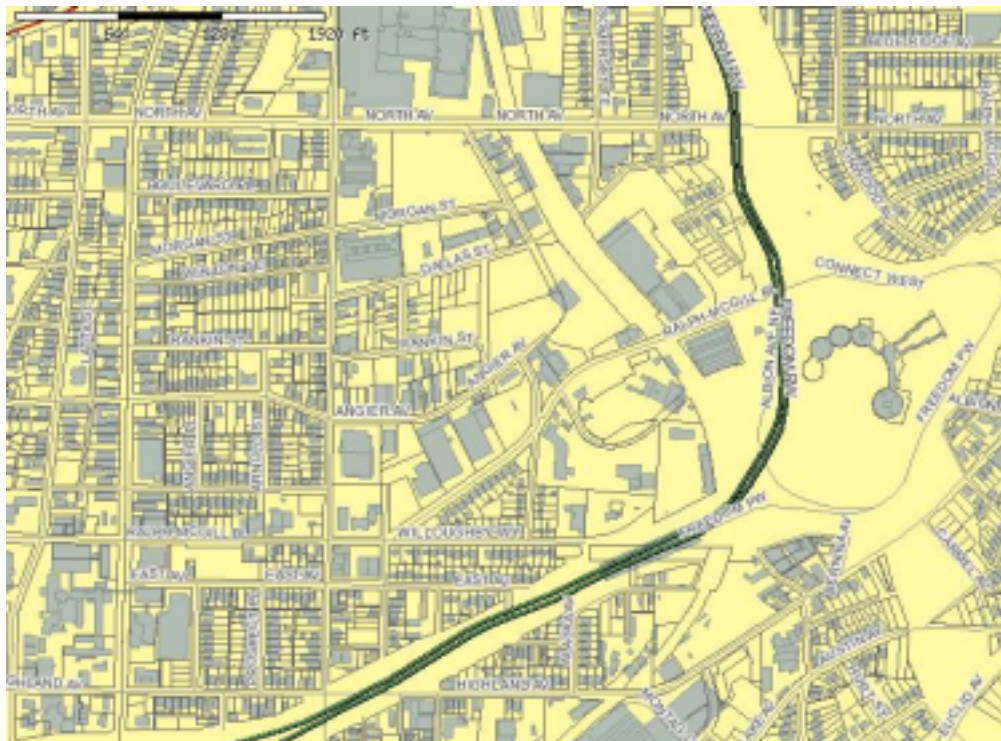


Ralph McGill Boulevard

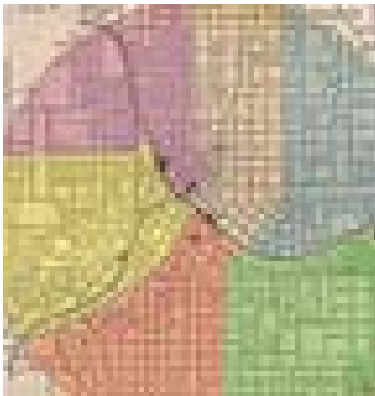


Theme

The Ralph McGill node boundaries are near the intersections of Glen Iris Avenue to the west, the Beltline to the east, North Avenue to the north, and Freedom Parkway to the south. This area lies within the heart of the Old Fourth Ward District. Two main factors characterize the history of the area, the residents and the industries present.

The Old Fourth Ward District was predominately an African American residential area until the 1960s when urban renewal displaced many of the district's residents. During segregation when the area was solidly a working-class neighborhood, there was an abundance of factories and warehouses. Railroad lines delineated the district from working-class white Cabbagetown to the south and affluent white Inman Park to the east. Downtown was west. The northern boundary was North Avenue, with what's now called Midtown lying beyond it. As the railroads became more and more obsolete and Atlanta's population began increasing, many of the industries chose to leave the area, opting for a more truck-accessible part of the city. Many of the vacant buildings became offices, and several were rehabilitated into loft apartments.

Developmental History



1883 Ward map of Atlanta, 4th Ward shown in blue

The Old Fourth Ward District gets its name from the Atlanta Ward System which is a series of political divisions used by the city of Atlanta from early in its founding until switching to a district system in 1954. The Fourth Ward was first defined in January of 1854 as the area north of the Georgia Railroad and east of Ivy St. The ward contained two of the roughest sections of town: the red-light district along Decatur Street and Slabtown (presently the site of Grady Memorial Hospital), but the northern part was home to mostly small farms. In November of 1883, a Sixth Ward was created from portions of the Fourth and Fifth Wards. The Fourth Ward lost the entire Peachtree Street corridor leaving a district of working class citizens: Germans and Jews to the north and African Americans to the south. Before 1910, the ward had become almost exclusively African American and centered around Auburn Avenue, known as Sweet Auburn. A large portion of it was destroyed in the Great Atlanta fire of 1917.

The Ralph McGill node was used as farmland and was largely undeveloped until the early 1870s when the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railroad constructed a portion of rail branching off to the north from the Georgia Railroad. This portion of rail is the first section of the Beltline to appear. With the construction of this rail line, development of the area begins to occur. The May Utility Workers, Atlanta Car Company, DeLoach Mill Manufacturing Company, Beutell Manufacturing Company Furniture Factory, and C.A. Dahl Company Green House spring up along the railroad in the 1890s. All but the greenhouse was quickly demolished to make way for newer development.



1919 Birds Eye View Map, Pattillo Lumber Co and Patterson Lumber Co

By the 1910s, the area began to see an increase in the development along the railroad. The DuPre Manufacturing Company built its excelsior mill at 695 North Avenue around 1901 and the mill still exists today as the only one of its kind in Atlanta. The Pattillo Lumber Company, Pratt Engineering & Machine Company, and Callaway Foundry Company were constructed along the Southern and Georgia Railroads, but were no longer existing by the 1930s.



1919 Birds Eye View Map, Ford Motor Co, DuPre Manufacturing Co and C.A. Dahl Floral Co

However, the Ford Motor Assembly Plant that was constructed from 1914-1915 remains today, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Forrest Avenue Public School was built in 1911, and remained until 1977. Population statistics for the Fourth Ward state that the population of the Ward in 1910 was 22,000 (the third largest population of the 10 Wards) and was 57 percent African American.



95 Angier Ave, 1911

In the 1920s, two businesses that are currently on the National Register of Historic Places appeared: The NuGrape Company of America and the Troy Peerless Laundry Building. The 1920s also saw the construction of the largest building remaining today in the Ralph McGill node, the former Sears Roebuck distribution center on Ponce de Leon Avenue. In the 1930s, Southern Dairies, the Western Electric Company Building (now the Telephone Factory Lofts), and the National Linen Service facilities were constructed, and they remain today in use and listed on the National Register. Several other manufacturing companies were established, and many public needs began to appear in the area.

The Creomulsion Company is one of Atlanta's oldest privately held companies. They opened their first offices and manufacturing on Glen Iris Drive in the 1920s. Now known as Summit Industries, the company was started when a pharmacist in Griffin, Georgia developed a product called Creomulsion Cough Medicine. An Atlanta investor believed in the product and it was eventually marketed in over 3,000 newspapers throughout North America. Two churches, one designated for African Americans, were built.



Troy Peerless Laundry, 1950



Sears Roebuck Distribution Center, 1953

The Henrietta Egleston Hospital for Children was founded on Forrest Road, now Ralph McGill Boulevard. From 1928 to 1950, when the hospital was demolished, the Egleston Hospital for Children treated some 20,000 children, 65-85% of whom could not afford healthcare. Census statistics from 1920 state that the Fourth Ward had the second highest population of the thirteen wards with 32,116 residents, 60 percent of whom were African American.

During the 1940s and 50s, more manufacturing and industrial facilities located in the area, but a shift occurred in the kind of goods and services being provided. The automobile had overtaken the railroads as the primary means of transporting goods. By the 1960s, most of the manufacturing industry in the node had relocated to more accessible locations for truck transfer. This left many of the mammoth factories vacant. The types of businesses in the area shifted from manufacturing to offices.

As for the residents of the area, the concept of urban renewal began to infiltrate the neighborhoods of the Fourth Ward District. Buttermilk Bottom was a portion of the historically African American district. In 1967, the neighborhood was demolished to be replaced by the new Atlanta Civic Center and several federal housing projects. In the 1960s, demolition began to allow for the construction of Freedom Parkway, also known as the Presidential Parkway, and was completed in the 1990s. Freedom Parkway divides the Old Fourth Ward from the area now known as Poncey-Highland. The Old Fourth Ward District is currently a very diverse neighborhood, with federal housing as well as new construction and redevelopment projects.



Telephone Factory Lofts, 2005

Now Atlantans of all ethnicities clamor for urban life, and the Old Fourth Ward is experiencing renewal. Many older houses are being renovated and new ones are built. Industrial spaces are being converted to loft apartments such as the Telephone Factory Lofts and NuGrape Lofts. New loft developments are appearing such as Block Lofts and Copenhill Lofts. There are projects underway such as the City Hall East Redevelopment. Many shops and restaurants are experiencing success in the area. Currently the restaurant Two Urban Licks, located near the intersection of Freedom Parkway and Ralph McGill Boulevard, is one of Atlanta's busiest restaurants.

There is still industry in the Old Fourth Ward, including a candy factory and a mammoth laundry. But many industrial buildings now house media firms or are being replaced with mixed-use developments. There are still dilapidated shotgun houses behind rusty fences, vacant lots overgrown with kudzu. But just beyond an apartment house where people without air conditioning pass warm evenings on the stoop, homes priced from \$700,000 are going up.



NuGrape Lofts, 2005



Sears Roebuck Distribution Center & City Hall East, 2005

Physical Description



Creomulsion Company, 2005

The Ralph McGill node is located in Northeast Atlanta, just east of the downtown Central Business District. The boundaries of the node, outlined in the Atlanta Development Authority's Redevelopment Plan, are near the intersections of Glen Iris Avenue to the west, the Beltline to the east, North Avenue to the north, and Freedom Parkway to the south. The node is characterized by 1 to 2 story industrial buildings, large surface parking lots, some mature trees, and steeply graded land in some areas.

Two significant railroad structures are in and around the node. There is a railroad bridge underpass near the intersection of Ralph McGill and Freedom Parkway. It is of steel plate girder construction with steel cross bracing underneath. The bridge also features a wooden deck with outrigger railing support and concrete wing abutments. The other bridge in the Ralph McGill node is located at the intersection of Ponce de Leon Ave and the Beltline. This underpass features a riveted steel plate girder deck with concrete wing abutments. There are also railroad crossing signs and signals near Irwin Street.

Just outside of the node sits one of the oldest non-residential buildings in the neighborhood at 345 Glen Iris Drive. Fulton County tax records show that this building was constructed in 1920. The building formerly housed the Creomulsion Company, a medicine manufacturing company. The structure is constructed out of brick with arched window openings, steel pivot windows, and a pedimented front on the façade.



Southern Dairies, 2005

The node also houses a truck transfer distribution center at 680 Dallas Street. Built in 1955, the building is primarily a concrete with 16 loading bays and a flat roof. To the left of the row of bays are offices constructed out of jumbo brick with steel windows. This structure formerly housed truck transfer companies, the most recent being Howard Baer Trucking, and is currently vacant. The Trust for Public Land acquired this property in August of 2005.



Troy Peerless Lofts, 2005

Several buildings have already been rehabilitated in the Ralph McGill node. The Telephone Factory Lofts at 828 Ralph McGill originally housed the Western Electric Company. The building is an excellent and unique example of the Moderne-style in Atlanta. The NuGrape building at 794 Ralph McGill was built as a stripped Classical style industrial building. The structure represents a transition between classically influenced architecture and modern architecture. The Southern Dairies office complex at 621 North Avenue and the Troy Peerless building at 650 Glen Iris are both prime examples of

the Art Deco style. The Ford Factory Lofts at 699 Ponce de Leon is indicative of early 20th century commercial and industrial architecture in Atlanta as well as in the Southeast. The Empire Manufacturing Company building constructed for the National Linen Service on Glen Iris was also built in the Art Deco style and is characterized by an oversized entrance with a geometric brick surround.



Empire Manufacturing Company, 2005



*DuPre Manufacturing Co Excelsior Mill,
2005*

The DuPre Manufacturing Company buildings at 695 North Avenue are planned for loft conversion. The mill, built around 1901, contains two buildings constructed out of rubble stone with wide mortar joints and double-hung wooden windows in arched openings. The facility also contains a 1940s steel-framed addition featuring steel windows and earthquake joints. Some of the historic excelsior manufacturing equipment is also still in place.

The majority of the remaining buildings in the node are older warehouse structures constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. The buildings are simple and are representative of the International and Modern styles of architecture. Most buildings are 1 to 2 stories, are constructed out of CMU, concrete, or brick, and contain steel windows. These buildings have also been constructed along with ample parking lots adjacent to them. Along Ralph McGill Boulevard, there are multiple industrial buildings all built between the late 1940s and early 1960s. An office building at 680 Ralph McGill was constructed in 1965 and has housed multiple book publishing companies including the Georgia School Book Depository, Harper & Row, and McGraw-Hill. 700 Ralph McGill was constructed in 1963 for a new daily evening newspaper called the Atlanta Times Inc. 723 Ralph McGill, constructed in 1954, is a 2 story brick structure that features a series of 20 light steel framed pivot windows. 728 Ralph McGill, constructed in 1963, is a 1 story brick building with a stone foundation and a stone retaining wall. At 750 Ralph McGill, there is a 2 story brick building constructed in 1949. The entrance to the building contains glass block and a concrete surround. The building is one story at the rear and has large windows, a pop-up triangle dormer, and a corrugated metal roof.



*DuPre Manufacturing Co Excelsior Mill,
2005*

A structure at 602 Morgan Street, constructed in 1948, features a raised center clerestory flanked by two lower wings with shed roofs. The building is constructed with 5 course American bond brick and rows of steel ribbon windows. Angier Avenue contains several smaller industrial buildings featuring brick front faÁades and steel windows.

Conclusion

There are several major significant resources in the Ralph McGill node. There have already been many rehabilitated structures in the area, as well as buildings that are planned for future redevelopment. Buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places include the Telephone Factory Lofts, the NuGrape building, the Southern Dairies complex, the Troy Peerless building, the Empire Manufacturing Company building and the Ford Factory. City Hall East, formerly a Sears Roebuck distribution center, is currently planned for redevelopment. The Redevelopment Plan also notes that the Magick Lantern Digital Studio (750 Ralph McGill), Hallís Atlanta Wholesale Florist (740 Ralph McGill), and National Linen Service (525 Glen Iris Dr) are planned for adaptive reuse as well.

Significant historic buildings not included in the National Register include the DuPre Manufacturing Companyís excelsior mill on North Avenue, the Creomulsion Company building on Glen Iris, and the truck transfer center on Dallas Avenue.

The Ralph McGill node is a significant industrial warehouse district. Because the node is flanked by the Old Fourth Ward residential neighborhood to the west and south, the area contains an excellent mix of uses including residential, office, and industrial. Rehabilitated properties, residential properties, and industrial properties make up the eclectic nature of the area and the site could be turned into one of the premiere nodes along the Beltline, however the Redevelopment Plan calls for demolition of many of the nodeís industrial buildings to make way for a new park and new 6 to 8 story office buildings. The area could be transformed into a more pedestrian friendly area, but doing away with many of the buildings that are already there may not be the best solution.

Taken individually the many buildings that make up the Ralph McGill node may go unnoticed, but together the buildings form a cohesive unit that tell the story of Atlantaís industrial past. The industrial buildings are enhanced by the complex and unique mix of uses and people in the Ralph McGill node. This variety can only continue to draw residents into the area.