

Peachtree Road



Theme

The Peachtree node area encompasses the neighborhoods along Peachtree Road from approximately the Collier Road intersection north to Peachtree Creek, centered on the point at which the Beltline crosses under Peachtree Road just south of Bennett Street. Peachtree Road is Atlanta's most famous street, a magnet for development over the past century and particularly since the 1960s, and the subject of planning to improve it as a transportation and pedestrian corridor. Peachtree Road presents a special challenge for managing the development of the Beltline in a way that preserves and enhances historic resources.



Peachtree Road overpass at CSX rail line



Peachtree Road overpass at CSX rail line, with 2045 Peachtree building in background

The Peachtree node area is historically and currently residential in character. While commercial office buildings of moderate scale in the range of 12-15 stories are interspersed along the Peachtree corridor, they are mainly related to the medical service industry focused on Piedmont Hospital at 1968 Peachtree Road. Commercial retail buildings and storefronts provide a mix of services for local neighborhoods and customers traveling through the area on Peachtree Road. These services include dry cleaners, drugstores, liquor stores, clothing, furnishings, and a wide variety of restaurants. The area also supports a major retail theme of fine art, antiques, and collectibles found in smaller nodes along or adjacent to Peachtree.

The residential development of the node area is a mix of high-rise apartments and condominiums, garden apartments in buildings of two to three stories, and subdivisions of single-family homes. Recent and proposed developments include mixed-use mid-rise buildings with streetfront retail and condominiums on floors above, and mid-rise apartment complexes and towers.

Developmental History

The terrain of the Peachtree node area is notable for a significant hill on which Piedmont Hospital stands today. Peachtree Road rises gradually from the south to Collier Road and the peak of the ridge at the hospital, then falls steadily down northward to a slight plateau where the Beltline rail corridor crosses, then falls again to the bottoms area along Peachtree Creek. Peachtree Road itself follows a ridge line north from the rail tracks so that cross streets drop significantly in grade to the east or west.

Creek Indian trails traversed the ridges and criss-crossed near the point at which Peachtree Road is intersected by Collier Road from the west and Palisades Road from the east. Sometime after the Creeks were forced out of the area in the 1820s, the land on the west side of the ridge south of Peachtree Creek became the farm of Andrew Jackson Collier (1827-1887). The Collier homestead stood near what is now the southwest corner of Collier and Peachtree Roads, with the family grist mill on Tanyard Creek, a tributary of Peachtree Creek. Markers on Collier Road near the site include two grindstones that were found along the creek.

On July 20, 1864, these heights were the scene of the Battle of Peachtree Creek in the Civil War as troops of the Confederacy attempted to fend off the advancing Union army. Tributes to the 2,500 Confederate and 1,700 Union soldiers who died here are located on monuments and markers on the front lawn of Piedmont Hospital and along Collier Road.

For the remainder of the 19th century what is now Peachtree Road was a country road from the bustling town of Atlanta to the village of Buckhead, and farming continued on the slopes above Peachtree Creek. During Atlanta's rapid growth between 1890 and World War I, however, the Peachtree corridor began to develop. The Southern Airline Railway beltline, now an active CSX freight line, was constructed through the area in the 1890s, crossing Peachtree just south of today's Bennett Street. New high-end residential areas were built on Tuxedo Road in Buckhead and around the Capitol City Club in Brookhaven, and by 1907 a trolley line ran along Peachtree Road to connect northerly residential areas with downtown Atlanta. In 1918 the Southern Railway completed Brookwood Station, south of the Peachtree node area, to serve the north edge of the city.



1928 Sanborn Map, Peachtree Road at Peachtree Creek

Early in the 1920s 65 acres of land on the east side of Peachtree Road from Huntington to Brighton Roads was subdivided and developed as the Brookwood Hills neighborhood, with homes comparable in size and cost to the earlier Druid Hills development near Emory University. Neighborhood retail stores were built in one-story brick storefronts on the east side of Peachtree Road. The only brick storefront buildings remaining today are in the 1800 block, the 1900 block, and the 2200 block. Garden apartment buildings were constructed at the intersections of Peachtree and Huntington on the east side of Peachtree, and on the west side of Peachtree farther north and along side streets such as Peachtree Memorial Drive. Several remain, including the Knox and Peachtree Road apartment buildings constructed in 1927. Other garden apartments along Peachtree were demolished for commercial development after 1970.

Fine single family homes were also built along Peachtree, including the 26-acre iDeerlandi estate of attorney Jack Spalding and family at the top of a hill north of Collier Road on the west side of Peachtree Road. Spalding had urged his fellow landowners along Peachtree to allow the road to be widened to eighty feet in 1908, so that it could become the transit corridor to Buckhead. In the bottoms along Peachtree Creek several Atlanta families donated about 200 acres of land for Atlanta Memorial Park (site of the Civil War battle) in 1929. In 1931 a golf course was constructed and named after Bobby Jones, one of Atlanta's most famous athletes and citizens.



1952 Sanborn Map, Peachtree at Colonial Homes Drive



1952 Sanborn Map, Bennett Street

A gas station — now incorporated into the Mick's restaurant building — was constructed at the corner of Bennett Street and Peachtree Road adjacent to the rail right of way in 1925. By the 1940s, Bennett Street was developing along the tracks into a neighborhood of light industries. A metal works stood at the corner of Bennett and Bratton. Other businesses included manufacturers of dresses, underwear, and Venetian blinds, a transfer and storage company, a dry cleaners, and a plumbing supply house. Buildings at 75, 95, and 125 Bennett Street were constructed in the 1950s.

The hill above Collier became an area of more intense development after World War II, in part because of the 1952 annexation plan adopted by the city of Atlanta that now incorporated the entire area of the Peachtree node into the city limits. In 1951 the Darlington Apartments, Atlanta's first high-rise apartment building with 612 units, was constructed at 2025 Peachtree Road adjacent to the north side of Brookwood Hills. Shortly thereafter, the Spalding family sold iDeerlandî to Piedmont Hospital as the site for a new hospital complex. Piedmont Sanitarium had begun in 1905 in the iSwift House,î one of the fine Romanesque mansions downtown on Capitol Avenue. Having long outgrown the mansion and later annexes, the hospital constructed a new building on the site of the Spalding house from 1954-57. In 1961 Piedmont added a nursing school building, and then a north hospital wing in 1976.



Eastside of Peachtree Road at rail line, 1949

The 1940s also brought major new residential developments to the area. Collier Hills was constructed on the hills west of Peachtree, south of Atlanta Memorial Park and along Collier Road. The Peachtree Hills subdivision was constructed on the hills east of Peachtree and north of Peachtree Creek, including several apartment buildings built in three phases from 1937-1951. In 1949 Colonial Homes, a 250-unit garden apartment complex, was completed on the east side of Atlanta Memorial Park.

Over the last forty years the Atlanta area has seen exponential growth, as marked by the widely-recognized population sign showing the current population count, erected in front of the Darlington Apartments in 1965. The Peachtree node area has seen more intense residential development during these decades, as well as the construction of office buildings for medical services and several small shopping malls.



2045 Peachtree Road

The Peachtree Park garden apartments in two-story buildings were constructed between Peachtree Creek and the CSX tracks two blocks east of Peachtree in 1969. More recently the Brookwood Valley garden apartments have been built down the hill to the east of the Darlington. The Bradford 12-story condominium tower was erected around 1990 on the east side of Peachtree north of Peachtree Park Drive. Other high-density apartment complexes include the 15-story Wesley Townsend tower and Heritage Place, constructed in the last five years on Colonial Homes Drive a block west of Peachtree. The Aramore at the intersection of Peachtree and Peachtree Memorial is also new construction, a mixed use building with street level retail, six stories of apartments, and a condominium tower under construction.

Piedmont Hospital has expanded on both sides of Peachtree Road, including a Professional Building at 2001 Peachtree completed in 1989, and the adjacent T. Harvey Mathis Rehabilitation and Fitness Center (next to the Darlington Apartments). Auxiliary medical services have also been attracted to nearby office towers, including the Sheffield building at 1938 Peachtree, and the 2045 Peachtree building (1963), both modernist designs of the 1960s. Two- and three-story buildings on Peachtree Park Drive built in the 1960s also house medical services.



Micks Restaurant

Retail has continued to grow with an influx of restaurants in free-standing buildings, including TGI Fridays, Houstonís, and Benihana clustered near the intersections of Peachtree Valley Road and Peachtree Park Drive with Peachtree Road. The brick commercial building standing on the southwest corner of Bennett and Peachtree since 1925 was expanded to become Harrisonís on Peachtree, a well-known night club in the 1970s and 80s, and then Mickís restaurant in 1987. Bennett Street began to attract antique dealers and art galleries in the 1970s (along with specialty high-end auto repair) and was joined in the arts theme around 1990 by the Peachtree Antique Center constructed on the west side of Peachtree several blocks north, adjacent to Peachtree Creek. One large structure on Bennett, the former metal works, was demolished for construction of an electric power substation, and major power lines run along the rail corridor. Four small or mid-sized shopping malls have been constructed since the late 1980s, including Brookwood Square and Peachtree Square on the west side of Peachtree, and Brookwood Village and the Shops of Buckhead on the east.

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Physical Description

Virtually no single family homes remain on Peachtree Road within the node area. One of the few nearby is the Cauthorn House built in 1921 in Dutch Colonial style and now part of the Peachtree Commons Condominiums along with the Knox and Peachtree Road Apartments (corner of Biscayne Drive and Peachtree Road). Single family homes in Brookwood Hills range in style from English Vernacular Revival, Colonial Revival and Neoclassical Revival to Craftsman bungalows. Many are substantial two and three-story structures with terra cotta or slate roofs. Collier Hills and Peachtree Hills reflect the homebuilding of the post-World War II era, with two- and three-bedroom cottages, many on one level. Styles range from Craftsman, Colonial and Tudor Revival to Modernist with flat roofs and ribbon windows.

Garden apartments from the 1920s are two- and three-story brick with decorative detail in window and door surrounds and cornices. The Colonial Homes apartments (1949) are spaced along curvilinear streets in two- and three-story brick buildings with plain wall surfaces and metal casement windows. Peachtree Park garden apartments have been renovated in recent years with sunrooms and porches added on to the existing two-story brick rectangles, creating a mix of 1960s and 1990s windows and in places adding wood siding to the original brick.

The Darlington apartment tower is a Modernist classic of 15 stories, with flat roof, unadorned walls of red and tan brick, and metal casement windows on each side of a plate glass window for each apartment. The 1980s senior citizen apartment building at 2240 Peachtree Road is also a Modernist design.



Darlington Apartments

The Aramore apartments, along with the Brookwood Village mini-mall, demonstrate the effectiveness of Atlantaís neighborhood commercial district guidelines. Both are recent construction and are built to the lot lines, creating continuous sidewalk frontage like the older 1920s brick storefront blocks. Both are brick with large windows at storefront level. Parking is behind or underneath.

These features contrast sharply with buildings from about 1990 that did not follow the guidelines. The Bradford apartment tower, for example, is sided in stucco painted gray. It is set back from Peachtree Road and stands on piers with little relationship with the street or sidewalk; and the mini-mall of Peachtree Square sets the shops back from the street with a four-row parking lot in front.



Peachtree at Collier SE in 1952

Three modernist office buildings are within the scope of the node. The Sheffield at 1938 Peachtree is notable for blue mosaic tile panels framing the windows on every floor. The 2001 Peachtree professional building has wide window ribbons sweeping around each floor level with red brick facing. It also attaches to an older two-story Modernist building sided in long and thin red brick courses, with three columns of cast concrete decorative panels in a central bay of the faÁade and narrow glass brick windows near the roof line on each side of the faÁade. A flat concrete porch roof stands on fluted columns framing a plate glass window that was formerly a front door. The 2045 Peachtree building stands on piers to compensate for the sharp slope down from the street grade along that section of Peachtree. The building's verticality is accented by thin concrete decorative triple ribbons rising the height of the building. The entry level faÁade is sided with marble panels, and the entry plaza is floored with blocks of slate.



Peachtree at Collier SE, 2005



Peachtree at Collier NE in 1952

The buildings on Peachtree Park Road are mainly brick with plain walls and metal frame windows, and lacking notable architectural features. One exception is Christ Presbyterian Church at 81 Peachtree Park Drive, also brick, which exhibits Prairie style features with wide eaves and three brick piers to the left of the front door. Piedmont Hospital is predominantly a red brick block of seven-story buildings. The original 1957 hospital wing has a flat roof, unadorned brick walls, and metal frame windows with twin vertical sidelights for each large window.



Peachtree at Collier NE in 2005

The 1920s storefront blocks in or near the node area are one-story brick, with the flat roofs, overhanging tile faÁade awnings, large windows, glazed doors, and wood trim and bulkheads typical of their era of construction.



Peachtree adjacent to Peachtree Creek Bridge, 1952

The 1940s and 50s industrial buildings now converted into art and antique galleries on Bennett Street are built of concrete masonry units with metal frame windows and unadorned wall surfaces. Some have tile coping along the cornice lines. Other nearby individual stores of brick construction from the 1920s include the Central City Tavern at Collier and Peachtree Roads, and R Thomas restaurant in the

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Peachtree adjacent to Peachtree Creek Bridge, 2005

The 1800 block of Peachtree. The Modernist office buildings at 1938 Peachtree Road (the Sheffield Medical Building) and at 2045 Peachtree Road should be seen as part of a group of Modernist office buildings spaced along Peachtree, including the 1776, 1800, and 1819 Peachtree (Palisades) buildings. This section of the Peachtree corridor contains some of the most notable examples of mid-20th century Modernist mid-rise construction in Atlanta. The blue mosaic faÁade of 1938 and the marble and slate facings of 2045 give each building a distinctive feature that helps define the streetscape. These buildings could be designated as a group when eligible in the next 5-10 years.



1776 Peachtree, 1952

The Darlington Apartments, Atlanta's first high-rise apartment tower, with over 600 apartments in a post-war Modernist brick building, should qualify for historic designation as an individual resource. Sometime in the future the more recent Modernist senior citizen apartment building at 2240 Peachtree Road might also be considered.



1949, west side of Peachtree Road, including Atlanta Memorial Park and Colonial Homes

Colonial Homes apartments present an undisturbed example of post-war garden apartment construction. Their arrangement along curvilinear streets adjacent to Atlanta Memorial Park and the Collier Hills subdivision allows for open vistas and spaces between Peachtree and the park. Other garden apartments in the area from the 1920s and '30s, such as Peachtree Commons and the Briary in the 2200 block of Peachtree, and the Peachtree Memorial Park apartments on Peachtree Memorial Drive, should also be noted. The Peachtree Commons complex was listed in the National Register in 1998. Others could follow suit as a group of similar buildings demonstrating the emergence of the garden apartment type in Atlanta.



1776 Peachtree, 2003



Colonial Homes and Peachtree Commons Condominiums



Bennett Street shops

The 1920s brick storefront blocks along Peachtree (1800, 1900, and 2200 blocks), while on the fringes of the development node, remain as fine examples of their type. They model the single-story streetfront with continuous sidewalk facade that Atlanta seeks in new commercial construction on Peachtree. These buildings are the same vintage as the few remaining historic brick commercial buildings more closely in the node, particularly the Mickis restaurant structure. Together they also draw the Bennett Street buildings, constructed later in the 1940s, into a thematic unity of low-rise masonry commercial structures 60-80 years old. Preservation of this building type would help retain historic streetscapes and enhance the qualities of the arts district.

Conclusion

The Peachtree Road corridor including the Peachtree node of the proposed Beltline will be the site of intensive development in the future. At least two mixed use condominium buildings are proposed just south of the node area and another as part of the Aramore development at the north edge of the node. A group of townhomes is under construction behind the Antique Center at 2300 Peachtree (The Enclave), facing Peachtree Creek. The Peachtree Valley apartments (1962) located between the Darlington and the CSX tracks have recently been demolished for construction of a new condominium complex. At least two new office buildings are currently proposed, including iSheffield Twoî behind the existing Sheffield Medical Building at 1938 Peachtree.

The historic character of the Bennett Street arts district has already been mimicked in a new building at 49 Bennett Street, built of brick and CMUs with industrial windows but distinctive for standing three stories. The desirability of established neighborhoods is also evident; teardowns and construction of much larger houses are occurring in Collier Hills on Golfview Road, and major additions are being constructed for homes in Brookwood Hills.

Buildings constructed for individual restaurants or stores, particularly TGI Fridays and Fresh Market grocery on the east side of Peachtree between Peachtree Valley and Peachtree Park Roads, and the Citgo gas station on the west side of Peachtree just south of the CSX railroad tracks, represent low density use that could be a ready site for redevelopment. These sites slope sharply down from Peachtree, presenting a significant challenge to construct buildings compatible with a continuous streetscape. Another possible limitation is the major power lines running along the rail corridor.

The historic resources in or near the node will bring continuity to the characteristic theme of the neighborhood over the last century: primarily residential development, with a major hospital and related medical services buildings, retail stores to serve local residents, and an arts district and restaurants attracting visitors to Peachtree Road from around the region.