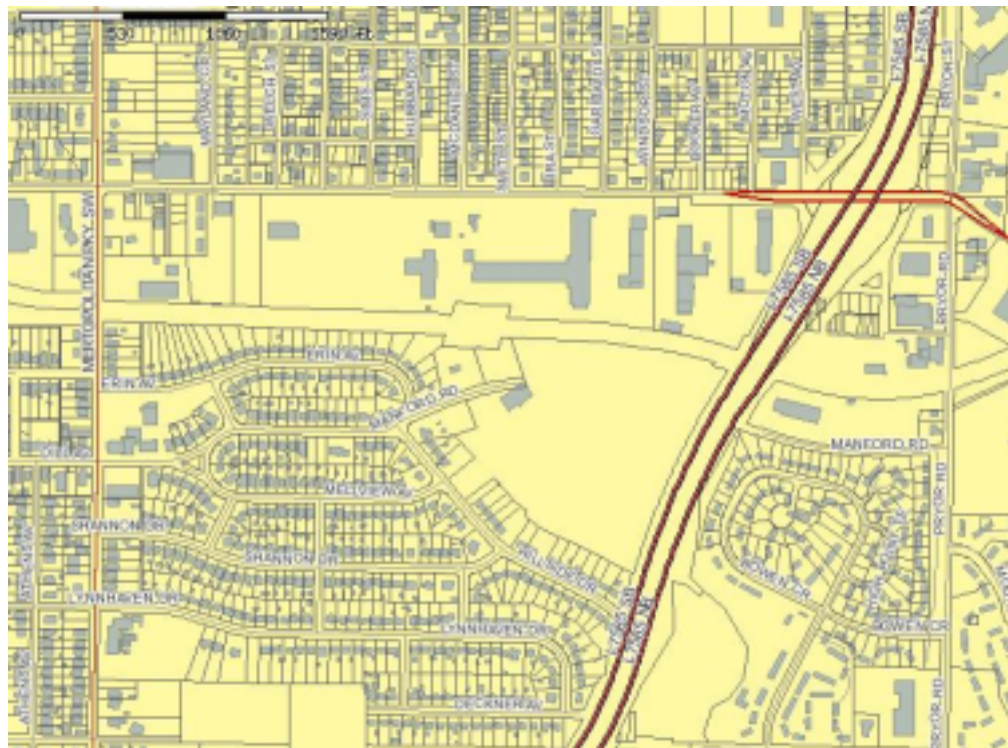


University Avenue/Metropolitan Parkway



Theme

The stretch of University Avenue between Metropolitan Parkway and I-75/85 is an anomaly along the Beltline. While the majority of vacant land along the railroad was early converted to industrial use, and the remainder became residential neighborhoods, this plot of land was farmland until after the construction of the Interstate and the subsequent construction of truck transfer facilities. Today, this tiny industrial stretch is surrounded by historic residential neighborhoods. To the north is the National Register listed neighborhood of Pittsburgh, and to the south are the historic neighborhoods of Capitol View and Capitol View Manor.

Developmental History

Development in the University Avenue node began just north of the node in the Pittsburgh Community. Following the Civil War, many began moving south of the Five Points area, where the railroads converged. Pittsburgh was founded as an African-American community and was home to many railroad workers. The community earned its name when it was observed that the dirty conditions surrounding many of the shops in the area resembled those of the steel mill areas in and around Pittsburgh, PA. African-Americans arriving in the newly settled community were greeted with steady employment due to the fact that the segregation that was the rule at the time, eliminated competition from the white population for jobs in the community. African-American owned businesses, homes, and churches covered the Pittsburgh landscape. The area south of University Avenue remained primarily farmland.

The first decade of the 20th century saw many changes in the area. In 1902, a streetcar line was installed to Pittsburgh, providing easy access to downtown and accelerating development. To the south of University Avenue, W.D. Beatie, the developer of Morningside, began developing farmland into the Capitol View neighborhood. Capitol View Elementary School, a 70+ year old brick school is also located within the neighborhood. It also features two neighborhood parks, Emma McMillan Park and the fifty acre Perkerson Park.



Capitol View Manor

Circa 1905, the Beltline was constructed just south of University, separating the predominately black Pittsburgh from the predominately white Capitol View. The area's first school, the Pittsburgh School, was established with the assistance of the Ariel Brown United Methodist Church, and was incorporated into the Fulton County School System in 1908.



Beltline passes over Metropolitan Parkway

The next decades saw continued residential development, and the commercial activity to support it. Just to the east of Capitol View, a new development called Capitol View Manor sprang up. Stewart Avenue (today Metropolitan Pkwy) became a center of culture and commerce, featuring prominent churches, schools, businesses and a 3-story classical revival Masonic Lodge.



University Avenue, aerial photograph, 1949

Despite all this growth, the stretch of University between Metropolitan Parkway and present-day I-75/85 remained either vacant or agricultural, as seen in a 1949 aerial photograph of the area.

In the 1960s, the Interstate was constructed through the heart of the neighborhood. While this did little to change the character of the residential neighborhoods, it dramatically altered the character of University Avenue. With easy interstate access, the vacant farmland between University and the Beltline became highly desirable for the booming trucking industry. Over

the next decades, several large truck transfer facilities were constructed near the Interstate. One of the notable businesses is the Capital Ford building, located at 300 University Avenue. The large brick and stone building was constructed in 1975, so based on its age is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In a matter of a few years, farmland was replaced with massive loading docks surrounded by asphalt.



Truck transfer facility, University Avenue

In the last half-century or so the node, has seen a decline in businesses and population. Factors cited in this decline include integration, which came about as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. Patrons of the businesses in the area dispersed causing many to close their doors due to lack of money to operate. Also, redlining by banks was a factor, and many residents were unable to sell their homes because of this. As a result, many found themselves moving farther west in the city to more marginal housing, abandoning their homes and allowing them to fall into disrepair. A third reason cited for the decline of not only Pittsburgh, but of the node in general is the construction of I-75/85 at University Avenue in the 1960s and 1970s. When the interstate was constructed, it cut off this section of Atlanta from the rest of the city to the north.

Physical Description



Commercial building on University Avenue

The University Ave. node on the Beltline consists of University Avenue, which intersects I-75/85. University Avenue then changes into McDonough Boulevard right after it crosses over the Beltline. Other major thoroughfares in the node include Pryor Rd, which runs north-south and intersects the Beltline and Capitol Ave, which runs north and then changes to Hank Aaron Dr. once it crosses the Beltline and intersects with University Ave. at the same time. Erin Avenue runs parallel to University Ave. and the Beltline to the south. Metropolitan Parkway is another major thoroughfare in the node as well. University Avenue, and its node are at an advantage when it comes to the Beltline because it is located in very close proximity to both a major interstate (75/85) and the Beltline itself.

Along University Avenue, many of the structures are home to businesses. The vast majority of the buildings are single-story brick structures that date to anywhere from about 1920 to 1960. The businesses housed in these buildings are mostly independent, local businesses such as restaurants, convenience stores and beauty shops. Examples include the S & A Food Mart, located at 1202 Metropolitan Pkwy, which is a single story commercial brick building dating to the 1920s. Many businesses are automobile related, such as the Auto Craft Paint & Body Shop, located at 385 University Avenue, and dating to the 1950s. Additionally, University Ave is home to multiple towing companies as well as junkyards owned by the towing companies.

On the south side of the road, between University Ave and the Beltline, truck transfer facilities dominate. The area is chiefly characterized by extensive late 20th century loading facilities surrounded by enormous parking lots. The facilities are chiefly constructed of concrete, steel and glass. While a couple of the transfer facilities have noteworthy architectural character, the overall atmosphere of this stretch of land is bleak and uninspiring.

The historic residential neighborhoods around the node are still to a great extent intact, and are the node's greatest historic assets. The houses that are located in the area are small and are located mostly on side streets off of University and the other main thoroughfares of the node. They consist of modest cottages and bungalows, interspersed with early 20th century commercial and civic buildings. Many homes, while still occupied, are in a state of disrepair, or are just run down from lack of maintenance. However, the area has begun to revitalize in recent years, and many fine homes are being restored.

In addition to the historic neighborhoods, the node has a noteworthy piece of historic railroad infrastructure. A fine steel bridge, constructed by the Atlanta & West Point Railroad, passes over Metropolitan Parkway. It is possible that this bridge is original to this segment of the Beltline, constructed ca. 1906. Its most notable feature is the name "Atlanta & West Point Railroad" painted on the side of the bridge. A similar bridge exists over Pryor Rd.

Conclusion

This node is significant for the historic neighborhoods surrounding it. Pittsburgh is one of few historically African American communities in Atlanta, and has been home to working class African Americans for well over a century. The more recent developments of Capitol View and Capitol View Manor, contain many excellent early 20th century commercial and residential buildings. The historic railroad bridge over Metropolitan Pkwy adds a bit of history to the Beltline itself, one of only two bridges like it along the Beltline.

University Avenue is surrounded by many significant historic resources. Its historic neighborhoods, businesses and railroad infrastructure help illustrate the development of Atlanta, the history of African Americans, the design of the Beltline and the influence of the Interstate on small communities. While the buildings along University Avenue itself may be largely non-historic and dilapidated, the adjoining neighborhoods contain many wonderful architectural examples that could influence future development in the node. These historic resources should be respected and conserved for generations to come.