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LOCAL STORIES JANUARY 11, 2023

# Exploring Life & Business with Derek Caffè of Code Black Properties

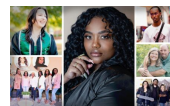


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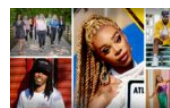


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Today we'd like to introduce you to Derek Caffé. **Trending** | ATL'S MOST INSPIRING STORIES

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### Derek, we appreciate you taking the time to share your story with us today. Where does your story begin?

Today, I am a real estate broker and contractor, but that's not how my journey started. In 2015, I started my career in real estate as an investor with the purchase of my first property in Austell, Georgia. I purchased a duplex which served as my primary home and an investment property, also known as house hacking. House hacking is the practice of purchasing a home with the intent of living in property while renting out the other unit(s) or rooms for extra income.

I distinctly remember the first of the month came three days after closing on my first property. At the time I hadn't moved into the home and both units had tenants. So, three days after buying the home I received a check for approximately \$1,285, which was the combined rent for



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filed the paperwork to start my real estate investing company – Code Black Properties, LLC.

Prior to purchasing the duplex, I was renting a one-bedroom apartment in Kennesaw, Georgia. House hacking the duplex allowed me to reduce my housing expense from \$805 per month to \$1.53 per month (yes, one dollar and fifty-three cents!). \$1.53 was the difference between my mortgage payment and the tenant's rent payment. And because I am a retired U.S. Army veteran, I was able to purchase that first property with a VA Home Loan. VA Home loans are available to military personnel and veterans. Those who qualify for VA Home Loans are able to purchase a 1 – 4 unit home with no down payment.

Although I didn't have to put a down payment on my first home, I had saved up enough money for a down payment prior

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property. I was fortunate to find another duplex close to my first property and within budget. Unlike the first property which was move-in ready, this second property was a fixer-upper. After closing, I immediately began the process of doing a full cosmetic renovation of each unit. Through the process of repairing my second duplex, I gained firsthand experience with the renovation side of real estate investing and I loved it! Years later this love would soon blossom into its own enterprise – Code Black Construction, LLC.

The real estate agent that I used for my second property told me that he thought that I would make a good real estate agent. He encouraged me to take the test. At first, I rejected the idea. After some more encouragement from him and others, I decided to give it a try. In early 2017, I signed up for a real estate salesperson course. By April 2017, I had

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remodeling investment properties to help others do the same. My desire to assist others in building financial independence through real estate gave birth to my real estate sales company – Code Black Real Estate, LLC.

As I continued helping clients climb the property ladder and invest in properties myself, I began to think about the future of Code Black Properties. I thought to myself, “What’s the next step? Do I just collect dozens of rentals all over the place until I kick the bucket?” That didn’t seem efficient to me. That’s when I stumbled upon the idea of becoming a real estate developer. Real estate development combined all my skill sets: real estate investment analysis; zoning analysis, real estate acquisitions; renovations and construction; property management and real estate disposition into one job title.

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That's how I got to where I am today.  
While I still hope to purchase and

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renovate properties as a real estate broker and contractor, I've also begun my first development, "Caffe Place". Caffe Place is a collection of 5 homes on 1.72 contiguous acres in downtown Austell, GA's Unity Square neighborhood. The homes and land will serve as a combination of long-term rentals, short-term rentals, event space, and a "third place" for the Unity Square neighborhood. Since it is a self-funded venture, I hope to have all phases completed by the end of 2024.

**Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges and lessons you've learned along the way. Looking back would you say it's been easy or smooth in retrospect?**

I liken my path to the popular internet meme, "What people think success looks like." In it, there's a straight arrow moving upward; next to "What success really looks like", where the arrow moves all

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over the place before moving upward  
While technically, I had and will

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continue to have adversity, I just look at it as a normal part of life. While some people have to overcome larger obstacles than others, it's a normal part of life for all. Adversity and your reaction to it is the foundation for who we are as people.

Some of the adversities I particularly face and will continue to face are historical in nature and ongoing. I'm a black man in America, which has its own nuances and implications for my life and its prospects. I know I don't have the same access to capital as others with similar demographics than me. I know that if I make a mistake, I won't be given the same opportunity to learn and grow from that situation as others. I know I don't have access to the same networks and knowledge bases as others. But despite this adversity being built into the fabric of the country, I've learned it's the people who are able to adapt to their environment that survive. So, I focus on

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my actions rather than the currently built environment.

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## **Appreciate you sharing that. What should we know about Code Black Properties, LLC?**

I own three complementary real estate companies. First, there is Code Black Properties, LLC the parent company, which handles the leasing and management of my personal portfolio of investment properties, along with real estate development.

Code Black Properties, LLC has two subsidiaries – Code Black Real Estate LLC and Code Black Construction LLC. Code Black Real Estate LLC handles real estate brokerage services (helping future investors buy and sell real estate). Code Black Construction LLC handles remodels and construction. Having real estate brokerage and remodeling services under one roof helps my clients alleviate the stress of buying and renovating.

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I specialize in clients that are interested  
in real estate for business and

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investment purposes. My clientele is varied and includes: those purchasing their first home and looking to house hack; beginner and experienced house flippers; and real estate developers.

Because I am an experienced real estate investor myself, I bring a wealth of knowledge to the home investment process that clients won't get from an average agent. I'm not looking at simply how pretty a home is, but rather, how this home purchase can be the launch pad for future financial independence.

### **What's next?**

I have lots of plans in the works. First, I want to help more ATL metro homebuyers and sellers learn how to build wealth and increase their income through real estate investment. Second, I'm hoping to have all phases of Caffè Place completed by the end of 2024. Third, I hope to obtain my contractor's license next year in 2023.

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are focused around improving the livability and desirability of downtown Austell. I'm in the process of launching a civic organization called Create Austell with several other residents of Austell. Create Austell is focused on building social connections in our local community and rallying around projects which would make our downtown much hipper and livelier. I am also preparing the launch event for Unity Square. Unity Square is a neighborhood bordering downtown Austell with homes and buildings dating back to the 1800s.

Lastly, I've been involved in local community activism in Austell since 2015. I have been a past stakeholder on our 2017 Comprehensive Plan, 2021 LCI study, and 2022 Comprehensive Plan. I am currently a stakeholder on the Austell Powder Springs Road Trail committee. This committee is composed of Austell, Powder Springs, and Cobb County

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Austell to downtown Powder Springs and ultimately the Silver Comet Trail.

So, I look forward to the fruits of these efforts coming to life in the coming years and creating a new and improved downtown Austell.

### Contact Info:

- Website: <https://www.CodeBlackProperties.com>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/derekcaffè/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CodeBlackProperties>
- Other: <https://www.CodeBlackRE.com>

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