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it's spring!

Atlanta

Good manners and glamour too—
Atlanta is on a roll, with a building boom, award-winning
chefs, and some of the
best shopping in the South
By Nancy Staab

Atlanta is no stranger to the spotlight. After all, the Georgia capital was the site of the 1939 movie premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, a major station of the civil-rights movement, and the host of the 1996 summer Olympics. But this storied Southern city has never quite received its due from the nation's custodians of cool. At least not until now.

Swank hotel chains have recently cottoned to Atlanta's status as one of America's fastest-growing metro areas: The Mansion on Peachtree, a jaw-dropping spire designed by Robert A.M. Stern and owned by Rosewood Hotels, opens this month. Three new W Hotels will be catering to urban hipsters, including the W Atlanta Midtown, which

debuted this spring. Also hanging up their shingles are a St. Regis, a Kimpton, and a Hard Rock.

The city's cultural stock is surging as fast as the luxury suites. Deep-pocket philanthropists are funding gems such as the stunning aquarium (the world's largest) and its much-ballyhooed beluga whales. The resplendently bohemian Savannah College of Art and Design—think RISD with a Southern accent—opened a campus here three years ago, giving every local would-be designer hope for the future. The Atlanta Opera luxuriates in its new home in the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, and the Grammy-winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is raising funds for a Santiago Calatrava-designed ▷