

Neighborhood Master Plan

For Midtown Neighbors Association and The City of Atlanta
Prepared by Lord Aeck Sargent

Updated August 2017

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PART 1

The Neighborhood: Yesterday & Today

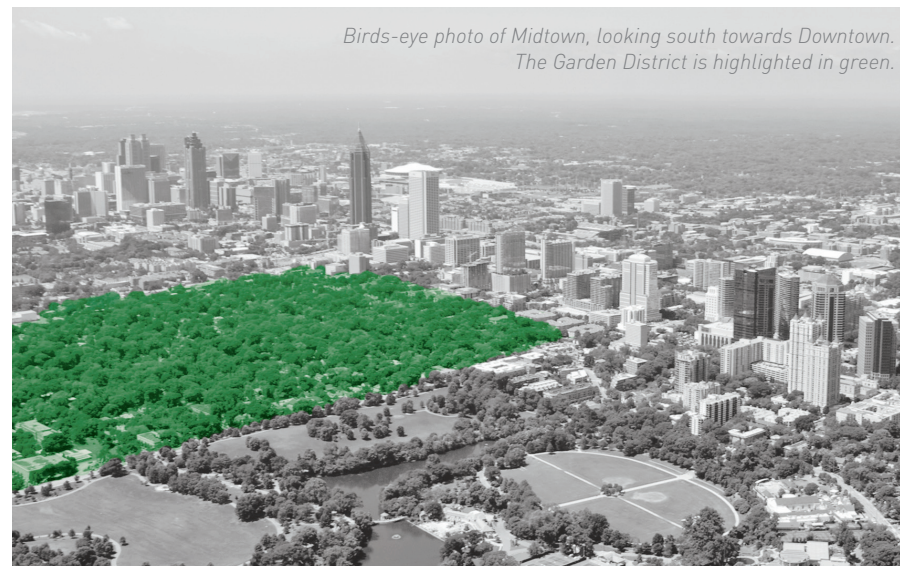
“Without increased preservation efforts Midtown is going to continue to change dramatically over the next few years, and I fear that in the near future it will not be recognizable as the same neighborhood. I think the preservation of the remaining historic integrity is the primary issue that needs to be addressed within the neighborhood.”

1.1 Introduction

The “Midtown Garden District” (MGD) is a predominantly residential in-town Atlanta neighborhood located immediately east of the rapidly-densifying Midtown Improvement District (MID). The neighborhood is characterized by early 20th Century historic homes, mid-century apartment buildings, a compact grid of streets, rolling topography and extensive mature tree canopy. The area benefits greatly from its central urban location, with restaurants, entertainment and MARTA rail transit immediately to the west, amenities such as Piedmont Park to the north and the Atlanta BeltLine trail to the east. The neighborhood is also a National Register Historic District, which was established in 1999.

Today the name “Midtown” is most often associated with the nearby Midtown Improvement District (MID) due to the unprecedented growth, development and densification it has seen over the past several decades. The “Midtown Garden District” is a relatively recent name that evolved out of the neighborhood’s annual and increasingly prominent Midtown Garden Tour, which showcases the abundance of private gardens throughout the neighborhood.

The Midtown Garden District planning focus area (represented in Fig 1.1 to the right) can be described as following 10th Street to the North, Ponce de Leon Avenue to the South, the BeltLine corridor to the east and Juniper Street to the west. It is in Council Districts 2 and 6 and in Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) E.



*Birds-eye photo of Midtown, looking south towards Downtown.
The Garden District is highlighted in green.*

WHY DO A MASTERPLAN?

A 2015 Creative Loafing article entitled *Cranes are Seriously Dominating Midtown’s Skyline* pretty much sums it up. In-town Atlanta continues to see an unprecedented amount of growth and densification with Midtown at its center. Mixed-use high-rises now dominate the skyline immediately to the west of the Midtown Garden District. The BeltLine Eastside Trail has similarly catalyzed dozens of mid-rise apartment buildings, mixed-use developments and new entertainment areas to the east. To the north, Piedmont Park plays host to over 150 annual festivals, bringing millions of visitors to the neighborhood each year. The Midtown Garden District continues (and will continue to) see increased development pressures, traffic impacts and aging infrastructure issues. The masterplan helps ensure that FUTURE neighborhood growth meets the vision of TODAY’s neighbors.

The masterplanning PROCESS was about building consensus around what the neighborhood wants to see in the future. This masterplan DOCUMENT summarizes that process and findings in order to guide future decisions on development and investments. This plan is also intended to be flexible enough to embrace inevitable change in and around the neighborhood, and serve as a living breathing document which could be expanded and modified in the coming years.

The Midtown Garden District Masterplan was initiated through a joint effort by Midtown Neighbor’s Association and City of Atlanta Councilmember Kwanza Hall’s office. The year-long planning process occurred throughout 2016 and involved thousands of neighborhood residents and stakeholders. This document represents a summary of neighborhood collaboration, dozens of public workshops, and focus group meetings, two-month online survey, as well as countless front porch conversations and backyard socials.

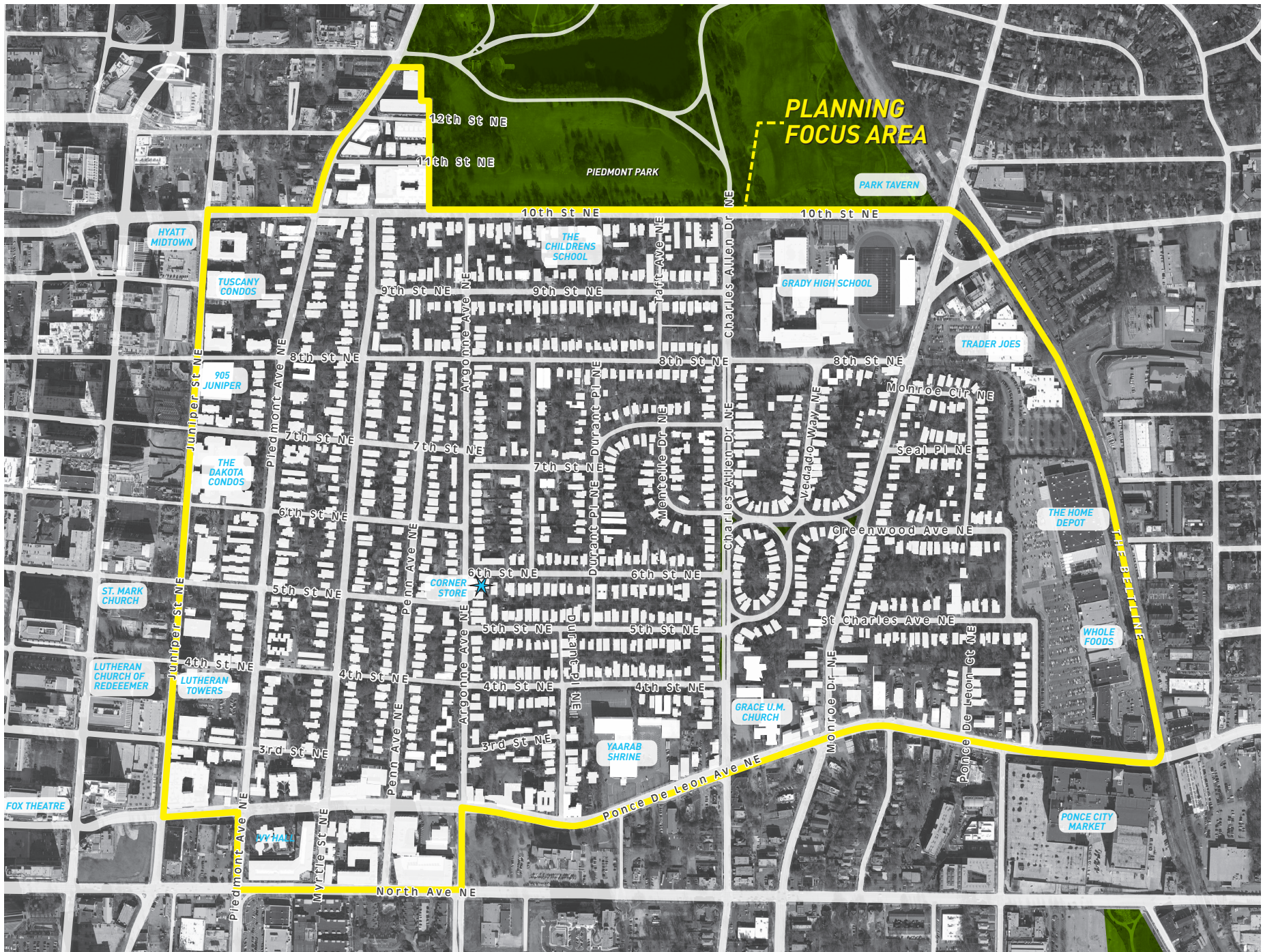


FIG. 1.1 MIDTOWN GARDEN DISTRICT - PLANNING FOCUS AREA MAP

1.2 Neighborhood History

NEIGHBORHOOD BEGINNINGS: 1800-1900

Prior to the Civil War, what is now the Midtown Garden District was a rural landscape. Peachtree Street began as a small country road along a ridge in the early 1800s and land east of it descended down to Clear Creek (a waterway that runs today in culverts underneath Piedmont Park, Grady High School and Ponce City Market). By the mid-1800s, three families - the Walkers, the Medlocks, and the Todds - owned all of the land in today's Midtown east of Penn Avenue, while west of Penn were several hundred acres owned by Richard Peters, a railroad entrepreneur. By the time of the Civil War, railroad lines were expanding throughout Atlanta as the city became an important junction at the center of the Confederacy's main food-producing region.

Streetcar lines began in Atlanta in 1871 and became a major catalyst for the city's rapid growth. In 1874 a line along Peachtree was expanded eastward along Ponce de Leon Avenue. By 1894 all of the city's streetcars were electric powered and the system had significantly expanded, with routes along West Peachtree, Peachtree, Piedmont, 8th and North Boulevard (now Monroe Drive). The various streetcar lines provided an impetus for Atlanta to grow steadily northward. The original city limit (the one mile radius from the Zero Milepost) ran between Third and Fourth Streets, but by 1897, the city limits had been moved north to Sixth Street and were expanded again in 1904 to include all of Midtown as well as Piedmont Park. By the end of the 19th Century, what is now Midtown included mostly wealthy families living on suburban estates occupying large tracts of land (sometimes entire blocks) along Peachtree and West Peachtree Streets.



One of the first major developments in the neighborhood was Ivy Hall, built by Edward C. Peters in 1883. Source: SCAD.edu



Detail from Kock's 1892 bird's eye view map of Atlanta showing Ponce de Leon Springs near lower right corner, the buildings and race track from the 1887 Piedmont Exposition at Piedmont Park at top right, and, at center, left, the residences along Peachtree, Juniper and Piedmont. Source: Atlanta History Center

NEIGHBORHOOD EXPANSION: 1900-1950

By the turn of the Century, there were larger homes lining streets such as Penn and Myrtle, but not much development existed east of what is now Argonne. For example, there were only about nine houses along St. Charles Avenue before 1900. However, by 1910 the street was filled with large homes. By the late 1920's, much of the neighborhood had filled-in and included a variety of single-family home types and styles.

Atlanta saw a building boom during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The city's population grew from 90,000 in 1900 to 200,000 in 1920. By then, building activity was at a feverish pace and the major influence of the automobile had taken hold. Atlanta became an attractive location for corporations, creating a large housing demand for the influx of office workers. This workforce wanted well-designed in-town living spaces close to streetcar lines, giving way to construction of apartments throughout the neighborhood - a relatively new type of housing for Atlanta at the time. In 1917, a large fire destroyed large portions of neighborhoods along Boulevard and Jackson Streets as far north as Vedado Way and Greenwood Avenue. Approximately 2,000 homes were destroyed in the fire, leaving over 10,000 people homeless and camping out in Piedmont Park for months. New apartments filled this demand while replacing many of the single-family residences destroyed in the fire. The housing demand during this time was also often met by subdividing single-family residences, especially the older, nineteenth-century buildings.

Examples of apartment buildings existing today include the Massellton Apartments (on the national register, located on Ponce de Leon Avenue), 907 Piedmont Avenue, 691 Juniper Street (formerly Juniper Terrace Apartments) and The Tyree on Durant Place (also on the National Register).



Commercial development was also prominent throughout Midtown by the 1920s and 1930s. Within two blocks of the intersection of Peachtree and 10th Streets there was a post office, a dentist, lawyer offices, a dance studio, a theater, Kress's "dime store," Cooledge Paints, C&S bank, two garages, two plumbers, two electrical companies, two barbers, two hairdressers, two hardware stores, three bakeries, Franco's delicatessen and no fewer than twelve grocery stores, four drug stores, two fish markets, a meat market and a dairy. During the 1920's Ponce de Leon Avenue was characterized by low-scale automobile service stations, the oldest of which still exists (built in 1939) near the corner of Ponce de Leon and Argonne. While corridors such as 10th Street and Ponce de Leon Avenue drew citywide clientele, smaller commercial nodes had become established within the center of the neighborhood, including one at Argonne at 6th Street, which still exists today (now L&M convenience store).



NEIGHBORHOOD EVOLUTION: 1950-1970

Following a period of stalled development during the 1940s, due to World War II, the early 1950s began to see new construction activity. Several apartment buildings were built on some of the last vacant land in the interior of the District as the northern part of the Glendale Terrace subdivision was finally developed. In 1947, the city's last streetcars were replaced by 'trackless trolleys' that ran on overhead wires but had rubber wheels instead of tracks in the streets. By the end of the 1950s, these would give way to gasoline-powered buses.

In 1949, construction began on the city's system of "expressways," later incorporated into the Federal system of interstate highways. One of the first segments constructed was the North Expressway, which was completed through the valley of Tanyard Creek a few blocks west of the District in the early 1950s. Automobiles facilitated suburban development further and further away from the center city during the 1950s, and by the end of that decade there would be a five-county metropolitan population of 1,000,000 people.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the neighborhood saw rooming houses and rental property increase dramatically as disinvestment by absentee landowners allowed many of the oldest houses in the District to deteriorate. By the 1960s, many of the houses on Juniper and Piedmont were beginning to disappear, several by fire, and by the late 1970s, entire



Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Piedmont Park was the center of Atlanta's "counter-culture," often hosting loosely-organized outdoor concerts. Source: GA State Archives

blocks had been cleared. Elsewhere in the District, scattered demolition and redevelopment, mostly with apartment buildings, continued to occur.

1967 brought the "summer of love" to the District as the changing business district became "The Strip," and Midtown became a center of the "counter-culture" of the 1960s and early 1970s. Although Midtown escaped the turmoil of white flight that plagued neighborhoods like West End and Edgewood, the drugs and prostitution that replaced the hippies on "The Strip" brought its own kind of turmoil to the District. By the end of the 1960s, the middle class population had left Midtown and the neighborhood suffered economic decline. Atlanta's population and tax base had shrunk as white flight to the suburbs began.

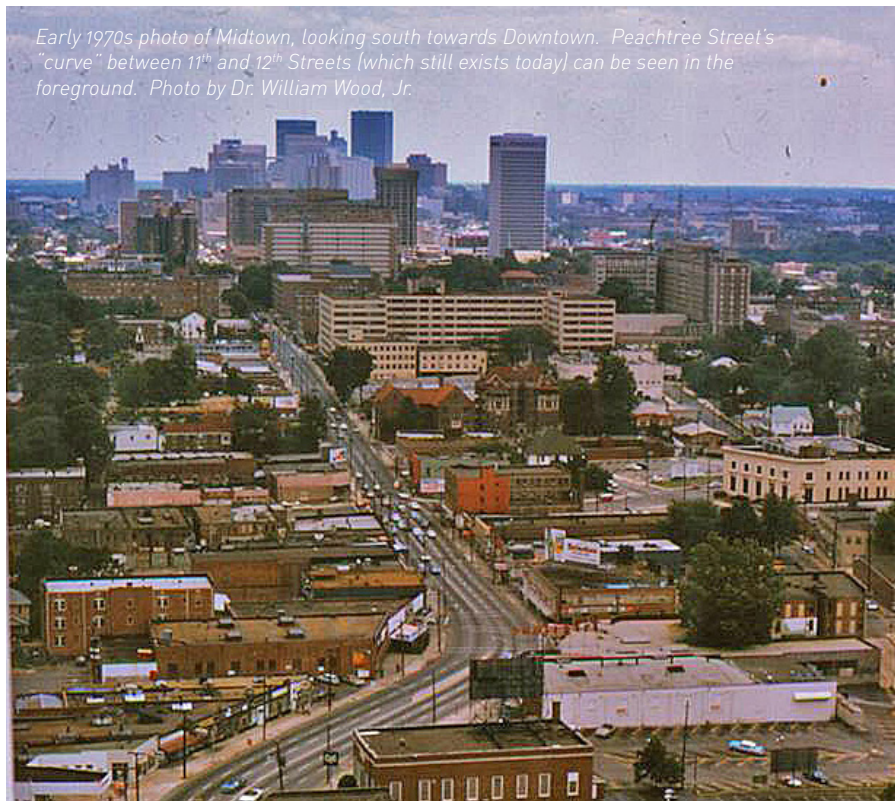


A scene of 10th Street from around 1966. Source: GA State Archives

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION: 1970-2000

By the late 1960's few of the old businesses remained on the western side of the District, although a laundry, Sig Samuel's, and a diner on Monroe Drive continued to thrive. Up until this time the District had been referred to by many names with none carrying from one decade to the next. Peachtree at Tenth was often referred to as simply 'Tenth Street' and briefly as 'Uptowne', until Buckhead began to establish itself as Atlanta's true uptown area. In 1969 construction began on Colony Square at Peachtree and 14th Street. That same year the Midtown Neighbor's Association was formed, one of the first of its kind in the city, and a slow period of revitalization began. Property values began to stabilize and remained high relative to the Old Fourth Ward, Inman Park and some other areas of the city. Rehabilitation of some of the decaying mansions on Piedmont began in the 1970s and there was increased interest by owners and residents in revitalization of the entire area.

In the mid-1970s, while the Midtown Neighbor's Association was focusing on revitalization within the mostly-residential portion of Midtown, a related movement had begun to "clean up" the commercial portion of the neighborhood to the west. The Alliance focused



Early 1970s photo of Midtown, looking south towards Downtown. Peachtree Street's "curve" between 11th and 12th Streets (which still exists today) can be seen in the foreground. Photo by Dr. William Wood, Jr.



Midtown Neighborhood Festival in the late 1970s. Source: Atlanta History Center

on neighborhood safety, commercial redevelopment, cultivating arts and education programs, and building community leaders. By 1980, the Midtown Neighbor's Association had spearheaded land-use policies that would help preserve the neighborhood's historic character. As a result, city zoning laws were crafted limiting density within portions of the neighborhood east of Piedmont Avenue.

The gay community in Midtown played a large role in the revitalization of the neighborhood, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s with the corner of 10th and Piedmont being its symbolic center and the many businesses there serving them. Around this same time period the MNA and the Midtown Alliance also worked together to improve both the neighborhood and the commercial district along Peachtree Street.

Urban planning in Atlanta gained a lot of traction following the 1996 Olympic Games. In the late 1990s the Midtown Alliance led an extensive community planning process called Blueprint Midtown. In 2000, as an outgrowth of the masterplan, the Midtown Improvement District (MID) was formalized as city development policy and its own overlay zoning district. At the same time, the MID became a self-taxing district by Midtown commercial property owners that would augment public resources and catalyze economic growth.

In 1999, what is now the Midtown Garden District became a National Register Historic District (approx. 360 acres). At the time of nomination, the historic district included 723 historically contributing, 168 non-historically contributing properties, and 4 individually listed historic buildings.

THE EVOLUTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

The District includes a well-connected street network composed of uniquely-abstracted sections of street grids. Much like the District's eclectic array of building types and architectural styles, its arrangement of streets reflects the fact that the neighborhood was initially developed by many different people over the course of many decades. For example, west of Argonne (developed in the 1870s by Richard Peters) the grid is aligned with Peachtree Street, which is skewed from true north by roughly 6 degrees. Streets east of Argonne, by contrast, were built after 1900 and were aligned to surveyed land-lots (oriented to compass points). Straight versus curved streets throughout the District also reflect the preferences of individual developers. For instance, "The Vedado" (est. 1906) and "Glendale Terrace" (est. 1925) were built as subdivisions and feature varied types of curvilinear streets. This evolution explains the different street character between areas such as Penn and Myrtle (very wide streets with larger front lawns) and areas like 8th and 9th Streets (more narrow streets with smaller building setbacks).

Other unique street features include Charles Allen Drive, which includes a planted center median. Although most of the neighborhood's sidewalks have been replaced since initially developed, some original sidewalk materials can still be found along streets such as Piedmont and Myrtle (red brick from late 1800s) and along streets such as Greenwood and Vedado (pre-WWII hex pavers).

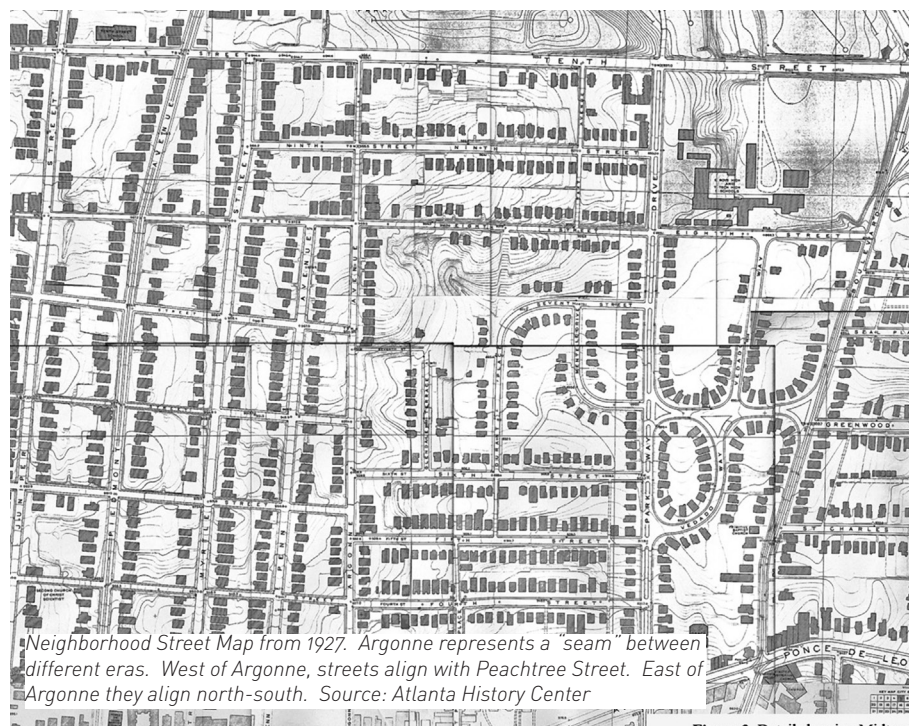
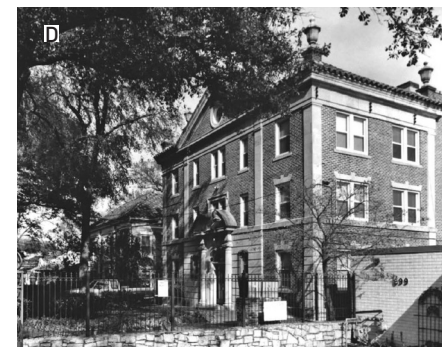


Figure 3. Detail showing Midtown

HOUSING TYPES & ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The majority of the District's historic structures date from the 1890s to about 1930, representing a wide variety of housing types built during this period, including American four-squares, duplexes and bungalows. Most of the houses within the district are wood framed and exhibits the eclecticism of housing in Georgia and throughout the Southeast from 1885 to 1930. The Midtown Garden District retains house types built during this period, including American foursquares (photo B below) and bungalows (photo A). Stylistic influences that can be found on these housing types include Queen Anne (Ivy Hall), Craftsman (photo A), Italianate, Classical Revival (photo D), Shingle Style, Gothic Revival, Mediterranean Revival (photo C), Colonial Revival (photo B), Jacobethan Revival and Renaissance Revival.

Two prominent "eras" of apartment buildings exist within the district. The first era includes apartments built from 1915-1930 include subdivided houses, garden-style apartments, and hotel-style apartments (photos C and D below). The second era includes post World War II housing generally built between the late 1940s through the late 1960s. Even today these lower-scale two-story flat apartments can be found within the neighborhood and represent much of the District's more affordable housing types.



1.3 Current Neighborhood Conditions

EXISTING LAND USE

The focus area boundary of the Midtown Garden District master plan is east of Piedmont Avenue. As such, it is not surprising that over 90% of the area's parcels are residential in use, typically less than ¼ of an acre. While this area was once almost exclusively single-family in character and use and occupied by large in-town estate homes, the Midtown Garden District has dramatically evolved and diversified in recent decades. Due to dynamic market forces, many older single-family homes were demolished with new small-scale multifamily apartments developed in their place. In addition, many of the single-family structures that have remained have been converted into multiple units in order to take advantage of the in-town rental market.

Currently, the neighborhood interior consists mostly of single family homes (many restored), duplexes, and small-scale apartment buildings. The periphery of the neighborhood tends to be slightly more dense, including larger mixed-use developments along Juniper Street and Ponce De Leon Avenue. As noted in Fig. 1.2, while the Midtown Garden District today is largely residential in *land use*, only 38% of the actual *buildings* are conventional single-family homes (i.e. occupied by a single "family"). By contrast, over 52% of the total parcels are dedicated to two-family, multifamily or mixed-use development. Therefore, from a purely building use standpoint, the neighborhood today contains more multifamily than any other use. This wide cross section of housing types, sizes and tenures is one of the key reasons Midtown benefits from a diverse array of age groups and household types.

Commercial and office uses in the Midtown Garden District tend to be clustered along Ponce De Leon (in smaller configurations) and along the BeltLine to the east in larger, big box / strip retail configurations. Of note, while directly adjacent to the BeltLine, the larger format retail sites were developed prior to the BeltLine's inception and therefore

Existing Building Use	# Buildings	% of Overall
Single-Family	447	38%
Two-Family	208	18%
Multi-Family	386	33%
Institution	38	3%
Commercial	72	6%
Office	6	1%
Mixed-Use	19	2%
TOTALS	1176	100%

FIG. 1.2 MIDTOWN GARDEN DISTRICT - BUILDING USE SNAPSHOT

Source: Data from GIS analysis illustrated in Figure 1.3



tend to have no physical relationship or connection to the rapidly-evolving BeltLine Eastside Trail. Other commercial and office concentrations include a major retail node at Piedmont and 10th, within mixed-use developments along Juniper and scattered among a few "nodes" within the neighborhood core (6th/Argonne, 5th/Durant are examples).

While institutions represent 3% of buildings within the neighborhood, those uses have large physical, social and transportation impacts on the community including Grady High School, The Children's School, Grace United Methodist Church and the Yaarab Temple in particular.

While Piedmont Park is undeniably a unique and large open space amenity for the Midtown Garden District, there are no other parcels in the community dedicated exclusively as public greenspace. This is a particular challenge for residents living within the southern portion of the district that are beyond a 10-minute walk to Piedmont Park.

In terms of zoning, most of the Garden District is zoned R-5 with small areas of R-3 (multifamily) interspersed. The western portion of the neighborhood includes Special Public Interest (SPI) 16 and 17 Zoning Overlay Districts. A current zoning map is included in the Appendix.

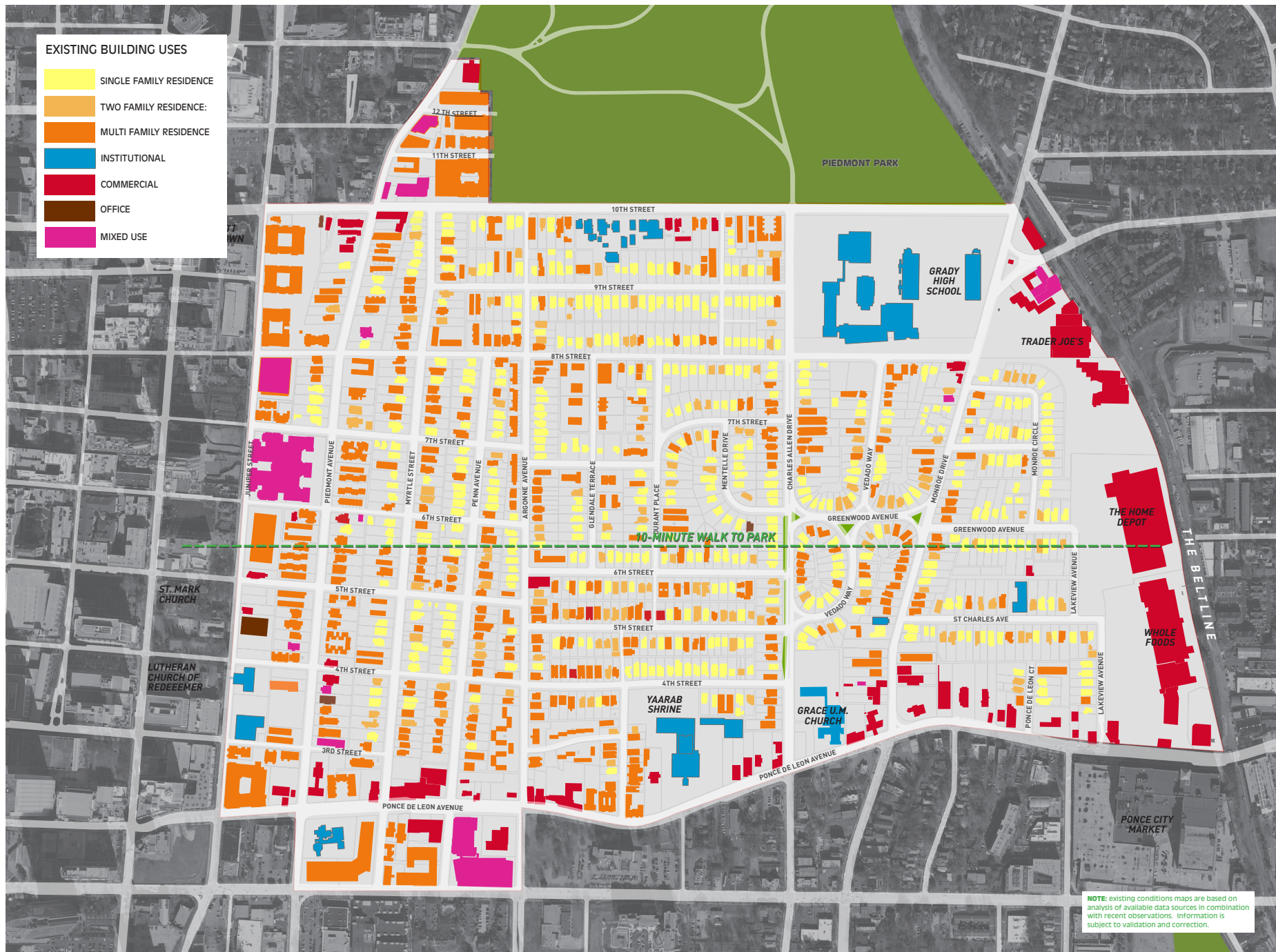


FIG. 1.3 MAP OF EXISTING BUILDING USES

Source: Windshield Survey and Ownership Data from City of Atlanta GIS Database

TOPOGRAPHY & STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Given that Atlanta was generally settled along the “Peachtree Ridge” it is not surprising that the Midtown Garden District includes widely varied topography, which in general falls in elevation from west to east. The highest points within the neighborhood are generally along Piedmont and Juniper (between Ponce De Leon Avenue and 7th Street), sloping downhill dramatically (40 -50 feet lower in some cases) around Grady High School. The shaded topography map to the right illustrates this dynamic terrain - blue areas are high points whereas red areas are low points.

It is not hugely surprising that this northeast portion of the of the Garden District suffers from fairly severe flooding conditions during heavier rain events. A cursory review of the location of subsurface stormwater lines shows that while there is a network of facilities, their widths (and presumably ages) vary greatly. The stormwater system appears to include several “dead-end” flows and/or locations with large gaps in coverage. In the area of the most severe flooding, the problem is so acute that standing water regularly flows above sidewalk curb level. Throughout the planning process, the team heard many complaints about persistent flooding on private property. The severity of the issue implies that the problem goes beyond clogged inlets and will require significant effort by the Department of Watershed Management to understand and mitigate the issue. Potential strategies related to stormwater infrastructure are included in Part 4 of this document.

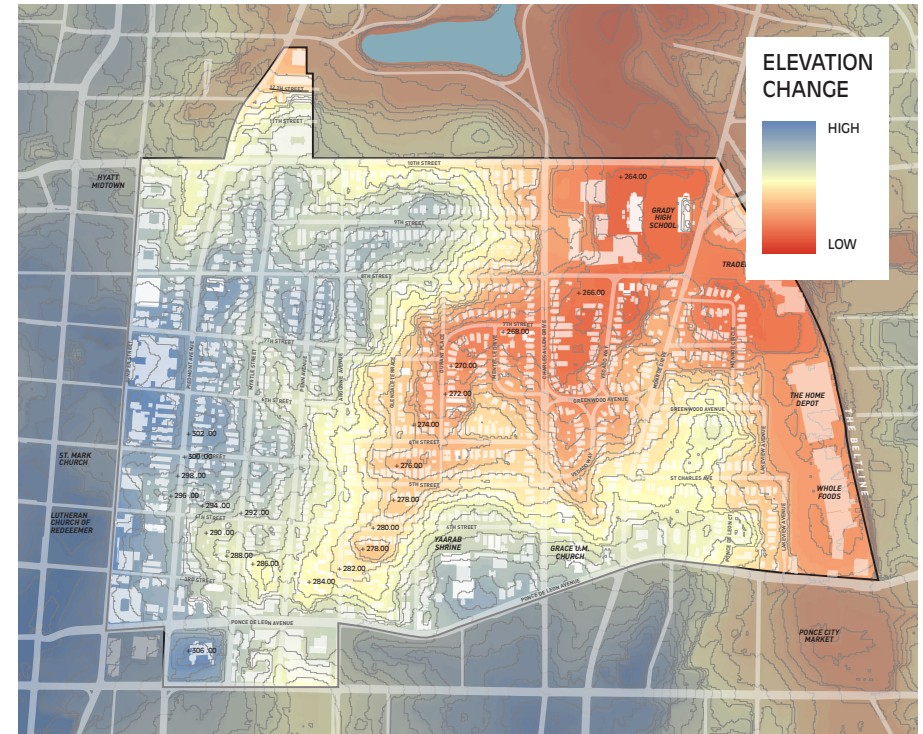
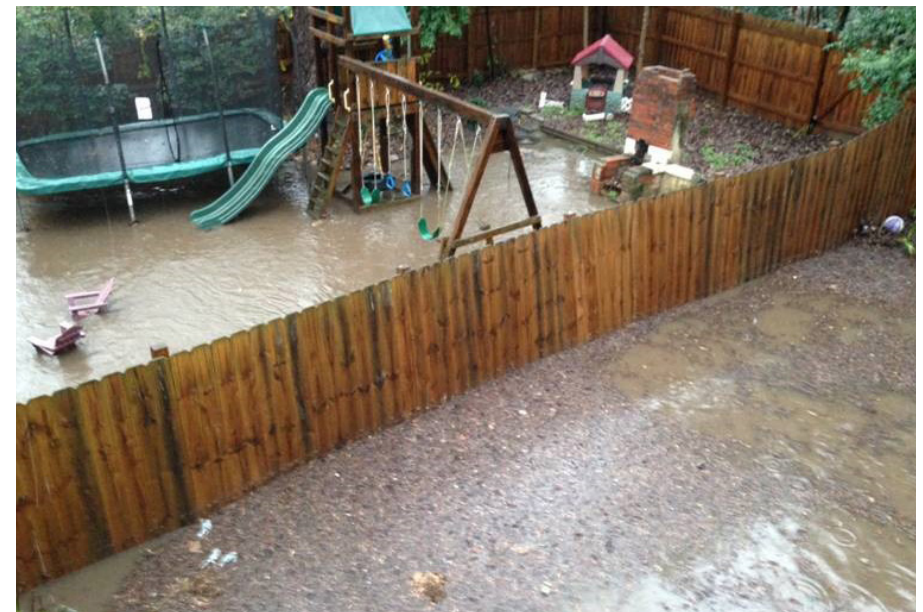


FIG. 1.4 TOPOGRAPHY MAP Source: City of Atlanta GIS Database



Flooding at 811 Vedado Way, 2016



Flooding at 833 Charles Allen Drive, 2016

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

The Midtown Garden District benefits from a tight urban grid of streets and blocks (a total of 61 individual blocks in the planning focus area) that provide numerous mobility options for pedestrians and vehicles, helping to distribute traffic. Bike facilities along 10th Street and along Ponce De Leon Avenue provide east-west bicycle connections to the BeltLine (east) and to the MID (west). Charles Allen Drive and the BeltLine also provide north-south bike connections to Piedmont Park and Ponce de Leon Avenue. However, despite these advantages, the Midtown Garden District includes widespread issues related to sidewalks and accessibility. Based on a recent site inventory of sidewalk conditions (see map to right), 16 neighborhood blocks do not include sidewalks at all with dozens more exhibiting significant issues including broken, missing or misaligned sidewalks.

The west side of the district includes a series of one-way streets, including the Piedmont Avenue / Juniper Street pair and seven other neighborhood streets. The roadway width of interior streets is inconsistent including many narrow sections of “yield streets” (i.e. no striped travel lanes). Pedestrian visibility issues at intersections are also prevalent throughout the area. These conditions are particularly dangerous on streets crossing Piedmont Avenue, Monroe Drive and 10th Street due to higher traffic volumes and speeds.

In terms of transit, the neighborhood is well-served by MARTA bus routes, including Route 102 along Ponce de Leon Avenue, Route 99 along Monroe Drive and 10th Street and Route 36 along 10th and 8th Streets. Both the Midtown and North Avenue MARTA Rail Stations are within a 10-15 minute walk from the district as well.

On-street parallel parking in the Midtown Garden District is allowed on one or both sides of most internal streets and is generally considered a community asset. It helps calm traffic, creates a physical buffer for pedestrians, and provides guest parking for visitors. However, as previously mentioned, on-street parking in the neighborhood is most often unstriped/unsigned, which exacerbates already-challenged visibility issues at intersections.

Part 4 of this document includes more detail on transportation and safety issues existing in the neighborhood along with specific projects and strategies for improvements.

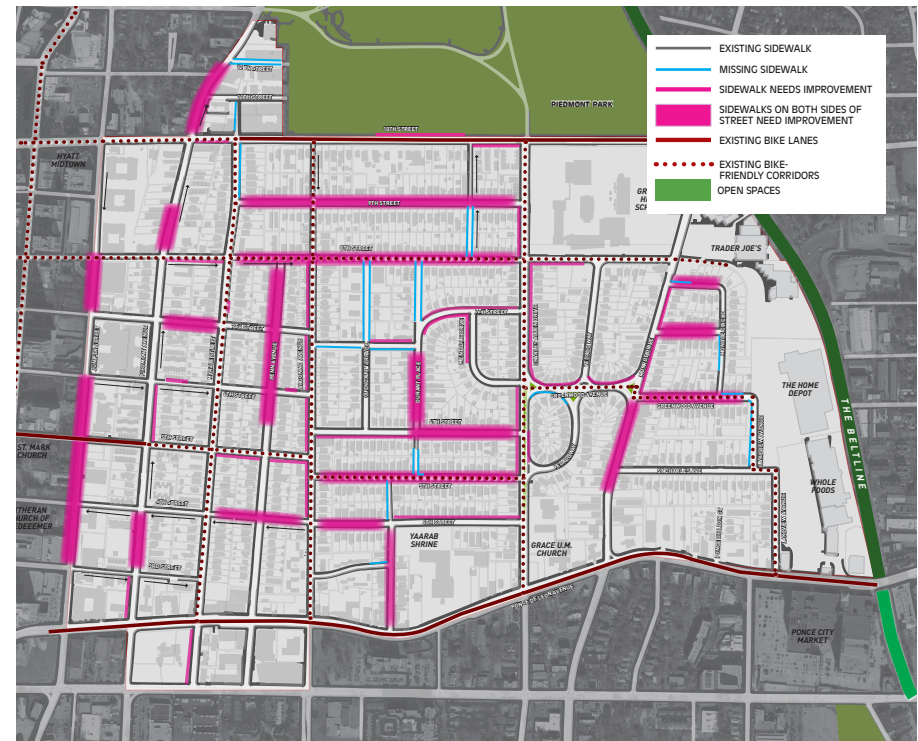


FIG. 1.5 MAP OF EXISTING SIDEWALK CONDITIONS

Sources: City of Atlanta GIS Database, Windshield Survey



10th Street includes a dedicated and protected two-way bike facility (i.e. “cycle track” connecting the BeltLine Eastside Trail to the Midtown Commercial District. Source: Stantec.com

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety has been of particular concern for Midtown Garden District residents in recent years. In 2015 alone, almost 700 incidents of crime were officially reported within the neighborhood (including both violent and non-violent crimes). As part of this planning effort, the consultant team gathered and analyzed recent Atlanta Police Department data (roughly January 2015 through March 2016) to map crime “hot spots” throughout the district – see maps below.

Figure 1.8 illustrates crimes against property (car/home break-ins, theft, etc.). “Hot spots” in this case seem to be mostly car break-ins occurring near active retail/restaurant areas such as Mary Mac’s Restaurant (at Ponce/Myrtle), as well as the Midtown Place/Ponce City Market area (at Ponce/BeltLine). Figure 1.7 illustrates crimes against people (i.e. violent crimes). It is not totally surprising that notable hot spots occur around more pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial nodes such as the market at Argonne at 6th Street, as well as at restaurants on North Avenue between Parkway Drive and Boulevard.

While there are several elements factoring into neighborhood crime, perhaps one of the biggest (and easiest to address) is the inconsistency of neighborhood lighting. The planning team surveyed the location of every street light in the community and found several gaping holes that lead to severe dark spots at night. In some cases lighting deficiencies are exacerbated by inoperable fixtures, poor placement (e.g., lighting

roadways and not sidewalks) and overgrown trees which block lighting patterns. Figure 1.9 shows existing street light locations overlaid with violent crime hot spots. Interestingly, the prominent hot spot along Argonne Avenue also seems to lack lighting in several key areas, especially near the market at 6th Street.

The planning team also analyzed incidents of crime over a five-year period from 2010-2016 (Fig. 1.8). While crime varies from year to year and from season to season, crime tended to be lowest in winter months. In addition, while not the case in every year, crime tends to spike in parallel with larger-scale events in Piedmont Park.

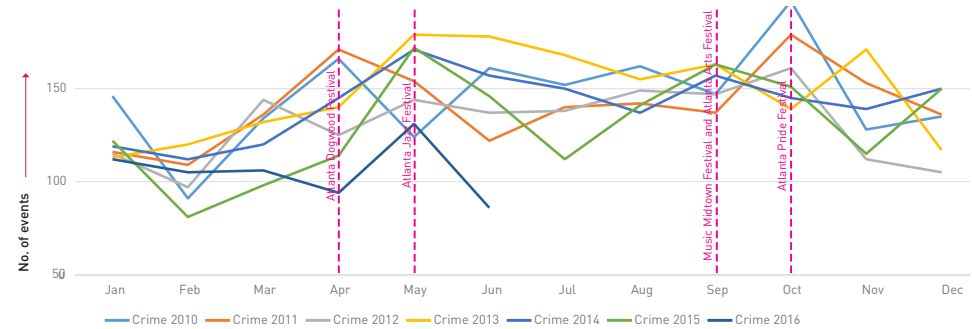


FIG. 1.8 SEASONAL PATTERNS OF CRIME INCIDENTS, 2010-2016

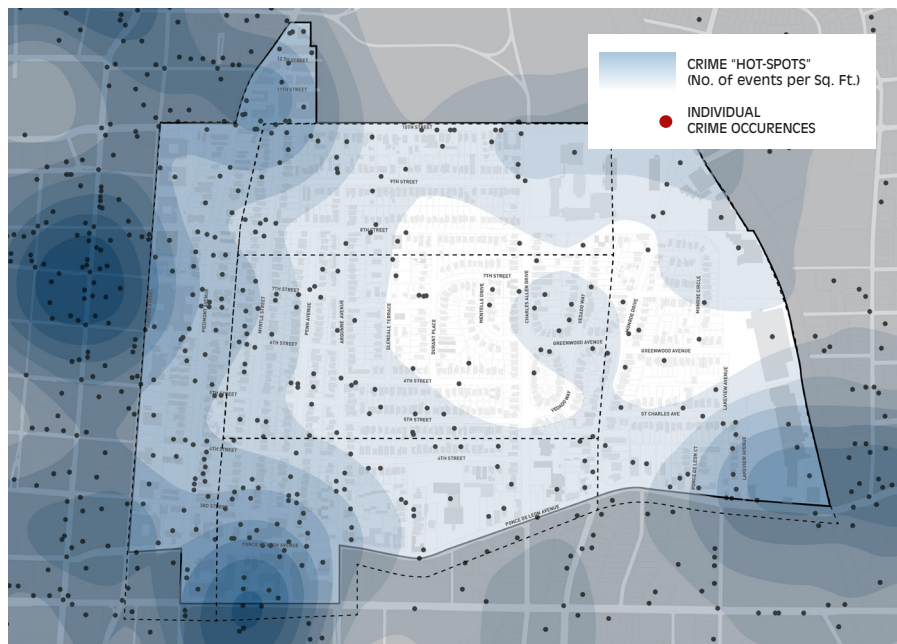


FIG. 1.6 CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY



FIG. 1.7 CRIMES AGAINST PEOPLE *All Crime Data Sourced from Atlanta Police Department*



FIG. 1.9 MAP OF CRIME “HOT SPOTS” OVERLAID WITH EXISTING STREETLIGHT LOCATIONS

Sources: Windshield Survey, City of Atlanta GIS Database, Atlanta Police Department

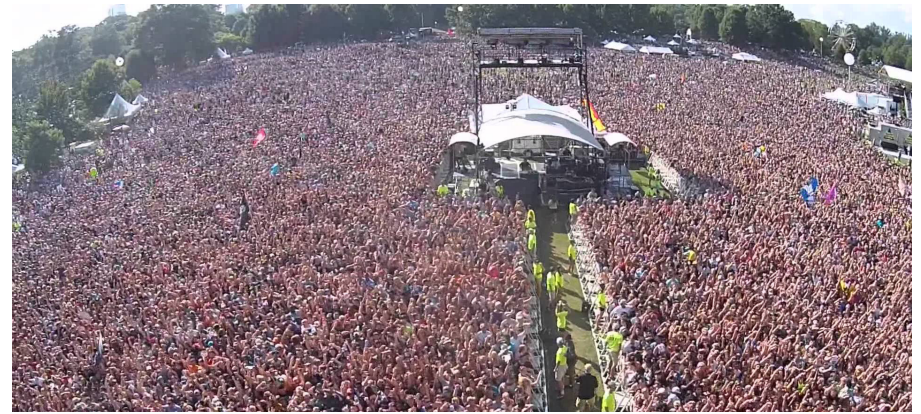
OPEN SPACE

The Midtown Garden District benefits greatly from its close proximity to Piedmont Park, As Atlanta's largest public park (185 acres), it is rich with a variety of passive and active recreational attributes including walking paths, playgrounds, open lawns, recreational fields, a public pool and many natural water features. Despite the advantages the park's adjacency to the district, however, its popularity as festival venue has increased in recent years, adding tension between visitors and residents. Specific recent issues heard repeatedly throughout the planning process relate to neighborhood on-street parking, bike/vehicular lane closures (festival staging) and noise. Today over 120 "class A" (i.e. large) festivals are held annually in Piedmont Park - more than any other park or open space in the entire city.

Although Piedmont Park is a major contributor to a high quality of life in Midtown, fundamentally it is a regional park serving visitors throughout the city, state and beyond. As illustrated on the Open Space Framework Map (Fig. 1.10), the neighborhood actually lacks any alternatives to Piedmont. In other words, there are no other small green spaces within the interior of the neighborhood. Furthermore, residents in the district living south of 6th Street are beyond a 10-minute walk from Piedmont Park, suggesting a dramatically higher likelihood of simply driving to another adjacent park.

As part of this planning effort, the district's deficiency of neighborhood-scaled "pocket parks" became a reoccurring discussion and a Greenspace Focus Group was created shortly thereafter. A major part of the group's focus was identifying potential "underutilized" spaces - however small - that could potentially be improved or programmed to enhance public access and use. As illustrated in Figure 1.10, potential spaces identified included the front lawn of Grady High School (Charles Allen frontage), planted medians, the "traffic islands" in and around Vedado Way and Greenwood Avenue and a large portion of underused surface parking on a portion of the Yaraab Temple property.

Additionally, the BeltLine Eastside Trail - which hugs the eastern border of the Midtown Garden District - is a more recently-implemented amenity for the neighborhood through its extended trail connections to shopping, entertainment, office space, lofts and community park space outside of Midtown. However, direct access to the BeltLine is extremely limited due to topographic conditions and the arrangement of big-box shopping centers along the neighborhood's eastern edge.



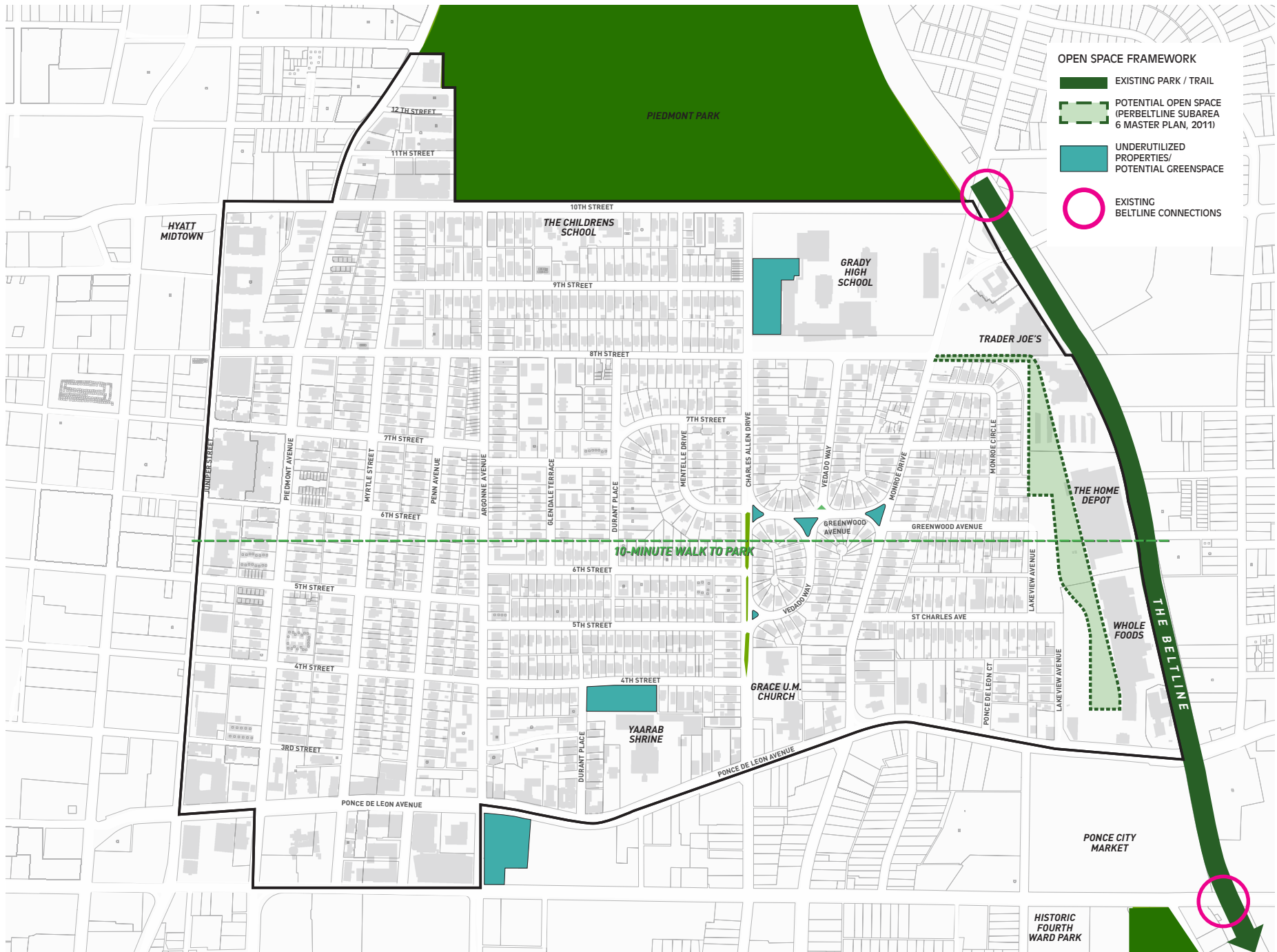


FIG. 1.10 OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK MAP

Sources: Windshield Survey, City of Atlanta GIS Database, Atlanta Police Department



PART 2

Planning Background & Context

“I love midtown. It’s exploding... but we need to stop the crimes against people, create a better parking plan for festivals, improve pedestrian walkways, and clean up Ponce.”

2.1 Recent & Related Planning Efforts

This plan builds upon many other related planning efforts - citywide and within adjacent neighborhoods. A key part of this planning process was researching other recent plans and understanding how their findings and recommendations relate to the Garden District. The following pages include high-level summary of other relevant planning efforts.

BLUEPRINT MIDTOWN 3.0 (2016) & MIDTOWN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2016)

Since the late 1990s, the Midtown Alliance has spearheaded planning throughout the MID. Throughout 2016, the Alliance pursued two parallel planning efforts. *Blueprint Midtown 3.0* builds on its previous iterations by further reinforcing the continued growth of an active, pedestrian-oriented, and economically diverse district. The plan focuses on Land Use & Development, Urban Design and Public Spaces. *The Midtown Transportation Plan* includes a detailed and holistic study of transportation and circulation patterns, current trends and future forecasts. The overarching goal of the plan was to better-balance mobility choices throughout the MID.

Collectively, the key findings and projects related to the Garden District include the following.

Land Use & Development

- Revisit the existing density bonus for affordable housing in the zoning code in order to facilitate its development
- Adapt the current zoning code to incentivize or require the principles set forth in the Midtown Owner's Manual development guide
- Continue to require that buildings graduate in height along Juniper Street and Piedmont Avenue into the Garden district
- Encourage compatible ground-floor uses along and adjacent to Juniper Street

Transportation

- Explore the implementation of Complete Streets throughout the district, including Juniper Street, Piedmont Avenue, 10th Street, and North Avenue.
- Improve walkability by slowing vehicle speeds and enhancing the pedestrian environment, including the implementation of a district-wide 25-mph speed limit
- Added pedestrian signal crossing at Piedmont and 6th, Piedmont and 4th, Juniper and 4th street
- Transit - MARTA Bus Route 110 enhanced service along Peachtree Street

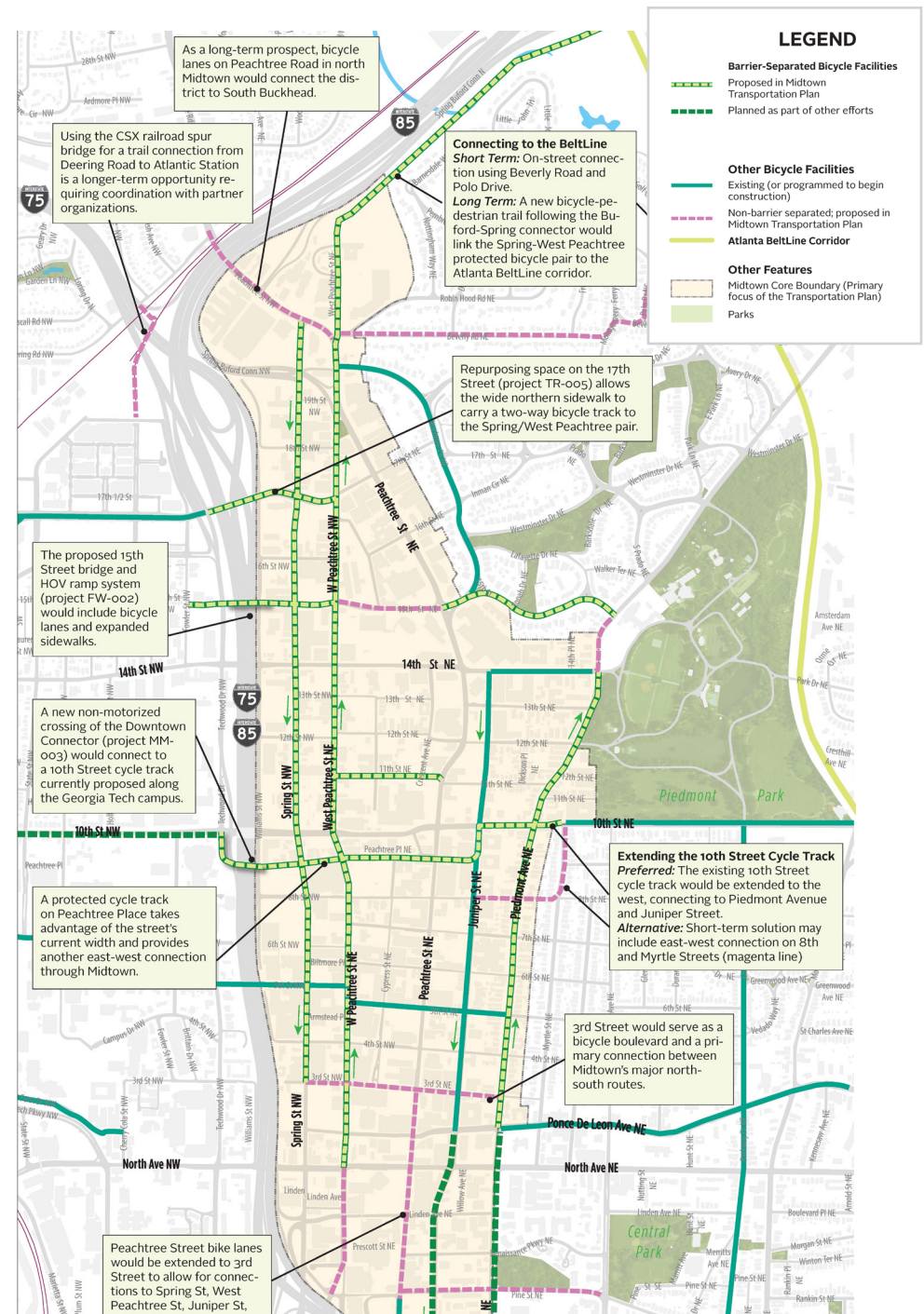


FIG. 2.1 PLANNED BICYCLE NETWORK, 2016 MIDTOWN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Source: Midtown Alliance

- Transit - East-west Midtown shuttle service along 10th street from Piedmont going west
- Extension of protected 2-way bicycle facility along 10th street from Myrtle going west
- Bike facility along Myrtle Street from 10th street to 8th street, and along 8th street from Myrtle Street to Juniper Street
- Proposed protected bicycle facility along Piedmont Avenue
- One way to two way street conversion along 4th street from Spring street to Myrtle street

Public Spaces

- Utilize tools such as transfer of development rights, zoning incentives, use of impact fees, and financial incentives to secure a signature park site within Midtown.
- Repurpose excess right-of-way and work with property owners to create and expand publicly accessible pocket parks.
- Explore longer-term opportunities to create open space by capping the interstate.
- Continue to employ round the clock public safety patrols and strengthen collaboration with the Atlanta Police Department Video Integration Center.

CITY OF ATLANTA COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2016)

The following initiatives and projects are highlights from the 2016 update of Atlanta's Citywide Comprehensive Development Plan. Many of these reinforce some of the initiatives set forth at the neighborhood level within the Garden District plan.

Open Space

- Update Park Impact Fees and associated ordinance for parkland acquisition and development funding reflective of current costs
- Creation of an Open Space incentives program.
- Protect a minimum of 20% of the City's land area as greenspace
- Provide a minimum of 10 acres of public parkland for every 1,000 residents
- Provide publicly-accessible greenspace within 1/2 mile walk of every City of Atlanta resident
- Protect at least 75% of sensitive lands via ownership and/or development regulations.

- Protect and restore Atlanta's tree canopy in order to meet a target of 40% coverage
- Integrate Atlanta's history, cultural heritage, and the arts into the greenspace system to express community identity

Transportation

- Expand the City's network of high-quality bicycle facilities
- Connect bicyclists to transit
- Connect people to and from the Atlanta BeltLine
- Create a supportive cycling environment for a bike share system

Urban Design

- Tree Canopy: The maintenance and expansion of the tree canopy enhances Atlanta's image, ameliorates the climate, and mitigates environmental problems in the City.
- Neighborhood Identity: A strong sense of neighborhood identity exists in Atlanta and should be capitalized on in any urban design plans. Many of the most successful residential neighborhoods are focused around parks and small historic retail centers with street connectivity and sidewalk infrastructure.
- Usable Public Space: Zoning and Land Subdivision ordinances allow the creation of parks adjacent to streets flanked by low-density residential uses. Amendments should be made to the usable open space requirements in the zoning ordinance to establish minimum criteria for usable green space in new multi-family residential development.
- Public Space and Public Art: New public spaces and the redesign of existing underutilized spaces provide opportunities for usable community gathering spaces that serve as the backdrop for unique public art in the form of murals, sculptures, lighting, water features, landscaping, etc.
- Historic Districts: Existing historic districts provide a continuity with Atlanta's past that contributes to the image, unique character, and architectural heritage of Atlanta. Policies and incentives to encourage the preservation of buildings in designated historic districts and those eligible sites and districts but not locally designated should be promoted.
- Preserve the boundaries and architectural character of Atlanta's existing neighborhoods and their buffers between neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- Create stable neighborhoods by protecting and enhancing their historic character and enhancing neighborhood parks, schools and commercial areas.
- Integrate new developments into the existing urban fabric, providing connectivity into and expansion of the existing street grid system.

- Preserve and protect the city's historic buildings and sites.
- Discourage land speculation and disinvestment that lead to neighborhood buy-outs, demolition of significant buildings (historic or otherwise) or land vacancy (including surface parking lots).
- Encourage mixed-use developments with residential uses to promote walkable communities.
- Preserve opportunities for connecting trails that reach out beyond the BeltLine to create a broad network of trails throughout the City.
- Encourage a grid of smaller blocks and connected streets to improve access to the BeltLine, reduce congestion, and further the urban character of the area.

VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND MASTER PLAN (2014)

The Virginia- Highland (VaHi) Master Plan was adopted in 2014. Given VaHi's location as the Garden District's eastern neighbor, the plan includes specific recommendations for areas such as Monroe Drive, 10th Street, and the BeltLine Corridor. The VaHi Master Plan highlights related to the Garden District include the following.

- Work with Midtown Alliance and the City of Atlanta to study the feasibility of making Piedmont Avenue 2-way from 14th Street to 10th Street.
- Install pedestrian gates/bollards at the BeltLine and Monroe Drive intersection.

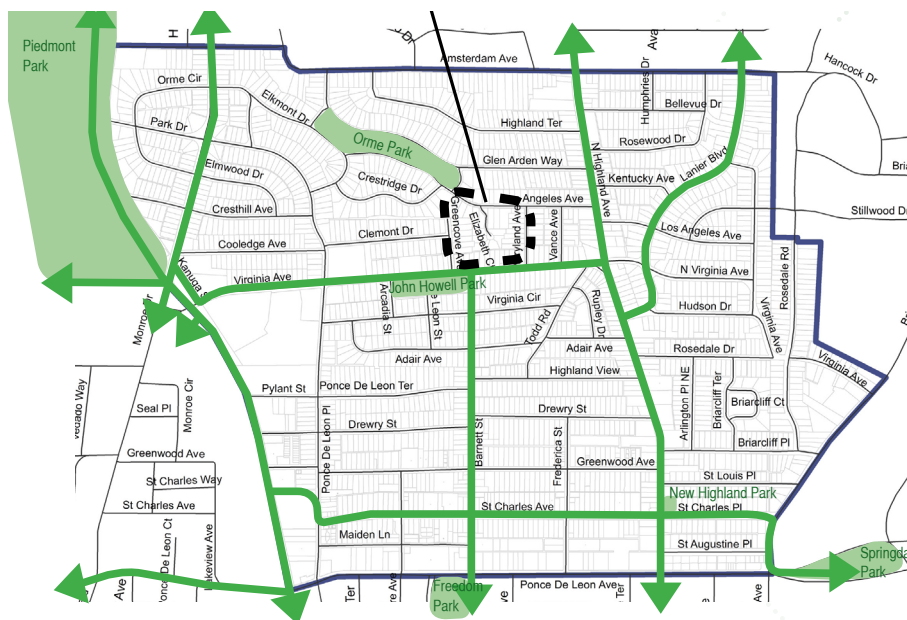


FIG. 2.2 COMMUNITY MOBILITY NETWORK, VAHI MASTER PLAN (2014)

Source: VaHi Master Plan

- Implement the BeltLine Subarea 6 Master Plan for the Virginia/Monroe/Kanuga intersection complete with pedestrian-only crossing sequences.
- Retrofit intersection curbs so that they meet at ADA laws
- Install curb extensions to better protect pedestrians at the crosswalks of intersections on major thoroughfares (Virginia Avenue, North Highland Avenue, Barnett Street, Monroe Drive, Ponce de Leon Avenue, Briarcliff Road, Amsterdam Avenue, Lanier Boulevard, Ponce de Leon Place, St. Charles Avenue).
- Add pedestrian crossing signage at the intersections along all major thoroughfares in the neighborhood (Virginia Avenue, North Highland Avenue, Barnett Street, Monroe Drive, Ponce de Leon Avenue, Briarcliff Road, Amsterdam Avenue, Lanier Boulevard, Ponce de Leon Place, St. Charles Avenue).
- Establish a new BeltLine connection at Ponce de Leon Avenue between the CVS and the BeltLine embankment to provide direct access from the BeltLine to the Midtown Place shopping center and Ponce de Leon Avenue.
- Create a new BeltLine connection from the existing BeltLine trail to the Midtown Promenade shopping center. A dedicated connection point can easily be made at the area of the BeltLine that is adjacent to the shopping center driveway that accesses Virginia Avenue.
- Encourage new development along the BeltLine to access funding for affordable housing units that are made available through Invest Atlanta.
- Install additional pedestrian lighting on streets that have none, focusing on the neighborhood's primary thoroughfares (Virginia Avenue, North Highland Avenue, Barnett Street, Monroe Drive, Ponce de Leon Avenue, Briarcliff Road, Amsterdam Avenue, Lanier Boulevard, Ponce de Leon Place, St. Charles Avenue).



FIG. 2.3 POTENTIAL MONROE DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS (NORTH OF 10TH STREET), VAHI MASTER PLAN (2014)

Source: VaHi Master Plan

CYCLE ATLANTA: PHASE 1.0 STUDY (2013)

Cycle Atlanta Phase 1.0 is an LCI-funded study focused on developing dedicated, high-quality bikeways in the core of the City. The recommendations specific to Midtown Garden District include:

- **10th Street from Piedmont Road to Monroe Drive:** two-way "cycle track" along 10th Street from Piedmont Road to Monroe Drive. *NOTE: as of 2016, both phases have been constructed*
- **8th Street from Piedmont Ave to Myrtle Street:** 1 travel lane + Shared lane marking and contra flow bike lane
- **Myrtle Street from 8th street to Piedmont Avenue:** 2 travel lanes + Shared lane markings
- **Kanuga Street from Virginia Avenue to Monroe Drive:** 2 travel lanes. On-street parking is removed to create space for bike lanes. A new traffic signal at Virginia Avenue and Kanuga Street may be needed to help cyclist and vehicles make a left turn from Kanuga Street on to Virginia Avenue

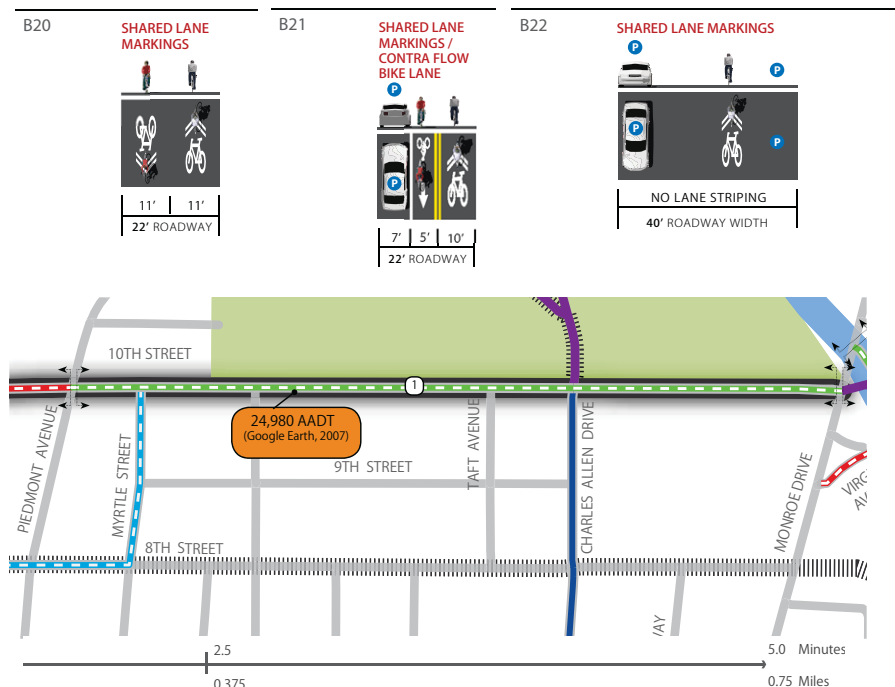


FIG. 2.4 CYCLE ATLANTA 1.0 STUDY: GARDEN DISTRICT AREA PROJECTS

Source: City of Atlanta

ATLANTA BELTLINE SUBAREA 6 MASTER PLAN (2011)

The study area of Atlanta BeltLine's Subarea 6 plan overlaps the eastern edge of the Midtown Garden District focus area. As shown on the associated Future Land Use Diagram below, the majority of 2011 plan recommendations relate to future redevelopment of the lower-density retail areas immediately adjacent to the BeltLine corridor. A summary of plan highlights is as follows.

Future Land Use: Monroe and Crescent

- Low density commercial with limited medium to low density residential

Future Land Use: Midtown Promenade / Home Depot

- 5 to 9 story mixed use development along Atlanta BeltLine
- Eastside of building have immediate access to the transit and trail
- Westside of block would front main street and the proposed linear park
- Westside of the site will be low density (1-4 story) residential scale to complement the scale of the adjacent [Garden District]
- North of the development will ultimately connect to Monroe Drive and 8th street

Future Land Use: 10th Street

- The land on Eastside of BeltLine right-of-way is zoned for low density commercial to maintain the existing condition while creating a more pedestrian friendly environment with more public space

Public Art

- Midtown Place/Midtown Promenade: Sculpture or Installation
- 10th Street and Monroe Drive: Civic Sculpture

Circulation and Transportation

- New N-S street connection between Ponce-De-Leon and 8th Street is proposed
- Ponce- De-Leon Terrace is also planned to connect to the new N-S street
- St Charles Ave. will also connect E-W to the New N-S street
- A majority of community participants desired a reduction in vehicular capacity along Monroe Drive.
- Monroe Drive improvements include a "road diet" from 4 lanes to 3 lanes.

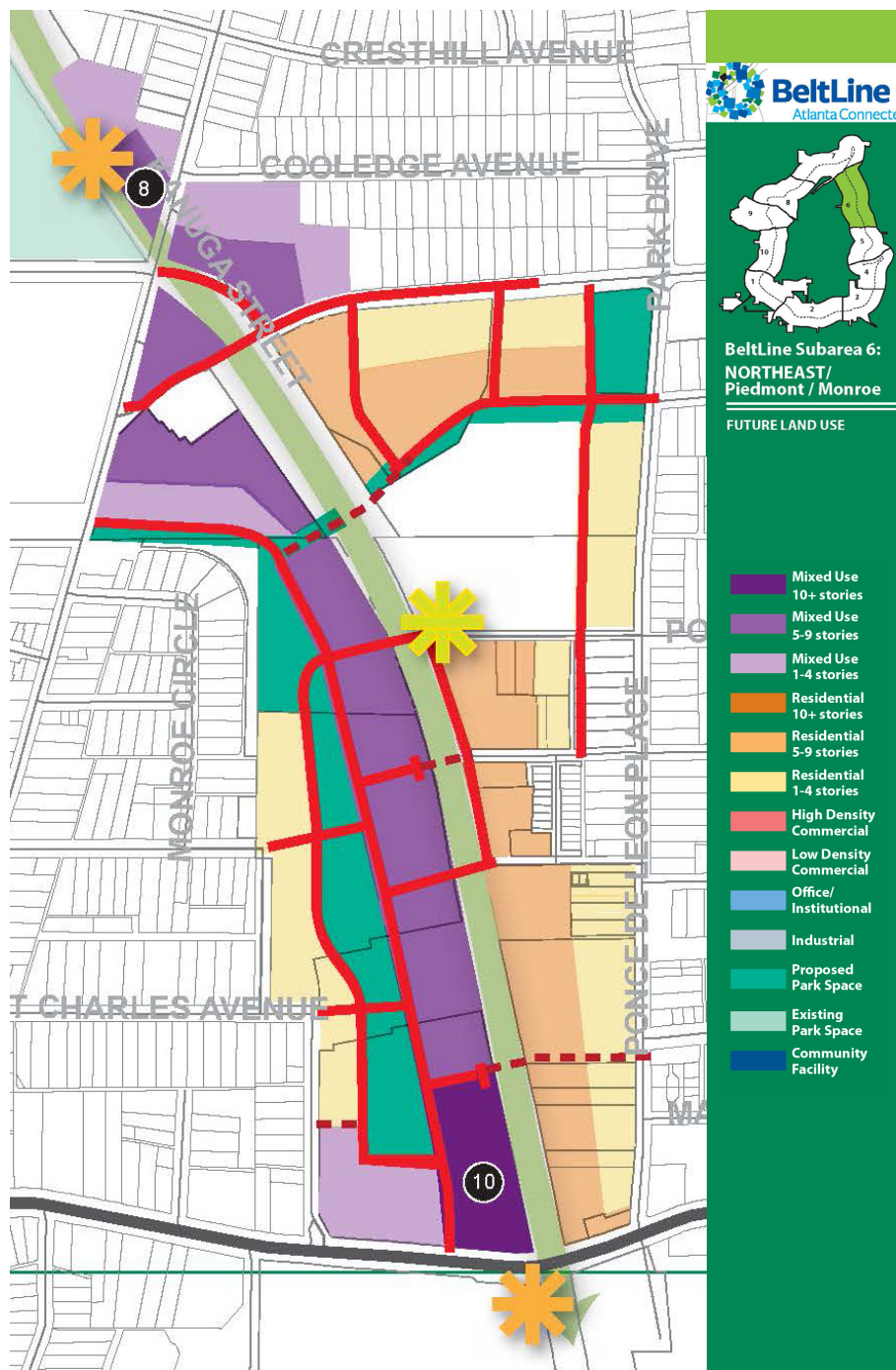


FIG. 2.5 FUTURE LAND USE, PER BELTLINE SUBAREA 6 PLAN (2011)

Source: Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

The “road diet” would accommodate one vehicle travel lane in either direction with a center median and turn-lane. This concept utilizes the additional right-of-way for wider sidewalks on the west side of Monroe.

- At Monroe Drive and 10th Street, 10th Street should be moved further north so that the trail and transit cross Monroe Drive through the middle of the intersection. This will improve pedestrian safety at the intersection, and have little effect on vehicular operations. Realigning the Virginia Avenue intersection with Monroe Drive, including consolidating the two slip lanes into one perpendicular intersection, will improve both pedestrian safety and vehicular operations.
- Monroe Drive is a barrier within the community and additional pedestrian improvements at key intersections are recommended, such as potentially narrowing the travel lanes on the northern and eastern edges of the park.
- Connect Greenwood Avenue between Midtown and Virginia Highland Neighborhood

CONNECT ATLANTA PLAN (2008)

Connect Atlanta, the city’s first comprehensive transportation plan, was adopted by City Council in 2008 and updated again in 2013. This plan sets the vision and framework for major public investment in transportation improvement for next 25 years. The improvement projects identified in the plan that affect the Midtown Garden District area are highlighted as follows.

- Virginia Ave-10th Street Realignment - Realign 10th Street to the south to cross Monroe Drive and connect to Virginia Drive in a single point
- Piedmont & Juniper - Complete street retrofits of both corridors (as one-way pairs)
- 8th St Extension - New Street connecting Ponce De Leon Ave and Monroe Dr. along the BeltLine through the commercial property. Anticipated as private initiative as a part of the redevelopment of the commercial property.
- Beltline Transit - 22-miles of new alignment Light Rail Transit / Streetcar around the core of the City (see BeltLine plans for more info)
- Ponce De Leon Traffic Calming - Traffic calming measures potentially including bulbouts and chicanes

Note: several Connect Atlanta projects which have been completed and/or superseded by more recent planning efforts were excluded from above.

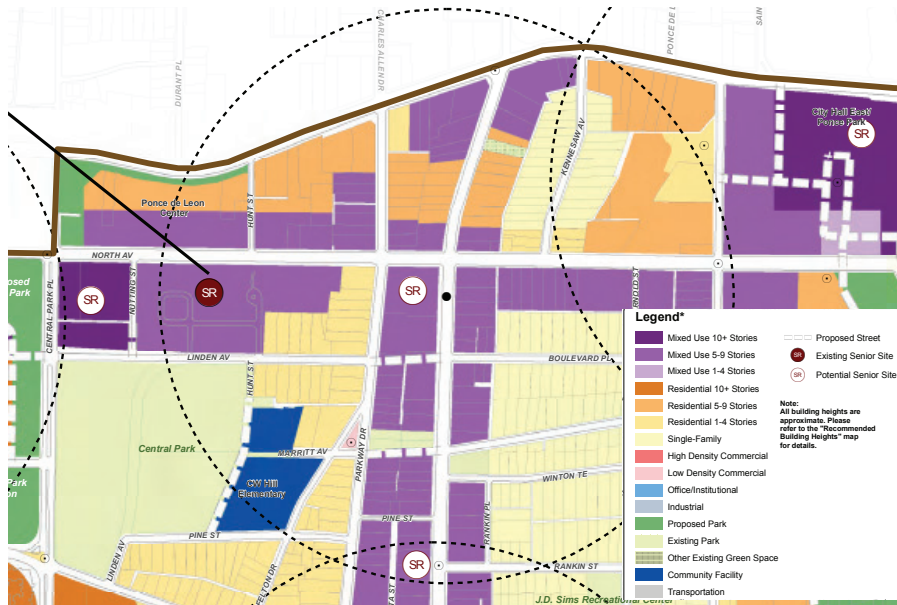


FIG. 2.6 FUTURE LAND USE: OLD FOURTH WARD NEIGHBORHOOD

Source: City of Atlanta

OLD FOURTH WARD MASTER PLAN (2008)

The Old Fourth Ward Neighborhood abuts the Garden District to the south, sharing a common “boundary” along Ponce de Leon Avenue. The following are highlights from the Old Fourth Ward Master Plan (adopted 2008) related to Midtown Garden District planning efforts.

Land Use

- Encourage mixed land use and focus growth along corridors and around existing/future transit stops
- Vary maximum building height in response to context
- Support pedestrian oriented retail nodes at Boulevard at North Avenue and along Ponce de Leon Avenue
- Boulevard corridor between Ponce de Leon Avenue and Freedom Parkway should become a true urban boulevard lined with five to nine story buildings featuring a mix of uses, housing unit sizes, and housing prices. Churches and other notable historic structures should be preserved. New east-west streets should be built between Boulevard and Parkway Drive to improve access. Small pocket parks should be provided throughout.

Infrastructure & Facility

- Relocate overhead utility lines when feasible.
- Continue efforts to identify storm water detention sites.
- Improve street lighting.
- Support the Sewer Evaluation and Rehabilitation Project.
- Increase the number and visibility of public safety officers.
- Hold property owners accountable.
- Include public safety criteria in the annual review process for business licenses.
- Create incentives for homeowner associations and building management companies to provide security officers.
- Enforce existing codes vigorously; reduce time from citation to prosecution to forfeiture, especially for absentee landlords and abandoned buildings.

Urban Design

- Provide pedestrian-oriented supplemental sidewalk zones.
- Parking located behind buildings
- No gated streets
- Buildings in mixed-use areas that form a continuous street wall
- Doors accessible from the sidewalk
- Active ground floor uses
- Storefronts, stoops, porches, or forecourts along the sidewalk
- Pedestrian-scaled signage
- Transparent ground floor glass

Housing and Economic Development

- Prevent the involuntary displacement of existing neighborhood residents.
- Encourage a mix of housing price points.
- Strive for a diverse mix of multifamily unit sizes, including three-bedroom units.
- Strive for 20 percent of new housing units to be affordable.

- Support recommendations of the BeltLine Affordable Housing Advisory Board.
- Encourage the creation of temporary business innovation zones on vacant lots.

Transportation

- More frequent service along bus routes with the most ridership (such as routes 27 and 16) to make bus travel more convenient and potentially attract new riders

PONCE-MORELAND CORRIDORS STUDY (2005)

The Ponce De Leon and Moreland Avenue Corridors Study was conducted in 2005 focusing on transportation and redevelopment visioning. Key recommendations from the study related to the Midtown Garden District include the following.

Street and Block Pattern Policies

- Prohibit street abandonments or closures as part of new development, unless new streets are created with equal or greater connectivity to the existing street grid.
- Utilize traffic calming to minimize the impacts of cut through traffic on neighborhoods, rather than street closures.
- Support new streets across the BeltLine at such time as it is developed into a transit greenway.

- Support long-term development a street connecting Monroe Drive to Ponce de Leon Avenue, through the current Midtown Place and Midtown Promenade shopping centers.

Vehicular Circulation

- Amend Public Works standards to permit new multifamily and commercial uses to use existing alleys.
- Amend Public Works standards to remove the requirement for alleys and driveways to be set 7 feet from side property lines, even if zoning permits it.
- Create enhanced bus service along the corridors.
- Implement a bus signal prioritization program as part of signal upgrades.

Pedestrian Recommendations

- Provide a protected pedestrian walk phase or leading phase at signalized intersections.
- Require all portions of public street-serving sidewalks, even when their width extends onto private property, to be held to the same design and accessibility standards as the portion within the public right-of-way.
- Open a bicycle and pedestrian connection from Midtown Place shopping center to Midtown Promenade.
- Open a pedestrian connection from Midtown Place shopping center to Lakeview Street.



FIG. 2.7 "WEST SECTOR" RECOMMENDED LAND USE MAP - PER 2005 PONCE-MORELAND CORRIDORS STUDY

Source: City of Atlanta

Bicycle Recommendations

- Install bike lanes on North Avenue. by narrowing North Avenue from six to four lanes with a center turn lane/median and bike lanes between Piedmont Street and the Belt Line rail bridge. Under the bridge a bikeable outside lane could be provided, while east of there a bikeable shoulder could be used.
- Provide bike lockers at the North Avenue MARTA station.

Land Use Recommendations

- Preserve civic, religious and residential land uses.
- Recognize that some auto-oriented uses are appropriate for the corridors, but their form must be pedestrian-oriented.
- Require new development, regardless of use, to be pedestrian-oriented.
- Reinforce mixed-use nodes at Peachtree Street Boulevard/Monroe Drive and Penn Avenue
- Encourage property owners to establish new parks or publicly accessible open spaces the western half of the Peters Mansion, in front of Y'aarab Temple and near Argonne Avenue
- Preserve the Krispy Kreme building and use.
- Limit buildings to 7 stories (or 85 feet west of Belt Line and in mixed-use areas, with the exception of [Ponce City Market]. Limit building heights to 3 to 4 stories or 52 feet in other areas.
- Support private efforts to establish parks at the Peters Mansion, Argonne Avenue, the Y'aarab Shrine Temple, North Avenue Park and the BeltLine.



FIG. 2.8 MONROE TO PONCE STREET CONNECTION - PER 2005 PONCE-MORELAND CORRIDORS STUDY

Source: City of Atlanta

Urban Design and Historic Policies

- Work with property owners to designate the following buildings as Landmark Buildings under the City's Historic and Cultural Conservation Districts ordinance: The Ponce, Mary Mac's Tea Room, The Massellton, Grace United Methodist Church, The Abbey Restaurant, apartment buildings near Durant Place, apartment building at the northeast corner of Ponce de Leon and Parkway Drive, Ford Factory Lofts, Claremont Hotel, Briarcliff Hotel, Druid Hills Presbyterian Church, Briarcliff Plaza and homes along the north side of the avenue between North Highland Avenue and Briarcliff Road
- Support variations of zoning open space requirements for buildings over 50 years old to support their reuse.
- Require new development to utilize the basic urban design standards contained in the City of Atlanta Urban Design Policy and codified in the Quality of Life Zoning Districts.
- Ensure that buildings in commercial and mixed-use areas provide roofs that appear primarily horizontal from the street by utilizing a parapet wall (or the like), provide continuous storefronts along the sidewalk, and prohibit parking lots adjacent to the street.

2.2 Garden District Planning Timeline

Development activity around Midtown picked up substantially within just a few years following the Great Recession. Between 2013-2014, the Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail and Ponce City Market had opened. The Garden District was seeing significant development pressure on all sides, yet had no neighborhood-specific masterplan to help guide land use decisions. In this context, the Midtown Neighbors' Association (MNA) partnered with Councilmember Kwanza Hall's office to seek out a consultant team, eventually selecting Lord Aeck Sargent, a Midtown-based planning and architecture firm, to lead the effort. The nearly year-long planning process, which lasted most of 2016, was organized around three sequential phases, described briefly as follows.

PHASE 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS & ISSUES ASSESSMENT (JAN-APR 2016)

The first several months of the planning process focused around inventory of existing conditions and identification of key issues and opportunities. In addition to organizing stakeholder meetings and groups (see Section 2.3 for details), the planning team walked, biked and drove the neighborhood to document aspects such as sidewalk conditions, accessibility issues, housing types, building uses and street lighting. The team also gathered Geographic Information System (GIS) data from a variety of sources in order to map and analyze trends related to public safety and infrastructure. These first few months also focused on neighborhood outreach as a way to document a wide range of initial neighborhood issues, complaints, suggestions, opportunities and ideas. Detailed maps and documentation from Phase 1 can be found in Section 1.3 and the Appendix.

PHASE 2: NEIGHBORHOOD VISIONING (MAY-AUG 2016)

With existing conditions, assessment and analysis complete, the planning team led the neighborhood through a series of highly-interactive public input sessions. Throughout the Spring and Summer of 2016, focus group meetings and public design workshops were held as a way for neighbors to collectively develop neighborhood strategies and design concepts. Using this input, Lord Aeck Sargent then developed concepts, illustrations, draft strategies and framework plans for focus group feedback and public discussion. This phase of the plan focused heavily on visioning for the future of the neighborhood, including both short- and long-term strategies.

PHASE 3: MASTER PLAN (SEPT-NOV 2016)

By Fall 2016, hundreds of neighbors had vetted design concepts, offered suggestions, voted on alternatives and, in some cases, even drawn their own design ideas for consideration. Based on stakeholder feedback the planning team then edited potential designs, developed additional concepts, drafted recommendations and put together a detailed list of short-term and long-term projects. A final public presentation was held to present the overall draft master plan to neighbors and gather additional feedback. This report serves as a document of events leading up to the plan's creation, the process involved and explanation of recommendations, future projects and next steps. This document was subsequently adopted by Atlanta City Council in early 2017 and shall be used as a guide and decision-making tool for future neighborhood growth.



FIG. 2.9 MIDTOWN GARDEN DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS

2.3 Neighborhood Engagement Process & Milestones

The Garden District planning process utilized a wide range of neighborhood outreach and input tools in order to gather insight from hundreds of neighborhood residents over a roughly 10-month period. Described briefly as follows are the key planning groups, events and milestones that occurred throughout the process.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee for the plan consisted of a small group of neighborhood and city leaders including MNA officers and Council staff. The Lord Aeck Sargent consultant team met with the steering committee on a bi-monthly basis to discuss project management, schedule, and plan progress.

FOCUS GROUPS

Early in the process, four (4) different focus groups were formed, as follows:

- Development & Preservation
- Circulation & Infrastructure
- Healthy Living & Safety
- Greenspace



Focus Group meetings included a smaller group of neighbors and were targeted to specific issues

The focus groups were a way for stakeholders strategize around key issues and opportunities facing the neighborhood. MNA and Council staff encouraged neighbors to sign-up for one or more focus groups (advertised at public workshops, on social media, email blasts, MNA website) in order to hone in on specific themes. Eight (8) focus group meetings were held during Phases 1 and 2 of the process.



Garden District residents participate in a greenspace issues ranking exercise

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Three interactive Public Workshops were held throughout the planning process:

Public Kickoff Workshop (February 10, 2016) - With over 100 participants in attendance, this first public event was held at the Grady High School cafeteria. The meeting included a short project overview/introduction by city leaders and the planning consultant team. The bulk of the workshop included a series of interactive planning stations allowing participants to identify in the neighborhood they lived, note major issues on neighborhood maps and document comments/suggestions. Lord Aeck Sargent staff were on-hand at each station to answer questions and help forward the discussion.

Second Public Workshop (August 10, 2016) - Held again at the Grady High School cafeteria, this second public event was organized as an open house, including nine planning stations. Each station centered around specific project ideas and framework diagrams that grew out of focus group discussions. Project concepts included corridor /streetscape improvements, ped/bike infrastructure/types/routes and greenspace character examples. Larger-scaled framework diagrams related to future land use, susceptibility to change, potential transportation improvements and potential open space expansion were also displayed for feedback. The series of supporting existing conditions maps and data were also presented to participants through the stations. The workshop was facilitated by consultant staff with roughly 80 participants in attendance.



Planning stations at Public Kickoff Workshop held February 10, 2016

Final Public Workshop (November 10, 2016) - The final public event was held in the Grady High School Auditorium focused on highlights of the draft masterplan. The bulk of the event included a presentation/discussion by Lord Aeck Sargent staff and MNA outlining land use strategies, potential capital projects and possible neighborhood initiatives. A portion of the workshop included planning stations allowing participants to further weigh-in on plan elements, concepts, illustrations and strategies presented. Over 50 people attended this final workshop.

ONLINE SURVEY

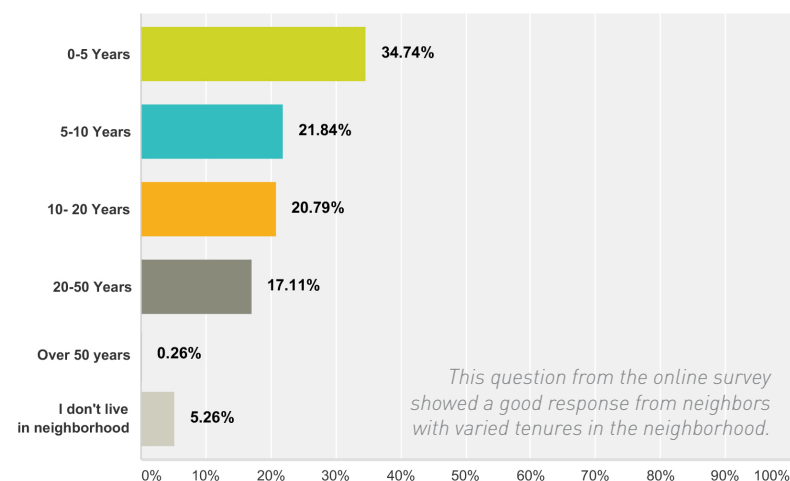
An interactive online survey was launched midway through the planning process as both a way to reach a broader audience and gather more detailed feedback from stakeholders. The survey included 25 carefully-crafted questions relating to specific neighborhood issues heard during Phase 1. Question formats included both multiple choice and character image rankings. Respondents were also asked questions about themselves such as their tenure in the neighborhood, their age, housing type, household and which area within the neighborhood they lived. In some cases, this allowed the planning team to analyze particular question responses based on neighborhood "area" in order to find out whether some perceived issues were neighborhood-wide or more location/street-specific.

The online survey, which was taken by almost 400 people, was available online for about 2 months and advertised through a wide range of social media platforms and websites.

Detailed documentation of Focus Group Meetings, Public Workshops and Online Survey Results are included in the Appendix.



Q5 How long have you lived in the neighborhood?



2.4 Consensus Highlights

Roughly ten months of survey input, focus group discussions, public workshop exercises and detailed conversations with many community stakeholders yielded a series of key drivers of the masterplan. The following include the major consensus highlights.

WALKABILITY

- **Sidewalk conditions were one of the most widely-recurring complaints from residents.** The online survey showed a desired focus on ADA and pedestrian “functionality” (83%) over aesthetic improvements (17%)
- Many expressed the need to create guidelines for preferred sidewalk/street design
- Better/additional pedestrian connections to the BeltLine were a persistent discussion topic and major desire for residents

INTERNAL STREETS

- Online survey respondents and workshop participants repeatedly stated that **vehicular speeding is a major issue along Argonne Avenue**
- Speeding and cut-through traffic on 8th Street is a concern for many as it has become an increasingly significant east-west connector through the neighborhood

PERIPHERAL STREETS

- **Pedestrian safety along Monroe drive should be a major area of focus.** Connection to the BeltLine across Monroe needs to be improved and additional pedestrian crossings need to be added.
- Pedestrian safety along 10th Street (especially crossing 10th to the Park) remains a major concern.
- Piedmont Avenue is underutilized as a corridor. “Off peak parking” along east side is probably not the best long-term use of the roadway space.

ON-STREET PARKING

- Parking is not a neighborhood-wide issue; rather, the issue is very localized (closer to Piedmont Park and near Mary Mac’s, for instance).
- **“Add more permit-only parking...” ranked lowest as effective parking strategy.** The online survey yielded widespread comments/complaints about permit-only parking. Those directly affected said it was hard to have visitors. Those indirectly affected said it’s spilling parking onto adjacent streets.

PIEDMONT PARK FESTIVALS

- Opinions over the negative impacts of Piedmont Park festivals varied widely. Based on the online survey, an astounding 88% of residents either “love them” or “like them” whereas only 9% said they were a “major nuisance.”
- Although there was no overall neighborhood consensus on the degree of negative festival impacts, **almost all residents agreed that the amount of festivals in Piedmont Park should be limited and that better controls for them need to be instituted.**
- Unsurprisingly, Piedmont park events were particularly favorable with newer and younger residents

HOUSING DIVERSITY

- Affordability seemed to be a prominent concern for many people in the online survey (many added specific comments). **Most people expressed strong support to develop a strategy to continue the neighborhood’s history of diverse housing types and tenures.**
- Many stakeholders suggested that future growth of affordable housing (flats) would make sense along the “periphery” of the neighborhood – Juniper Street, Ponce de Leon Avenue and along BeltLine corridor.

CRIME & LIGHTING

- 83% think that “lighting is a major issue to be addressed”. Furthermore, Phase 1 findings seemed to reveal correlations between lack of street lighting and crimes against people (Argonne between 6th and Ponce, for instance)
- The neighborhood was generally supportive of any strategies that increased camera surveillance in public rights-of-way (86% per online survey said cameras in ROW should be either an “aggressive” or “strategic” approach)

STORMWATER

- Flooding during major rain events is a very localized issue (like many issues in the neighborhood). Phase 1 findings seem to indicate deficiencies in the aging infrastructure.

2.5 Guiding Principles

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Based on the survey, 60% of neighborhood in favor of “Requiring a more rigorous city and neighborhood review process for demolition of historic structures.” Furthermore, almost 75% of the neighborhood in favor of “stronger development regulations as long as they don’t discourage new development.”
- **Neighborhood consensus is not about regulating architectural STYLE. It’s about needing a better PROCESS for reviewing demolitions.**

GREENSPACE

- Households with children have been increasing in the neighborhood, creating increased desire for neighborhood park spaces (lacking today), even if small.
- Given growing prominence of the Midtown Garden Tour, a set of street design & planting guidelines (with focus on right-of-way) should be created

The consensus points yielded a series of Guiding Principles that were used in the development of the overall masterplan. Specific initiatives and projects that are detailed later in this document are designed with these Guiding Principals in mind.

Manage & Calm Traffic: Establish strategies that slow and calm traffic on neighborhood streets, particularly as it relates to cut-through traffic and improving the experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

Alleviate Stormwater Management Issues: Professionally asses the Garden District’s ability to manage stormwater and mitigate flooding. Establish a holistic approach to stormwater management through a variety of measures including infrastructure/inlet maintenance, system repairs and upgrades and environmentally friendly enhancements such as rain gardens.

Preserve Historic Character: Identify strategies and mechanisms to better preserve existing historic resources where feasible including considerations for a neighborhood review process for demolitions.

Encourage Compatible Mixed-Use Development Along Peripheral Corridors: Ensure new mixed-use development along Ponce De Leon Avenue, Juniper Street and the BeltLine in ways that transition to and are compatible with the character of the interior of the Garden District. Provide opportunities for new pedestrian-oriented goods, services, shopping and entertainment. Avoid out-parcel vehicular oriented development.

Promote the Neighborhood’s “Garden” Character: Enhance the existing “Garden” character of the community by defining neighborhood street design and planting guidelines, preserving and pruning healthy old growth trees, improving medians and landscape triangles and creating new streetscapes on key streets.

Enhance & Expand Open Spaces: Identify strategic locations for new public or private open space within the neighborhood interior. Encourage new open space in any larger-scale mixed use developments.

Improve Operations & Impacts of Piedmont Park Events: Identify strategies to help mitigate the impacts of events at Piedmont Park for neighborhood residents including improving public safety, planning for traffic and parking, formalizing funding partnerships and considering a dedicated neighborhood festival.