

# **BeltLine Update: Boulevard Crossing**

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Now that parts of the BeltLine are actually under construction, it's even more fun to walk through areas that will be transformed by the coming trails and parks. The trails in the West End were started in February and should be finished by the end of summer. It's worth a drive-by now to see the work in progress and to imagine how Boulevard Crossing Park will spark more development in this scrubby industrial area. More recently, we talked Valarie Wilson, executive director of the Beltline Partnership, out of her office on a pretty spring afternoon to meet us on Francis Street, where we parked our cars to get out and survey the development going on south of Grant Park. Standing on the abandoned tracks on Boulevard, Wilson said this is the first fully assembled property that will become a park along "the emerald necklace." The 21.5-acre park is bordered, roughly, by Englewood on the south, Boulevard on the east, and the tracks on the north. When completed, in 2010, it will include dog parks, playgrounds, courts for basketball and a field for baseball. There will be venues for art installations and performances and terraced community gardens.

When the park and its trails are complete, Wilson said, there will be spurs that connect to Arabia Mountain in DeKalb County and to the Silver Comet Trail, which goes all the way to Alabama. "Look how many neighborhoods can access this park," Wilson pointed out. "It's going to change this neighborhood for existing and new residents," she said. "We're helping to create the kind of community you want to see."