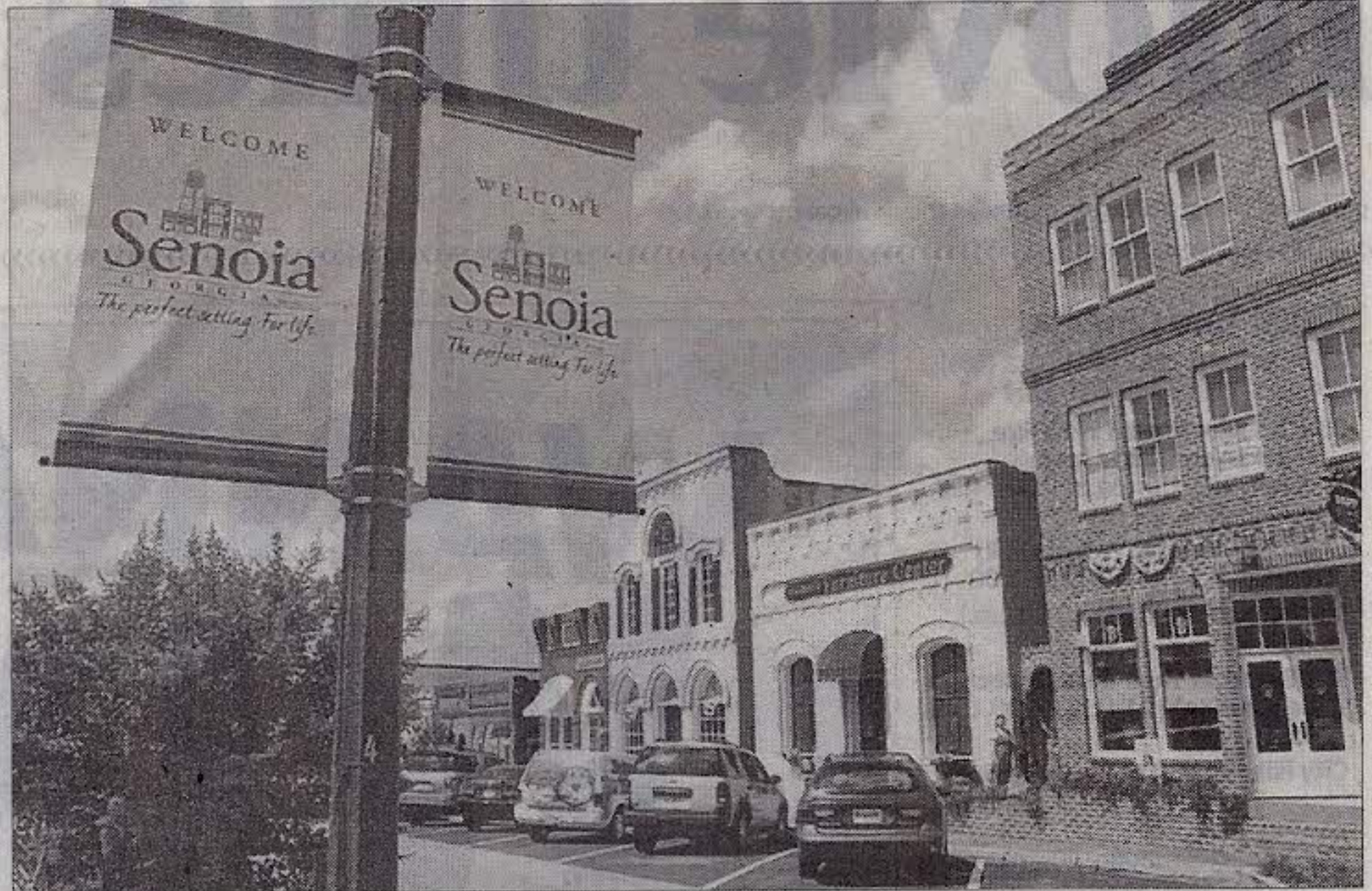
Senoia

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“You do decompress when you’re here,” said Scott Tigchelaar of Raleigh Studios — Atlanta, who drives a golf cart through town with his kids to get ice cream or supper. “You’re expecting Norman Rockwell to be painting your picture.”

Now Senoia is playing host to Southern Living’s devoted readers, many of whom go on pilgrimages each year to see the homes the magazine appoints for its annual Idea House. Each year, 30,000 to 40,000 people travel to the high-design abodes. So far, more than 3,600 people have visited the home since it opened in June, organizers say, a number sure to rise when the home is featured in the magazine’s August issue, which arrives this month.

The 2010 Georgia Idea House, a corner unit in a row of brownstones, is a lesson in refined, comfortable Southern style. Newnan-based interior designer Jamie McPherson of Hearth and Home Interiors was tapped by the magazine to decorate



The look of a simpler time is what developers are striving for in Senoia. Main Street has been revitalized and visitors will find antiques and home decor shops, a bakery and a wine store. **Vino Wong** vwong@ajc.com

the four-story dwelling built by John Bynum Custom Homes. The brownstones were developed by Raleigh principals Paul Lombardi and Tigchelaar’s development firm Historic Development Ventures. The homes are the first phase of construction for their Gin Property, an 11-acre residential and mixed-use development off Main Street that will be used as a backdrop for movies.

Frank Craig, the manager of Southern Living’s Idea House Program, said the magazine was attracted to the Gin Property project for a number of reasons. In addition to



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Senoia’s cachet, the town is about 35 miles south of Hartsfield Jackson International Airport. The magazine also has a long history with Peachtree City-based Historical Concepts, a leading Southern architectural firm that designed the community.

Southern Living editor in chief Eleanor Griffin sums it up this way: “This development in Senoia captures the magic of what Southerners envision the Southern ‘good life’ to be.”

After visiting the Idea House, tourists can take a trip through Mayberryesque Main Street. Antiques and home decor spots abound, intermixed with a bakery and wine shop. Locals mingle at the Senoia Coffee Co., the area’s sole coffee spot for drinks and light fare, or rub elbows at one of Main Street’s three restaurants, often the site of filming for such TV shows as Lifetime’s “Drop Dead Diva.”

The streets are clean, the pace is slow and everyone knows everyone. And that’s just what makes Senoia so darn special.



Southern Living magazine's Idea House in Senoia features an open, relaxed atmosphere in the kitchen and hearth room. The home is in a corner unit in a row of brownstones, near the intersection of Gin and Broad streets. Photos by **Vino Wong** vwong@ajc.com

If you go

What to do

● **Southern Living 2010 Georgia Idea House.** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays; 1-5 p.m. Sundays. Through Dec. 12. \$10; children 12 and under, free. \$1 of each ticket benefits the American Cancer Society Cattle Baron's Ball. The house is near the intersection of Gin and Broad streets. www.idealhouse2010senoia.com

● **Main Street, the shopping mecca.** Check out Gail's Antiques and Ms. Wendy's for antique and vintage furniture, china and more. Twist on Main boutique and Beyond the Door have stylish decorative accents and tabletop wares. Cydney's Alley specializes in funky "fine junktiques," while mainstay Hollberg's Fine Furniture offers high-end furniture.

● **Historic homes driving tour.** Start on Main Street and take a self-guided tour throughout Senoia to see its most impressive homes, including cottage, Federal, classical revival and farmhouse styles. Visit www.idealhouse2010senoia.com and click "things to do" for house tour pamphlet.

Where to eat

● **Founders Restaurant:** For white-cloth dining, check out this spot. The impressive sky-high bar was built by Riverwood Studios with the intent of using the restaurant in films. But the food is the star, specializing in seafood intermixed with Southern staples. 20 Main St. 770-599-4144, www.foundersrestaurant.com.

● **Redneck Gourmet:** Pop into this casual eatery for Southern bites, especially the pimento BLT sandwich. 42 Main St. 678-723-0235, www.redneckgourmet.com.

● **Maguire's Restaurant and Irish Pub:** This cheery spot below street level is a hit with locals looking for traditional Irish fare such as bangers and mash or shepherd's pie. On Sundays, it's the official "Drop Dead Diva" viewing place. 42 Main St. 770-727-3020, maguiresirishpub.com/GreatFood.