

# *10th Street and Monroe Drive*



## *Theme*

The 10th and Monroe node is located in the area surrounding the intersection of 10th Street and Monroe Drive. The boundary of the node is roughly formed by 10th Street, Monroe Drive, Cooledge Avenue, Virginia Avenue, Ponce De Leon Place, the Southern Railway Line, and 8th Street. Historic sites in the node include Grady High School, Piedmont Park, the Piedmont Park Club House. Contributing commercial buildings include Woody's, Sig Samuelis, and the Silver Grill. Adjacent areas include Piedmont Park, the Virginia-Highland district, Orme Park, North Boulevard Park, and Midtown. The Beltline runs northwest through the area bisecting the node.

The 10th and Monroe node is very important to Atlanta's history for two main reasons. Since the 1880s, the area has been valued for its scenic beauty and recreational qualities. This area also provides an example of how Atlanta's turn of the century developers adapted land to transportation, as they still do today. The 10th and Monroe node has served as Atlanta's middle and upper class playground since the first trolleys transported people to the area as a weekend retreat or picnic destination. The area serves the same purpose today. The Midtown Promenade commercial center serves as a retail outlet for the surrounding residential areas. The area as a whole serves as Atlanta's intown playground, a place to enjoy the outdoors through the park for its scenery and for the many events and festivals held there throughout the year. The transportation theme is apparent when examining the patterns of residential development within and just outside the node. The planning process and its emphasis on transportation is apparent when looking at land development in the node in the first half of the twentieth century.

## *Developmental History*

Prior to white settlement, the 10th and Monroe area was forestland and was sparsely settled. The land was hilly with ravines and streams. The area was desirable because it had an ample water supply and overlooked surrounding land. Prior to 1900 the area was used for farming. As late as 1900, Monroe Drive was known as East Avenue, marking the east boundary of the city. The street name was changed from East Avenue to Boulevard then to Monroe Drive.

In 1812 William Zachary purchased the first 202 acres of what would become the area known as Virginia-Highland. The land was farmed until 1822 when it was sold to Richard Copeland Todd, who built a farmhouse at what is today 816 Greenwood Avenue. In 1910 the Todd farmhouse was destroyed by fire. Twelve years later, Sam Walker, a pioneer citizen, purchased land in the Midtown area. Walker's land would later become the site of Piedmont Park.

Perhaps the most important and influential people to the development of the area were George W. Adair and Richard Peters. An affiliation with the Georgia Railroad brought both men to Atlanta. In the mid 1850s Richard Peters purchased 200 acres of property of what is currently known as Midtown. Peters purchased the property to use for timber to fuel the steam engines that powered his flourmill. Peters' mill failed to make a profit and was sold to the Confederate government.

About the same time Adair was purchasing pieces of property in the area of the present day Virginia-Highland neighborhood. Several businesses existed along the rail line at this time. The buildings were industrial in nature and oriented to the railroad. They were predominately masonry buildings, one story in height with a flat roof and a parapet.

In 1871, Peters and Adair purchased a streetcar company and founded the Atlanta Street Railway Company which laid the tracks for the 9 Mile Trolley Line. The line traveled from the Central Business District to the Highland farming area. The route followed Broad Street to Peachtree Street to J.W. Dobbs (formerly Houston) to Highland Avenue and then onto Virginia Avenue. From Virginia the cars continued to Monroe (North Boulevard), back to Highland and then back downtown. The trolley line created the sweeping curves at Virginia and Monroe Drive. Additional lines were added and eventually the trolley passed by Peterís residence, constructed in 1881 and terminated near Adairís residence on Rupley Drive. By 1872 the trolley line had been extended to Ponce de Leon Springs a popular weekend picnic destination. Adair and Peters recognized that the rail and trolley lines would provide the impetus for growth and the infrastructure crucial to their real estate plans and Atlantaís expansion northward. The rural nature of the area changed dramatically as Peters began selling lots to the white, upper class. Peterís son, Edward C. Peters constructed his home, Ivy Hall, on such a lot on Ponce de Leon Avenue in 1885.

In 1887, a group known as the Gentlemenís Driving Club, which later became the Piedmont Driving Club, purchased 189 acres of rural land from Benjamin Walker. The sale included a stone residence on Plaster Bridge Road (now Piedmont Avenue) that Walker constructed in 1868, which became the nucleus of the Driving Club. The Piedmont Driving Club was comprised of Atlantaís elite who desired the spot for a place to race their horses. The area which would become Piedmont Park also served as a destination spot for two major expositions and for many recreational purposes in Atlantaís foreseeable future.

By the early 1900ís significant development began taking place around the 10th and Monroe node. Streetcars were running as far north as the current day Piedmont Park and the area that would become known as Virginia-Highland was changing rapidly. Multiple real estate developers developed both the present day districts of Virginia-Highland and Midtown. The platting of each development was influenced by the natural terrain and existing transportation infrastructure. Real estate value was often determined by the proximity of the lot to the trolley line. This valuation resulted in the location of the oldest, existing homes along the trolley line.

The area now known as Midtown developed just prior to the platting of the Virginia-Highland district. Stately homes began increasing along Piedmont and the northern section of the district. With the Petersí Mansion as a southern anchor and the Piedmont Driving Club as the northern anchor, the area of Midtown became a focal point for social life in Atlanta. The areas of Midtown within close proximity of the 10th and Monroe node were developed later, from the year 1910 to 1930.

The Virginia-Highland area subdivisions were platted by George Adair beginning the early 1900s. Oddly enough, the area was developed for the trolley at the same time the automobile was introduced to Atlanta. The Virginia Avenue portion of the trolley track was abandoned just ten years later and used as a service line only.

In the 1910s the city of Atlanta extended its city limits to the areas just south of Piedmont Park. Shortly after, a development group known as the North Boulevard Park Corporation purchased 64 acres of land east of Piedmont Park, which the City of Atlanta annexed in 1915. A subdivision was planned for the site but was delayed by the outbreak of World War I. Anticipating the commencement of residential construction after the War, the developers began site work constructing the Park Drive Bridge, linking the future subdivision with Piedmont Park, laying utilities, grading streets, etc. By the early 1920s, 80% of the lots of North Boulevard Park were sold and over half occupied by houses. The subdivision was expanded in the late 1920s to the northeast to include the land known as Orme Park.



1919 Birds Eye View Map, 10th and

Between the 1910s and 1930s, apartment buildings appeared in the Midtown and Virginia-Highland districts. This development indicates the trend in multi-family housing prior to and after World War I. During this period both areas began to experience increasing population density. The southern portion of the Virginia-Highland district, the closest in proximity to the Beltline, developed between the 1910 and 1940. Apartment dwellings proliferated among the streets in the southern section of the district. The southern section of Virginia-Highland had a much more urban feel than those areas developed closer to the Beltline. In the 1920s, smaller Craftsman influenced houses and commercial blocks appeared in the Midtown district. Also in the 1920s, a small African American community was located on Drewry Street. In 1922, the City of Atlanta annexed all remaining sections of the Virginia-Highland district.

The trolley which had made the neighborhoods in the node a possibility ceased to run during the 1940s due to the impact of the automobile. The residents of the 10th and Monroe area began to rely on their automobiles thus eliminating the necessity to live close to downtown and their jobs. By the 1960s the neighborhoods were suffering from neglect and disinvestment of both commercial and residential properties. Many of the large homes were subdivided for rental property as the more affluent population shifted to the areas outside the central intown area. Middle class families migrated to the suburbs resulting in not only decreased income levels and property values of residential properties inside the city but of commercial areas as well. Many commercial establishments that had existed to serve the middle class inhabitants of the area vacated their spaces allowing low rent retail establishments to move in.

In the 1960s, middle class residents began reclaiming intown neighborhoods. During the height of the movement the Georgia Department of Transportation proposed the construction of Interstate 485. The proposed route was designed to connect Interstate 285 with Interstate 20 and would have divided many intown neighborhoods in the process. The threat of the new interstate galvanized the residents of the reclaimed neighborhoods resulting in the formation of many civic associations intent to protect the character and cohesiveness of the historic districts.

### ***Physical Description***

The topography of the 10th and Monroe node is hilly, with ravines and streams. Prior to late nineteenth century the land was used primarily for farmland and only a few farmhouses existed within the vicinity of the node.

The first evidence of a large industrial structure appeared in the node in 1860. The building was the Virginia Avenue Car Barn located on Virginia Avenue and the Beltline. The site portrays a symbolic role in Atlanta's transportation history. The building was constructed around 1860 and the Barn was originally designed as the shop and car barn of the Fulton County Street Railroad Company. Trolleys were assembled at the location until the mid-1920s. The Virginia Avenue Trolley Barn changed hands over the years as a result of the various railroad mergers and was owned by Georgia Power at one time. The building housed trolleys and later served as a garage and repair shop for buses. Marta owned the building from the early 1970s to the mid 1980s. Marta sold the property to a development company in 1985 and it was unfortunately demolished in 1987 following a lengthy City Council battle.



The next structures along the rail line were designed for industrial purposes and were constructed within the node, many predating the trolley line. The structures were oriented to the Beltline and were typical of late nineteenth/early twentieth century industrial buildings. The structures were located on the Beltline. The industrial buildings were masonry with loading docks oriented to the railroad line. No such building exists within the defined 10th and Monroe node today however several exist just outside the node along the Beltline and Ponce de Leon Place. Prior their demolition, the 10th and Monroe node was the location that served as home to businesses such as the AC&J Walters Building Materials, Hunter Coal Company, Carroll Coal Company, and the Watson Company. Existing just outside the node along the Beltline and Ponce de Leon Place were industrial buildings housing such businesses as Linde Air Products, the B. Mifflin Hood Brick Co., All-Metal Cooler Corp, Wizard Products Co, Martin-Parry Corp., Universal Motor Co, Inc., Ansley Garage, Nehi Bottling Co., Zachary Manufacturing Co, and Krigshaber & Son. With the exception of the Virginia Avenue Trolley Barn, the DeJarnette Supply Company was the last industrial business to exist within the defined boundaries of the node. The firm was founded by J.T. DeJarenette in 1919 and sold building materials until 1972.

Perhaps the most identifiable physical resource in the 10th and Monroe node is Piedmont Park. The Park was the site of some of Atlanta's major historical events. The Park is roughly 185 acres and occupies the triangular shaped area between Piedmont Road and the Southern Railway. Purchased by the Gentleman's Driving Club in the late 1880s, the Park was used as an in-city location to ride horses and was planned as the site for the Piedmont Exposition in 1887. The Piedmont Exposition lost no time building the structures necessary for showcasing the resources of the Piedmont region.



*Piedmont Park Plan for Cotton States Exposition showing the Southern Railway*

In 1895, the site was home to the Cotton States and International Exposition. The New South movement and the City of Atlanta mobilized to create an exposition to promote the post-Civil War South as a place ripe for resources and manufacturing. The Piedmont Driving Club was chosen as the site for such an Exposition. The Cotton States Exposition served as a symbol that the South and the City of Atlanta were rebounding from the Civil War and ready to join the Union. The planning and siting of major structures were symbolic of this ambition. The most prominent structure, the U.S. Government building, stood on top of the hill near the present day Botanical Gardens. Buildings devoted to manufacturing were given high visibility while those exhibiting agriculture were hidden. This strategy highlighted the South's desire to enter the industrialization and deemphasize its dependence on agriculture. A Women's building and Negro building were added to demonstrate the New South's attempts to overcome the reputation of racism and sexism. The highlight of the Exposition was Booker T. Washington's 'Separate but Equal' speech which took place near the present day 14th Street entrance to the Park. Sadly, the buildings of the 1895 Exposition were condemned as deteriorated to a state beyond repair and required demolition in 1905. A fire in 1906 claimed other existing structures.

Following the purchase of Piedmont Park by the City of Atlanta in 1904, the Olmstead brothers immediately began preparing a comprehensive plan for reclaiming the Park. The only remnants of the Exposition's structures were the stone stairways that formerly led to buildings. The Olmstead plan called for paths and formal gardens to contrast with informal elements arranged along meandering paths. Sections along the park were planned for various recreational fields. Included in the 10th and Monroe node is the former Piedmont Park Golf Course Clubhouse, now part of the Park Tavern. The Clubhouse was constructed of stone in 1928 and features an arched entry with terra cotta tile hipped roof and large wood windows.



*Piedmont Park Clubhouse*

The physical appearance of the residential developments in closest proximity to the 10th and Monroe node began to take shape in the early part of the twentieth century. The developments within the closest proximity of the Beltline include the Vedado and the Seal Place sections of Midtown along with the southern section of the Virginia-Highland district and eastern North Boulevard Park and Orme Park section of the Virginia-Highland district.

The first residential section around the 10th and Monroe section to develop was the southern section of the Virginia-Highland district, east of the Beltline. This section was the first in the district to be annexed into the City of Atlanta. The section possesses the oldest and largest homes in the area. Most of the residential homes are Queen Ann Cottages and New South Cottages.

The first residential section to develop west of the Railroad was the Vedado in the Midtown area. Edwin Ansley laid out the Vedado in 1906. The development consisted of a curvilinear plan with a combination of large foursquare houses and bungalows. The foursquares were constructed first around 1910 and the bungalows followed in the 1920s. Platted in the 1920s, Seal Place was developed east of Monroe Drive by Seals and Peacock. This development also features bungalows, mostly with Craftsman details.

The North Boulevard Park section of the Virginia Highland district, located west of Monroe Drive and Orme Park, located on the west side of Monroe, were both developed as bungalow neighborhoods. The majority of the homes were Craftsman style with a limited number of English Vernacular Revival, Colonial Revival and Mediterranean styles. Both of these later developments provided modern amenities such as electricity, water and sewer lines, and telephone service. The developments also provided a driveway to accommodate an automobile.



Another important physical feature of this area was the Park Bridge constructed to connect Park Drive to Piedmont Park. The bridge is an impressive feature serving both Piedmont Park and the North Boulevard Park neighborhood. C.E. Kauffman of the Atlanta Department of Construction constructed the bridge in 1916. The contractor for the project was Case and Cochran of Atlanta. Aesthetic design was an important consideration when planning the bridge. The total length is 625 feet including four concrete girder spans and a central arch. The bridge features a paneled red brick railing with inlaid colored tiles in the main piers of the structure. An interesting historical note on the bridge is that the granite blocks utilized were also used in the paving of Atlanta's first streets in 1882. The Beltline runs under the bridge.

The late 1910s/early 1920s realized the proliferation of multi-family units in both the Midtown and Virginia-Highland neighborhoods. This development was representative of the trend both in Atlanta and the nation to provide affordable housing at a greater density. The apartments often integrated architectural features common to the single family dwellings around them such as craftsman details, double hung windows and landscaped courtyards.

The only evidence of an African American community existing in the 10th and Monroe area was found in the National Register file for the Virginia-Highland district. The National Register District file makes reference to an African American community located on Drewry Street. The community consisted of 8-10 wood homes and was demolished some time in the late 1950s

Commercial strips such as the one still present between 1027-1035 Monroe Drive were constructed in the 1920s. This specific strip is located very close to the 10th and Cooledge Avenue and is very typical of 1920s commercial construction. The strip is constructed of brick with a terra-cotta parapet, cornices, brackets, and other features representing the period. The commercial structure would have housed businesses servicing the residential neighborhoods. An example of such a structure exists today as Sig Samuels, located at 906 Monroe Drive. Sig Samuel, an Atlanta entrepreneur and real estate developer, constructed the building. Following prohibition, Mr. Samuel was the original Schlitz beer distributor in Atlanta and owner of the Loewis Grand Theater. The building is rumored to have been a drugstore until the 1930s when Mr. Samuel turned it over to his brother-in-law for operation as a dry cleaner. The current tenants have owned the building since 1962 when they purchased it from Mr. Samuel's estate. Later commercial structures developed in the strip include a filling station located in the triangle formed by Monroe Drive, Virginia Avenue and Kanuga. Although the exact construction date is unknown the filling station first appears on the 1932 Sanborn Map.



*Sig Samuels, 906 Monroe Drive*



*Grady High School*

In the mid-1920s, Boys High/Tech High School was constructed at 929 Charles Allen Drive. The firm of Hentz, Reid & Adler was selected to build Boys High but the original design was never completed because an underground creek was discovered on the property. This discovery deemed the ground unstable for the building and the construction budget could not permit the extensive site work required. The original section of design features brick construction and Classical Revival style. The plan is rectangular in shape and the building is 2 stories tall. Atlanta architect Philip Shutze worked on the original design as an apprentice. Additions to the site included a print shop (1934), auditorium and gym (1938). In 1947 the school was renamed Grady High School for Henry Grady, the former editor of the Atlanta Constitution and promoter of the New South movement. The school was made coeducational in the same year. In 1949, the stadium located at the corner of Monroe Drive was constructed. The stadium was designed by Atlanta architect Richard L. Aeck.



*Grady High School Stadium*

Several existing institutions were constructed in the 10th and Monroe node around 1950. The buildings, including the Silver Grill, constructed in the mid-1940s, and Woodyís, constructed 1953, still continue to serve the area. The structure now occupied by the Silver Grill was constructed in 1949 by Sargent Crenshaw who served in the Pacific Theater of World War II. Sgt Crenshaw, a real estate developer by trade, felt that the metal Quonset huts that he built during the war would also be ideal for commercial structures in Atlanta. According to the current owner, the Silver Grill is corrugated metal underneath the existing cladding. It was built as a temporary structure and originally had a tin roof. The building was purchased in 1945 by the current ownerís family and has operated as the Silver Grill since the late 1940s. Woodyís has been in existence since 1975 but the building was constructed in 1953. Prior to becoming a restaurant the building housed a locksmith operation. The structure is wood-framed with a wrap-around porch and is sited in the middle of an island formed by Monroe Drive, Virginia Avenue and Kanuga Street.



*Woodyís Silver Grill*

As it exists today, the 10th and Monroe node incorporates a large amount of public/institutional land including Grady High School and Piedmont Park. Other sites include a large commercial shopping center, the Midtown Promenade, as well as a large storage facility, and single and multi-family residential properties. The area contains several historic sites including Grady High School, Piedmont Park, Piedmont Park Clubhouse, and contributing commercial buildings (Woodyís, Silver Grill, Sig Samuels). Early 20th century residential areas that have generally maintained their historic character and context surround the area.

### ***Conclusion***

The 10th and Monroe node consists of several well-documented historic resources. Two National Register listed sites, Piedmont Park and Grady High School, form the intersection of 10th Street and Monroe Drive along with two National Register listed neighborhoods, Midtown and the Virginia-Highland district. The sites and districts are intact for the most part and have maintained their historic character. Several intrusive buildings exist such as the Midtown Promenade and the storage units on Virginia Avenue . These sites may provide possible locations for redevelopment. Due to the fact that the area is well documented, and historically significant in the eyes of most citizens and residents, the 10th and Monroe node may be in better position than other nodes in terms of maintaining its historic context and character. In addition, the community is very protective of their assets and wary of the intense pressure development may place on the node in regards to increased traffic and incompatible new construction.

The Atlanta Urban Design Commission does not currently review projects in the 10th and Monroe neighborhoods of Midtown and Virginia Highland. Protection under the AUDC would provide for a mechanism of review and guidance and could protect historic resources from incompatible new projects that may be too dense or out of scale with the area.