

INTERPETING CITY IDENTITY THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE STREET

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Eiffel Tower. Golden Gate Bridge. Gateway Arch. Space Needle. Names given to unique objects that evoke pictures in the mind, images that conjure associations with specific cities: Paris, San Francisco, St. Louis, Seattle. Ideal for post cards and tourist brochures, these landmarks aid in the creation of a first “hook”, or attention getting point of reference for a city. Often the structure may even have an interesting history in its own right, although it is the rare resident or visitor that seeks more than the visual or functional impact of the object. But beyond the cognitive function it provides, does an object really provide any insight into its city, who and what it is?

Greenwich Village. Georgetown. Buckhead. Little Havanna. More names, this time given to neighborhoods which have actual or perceived commonality within their physical borders, yet uniqueness from their surroundings. One of the more socioeconomic and/or occupational class homogenous groupings found in cities, neighborhoods can play a role in supporting a resident’s identification with that community. Beyond this, residents and nonresidents are often able to associate certain neighborhoods with specific cities. In contrast to landmarks, the mental image of the neighborhood extends beyond a visual “thing” to qualitative descriptors of the neighborhoods’ residents and even lifestyles. It is not uncommon for these images to be so strong as to lead to stereotypes and generalizations that extend and last far beyond the reality. Given that cities are aggregates of heterogeneous people and neighborhoods, the use of a singular neighborhood as a medium for understanding a city’s “spirit and character” is simplistic at best, and fallacious in most cases.

Virtually every American metropolitan area has some form of Visitor and Convention Bureau, a place of reference where we could expect to find a synthesis of what the city views are its positive qualities. Of course, the “city” in this case is the perspective of the commercial and local

governmental representatives, and that perspective is addressed towards the perceived expectations of visitors, not residents. Not surprisingly the visitor websites of the top U.S. cities portray their cities in a commonly used format, one of listing specific establishments and structures within standard activity categories of shopping, dining, lodging, sightseeing, etc., and placing such entities in their geographic locations on maps. Such information aids in promoting legibility of the city prior to the visit, a worthwhile function. But have we learned anything more from these sources about that particular city? Does a listed collection of predominately privately run commercial entities, attractions, and historical landmarks portray a city's identity?

Landmarks and neighborhoods, information and public relations – taken individually, these elements and methods have limited use in understanding the identity of a city. It is the contention of this thesis that another medium can be employed, one that may be the smallest environmental grouping capable of associating an identity with a city. That medium is the street. Often viewed today as a thin line on a map or a semi-static factor in traffic flow studies, the urban street is one of this country's most ignored and underutilized assets. It has, however, distinctive characteristics that make it an applicable format for formulating images about its host city. This assertion will be explored by focusing on the concept of one particular street within an urban area, that which I am categorizing as an "identity street", as a narrator of city identity.

The foundation for this justification is found in the next three chapters. Chapter 2 establishes a theoretical framework for the definition of "identity" from the fields of sociology, psychology, architecture, and human geography. Here we will see that identity is closely associated with the ideas of image and place, and is also a function of one's participatory role in the city, e.g. full-time resident, commuter, or occasional visitor (Relph 44).

Chapter 3 reviews the origins, evolution and current status of the street, followed by the functionality and perceptions of streets in America. The scope of this thesis pertains only to the United States due to the significant differences in the historical context of the street and our cultural values as a society. One example epitomizing this difference is found in how an American says, "We

live *on* Elm Street,” while an Italian, for example, lives “*in* via Angelo Masina.” The differences in terminology suggest differing conceptions (Schumacher 133).

Broadway, Wilshire Boulevard and Michigan Avenue are analyzed in Chapter 4 as identity street case studies. Do these streets manifest the unique character of their cities? Are there patterns or characteristics found in all of them that may be the basis for any identity street?

Based on the historical and cultural context of the street, the theories of group and place identity, and the analysis of a sample of physical embodiments, the definition of identity street in the context of this thesis is postulated in Chapter 5. The opportunity to further study the concept is generated by the introduction of the application – Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia. Chapter 6 contains the first step in the application, a perceptual inventory of Peachtree Street today. What is noticeable to the first time viewer if one takes an active perceptual stance? What is the experience? Are clues evident about the city and its people? Chapter 7 then adds a framework to the initial impressions by relating a summary of Atlanta’s history and Peachtree Street in particular. While the emphasis is on the characteristics of this particular street, its role and context to its surroundings is considered of equal importance and is also addressed.

These components are then analyzed in Chapter 8 by addressing the following questions: Does Peachtree Street narrate a story about Atlanta? How does/does it not support the creation of image and identity? Does it embody the character and is it consistent with existing images of Atlanta? Specifically, the analysis compares the observations from Chapter 6 with this thesis’ definition of “identity street”, thus highlighting opportunities for recommendations regarding physical design and urban planning alternatives for Peachtree Street.

It should be noted that identity and any form of its representation is a multi-dimensional concept. This thesis does not claim that physical design is the only variable necessary for consideration in the establishment or embodiment of a city’s identity. However, as a thesis in the field of landscape architecture, the focus here is on the physical environment and its potential role in the identity concept. The limitations inherent in the methodology employed in this thesis, as well as

opportunities for further research are discussed in the conclusion of this paper. But realizing the limitations of an action should not lead to absence of effort or dismissal of the underlying concept. To do so in this case will contribute to the inevitable spread of “placelessness”, a “weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience” (Relph, 90).

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY, IMAGE AND PLACE

If a thing isn't distinguished from anything else it has no value.
(Rypkema, 1999)

How does one define the identity of a city or metropolitan area? This is one of the key questions underlying this thesis. It is therefore instructive to briefly reflect on the theories and philosophies regarding identity, and its associated concepts of image and place, generated from the fields of sociology, psychology, geography and architecture.

Review of Literature

In The Image of the City, the 1960 classic book on the look of cities, Kevin Lynch studies the mental images of cities held by its citizens and how physical design elements contribute to the formation and enhancement of those images. He begins with the concept of the environmental image, “the generalized mental picture of the exterior physical world that is held by an individual” (4). This image is comprised of three interrelated components: identity, structure and meaning (8). He defines the identity component as “individuality or oneness”, and structure as the “spatial or pattern relation of the object to the observer and to other objects”. Lynch states that city planners and designers should focus more on the first two components because he believes meaning is too variable by individual, is not easily influenced by physical design, and must be allowed the freedom to evolve and adapt. Thus, his research sought to determine the physical qualities that relate to identity and structure in the mental image. He concludes that the important factor in our ability to create a mental image representative of a particular city is the city’s imageability (alternately referred to as legibility) – the ease with which parts of a city can be recognized and organized into a coherent pattern. That is, cities that contain elements supportive of identity (“consistent sameness”) and structure (discernable “patterns”) have high legibility and strong mental image association. These elements he went on to define as paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks (46).

Lynch authors a later book on the physical environment, What Time is This Place, in which he directs us to think of an environmental image as being both spatial and temporal, a time-place (242). He calls memory the basis of self-identity (124), and that “group memories are supported by the stable features of the environment, which becomes a ‘spatial emblem of time’ ” (125). Lynch views place as an “emblem of past, present and future time”, and that “a desirable image is one that celebrates and enlarges the present while making connections with past and future” (1).

Geographer Edward Relph considers the notion of identity from a phenomenological viewpoint in Place and Placelessness. He highlights the interrelationship and difference between the concepts of identity *of* and identity *with*; “The identity of something refers to a persistent sameness and unity which allows that thing to be differentiated from others. However, that inherent identity is inseparable from identity with other things.” He claims that the identity a person or group has with a place is as important as their identity of it, and is conditional upon their experience as an insider, e.g. a resident, or an outsider, e.g. a tourist (45). (This insider/outsider dichotomy is examined more thoroughly later in this chapter.)

Relph goes on to delineate physical setting, activities, and meaning as the three basic elements of the identity of places (47), linked by a fourth, less tangible attribute “that has been variously termed ‘spirit of place’, ‘sense of place’ or ‘genius of place’ (*genius loci*) – all terms which refer to character or personality” (48). He writes that the relative weighting of each of the subcomponents may be of considerable importance in establishing the identity of particular places. Relph adds that identity is not just a product of its components, but is also influenced by the images that individuals and groups have for a place. These images vary within a person, such as how the image of a street changes when one is a pedestrian vs. a driver, and among individuals and groups. An example in the latter case is the identity a city may have to its residents living in a ghetto vs. that perceived by the city’s planning department personnel.

Relph then delineates a third class of images beyond those held by the individual or group, namely *consensus identity images* of place. These represent a common ground of agreement about a

place and include a type he labels as *mass identities*. These images are assigned by ‘opinion-makers’ and disseminated through the mass media. Relph criticizes this form of identity, which is “based not on symbols and significances, and agreed on values, but on glib and contrived stereotypes created arbitrarily and even synthetically” (58).

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan focuses on the human experience associated with the two related components of the title of his book, Space and Place. What begins as undifferentiated space, he writes, becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value (6). Time is movement in space; place is pause. Each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. Tuan states that identity of place is achieved by “dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life” (178).

In his book The Psychology of Place, David Canter studies the psychological processes which enable us to understand, identify, use and create places, with emphasis on cognition. He writes that place is the result of relationships between actions, conceptions, and physical attributes, and that those common elements found in their junctions facilitate the identification of those places (158-159). He gives much credit to Lynch for applying psychology and economic theories regarding imagery and recall to the physical environment, but claims that Lynch draws on only the ‘spatial’ and ‘relational’ components of image and neglects the ‘value’ image and ‘emotional’ image (25). In other words, he believes that meaning, which is derived from values and emotions, cannot be left out of the study of image.

Architectural icon Christian Norberg-Schulz, progenitor of the *genius loci* concept, presents a viewpoint from architecture with his theory of “existential space”, a relatively stable “concretization of environmental schemata or images, which form a necessary part of man’s general orientation or ‘being in the world’ ” (Norberg-Schulz 1971, 7). The elementary organizational schemata consist in the establishment of centers or places (proximity), directions or paths (continuity) and areas or domains (enclosure) (18). The notions of proximity, centralization and closure work together to form the concept of place, and places are the basic elements of existential space (20).

He also contends that concrete environmental (architectural) structures are necessary, for “when history is not related to a stable system of places it becomes meaningless” (114). He states that we cannot have a totally transient or mobile environment because history requires a slower rate of speed to occur. That is, history is meaningful only when memory and experience, which are temporal and locational attributes, have sufficient time to develop, and the existence of stable artifacts associated with those memories and experience keeps time from disappearing. Concrete architectural elements also embody how the architect, (ostensibly as surrogate for humanity), “receives” the environment at the time of construction. The details of these elements articulate and explain environmental character, and thus become meaningful as historical character representations (32). (Norberg-Schulz puts much faith in the ability and the desire of those controlling the element’s design to articulate environmental character, which may not always be justified.) He stipulates that we must demand from architectural space “an imageable structure that offers rich possibilities for identification”, analogizing that “the value of great works of art consists in their allowing for different interpretations without losing their identity”.

In The Aesthetics of Landscape, Steven Bourassa writes that “culture not only seeks its identity in symbolic forms, but it also seeks to maintain itself through such forms. The landscape is one form through which cultural groups seek to create and preserve their identities”. He goes on to describe Costonis’ ‘cultural stability – identity’ theory that explains that viewers respond affirmatively to particular visual configurations in the environment because they signify values that stabilize cultural, group, or individual identity (91).

The appearance of landscapes is also the theme of John Jackle’s 1987 book, The Visual Elements of Landscape. The landscape, the environment that surrounds us, contains places, which are “behavioral settings linked to anticipated satisfactions and dissatisfactions” (5). He goes on to paraphrase landscape critic Ian Nairn’s discussion of identity as a unique configuration of all objects that go to make up a place. Implicit in these objects are behavioral expectations. The way to expressive and exciting landscapes is through the creation of separate identities forming essential

parts of the whole, and one creates these identities through the physical relationships of objects as they form spatial sequences (33). Jackle discusses the character of place, the search of which involves interpreting objects of place as symbols of human intent. A landscape is seen to have character through the discovery of its details (75-76).

Although Potteiger and Purinton's Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories does not directly address the issues of identity and image, its subject matter may prove useful in the quest to identify (or make cognizant) the image of a city. The authors contend that "narrative is a fundamental way people shape and make sense of experience and landscapes", and that "stories link the sense of time, event, experience, memory and other intangibles to the tangible aspects of place" (ix). They define narrative as "both the story, what is told, and the means of telling, implying both product and process, form and formation, structure and structuration" (3). Landscape narratives designate the interplay between landscape and narrative; places configure narratives, and narratives play a critical role in making places. "It is through narrative that we interpret the processes and events of place. We come to know a place because we know its stories" (6).

In her book, The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society, art critic Lucy Lippard writes of the "lure of the local", the pull of place that operates on each of us relating to our psychological need to belong somewhere (7). She adds that inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/cityscape seen from the inside. Place is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width and depth. It is about connection, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there. For Lippard, art provides a mean to negotiate and transcend the tensions of a multicentered society. One of the examples she cites as demonstrative of this capability is Leicester's memorial to miners and the mining industry in Frostburg, Maryland (270). The exterior pays homage to vernacular architecture, while the interior shelters personal artifacts of mining families in the area. There is a frieze of black butterflies (black lung), a "Pillar and Room" named after a dangerous extractive process, and "Rooms of Memory" filled with memorabilia. Leicester was determined to

make a piece that was not a feel-good nostalgia trip but a reminder of hard work, dignity and oppression of the miners and their families.

More recent landscape related theory and research in geography has involved the question of ownership over space and identity, namely private vs. public space ownership, the relationship of property to landscape, and the scale of ownership (Mitchell 275). The studies have focused on who controls identity through land ownership and the motivations of those having this control. These motivations include: political ideology; the pacification of differences by presenting sanitized and neutralized versions of conflict in history, destroying culturally significant landscapes for commercial development, and standardizing social relationships; and the “commodification” of the landscape to aid consumption. Additional commentary related to this latter point centers around the processes of aestheticization and spectacularization occurring in urban environments today. Some have termed efforts such as events planning, gentrification, self-conscious image making and street beautification projects as “exploitation of cultural capital” aimed at encouraging consumption that works negatively to override more real urban cultures, generate inauthentic diversity, or contribute to social polarization (Jacobs 1998, 252). Jane M. Jacobs, however, counters that such activities can also be positively linked to national and local agendas that meaningfully negotiate a variety of vectors of power and difference (274-275).

While these studies serve purposes beyond the scope of this thesis, they provide additional theories as to why the urban landscape appears as it does today and may appear tomorrow. Their findings support the premise that forces are contributing to the genericization of our city landscapes, particularly in places with strong growth and capital investment. Thus, the representation of uniqueness or differentiation in the physical environment may prove to be a challenge. Another implication is that any attempt to represent “regional and local identity” has the potential to become manifested in a trite marketing format bearing little resemblance to the reality of historical conflict and varying interpretation of events within the locale.

Synthesis of Readings

What can be extrapolated from the ideas just presented that may aid in the formulation of an identity street concept? In terms of commonality, the definition of identity has a consistent theme of individuality or oneness - a persistent sameness that leads to differentiation from others. This is in line with the combination of the first two listings of the word in Webster's New World Dictionary:

Identity 1. the condition or fact of being the same or exactly alike; sameness; oneness
2. the condition or fact of being a specific person or thing; individuality

In this sense, the word is an abstract evaluative concept, a term open to interpretation by the one making the judgment, but able to exist because multiple individuals are able to arrive at the same conclusions regarding "sameness" and "difference". In this light, it would seem that environments with the potential for strong identities are those that offer high impact sensory and visual cues and elements, be they very consistent or high in contrast, in order to reduce the opportunity for individual interpretation.

From the architectural world, we get more focus on the role of the tangible aspects of our environment regarding group and cultural identity. Semi-stable visual configurations and temporal architectural forms are deemed essential to the preservation of cultural identity, implying either the existence of explicitly designed meaning in the form or configuration, or that form has acquired symbolism over its existence based on cumulative individual or group experience, association from memory, or simply nostalgia. As with Potteiger's narrative techniques, this concept could be used in both the evaluator stage of identity recognition, i.e. studying the physical elements in the landscape for their role in recognizing the city's identity, and in the implementation phase of identity encapsulation in a particular physical environment such as the street.

A common theme throughout the various disciplines is the concept of place, or essentially the "thing" we are seeking the identity of (or with). The word is derived from the Latin *platea*, meaning broad street, although common usage today is as a spatial or geographic locator for a specific activity or use. Most readings summarized in this chapter go beyond this definition by describing a place as an interplay of physical setting, the activities or actions taking place at that

setting, and associated conceptions, meanings and symbols. An interesting implication here is that a city may not have a discernable identity because it lacks either one of these components or any intersections among them – it is a placeless place.

Some authors bring in a fourth dimension to the discussion of place, namely its *genius loci*. This concept tends to receive acknowledgement but not exploration, which may be due to an inability to translate the principle into a quantifiable research methodology. Landscape architects have attempted to embrace the *genius loci* of a site in their designs, but most applications have been in non-urban environments. The question here is whether *genius loci* is as powerful or authentic in environments where we have so transformed the original physical landscape as to render it a neutral backdrop or place-holding mechanism. I believe *genius loci* remains a viable concept even in urban areas because the “spirit” of a place is a function of all factors affecting the way we perceive and experience a particular environment, even one altered or influenced by our own actions.

The facet of the identity topic that presents a point of departure amongst the authors is the level of importance given to identity *with*, and its linkage to experience and meaning, vs. identity *of*, which gives more prominence to cognition. Lynch consciously omits the subject of meaning in his research. Architects focus on the designed-in or symbiotic meaning of manmade artifacts and, in the case of Norberg-Schulz, man’s relationship to them. Relph quotes the landscape artist Alan Gussow as writing: “The catalyst that converts any physical location – any environment if you will – into a place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that is claimed by feelings” (142-143). According to Relph, this intensity of experience is a function of one’s level of “insideness” or “outsideness”. For example, a city resident in her hometown, who “knows this is the place where she belongs”, is an *existential insider* and should have the strongest levels of identification with the place. Contrastingly, an *incidental outsider*, such as a businessperson who travels to a city for a meeting and returns the next day, attaches no importance to the particular place, has a much lower intensity of experience, and thus much weaker place identification. (It should be noted that Relph’s conclusions here are theoretical and he does not base on supporting

research). Norberg-Schulz also broaches the topic of the insider/outsider dichotomy by writing, “to be inside is the primary contention behind the place concept” (25). Lynch avoided the subject by conducting research only with city residents – no mention is made of the applicability of his theory across differing segments of city users. Jackle defends the importance of studying tourists (outsiders), explaining that many actively seek stimulating and scenic visuals and thus may be more sensitive to character recognition than some residents who may view their environments in more functional terms. Tuan writes “long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience” (1979, 18). This topic suggests the necessity of understanding whose perspective the identification is coming from. The resident? The suburban commuter? The visitor or tourist? The city’s planning office? The business owner? The Mayor? All of the above?

This insider/outsider question relates to one final issue, that of the relationship of identity to image. The first five definitions listed in Webster’s Dictionary provide the relevant background to the issue:

Image 1. an imitation or representation of a person or thing 2. the visual impression of something produced by reflection from a mirror 3. a person or thing very much like another; copy; counterpart 4. a mental picture of something; conception; idea; impression 5. the concept of a person, product, institution, etc. held by the general public, often one deliberately created or modified by publicity, advertising, propaganda, etc

Image is an abstraction, a visual representation of a thing but not tangible itself. It is a term often equated to a pictorial (either mental or material) or linguistic abstraction of a particular thing’s identity. From here, a divergence of meaning becomes evident by comparing Webster’s second and fifth definitions. “Reflection from a mirror” implies a true to form representation with only a commonly recognized orientation alteration. The fifth definition, however, implies the potential for overt manipulation and even fabrication that may or may not be known by the receiver of the image. Relph terms these images “mass identities”; I will call any group of images generated by secondary sources for public consumption *virtual identities*. Thousands of people are employed in the fields of marketing, advertising and public relations whose responsibility is the creation, preservation and

enhancement of the image of organizations and individuals. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent each year on brand awareness and recognition for products, services, and anything else deemed to be “marketable”. Obviously images are important to individuals and groups alike. Their effect is so pervasive as to make distinctions of images about people and places formed by virtual identities vs. an individual’s “original” perceptions nearly impossible. Virtual identities play an important role in the creation of expectations, and one factor of satisfaction is the similarity of one’s experience to expectations. Thus, virtual identities cannot be ignored when attempting to discern city identity, nor should all be dismissed and labeled “inauthentic and dishonest”. Instead, we can often determine kernels of identity by studying virtual identities over time. In addition, one test of the validity of these images is their correlation with what we see and experience in the city’s environment.

CHAPTER 3

STREETS

"Of all things made by mankind, the street is the most enduring. Streets, along with those who work and live on them, boast golden ages and dusty oblivions but the major arteries never quite entirely disappear."

(Shepard 7)

What is it about that entity we call an urban "street" that offers its potential as an embodiment of a city's identity? Some keys can be found in a review of its evolution in both tangible qualities and cultural perceptions.

The road, as antecedent to the street, "suggests movement to a destination and . . . the transporting of people and commodities on foot, by pack animal or vehicle" (Rykwert 15). In A History of Roads, Hindley offers the origin of the word road as "a route of overland communication between established communities" (1). From the Romans, we carry today the legacy of humanity's ability and desire to engineer and construct roads for wheeled traffic. Ironically, the Via Appia, one of the main arteries in Italy's road system at the time, was not simply the first stretch of paved road in the history of Western man. According to Hindley, it was also lined with the tombs of generations of famous Romans along a 100-mile stretch southward from Rome. The monuments and decorations were so impressive that "they became one of the sights of the empire and sidewalks had to be provided to accommodate the many strollers and pedestrians on this somewhat macabre sightseeing tour" (26).

In contrast to "road", our associations with the term "street" seem to be more variable and inclusive of subjective evaluation. At a more clinical level, architectural historian Amos Rapoport, who has conducted significant research on the perceptual characteristics of streets that support pedestrian usage, defines streets as "more or less narrow, linear spaces lined with buildings found in settlements and used for circulation and, sometimes, other activities" (81). The architectural field has vacillated in a love-hate relationship with the street and its level of importance in the landscape.

Architects often describe streets in terms of “space” – either positive or negative, and “solids and voids”. Pervasive throughout the majority of the twentieth century, Modernism has viewed the street as an unimportant two-dimensional background palette, a simple road, divorced contextually from individually placed architectural objects. Pre and post modern views generally treat the street as a three-dimensional volume, a positive space, which is intimately entwined with architecture. “Streets tend to act both literally and metaphorically as exterior rooms in the city”, allowing them to function as links and as places with activities (Ellis 117).

In the latter part of the twentieth century, social science disciplines concerned with urban issues developed interest in the street as a research subject. Because of its generic pervasiveness, longevity, role in fostering exchange and interaction, and “public space” characteristic, authors in recent times have described the street in more socially oriented terms:

- “The street is human movement institutionalized.” A path never becomes a road or street because the road and street are social institutions, and it is their acceptance by the community that gives them their name and function (Rykwert 15).
- “It is the urban street that from the first origins of settlements has acted as principal place of public contact and public passage, a place of exchange of ideas, goods, and services, a place of play and fight, of carnival and funeral, of protest and celebration. Its place in the web of association that have sustained human society is therefore paramount” (Czarnowski 207).
- A street has two social functions: *instrumental* and *expressive*. In their instrumental sense, streets provide links between buildings, over which the goods and people necessary to sustain the city can pass. Streets also link people, facilitating communication and interaction, and binding together the social order of the polis or local urban community. Its expressive function includes its use as a site for casual social interaction, including recreation, conversation, and entertainment, as well as its use as a site for ritual observances such as processions (Gutman 250).

- In her critique of city planning, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs views streets and sidewalks as the “most vital organs of the city”. If streets are dull, deserted, and unsafe, so will be that city. She cites clear public/private demarcations, “eyes on the street” belonging to “natural proprietors”, and continuous pedestrian use as necessary elements of a successful city street.

Architecture professor Christopher Alexander, in his classic book on town planning, A Pattern Language, essentially says that our current system of combined vehicular and pedestrian streets and roads suboptimize both applications. For high traffic density urban areas, he advocates separation of use into higher speed vehicular roads interlaced with low speed local street and pedestrian paths. Homes, shops, plazas and arcades, all built to the street and creating positive space, would be placed on the pedestrian greenways.

Still others have espoused a theme about streets that bears resemblance to this thesis. Norberg-Schulz writes, “in the past, it was a ‘small universe’, where the character of the district and of the town as a whole was presented in condensed form to the visitor” (81). Potteiger and Purinton believe “a public street is a place where a diverse group of people participate in the ongoing narratives of place” (187). Editor of the book Public Streets for Public Use, Anne Vernez Moudon posits that “more than any other element of the urban infrastructure, streets both record and determine the history of city form. Streets and their layout reflect the societies that have created them” (13).

Despite such lofty attributions, the history and current reality of the American urban street do not seem as inspiring. One reason for this antipathy towards streets by Americans may be our direct association of streets with our historical antagonism towards cities. Exemplified by Thomas Jefferson’s beliefs, America’s general attitude of cities as a necessary evil, which we tolerate and use to our benefit, has not bode well for attention to “quality of life” issues related to the street. Even public health and safety actions taken in the early twentieth century, while resulting in some sanitary improvements along the street, were more focused on housing, schools, and occupational facilities.

It did not help that the suburban escape movement began during this time, which diminished any impetus to address the core issues of perceived streetlife problems.

Our attitudes of benign acceptance and lack of interest are manifest in the physical appearance of our urban streets, which, from written accounts, were unpleasant places from the earliest days of our country. Due to our ancestral urban residents propensity to use the street as repository of refuse and sewage, (and perhaps some latent agrarian tendencies revolting against the urban environment), pigs were allowed to run wild in the streets of New York as late as the 1830's. As Bernard Rudofsky writes in his critique of American urban attitudes, Streets For People: "There was also the added pleasure of seeing the garbage metamorphosed into bacon fat at no extra cost" (46-47). Despite the advent of garbage collection since then, Rudofsky points out that old habits die hard. "Street dirt is still one of the conspicuously appalling sights in American towns" (54).

One of the most influential forces on the character of our streets today has been its role as a tool of planners, politicians, bankers, and real estate developers for enabling land division, ownership, speculation, and development. The establishment of the grid street layout across this country resulted in a purposeful disengagement of the street from its host, the topography of the underlying landscape. This would prove to be just the first of many steps that serve to continually narrow the definition of the street to a horizontal band for movement. As Robert Gutman writes in The Street Generation, the constituencies listed above view the street in "its capacity to stimulate the market for land values by accommodating swift and efficient surface and underground transportation" (251). Historian and philosopher Lewis Mumford had come to similar conclusions decades earlier. The street "is a symbol of possible traffic, possible commercial opportunity, possible conversion from residence into a more extensive business use. The street itself thus provided an extra excuse for the fantastic land values that were sometimes optimistically tacked in advance onto rural properties that stood in the path of the advancing city" (427). Furthermore, planning and zoning regulations segregating land use throughout the latter half of the twentieth century have stripped the human activity levels on the street in many places to either nullity or to slivers of time periods in the day or

night. The concentration of commercial enterprises, a half-century of modern architecture implementation, and new building construction techniques have also led to a streetscape problem of scale. As Norberg-Schulz writes, “We are hardly able to identify ourselves with such streets as Park Avenue in New York, and the lack of variation and spontaneous details is depressing” (81,83).

One trend resulting from the aforementioned factors has been an importation of previous public/private transition space activities entirely into the private realm. Inward facing private courtyards, indoor malls, blank walls and gates, and privately controlled sidestreets contribute further to stripping the street of public usage and functionality beyond its transportation role. Numerous authors have decried the intentional or unintended side effects of enclosed, privately operated, climately controlled pedestrian walkways, bridges and tunnels that remove the most “fundamental of urban activities – people walking along the streets” (Boddy 124-125). Critics warn that these architectural devices are not benign tools, but serve to accelerate a stratification of race and class, allow extensions of corporate scale and efficacy across the landscape, and restrict political freedoms and social diversity. “Climate protection” has become a euphemism for social protection and segregation; interior, or “being inside” is a powerful symbol for protection, while “being outside”, i.e. on the street, evokes exposure and vulnerability (139).

Of course, the automobile has had the most profound effect on the American street. “Today, the urban street has too often become specialized, often largely a track for traffic; diffuse, and alternating sequences of monumentally isolated buildings and parking lots; and neglected, a no-man’s-land of litter and crime” (Czarnowski 207). Much has already been written on this subject and thus will not be elaborated upon here. However, the results of increasingly wide asphalt pavements clogged with emission generating vehicles or swiftly moving traffic endangering or limiting pedestrian use has brought new/rehashed ideas from a variety of fields. While experimentation in the segregation of automobiles and pedestrians has found only limited success in this country, attention has turned toward “livable street” alternatives for enhancing the quality of residential streets for all types of users.

Today, attention is also finally being directed towards some commercial and arterial urban streets. “Main Streets” in smaller towns are being rehabilitated for a variety of community stabilizing, economic generation and historic preservation advocacy reasons. The enhancement of the visual elements of the streetscape has taken place in a number of cities. Planning studies speak of a renewed attention to pedestrians, to “support the sense of community by bringing diverse groups of people together on the street”. One could view this type of thinking as idealistic nostalgia for an era that may have only existed in very tight-knit immigrant dominated enclaves of the early twentieth century. But, while the motivations and long-term efficacy of these types of goals and programs can be debated, they, nonetheless, offer evidence that pursuit of transportation efficiency is no longer the only expectation we have for our urban streets. With 30% - 60% of urban land consumed by streets (there are 6375 miles of streets in New York City alone according to the New York City Convention Bureau), multi-functionality of such a vast resource should be a goal worthy of pursuit. And, as a placeholder for constantly regenerating manmade elements, a medium of movement and signifier of temporal change, a functional necessity for our current cultural values of mobility (transportation) and economic valuation, a palette for sensory perception, a publicly accessible “open space”, a social forum, a city communications guide, and a testimony to endurance, the street has the potential to be one of the best physical instruments for peering into the soul of the city.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES

It is instructive at this point to depart from theory and examine existing identity street candidates in the United States. The first category of streets elicits associations with specific functions or land use such as Wall Street, symbolic of the stock market and capitalist economics. These types of streets, however, while usually providing locational reference to their respective cities, are too narrow in scope to aptly describe a major metropolitan city's identity. In addition, their physical manifestation is irrelevant to their ability to achieve this associative quality, other than to reinforce the expectations we have of the environmental "look" of each land use type. Another type, usually listed in tourist guides, supposedly portrays some aspect of that city's original development, and tends to emphasize that image in its physical manifestation. An example here is the one-block long, pedestrian only Olvera Street in Los Angeles, which is located in a section of the city that traces back to its former Mexican heritage. After a period of deterioration, the street was turned into a Mexican marketplace in the 1930's and remains today a festive mix of ethnic based retailers and significant architectural landmarks (Johnson 49). However, to say that a street heavily "made" into a representation of one aspect of a city's heritage is an identity street would also be too exclusive for an overall identity.

Instead, three particular streets of some renown will be studied, first by covering their histories and current physical design and character, followed by an analysis of each in respect to their home city. Evidence among all three of commonality or variability will then be determined. The streets selected happen to be located in the three largest metropolitan areas (and cities proper) of the U.S.: Broadway in New York City; Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles; and Michigan Avenue in Chicago.

The source of information for these case studies is primarily written narratives (books, newspapers, web sites, etc) and photographs, with some memories of this author's prior visits to New York City and Chicago. Thus, the perspective is from an "outsider", in Relph's terms, albeit one who is empathetic, and certain biases and surface level generalities are inevitable. Specifically, unless otherwise noted, the historical information used for these cases studies is attributable to Richard Shepard's book, Broadway – From the Battery to the Bronx; Thomas Hines' essay "Wilshire Boulevard" in Cigliano and Landau's The Grand American Avenue 1850 – 1920; and John Stamper's publication Chicago's North Michigan Avenue.

Broadway, New York City

*A street may speak for city or nation, but it always bespeaks a state of mind.
Broadway is such a street.*

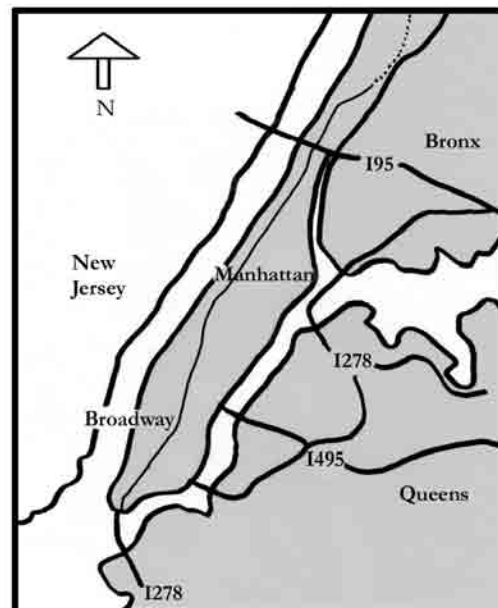
(Shepard 7)

While best identified by the rest of the country as home to the Theater District and Times Square, Broadway is much more than a single theme pathway. Twenty-one miles long, Broadway is New York City's longest street, extending from its origins at the southern end of Manhattan, reaching north into the borough of the Bronx (Figure 4.1). It is a spine of the city, traversing districts as diverse as finance to theater to shopping, and with a history that parallels the continuous regeneration of our country's largest urban area. It is also one of the few streets in Manhattan that does not conform to the rigid geometric street grid system of numbered east/west streets and lettered north/south avenues. Instead, it primarily runs at a northwest to southeast diagonal along its middle and main tertiary.

Broadway was originally an Algonquin Indian track known as Weekquaesgeek (Poli 28-29). Once the Dutch colonized Manhattan, the trail became Heere Straat, a road extending north along a high ridge from a fort (where Battery Park now exists) built by the Dutch India Company in the early 1600's. It then achieved its current name through derivation of that of the Dutchman Breede Wegh (Poli 28). Some time after the British took control of New York, New York's first public park, Bowling Green, was created in 1732 for the pleasure of the wealthy British living along Broadway at

Figure 4.1

Broadway and New York City



the time, as well as other city inhabitants. Today, Lower Broadway equates to finance. Intersecting with Wall Street, it is a mix of modernist walls of glass and 1920's ornately adorned banking and brokerage buildings that seem to reduce the width of the street with their towering, dark facades. At Liberty Street (which leads a few blocks west to the former World Trade Center), however, the mood lightens in warm weather with musicians, clowns, jugglers and magicians providing street entertainment in the plaza of the Marine Midland Building with its Noguchi red cube sculpture.

Up the street is City Hall, constructed from a design competition in 1812, and the first of many focal points found at major intersections along Broadway. In this case, it is City Hall Park, at



*Figure 4.2. View from Battery Park
Photo: Carin Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 15).*



Figure 4.3. City Hall Park at Broadway.

the northeast corner with Park Row, formerly the Boston Post Road. The Park was originally known as the Commons, a greensward that was used for parades, demonstrations, riots, and protests.

Across the street on Broadway's east side is the Gothic Woolworth Building, which was the world's tallest skyscraper when constructed in 1913.

Continuing north to Canal Street, the buildings are older and smaller, and the influence of Chinatown has prevented Broadway in this section from deteriorating. In fact, it is the small entrepreneur-merchant, often recently immigrated to the US, who has helped to sustain landmark structures of the past through reuse and rehabilitation (Shepard 33-34). Today, Broadway north to Houston Street is a 20th century version of a lower East Side trading street, with retail wares directed at the budget conscious, ethnically diverse customer, and vendors hawking their goods at curbside or

in front of their stores. Ironically, the New York City Plan of 1821 considered Broadway an “accidental thoroughfare”, unlikely to progress further than Canal Street.

Despite officials’ prognostications, Broadway did progress. The area up to Houston Street today is a jumble of architectural and cultural styles, including cast-iron facades and Italianate columns of a by-gone era. In the 1850’s, this stretch of Broadway was packed with hotels, theaters and halls catering to the higher social strata. After the entertainment district moved north, the area transitioned to offices and lofts, and is now being filled up with art galleries and bookshops as the Soho district pushes westward.

Up until 9th Street, Broadway is a straight north/south thoroughfare. To avoid collision with The Bowery, however, it was shifted diagonally in the early 1800’s to the northwest, with the two streets intersecting in the newly created Union Square Park. Broadway continues on this angled trajectory until straightening somewhat at 79th Street.

After the Civil War, the section of Broadway from 9th to 23rd Streets housed an extensive congregation of buildings dedicated to luxury shopping. Part of the “Ladies Mile” that included stores on 5th and 6th Avenues, it was the center of fashion and culture. As Robert Macoy wrote in 1876 in *The Centennial Guide to New York City and its Environs*, “The great thoroughfare is the grand promenade and swarms with the beauty, fashion, and wealth of New York. No avenue or street in London or Paris or Berlin, or any of our cities, can be compared with it” (Shepard 51). While these businesses eventually moved north, their structures remained and became home to bargain merchants of such items as carpets, novelties, and toys.

While much has disappeared, a large amount of the richly decorated, high quality construction of the past century still survives along Broadway from City Hall north to 23rd St, conveying a small sense of grandeur that once existed (Shepard 43). Today, while eclectic “antique” dealers still cluster around the Union Square area at 14th St., the area is once again changing as new construction is bringing in a new round of residential structures. Union Square has become a town commons, enhanced by a farmers market several days of the week. And, as an artificial boundary



Figure 4.4. Cast iron buildings between Houston and Bleeker. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 41).



Figure 4.5. Broadway at 5th Ave. and 23rd St. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 60).

between Greenwich Village and the East Village, Broadway here is also a crossroads for a wide variety of artists who are taking an active role in preserving the architectural character of the neighborhood.

Broadway's squares are also home to many of the city's public statues and monuments. Washington, Lafayette, and Gandhi all grace Union Square. At Madison Square, a 51 foot high General William J. Worth Monument sits atop the burial spot of this hero of the Seminole and Mexican wars. Herald Square boasts the New York Herald publisher James Gordon Bennett Memorial. Times Square hosts two particularly relevant memorials to this section of town: George M. Cohan, legendary songwriter for Broadway musicals, and Father Francis P. Duffy, former pastor of 42nd Streets' Holy Cross Church and chaplain in three wars to the 165th infantry. Dante Alighieri clutching a copy of his *Divinia Commedia* has graced the corner of 63rd Street for forty years before Lincoln Center emerged. Just north at 65th in Tucker Park is the bronze bust of Richard Tucker, a popular tenor of the Metropolitan Opera for 21 years. Verdi Square at 72nd hosts Giuseppe Verdi and characters from his operas at the base. The park at West End Avenue and 106th contains a large bronze and granite fountain sculpture in memory of Isidor and Ida Straus, members of a prominent mercantile family who perished aboard the Titanic after allowing others to use the few lifeboats available.

In the late 1800's, entertainment events were held in a succession of garden structures along Broadway north of Madison Square. The arrival of the Flatiron Building in 1902 at the southern end of the square, would signal the end of the square's gracious days as high end retailing and entertainment again moved uptown. The 20-story narrow, limestone clad triangular shaped building was one of the earliest and tallest steel framed buildings in New York, and remains today.

The proliferation of Asian enterprise in the zone between the two squares, Madison and Herald, is a prodigious testimony to the perennial lure of Broadway as outlet to the world (Shepard 74). Korean language signs abound over shops selling computers, shirts and ceramics. This was where Tin Pan Alley was born, when music publishers lined Broadway at 28th Street. Legend has it



Figure 4.6. Details of the Flat Iron Building at 22nd St. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 59).



Figure 4.7. Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 68).



Figure 4.8. View toward Herald Square at 6th Avenue. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 66).

that two songwriters were walking along 28th St. and one described the sounds of songs coming from multiple pianos as “someone banging on tin pans,” to which the other songwriter dubbed the area Tin Pan Alley.

Broadway north of Herald Square (at 32nd) was called “The Gay White Way” in the 1890's, which was altered a decade later to the “The Great White Way” when the theater district moved to Times Square. In the 1920's, the garment district moved in, and continues to make its mark in this section of town. Very little of this segment's prior theater gaiety ambience remains. John Jacob

Astor's Knickerbocker Hotel is now an office building, and the Metropolitan Opera House, an institution from 1863-1965 has become a skyscraper housing women's wear.

The advent of Penn Central Station one block over on 7th Avenue made Herald Square, at Broadway, 6th Avenue, and 32nd Street, a commercial hub dominated even now by the world's largest department store, Macy's. Today, this area teems with both local and tourist clientele shopping for discount fashions. Macy's Thanksgiving parade terminates here after a long stretch down Central Park and Broadway. This is just one of many parades that have been a tradition on Broadway for 200 years.

Up ahead at the intersection of 7th Avenue and 42nd Street is Times Square, the most identifiable portion of Broadway. In the 1890's, this intersection was an undistinguished crossing of unlighted streets known as Long Acre Square, a place to get one's carriage repaired. In 1895, Oscar Hammerstein opened his lavish Olympia Music Hall at 44th Street, and ever since, Broadway theater has meant the Times Square area. Home to a "stable" theater district in what were increasingly seedy surroundings, the area has undergone an extensive "clean-up", both literally and figuratively, over the last ten years. Aided by local government and law enforcement support, the Times Square Business Improvement District has been instrumental in improving the area's litter removal and safety. In addition, the city has enforced regulations against "living on the street" and supported the efforts to remove pornographic enterprises off Broadway. The efforts have been so successful that Disney and other "family" oriented companies have taken space in the area.

These actions have spurred an overall interest by a wider variety of corporate enterprises to not only obtain retail space at ground level, but to add to the amazing proliferation of advertisements found growing vertically and horizontally along the buildings. Nighttime is particularly frenetic, with the bombardment of colorful neon and now video images vying for attention of the throngs of people below. It is a spectacle unlike any to be found in this country. As Tony Hiss says in The Experience of Place, it is "here in this one place, the energy of an entire city has been put on display" (79).

Times Square itself is not noteworthy from an aesthetic, architectural, or artistic viewpoint. However, it represents a meeting point for New Yorkers, a place where memorable, often emotional events take place. In 1908, thousands turned out to see six daredevil automobile crews depart on a 20,000-mile race from Times Square to Paris in a competition sponsored by The Times and Le Matin. The World War II victory was celebrated here. Television brings the annual spectacle of the dropping ball on New Year's Eve now to the entire nation.



Figure 4.9. Theater District near Times Square today. Photo: Antonio Attini/Archivio White Star (Poli 126).

Further up at 47th Street where Broadway and 7th Avenue diverge, is the TKTS booth, a creation of the nonprofit Theater Development Corporation, which offers same day half price tickets to current theater productions. Not surprisingly, with current theater prices approaching \$100 a seat, a highly visible long line of people can be found here, bringing even more life into the area in the daytime hours. The Times Square Visitor Center nearby adds fuel to the fire.

At the southwest corner of Central Park, Broadway crosses 8th Avenue in a circular area reminiscent of a Parisian intersection post Hausseman. Termed Columbus Circle, the roundabout is distinctly oriented towards vehicles vs. pedestrians, unlike the previous squares and parks found along Broadway prior to this point. In the center is a 77-foot granite monument of the circle's namesake, Christopher Columbus, a sculpture commissioned by New York City's Italian community for the 400th anniversary of his discovery of America. At Central Park's corner is the classical Maine



Figure 4.10. Broadway (left) at Columbus Circle. Central Park on right. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 80).

Monument Fountain, a tribute to those lost in the 1898 sinking of the battleship Maine. The north side of the intersection features an out of scale and basically monotonous skyscraper, the Gulf and Western Building, which dominates the surrounding shorter buildings. A new combination high-rise condominium and hotel complex on the west side of the square currently being constructed on the former site of the New York Coliseum may become the new dominant feature, however.

Broadway's appearance northwest changes, as it transforms into a divided boulevard with a vegetated median and four lanes of traffic on each side. This section of Broadway had been Western Boulevard, a road laid out in 1868 that led north to a luxury residential area called Bloomingdale. It was added to Broadway in 1899.

The area north of Columbus Circle is in transition mode due to the effects of Lincoln Center at 65th pushing downward, and the demise of the Coliseum which favored transient attractions. Taller, high-priced apartment buildings are also sprouting up in the area, bringing incongruity to the streetscape. At 65th, with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Fordham University just to the west, the tempo of the street rises, buildings are higher and more massive, and people are more fashionably dressed (Shepard 87). While critics abound concerning the 1959 constructed Lincoln Center's architectural form, it sparked, and continues to generate life in this area of town and has spawned many other arts oriented ventures to locate nearby. It is one of New York's top tourist

attractions, drawing people not only to its performances in its several halls and theaters, but outdoors in the summer with its festivals and outdoor concerts.

The Upper West Side, north of 70th Street, is a myriad of shadings, from tenements to upscale apartments, from yuppies to the elderly. The intersection at 72nd and Amsterdam is noteworthy not only for its two squares, Verdi and Sherman, but for the 72nd Street kiosk subway station in its center, now an official city landmark. The station, still in operation, was the first IRT express station north of 42nd street when constructed in 1904.

Gentrification has begun in the area, but new zoning laws require new residences to be shaped in keeping with the look of the street and to have commercial space on the Broadway side so that the line of shops and restaurants will not be breached. The residential resurgence is in keeping with the area's history in the early 20th century as home for the nouveau rich bourgeoisie. Many of



Figure 4.11. Verdi Square at 72nd St. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 94).

the fine apartment buildings such as the Astor Apartments and brownstones still exist, as well as such landmarks as the turreted and towered Ansonia hotel, past favorite of singers and show people drawn to its soundproofing. Meanwhile, the streetscape represents much of what New York is, a diversely ethnic enclave of merchants, musicians, writers, professionals, shoppers, people-watchers, immigrants and hucksters.

Broadway reaches the end of its Upper West Side nomenclature at the north end of its parallel with Central Park, where it intersects with streets in the lower 100's. Strong contrasts of rich/poor, homeless bag ladies and immaculately refurbished side street brownstones, occur frequently now, differentiating this area from all others along Broadway (Shepard 107). At 106th Street and West End Avenue, the hustle and bustle so common along Broadway till now subsides, with residential living overtaking commerce for the first time. This intersection also offers the first

view of the Hudson River to the west, and includes some activity from Columbia University just to the north. What stores that do exist are small, and the area takes on an intimate feel.

Columbia University borders Broadway from 114th to 120th Streets, with two long established institutions, Salter's bookstore and the West End Café, on the west side of the street.



Figure 4.12. Broadway between 104th and 105th Streets. Photo: Dreshler-Marx (Shepard 106).



Figure 4.13. Columbia University section of Broadway.

The Union Theological Seminary utilizes a number of Gothic structures from 120th to 122nd Streets. Other educational institutions in this area include the Teachers College, Manhattan School of Music, and Jewish Theological Seminary. The effect on Broadway between 116th and 123rd is profound – no signs of commerce exist, nor residences, only academe edifices (Shepard 117). It is also in this area that Broadway descends topologically until it resumes its ascent at 125th Street.

The streetscape here is lined with housing projects with playgrounds, and elevated subway tracks. Formerly heavily Irish and Russian, the area is now home to a large Puerto Rican community. Spanish signs are in abundance and graffiti is common. Its commonality with the rest of Broadway is its energy, entrepreneurship, and constant crowds of people on the street.

At 153rd Street lies Trinity Cemetery, established in 1842 and Manhattan's only cemetery still open for burials. Part of the site is also the former farmland of John James Audubon, whose grave here is marked by a 16-foot stone cross. Two streets north is Audubon Terrace, a cultural center including churches and museums.

Broadway then begins a slow climb upward to Washington Heights, a neighborhood centered on a peninsula formed by the Hudson River to the west and Harlem River to the east. On its way can be found the sprawling Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, which has grown on this site since the 1920's and serves over 150,000 patients annually. Another



*Figure 4.14. Broadway at 155th St.
Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 125).*

behemoth, the gaudy United Church, occupies the site of a former Loew's movie palace replete with terra-cotta ornamentation. But it is in Washington Heights that literally the bedrock of Manhattan is visible, as ridges of Manhattan mica schist crest to 260 feet in Fort Tryon Park north of 190th Street. Broadway becomes a valley at its northern reaches at Inwood, providing a sensation not too different from the canyons of Wall Street far to the south (Shepard 132).

What was once a Greenfield of rural estates is now an area of large apartment complexes surrounding low lying stores along Broadway, and, once off this street, a non-grid circulation system necessary due to the undulating topography. But lush parks and trees are commonplace in this working class neighborhood, where the George Washington Bridge lies just to the west.



*Figure 4.15. Broadway at St. Nicholas Ave. and 168th St. Photo:
Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 131).*



Figure 4.16. At 187th St. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 133)



Figure 4.17. Last building on Broadway before the Bronx. Photo: Drechsler-Marx (Shepard 142)

Broadway skirts Fort Tyron Park, a gift to the city from John D. Rockefeller Jr., who also helped finance the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Cloisters complex found at this site. Once past the George Washington Bridge and the city environs, Broadway meets its end as it becomes state road number US9, and runs upstate to Albany.

The following significant attributes and findings emerge when analyzing Broadway in the context of New York City as a whole:

- Length, direction and shape: This extremely long street of 21 miles traverses virtually the entire north-south gradient of Manhattan and includes a long diagonal stretch unique to the city's rigid street grid pattern.
- Origins and evolution: Begun in the early 1600's, it is as old as the city itself. Its northward migration and extensions also mirror the growth pattern of the city.
- Distinct "urban fabric zones": Depending on one's level of interpretation, the number of distinctive "neighborhoods" and activity based "districts" along the street numbers more than fifteen, each cohesive and large enough to promote recognition. This mirrors the overall structure of New York City, a city of boroughs consisting of varying ethnic, socioeconomic, and occupational/lifestyle neighborhoods intermixed with a functional overlay. In the mid 1980's, New York became a "majority minority city" for the first time.

- Potpourri of architectural styles: As a subset of both the previous and next points, a wide variety of time representative architectural motifs are evident along the street, either in stark adjacent contrast or in a consistent façade to enforce the distinction of neighborhood recognition. While New York City has done its share of architectural demolition, Broadway has managed to retain a noticeable amount of architectural heritage, particularly along the residential sections of the street.
- Holder of public artifacts: Approximately 25 statues or monuments honoring a wide range of people and causes are found along the street, each in its original location, and generally in prominent viewing position for both pedestrian and driver.
- “Pause” points and intersection identity: The diagonal orientation of Broadway on an extensive grid street pattern creates triangular wedges at intersections that are often the home of the artifacts described above, or patches of greenspace that foster visual break points or offer pause options for pedestrians from their linear movement. The varying contents of these wedges add legibility to the environment by their distinctiveness from one another.
- Levels of human presence and activity: The most striking characteristic about Broadway is that people are virtually always visible on the street. (This is not so much unique to New York City but to most other American cities and streets.) The activity level is found both day and night, albeit some segments of the street peak at different times than others. Most importantly, this activity level comprises residents, commuters, and tourists, which aids in the constancy of the street life.
- Heart of Times Square: Broadway runs through the heart of the theater district and is one of the defining edges of Times Square, already a worldwide image in its own right. Unlike other “landmarks” such as an opera house or sports arena, Times Square is not an inclusive enclosure of activity; it is a place of human gathering that spreads to encompass a vast network of theaters, pre and post show eating establishments, and assorted complimentary

tourist oriented attractions, entertainment venues and commercial establishments. More uniquely, its draw is equally outside of these establishments by the “experience” it offers on the street - that of being a part of an eclectic sea of humanity in an environment of visually heightened stimulation so obvious that it disengages any sense of cynicism and allows one to “just take it in”.

- The power of a name: The name of the street itself has an associative linkage with the activity along one of its sections. “Broadway” is used interchangeably with “going to the theater”, or in terms of “seeing a Broadway show”. Its distinctive shape has also allowed the absence of the ubiquitous “Avenue” or “Street” appendage of other New York pathways.
- Accessibility: The aptly name Broadway subway line runs underneath much of Broadway the street. Other transit lines feed into Times Square from all the boroughs, and the Lincoln Tunnel brings cars and buses from New Jersey (Hiss 64). As with much of the city, it is most accessible by foot for surrounding neighborhood residents and hotel occupants.

Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles

*“The real downtown of L.A. is linear, it’s Wilshire Boulevard.”
(Frank Gehry, as quoted in “Position Paper”)*

Wilshire’s geographic destiny has roughly followed the imprint of Indian paths and Spanish explorer trails. Historicism did not, however, carry over to the origin of its name. Developer Gaylord Wilshire honored himself by attaching his name to the 120 ft wide principal street in his new subdivision in 1895. Various streets were joined with the original length over time, and it wasn’t until 1934 that the current 15.6 mile Wilshire Boulevard ran uninterrupted between downtown Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean (Figure 4.18).

Native Angelinos have consistently described Wilshire in glowing terms. “Wilshire Boulevard,” wrote journalist David Lantis in 1960, “has become the city’s contribution to the famous streets of the world, along with the Champs-Elysees, Broadway, Michigan Boulevard ” (Hines 309). Writing a cover story for National Geographic in 1962, Robert De Roos mused upon “traveling the 15 ½ mile length of Wilshire Boulevard, I realized that this street is the unifying element in the

diversity of Los Angeles. It ties together the city of today with the city's past; virtually everything that has happened to Los Angeles has happened or is represented on Wilshire" (311). Some, however, did not share the viewpoint of the street's grandeur. "A motion picture prop man, in his wildest nightmare could not have dreamed up the fantastic hodge-podge that is Wilshire Boulevard," wrote columnist Matt Weinstock (Hancock 3).

What Wilshire does have is a definitive beginning (Grand Avenue and the skyscrapers of Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles) and ending (the Pacific Ocean cliffs of Santa Monica). As is common with streets of significance, it also has an aura, a positive name association that prompts many to use the Wilshire name in their business or address. In 1950, over 200 businesses and institutions in the city had Wilshire as part of their name. It has also been the named setting in numerous novels and motion pictures.

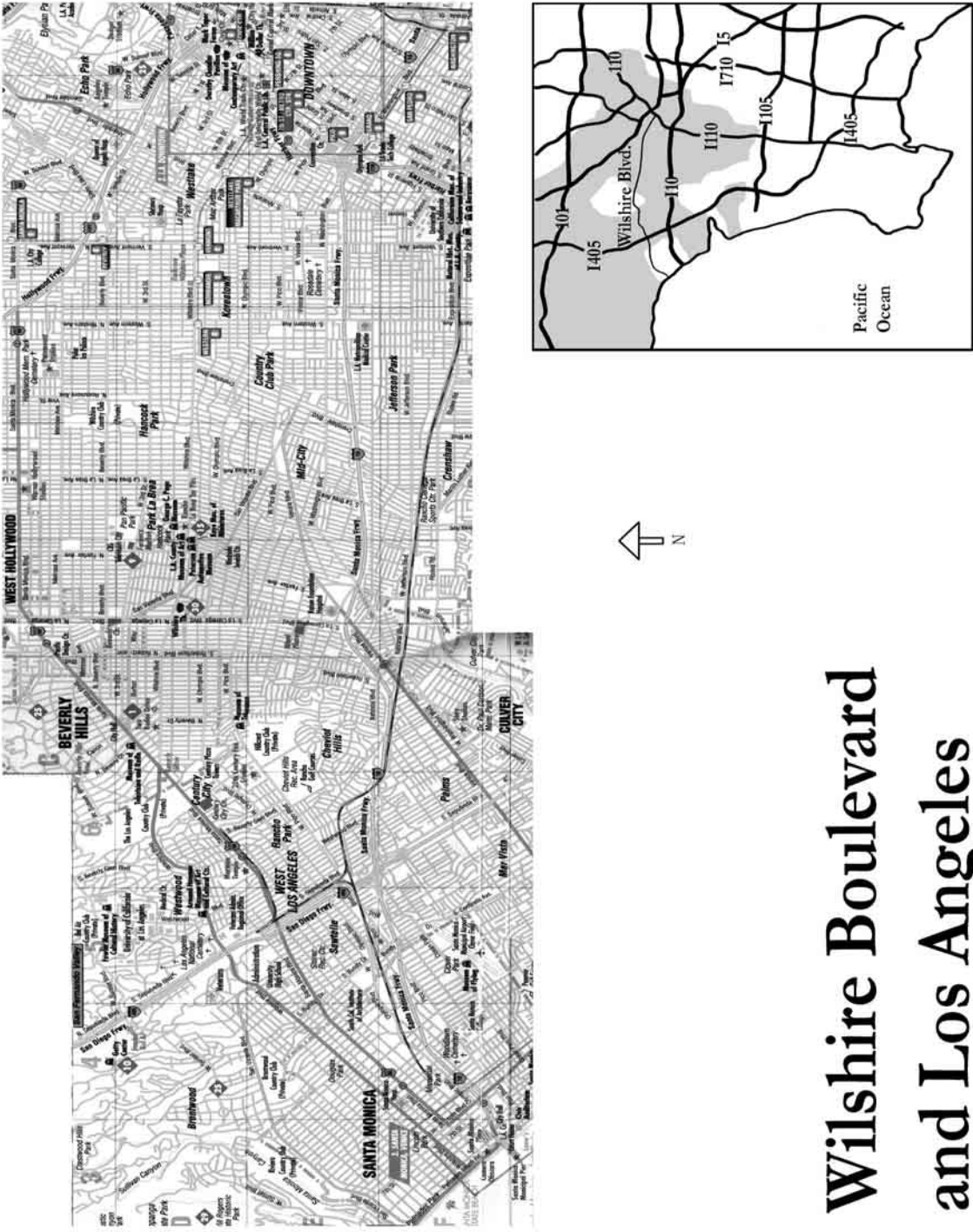


Figure 4.19. Wilshire Boulevard near Fairfax and La Cienega, c. 1908-10. Courtesy Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. (Cigliano and Landau 320).



Figure 4.20. Homes and Model Ts on the boulevard near Westlake Park, 1914. Courtesy Los Angeles County Library. (Cigliano and Landau 322).

Figure 4.18



Wilshire Boulevard and Los Angeles

Wilshire has been described by architect Douglas Suisman as a modern day close representation of the nineteenth century Spanish urbanist Arturo Soria y Mata's vision of a linear city. At various points in time, according to Suisman, the Boulevard has exemplified all three aspects of Soria's model: a park-like suburban district on the edge of downtown; a connecting roadway between Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, and Santa Monica; and a magnet for development along the open fields of the rancho lands that lay in between (Hines 312).

Wilshire's development resulted from serendipitous convergences over a long period of time, not from any conscious adherence to a vision. However, surveyors Edward Ord and Major Henry Hancock, who overlaid large-scale grids over the region in the mid 1800's, set the stage for the use of wide boulevards throughout Los Angeles (Hines 313). Although Charles Mumford Robinson and Olmstead, Bartholomew and Cheney created master plans for Wilshire in 1907 and 1924, respectively, they were only implemented in limited ways.

Gaylord Wilshire's real estate developments in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century coincided with the timing of the residential Grand Avenue phenomena occurring in many large American cities. Wilshire himself envisioned his namesake to be a grand avenue of stately homes, and persuaded the Los Angeles City Council to pass an ordinance guaranteeing that Wilshire would remain "an open boulevard, along which no railroad franchise shall ever be granted or laid thereon . . . nor that wagons carrying merchandise or any heavy trucking be permitted" (Hines 316). Billboards, however, were acceptable, particularly when they advertised Wilshire's real estate properties.

The developer's wishes soon came true, as a variety of mansions owned by business and professional people emerged along the boulevard starting at the Park View intersection on the eastern stretch of the road. Movie celebrities also built homes there in the 1910-20's. However, the era of residential grandeur transitioned quickly as property values soared to commercial levels. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1914, "The hotel men are claiming site after site and are gradually but surely replacing the beautiful homes of the original 'Wilshire District' with splendid hostelries and apartments that compare in elegance with those of the metropolis itself" (Hines 320). Grand hotels

would soon dominate the eastern section of the street, and included the city's most famous and first great resort hotel, the Ambassador. In their book The City Observed: Los Angeles, authors Moore, Becker and Campbell called the Ambassador "one of the prime reasons Wilshire Boulevard became the extended main street of Los Angeles. When construction of the hotel began in 1919, Wilshire was a dirt road running between bean and barley fields on the fringes of rather tentative residential subdivisions . . . Its activities moved the city's center of gravity westward and spurred the commercial development of Wilshire Boulevard" (148-149). The entire area around the Ambassador Hotel became the site of high-rise New York style apartment buildings occupied by film stars. (This hotel would be the scene of tragedy later in its life, however, when Bobby Kennedy was shot and killed here during a political celebration party in 1968 (Wallace).)

Wilshire could have stayed residential at least a while longer had the city planning commission's residential zoning of the boulevard in the early 20's continued. However, the east Wilshire property owners persuaded the City Council to overrule the commission and rezone it commercial.

Meanwhile, what would become the western portion of Wilshire was envisioned by realtor A. W. Ross as a commercial nexus keying on the trend of increasing automobile use and an assumed 4-mile maximum driving radius boundary. Aggressively subdividing and selling lots on speculation, Ross did concern himself, however, with the physical manifestation of the development plans and constantly promoted and held in check the quality of the street's character. When western Wilshire was annexed into Los Angeles and thus fell under a residential zoning classification, Ross and others resorted to spot zoning techniques that eventually resulted in the sought after commercial zoning designation they desired. His original 4-mile radii district, Wilshire Boulevard Center, would be renamed by Ross as the "Miracle Mile", upon the suggestion of a friendly investor after observing the bustling activity in the area.

In 1929, a coordinated effort of neighborhood groups began advertising and promoting Wilshire as the “Fifth Avenue of the West”, a “street of fine shops and office buildings, catering to the motorizing public” (Hines 327). A year earlier, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the intersection of Wilshire and Western was the busiest in the nation, with 75000 vehicles passing through it on one clocked Saturday.

The final leg of Wilshire Boulevard that connected downtown to the ocean was put in place in 1934 with the extension of the street eastward through Westlake Park (now MacArthur Park). As recorded in the *Los Angeles Times*, then Mayor Shaw, during the ribbon cutting ceremony, asserted that this final addition would “assure Wilshire’s prominence as California’s most famous thoroughfare” (Hines 337).

To the west of the Miracle Mile would rise Beverly Hills, home of the stars, then Westwood Village, home of UCLA, before finally reaching the beach community of Santa Monica. In the 20’s the architecture of Wilshire from the Miracle Mile to Westwood would primarily favor low rise (2-4 stories) Mediterranean and Spanish themes. These would give way by the 30’s to modernist modes and ever-taller buildings along the entire boulevard. Three structures constructed in the period



Figure 4.21. Looking east along final Wilshire extension through Westlake Park, 1934. Courtesy Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. (Cigliano and Landau 336).

would stand out as landmarks in the Art Deco style: Bullocks-Wilshire and Tower, the Pellisier Building, and the Wiltern Theater. (All three exist today although with different functions.) The first branch retail department store in Los Angeles, the Bullocks building was described by the Los Angeles journal *Saturday Night* as “a concrete expression of faith in the boulevard’s rich destiny”. The article continued with, “It is a ‘miracle highway’ for it is doubtful if any other artery in any large city can show comparative increases in so brief a space of time” (Hines 330). In 1939, I. Magnin’s new department store on Wilshire was the first retail store in the country to be operated entirely by electricity and fully air-conditioned (Gilman).

While common, the high fashion deco style was not the only architectural phenomenon occurring along the boulevard in the 1930’s and 40’s. Mimetic architecture, buildings constituting the semiotic parody of the product or service being offered, brought a whimsical and surreal type atmosphere with the emergence of buildings in the shapes of a coffeepot, airplane, and giant camera to name a few. Such establishments not only provided an obvious form of communication to the (driving) consumer, but often became well known landmarks in their own right (e.g. the Brown Derby restaurant). The Art Deco style would be used predominately along Wilshire in all types of business establishments, including another ubiquitous genre that emerged in the 1930’s and 1940’s – the drive-in restaurant. The 1940 May Company branch store at Wilshire and Fairfax was to prove



Figure 4.22. Deco style: the May Co., 1940. Courtesy Marc Wanamaker, Bison Archives, Raleigh Studios (Cigliano and Landau 331).



Figure 4.23. Mimetic architecture: The Brown Derby Restaurant, 1926. Courtesy Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. (Cigliano and Landau 334).

to be the climactic finale to the style that had given the street an affinity with Miami and New York.

The existence of commercial enterprise and massive vehicular volumes did not translate into a bustling pedestrian environment. In a narrative foretelling the progression of commercial urban areas to come, Hancock wrote in the late 1940's; "It is a curious experience to go up and down both sides of the most busy and prestigious shopping section of Wilshire Boulevard, the Miracle Mile, and observe that relatively few people pass in and out of the front entrances of shops while inside they are crowded. The action takes place at the back which, in terms of activity and the resources devoted to décor, is really the front" (163). While the Miracle Mile represented the mass exodus of retailing out of the downtown core, it was to become its own victim as the trade moved on to greener suburban pastures in the following decades.

By 1949, Wilshire was the principal avenue of eleven communities, and was intersected by more than 200 streets, places, drives, roads, avenues, and boulevards. It also had more vacant lots than improved ones, possibly because some of these lots produced incomes of \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year as billboard sites (Tuan 1974, 190).

It was the billboards that won throughout the 1950's on the boulevard (McCoy and Rand



Figure 4.24. The Miracle Mile looking west, 1940. Courtesy Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. (Cigliano and Landau 324).



Figure 4.25. The Miracle Mile looking east, 2001. (Johnson 82).

44). Without laws or regulations limiting quantity or position of signs except on motels, numerous signs enveloped each building, and the sky was filled with billboards "raised on rooftop structures

resembling those thrown up for a one-night-stand-carnival”. However, the landscape of Wilshire was to change when an existing 13-story height limit on buildings was lifted in 1951 (Gilman). Twenty-two high-rise office buildings were erected on the boulevard from 1968 to 1976 to house insurance, oil, and financial firms. Even the Westwood Village section of the boulevard, with its low-rise buildings and intimate character emanating from the UCLA campus, was not immune. Two high-rise office buildings were constructed as early as the 1950’s, and continued afterwards.

Meanwhile, new commercial and high rent growth pressed westward into the 1980’s, creating deterioration in the boulevard’s older eastern section. This decline was not confined to the downtown district but spread to its western neighbor, Wilshire Center. (The area bisected by Wilshire Boulevard and bounded by Hoover, Wilton, Third and Ninth Streets had been named Wilshire Center in the mid 1950’s.) During this time, the neighborhood was under constant upheaval from construction of the Metro Rail, Los Angeles’ first subway system. Retailers like I. Magnin closed and moved, and even the famed Ambassador Hotel was forced to shut its doors in 1987. Office rental rates plummeted to \$1.65/sq. ft by 1991 (Wallace). The Los Angeles riots of 1992 exacerbated the problems, with the abutting Koreatown district to the Center’s south bearing much of the property and psychological damage. Afterwards, Wilshire Center was becoming a “ghost town” said Mike Davis, author of the novel City of Quartz.

Once the subway work was completed the Wilshire Center Business Improvement Corporation attempted to turn the course of Wilshire Center’s low point by accumulating over \$6 million in funds from a network of private and public enterprises to implement a Streetscape program for a 21-block stretch of the boulevard (Wallace). Over 2000 trees were planted, fifteen vegetated medians created, brick crosswalks installed, flowerpots placed, street lighting upgraded and bus shelters renovated.

Whether a result of this or not, business picked up in the area. The vacant former Bulloch’s building was purchased by Southwestern University Law School and rehabilitated. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles chose to place its headquarters along Wilshire. The first major

supermarket in years opened in 1996. The deco I. Magnin building was converted into the shops and restaurants of Wilshire Galleria. While still vacant, developers are eyeing the Ambassador Hotel for re-use possibilities.

In addition to this transition to office and commercial focus, the Wilshire Center section also



Figure 4.26. Wilshire Center, 2000.

experienced an influx of Korean immigrants to the area starting in the 70's. More than 110,000 now live in the neighborhood, the largest Korean population outside of Korea itself (Johnson 80). Combined with an additional mix of Latin, Asian, African-American and European cultures, Wilshire Center is now an ethnically diverse

neighborhood with the highest population density west of the Mississippi (Wallace).

Today, the full boulevard links the diverse communities of Central City, Westlake, Wilshire Center, Miracle Mile, Beverly Hills, Westwood and Santa Monica. It has a population of approximately 500,000 and a work force equal to that number ("Position Paper"). The street begins in the east in a Downtown district undergoing its own renaissance and attempt to be as much of a central business district as is possible in this suburban scale city. Towering banks, hotels and office buildings contribute to the image of a downtown core. Moving west along the boulevard one encounters the four level Harbor Freeway overpass as a reminder that automobiles are a constant element everywhere in Los Angeles.

The boulevard then intersects MacArthur Park much as it did in fifty years ago when it was known as Westlake Park. This is the first of seven parks located along the length of Wilshire, all of which exist because of some disadvantage they had as building sites (McCoy and Rand 48). Westlake Park was a city dump prior to its development into a park in 1887 made possible by private donations (Gilman). While a pleasant respite during the day, the park is known as a major drug

market and trafficking location (Davis 165). The surrounding area, once the city's wealthiest neighborhood, is a highly congested tenement district home to the largest Central American community in the United States. Industrious sidewalk vendors have turned the circumference of the park into an exuberant swap meet. But, because it is midway between Downtown and a revitalized Miracle Mile, the district is ripe for redevelopment.

Wilshire curves through the park, one of the few nonlinear sections along its route. Palm trees now become a common sight lining the roadway. Passing through Wilshire Center, the former Wilshire Bulloch's, Ambassador Hotel and Wilshire Theater, in their rejuvenated states, remain as historical placeholders in an area now more represented by the two Korean museums and the non-English signs along the road. The western limit to the metro red line stops here.

To the west and north is Hancock Park (the neighborhood), site of the city's old money suburbs, which still harbors remnants of the mansions that once filled this section. At its periphery is Hancock Park (the park), container of over 100 tar pits, actually asphalt deposits, containing fossils that give Wilshire the distinction as being "the only street in the world that has recorded its own history" (McCoy and Rand 48). In the Pleistocene Age Wilshire was a trail for the giant ground sloth and like creatures. The creatures search for water took them to the tar bogs, and after being sucked into the ooze their bones were preserved for a millennium. Paleontologists continue to excavate the site, and its relevance has been immortalized in a sculptural form on Wilshire.

Next, the street enters its bygone Miracle Mile status as commercial shopping nexus, with the portion between LaBrea and Burnside Avenues now a national historic district. Just four streets north of this section, however, Los Angeles' latest definition of retail heaven can be found in the currently trendy Melrose Avenue shopping walk, an "attitude driven mecca, where the coolest max out their credit cards on retro clothing, club wear, ethnic garb, shoes, jewelry, fine art and kitsch décor" (Johnson 96). Meanwhile, the western portion of the original Miracle Mile has been reborn into the "Museum Mile" a concentration of five museums of art and culture that includes the massive Los Angeles County Museum of Art, holding 110,000 works and attracting 600,000 visitors a year

(84). Fittingly, a museum devoted to the automobile, the Petersen Automotive Museum, is also located here.

Wilshire then enters Beverly Hills, former lima bean fields that have come to epitomize the lifestyles of the rich and famous. It intersects with the Beverly Hills' most famous street, Rodeo Drive, and includes the historic Beverly Regent Wilshire Hotel and the larger luxury department stores of this high rent district, including Barneys, Saks Fifth Avenue and Nieman Marcus. Passing through the golf course landscape of the private Los Angeles Country Club to its north and the planned community of Century City to its south, the boulevard curves through the high-rise residential neighborhood known as Beverly Glen. Apartment buildings and condominiums dominate the street until Wilshire enters Westwood, home of UCLA. Between the university to the north and the boulevard is the lively student oriented Westwood Village, with some of LA's wealthiest neighborhoods north and west of the Village: Brentwood, Bel-Air, and Pacific Palisades (Johnson 170). Wilshire, however, does not correspond to this environment; its landscape is dotted with small businesses, apartment buildings and movie multiplexes interspersed with towering condos and office buildings.

The final leg of Wilshire Boulevard runs to the city of Santa Monica bordering the Pacific Ocean, and one of L.A. County's most popular beach destinations.



Figure 4.27. Looking west through MacArthur Park, 2000.



Figure 4.28. Signs adapt to ever taller buildings.



Figure 4.29. Regent Beverly Hotel.



Figure 4.30. Looking west along Wilshire in Westwood.



Figure 4.31. New dominating the old in the former Miracle Mile.



Figure 4.32. High rise residences in Beverly Glen.

The following observations can be made about Wilshire Boulevard in the context of its home, Los Angeles, the “City of Angels”:

- **Origin:** Although Wilshire’s existence was not formalized until the late 1800’s, it has always been a busy stretch. Native American tribes trekked the route from the Elysian Hills to reach the sea, and the Spanish colonists used it to cart oily asphalt from the La Brea Tar Pits to waterproof their homes (Johnson 78). Los Angeles’ beginnings as home to Gabrielino Indians, the missions of Spanish “Los Pobladores” settlers, and designation as U.S. territory after the Spanish-American war, were setup phases to the major influence the transcontinental railroad would have on the growth of the city (Gilman). Unlike the European influx of immigrants escaping dire conditions to the eastern half of our country, southern California imported many wealthy and middle-class Americans seeking the “tropical paradise” and land availability portrayed by the state’s business community. This group of newcomers had the financial capability to purchase land and single-family homes that sprouted from a frenzy of real estate development and speculation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The area’s origins had resulted in a small number of individuals holding extremely large tracts of land that became prime for subdivision and speculation, and this focus on land would be a key determinant for the city’s sprawl character still in existence today. Wilshire Boulevard, with its extensions made further west over time, exemplifies this phenomenon.
- **The Trend to Genericism:** In a city “of pure drama, besieged by a plethora of multiple personalities” (Johnson 11), where each section of town is like a city within a city, Wilshire seems to go out of its way to smooth the edges of the neighborhoods it transects. The street itself has negated the natural topography of the land, and does little to present focal points or break points along its incredibly long and fairly straight distance. Even in the 50’s and 60’s, any uniqueness in the architectural structures became obscured with the plethora of signage. Except for the recent streetscape project in Wilshire Center, attention to vegetation (other than palm trees), greenspace and water has been surprisingly absent in a climate conducive to plant growth and the surf and

beach, a presumed component of the southern Californian allure. While the city pays extraordinary attention to art and visual effects within its museums and even Metrorail stations, little is evident in the street. Public monuments do not exist. Instead, Wilshire has progressively moved to a corridor of increasingly vertical, monotonous office structures, and away from the originality of its previous residential and mimetic commercial architecture. Pedestrian activity, while always lower than in other urban areas, has decreased even further, making it more difficult to establish a unique character for the area.

- **Regeneration:** Los Angeles, the place of fads, counterculture style, and image, appears to be in a process of constant regeneration. What is in today is out tomorrow and vice versa. Perhaps as a result, for such a long street, there is remarkably little on Wilshire for the present or next generation to mark for preservation (McCoy and Rand 37). However, those structures still standing today seem to have a good chance for survival in light of an increased focus on preservation even in this town. This rejuvenation capability and desire, however, does allow for the city's residents to quickly overcome the disasters that seem to strike this city more than others, both environmental (earthquakes, mudslides, and brushfires) and societal (race riots, road rage violence).
- **Role as Connector:** Although the Santa Monica Freeway runs a similar route to Wilshire, one highway is incapable of handling the vehicular traffic demand in this city. Wide boulevards like Wilshire continue to be essential to traffic flow, particularly with its route from Downtown to the ocean which interconnects a host of varying constituencies. (Although, Wilshire does not directly intersect Hollywood, the film studio functional district most inherently associated with Los Angeles). While the Metro Red Line only extends from the downtown to Western Avenue, plans are currently being proposed to bring an "environmentally friendly" monorail system extending to the Miracle Mile to help alleviate the ongoing traffic congestion. Other efforts that demonstrate Angelenos are at least thinking about nonvehicular projects include the recently instituted "Angels Walk" program, which the Wilshire Center Business Improvement District

describes as “not about creating great places so much as it is about connecting the ones we have. Wilshire Center is a great place to live, work and shop and Angels Walk will help to bring visitors to our neighborhood, increase use of public transit and reinforce how many wonderful historical and cultural assets exist in Wilshire Center” (“Angels Walk”).

In 1961, McCoy and Rand wrote of Wilshire: “It embodies the shortcomings and the vitality of the individualists who planned it: a boundless vigor and a blindness to communal interests: a mercantile drive and a lack of appreciation for grace and leisure; a love of bright lights and an indifference to the magic of water” (27). While not particularly flattering, the more troubling aspect about Wilshire is that it may have adapted too much and too quickly to trends and more national (vs. regional) facets of real estate development. Has it thus become just another generic, overly wide and long arterial road? One could say Rodeo Drive is more representative of its city Beverly Hills. However, that would be comparing an apple to a farmers market array of produce in terms of the level of heterogeneity of the underlying populations. In Wilshire’s favor, however, are its physical placement in the context of key neighborhoods within the city, an incoming population that continues to pour into the city proper of Los Angeles and regenerate Wilshire’s neglected sections, and a maturity regarding the significance of community, transportation options and history it may have finally reached with its first centennial of existence.

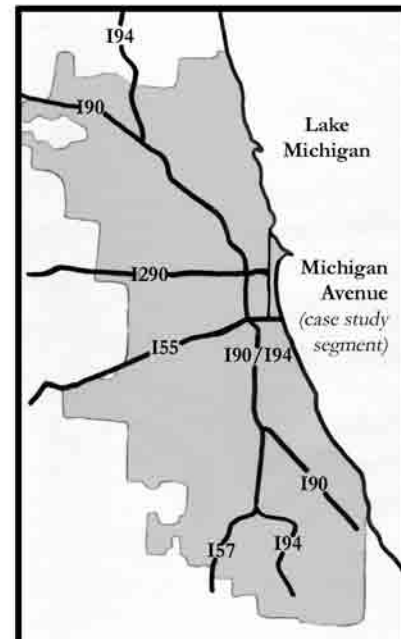
Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Chicago’s North Michigan Avenue (Figure 4.33) got its start as an old settler trail in the early nineteenth century and included the city’s first structures, the Jean Baptiste Point DuSable house and Fort Dearborn. Its first platting coincided with the incorporation of the city of Chicago in the 1830’s, whose existence had grown beyond a fur trading settlement to one created by the selling of lots to fund the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The section that would become the core downtown area of the city was a treeless plain in a low-lying section barely above the river and lake level. Chicago is nearly centered on a low, almost imperceptible divide that separates the Great Lakes drainage basin from that of the Mississippi River system (Cronin 4).

Figure 4.33



Michigan Avenue and Chicago



At its inception, Michigan Avenue included the old trail portion south of the Chicago River and was positioned only a few yards from the shoreline. However, the Illinois Central Railroad not only infilled land for a terminal and freight yards, but was granted a right-of-way to add more landfill to Lake Michigan for a north/south rail line. This was granted by the city to help stabilize the shoreline and save it from flooding that threatened Michigan Avenue. This right-of-way would eventually be added to and become today's Grant Park.

The year 1855 marked the first of many civil engineering feats that the city undertook, including one that affected Michigan Avenue. The city council enacted legislation requiring all existing buildings to be raised 4' – 7' above the river's low water level, and all street grades to be heightened. Future engineering marvels for their time would include water and sewer tunnels and systems utilizing Lake Michigan, and steel frame construction, which paved the way for skyscraper feasibility.

During this period, the railroads and canal opening enabled the city to achieve a unique position as the link between the country's agricultural production areas and consumption markets of the east – the nation's wholesaler to speak. The town became the ultimate trading post and marketplace, an obvious location for processing activities, and a hub for new information and communication technologies to coordinate it all. Its population was already 93000 in 1857, a fourfold increase from 1848 (Cronin 20).

Chicago hosted the 1860 Republican convention and established the role to this day as one of the top convention sites in the country. It would go on to host 25 political conventions, more than any other city. Meanwhile, railroad and lake connectivity cemented the city's role as a central transportation hub and allowed it to establish a stronghold in meatpacking and food processing, which concentrated in the industrial southwestern portion of the city. Employment opportunities brought intensive population growth, particularly from German, Irish, Scandinavian, Polish and other Central European countries.

During this growth in the late 1800's, Michigan Avenue became a warehouse and wholesale district, with the river frontage primarily developed as a dock and industrial area. On the North Side (north of the Chicago River), a wealthy residential area began to appear, including that along North Michigan Avenue (then called Pine Street). In 1869, a water tower and pumping station was constructed on the street, a Gothic Revival structure in yellow limestone and decorated with turrets and crenellations. The pumping station section would be just one of the casualties of the Fire of 1871, which destroyed significant portions of the North Side, and fueled the opportunity for land planning and redevelopment. All told, the fire destroyed 18000 buildings, killed three hundred people, and left a third of the population homeless (Cronin 59).

Speculation brought a flurry of building in the city after the fire, and developers attempted to attract wealthy residents and higher quality construction. Real estate operator Henry C. Johnson marketed the advantages of the North Side over the South Side as being wide streets, high ground, good drainage, the lakeshore, and Lincoln Park. He also pointed out there was fresh air, free of the taint of the slaughterhouses to the south (Stamper xix). His and other efforts were successful, as over 100 mansions were built in the next five years. The McCormick family inhabited so many that the area was nicknamed "McCormickville". Two additional residential oriented areas would continue northward along the street: Streeterville and the "Gold Coast", the latter including upscale apartment buildings.

Much further to the south in Hyde Park was the scene of the extravagant World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, a World's Fair celebrating the 400th anniversary of Columbus' landing in America, and an opportunity for Chicago to present its case as a world class city. Always self-promoting, it was during the vigorous and often vocal competition to host the event that New York Sun editor Charles Dana dubbed Chicago as "the windy city" ("History"). Over 26 million visitors attended the event, which showcased technology and amusements and the city's first elevated trains. The exposition also featured significant City Beautiful classical architecture (albeit temporary) that set the stage for the town's cultural flowering. The orchestra, library and major museums were

all established in this era, and today's Museum of Science and Industry building is the lone architectural survivor of the fair. The exposition has also been deemed by one author as "an extension of urban ideals of public comfort, safety and convenience", that "offered a vision of what urban life in Chicago might become" (Lewis 152).

At this time, Chicago's population stood at 1.55 million, one-third of which was foreign born.

In 1911, A. Montgomery Ward won a lawsuit that affected the fate of a major landmark along Michigan Avenue south of the river ("Grant Park"). Grant Park originated as a small greenspace named Lake Park in 1836, whose charter read "forever open, free and clear". After the Great Fire of 1871, residents carted loads of rubble and ruin to the edge of Lake Michigan, creating significant landfill to Lake Park. After commercial interests attempted to alter the then renamed Grant Park with significant construction, Ward instituted a twenty year long lawsuit to keep Grant Park open and free for the poor, and "not for the millionaires". Michigan Avenue today borders 1.2 miles of the western edge of the Park.

The dichotomy of industrial orientation to the south and elite residential to the north along Michigan Avenue may have continued longer were it not for a strong structural influence in 1920 – the widening of the street and construction of a new North Michigan Avenue Bridge over the Chicago River. The bridge allowed Michigan Avenue to extend northward and handle the increasing vehicular traffic that was occurring on the city's streets. Chicago got its first taste of the more extensive "urban renewal" demolition that would come forty years later by destroying over 30 commercial, single family and apartment buildings along the route.

By the mid 1920's, commerce had encroached on the McCormickville residential area, pushing it further north. This period was also a major building boom in many American large cities and Chicago was no exception. Beginning with the Beaux Arts influence and following with the introduction of modernism, several buildings still in existence today were constructed along the street in the 20's, including the white terra cotta Spanish Renaissance Wrigley Building and its North

Annex, the Gothic Revival Chicago Tribune Tower, and the 22-story limestone London Guarantee Building (now named 360 N. Michigan Avenue). By the end of the decade, a broad range of shops, stores, and restaurants could be found on the Avenue, in addition to the thousands of offices. Nearly every building utilized the first two floors for retail enterprises, with elaborate and high quality architectural detail visible to the pedestrian, with the floors above retaining a more utilitarian style.



Figure 4.34. 737 North Michigan Avenue, 1928-29. Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society. (Stamper 178).

In the early twentieth century, efforts were made to bring direction and planning to the vision of the city and its physical form. One of the fathers of modern day city planning, Daniel Burnham, developed a comprehensive land use and transportation plan for the city of Chicago in 1909. While only parts of it were implemented, it established such legacies as an unobstructed lakefront, city park system, and forest preserve greenbelts (“Chicago History”). It also paved the way for organizations - public, private and some combination of - to use planning as a way of influencing the function, land use and look of their regions. Regarding Michigan Avenue, the North Central Business District Association formed a plan with the goal of making that portion of Michigan Avenue the city’s most prestigious commercial thoroughfare. Incredibly, the association got a voluntary 20-year commitment by property owners in 1918 to agree to allow only “upscale, high quality” commercial retail, banking, and hostelry on the Avenue. This was generally honored prior to

the Depression. The plan also called for architectural synergy, which was more problematic. The association favored the Beaux Arts style and low-rise buildings, but when the Chicago City Council modified its zoning laws in 1923 to allow high-rise construction on Michigan Avenue, the street became an increasing hodgepodge of verticality. Buildings during the 1920's ranged from 3 to 45 stories, and 35 to 498 feet in height.

Michigan Avenue was not spared from the harsh effects of the Depression. Bankruptcies and foreclosures occurred all along the street, and building did not start in earnest again until the late 1940's. The impetus for the renewed interest was developer Arthur Rubloff, who gained control of much of the North Michigan Avenue property and created and heavily promoted his "Magnificent Mile" (from the river north to Oak Street) project plan to revitalize the area. The plan called for low-rise buildings, pedestrian promenades, and significant destruction and clearance of existing buildings and landscape. While its physical manifestation was hardly followed, the plan and Rubloff's



Figure 4.35. View looking north in 1933 from Michigan Avenue Bridge. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society (Stamper x).



Figure 4.36. Similar view in 2001. Wrigley building on left. Photo credit: Ron Schramm.

promotional efforts did spark development interest, particularly for skyscraper structures. The first

building to begin the transformation was the 41-story Prudential Building, quickly followed by the 35-story Equitable Building and Westin Hotel, to name a few.

The structure that altered the scale of the Avenue most radically, however, was/is the John Hancock building. The last site to be developed on North Michigan Avenue, it rose 100 stories upon completion in 1970. Half of the site was left open, and the building itself set back from the street with an intervening garden/skating rink. The structure became the new focal point of the area, overwhelmingly huge from the street; a beacon to be viewed from afar. Its spatial realm was that of the city, not of the avenue (Stamper 212).

Just to its south, the 62-story marble-clad Water Tower Place, a commercial, hotel, and condominium complex, followed in 1976. The tower portion is set back on a block-long 12-story base containing an indoor atrium shopping mall. The structure and others that followed, such as the Illinois Center, were not only incongruous with the context of the 1920's architecture, but also with each other and their neighbors as well in terms of materials, color, and proportion. Today, the average new building height on North Michigan Avenue is 65 stories.

Despite the continuing threat of ever towering skyscrapers transforming Michigan Avenue into a canyon desert, the street shows no signs of disinterest by investors. The Greater North Michigan Avenue Association, successor to the North Central Business District Association, is 755 members strong representing The Miracle Mile, Streeterville, Gold Coast, River North and Illinois Center areas including and surrounding North Michigan Avenue. In 1997, GNMAA developed a comprehensive "Vision 2012" plan to "ensure the vitality of the Avenue."

In addition to generic new construction office buildings, the Avenue today is home to many structures attractive to visitors and residents alike. While much has not survived the construction booms of the 20th century, eighteen structures along Michigan Avenue from Roosevelt Road to Oak Street are designated Chicago landmarks. These include:

- The Art Institute of Chicago in Grant Park;
- The Chicago Cultural Center at Washington Street, "a showplace for the lively and visual arts";

- The Fine Arts Building, an arts center with studios, offices, shops and theaters for the arts community. It was originally built as a showroom for Studebaker carriages in 1885;
- Auditorium Building and Theater: When completed in 1889, it was the heaviest, most modern and fireproof building to date, tallest in Chicago, the first large building to be electrically lighted, and whose theater was the first to install air-conditioning. It is currently owned by Roosevelt University and touring Broadway shows continue to play in its 4000 seat theater;
- The Wrigley Building, whose tower is modeled after the Giralda of the Cathedral in Seville;
- The Tribune Tower, modeled on the butter Tower of Rouen Cathedral and whose base contains stones from famous structures throughout the world. Its design resulted from an International design competition;
- The Terra Museum of American Art, one of the most comprehensive collections of American Art in the world;
- The Museum of Contemporary Art at Chicago Ave., the largest facility in North America devoted to contemporary art;
- The Historic Water Tower and Pumping Station; the Tower now home to the Historic Water Tower Visitor Welcome Center, the restored Pumping Station still in operation, and the old boiler rooms redesigned into the theaters that show the visitor production “Here’s Chicago”;
- And, the John Hancock Center, whose observatory decks on the 94th floor offer excellent vistas of the city and Lake Michigan.

In describing the physical landscape of Michigan Avenue today, one must first define the boundary of the street. Technically, a north-south street named “Michigan Avenue” runs approximately 25 miles from its northern intersection with Lake Shore Drive at Oak Street, all the way to the city’s southern edges at 150th street. With Chicago’s street numbering/naming system, the section north of Madison is termed North Michigan Avenue, and that to the south is South Michigan Avenue. While assuming the entire length of this street would strengthen its case as being representative of the city, for pragmatic purposes, this paper focuses on a roughly five mile section

from Oak Street to the Stevenson Expressway (I-55), which includes all of North and a portion of South Michigan Avenue.

Starting at the north is Rubloff's "Miracle Mile" section, which bears no resemblance to his functional vision but definitely incorporates the vitality the developer sought. The mile of street is home to fashionable department stores, prestigious boutiques, upscale dining establishments and luxury hotels. In all, it contains 460 stores and 436 restaurants, attracting 22 million visitors a year ("Magnificent Mile"). Many of the city's architectural landmark buildings are located in this stretch, and give the city its signature skyline. To the west is a dynamic area featuring much of the city's nightclubs and currently trendy restaurants, as well as loft conversions for both residential and small commercial use. To the east is Streeterville and its multitude of high-rise apartment buildings catering to the professionals working in the area. This area had previously been 186 acres of saloons and shanties on a disreputable landfill "owned" by Cap Streeter (Fodor's 51). The renovated Navy Pier with a variety of tourist attractions is also found at the shore of Lake Michigan to the east.

Heading south, pedestrians and vehicles cross the Chicago River over the still impressive nearly 100 ft wide North Michigan Avenue Bridge, with its four monumental tower abutments and grand staircases leading down to the river. Michigan Avenue soon intersects with the northwestern edge of the 319-acre Grant Park, Chicago's main greenspace and host to a massive ethnic food festival, Taste of Chicago, that draws over 3.5 million visitors over ten days ("Taste of Chicago"). Several museums and cultural centers are found along this section of the avenue, which is just east of The Loop. The Avenue retains an open quality due to the park on its eastern edge until reaching Roosevelt Road.

Less than a half mile east on Roosevelt is Lake Michigan and several other cultural and tourist oriented venues along the lake: the Field Museum of Natural History, Soldier Field, the Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium and Meigs Field.

Once south of the park, the street scale of Michigan Avenue turns significantly more horizontal. This "South Loop" section is now home to one of the fastest growing residential areas of

the city. This coincides with the area's historical context, when the nearby "Prairie Avenue District" became the city's most fashionable residential district following the Fire of 1871. The area eventually declined to one of gambling and prostitution, and many of the mansions were destroyed in the modernist heyday of the twentieth century.

Just south and west of the Avenue is Chinatown, a small but still tightly knit community of both Chinese ancestry from the first settlers into Chicago in the 1870's and new immigrants. This structurally restricted 8-block area became home to the community through discriminatory real estate practices in the early 1900's, and through the destructive results of forced urban renewal projects in the 70's ("Chinatown History").

Where the Stevenson Expressway crosses Michigan Avenue, Chicago's massive McCormick Place Convention complex can be found just four blocks to the east. With 2.2 M sq. ft, McCormick Place is the largest exhibition hall in the country. Overall, Chicago hosts over 35,000 conventions, trade shows and other meetings annually that attract 4.4 million attendees ("Why Choose").



Figure 4.37. Medians planted with flowers, 1994. ("Chicago Imagebase").



Figure 4.38. Tree canopy along the sidewalks, 1994. ("Chicago Imagebase").

Equally as striking as the architecture and cultural facilities along Michigan Avenue are the street's activities and events that support people gatherings. These include the Crystal Carnival, an ice sculpture competition in winter; the November Lights Festival, a lighting of the trees lining

Michigan Avenue during the Holiday season; and the “Gardens of the Magnificent Mile”, whereby 45 businesses last year created visually appealing and exotic garden landscapes not only on their own properties, but in 30 blocks of medians along the Avenue (“Magnificent Mile”).

These points can be made when analyzing Michigan Avenue with respect to the city of Chicago:

- **Location:** The Avenue occupies a strategic position within the city, particularly in light of its origins. First platted nearly on the lake, the land between Lake Michigan and the street is fill, and more importantly, has remained a public resource for greenspace and cultural amenities. Thus, Michigan Avenue is the most easterly street capable of containing more variable land uses. It is also the framework for the city’s skyline as seen from the lake. Thus, it performs a dual role as an object image (the city’s distinctive skyline) and a representational identification of the city within its own boundaries. The street’s nearly straight north-south orientation is in keeping with the dominant grid street layout of the city, and its extraordinary length virtually assures heterogeneity in the urban fabric along its route. The Avenue also crosses and comes in contact with the Chicago River, one of the key geographical factors in the formation of the city.



Figure 4.39. View east towards Michigan Avenue, date unknown. Photo Credit: Vito Palmisano.

- **Architectural Heritage:** Due to its forced rebuilding after the fire and individuals with strong visionary ideals regarding architecture, the aesthetic of some portions of the street provides grandeur and awe still today. However, the city and its architect’s enamor with new styles, along with a heritage and economics favoring the skyscraper, contribute to the danger of

losing its architectural ambience. Chicago has been undergoing the largest building boom since the Depression, and is only behind Atlanta and Phoenix in new permits approved (Rozhon). “Chicago's great contribution is its architecture,” said David Garrard Lowe, an architectural historian. “And every day they knock down a piece of its heritage, Chicago's vitality is getting zapped.” Professor of Urbanism Witold Rybczynski, who wrote about Chicago's past in his book City Life, said “Of all the cities we can think of, except maybe Hong Kong, we associate Chicago with new things, with building new. Combining that with preservation is a difficult task, a tricky thing. It's hard to find the middle ground in Chicago”.

- **Miracle Mile and Conventions:** North Michigan Avenue is able to retain a successful commercial shopping district by catering to the very high end shopper coming down from the north shore and the tourists and conventioners the city so aggressively and effectively seeks. Not surprisingly, the Miracle Mile is also home to the majority of the luxury hotels in the city. The large concentration of museums and cultural amenities along the lake also give the city much needed “attractions” for the visitors.
- **Segregation and Ethnicity:** Chicago is a notoriously racially and ethnically segregated city, which is evident when visiting the residential neighborhoods outside of the central business district. (Perhaps realizing some cultural value in this, many neighborhood tours are sponsored by the city and conducted by local residents proud of their community's identity.) Continuing southward along Michigan Avenue from I-55 would show a large contiguous African American population that has been further concentrated within the city limits. However, the section of Michigan Avenue studied, particularly north of Roosevelt, gives the impression of “neutrality” and cultural homogeneity due to commercial, office, and classical fine arts emphasis that lacks the emotion and unpredictability of residential landscapes. It is a bright, shiny face that the city says to everyone, “see how beautiful and powerful we are – we have no problems”. Michigan Avenue does its part to sustain that image.

- Images and Names– past, past their prime and still true: Chicago has had its fair share of strong image associations, many not particularly pleasing: slaughterhouses, gangsters, “the projects”, cronyism and the political machine and boss system, the (loser) Cubs . . . In contrast, “Michigan” is an Algonquin Indian word meaning “great water”, a pleasing geographic descriptor without adverse symbolism.

A Summary of the Three Streets

Now that each street has been analyzed in the context to its local environment, a comparison to each other is necessary to determine the existence of patterns and common characteristics.

The first noticeable commonality is each street’s location in the context of the core of each city. All streets were created when the city itself began, or, in the case of Wilshire, when the city incurred an extensive period of growth. Their physical location and growth mirrored the growth of the city. Once the pacesetter and literal manifestation of their city’s development, most identity streets today are evolving to a different but no less important role – one of a partial barometer of the city’s (commercial and economic) health, and of the role being played by our historically urban core areas. They act as a “spine” or linear seam allowing access and connection to various districts and key functional components of the city. (This is less true of Michigan Avenue than the others.) They all have had important roles as transportation and routes for movement, which remains consistent today.

A second commonality is that each street reflects the spatial, tempo, and density characteristics of its host city. Broadway lines much of its route with continuously attached, multistory buildings, and its walkways are packed with throngs of pedestrians and vendors. Wilshire portrays a more suburban feel with its wide boulevard of still predominately low rise and disconnected artifacts. People are found inside the vehicles and buildings of the street, not so much on the boulevard. Michigan Avenue lies between the two, an urban corridor of skyscrapers of extreme vertical density of buildings and people, with a lively tourist trade to sustain the horizontal density of people along its sidewalks and roadway.

Thirdly, all of these streets have enjoyed a positive aura or symbolic association with their name. This is manifest in the proliferation of commercial interests using the name and in the high land values and rental fees charged along the street. Most importantly, it has meant the ability of the street to regenerate itself because of a level of confidence in the street's viability in the long term. This confidence and high real estate values make these streets much more "future oriented" than others and highly susceptible to the destruction-creation process.

Fourthly, each street seems to capture the values of the each city's "elite" over its history. All three, generally in the Grand Avenue era of the early twentieth century, had wealthy residential sections that showcased the mansions of the city's rich and powerful. With the transition to commercial and office use, these streets often became the showcase for engineering feats, architectural ideology, and individual owner's egos, as big business and commercial enterprise became powerful forces in shaping the street environment. Emblematic of this would be such buildings as the Woolworth Building, the Wrigley Building and Bulloch's Wilshire. Today, the strength of the large and publicly owned development companies and multinational corporations is exerting its influence in bringing the generically economical and functional skyscraper to more segments of the streetscape.

Correspondingly, the values placed on public amenities for the overall city are manifest in the microcosm of these streets. Broadway has numerous public monuments recognizing its favorite sons, as diverse a group as its city's makeup. It also intersects with Central Park, which needs no explanation of its importance to all city inhabitants. Chicago's Michigan Avenue extends along Grant Park, just one of many parks and forest preserves found in the Chicago area representing a commitment to greenspace extending back to Burnham's days. Also along or within blocks of the avenue are many cultural, publicly accessible venues. Wilshire, with its lack of virtually any attention to public space or amenities, simply embodies the context of laid back Southern California – a place where everybody does their own thing, where the single family "suburban" type development flourished early on, and where attention is placed on more ephemeral fashions, styles, fads, and

looks, which can be changed in an instant. An exception to this is the recent emphasis on the concentration of cultural institutions in the “Museum Mile” section of Wilshire.

This point about Wilshire is closely related to a final commonality about the streets. Each is essentially a reflection of the image that those in power have (purposefully or not) crafted for their cities. As Gateway to the New World, New York has had little trouble attracting newcomers to its borders. However, its near economic collapse, physical degeneration and reputation for encompassing the general negative connotations of urban life in the 1970's and early 80's, created a need for more attention to the city's image. What has transpired at Times Square is the more public face to an actual regeneration and renewed confidence by New York's own residents. By focusing on this very strong culturally unique asset, i.e. the Theater District, by cleaning up and making the streets safe, while providing the glitz and glamour of a great tourist attraction, New York achieves a spillover effect for the entire city.

Chicago, on the other hand, is a master at imagineering and has been able to back up its own hype by the existence of many elements found on Michigan Avenue. It has not simply constructed massive convention facilities, but supported the convention visitor with a large concentration of luxury shopping (great for looking even if out of the realm of affordability), world-class hotels, and cultural amenities for those who want to “bring along the family”. It is one of the few cities to have its own Visitor Bureau within city government, which results in activities and amenities that a normal privately run convention and business bureau would not be inclined to provide. It is a city that has consistently desired the personification of “power” and “greatness”, and its architectural and engineering marvels visible along Michigan Avenue certainly work to support this image. Equally important, it is attempting to bring people-gathering events and activities to its core on a year round basis, which is necessary to project the dynamism only feasible by significant groups of people on the streets.

As the widest of the three streets, Wilshire has mainly been viewed as “the way to get to everywhere else in your automobile”, with its functionality as a road more the key distinction than its

streetscape environment. Historically, its strength and reason for admiration seems to have been its energy and fast paced tempo, a fresh image of newness resulting from the area's tremendous growth combined with ubiquitous southern California sunshine. As Los Angeles wrestles with the negative implications of growth, Wilshire may once again prove to be the city's best test bed of its priorities and new ideas about the city's vision.

CHAPTER 5

THE APPLICATION

Refining the Identity Street Concept

In order to apply the identity street concept to the application of Peachtree Street in Atlanta, the findings of the previous chapters must be distilled into a definition usable for evaluation of a physical environment. This definition will be based on the following summary observations:

- The street, by its very existence, is a path and placeholder. It is movement and permanence; a continuously regenerating physical representation of the complexity of the effects of a perpetual concept of time overlaid on a (generally) static section of land. Portions of its functionality, activity generating capability and aesthetic are constantly revised and remade by governmental actions and owner predilections. It is a placeholder of places, not just constructed artifacts; areas where traditions have been observed and people have massed for celebrations and mourning. Its public accessibility allows participation with anonymity or engagement. Thus, *an identity street is capable of representing the city's memory and indicating its future in the experience of the present*. It does this by displaying inter-related traces, discernable sequences and/or obvious patterns that allow for interpretation and exploration. It combines what is known with what is new. It teases with the future while offering comfort from the past. Because of their relative organic nature and multiple owners and users, major urban streets also have the capability of retaining more “authenticity” than a singular site or even the main street of a small town. The identity of a particular site can easily be erased or manipulated according to the desires of its latest owner. Even the primary street of a small town can find itself susceptible to a makeover into a prototypical Norman Rockwell Main Street aesthetic in hopes of economic rejuvenation.

Ironically, the fact that our urban streets have been ignored as potential assets has worked to the benefit of their retention of this “realness” quality.

- The preceding point does not mean that the identity street contains all of the elements that make or represent a city’s memory and future. Streets are manmade configurations meant to relate and work together in an overall spatial and transportation pattern for the city. However, as seen in the case studies, certain specific streets have formed vital roles in the origin and growth of a particular city and thus have the ability to be partially emblematic as is. These streets then augment their own capabilities by performing the role of navigator. They act as a spine and nerve center, a central point from which other city assets and physical identity elements can be cognitively placed. Thus, an *identity street is a legible connector of city identity elements*. They provide a feeling of safety in the context of knowing where one is (and needs to go), which promotes the hesitation and confidence necessary to generate strong memory retention. Unlike interstate highways that often parallel their routes, the urban arterial provides this function for all types of users: pedestrians, automobiles and public transportation mediums.
- Identification of the city relates to landscape, something that can be accomplished by viewing from afar. It is often the result of incorporating, interpreting, analyzing, and/or perceiving a consistent whole or sameness from an accumulation of elements, information or experiences. It is susceptible to influence by virtual identities. It is dependent upon comparison of other landscapes to differentiate uniqueness, as well as a level of stability and continuity of landscape elements and tempo as visible on the street. It can be achieved by insiders or outsiders. It requires visibility for comprehension. Contrastingly, identification with must involve place, a location with meaning to the participant. Identification with can involve only a singular, intensely interesting or personal location or experience, or a physical representation of a strongly held value, longing or memory. Identification with does not require visibility; it may involve a place “invisible” to most but meaningful to one. Memory and experience are important. It is usually, but not always, more applicable to those who live in the city, especially those with

generational ties. Even here, it may apply more to the individual's neighborhood and become more abstract when related to an arbitrarily defined area known as the city. Because of its multifaceted nature, sensory experience can heighten the intensity of both identification of and identification with. However, identification with does not imply a uniqueness of place compared to others but more a comfort of place as perceived by the individual. Thus, *identification of relates to knowledge, legibility, sameness of features and activities within but difference from others, and correlation of virtual identities with the physical reality. Identification with is more associated with meaning, personal experience, sameness of values, and an environment encouraging a sense of belonging.*

- The different criteria for “success” for the identification of a city vs. identification with a city has implications when attempting to use a singular street as the conduit for each of these. It appears more feasible to pose the premise that a street can strongly represent the identification of a city vs. the more problematic statement that all of a city's constituencies can identify with a city through their experience along a particular street. Lynch inherently agreed with this observation and advocated focus by designers and planners on legibility. While important, relying solely on legibility can create a “great street” in urban design terms, but not necessarily a sustainable identity street. It addresses “things” and spaces, but not people, which are essential to the identity of a city. Identity streets can support “identification with” by providing accessibility (e.g. minimization of privately controlled street areas) along its route and in public venues and spaces of all sizes, the retention and purposeful design of memory enabling artifacts and clues that allow interpretation of meaning by groups and individuals, and basic “comfort” oriented qualities (e.g. safe, clean streets) that avoid first level inhibitors of identification.

Thus, for purposes of this thesis, an optimal identity street should **connect:**

- the city's present to its past and future
- its constituencies (people) by its accessibility
- its differentiated neighborhoods and attractions (along the street and in surrounding areas)

- recognizable landmarks interspersed with “pause” points (places where movement is slowed or stopped)
- a concentrated number of elements pertaining to a unique land use, expertise, or culturally significant city strength

and **reflect**:

- the tempo, vitality, and spatial density of the city
- regionally based environmental and physical design elements and materials
- the effect of time
- and, the city’s championed virtual identity.

It does this in a highly legible manner and in perpetual motion, narrating an ongoing story of the city and its influencing factors. How and which of these elements are implemented and prioritized leads to the differences among our city’s identity streets.

The Rationale for Peachtree Street as the Application

*“Atlanta has no character, we are building it now.”
Andrew Young, Mayor of Atlanta, 1982 - 1990 (Rutheiser 186)*

The selection of Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia as the application for this thesis is due to several factors. From the overall aspect of the city, Atlanta is currently the eleventh largest American metropolitan area and had the eleventh highest population growth rate in the country this last decade. It thus meets the criteria of being a major urban area. It has also suffered from issues regarding the perception of its identity. Given this void, it has recently been the subject of both heads of the coin regarding one’s perspective on growth. It receives glowing ratings from business groups as a top place to live and do business at the same time it is being painted as the poster child of suburban sprawl and traffic gridlock. This perception is not without grounding, as the 2000 United States Census reported population of 416,000 for the city of Atlanta is only a tenth of the area’s overall metro population (Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1

	2000 Population (City) - mil	National Rank	2000 Population (Metro) - mil	National Rank	Sq. Miles (City)	Visitors (annual) - mil	Population Density/Sq. Mile (City)
New York City	8.01	1	21.2	1	301	37.4	26611
Los Angeles	3.7	2	16.37	2	469	24.7	7889
Chicago	2.9	3	9.16	3	229	32.4	12664
Atlanta	0.42	40	4.11	11	131	17.1	3206

Sources: Population and ranking: United States Government Census 2000
 NYC Visitors: New York City Convention and Visitor Bureau
 Los Angeles Visitors: Los Angeles County Convention and Visitor Bureau
 Chicago Visitors: City of Chicago
 Atlanta Visitors: Atlanta Convention and Visitor Bureau

Atlanta also presents an interesting challenge regarding identity in light of the transience of its current metropolitan area population. In a survey of 40 American cities conducted by Harvard professor Robert Putnam, Atlanta had some of the highest percentages for these questions: (Pruitt and Stanford A10)

Percent of respondents living in community five years or less 44%

Percent not expecting to live here five more years 31%

(The corresponding national figures for these were 29% and 20% respectively)

As one respondent in a February, 2001 *Atlanta Journal Constitution* poll said, “Atlanta is a steppingstone. People are here because of money and jobs” (Pruitt and Stanford A1). Finally, while its surge in growth may be fairly recent, Atlanta is an old city (in terms of the United States), certainly comparable in time to the case study subjects, and full of its own history and regional idiosyncrasies.

Added to the draw of using Atlanta is this city’s unparalleled historical obsession with image. While similar in some respects to Chicago, this preoccupation by Atlanta’s public and private leaders may have been due to the city’s unique role in the development of the South or simply from the specific personality traits and economic motivations of the small group of men who formed the

power base of the city. For whatever reason, Atlanta has perpetually grasped for the brass ring, presenting its capabilities beyond the existing reality (although it has usually been able to quickly rise to its own imposed challenges). No where was this more evident than in its successfully managed image handling of the racial conflicts in the 1960's with the region's transition from segregation to integration, as well as its quest for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games.

This thesis' contention that urban streets need to be viewed as city assets will certainly be tested by using Atlanta as a case study. An online user group that espouses the philosophy of New Urbanism judged Atlanta to be the "Worst Streets Capital in America" due to having the most nominations of "ugly, car-choked streets" (Colleran). Although Peachtree Street was not singled out, its extension, Peachtree Road, was included.

Peachtree Street appears to be a natural for this thesis given its strong name recognition by those inside and outside the city. Like Wilshire, the name Peachtree as a brand has historically been desirable, leading to over one hundred streets in Atlanta having the word somewhere in their name, and hundreds of businesses incorporating the term ("Atlanta Fact Sheet"). The street has been the subject and location of several books that range from describing its historical evolution to its setting for a fictional Atlanta family.

Recent Peachtree Street Projects and Studies

Peachtree Street has been the subject of several recent design related studies. Two of these were co-sponsored by the city's Bureau of Planning and Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), a private association "representing the interests of businesses and Downtown organizations that share a common vision of central Atlanta" dating back to 1941 ("About CAP"). The first of these involved a new vision for the Central Business District that would have strongly impacted Peachtree. As part of the 1971 Central Area Study, John Portman championed a plan calling for a pedestrian enmalling of Peachtree Street from Five Points north to Peachtree Center (Rutheiser 169-170). An elevated people mover would transport commuters quickly and automobile and subway traffic would speed below ground in a series of grade-separated tunnels. The plan was not pursued.

In 1991, the two organizations sponsored a design competition for both Peachtree Street and Auburn Avenue that represented an implementation of recommendations from a second Central Area Study issued three years prior. The competition program described Peachtree Street as “Atlanta’s physical trademark”, and provided a design goal of making the street “Atlanta’s urban showcase” (“Design on Peachtree” 5). Judging criteria included the ability of the design “to encourage the perception of Peachtree Street as continuous spatial sequences” and “to portray a festive and international theme that suggests a strong and vibrant city” (6). The detailing of streetscape elements was encouraged. The competition generated over 100 entries from around the world. A majority of the winning entry that focused primarily on its streetscape elements up to 3rd Street was implemented prior to the 1996 Olympics. Extension phases to carry the changes to many intersecting streets are in process. In addition, Midtown Alliance, a private association similar to CAP that focuses on the area north of the Central Business District, has created and obtained approval from the city for a revised Midtown Special Public Interest zoning overlay for the district (“Proposed Midtown Zoning”). (Midtown includes the portion of Peachtree Street from the I85/75 overpass north of Ralph McGill north to Brookwood). Combined with other Midtown Development Guidelines, the implications for Peachtree Street are the standardization of alternatives available for such landscape elements as street lighting, trash receptacles, tree grates, street furniture, sidewalk material and widths and street tree size and spacing. The new zoning regulations also favor commercial uses along Peachtree without height restrictions. Thus, there has certainly been interest in Peachtree Street from a visual and planning standpoint and the results are evident in places along the street today.

CHAPTER 6

PEACHTREE STREET TODAY: A PERCEPTUAL INVENTORY

Methodology

The next three chapters comprise the application portion of this thesis. The methodology used for conducting the application relied heavily on first hand observations. Peachtree Street was first inventoried for aspects of its current physical and human character. Any particular point along the four mile stretch was seen and experienced as a pedestrian three to four times over a total of twelve visits/days. Four of these visits took place during the summer of 2001 and the remaining eight occurred during February and March of 2002. The observations for each location were made at mid-morning, around noon, and during the mid afternoon on weekdays. In addition, three visits were made traversing the street as a motorist, including both an evening and Saturday “tour”. Photography was used to augment note taking. An Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau map was used for general navigation. Views seen going in both directions, i.e., north to south and south to north, were noted. The intent was to record the observations and experience one would have on the street as a first time visitor, lacking knowledge of Atlanta’s and Peachtree’s history. (Since I had never been a pedestrian on Peachtree Street and was not too familiar with the city of Atlanta, this simulation seemed plausible.) The results of this perceptual inventory are found in this chapter.

Peachtree Street and Atlanta’s history were then researched. Sources included Franklin Garrett’s classic Atlanta and Its Environs (Volumes I and II), the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* newspaper, and recent books focusing on particular people and issues that have shaped the city (Pomerantz’ When Peachtree Street Meets Sweet Auburn, Allen’s Atlanta: The Invention of an International City, etc.). Photographs of Peachtree Street at various points in time were of particular interest, as well as quotations and writings of those within Atlanta and across the country regarding their views of the city and its image. A summary of Peachtree Street’s history and an analysis of

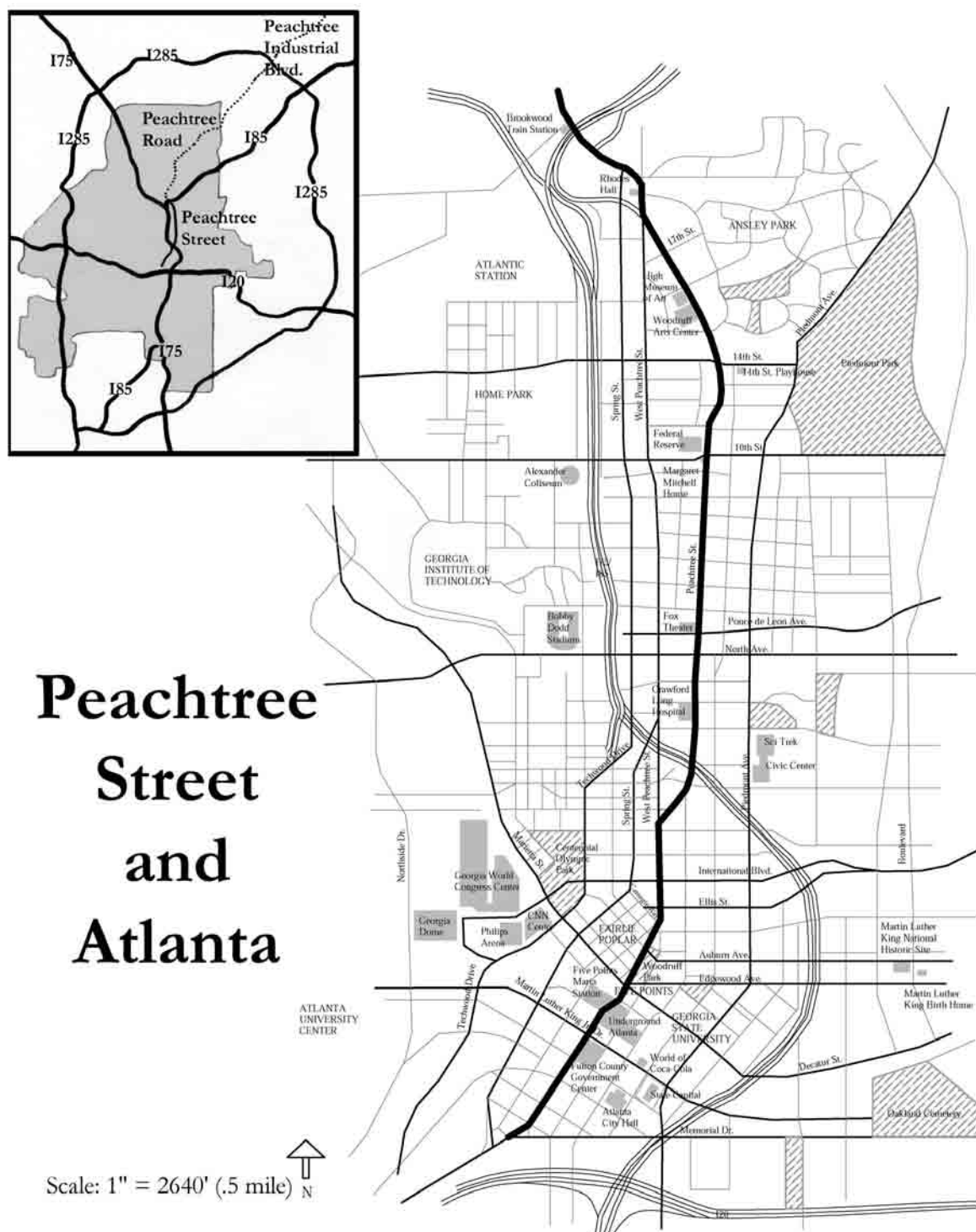
Atlanta's "identity elements" are found in Chapter 7. The perceptual landscape analysis was then re-evaluated for compatibility with the historical context of the city and street. Consistencies and deficiencies were noted. Finally, Peachtree was evaluated in terms of the identity street criteria outlined in Chapter 5. Areas of weakness presented opportunities for changes to the physical environment. Recommendations for improvement (Chapter 8) were also shaped by a desire to avoid duplication of ideas presented in the Peachtree Design Competition and streetscape plans already in process.

Initial Observations

Peachtree Street has no obvious beginning/ending at its northern point. It simply melts seamlessly from Peachtree "Road" at a small cross street named Palisades Road a few blocks north of Brookwood train station. However, where Peachtree Street forms an overpass to the I85 highway seems to be a more implicit, albeit unexciting start to the story. Peachtree Street continues for approximately 4 ¼ miles, generally in a linear, southerly direction. It ends as unobtrusively as its beginning, by changing to "Whitehall Street" after crossing Memorial Drive. Its full length is well within the Atlanta city boundaries (Figure 6.1).

Some comments about the streetscape establish a general background for the search for narrative. The roadway varies from six lanes to four lanes of traffic, often with a center turn lane weaving in and out. The street generally narrows as one moves south. Traffic is consistently heavy, but moves fairly well. Parked service and construction vehicles sometimes present roadblocks. Sidewalks line both sides of the street, but are narrow, often only five-six feet wide. In places, they are cracked and poorly maintained. Street trees are fairly common, but compete with pedestrians and are allocated insufficient space in tree wells. (Two exceptions are found regarding high impact areas of vegetation: the Fox Theater/Georgian Terrace hotel area where a wide median of mature street trees provide a lush foreground to the area; and a number of large street trees are found from 13th – 16th Streets that not only do much to soften the angular surrounding building lines, but provide welcoming shade and visual relief to the very open and asphalt oriented landscape to the south.)

Figure 6.1



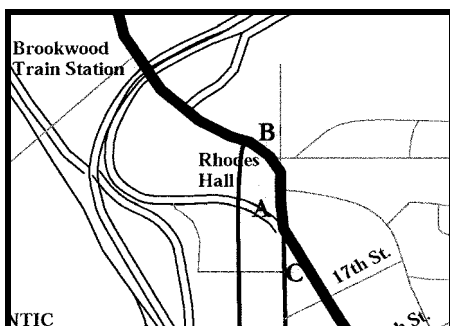
Above ground utilities and billboards appear and disappear along certain segments of the road. Street lighting (type) becomes consistent once south of 3rd Street and provides an aesthetically pleasing continuity. The street is predominately free of litter.

While running north/south, Peachtree does have several bends and curves that sometimes bring changes in character. In some cases, these bends also represent transition points between eight “Districts” of Peachtree Street ranging in size from one-third of a mile to nearly a full mile long. The boundaries between these districts are generally subtle and not well defined. Their edges are in flux, and are representative of this point in time. Exceptions to the “characteristics” of each district are common. These districts were determined for this analysis by combining pedestrian impressions with those encountered while driving. The “view from the road” provided the “big picture” view while the street level view allowed for more subtle interpretations. When driving along Peachtree, it often seems that a “district” has just started when it abruptly ends. When walking, many districts do not provide enough engagement or visual cues from afar to provide a desire to continue on. Despite these caveats, the eight “character districts” of Peachtree are (from north to south):

- **Suburbia Peachtree:** A low density, hodgepodge of land use and low-scaled, setback buildings more reminiscent of a suburban area than a city core.
- **Corporate Arts:** A modern, gleaming, affluent concentration of office structures and traditional “elite” arts oriented facilities (symphony, art museum, etc). The effect is somewhat similar to Perimeter Center, an “edge city” found to the northeast along I285.
- **Scale in Transition:** An area undergoing apparent conversion from low scale, small retail to large, isolated complexes. Overhead utilities, surface parking lots, and un-maintained lots signify speculative property owners awaiting redevelopment.
- **Urban Residential Living:** Another section also undergoing redevelopment, this one appears oriented to young urban professional living. Retro new apartment construction and attention to redevelopment of existing buildings give the district an additional design style. A concentrated theater subdistrict is located at the southern end.

- **Downtown-Midtown Transitional:** Peachtree once again forms an overpass over the I85/I75 Connector, which occurs in the middle of this district. The southern side marks a perceptual transitional area for Downtown Atlanta, while the northern side transitions us to Midtown Atlanta.
- **Urban Canyon:** Here Peachtree looks and feels the most “urban”, with a short stretch of 70’s style tall buildings lining both sides of the street, giving it enclosure and manmade shade.
- **Old Atlanta:** This district appears to be the “oldest” given the existence of certain architectural structures and higher density. It also has the most open space and people on the street.
- **Institutional Atlanta:** Several large municipal complexes, including a detention center, and surface parking lots fill this section. The overall feel here is lack of vitality.

The charts on the next pages provide significantly more details and photographic representations of the Districts regarding their unique character attributes. A summary of overall Peachtree Street observations then follows to conclude this chapter.



Suburbia Peachtree

Brookwood Station to 17th Street: .9 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

I-85 overpass is assumed north delimiter. Billboard at 17th St. marks the southern edge.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: Low - buildings isolated and set back from sidewalks.
- Land use: Diverse – office buildings, gas station, churches, apartments, etc.
- Verticality: Scattered 6-10 story structures at curves, 3-6 story buildings along route.
- Age (estimated): New construction mixed with 70's vintage.
- Miscellaneous: Billboards, road signs, overhead utilities.

Street-Life: Pedestrians nearly nonexistent; 6 lanes of fast moving traffic.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Olympic “World Athletes” monument in on-ramp oasis to I85 appears as out-of-place artifact. More visible going north. **(A)**
- Going north: Large office building (“Peachtree Point”) at road bend with Beverly Road. **(B)** Peach colored TAZ Media building just before overpass is gaudy eye catcher.
- Going south: NSI office building at West Peachtree intersection. **(C)**
- Brookwood train station is not a focal point – scale of building too small for surroundings.



World Athletes Monument

Open Spaces – Public and Private

- WWI Veterans small pocket park in triangular section fronting NSI building.
- Outdoor cafe area outside food establishment at NE corner of 17th St.

Connections to Surroundings: None

Connections to Past and Future

- Sign south of Beverly Rd. indicates mixed-use development is coming to this treed space.
- Gothic Peachtree Christian Church and neo-Georgian synagogue, The Temple, appear to be long-lived structures.
- Rhodes Memorial Hall is now home of The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. Visible National Historic Landmark marker.



Setback and low landscaping of Equifax building allow excellent viewing and framing of the historic structure when coming from north. Signage provides identification.

Suburbia Peachtree District

Character Sketches



Views Looking North



Views Looking South



Character Element Sampler



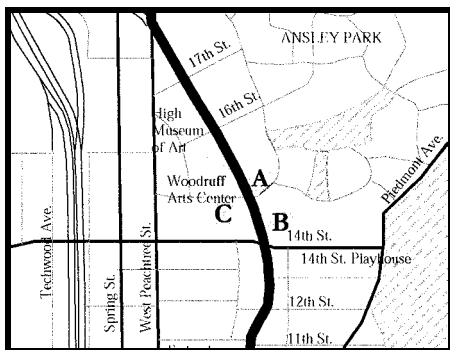
Billboard at 17th Street



"Peachtree Point" at Beverly St.



Taz Media Building at Overpass



Corporate Arts

17th Street to 12th Street: .6 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

High Museum at SW corner of 16th St. appears as north boundary. Massively tall Eleven Hundred Peachtree Office building at NW corner of 12th St. marks southern edge.

Character Defining Attributes

- **Density:** Medium – concentration and close adjacency of horizontal glass block structures, tall buildings set close to street, and curve in road denote higher density than Suburbia Peachtree.
- **Land use:** Music and visual arts complexes set among large office structures. Some street level retail within commercial buildings. The Woodruff Arts Center (which looks like an office building) and adjacent High Museum (a distinctive modern structure), along with 14th St. Playhouse just east on 14th St. provide small core of an “arts district” but needs more critical mass to overcome the corporate feel of area.
- **Verticality:** Mainly mid-rise (10-30 story) buildings provide feeling of enclosure.
- **Age (estimated):** 80’s vintage with some recent construction (tallest buildings).
- **Miscellaneous:** Underground utilities. Street trees and landscaping soften angular lines of buildings. Well-maintained and affluent area. Structures generally coordinate well with each other in design and scale. (Exception: newly constructed office structure NE of 16th St – The Peachtree - made to look Georgian but too massive for style and scale of surroundings and overwhelms the more subtle elegance of the Reid House residential building to its south.)

Street-Life: Moderate pedestrian levels, highest around noon (office workers lunch) and in evenings for arts center seasonal events. Events at Arts Center during school days brings spurts of significant children and bus traffic.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Coming north, Church of the Christ, Scientist is first blocked by a tree, then comes into sight as excellent visual relief to surrounding corporate “look”. **(A)**

Open Spaces – Public and Private

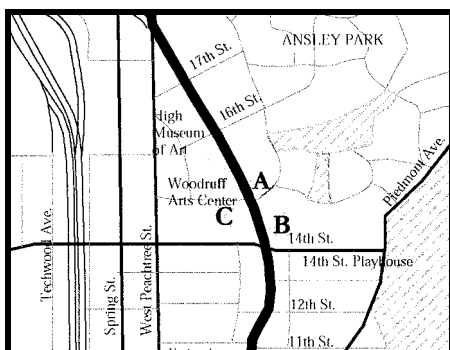
- Colony Square mixed use complex has interior courtyard area somewhat visible from street. Presence of people there makes entry more inviting. Also has several curved seating walls – people seen eating lunch here. **(B)**
- Woodruff Arts Center has large paved area off street behind neon sign. Sculpture provides focal point. Appears to be primarily for handicap parking and drop-off traffic. No seating, nor shade from heat – not inviting.



Woodruff Center “Plaza”.

Connections to Surroundings

- Woodruff Arts Center has movable type neon sign out front, possibly to let one know it is not an office building but reminds one of Las Vegas convention center signage. High Museum has large poster on facade showing its current highlighted exhibit.



Corporate Arts (cont.)

17th Street to 12th Street: .6 Mile

Connection to Surroundings (cont.)

- Landscaped circle at 15th St. provides small indication of transition to single family housing area, Ansley Park, visible to the east.
- Info kiosk about Colony Square with area map found at NE corner of 14th St.
- “Midtown” extra sign placed above street name signs gives neighborhood distinction.

Connections to Past and Future

- Interesting older home visible along southern side of Woodruff paved area on 14th Street. Structure is significantly elevated on stone foundation. No information as to identification of the building. (C)
- Lower scale office and multi-family structures from 15th to 17th St. provide eclectic combination of styles and ages. Historic looking First Presbyterian Church at NW corner of 16th St. is interesting contrast to High Museum to its south.
- Atlanta Women’s Club at 13th St. occupies what appears to be a former mansion dwarfed by the surrounding office buildings. National Historic Landmark sign out front. Currently undergoing some type of renovation.



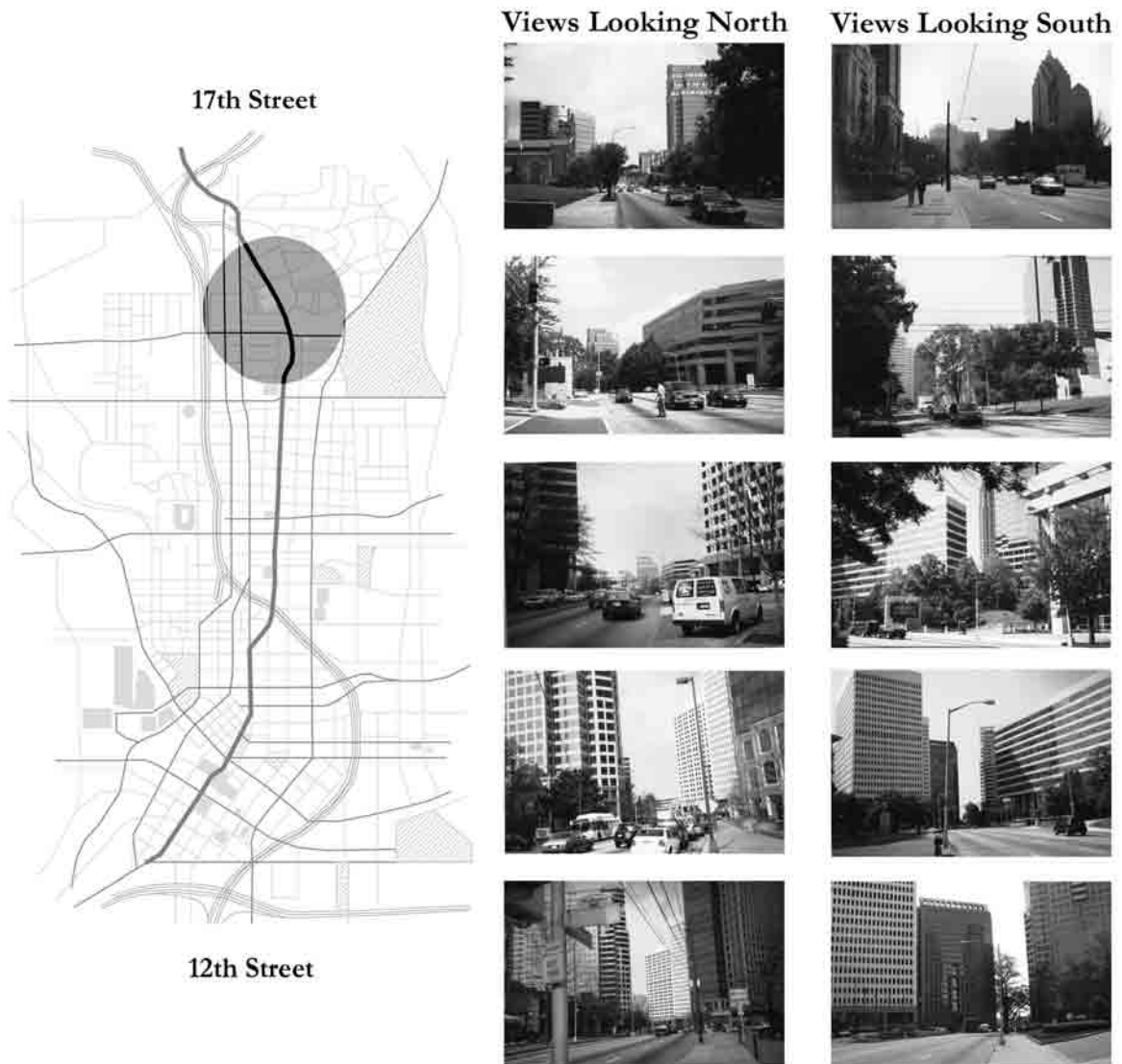
Atlanta Women's Club.



A former mansion on 14th Street?

Corporate Arts District

Character Sketches



Character Element Sampler



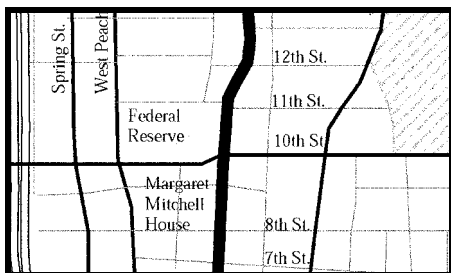
Colony Square



First Church of Christ Science



High Museum of Art



Scale in Transition

12th Street to 8th Street: .33 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

Surface parking lot and billboard at 12th denote change from corporate look. Massive new construction next to First Union Plaza at NE 8th St. marks southern boundary.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: Low – Very open feel with surface lots and older small structures. New buildings are isolated and massive. Street becoming lopsided with east side high-rises built up to sidewalk with lower structures and setback buildings on west side.
- Land use: Mixture of older commercial (small restaurants, auto shop, bank branch, etc.), institutional (Federal Reserve building), large office (First Union Plaza), and parking lots.
- Verticality: 1-2 story existing buildings being replaced with mid-rise office structures.
- Age (estimated): 70's with new construction ongoing.
- Miscellaneous: Overhead utilities and billboards are back. Little greenery for heat relief. Sidewalks in poor shape except new very wide walkways in front of Federal Reserve.



Sidewalk between 11th and 12th Streets.

Street-Life: Very few pedestrians – comparable to Suburbia Peachtree. Heavy traffic at 10th St. intersection.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Going south, massive white marble Federal Reserve building dominates view.
- Going north and uphill, buildings in Corporate Arts District and west dominate the skyline.

Open Spaces – Public and Private

- Large open space with bench seating in greenspace in front of Federal Reserve. Does not appear to ever be used. Assumed public space but overall intimidating atmosphere.

Connections to Surroundings

- Info kiosk about Margaret Mitchell at SW corner of 10th St.

Connections to Past and Future

- Sign in front of patch of greenspace next to Jock's and Jill's restaurant at NE corner of 10th St. indicates a large mixed use development is coming, “Midtown Square”.
- Sign (in photo) identifying Margaret Mitchell house (taken 8/2001) was not there on 3/2002.

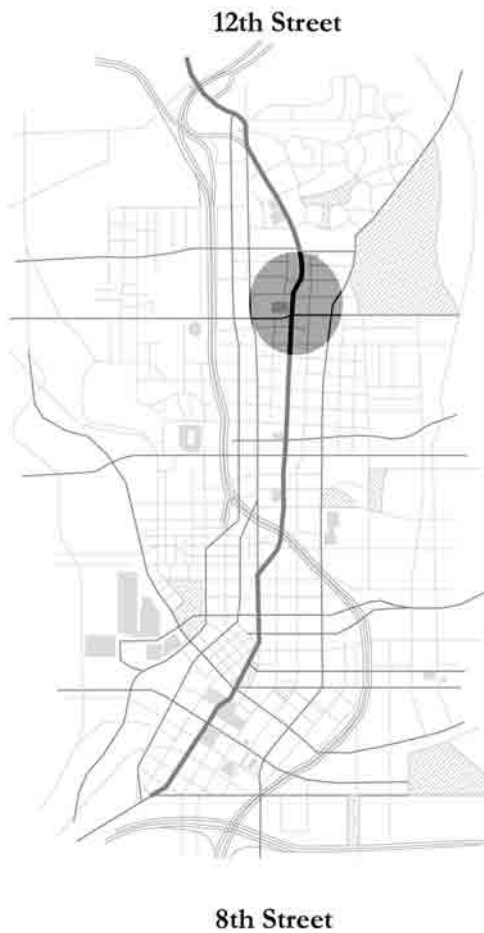


Margaret Mitchell House located at SW corner of 10th St. fades into background buildings of similar color. Property is fenced – must go around back to entrance. Visitors are not evident. A small visitor center is located to the south of the house and is not highly visible.



Scale-in-Transition District

Character Sketches



Views Looking North



Views Looking South



Character Element Sampler



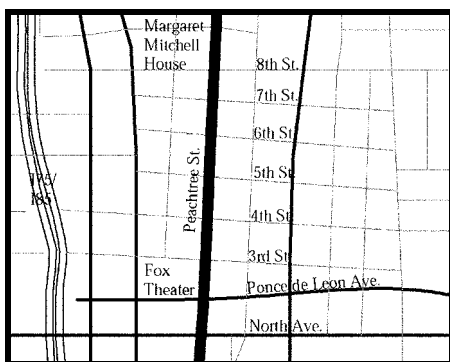
Federal Reserve Plaza



Low Scale Commercial



First Union Building



Urban Professional Living

8th Street to North Avenue: .6 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

Art deco small corner strip center at 8th brings back human scale. Fox Theater and Georgian Terrace Hotel form entertainment subsection at southern edge of district.

Character Defining Attributes

- **Density:** Low becoming Medium in places. Several greenspace areas and vacant lots. New buildings set close to street. Peachtree here has narrowed to 4 lanes.
- **Land use:** Primarily residential with theater/hotel section at south end. Scattered office and religious facilities. Significant apartment construction visible along east/west streets. Small retail establishments (chic furniture, casual restaurants) both standalone and located in street level of residential buildings.
- **Verticality:** Mainly low-rise (2 -6 story) structures. 4th St. to North Avenue has tallest residential structures.
- **Age (estimated):** Wide assortment. Theater district structures appear to be historic. Renovation of older office buildings into residences has occurred. Scattered new construction.
- **Miscellaneous:** Building awning/canopies, street trees and several greenspace areas add to human scale. Billboard and overhead utilities at north end imply older area awaiting redevelopment. Gentrification feel to area.

Street-Life: Low during the day. Significant foot and vehicle traffic pre and post evening Fox Theater productions. Heavy car traffic at North Avenue intersection.

Landmarks/Focal Points

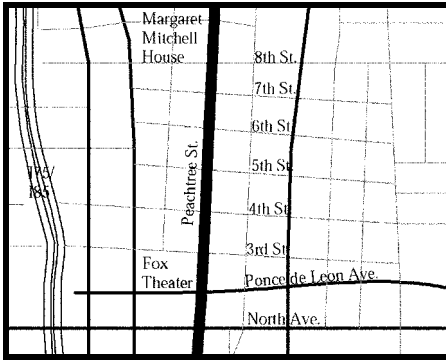
- The brightly lit Fox Theater, along with the architecturally interesting Georgian Terrace Hotel and Ponce de Leon residential building make the Peachtree-Ponce intersection a nodal point at performance time.

Open Spaces – Public and Private

- A small greenspace at the NE corner of 4th St. appears to be part of the Lutheran Church property at SE corner.
- Several eating establishments have outdoor seating areas visible from the street.

Connections to Surroundings

- The vertical neon Fox Theater sign and marquis signifies “entertainment is here”.
- Two info kiosks: at SW 3rd St. about Fox Theater; at SW Ponce de Leon about the history of that street.



Urban Professional Living (cont.)

8th Street to North Avenue: .6 Mile

Connections to Past and Future

- Two churches on street have shown survival skills.
- Georgian Terrace hotel has National Landmark marker in front.
- Several residential buildings show adaptive reuse of prior industrial/office structures.
- An old “abandoned” motel at 6th St. with chain link fence shows signs demolition is coming.
- Architecture around the theater appears historic. Days Inn hotel occupies nontraditional structure. Classic Georgian Terrace and similarly styled residential complex to its south provide interesting contrast to bold Moorish Fox Theater across the street. This small section has its own personality and offers an interesting contrast to the more deco/retro style of new residential living construction going on further north.



Georgian Terrace Hotel.



Fox Theater.



Day's Inn Hotel.

Urban Professional Living District

Character Sketches



Views Looking North



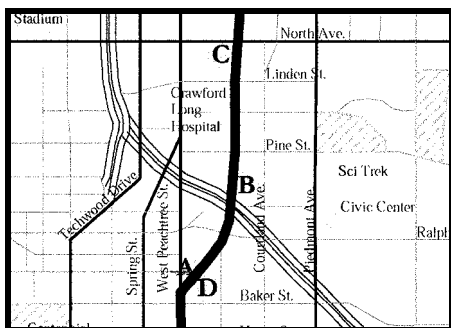
Views Looking South

Human Scaled
Commercial
and Religious
Venues

Character Element Sampler



Residential Complexes



Downtown-Midtown Transitional

North Avenue to Baker Street: .65 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

Bank of America skyscraper at SW corner of North Avenue changes scale back to office levels. Its downtown twin, The SunTrust Plaza tower across the overpass, is the southern delimiter.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: Low but higher at each end. Street becomes wider with 5 lanes. Open feel from overpass bisecting “district” and large surface lots in Midtown section.
- Land use: Diverse: Office, Commercial, Religious, Parking.
- Verticality: Highly varied. 50+ story Bank of America and SunTrust Plaza towers significantly overshadow surroundings. Low rise (2-6 stories) in between.
- Age (estimated): Wide assortment from older abandoned Medical Arts building to historic churches to new construction.
- Miscellaneous: Construction of overpass seems to have negatively affected the street in this area. Noticeable continuity of arched platinum streetlights lining Peachtree.

Street-Life: Moderate around Crawford Long Hospital during the day, no life elsewhere. Broad, unappealing highway overpass is hindrance to pedestrian traffic to the other side.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Going north and south, the two dominating skyscrapers capture attention away from interesting details of foreground structures.
- Going south, the small Greek classical “Carnegie” column monument at Peachtree-West Peachtree-Baker intersection in downtown section gets lost in background buildings and is additionally hampered by a competing pink modern sculpture across the street in front of the Hyatt Regency hotel. (A).

Open Spaces – Public and Private

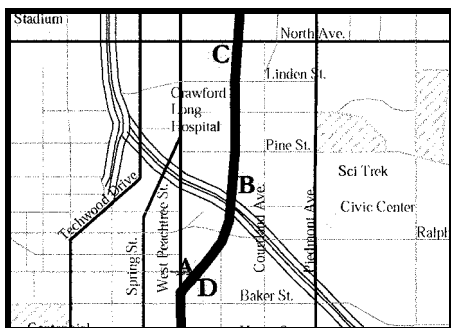
- Hardy Ivy Park at West Peachtree intersection in downtown side is small, publicly accessible open space and gives more space for Carnegie monument to be noticed.
- Another small “Mayor’s Park” located at Ralph McGill just south of overpass has sign stating closed hours of 11:00pm to 6:00am. Vegetative screening from road and small size make entry appear unsafe.
- A nicely landscaped small park is also located on Peachtree’s east side north of the overpass adjacent to the St. Luke’s Church. It is padlocked closed and surrounded with a chain link fence – apparently to be seen but not used. (B)



Hardy Ivy Park.



Fenced park next to St. Luke’s Church.



Downtown-Midtown Transitional (cont.)

North Avenue to Baker Street: .65 Mile

Open Spaces – Public and Private (cont.)

- The Bank of America and SunTrust Plaza entries provide samples of semi-private transitional entryways into large-scale buildings. (C) and (D)
- Graffiti filled large surface parking lots on west side of Midtown section contribute to unappealing landscape. Landscaped parking area with wrought iron fencing around St. Luke's parking lot presents more aesthetic handling of this function.



Bank of America .



SunTrust Plaza.

Connections to Surroundings:

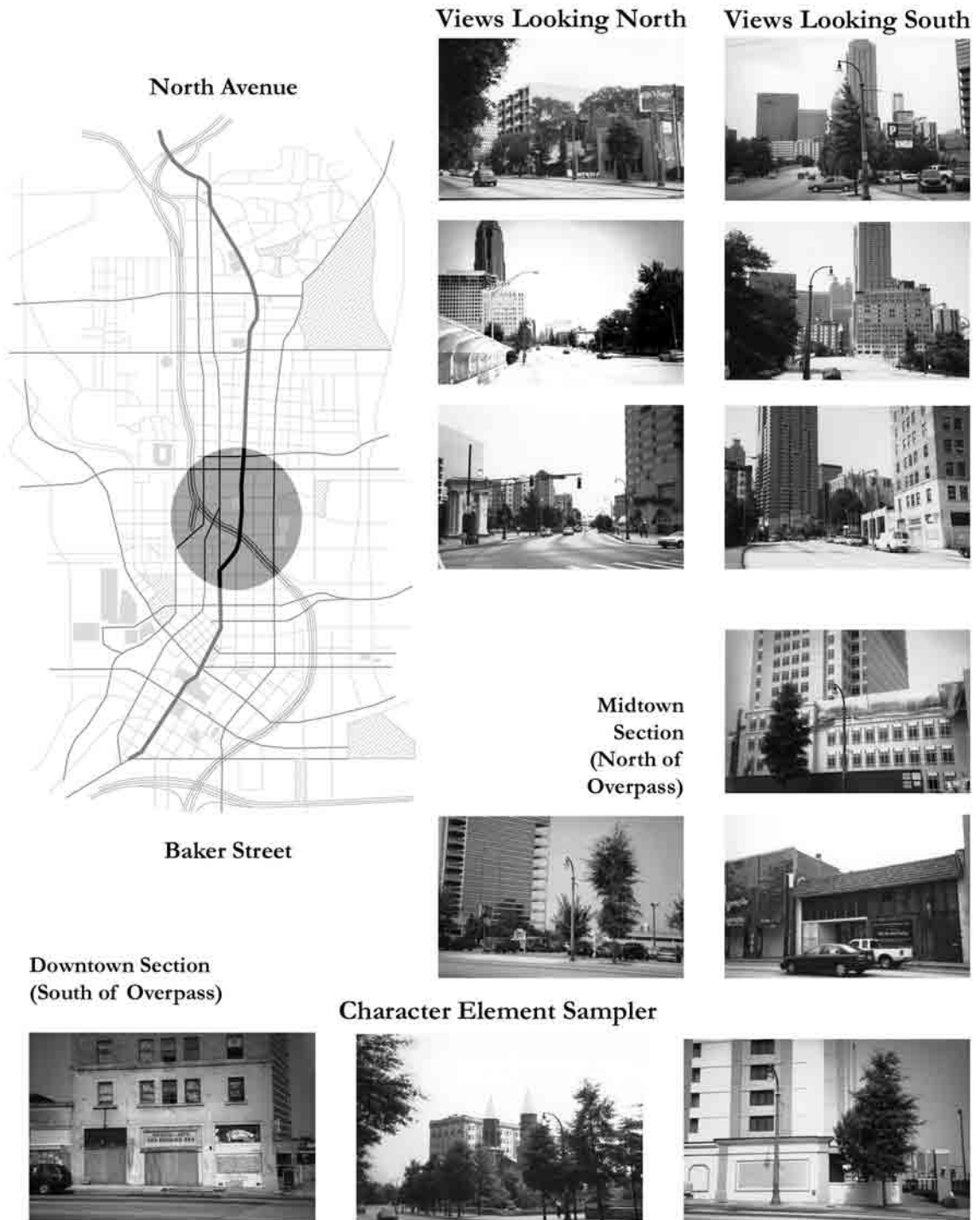
- Info kiosk by Carnegie monument and Hardy Ivy Park about Atlanta native son, Hardy Ivy.
- Info kiosk at Ralph McGill Blvd. about McGill, former Atlanta Constitution editor.
- No information provided as to what Carnegie monument is for/about, nor is any available regarding the pink sculpture in front of Hyatt.

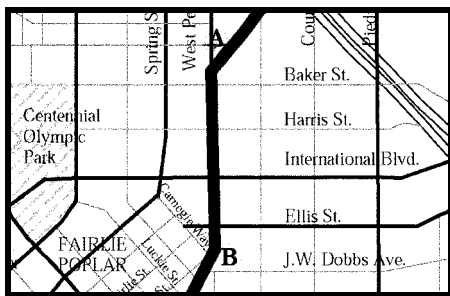
Connections to Past and Future

- Graffiti laden older Medical Arts building indicates abandonment of a once worthwhile past for this building. Is reuse or the wrecking ball in its future? Meanwhile, its current state makes pedestrian use here unpalatable.
- The Atlanta Preservation Center occupies what appears to be a former home near Linden Street. Has not been maintained and is wedged between a parking lot and jewelry store.
- Several historic churches again carry on, including the twin steeple Sacred Heart church visible from both north and south directions.
- "Ralph McGill Boulevard".
- Olympia Hotel appears to be a reuse project – some type of living quarters is evident.
- SunTrust and Bank of America buildings seem to be dueling "trophy" buildings that intend to remain unique in this stretch of Peachtree.
- Large construction/expansion of Crawford Long Hospital shows the Midtown section of this District potential as medical node. Meanwhile, renovation of small-scale retail structures across the street from the hospital indicates confidence in the center's future. Pornographic shop is located across the street.

Downtown-Midtown Transitional District

Character Sketches





Urban Canyon

Baker Street to Carnegie Way: .3 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

Carnegie monument at north bend in road. Georgia Pacific building at Carnegie Way at southern end.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: High. No setbacks. Most building connected without breaks.
- Land use: Primarily office and hotel. Limited retail. Evidence of some defunct venues (e.g. Planet Hollywood restaurant). Some retail is enclosed within interior courtyards and building lobbies (e.g. Peachtree Center shops).
- Verticality: Consistently mid-rise at street front. Some skyscrapers have stepped fronts to avoid overpowering the street (e.g. One-Ninety-One Peachtree).
- Age (estimated): 1960's-70's vintage with renovations.
- Miscellaneous: Sidewalks are narrow for building density. Facades tend to be blank/fortress like (e.g. Westin hotel and the Merchandise Mart), with large atrium designs inside. Elevated “catwalks” linking buildings are visible down east/west streets. Buildings tend to shade the street.

Street-Life: Moderate, consistent pedestrian activity throughout the day. Diverse mixture of locals, visitors, and workers.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Going north, the Carnegie monument at Peachtree-West Peachtree-Baker intersection in downtown section serves function somewhat at the pedestrian level, but is too small in relation to background buildings and appears out of context with surroundings and Atlanta. Thus, as seen in the Downtown-Midtown summary, this focal point candidate has the same problems coming from either direction. **(A)**
- Generic large office structure (Georgia Pacific building) frames the viewpoint looking south as Peachtree starts to bend. **(B)**

Open Spaces – Public and Private

- Georgia Pacific building has paved “plaza” area in front. Not well used.
- In general, the open spaces in this section are interior and privately controlled.

Connections to Surroundings

- Several visible Marta rail stations.
- Macy's vertical marquis and Hardrock Cafe's eclectic signage provide strong cognitive links to their functions.
- “Andrew Young International Boulevard”.
- Info kiosk at NW corner of International Boulevard about developer John Portman and his Peachtree Center complex of buildings in the area.

Connections to Past and Future

- Deteriorating former Winecoff hotel with landmark sign out front gives sad reminder of abandonment of the past?

Urban Canyon District

Character Sketches



Views Looking North



Views Looking South



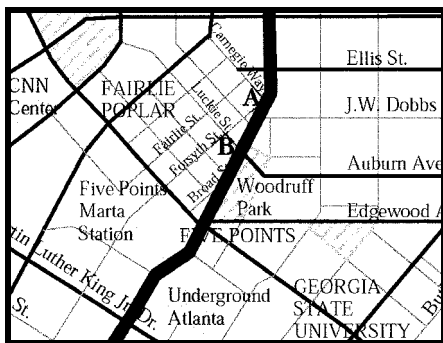
Street Level Retail Venues



Character Element Sampler

Office and Hotel Venues





Old Atlanta

Carnegie Way to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive: .4 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: “Beginning and Ending”

West side Peachtree Marta station is northern edge.

Underground Suites Hotel at south side of Underground plaza defines other boundary.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: High generally on west side of street. Large open spaces due to Woodruff Park and Underground Atlanta plaza make east side very open south of Candler Building.
- Land use: Diverse- office, some retail especially at south end, park, transit station, hotel, etc.
- Verticality: Mid-rise on west side of street. Small low-rise section between Alabama St. and MLK Drive.
- Age (estimated): Mixture of early 20th century, and 60's-70's vintage.
- Miscellaneous: This district has the oldest existing buildings, most street accessible open spaces, and most public art pieces of any District along Peachtree. Walkways along the park and Underground Atlanta are wider than normal.

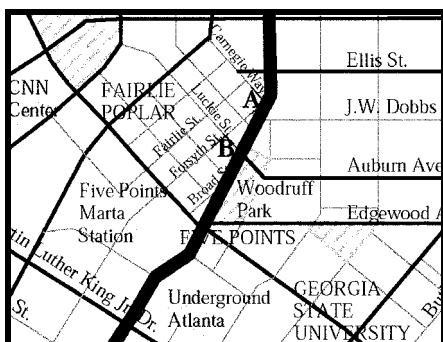
Street-Life: Medium – highest of any district during the day. “Invisible racial line” seems to occur south of Auburn Avenue, when street population becomes nearly all African American.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Going south, the Candler building provides a classic backdrop as Peachtree bends to the east. **(A)**
- Continuing south in a short “urban canyon” area, the unusually shaped triangular Flatiron building at Luckie Street is seen ahead. **(B)**
- A tall white structure, looking like a communications tower, and the “Underground Atlanta” plaza, retail “street” and steps leading to shops below presents a conflicting message to visitors. One first wonders why does “Underground” seem to be “above ground?” The plaza area has every element one could think of placing in a plaza: a water feature, a vertical “landmark” (the tower), brick paving patterns, banners, flags, canopies, steps, retaining walls, purple painted street poles?, a line of trees, planters, ornately designed lamp-posts, an assortment of colors and so on. The area attempts to present a festive face, but the overall effect is chaotic yet generic.
- Continuing south, the large Underground Suites Hotel is out of scale with surroundings and diminishes effect of the Underground plaza area.



Street level portions of Underground Atlanta.



Old Atlanta (cont.)

Carnegie Way to Martin Luther King Jr.
Drive: .4 Mile

Landmarks/Focal Points (cont.)

- Going north, the juxtaposition of different vintage buildings presents an interesting collage and gives notice that you are approaching the hub of the city. The opening offered by Woodruff Park on the east presents a pleasing aesthetic foreground for the composition. Its southern entry has a sculpture “Atlanta From the Ashes” donated to the city by the Rich Foundation in 1969, as well as a glass-domed gazebo.
- An approximately 30 ft. tall sculpture entitled “Five Points” is positioned in a pedestrian median at the confluence of Marietta St. and Edgewood.



Woodruff Park sculpture and gazebo.



“Five Points” sculpture at Marietta Street.

Open Spaces – Public and Private

- The two block, very accessible Woodruff Park is across from the Flatiron building and expands Peachtree’s presence eastward. The park benches and seating walls were heavily used during the day in 3/2002.
- The Five Points Marta station at Alabama often has street vendors lined in front selling their wares. The front of this station appears to be a gathering point for people.
- A small triangular plaza area with a highly visible “Cingular Wireless” sign marks the intersection of Carnegie Way and Forsyth St. in front of the Atlanta Public Library. Faintly visible etched in a low retaining wall is the designation “Margaret Mitchell Square”. The plaza area is utilitarian, gray, hot, littered and unkempt.



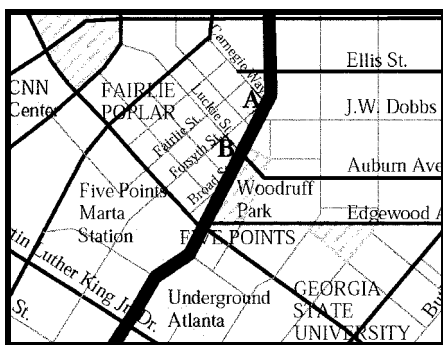
Margaret Mitchell/Cingular Wireless Plaza.

Connections to Surroundings

- The entry into the linear pedestrian “shopping” street of Underground Atlanta is hampered by the parked cars in front of the entrance – confuses the visitor as to whether one is “allowed” to enter.
- “John Wesley Dobbs Avenue”.



Entry to pedestrian street of Underground Atlanta.



Old Atlanta (cont.)

Carnegie Way to Martin Luther King Jr.
Drive: .4 Mile

Connections to Surroundings

- The entry into the linear pedestrian “shopping” street of Underground Atlanta is hampered by the parked cars in front of the entrance – confuses the visitor as to whether one is “allowed” to enter.
- New construction occurring for “Georgia State Learning Center” at Luckie St.
- Several narrow intersecting streets cross Peachtree on the west side across from Woodruff Park and are marked with interesting art pieces designating the area beyond as the Fairlie Poplar Historic District. This neighborhood appears intimate and inviting from Peachtree.



Fairlie Poplar Sculpture.

Connections to Past and Future

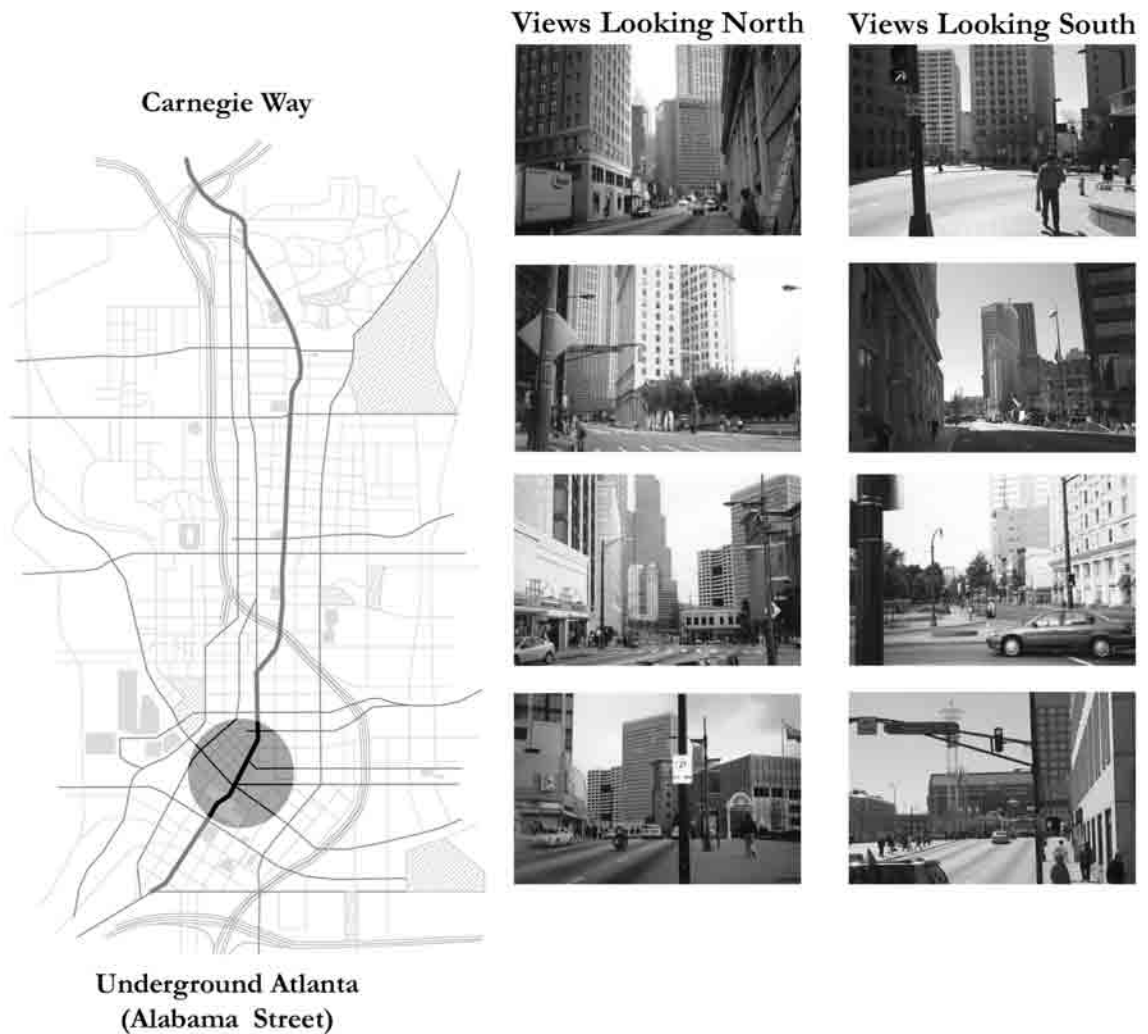
- Several info kiosks provide information about facets of the area’s past
 - One located in the north end by the Cingular Wireless plaza is titled “Peachtree on Parade”. Speaks of parades and special events, such as the *Gone With the Wind* movie premiere at the Loew’s Grand Theater, that have occurred on the street. (The Georgia Pacific building now occupies the site of the former Loew’s Theater.)
 - One kiosk adjacent to the “Five Points” sculpture at Marietta St. tells us this was the former location of a towering artesian well built in 1884 to increase the city’s water supply.
 - The other kiosk at Peachtree’s SE corner with Auburn Avenue relates the prior importance of Auburn Avenue as a major African-American commercial center during the early to mid 1900’s resulting from Jim Crow laws.
- A circular series of three white columns is placed in front of the Equitable building at the NW corner of Auburn Ave. A plaque states these were salvaged from the original Equitable Building (built 1895, demolished 1971).
- The small retail section between Alabama St. and MLK Drive has several “out of business” signs. Pawnshops and “checks cashed” facilities indicate declining economic conditions in this section.
- Marriott Residence Inn across from Candler Building appears to be an adaptive reuse of older office building.
- “Martin Luther King Jr. Drive”.



Columns in front of Equitable Building.

Old Atlanta District

Character Sketches



Character Element Sampler



Five Points MARTA Station



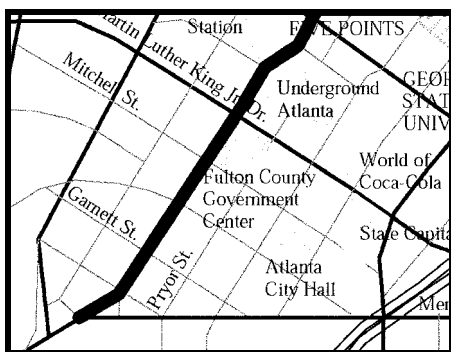
Woodruff Park



Flatiron Building



At Edgewood Ave.



Institutional Peachtree

Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to Memorial Drive: .45 Mile

Perceived Boundaries: "Beginning and Ending"

Fulton County Government Center at the north.

Intersection with Memorial Drive (Peachtree's end) at south.

Character Defining Attributes

- Density: Low – a few very large municipal buildings among mainly surface parking lots and a large Marta station.
- Land use: Government and parking.
- Verticality: Government buildings are Mid-rise.
- Age (estimated): Government buildings – 90's. Others much older.
- Miscellaneous: This district has the least activity of all districts. Much underutilized space.

Street-Life: Few pedestrians.

Landmarks/Focal Points

- Going south, bulky County Detention Center looms ahead. There is no obvious marking of Peachtree's change to Whitehall Street at Memorial Drive.

Open Spaces – Public and Private: None

Connections to Surroundings

- Garnett Marta station

Connections to Past and Future: None

Institutional Peachtree District

Character Sketches

Martin Luther King Jr. Drive



Memorial Drive

Views Looking North



Views Looking South



Character Element Sampler



Surface Parking Lot



Fulton County Government Center

Analysis of Observations

From these first observations, what does Peachtree Street tell us about Atlanta? From an age perspective, the city appears fairly young based on an architectural standpoint, the types of residences going up in Midtown, and the general age of people on the street. There is very little evidence of an industrial past, except near Underground Atlanta. Instead, it appears typical of a growing service economy sunbelt city with an emphasis on high rent office structures. The city's origins seem to be in the "Old Atlanta" section around the Five Points intersection with evidence of growth occurring northward. However, spotty evidence of prior "mansions" and historic landmark buildings, and the longevity of many churches along the route indicate that Atlanta may not be as young as it appears at first glance. The view looking north from Edgewood Avenue showing a collage of various era buildings is further evidence of time layering. The street is nearly absent of monuments and public markers, except for a few objects in Old Atlanta. Ongoing construction/redevelopment not only shows economic (real estate) health and growth, but may also indicate a city more oriented to the future than the past.

The street/city gives off a strong business atmosphere. It is fairly well maintained and "sanitized", without the grittiness and edginess found in many other American urban streets. A few street vendors have set up "shop" in front of Five Points Marta and a few in front of Woodruff Park, but entrepreneurship is not otherwise evident. Peachtree seems "safe" during the day in the context of standard urban wariness. The street facade tends to be generic commercial construction with much glass, or blank concrete walls without signage (e.g. Merchandise Mart). A regionally distinct design style is not evident, although brick is found in many of the lower scaled structures. Focal points found at Peachtree's curves tend to be office buildings (e.g. NSI building at Peachtree and West Peachtree). Even noncommercial structures look much like office buildings (Woodruff Arts Center, Crawford Long Hospital). The Federal Reserve building at 10th Street looks the part of a U.S. government vault and protector of the nations currency.

People activity is highest around Woodruff Park and the Five Points Marta station. The homeless are evident in Woodruff (by carts, bags, etc. of belongings by individuals seated on the benches). In fact, the benches within the curved interior pathway are heavily occupied. (Note: some change appears to have occurred in Woodruff Park from the summer of 2001 to March of 2002. Large numbers of people are no longer seen sleeping on the grassy areas.) The seat walls by the sidewalk lining Peachtree are a favorite location for many to play checkers, chess and card games. A moderately consistent level of people “on the street” is found in the Urban Canyon section during the day. People wearing convention badges and searching for “things to see” are not an uncommon site, although one would expect to see more people given the cluster of huge hotels found on or near Peachtree. The other noteworthy area of people is the Corporate Arts District, which, during the workday, is a street mixture of office workers, some tourists and residents from nearby residential areas. Large groups of people attending scheduled, primarily evening events are found at the Corporate Arts Section and Fox Theater subdistrict. Very few pedestrians are seen in the Suburbia, Scale in Transition, Downtown–Midtown Transitional and Institutional Districts. In total, Peachtree lacks a strong, consistent pedestrian streetlife (although heavy traffic shows a strong functional role as a vehicular route). Peachtree also has a subliminal racial character, with a predominately African American population seen south of Auburn Avenue, and a near monopoly Caucasian inhabitation from the Urban Residential Living district northward. As for use of the “designed” open spaces found along Peachtree, the small vegetated pocket parks and paved plazas are infrequently used (e.g. Hardy Ivy Park, Margaret Mitchell Square, Georgia Pacific plaza, Mayor’s Park), but Woodruff Park is highly populated. Underground Atlanta’s plaza area always has some people milling around, but not enough to make this very large space appear lively.



Figure 6.2. Woodruff Park, March 2002.

In terms of legibility, the street lacks strong, uniquely memorable individual elements, or highly differentiated concentrations of activity other than office centers. Woodruff Park appears to be a nodal point and landmark, a pause point in the break of surrounding density, but it is not an element that is distinctive from similarly scaled greenspaces found in other urban areas.

Underground Atlanta is likewise a generic “(un)festive” plaza above ground, but is a unique concept of stores underneath the viaduct (the latter part, however, is not evident on Peachtree). There are no indications along Peachtree as to its connection to the other parts of Atlanta, other than signs for access to the interstate. Every intersection appears virtually identical to the last – if there is something interesting beyond, one has to find out using some other method.



As a positive legibility device, numerous kiosks along Peachtree provide historical/cultural information about particular local events and “you are here” type street maps.

We can now turn to the past for additional clues to the city’s identity, and a better understanding of how well these first impressions of Peachtree Street relate to its recorded historical narrative.

CHAPTER 7

THE HISTORY OF PEACHTREE STREET AND ATLANTA

The Evolution of Peachtree Street

Understanding the present necessitates a review of the past. This chapter begins by focusing on the history of Peachtree Street and then turns to the broader based scope of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Note: Unless otherwise cited, the historical information for this section on Peachtree Street is William Bailey Williford's book, Peachtree Street, Atlanta.

The origin of the name "Peachtree" was the Creek Indian settlement translated as "Standing Peachtree" located at the confluence of the Chattahoochee River and a stream now known as Peachtree Creek. The name is also commonly attributed to the corruption of "pitch tree", referring to the large pines that grew at the top of Standing Peachtree. Peachtree's road origins are as an Indian trail that followed the ridgeline of Hog Mountain down from the Chattahoochee River to meet with the Sandtown Trail near today's Five Points. Peachtree Street initially began at this southern end in the mid 1800's, extending only a few blocks until becoming Peachtree Trail, then Peachtree Road. The evolution of Peachtree Street has intertwined with that of the city ever since.

The town commissioners did not initially plat the streets so they tended to grow organically. In fact, Atlanta's first streets – Peachtree, Whitehall, Marietta, and Decatur – were already in existence from their origins as Indian and settler trails. The addition of Edgewood Avenue into the intersection of these streets would later lead to this location's "Five Points" nomenclature. It was in this area, and southward along Whitehall Street that the commercial hub of Atlanta began. Noteworthy venues included Peachtree's first commercial business, Wash Collier's combination post office/general store, and Jonathon Norcross' general store at "Norcross Corner". Peachtree Street itself, however, was a muddy miasma in which cattle and hogs were not an uncommon sight. In the 1850's, the city's most affluent citizens began constructing homes to the north of this section, e.g.

between Ellis and Cain, thus foreshadowing Peachtree Street's role as an important residential street in the early 20th century.

Sherman's march through Atlanta near the end of the Civil War left much of Whitehall and parts of Peachtree Street destroyed. However, significant in-migration and a rebuilding frenzy brought energy and much congestion along the clay based and unpaved street. Quick and dirty

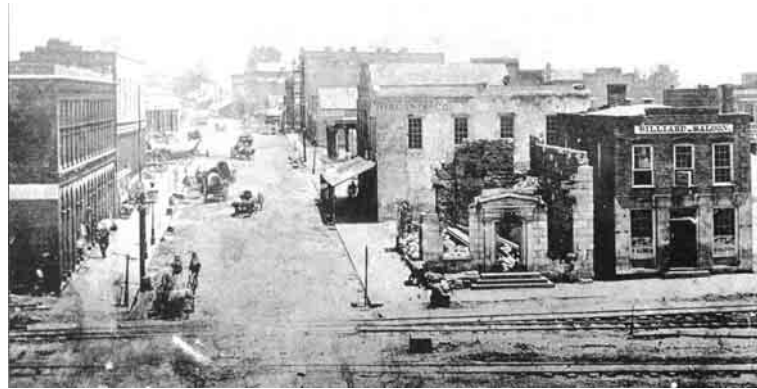


Figure 7.1. Civil War destruction along Peachtree, 1865, looking north from today's Underground Atlanta. Courtesy Atlanta History Center. (Auchmutey 3).

construction was replaced by well-built brick structures by 1880, including the first official Governor's mansion at Peachtree and Cain (now Andrew Young International Boulevard). Peachtree Street's infrastructure improved during the decade; portions were macadamized, blocks were paved with granite and sidewalks added. The street was widened and lengthened, and the trees planted after the war began to provide much needed shade.

Atlanta obtained a towering landmark when an artesian well was drilled in 1884 at Five Points to aid the city's drinking water supply. The well was short lived; its function was replaced with a system utilizing the Chattahoochee River by 1900.



Figure 7.2. Artesian well at Five Points. (Auchmutey 2).

By 1890, Peachtree Street extended northward to 6th St. and entered the period of its greatest glory as a fashionable residential thoroughfare. Single-family homes lined the entire segment from Ellis to 6th St., and new mansions were springing up from North Avenue to 10th St.

Peachtree Street had also become a place for both large and small public gatherings. Jacob's Corner (formerly Norcross Corner) at Marietta, and the Capital City Bank Corner at Whitehall and Alabama were popular places for small groups to "gather and gossip". Peachtree Street was the favored route for a seemingly endless supply of parades and celebrations that occurred in the city frequently until the 1970's.



Figure 7.3. Peachtree Street looking north at Ellis, 1895. (Auchmutey 27).



Figure 7.4. Peachtree at Whitehall, 1900.



Figure 7.5. National Shriners' Convention Parade at the Viaduct, 1914. Courtesy Atlanta Historical Society. (Garrett II, 637).

The construction of a viaduct over the railroad grade crossing at Peachtree and Whitehall Streets minimized a dangerous pedestrian situation and dramatically improved traffic flow. It also helped solidify the Five Points area as a commercial hub of the city. Hotels, entertainment venues (such as the DeGive Opera House which later became the Loew's Grand Theater), and ten to twenty story office buildings, e.g. the Flatiron

Building and Candler Building, created a more cosmopolitan and vertical urban landscape.

The first twenty years of the 1900's also brought Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Christian Science, and Presbyterian churches, as well as the Hebrew Temple, to various locations along the street. New construction along Peachtree was further accelerated when a fire destroyed many of the buildings along its west side from the viaduct to Marietta Street.

Five Points was home to one of the city's shameful events in 1906. Due to rumors of assaults on white women, a mob of angry white men raked violence on black persons and businesses in the area. Twelve were killed, 70 injured and the state militia was called in.

The years 1890-1910 proved to be the pinnacle of Peachtree's grand residential era, and the associated entertainment of visiting dignitaries and celebrities by Peachtree's homeowners. Increasing property values and pressure for commercial expansion, and the mobility afforded by the automobile served as catalysts for the change. One example occurred at the corner of Peachtree and Ponce de Leon, when the Georgian Terrace Hotel and two other businesses were built on three former home sites. Even the governor's mansion was not immune; it was demolished for the Henry Grady Hotel. The race to replace was on. The typology of Peachtree's residential landscape also changed when three large apartment complexes were constructed north of 15th Street.

In the 1920's Whitehall Street lost its pre-eminence as the retail center for the carriage trade as most department stores departed to surrounding streets. The one exception was Macy's, which opened a large store at Peachtree and Ellis, and remains the only department store found along the street today. When Tom Pitts closed his famous cigar and soft drink store at Five Points in 1926, he lamented that Five Points, once the best retail spot in the city, had turned into "a Wall Street business section" that became deserted at night and on weekends (Appendix II).

The start of Atlanta's cultural scene began that same year when Mrs. James Madison High donated her Tudor home to the Atlanta Art Association as a permanent memorial to her late husband. The High Museum of Art would achieve a more distinctive home much later in 1982 with the opening of Richard Meier's white modernist design at 15th St.



Figure 7.6. World premier of the movie “Gone With the Wind” at the Loew’s Grand Theater on Peachtree. (Blass and Rose 60).

The depression brought building activity to a halt, but celebratory parades and gatherings continued. None was bigger than the 1939 world premier of the movie “Gone With the Wind”, adapted from Margaret Mitchell’s novel and held at the Loew’s Grand Theater on Peachtree. Publicized nationwide, the event, book and movie did much to imbed a confederate civil war cultural image to the city.

Home demolitions continued during WWII, and Peachtree’s once illustrious residential section deteriorated into a series of dowdy boarding house districts. With the exception of blocks north of 14th Street, the old families had moved their

estates into the woodlands of West Paces Ferry Road and Peachtree Battle. A building boom in the 1950’s forced the commercial movement ever northward along Peachtree. North of Five Points, boarding house row became a street of modernist office buildings, parking lots, and motels.

In 1960, the Saturday Evening Post illustrated Peachtree Street on its cover for a series on Great American Streets. The rendering gave the impression of a bustling main street of a medium sized town. This look soon changed when office building construction turned vertical. The 41-story First National Bank (now Wachovia Bank of Georgia building) became the tallest building in the southeast when constructed in 1966 (Gournay 22). More important to the future of the lower portion of Peachtree, developer John Portman opened his Merchandise Mart in 1969, the first of five towering components of his “private urban renewal program” (Allen 169), an enclosed, connected hotel-retail-office agglomeration at Peachtree and International Boulevard. That year also saw the birth of Underground Atlanta near Five Points. A themed entertainment and retail complex developed by two Georgia Tech alumni, Underground Atlanta was an adaptive reuse of the below grade former streetscape created by the viaduct construction.

Peachtree had a limited direct role in the equal rights movement in Atlanta. In the early 1960's, students at Atlanta University staged numerous protest actions and boycotts aimed at downtown department stores (Pomerantz 260). The stores engaged in discriminatory practices such as not serving African Americans in the store's restaurants, and prohibiting blacks from trying on clothing. While Rich's on Broad Street was a prime target, others, such as Davison's on Peachtree (now the Macy's store) were also targeted. Other students worked to desegregate movie theaters such as the Roxy and Fox. Ironically, Herndon's barbershop, a black owned enterprise and an Atlanta institution at 66 Peachtree (across from today's Woodruff Park) for more than fifty years, was also targeted for a sit-in demonstration in 1965 for being a "white only" customer venue by choice (Auchmutey 11). Of course, Peachtree has had a symbolic role as the "white" commercial center vs. Sweet Auburn Avenue (more on this in the Atlanta summary to follow), one that particularly gained momentum after the white mob riot at Five Points in 1906.

Atlanta's first Memorial Arts Complex (now named the Woodruff Arts Center), opened in the late 1960's at Peachtree and 15th St., paying tribute to the 106 members of Atlanta's arts community that had died earlier in a Paris plane crash. The Center's bunker façade, which later underwent renovation to its "corporate" look of today, may have resulted from the state of surrounding neighborhood at the time. Peachtree Street from 10th to 14th Streets was home to the largest "hippie ghetto" of the southeast and aptly called the "Hip Strip" (Rutheiser 59). By the early 1970's, the Strip had turned into a combat zone of pornographic bookstores, strip joints and prostitution.

One of the first attempts to turn around the area arrived with the construction of the city's first multi-use development, Colony Square, located across from the Arts Center. Combining office, residential, and first level retail spaces with an underground parking structure, Colony Square may have been ahead of its time. While originally incurring financial difficulties, it survives today. Meanwhile, gentrification began to impact the former red-light district, particularly in the residential areas around Piedmont Park. In 1982, the city passed a Special Public Interest zoning ordinance that

encouraged high-density, mixed-used development in an area formerly zoned for low-rise, low-density residential and/or commercial uses (Rutheiser 185). This led to a rapid increase in Midtown property values, and the transformation of the landscape along Peachtree from one of small-scale individual proprietorships to vertical oriented, large-scale development projects that continues to this day.

In 1971, Robert Woodruff, Atlanta's premier philanthropist, gave the city funds to purchase land for a 2-block park along Peachtree at Edgewood Avenue, near the site where the first Coca-Cola was served. From its inception, Center City Park, now named Woodruff Park, experienced complaints from surrounding businesses, tourists and office workers about the extensive use by the city's homeless (Rutheiser 212, Campbell B5). It was later redesigned in preparation for the Olympics, adding a waterfall feature at its northern end and increasing visibility into the park from the street.

The city's attention shifted from racial integration of the 1960's to the less admirable issues of crime and the high inflation/high unemployment economic crisis of the 1970's. FBI statistics showed Atlanta's per capita crime rate to be the highest of the largest forty American cities in 1978 (Gapp 12A). The predominance of office buildings contributed to a deserted streetscape as workers left the downtown area empty on nights and weekends. Underground Atlanta was forced to close in 1982 as people increasingly found their entertainment and shopping needs met in the suburbs and sprouting edge cities. The section of Peachtree south of Five Points became home to budget oriented retail shops catering to the nearby African American residential sections. Parking structures and municipal complexes, such as the Fulton County Government Center and the Municipal Courthouse and Detention Center, were also built along this section south to Memorial Drive.

The city weathered the storm, and the 80's became an era of "trophy building" construction along Peachtree and its nearby streets. Several buildings that dominate Atlanta's skyline today were completed in the 1980's and 90's, including: the Georgia Pacific building and plaza, which replaced two city icons – the Loew's Grand Theater which had been damaged by fire, and the Coca-Cola sign

at the intersection of Peachtree and Pryor; One-Ninety-One Peachtree; developer Tom Cousin's Nationsbank Plaza (now Bank of America Plaza); and Portman's One Peachtree Center (now SunTrust Plaza). Underground Atlanta got new life with a renovation involving an assortment of public and private entities hoping to lure more visitors and residents back into the Five Points area. Unfortunately, retailing's demise in the urban core came to fruition when Rich's closed its downtown store in 1991.

The awarding of the 1996 Olympics to Atlanta did, however, support the retention and addition of smaller retailers and eating establishments along Peachtree. The area around International Boulevard in the mid 90's included such chains as Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood, All-Star Café, Brooks Brothers, the Limited, Casual Corner, and Mori Luggage and Gifts ("Whither" E1). Once the Olympics ended, however, all but one of these closed.

Peachtree Street's Surroundings

Peachtree's spinal location within the city gives it a central access position to several important and/or diverse neighborhoods and facilities. To the north, Peachtree Street naturally extends into the Buckhead community along Peachtree Road, now a center of nightclubs, tony restaurants, and high-end residences. The east side of Peachtree from 14th to 17th is home to Ansley Park, an early twentieth century garden city type residential development and still a highly sought after affluent residential community. Piedmont Park, the city's largest park, is found just one half mile east from Peachtree on 14th Street. The area surrounding Piedmont Park is heavily residential, and recent zoning overlays have placed building height restrictions here. (This Midtown overlay district zoning, however, allows unrestricted heights along Midtown's length of Peachtree Street.)

The construction of the downtown Connector expressway, I85/75 in the 1950's severed connections both within and among many communities in the city. It particularly strengthened and sustained a deterioration of the Midtown section between the expressway and Spring Street. However, plans underway may aid reconnections in two ways: a new 17th Street bridge will be

constructed from the Atlantic Station complex under development on the west to West Peachtree Street on the east. While not tying directly into Peachtree's 17th Street, it will bring better accessibility to both sides in this area. In addition, Georgia Tech is expanding its campus for the first time to the eastern side of the Connector, between 4th and 6th Streets. Called Technology Square, it will encompass several technology related centers, a new school of management, hotel and conference center, and street level retail ("Technology Square"). This could tie in well to Peachtree's Urban Residential Living district just to the east of this area. The Connector has particularly hurt access to the Atlanta Civic Center located on Piedmont Road east of Peachtree. Taking Ralph McGill Blvd east from Peachtree appears to be the most direct route now.

Meanwhile, several east/west roadways continue to be major traffic corridors in the city, including 10th Street, which ties Peachtree to the southern end of Piedmont Park and the athletic facilities of Georgia Tech, and North Avenue, which leads to the southern edge of Georgia Tech and the city's western industrial area. Further south is the city's self designated important gateway to the Georgia World Congress Center from the Connector (Rutheiser 192) – Andrew Young International Boulevard- which is a one-way eastern route from Peachtree. This street leads to the other major node of Atlanta proper, that around Centennial Olympic Park, CNN Center, the Georgia Dome, Philips Arena, and Georgia World Congress Center, located just a half-mile west of Peachtree.

Peachtree's Old Atlanta section runs between two differentiated communities: Georgia State University to the east, and the Fairlie Poplar Historic District to the west. Georgia State continues to expand its presence in the area and has crossed Peachtree to construct a Student Learning Center on the Fairlie Poplar side. Fairlie Poplar is a very contained, human scaled grid neighborhood that seems prime for gentrification and popularity but has yet to achieve a critical mass of stable residents and retailing establishments (Turner E1).

Auburn Avenue, which extends eastward from Peachtree, is no longer the vibrant commercial center it was during its heyday of the 1940's. However, it is home to several important landmarks for the city, the Martin Luther King birth home and Historic site, as well as the Ebenezer

Baptist Church. Peachtree's "Institutional District" is the far western edge of a complex of municipal buildings spanning from the Atlanta city government (City Hall), to county government (Fulton County Government Center and Courthouse) to state politics (the State Capital). The area south of Memorial Drive, where Peachtree becomes Whitehall Street, is bounded by yet another interstate highway, I20 running east-west. With rail line infrastructure just to the east, this is a no-mans land that contributes to the lack of vitality in the southern most segment of Peachtree.

A Summary of Atlanta

Placing Peachtree Street in perspective requires an interpretation of the key influencers of Atlanta's character and identity as shaped over time. Appendices I, II, and III provide, respectively, a historical timeline of key events, a sampler of quotations and written commentary about the city over its history, and a tabular presentation of population growth. These and other relevant sources listed in the Bibliography form the foundation for the identity characteristics summarized in this section.

- Atlanta is a city that has encouraged population and spatial growth. It has welcomed newcomers to stay as residents, and visitors to pay as tourists. Until the last decade, its population and corresponding culture were driven by rural southern whites and blacks whom flocked to the city after the Civil War, in the early twentieth century, and in the 1950's. Opportunities for professional and technical employment have more recently brought a wave of newcomers from around the nation into the suburban metropolitan area. The disparity in the city proper population to the metropolitan area equivalent is staggering in comparison to other American metro areas (Table 5.1). The contrast between city and metro area also carries over to the population's racial makeup. The 2000 United States Census shows a 61% black/33% white mix in Atlanta, with a 29% black/63% white composition for the metro region. The influx of newcomers has also led to a consistently young population. The 2000 U.S. Census places the city's median age at 31.9.
- Another key population related phenomenon is Atlanta's historically low foreign in-migration. Until recently, the peak of the foreign born population in the city was 6%, which occurred in

1860 (Rutheiser 88). Since the 1980's, however, the influx of Southeast Asian, African, Caribbean and Hispanic immigrants/refugees has been extremely strong. Like the overall metro population, these immigrants are residing generally outside the city in dispersed locations and small pockets of discernable ethnic neighborhoods such as Chamblee in DeKalb County. Therefore, the ability of newly arrived immigrants to sustain or revitalize deteriorating portions of the city, or even create distinctive neighborhood enclaves as has occurred along Broadway and Wilshire Boulevard, is missing in Atlanta.

- Atlanta's embracing of newcomers is also evident in its focus on temporary visitors through its convention industry. In the past, "hospitality", climate and transportation accessibility gave Atlanta advantages in this area. With increased parity occurring among competing cities, Atlanta will need to look at its "total package", which includes a physical environment amenable not only to visitors, but to its own population.
- Interpretable from its actions over time, as well as the descriptions of the city's culture listed in Appendix II, to many, Atlanta has not been a southern American city among the likes of Savannah, Charleston, or Birmingham. As Franklin Garrett, author of two massive chronologies on Atlanta's history said in a 1988 National Geographic article, "Atlanta has never been your typical moonlight-and-magnolia southern town. It's always been a rough-and-tumble place, forging ahead, gung ho for progress" (Zwingle 7). Atlanta ended up the capital of the New South by default because it was willing to embrace change (Allen x). Others have claimed Atlanta "still struggles with regionalism" and is a profoundly southern city because it bears the scars of Civil War destruction, a "shining capital of a region haunted by futility, guilt and defeat" (Zwingle 10).
- A magnet for the southern poor, the capital of a declining agricultural economy, and the leader of a region that did not regain its economic ground from the civil war until 1946, Atlanta has had to seek its wealth in different ways from its northern counterparts (Allen 49). Atlanta's well-to-do made their money in the areas of banking, commerce and transportation rather than the giant

billionaire creating industries of steel, automobiles and oil. Less maximum wealth and fewer numbers of those with disposable and inherited wealth has meant fewer cultural endowments and less civic philanthropy in Atlanta. Other power structure elements found in northern cities in the first half of the twentieth century were missing in Atlanta. Along with rich families and powerful corporations, Atlanta lacked organized crime, powerful unions, immigrant factions and an active Catholic Church. Atlanta's power structure, by default, was driven by sales and commerce. Again, this appears evident in the city's physical environment.

- This power structure includes those in the real estate development industry. Two "home-grown" individuals and their companies have played important roles in the physical landscape of the city today, namely John Portman and Tom Cousins. Each have been boosters of the city's core area, but have instituted and emphasized different solutions to the goal of a healthy inner city. Peachtree Street has been most impacted by Portman's Peachtree Center complex and his assumptions of a linear south to north development profile. Portman's attempt to retain a healthy convention business downtown involved the inward, self-contained architecture that removed activity to a "safe and controlled" private environment. While complexes like Peachtree Center have since been criticized for turning their backs to the street, the 1970's turbulent era in which the Center was built certainly played a role in the rationale for this alternative and Portman was hailed as a hero for "breathing fresh energy into the downtown streets at a time when central cities elsewhere were being deserted" (Allen 153). Tom Cousins, on the other hand, strove to utilize the old railroad gulch and extend the core to the city westward. He believed MARTA would be instrumental in connecting his complexes like Omni International and Georgia World Congress Center to the Five Points area, and bring suburbanites back into the city (Allen 198). While his goal was not realized at the time, perhaps Centennial Olympic Park is the lynchpin that has been missing to the achievement of this vision, as evidenced by a sparked interest in residential development recently in that area.

- The city has a history of celebration and public gatherings, especially parades down Peachtree. However, these celebrations were primarily for one-time events whose significance, interestingly, often went beyond local matters, e.g. Armistice Day, Grover Cleveland's presidential election, etc. Perhaps because local/regional traditions were not emphasized through repetition, combined with our society's move away from public oriented gatherings, the city today strongly lacks these consistent activity related ties to the past. Even the popular "Lighting of the Rich's Christmas Tree" at Thanksgiving was moved from downtown to Lenox Square when Rich's closed its Broad Street store. One indication of local meaning, however, seems to have been expressed when numerous private citizens worked to save the Fox Theater from the wrecking ball in the 1970's. Accounts of those involved, highlighted in the Georgia Public Television aired documentary "Peachtree Street" (March 14, 2002), indicate that the preservation was not simply a matter of saving distinctive architecture, but that memories of attending events at this grand venue left indelible imprints in the minds of many.
- Andrew Young's dismissive attitude towards the architectural reminders of Atlanta's past is reflected in the continuous "burn and build" history of the physical environment along Peachtree. This attitude appears to result from two factors: a growth emphasis and future orientation, which has equated to meaning new and modern; and a rejection of artifacts of the past to deacknowledge the city's previous purposeful policies of racial segregation. The result is a physical environment that shows a continuous upheaval and emphasis on the present. This characteristic, if not moderated, blankets and obliterates elements that can contribute to and support recognition of a richer city identity.
- Centralized accessibility and transportation have been prime factors in the city's creation and growth, taking the form of train tracks, airways, and roadways. Atlanta started from the staked terminus of three railroads authorized by the state in the 1840's. This south to north street growth mirrors the pattern of Atlanta metro's most recent commercial development, giving Peachtree a role, like Wilshire, as a linear spine of the city. Whereas rail and air transportation

create concentrations of people and activities at their depots and airports, roads are decentralizing factors that diminish the strategic advantage of location. One question is whether Atlanta is going to continue its heritage of transportation innovation and leadership in ways that may reverse this decentralizing trend.

- Climate and abundant vegetation present attributes that this city has taken for granted but are the more subtle “quality of life” factors that have contributed to the recent white collar employment and company relocations to the area. Ironically, many neighborhoods within the city proper are filled with mature trees and vegetation unlike those found in the newly razed suburbs. The city is missing opportunities to incorporate the region’s lush “green” capability into its more urban street settings, as well as the region’s mild (three season) climate for outdoor activities. Interestingly, Chicago, with its extreme weather and difficult growing conditions, is using landscaping to support an overall aesthetic appeal of the North Michigan Avenue district.
- Finally, the racial segregation still so prominent in metro Atlanta’s residential neighborhoods today, and purposely instilled in its commercial, educational and social districts of the past, are part of the city’s culture. Up until the 1960’s, discriminatory practices and laws forced the black community to create separate “districts” and institutions to serve its population. This included the counterpart to Peachtree Street, Sweet Auburn, which contained numerous successful black owned industrial, service, and retail businesses. The Atlanta University complex represented segregation at the university level and the public school system was also completely segregated by race as recently as the 1960’s. Some would say that to offer Peachtree Street as the identity street of Atlanta ignores this history, offers identification only with the elite white population, and gives importance to a physical location that was home to many discriminatory practices amongst its residents and businesses. Yes, Peachtree Street was molded by the historical white business and governmental leaders of its past, and its prior businesses did engage in discriminatory practices. Perhaps this makes it an even more appropriate choice now, because it has the capability of showing the evolution of racial issues. It represents an opportunity to provide a “public”

avenue, a “common ground” usable by all that seems particularly important given the city’s highly segregated residential neighborhoods and a national trend towards gated, exclusive communities.

Atlanta’s Virtual Identities

This analysis would not be complete without a brief discussion of Atlanta’s virtual identities, those words, comments, slogans, and images that those (with the power to speak for) the city and those from afar have used to portray Atlanta’s identity. Appendix II gives a flavor of the common themes regarding Atlanta over time: Capital of the “New South”, meant to separate the city from the racial inequalities and agricultural and slower tempo associated with the rest of the southeast; a city of constant rebirth and renewal, capable of “rising from the ashes” of destruction (fire, war, etc); an embracer of newcomers, especially those who come to visit and contribute to Atlanta’s convention business economy; and a city of fervent self promotion. In general, the marketing of the city by Atlanta’s leaders and information handlers has generally been consistent with the overall theme of a busy, growing, young, visitor friendly, socially progressive (relative to its southern location) metropolitan area.

More recent virtual identities applied to Atlanta have included top marks for its pro-business climate and an association with Los Angeles as the car-choked, urban sprawl archetype. This latter distinction has conflicted with other qualitatively fuzzy cultural labels applied to the metro area as “a great place to live”.

Atlanta’s perceived identity outside of the media and city leaders, however, is much more nebulous. The city lacks a strong geographical feature (such as a river) or consistent, distinctive architectural element to provide even a first level cognitive association like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. One industry does not dominate the area, like Detroit, nor does it have a regionally/nationally strong concentration of an easily observable commodity like the Theater District in New York. Its present and future orientation negates a recognizable (perceived and marketable) local cultural identity like Savannah or Charleston. Not surprisingly, some turn to

cultural images to make some linkage. “Out of all the research that we have ever seen, ever done, ‘Gone With the Wind’ is the single most popular thing people think of when they think of Atlanta,” said Jim Pringle, chairman of the Atlanta ad agency Pringle, Dixon, Pringle, which handles the state’s tourism account (Murray G1). The aging of Mitchell’s book and movie, however, is even fading this superficial image.

A clear image is not strongly evident in the metro area’s current self promotion. The Atlanta Convention and Visitor Center website’s latest public relations slogan is “Atlanta: An ‘Exciting, Entertaining, and Enjoyable’ Destination” (“Media Kit”).

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PEACHTREE STREET

Synthesizing the Pieces

With a contextual framework for Peachtree Street and Atlanta established, we can now evaluate our original observations in light of this newly gained knowledge. Does the physical environment relate to its context? Does Peachtree Street narrate pieces of Atlanta's "story"?

Unlike the arbitrary starting point of our linear observation route, we now know that Peachtree's origins, as well as Atlanta's, centered on the Five Points area. The street grew northward by extension over former trails and to the south by the encapsulation of Whitehall Street's portion to Memorial Drive. Five Points, superficially a navigational reference point for the intersection of five streets, has additional layers of meaning specific to individuals and groups due to its role as a place for gatherings. Historically, these gatherings literally took place on the street corners – no "plaza" was necessary. Today, Woodruff Park now provides an open space for this function, and the Five Points Marta Station just southwest continues the tradition of assemblies on the sidewalks outside its entrance.

We confirm that Atlanta is older than it appears, becoming a city in the mid nineteenth century, not much later than Chicago. War destruction and several major fires affecting Peachtree have contributed to the lack of structures more than a century old.

Information provides the land use backgrounds of the identified "Districts":

- Institutional Peachtree: A former commercial and railroad supporting industrial area, it has been negatively effected by the Downtown Connector and I-20 interstates crossing just to its south.
- Old Atlanta: The origin of Atlanta, this section has always been strongly commercial. A building boom in the early twentieth century brought the first high rise office structures and

new hotels to the area which moved the retailing district northward into today's Urban Canyon section. A theater/nickelodeon concentration of venues that brought people into town for entertainment overlapped Old Atlanta and the Urban Canyon District. The most notable venue was Loew's Grand Theater, formerly the DeGue Opera House, which occupied the site of today's Georgia Pacific building at Peachtree and Pryor.

- **Urban Canyon:** South of Cain Street (International Boulevard), this section was a strong retail center for the city, boasting all the region's department stores and even many modern chain stores into the 1980's. With the decline of this urban core in the 1970's came the development of Portman's inward atrium oriented connected complex of office-hotel-retail facilities that exist today. This section has also historically included hotels and hostelry constitutes a still viable land use (e.g. Westin, Hyatt, and Ritz Carlton). North of Cain Street, Peachtree's Grand Avenue of residential mansions and homes of the city's elite dominated the landscape from the late 1800's to the 1920's. Peachtree's role here changed when the elite moved off the street entirely to the outlying forested "suburbs" after the Depression.
- **Downtown to Midtown Transitional:** This section underwent a transition from single family residential (promoter of the "New South" Henry Grady lived here) to low scale commercial enterprises such as auto showrooms and garages. Its demise was further heightened when it was bisected in the late 1950's by the construction of the Downtown Connector, effectively forming a boundary between "downtown" and "midtown". It retains remnants of abandoned buildings and Peachtree's last pornographic enterprise.
- **Urban Residential Living:** The Fox Theater-Georgian Terrace area at Ponce de Leon signifies the once glamorous section here. By the end of WWII, this section was a series of dowdy boarding houses. The following waves of development brought a commercial strip resembling suburbia, with motels, gas stations, and an assortment of small retail establishments. It is now returning to its history as a residential section, albeit apartments and condominiums rather than mansions for the elite.

- **Scale in Transition and Corporate Arts:** In the late 1960's, the section from 10th Street to 14th Street became the short lived, youth oriented "hip strip", followed by an association with prostitution and pornography. Zoning changes and the construction of Colony Square and the Woodruff Memorial Arts Center started the movement towards its current office and performing arts status.
- **Suburbia Peachtree:** Most of this land was owned at one time by Wash Collier, who had constructed Peachtree's first commercial building at Five Points in the mid nineteenth century. He intended for the land north of 14th St. to remain wooded and undeveloped, but his heirs successfully fought to sell the property after Collier died in 1903 (GPTV "Peachtree Street"). Ansley Park resulted from one property division, and several apartment buildings were built north of 15th Street in the 1920's.

We learned of racial segregation practices as late as the 1960's in Atlanta. Superficially, Peachtree's physical environment shows no evidence of this past. Many sections appear to have a diverse populace seen on the street. However, the importance of Auburn Avenue as a previously strong African-American business district seems to correlate with a nearly unanimous African American population found along Peachtree south of Auburn Avenue.

History provides answers to the identity of several names seen along Peachtree and its intersections. Woodruff Arts Center and Woodruff Park indicate the economic support of both by former Coca-Cola head and philanthropist Robert Woodruff. The Margaret Mitchell House and Margaret Mitchell Square memorialize local author of "Gone With the Wind" and long time Peachtree resident Margaret Mitchell, who eerily died crossing Peachtree Street at 13th Street. Former large local landowner Hardy Ivy got a pocket park named after him at Peachtree and West Peachtree. Street names all signify local sons: Ralph McGill (Blvd), former AJC editor and Atlanta booster; John Wesley Dobbs (Ave.), former patriarch of the African-American community; Andrew Young (International Blvd), Atlanta mayor in the 1980's who successfully aided the effort to bring international investment to Atlanta; and of course, Martin Luther King, Jr. (Drive). The positive

association of the Peachtree name spawned surrounding emulations: West Peachtree, Peachtree Place and Peachtree Center, generally applied to the series of Portman complexes in the Urban Canyon section. One interesting distinction is the wide assortment and meanings of street names found in the downtown section of Peachtree vs. midtown section, the latter of which uses street numbers for cross-streets. These aid in legibility but perhaps not interest. “Midtown” itself is distinctive – the nomenclature separates this area from downtown and supports the formation of a unique identity, whether originally intended or not.



Finally, we see much of Atlanta’s virtual identity played out on Peachtree. The increasing scale, new buildings, and “shiny face” atmosphere of the street portray the transition of a regional, mid-sized city to one looking for more. The main street feel of the Saturday Evening Post cover has given way to trophy buildings like the SunTrust Plaza and NationsBank Building that scream “we’re in the big league now”, and the affluent “edge city” look of the Corporate Arts District claims “multinational” status. A city never enamored with the past is well represented by its signature arterial carrying only a handful of remnants along for the ride. A historical focus on sales, commerce, and land development is evident by the strong office/commercial land use along Peachtree. Several general postmodern urban planning phenomena are also evident in varying quantities: MXD’s (mixed-use developments), pedestrian streetscape elements, festival marketplaces, historic preservation/renovation, and gentrification. Combined with the characteristics of its overall metropolitan environment, Atlanta (and Peachtree Street to a lesser extent) aptly represents generic American urbanism of 2002.

Peachtree’s Role as Atlanta’s Identity Street

Clearly, much has been learned about Peachtree and Atlanta by “looking with purpose” and integrating information about the city’s formation, events, and personalities. But this is an exceptional act for the vast users of the street, from the office worker in one of its many towers to the conventioner window shopping between seminars. This point brings to mind a question asked

in Chapter 2 regarding the “identity of the identifier”, i.e., from whose perspective should we be considering? In light of our knowledge of Peachtree and Atlanta, anyone who comes in contact with Peachtree Street, as well as anyone living in the Atlanta metropolitan area should be considered the “identifying” population, because, whether realized or not, they contribute to Atlanta’s identity. (The dominance of certain groups over others in affecting the physical environment’s role in this image creation is important, but is not addressed in this thesis).

So, how does Peachtree rate as Atlanta’s identity street? What can be done to strengthen its role? The 1991 Design Competition for Peachtree Street and Auburn Avenue provided numerous options emphasizing physical streetscape enhancements that bring continuity to the street and employ many of the elements characteristic of a Grand Boulevard. This type of street, because of its consistent visual appeal and increased pedestrian oriented characteristics, becomes an identifiable icon unto itself because of its uniqueness vs. other traditional streets. While beneficial, other alternatives should be considered in conjunction with implementation of the winning design. (This is particularly true given the significant new construction and changes that have occurred over the last decade along Peachtree, making certain recommendations currently unfeasible.)

These alternatives are derived by evaluating Peachtree Street against the identity street criteria outlined in Chapter 5. To review, an optimal *identity street* is defined as *a connector of*:

- the city’s present to its past and future
- its constituencies (people) by its accessibility
- its differentiated neighborhoods and attractions (both along the street and in surrounding areas)
- recognizable landmarks interspersed with transitional “pause” points
- a concentrated number of elements pertaining to a unique land use, expertise, or culturally significant city strength

and a reflector of:

- the tempo, vitality, and spatial density of the city

- regionally based environmental and design elements and materials
- the effect of time
- and, the city's championed virtual identity.

Legibility: Landmarks, Transitions and Connections to Surroundings

Peachtree has been called a north/south linear spine for the city. However, its legibility, i.e. a quality of physical form that evokes a strong mental image in an observer (Lynch 1969, 9), is very weak. While eight “districts” were derived in the perceptual inventory, several have very subtle edges and numerous “exceptions” diminish the consistency within each district needed for strong segment identification. The increased scale and predominance of new construction geared to office use is found in all parts of the street and may lead to Peachtree’s “genericization” as one long series of office towers. In addition, Peachtree suffers from a weak “beginning and ending” and lacks the semblance of a center or connection of landmarks with transitional “pause” points, which aid in preventing linear monotony. Lastly, there are essentially no indications from Peachtree of life beyond the street (i.e. attractions, referential places) and how Peachtree fits in with the rest of the city, particularly to the motorist. This is inconsistent for a city with such an emphasis on attracting visitors. The info kiosks provide some information to pedestrians but one sign is insufficient. Optimally, key connecting intersections should form nodal points that not only aid in legibility but can also double as people or transit-oriented spaces.

Reflection of Tempo and Vitality

Atlanta has been a city of celebrations and parties and parades. In the past, people went “into town” for shopping and entertainment. People gossiped and hung out around Five Points. Even today, the city is high growth, dynamic, and youth oriented. Its physical environment, other than in the continuous new construction feel of its architecture, does not optimally represent this vitality of the city. It is bland and sanitized. Not enough people are seen on the street. Perhaps most ironically, in a city so pro-business, individual business identity is also somewhat invisible and subtle. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 summarize the change well.

Connection and Concentration of Distinctive Spaces/Functionality

Peachtree has small concentrations of uniquely differentiated activity/functionality, but none today is large or consistent enough to be strongly identifiable with the city. These areas include:

1. Corporate Arts District – The Woodruff Center, High Museum, and 14th St. Playhouse form the existing arts core of this district. A new symphony hall is planned for the area. While this addition will strengthen the core, the site plan shows the hall will be primarily hidden from Peachtree. Instead, two high-rise residential towers will inhabit the space at Peachtree's intersection with 14th St.
2. Urban Residential Living District – This district has much potential to give a human scale and feel with its rehabbed residential units, small cafes and home-furnishing retailers. This district however seems highly susceptible to losing this character given that the Midtown planning regulations may be encouraging large Mixed Use Developments (MXD's) along Peachtree, with low scale residential favored to the east of the street.
3. Urban Canyon District. This district historically and still today includes very distinctive hotels. This distinctiveness, however, applies to their interiors, not exteriors. Traditional retail has had trouble staying in business here, indicating that the convention trade alone cannot sustain a strong retail sector.



Figure 8.1. View south from Ellis Street, 1940. (Auchmutey 1).



Figure 8.2. View south from Ellis, 2002.

Connection to Past and Future/Reflector of Time

This characteristic is somewhat problematic for Peachtree because its “present” emphasis and continuous “rebuild after demolition” practices actually reflect the city’s historical approach to its past quite well. Without much infrastructure to work with, it’s certainly a challenge to attempt linkages to the past without appearing trite, stereotypical or meaningless due to lack of context. In

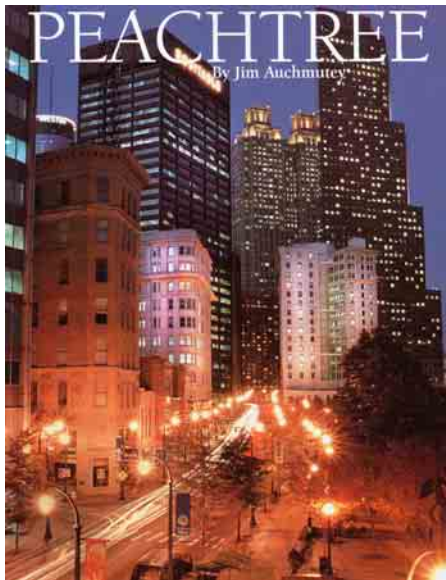


Figure 8.4. Looking north from Edgewood Ave. (Auchmutey cover).

Old Atlanta, we see some evidence of the layering of time through architecture, a temporal collage as Lynch calls the effect (1972, 168).

Was it mere serendipity that



Figure 8.5. Daytime view looking north from Edgewood, 2002.

this scene works so well or did each architect consider his/her project within the overall context when designed? The fact that this successful composition is more the exception to the rule may give impetus to the consideration of new types of planning guidelines.

Architecture is not the only method to record time and is problematic because of its binary quality – i.e. a particular structure can exist for a long duration, yet be destroyed and a substitute rebuilt in a disconcerting rapid time period. Rhythm and predictable repetition are also time representations. Elements exhibiting these qualities provide continuity and stability supportive of memory and mental mapping of places and associations with activities. For example, deciduous street trees show seasonality and flowering vegetation indicates approximate time periods of the year.

Vegetation, when indigenous or culturally associated with a region, additionally supports a consistent and region-linked aesthetic identity for the city (e.g. Live Oak trees in Savannah's squares).

Beside vegetation, decorative elements and temporary signage also mark time. For example, the lining of a streetscape with Holiday decorations from Thanksgiving to Christmas, or the continuity of American flags and red-white-blue coloring around July 4th not only stabilize time but are often aesthetically interesting visual treats for both pedestrians and drivers. If done well and in significant mass, they promote visitation and encourage people to spend extra time on the street. This is also one of the lowest cost methods of bringing change of mood, color, and style to the streetscape. Some Asian cities create highly festive and visually dynamic streetscapes for New Year celebrations by using decorations made from entirely from paper.

Rituals and traditional events are also time markers that have the added benefit of bringing people together. One important form of these is street fairs. Either one shot deals or routinely predictable (e.g. first weekend of every month), these temporary outdoor affairs provide opportunities for both market exchange or simply people watching. And certainly unlike the indoor mall, the evidence of the activity is visible to all who pass. These events require flexible, unstructured, and preferably public spaces, which are uncommon in Atlanta.

The distinct lack of memorials, public art, symbols, etc. along Peachtree – as if people never existed before - is somewhat disturbing for an urban environment with a past as rich as Atlanta's. Public art has the potential to be an excellent medium for not only conveying information to those on the street but also engendering individual or group meaning. Unfortunately, our society has tended to avoid the challenge of presenting meaning, and often even "history" in a public forum due to actual or perceived differences over interpretation. We end up with shallow, nondescript plazas with plaques, or a design so abstract it's unreadable by anyone other than the designer/artist.

Regionally Based Materials and Styles

In the early 1920's, the Santa Barbara (California) Civic Association publicly advocated a "new Spanish Colonial Style based on Mediterranean Spain as the perfect architectural image for the

city” (Blanco 56). With strong public and private support, along with planning controls, the city has become the image, and is considered by many as one of the most beautiful cities in the country. In this case, an original “inauthentic”, although not incongruent, design style has become authentic through its consistency over a long period of time. Santa Barbara is a case study for a methodology of creating identification using a particular architectural style and materials portfolio. However, as a strongly affluent, demographically homogenously populated city with spectacular physical features, Santa Barbara is certainly not typical of American’s most populated urban areas. The case study of Michigan Avenue demonstrated the ability of that street’s business community to obtain cohesion regarding the type of businesses desired on the street, but its lack of success in getting consensus on Beaux Arts design styling.

A singular architectural style or use of materials (other than glass dominated modern high rises) does not occur along Peachtree, and the lack of concentrated areas of older structures negates the opportunity for extending a historically used design style. The emphasis on high-rise commercial office structures also makes this issue problematic as vernacular styles can be difficult to translate at this scale. However, it doesn’t seem that Peachtree ever really had a regional flavor in its appearance. Even the mansions of the elite in the early 1900’s and the numerous churches from that era were highly individualistic. The advent of air conditioning contributed to the lack of regional design attributes tailored to climate considerations. Although regional/consistent design can be a factor in creating identity, this methodology may be more suitable to residential streets and neighborhoods in which the consistency is more visible and scale more feasible.

Connector of People

Today, Peachtree Street has more designed “open” spaces than ever before, yet fewer people are seen on the street. Thus, in considering how to strengthen Peachtree’s identity role in this area, it would be instructive to review the plethora of adulatory literature and now even videos made about Peachtree Street. Why has this street been eulogized to the extent it has? Is it simply nostalgia for an overall lost American culture? The answer may be found in the topics of its admirers’ comments and

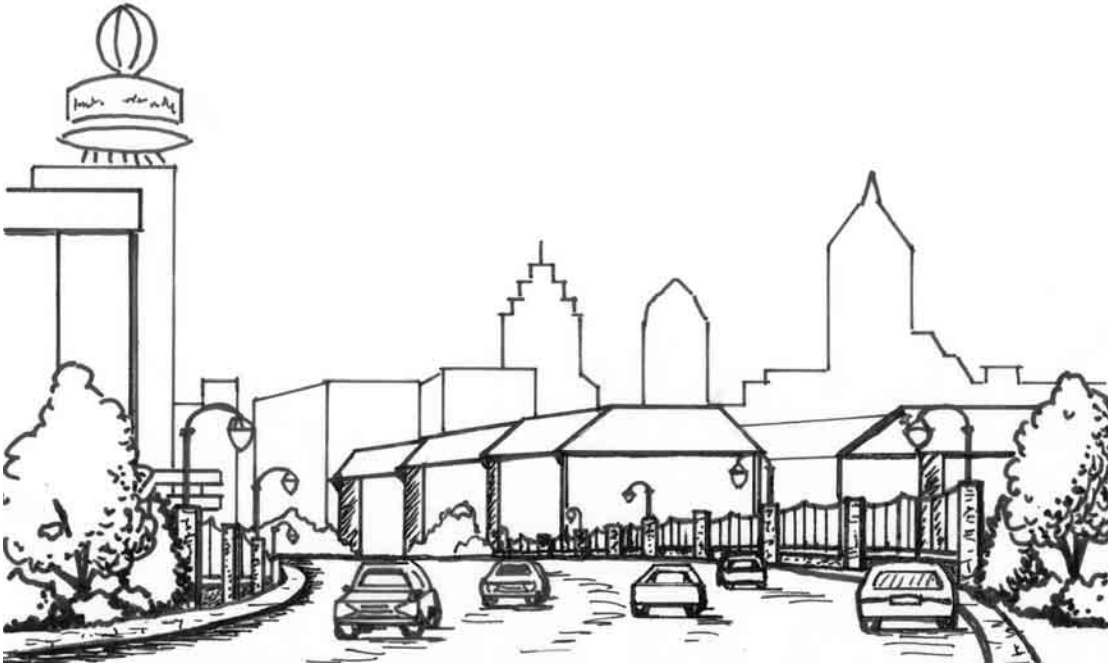
writings. Peachtree's adherents speak of memories and experiences associated with the street such as theater hopping up and down Peachtree, driving into the Hip Strip to see the "hippies", getting a luxurious shave at Herndon's barber shop, or coming "into town" for shopping at Rich's and Regenstein's. They speak of the Fox Theater and the Coca-Cola sign (now gone) as old friends, a pair of favorite shoes – always there and welcoming. Peachtree's identity was woven into these people's lives through memorable experiences. Can the street provide similar memories for current generations? Even memories which may not be favorable, such as an African American trying unsuccessfully to get waited on at a lunch counter in the early 1960's, support the point that strong images of specific physical environments are associated with personal meaning and memory.

Design/Planning Alternatives for Peachtree

The following concepts address some of the aforementioned opportunity areas to strengthen Peachtree's role as Atlanta's identity street. The ideas proposed are meant to stimulate thinking (vs. detailed landscape plans), favor pragmatism (rather than utopian visions) and do not cover the street's entire four-mile length. They do, however, attempt to capture the comparison of experience before and after the proposed change for both the pedestrian and the motorist. Figure 8.6 highlights the locations for the proposals.

Most address multiple criteria of the identity street definition. Like Lynch's bias, they focus strongly on improving legibility, an attribute arguably most influenced by physical design. Like Relph, Canter and others, however, some proposals acknowledge the importance of meaning to identification and attempt to address that aspect through public art and in the creation of "reasons for being on the street."

① Suburbia Peachtree – Brookwood/I-85 Overpass



Status: Peachtree Street forms an overpass to I-85 just south of its northern point of transition to Peachtree Road. The overpass is a standard DOT bridge with concrete half walls topped with chain link fencing and sidewalks lining both sides.

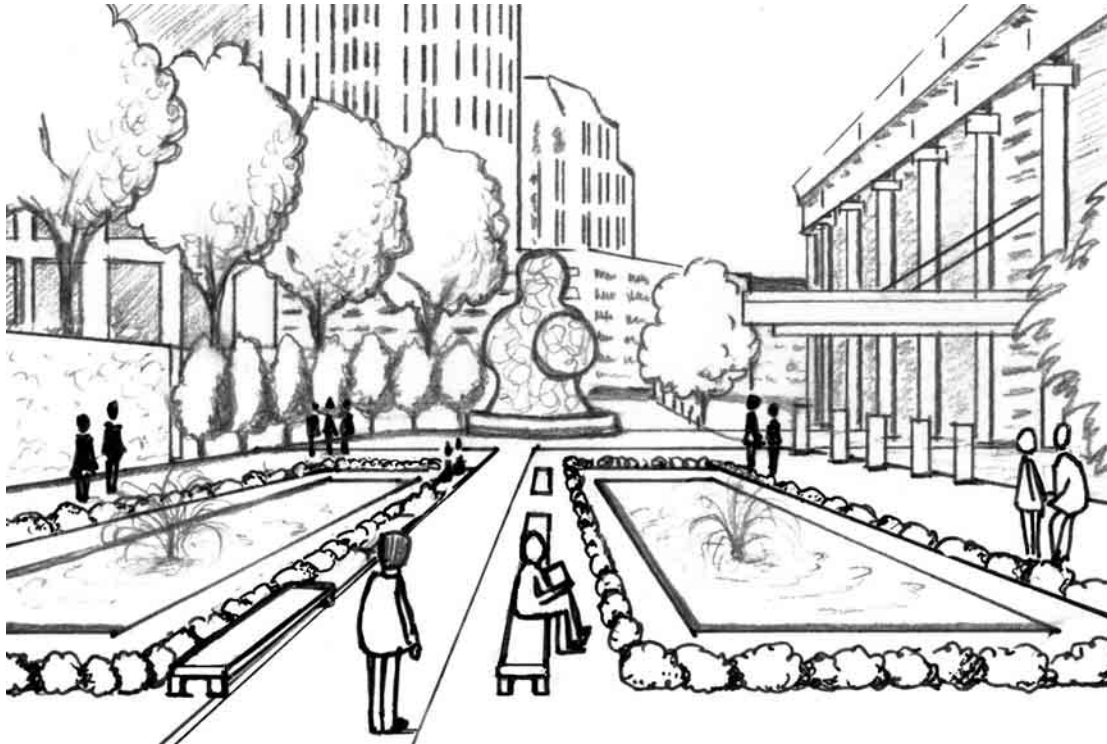
Proposal: Create a more pedestrian and aesthetically attractive overpass to provide indication that one is entering (if going south) the “last leg” of a journey into the “city core” symbolized by the skyscrapers in the background. Use brick half walls and columns with granite capstones, with steel gray ironwork railings. This ironwork could be patterned after designs used in early 20th century rail terminals and bridges found in the city. The materials and design used for this bridge should also be used consistently in the other overpass further south along Peachtree. The aesthetic effect should be equally visible on the bridge exterior as viewed by the cars along the highway below, and include a compatibly designed “Peachtree Street” sign.

The design should not appear to be a pretentious gateway “into the city”. Instead, a motorist driving south should inherently get a sense of distinction from the prior miles of Buckhead suburban landscapes from the combination of the cosmetic bridge changes along with the landscape encountered beyond. Currently, the Suburbia Peachtree District is synonymous to the Peachtree Road environment. Zoning and land use regulations could require all new construction along Suburbia Peachtree to build to the lot lines, starting the formation of a continuous streetscape emblematic of a denser urban fabric. This section would also seem ripe for residential use and retail catering to that population, as Peachtree already contains several apartment complexes and single-family residential neighborhoods exist to its east.



Summary Benefits: Aids legibility and visual appeal.

② Corporate Arts District – Woodruff Arts Center



Status: The Woodruff Arts Center includes a paved plaza area that straddles its southern facade. Currently, the section appears designed for deliveries and handicap car access. The Peachtree facade of the Center includes a long section of steps that appear empty much of the time. The overall facility emits a corporate, utilitarian image.

Proposal: “Semi-private” spaces such as these also need to play a role in increasing functionality and street life by providing more hospitable people oriented features. Instead of using this valuable space for vehicles, redesign the front facade of Woodruff (where the stairs are) with a pull-in area to make this the drop-off/handicap accessible entrance. This allows the plaza to be redesigned for people to actually use while waiting for performances, or for nearby office workers to enjoy during their lunch break. The front facade and this plaza redesign create a more “human” atmosphere to this facility.

Summary Benefits: Connection of people, strengthens legibility of an “arts district” when people attending the events are visible from the street.



③ Corporate Arts District – 14th Street Node



Status: The Corporate Arts District needs additional arts related components to strengthen its identity. A new symphony hall for the Atlanta Symphony is planned for this northwest corner of Peachtree and 14th Street just south of the Woodruff Arts Center, which will benefit this effort.

The current master plan shows the hall facing 14th Street to the west, with two high-rise residential towers fronting Peachtree. The hall, therefore, with the exception of a narrow walkway, will not be visible from Peachtree.

Proposal: Alter the master plan and place the hall as the prime focal point at the Peachtree-14th Street intersection. This makes the District's components more visible as a more concentrated grouping. Design a grand entry and plaza area leading from the hall to the Peachtree/14th Street intersection. Those entering the hall or waiting outside before the event would give vibrancy to the area, and provide opportunities for "people watching" to those passing by. It is also expected that the hall's architectural style will be distinctive, and highly differentiated from the surrounding office structures on the other three corners of the intersection.

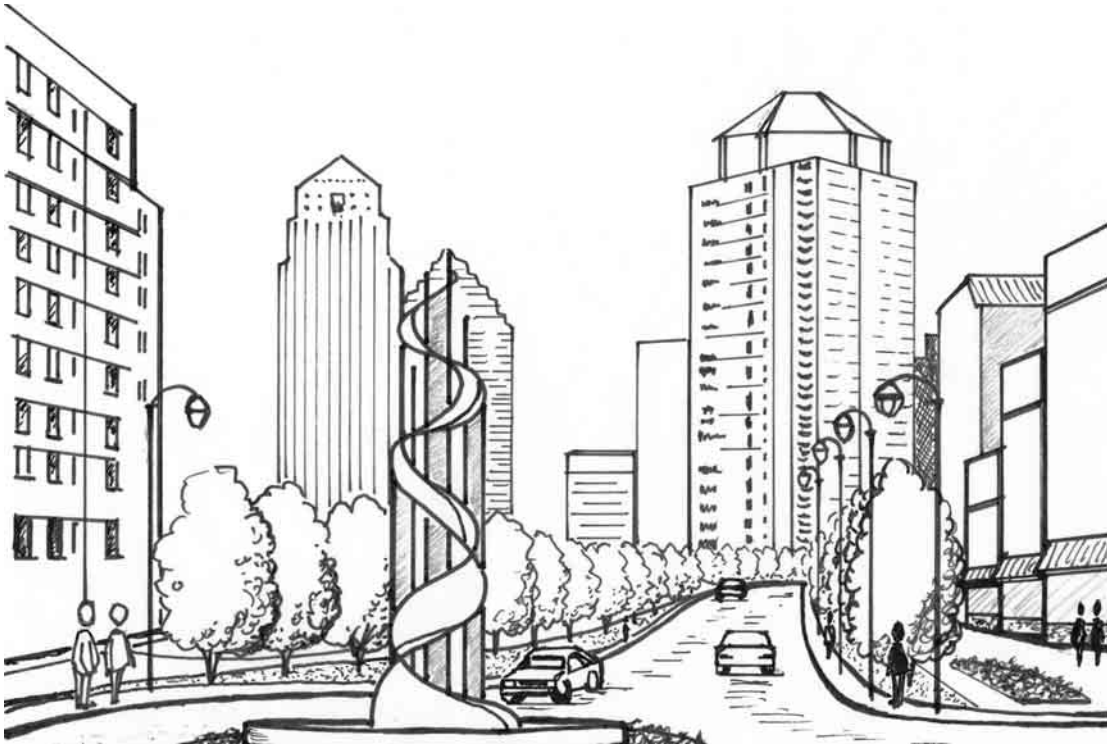
Summary Benefits: Strengthens legibility by creating not only a landmark (the hall), but also a node where people gather. This additional arts complex supports overall district identity and distinction from adjacent areas.

SYMPHONY CENTER

The master plan for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra/Hines project in Midtown calls for two residential towers and the new Symphony Center. The first residential tower, located at Peachtree and 14th streets, would open in the spring of 2005.



④ Scale in Transition – 10th Street Node



Status: 10th Street is a major traffic intersection, connecting Peachtree to Georgia Tech to the west, and Piedmont Park to the east. It is a near literal midpoint of Midtown. The new Federal Reserve building dominates the intersection, although the Corporate Arts District towers also fill the horizon when traveling north. Margaret Mitchell house, at 10th Street's southwest corner, is dwarfed. The northeast corner, currently a greenspace with a low-rise restaurant, is slated for a massive mixed use high-rise development.

Proposal: Reconfigure the standard intersection into a traffic circle node with a sculpture of necessary scale gracing the center. (Note: the sculpture shown in the graphic is for place holding purposes only. This would be a public art competition opportunity that “links the site’s present to its past or future”.) While a commercial development is planned for the northeast corner, a municipal building such as a cultural center set back to balance the Federal Reserve building would be a more intriguing land use here, creating three facilities of non-office use at this corner. (The Federal Reserve plans to offer tours of the mint.) At a minimum the mixed use complex should not be inward and tourist oriented. Its street level retail should cater to the needs not only of its own residential population, but to the large, developing Urban Residential District just to the south. Commercial office towers should be encouraged to locate in the Scale in Transition District to the north as this trend is already underway and would become a part of a concentrated Corporate Arts District.

Summary Benefits: Legibility through formation of a landmark and one of the street’s “centers”, and transition point of Urban Residential to the south, and the commercial office corridor to the north.



⑤ Urban Residential Living – 3rd Street to 8th Street



Status: This District is emerging from a prior landscape of small-scale assorted retail, auto shops, motels and boarding houses to one geared for young urban professional living. This is most evident by the plethora of residential construction occurring on cross streets off of Peachtree. Along Peachtree, older structures have been renovated into apartment buildings with first floor retail. Several cafes and interior furnishing stores currently dot the street. This portion still retains remnants of its recent past, such as billboards and some vacant lots. The current Midtown Special Interest Zoning regulations favored by Midtown Alliance place no height or use restrictions along Peachtree, but do require certain streetscape elements.

Proposal: The District is susceptible to disruption of this emerging human scaled residential identity. A massive multi-use complex is currently being built to the north of 8th Street, and a BellSouth Midtown facility has just been constructed at 3rd Street. The building height restrictions placed on the Midtown streets to the east should carry over to Peachtree to avoid the potential of floating, over scaled office buildings popping up along this section. Building to the lot lines and connecting to adjoining structures should be required. Such requirements would increase the probability that the new construction complements its surroundings rather than competes with it, and gives enclosure to the streetscape.

Summary Benefits: Aids legibility by solidifying the district's image and providing strong contrast to the high-rise commercial district to the north. Support the goal of bringing more residential living back into the city necessary for market vitality.



⑥ Downtown-Midtown Transitional – I85/I75 Overpass



Status: South of Linden St., Peachtree once again bridges the interstate in another pedestrian unfriendly and visually depressing standard overpass design. The sections of Peachtree on both ends contain graffiti filled surface parking lots, padlocked greenspaces, and decaying buildings. This overpass marks an implicit separation of Midtown from Downtown. The streetscape is devoid of people.

Proposal: Minimize the Midtown/Downtown distinction by turning an eyesore and underutilized space into a much needed large gathering space by extending the overpass section westward. Promote this area for regularly scheduled street fairs and farmers markets, as well as one time or annual events. (This flexible open space also relieves pressure on the city's few large parks for events such as these.) Beside visitors from all parts of the metro area, these types of uses would also draw from a substantial population of workers, patients, and visitors that revolve around the expanding Crawford Long Hospital complex just to the north. The current abundant parking in the area is actually an asset in this case.

Use the same bridge design elements as proposed for the Brookwood overpass to the north. The ground plane of the extension should be visually appealing when events are not taking place. One design idea for



⑥ Downtown-Midtown Transitional – I85/I75 Overpass

the hardscape is a large map like representation of Atlanta's present downtown/midtown that functions as a time capsule for comparing city changes in the future. As evidenced by the locked fence around St Luke's Church's small, beautifully landscaped park adjacent to the overpass, creating another traditional park or greenspace is not recommended for this section at this time.

The graphic depicts the removal of the derelict Medical Arts building, which allows the time layering effect of the two architecturally interesting churches in the foreground to the Urban Canyon District.

Summary Benefits: Legibility and Connection of People through creation of flexible gathering space. Consistent bridge elements strengthen continuity of streetscape. Potential for Linkage to Past and Future through relevant design elements for extension area.



⑦ Downtown-Midtown Transitional – Carnegie Monument/ Hardy Ivy Park



Status: Just north of Baker Street, Peachtree bends to the northeast. A small columned monument and Hardy Ivy Park occupy the triangular section formed by Peachtree Street, Peachtree Place, and formerly West Peachtree St. Prior to the Olympics, West Peachtree intersected directly into Peachtree, but was closed off to form the park. This action was recommended in the competition winning entry. The monument is built from materials salvaged from the former Carnegie library further south at Carnegie Way, which was replaced in

situ by the modernistic Atlanta Fulton County Library. A Hardy Ivy statue is located in the north corner of the section and is barely visible from Peachtree. The park is small and is not well used.

The monument is too small for its prominent location and blends into the background buildings when coming from both directions. The Greek style monument has no relevance to Atlanta. The materials have been moved to a location lacking context. The park is not used because there is very little commercial activity to its north – overall, the District has few pedestrians.

Proposal: Utilize the salvaged materials in juxtaposition on the current library, or in a piece of freestanding public art at that location to signify process evolution. Place a new, distinctive landmark at the bend having a height compatible with the surrounding scale. This landmark could even be a building such as the Flatiron.

Summary Benefits: Aids legibility and gives enclosure to the urban canyon feel to the south.



⑧ Urban Canyon – International Boulevard Node



Status: Andrew Young International Boulevard marks a key intersection that links the sports arenas/CNN/Centennial Park/Georgia World Congress Center core city section to Peachtree. In the midst of the Urban Canyon District, this intersection gets lost in the background. The northwest corner holds a parking deck with its lower portion carved out for retail use. Planet Hollywood, the last tenant, recently closed leaving the storefront vacant. This District is home to many large convention hotels. International Blvd. is one-way west from Peachtree.

Proposal: Remove the garage, forming a breathing space at the intersection. Use this space as a pickup area for an open air shuttle bus (discussed later in this thesis) and create a restful, landscaped place to wait or just relax. On the northern wall (blank square in the graphic) of the Westin Peachtree hotel at the southwest corner, paint a detailed mural depicting life along Peachtree at this site at various points in time. (Taking in the mural is another reason for people to congregate at this corner.)

Summary Benefits: Legibility through creation of an intersection node. Connector of People. Potential for Connection to Past with mural.



⑨ Urban Canyon – Carnegie Way to Baker Street



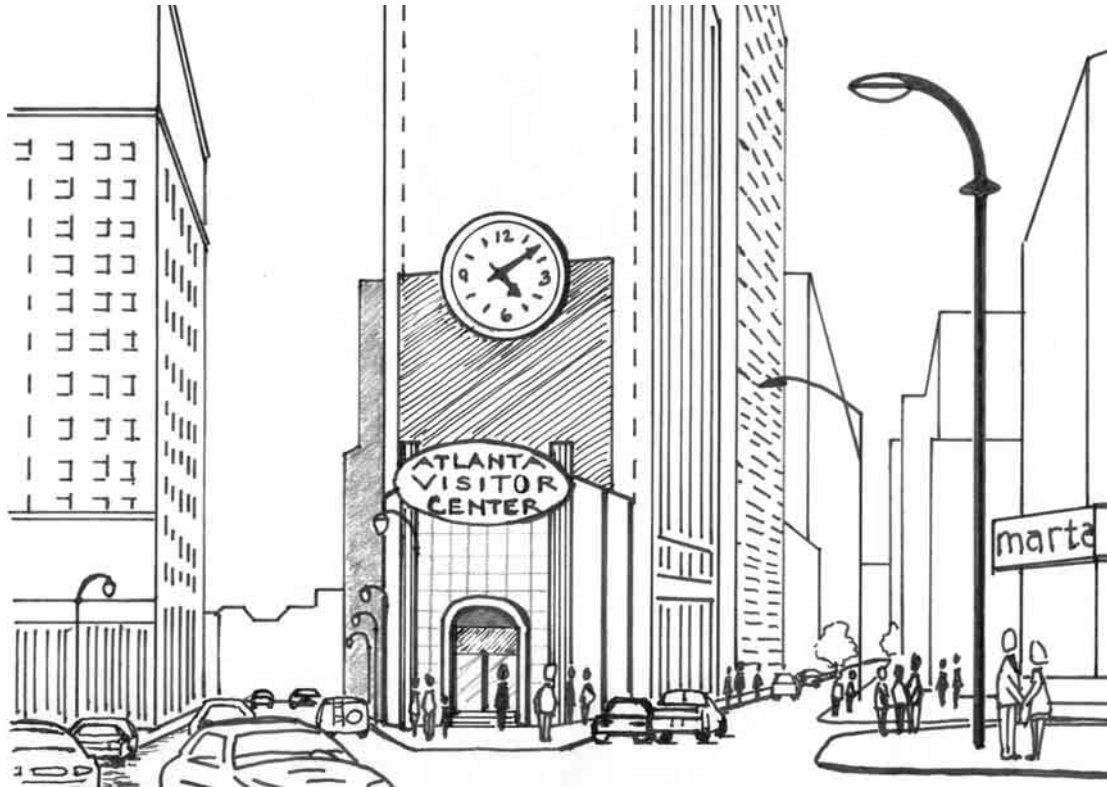
Status: The Urban Canyon District is the densest portion of Peachtree from a streetscape perspective. However, many of the buildings are inward focused and present generic and inhospitable facades along Peachtree. This District contains the largest percentage of tourists/conventioners. General fashion (mall) type retailing has struggled to survive here and has given way to franchise restaurants. This section of Peachtree was the city's core retail and entertainment district in the mid 20th century.

Proposal: Bring some “fun” back into this previous lively streetscape through the use of vertical marquees and signage for businesses occupying this section (preferably), augmented by corporate brand advertising. (This type of brand name signage is frequently found throughout European and Asian cities, not just Times Square in New York.) The presence of signage was highly visible historically along this section, albeit lacking the electronic technology available today. The signage must accentuate night viewing and interest. Billboards are not permitted – the building facades are the backdrops. Add vertical height to the two Marta station entrances to create a better transition to the taller buildings in the background. Fees from the licensing of space for the signs could be used to initially incent retailers to return to the area. This type of signage would only be allowed in this “visitor” oriented District of Peachtree to retain its distinctiveness and would be detrimental to the other Districts.



Summary Benefits: Strengthens District Identity.
Connector of People. Signage aids legibility.

⑩ Old Atlanta – Margaret Mitchell Square



Status: The small triangular section formed where Forsyth Street intersects with Peachtree has traditionally been a hive of people activity. The Fulton County Library is located across the street from this corner, and the Candler building with its former landmark Coca Cola sign fills the opposite side. Currently the corner features a utilitarian, almost military looking pocket plaza with a “Cingular Wireless” sign above. This overall intersection of streets is locally known as Margaret Mitchell Square. The backdrop building is a Residence Inn hotel converted from a historic building.

Proposal: Replace the unused and unsightly plaza with a highly visible Visitor Center. The current visitor center is buried halfway down the Underground above ground pedestrian street further to the south. Placing a visitor center in this prominent location brings a steady level of people to this area, and provides incentive for visitors in the Urban Canyon District to enter the Old Atlanta District. The shaded area in the graphic below the clock is not to be used for advertising, but could be an interesting display area for the city to send messages such as “Welcome NCAA Final Four Fans”, or the current temperature, or a current camera shot of a specific location around the city – that is, things that support a hospitality and welcoming virtual identity historically projected by the city.

Summary Benefits: Creates a new landmark similar to the old Coca-Cola sign. Connector of People.



⑪ Old Atlanta – Auburn Avenue



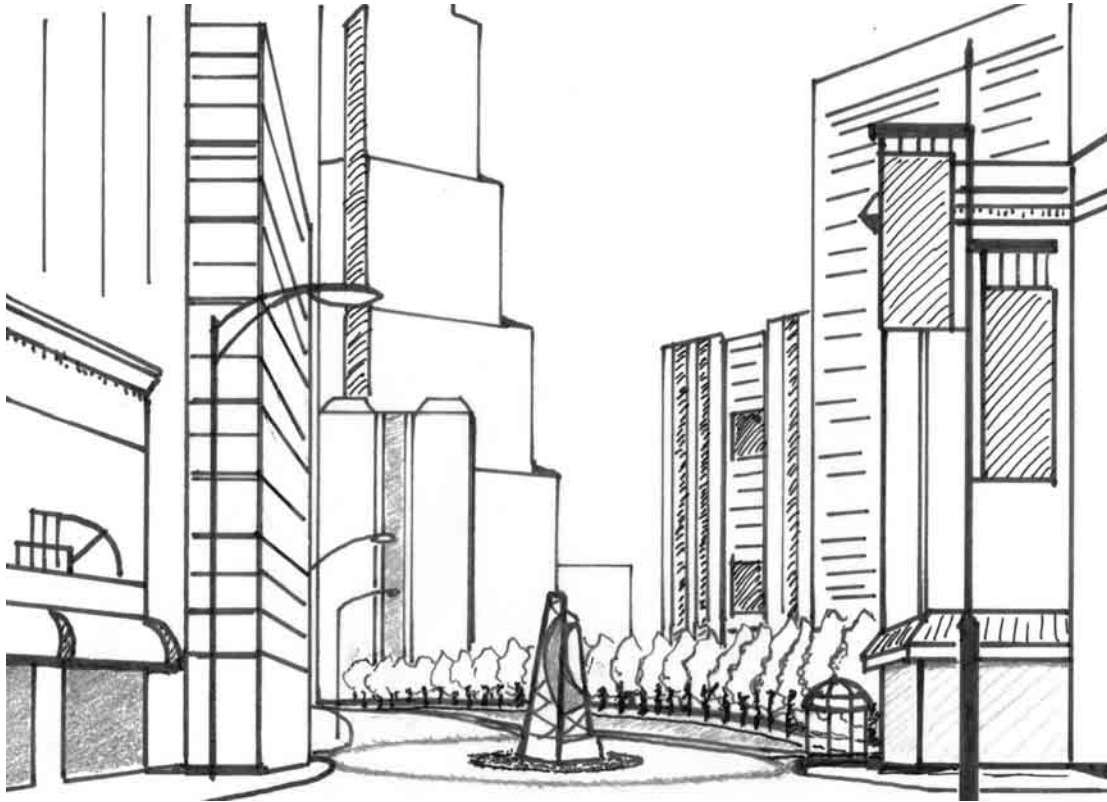
Status: Auburn Avenue intersects Peachtree Street on its eastern edge, cutting through Woodruff Park. Formerly the vibrant “Sweet Auburn” commercial center of the African American community throughout the first half of the 20th century, and today home of the Martin Luther King birth home and Ebenezer Baptist Church, Auburn Avenue is marked simply with another of the information kiosks providing a brief description of its former role.

A plaza area (photo) fills the portion of Woodruff Park at the south side of the road, and a curved water wall bounds the small piece of Woodruff on Auburn Avenue’s north side.

Proposal: Use the plaza area to showcase a more dramatic display of the avenue’s culturally important past through a public art medium. Enlist those with memories of the street and current neighborhood residents to develop the message concept. The dichotomy of this intersection being the crossroads of the previous white/black commercial success stories, as well as the process of equal rights as played out in the commercial sector is an intriguing story and should not be ignored.

Summary Benefits: Linkage to the past, and a nodal opportunity at this intersection.

⑫ Old Atlanta – Five Points



Status: Five Points is the locally known name for the intersection of Peachtree Street, Marietta Street, Decatur Street, Edgewood Avenue, and formerly Whitehall (now the southern portion of Peachtree). Serving as a prominent cognitive marker for locals, the intersection historically formed its own identity from the people who gathered there and the personality of the shops (such as Jacob's Pharmacy) rather than any designed spaces or landmarks. Today, the intersection forms the southern boundary of Woodruff Park, and is located just north of the Underground plaza area. Already a second main route to the Georgia Dome area from Peachtree, Marietta Street will attain increasing prominence if the multi-modal terminal is built just to its south.

Proposal: Removing the small building between Decatur St. and Edgewood Ave. dramatically opens the vista coming north on Peachtree and creates the space to form a traffic circle at this unusual intersection. This circle would be downtown's complement to the 10th Street circle described earlier. The gazebo is shown moved to the vacated site. Woodruff Park is modified to include a linear pool of cylindrical, consecutive fountains that ring the semicircular interior sidewalk. Each "Bubbler" could have a marker with the name and a brief story of a past/present Atlanta resident representing the city's "untold" daily life stories.



Summary Benefits: Landmark increases legibility of the Five Points intersection. Connection to Past.

⑬ Old Atlanta – Underground Atlanta



Status: Underground Atlanta is a retail/entertainment complex originally created in 1969 by using the below grade former street space formed when the city built viaducts for traffic flow improvements in the early 20th century. Underground today is a revised version of the original design that closed in 1982, and now includes a large above ground tiered plaza and a pedestrian retail street extending east from Peachtree. This pedestrian streetscape dead-ends at Central Avenue across the street from the eastern entrance into Underground by the World of Coca Cola. Underground Atlanta is primarily a tourist center, although the first Underground may have been initially successful because of strong local (metro Atlanta) usage. The plaza was the scene of the gathering celebrating Atlanta's awarding of the Olympics, and is also the site of the annual New Year's Eve "Peach Drop". This proposal is directed towards the above grade newer section of Underground. Located across the street from the Five Points Marta station, the plaza and pedestrian street were designed by the Rouse Company in a "festival marketplace" format, with the structures made to resemble small railroad terminal buildings. The attraction is having trouble retaining retailers. Pedestrian traffic and shoppers are not in sufficient quantity for economic success, nor for the appearance of an active urban open space.

Proposal: The complex has had significant investment by many public and private entities, and any proposals for change would require equally significant study. At a minimum, certain legibility issues could be addressed:

- Do not allow car parking in front of the entrance to the pedestrian street at Peachtree.
- The view from Peachtree down the street appears forbidding, long, and without a terminus. Meanwhile the center is filled with an assortment of things that make the view confusing and detract from the storefronts. The shops are so low scale they do not provide a feeling of enclosure. Without vegetation and so much hardscape, the street is barren and hot (temperature).

However, the fact that a second attempt to create a “place” using certain formulas is not meeting expectations may require a rethinking of the basic goals of this area from a planning perspective. Factors for consideration include:

- The addition of more small retail above ground is problematic given that the primary underground section, as well as the Urban Canyon District commercial area easily within walking distance, is struggling to garner necessary sustainable sales volume. In addition, those who enter Underground from the east side by the city’s strongest tourist attraction, World of Coca-Cola, may never even know the above portion exists.
- The potential multi-modal transit terminal, if built, is planned to the west of the Five Points station, creating the opportunity to link the Georgia Dome area to Five Points. This may mean a movement of activity to the west side of Peachtree, further away from Underground. This station would also be more of a commuter asset – not a pool of people that would take an interest in Underground as a tourist retail strip.
- Georgia State University continues to expand westward and is located adjacent to Underground.

These points suggest several options for strengthening this section of Peachtree. These include reducing the size of the plaza area and building residential units, and/or reopening Alabama Street for local vehicular traffic and replacing the pedestrian street with a “residential” street. Currently, Transit Oriented Developments are being built at several other Marta rail sites, and the heavily used Five Points station should be no exception. The new multi-modal terminal, should it come to fruition, further supports this concept of creating housing near mass transit. A second opportunity concerns Georgia State, and the potential for turning the pedestrian Alabama Street into a university “street” off Peachtree. In this case, the street could be a (narrow) greenway lined with university facilities. The addition of students/faculty/administration would bring a regular flow of people into this area to strengthen the (too small) tourist base generated by Underground.

Summary Benefits: The addition of housing and/or university facilities brings stability to an area low on confidence with Underground’s economic uncertainties. Reducing the over designed and specialized function of the plaza also allows Five Points (as proposed) to be the recognized “hub” of Old Atlanta.

Additional Proposals for Peachtree Street

In addition to the specific alternatives just described, other options that relate to multiple sites include:

- The key intersections of Peachtree (14th Street, 10 Street, North Avenue, International Boulevard, Five Points, Auburn Avenue, etc) should be augmented with materials and design elements to further aid legibility. These could include placing brick in the crosswalks at these intersections and displaying a consistently colored size/shaped sign at the intersection visible to motorists listing the major points of interest on that cross street (e.g. Piedmont Park at the 10th and 14th street intersections).
- While a specific architectural style may be problematic for Peachtree, the use of a consistent indigenous/cultural based palette of vegetation could be optimally planted at high visibility intersections and pocket parks, particularly one that includes a progression of bloom times for clues to seasonality. The use of tree canopy for shade also benefits pedestrians in Atlanta's hot summer climate.
- Instead of focusing on land use and setbacks, and even the absolute preservation of old buildings, the criteria for new building construction, at least along certain sections of Peachtree, could center on cohesiveness to its surroundings and, in the case of an existing older structure, whether a proposed new construction can meet or exceed its present value (Lynch 1972, 236). This could mitigate the extreme out-of-scale skyscrapers that seem to randomly occur along the streetscape and alter the entire character of its surroundings. In two sections along Peachtree, this effect has carried over to an uncomfortable asymmetry where one side of the street includes tall/massive buildings aligned nearly up to the sidewalk, where the opposite side of the road has either small, low scale structures or buildings that are set back significantly. An additional consideration regarding the demolition of older structures should be the requisite of an opportunity for community response to understand any existing base of memory and experience associated with the site or structure.

- Regarding the use of time based decorations and aesthetic elements in the streetscape described earlier, the citizens of Atlanta could provide the annual nomination for an event, issue or person of “local significance” to highlight along the street, either from the past or present. Currently, banners frequently hang from the lampposts, but are geared towards welcoming a particular convention or event in town.
- Another potential area for identity enhancement is Atlanta’s original and still dominant ties to transportation. Certainly, the discussion of a multi-modal terminal a la Grand Central Station potentially located in the “gulch” area between the Five Points Marta Station and the Georgia Dome/CNN parking structure has many interesting ramifications for reviving the city’s rail-line heritage, physical design and people movement, and overall accessibility and connection of two main nodes of the city. With or without that happening, however, perhaps Atlanta can show its determination to be at the forefront of transportation innovation (i.e. connect to its future) by making Peachtree Street and International Boulevard the first streets to have “Segway” lanes (also usable by bicycles). Segway is Dean Kamen’s scooter type of “human transporter” that some claim opens up the opportunity for transit viability and decreased auto dependency. Segway vehicles could be offered for rental to conventioners traversing the half-mile from the Georgia World Congress Center and the Urban Canyon hotel district. More mundane but useful is the concept of an open air “tour” shuttle(s) along Peachtree that would provide a non-car based option for visitors not only to traverse Peachtree, but to see more distant attractions and neighborhoods, such as Sweet Auburn, Cyclorama and the Jimmy Carter Center.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

*"Backgrounds inevitably affect foregrounds."
(Lippard 61)*

The concept of identity, as applied to a city, raises more questions and issues than answers. Many cannot even agree on the definition of whom and what constitutes a city, let alone how to evaluate its identity. The physical environment of a particular street is only one facet of many that should be studied to arrive at a comprehensive hypothesis about a city's identity. Despite these factors, this thesis shows that a specific set of streets throughout our county do provide a wealth of clues and stories about their host cities, particularly when one actively sees, experiences and observes not only the "big picture" but takes in the details of the landscape. Unlike a specific attraction or landmark object, these "identity streets" do this by emulating the "living organism" quality of the city, where process and time affects and influences things, places and people.

The best identity streets make connections – of people to people, people to places, and places to places. They contain physical elements and spaces in combinations, sequences, patterns, and frequency that aid in geographical and cognitive identity and mental mapping. They connect people to places by linkages to the past and projections of the future. They connect people, from the local resident to the commuter office worker to the one-time conventioneer, to the city by giving them additional reasons for being there. They connect people to people by representing one of the last bastions of space where all people, within the law, can just be.

The thesis also shows how the addition of knowledge about the events, people, and forces that have shaped the city acts as a double edge sword when evaluating an identity street. On one hand, information answers questions concerning observations such as street names. Knowledge can evoke emotional responses, such as a fresh respect for a particular structure in which a meaningful

event took place. As Tuan writes, “feeling for place is influenced by knowledge” (1977, 32). On the other hand, knowledge of a city’s past allows the evaluator to observe what stories or points of interest are missing, either inadvertently or purposefully, and whose identity seems to dominate the physical environment.

The components of identity – structure, activities and meaning - are interdependent in the optimal identity street. An impressive, unique landmark frequently highlighted in city photo/video images can engender association with the city in those exposed to the images. However, this landmark/neighborhood, etc. is of most value when it is cognitively linked to an experience, activity or meaning associated with the city for a group or individual. Alternatively, in a generically homogenous or chaotic and confusing landscape lacking legibility, the association of meaning and memory with a place/city is less easily formed and retained because the placeholder function of a strong physical representation is missing. Interweaved into this triangle are virtual identities that affect our image of the city’s identity. If consistent with our experience and observations, they reinforce identity (either positively or negatively). If inconsistent, they lead to confusion and lack of identity, or rationalization/seeing what we want to see, if the virtual identity dominates.

The criteria attributed to an optimal identity street in this thesis were influenced by the case studies selected – major, lengthy urban arteries in the top three most populated cities in America. Other avenues of exploration could be undertaken that would lead to varying definitions and recommendations. These include focusing more narrowly and exclusively on such attributes as land use, property ownership, concentration of a particular industry/activity, consistency of a regional architectural style, adherence and recognition of the underlying physical geography and ecology of the city, or even the character and population of a residential street. The multi-dimensional quality of the identity topic makes numerous approaches possible.

This paper’s methodology led to the formation of an identity for the city of Atlanta based on one person’s observations and interpretations of history and context. Any attempt to postulate the identity of a city necessitates significant study and analysis far beyond this scope. Research expanding

the number of “observers”, representing the various roles of city users (e.g. nearby residents, one-time visitor, etc), would show the variability or consistency of interpretation by individuals not only in observations but in the evaluation of a city’s history. Conducting this research over long time periods would additionally show how changes in the landscape are interpreted over time and the influence of change on identity formation and retention. In-depth studies of the city’s political, social and economic structure, as well as the effect of global/national trends on the physical environment all would aid in the understanding of whose identity is being personified and why, as well as more specific understanding of which attributes in the physical environment are specific to the locale vs. representative of more pervasive, “global” trends.

One final question emerges from the premise of an identity street as a repository of clues to city identity. What if we don’t like what we see? Does the physical environment mirror our societal values, and reflect who we are? Jackle wrote The Visual Elements of Landscape based on the belief that “we human beings can learn much about ourselves by examining our own experiences of being in the world” (xi). Change requires the recognition of a need for change. Attempting to understand our individual and collective identities for our cities is the first step in this process.

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APPENDIX I

TIMELINE OF PEACHTREE STREET AND ATLANTA HISTORY

Unless otherwise cited, the source of information for this Appendix is William Bailey Williford's book, Peachtree Street, Atlanta.

- 1825 Standing Peachtree designated as first post office in DeKalb County.
- 1831 State of Georgia charters three railroad lines.
- 1837 Location 100' southeast of Peachtree-Sandtown junction staked as the "Terminus" of the three railroad lines.
- 1842 Terminus granted governmental charter. Town is named Marthasville after the governor's daughter.
- 1845 Marthasville renamed Atlanta, a derivation of Western and Atlantic Railroad.
Wash Collier builds Peachtree's first commercial building, a combination post office/general store at Peachtree and Decatur Streets.
- 1846 Jonathon Norcross opens general store at Peachtree and Marietta. Becomes a popular gatherings place known as "Norcross Corner".
- 1853 Fulton County created (Garret I, 362).
Gas light service inaugurated.
- 1856 Richard Peters builds largest flour mill in cotton states and acquires 400 acre wooded tract along Peachtree from North Ave. to 8th Street as source of firewood for mill.
- 1861 Thousands line Five Points area to welcome Confederate President Jefferson Davis.
- 1864 Northern army General Sherman and troops march through Atlanta, burning most business establishments, railroad facilities, and mills. All of Whitehall Street, Atlanta's main commercial district, is destroyed, as well as surrounding forest areas.
- 1866 For twenty years after the war, mission societies of religious denominations from the north create six institutions for the "higher education of Negroes". With the later addition of a seventh university, this Atlanta University Center occupies a 140 acre site to the southwest of the center of the city (Garrett II, 855).
Four railroads back in operation and gas light service returns.
- 1867 Whitehall Street from Marietta Street south to the railroad crossing becomes part of Peachtree Street.
Morris Rich opens first store (becomes Rich's department store chain).
- 1868 Georgia legislature moves state capital from Milledgeville to Atlanta.
Huge torch-light parade down Peachtree in support of Democratic presidential candidates.
- 1870 State purchases new official governor's residence at Peachtree and Cain, the former John James residence.
Largest hotel in the south opens, the Kimball House. First hotel in Atlanta to have central heating and safety passenger elevators. It is destroyed by fire in 1883.
- 1871 First street cars pulled by mules.
- 1873 New street numbering system makes intersection of Peachtree Street and Whitehall "center" of the city (Garrett I, 893).
- 1875 Water works system implemented for city.
- 1879 First telephone service.
- 1883 Capital City Club, a "gentlemen's social club for young men" forms and takes residence at Peachtree St. and Ellis. Club is center of social life for city's elite, holding receptions and entertaining visiting dignitaries (Garret II, 61-62).

- 1884 Artesian well bored and 2000' tower constructed at Five Points to increase city's water supply. Closes ten years later with construction of Chattahoochee River system. Second Kimball House hotel opens. It is demolished in 1959 for redevelopment. Massive torchlight parade down Peachtree and celebration of Grover Cleveland's presidential election.
- 1886 Henry Grady delivers "New South" speech before the New England Society of New York. Italian marble statue of Georgia senator and Confederate statesman Benjamin Harvey Hill unveiled at Peachtree and West Peachtree Streets. Former Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General James Longstreet attend the ceremony. Statue is later moved to the State Capital for protection from vandals (Garrett II, 591). Soda fountain operator at Jacob's Drug Store, at the SE corner of Peachtree and Marietta, inadvertently serves first Coca-Cola by mixing soda water with Dr. John Styth Pemberton's headache medicine. Pemberton sells all rights to Asa Candler for \$1750.
- 1887 Gentlemen's Driving Club formed and 200 acre Walker farm purchased as place for horseback riding and races. Club leases land for use in Piedmont Exposition, a showcase for the resources of the Piedmont region. Numerous dignitaries, including President Cleveland attend.
- 1888 Georgia School of Technology (renamed Georgia Institute of Technology in 1949) opens in Atlanta. First year enrollment is 130 male white students (Garrett II, 169).
- 1889 Henry Grady delivers nationally recognized speech in Boston on "The Race Problem in the South". He contracts pneumonia and dies eleven days later. Vast funeral procession held on Peachtree.
Electric lights come to Atlanta's streets.
- 1891 First electric streetcar put into operation.
- 1892 The opulent 6 story Aragon Hotel opens at Ellis Street, considered "the place to stay" and dine in Atlanta. Demolished in 1930 for construction of the Collier Building.
- 1893 DeGive's Grand Theater opens at SE corner of Peachtree, Banks and Pryor Street. Venue hosts traveling opera company productions, and is later modernized into the Loew's Grand Theater.
- 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition held over three months at Piedmont driving club grounds, one quarter mile east of Peachtree. Piedmont Exposition Company purchases property from club. 800,000 people attend and prove city's ability to host large gatherings. Donation by Atlanta resident and businessman Samuel Inman averts bankruptcy of exposition.
Erskine Memorial fountain given as gift to city for placement at Peachtree and West Peachtree. Fountain moves to Grant Park in 1912 when Peachtree Street's grading is lowered (Garrett II, 591).
- 1898 Sacred Heart Catholic Church built at Ivy Street. Only twin steeple church remaining in Atlanta today.
North Avenue Presbyterian Church, constructed of granite from Stone Mountain, opens at southeast corner of Peachtree.
- 1899 Huge reviewing parade down Peachtree for local hero of Spanish American War, Lt Thomas Brumby.
- 1900 Distinctive English-American triangular building constructed at Peachtree and Broad (known as Flatiron Building).
- 1901 Viaduct (bridge) constructed over railroad crossing at Peachtree and Whitehall streets. The viaduct minimized a dangerous pedestrian situation and improved traffic flow. Funding came from private donations. The area underneath the viaduct later becomes Underground Atlanta.
- 1902 Fire destroys many buildings along Peachtree from the viaduct to Marietta Street.
- 1903 Lutheran Church of the Redeemer moves into former Thomas M. Clarke home at Peachtree and Fourth St.

- First Methodist church moves to Peachtree and Porter Place.
- 1904 The City of Atlanta purchases Piedmont Park from the Piedmont Park Exposition Company for \$98,000 (Garrett II, 455).
Edward Ansley purchases former Collier 202 acre estate located just east of Peachtree at 14th St. He constructs the garden city type residential subdivision known as Ansley Park.
- 1906 Asa Candler constructs seventeen story Candler Building at Peachtree-Pryor-Houston that becomes landmark for visitors who enjoy riding its elevators.
Atlanta's first Baptist church opens at Peachtree and Cain.
Due to rumors of assaults on white women, a mob of angry white men rakes violence on black people and businesses at Five Points. Twelve are killed, 70 injured, and the state militia is called in.
- 1907 Masonic Temple built at Cain Street. It is destroyed by fire in 1950.
- 1908 Peachtree Road from the Brookwood Bridge to Buckhead widened to 80'.
Davis-Fisher private sanitarium opens at Linden Street. It expands to an entire square block renamed Crawford Long Hospital in honor of Dr. Crawford W. Long's 1842 achievement of using ether for anesthesia (Garrett II, 530).
- 1910 Metropolitan opera performances begin in Atlanta to sold out crowds.
- 1911 Georgian Terrace hotel opens at Ponce de Leon. Advertised as a "Parisian hotel on a noted boulevard in a metropolitan city", the hotel becomes a favorite place to stay for opera singers and theater actors.
- 1914 Nobles of the Mystic Shrine convention brings more visitors to city than at any time in history. Parade down Peachtree.
- 1916 The first "high class photoplay" luxury theater, the Criterion, opens on Peachtree.
- 1917 Four separate fires rage in the city destroying a two mile section east of Peachtree. City gets motorized fire department.
Peachtree Arcade opens, a mixed use, multistory complex of retail shops and upper level offices.
- 1918 Southern Railroad opens Brookwood train station on Peachtree.
Celebratory parade down Peachtree marks the end of WWI. Triangular section at Peachtree and West Peachtree renamed from Goldsboro Park to Pershing Point in honor of General of the Armies John Pershing. Two years later, the War Mothers of Fulton county dedicate granite bench engraved with great battles of WWI.
- 1919 First Presbyterian Church constructed at Peachtree and 15th St.
- 1923 The governor's mansion at Peachtree and Cain is demolished and replaced with the Henry Grady Hotel, Henry Grady Building and Red Rock Building. A new governor's mansion is built to the north on Prado street.
- 1926 Mrs. James Madison High donates Tudor home to Atlanta Art Association as permanent memorial to her husband, establishing the High Museum of Art.
Tom Pitts closes his famous cigar and soft drink store on Peachtree between Decatur and Edgewood.
- 1926 Electric street cars at their pinnacle. Decline begins due to increasing automobile use.
- 1927 Macy's merges with Davison's and opens large store on Peachtree at Ellis.
- 1929 City's tallest office building, the 21 story Rhodes Haverty building, built at Williams Street.
Fox Theater opens as movie palace when Shriners incur cost overruns on building originally planned as Yaarab Temple Shrine Mosque ("Fox Theater History").
- 1930 Atlanta pays tribute with parade down Peachtree for Georgia Tech golf great Bobby Jones.
- 1932 Viaduct is rebuilt and modernized.
- 1933 50,000 march down Peachtree in National Recovery Administrations parade, the largest peacetime demonstration of patriotism (Garrett II, 907).
- 1934 Coca-Cola bails out Atlanta from \$1 million-plus deficit by advancing it \$800,000 ("A Short History").

- 1936 Atlanta's first public housing project, Techwood Homes, completed with federal financing ("A Short History").
William Hartsfield elected mayor (Allen 25).
- 1937 Cyclorama civil war 360 degree painting and building restored in Grant Park (Rutheiser 37).
- 1938 Ralph McGill named executive editor and columnist of the *Constitution* ("A Short History").
- 1939 World premier of movie "Gone With the Wind" held at Loew's Grand Theater on Peachtree. Movie adapted from 1936 best selling book written by Atlantan Margaret Mitchell. The event is attended by actors, director and producers and is a major public relations coup for the city.
- 1941 Delta Air Lines, a dust cropping service, moves its headquarters from Louisiana to Atlanta (Allen 32).
- 1946 Fire strikes Winecoff Hotel and kills 119 people. Rebuilt in 1951 as the "Peachtree on Peachtree" Hotel ("A Short History").
Atlanta Historical Society purchases last house on Peachtree proper, a Georgian style formerly owned by Dr. and Mrs. Willis B. Jones and designed by architect Neil Reid.
Over 100 passenger trains pass through Atlanta daily (Martin 148).
Mayor Hartsfield unveils plans for an interstate highway to run north-south through the city and named "Downtown Connector" (Allen 33).
- 1947 Last electric streetcar retired.
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra forms ("A Short History").
- 1948 Air travel champion Mayor Hartsfield presides over opening of the Atlanta Municipal Airport (Allen 33).
- 1949 Margaret Mitchell dies after being struck by a taxi when crossing Peachtree Street at 13th St. (Allen 38).
Blacks vote for first time in mayoral primary ("A Short History").
- 1950 Fire destroys the Masonic Temple at Cain Street. It is replaced by a combo apparel shop and parking lot. Masons move north to Peachtree and Deering Road.
Cox purchases Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution newspapers (Martin 164).
- 1952 Atlanta annexes adjacent areas, tripling the city to 118 square miles and adding 100,000 new citizens (Martin 173).
- 1953 6000 delegates to the Negro Elks' National convention parade down Peachtree and Whitehall streets.
- 1954 Parade marks the centennial of Fulton County.
City changes bicameral system of city council and board of alderman and becomes one body with two alderman from each district ("A Short History").
- 1955 Three major parades down Peachtree: inauguration of Marvin Griffin as governor; U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce convention; and annual Armistice Day tribute (later replaced by Veteran's Day parade).
Four days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling declaring racial segregation must end in public schools, the Atlanta branch of the NAACP brings petition to Atlanta school authorities to take immediate steps to meet directive (Martin 223).
First black men play golf on Atlanta's North Fulton course after Supreme Court bans racial segregation in publicly financed parks, golf courses, and playgrounds (Martin 224).
Travelers through Atlanta airport double in one year to over 2 million (Martin 237).
- 1956 Downtown Connector opens, relieving some traffic congestion on Peachtree but dividing and destroying neighborhoods in its path.
- 1957 The Fulton National Bank building is the first high rise building constructed since 1930.
William Hartsfield wins 6th term of office by defeating Lester Maddox in mayoral race (Martin 270).
- 1958 The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple at Peachtree and Spring St. is bombed by dynamite. The trial of suspects ends with no verdict.

- Peachtree is part of route taken by convoy of gold from Dahlonega to Atlanta to gild the state capital dome.
- 1959 Atlanta Public Library quietly integrates (Martin 299).
Aldermen approve plans for first five urban-renewal programs (Martin 305).
Lenox Square, the area's first regional mall, opens on Peachtree Road in Buckhead.
Metro Atlanta reaches 1 million in population, first in the southeast. Residents celebrate (Allen 85).
- 1960 Students of Atlanta University and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stage sit-in at food counter of Rich's department store. Stores agree to desegregate one year later (Martin 318-319).
- 1961 Ivan Allen Jr. elected mayor (Martin 330).
Developer John Portman opens 1 million sq. ft Merchandise Mart at Peachtree and Harris.
- 1962 106 members of Atlanta's art community die in Paris plane crash. Woodruff donates for the construction of new arts center in memory of those killed.
- 1963 Mayor Allen testifies in Washington in support of civil rights bill, the only southern governmental official to do so (Allen 127).
Jacob's Drug Store at Five Points closes down (Martin 374).
Local Celestine Sibley publishes book *Peachtree Street, U.S.A.* (Martin 386).
- 1965 All Atlanta public school grades integrated (Martin 428).
Portman's Peachtree Center Tower opens, the first office building of Peachtree Center complex (Gournay 53).
Atlanta Fulton County Stadium built using urban renewal powers (Rutheiser 154).
- 1966 Atlanta gets major league baseball team, the Braves and football team, the Falcons.
Portman's massive Regency-Hyatt House Hotel opens at Peachtree, Baker, Ivy and Harris and establishes atrium genre for hotels (Allen 152).
Summerhill race riot disperses without major violence (Martin 467).
- 1967 Intersection of Peachtree, Pryor, Forsyth and Carnegie Way named Margaret Mitchell Square (Martin 496).
Central Atlanta Improvement Association and the Uptown Association merge to create Central Atlanta Progress (Martin 497).
- 1968 Funeral for Martin Luther King held in Atlanta.
Atlanta Civic Center and Memorial Arts Complex (Peachtree and 15th St.) open.
- 1969 Underground Atlanta, a reuse retail and entertainment complex of the areas beneath the viaduct, is developed and opened by two Georgia Tech graduates (Rutheiser 166).
Ralph McGill, noted Atlanta journalist, dies (Martin 544).
The first multi-use development in the south constructed at Peachtree and 14th – Colony Square (Gournay 119).
I-285 circumferential highway (the "Perimeter") opens to traffic (Rutheiser 82).
- 1971 Robert Woodruff gives city \$10 million to purchase land for park at Peachtree and Auburn, a block from the site where the first Coca-Cola was served (Allen 186).
Atlanta elects its first African American mayor, Maynard Jackson (Allen 180).
Fulton and DeKalb Counties pass referendum approving Metropolitan Atlanta Rail Transportation Authority (MARTA) (Allen 175).
- 1974 Hartsfield becomes second busiest airport in the world behind Chicago's O'Hare (Allen 188).
Hank Aaron hits 715th home run at Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, breaking Babe Ruth's record (Allen Photo 67 caption).
- 1975 Developer Tom Cousins opens Omni International Hotel complex. Ted Turner later buys to house CNN headquarters (Rutheiser 163-164).
Atlanta Landmarks Inc. saves Fox Theater from wrecking ball and begins restoration ("Fox Theater History").
- 1976 Portman's cylindrical 70-story Westin Peachtree Plaza hotel opens on former site of Henry Grady Hotel (Gournay 51).

- 1977 First phase of Georgia World Congress Center opens on Cousins' donated site next to Omni (Rutheiser 164).
- 1978 Dr. Tetelman killed outside the Civic Center while attending a convention (Allen 206).
FBI statistics show Atlanta with highest crime rate in nation (AJC 4/6/80 as cited in Allen 206).
- 1979 Patricia Berry killed by a demented Vietnam vet while walking at lunchtime on Peachtree (Allen 207).
For two years, string of murders of 28 black children creates panic in city. Wayne Williams convicted (Rutheiser 64-65).
MARTA Five Points station opens at Peachtree and Alabama.
- 1980 New Atlanta Public Library building opens next to Margaret Mitchell Square (Martin 591).
- 1982 Underground Atlanta shuts down due to lack of business (Rutheiser 197).
Andrew Young elected mayor (Allen 219).
Georgia Pacific 52 story skyscraper built on site of former Loew's Grand Theater, which had been damaged by fire (Gournay 37).
Cable News Network (CNN) debuts from Atlanta headquarters.
Hartsfield International Airport opens (Rutheiser 80).
- 1983 Richard Meier's modern design used for new High Museum of Art at Peachtree and 16th St. (Gournay 128).
- 1988 Democratic Party holds convention in Atlanta (Allen 230).
- 1989 New version of Underground Atlanta opens with city backing. Street level retail portion added (Rutheiser 198)
- 1990 Thousands gather at Five Points to hear Atlanta awarded 1996 Olympic summer games (Allen 240).
Fifty story One-Ninety-One Peachtree Tower built across the street from Macy's (Gournay 50).
- 1991 Rich's downtown store closes (Allen 244).
State builds Georgia Dome (Allen 244).
World of Coca Cola opens (Allen 244).
- 1992 Granite clad, pyramidal roof NationsBank (now Bank of America) Plaza opens at North Avenue and Peachtree (Gournay 93).
Portman's One Peachtree Center (now SunTrust Plaza) built at Peachtree and Baker (Rutheiser 175).
- 1994 Woodruff Park undergoes redesign for Olympics (Rutheiser 213).
- 1996 Centennial Olympic Park opens.

APPENDIX II

A SAMPLER OF QUOTATIONS AND COMMENTARY ON ATLANTA

February 12, 1867: Milledgeville *Federal Union*

"Atlanta is certainly a fast place in every sense of the word, and our friends in Atlanta are fast people. They live fast and they die fast. They make money fast and they spend it fast. They build houses fast and they burn them down fast . . ." (Garrett I, 768).

1873: C.W. Tebeau, "Visitors' Views of Georgia Politics and Life, 1865-1880," *G.H.Q* (March 1942)

"But few traces of the war are now left in Atlanta. The residence streets have a smart, new air; many fine houses have been recently built, and their Northern architecture and trim gardens afford a pleasant surprise after the tumble-down unpainted towns of which there are so many of in the south. It is a new, vigorous, awkwardly alert city, in which there is little that is distinctly southern" (Garrett I, 900).

August 10, 1878: *Constitution*

"Those who doubt that Atlanta is growing can be convinced by calling any real estate office and looking at the list of calls for houses and supply of the same. The demand is constantly in excess of the supply in spite of the continued building which every day completes residences and stores. There are absolutely no houses begging for tenants here, while in every other Georgia city the spectacle of closed doors and deserted premises is so frequent as to be monotonous. It is with difficulty that we keep up with our increasing population, but of course we will do so. We are always glad to welcome new comers" (Garrett I, 948).

December, 1879: *Harper's Magazine*

"Atlanta is less peculiar and picturesque in its characteristics than any other town in the South. She looks to me more like a western town, since her newness and enterprise hardly affiliate her with Augusta, Savannah, Mobile and the rest of the sleepy cotton markets, whose growth, if they have had any, is imperceptible, and whose pulse beats are only a faint flutter. Deriving her success from a multitude of business advantages, and from her favorable situation in point of geography and climate, Atlanta has waxed great and powerful, and withal attractive. All the evidences of busy life are around you, and only unless you are fresh from New York or Baltimore or Chicago, do you notice the provincial air . . ." (Garrett I, 962).

October 10, 1926: *Atlanta Journal Magazine* interview with Tom Pitts, long time Peachtree Street business owner:

"I've seen Five Points change considerably. Most of the shops that were there in the early part of the century have vanished. Office buildings have taken their places. Five Points has lost its 'town pump' characteristics. It is no longer a place for people to congregate; it is a place they rush away from. I think the real thing that did it was automobiles, and more automobiles. Hundreds use to stop; now thousands pass. Five Points has become a thoroughfare instead of a center. New traffic rules have made it impossible to park an automobile within two or three blocks of Five Pints, and the traffic signals keep everything moving. For years and years, Five Points was the best retail spot in the city. All hotels were in a stone's throw. But now instead of having one community center, Atlanta has

many – Tenth Street, Pershing Point, Buckhead, Little Five Points and a number of others. Five Points has become more like a Wall Street business section.

“In the old days, people used to go ‘to town’ in the evening. Now they take their cars and ride away from town, and at night, Five Points is almost deserted. It is the same way on Sundays” (Garrett II, 821-822).

1926-29: Atlanta’s Chamber of Commerce national advertising “Forward Atlanta” campaign
Attempting to urge businesses to relocate to Atlanta, ads tout the city’s climate, “inherently skillful Anglo-Saxon workers”, strategic central location, low taxes and abundant natural resources in order to attract business and investment (Rutheiser 31).

December 16, 1939: Willard Cope, *Constitution*, describes the *Gone With the Wind* movie premier in Atlanta:

“All present - in an assemblage, which drew from every important region and stratum of American life - were held together by the sense of sharing in a common, and most historic, experience. It was as if two shows were being presented simultaneously - the fictional *Gone With the Wind* on the screen and the factual ‘Biography of *Gone With the Wind*’ in the seats and aisles, as well as upon the screen, of the theater. News, history, was being made, and everybody knew it. The whole crowd, spiritually, were moving about upon a stage. It was Hollywood, but it was also Atlanta. It was theater, but also life” (Garrett II, 987-988).

1959: Mayor Hartsfield’s proclamation at a National Toastmaster Club meeting
“We’re too busy to hate” (Rutheiser 47).

1960: Chamber of Commerce sponsored brochure

“To speak of Atlanta as a city confined within corporate limits is to leave out a part of the story of this great, growing metropolis. For the essence of Atlanta is not the city, but a community of towns, cities and counties. It now displays both appearance and substance of one of America’s true ‘national cities’.

“Atlanta is the first and only Southeastern metropolitan area to qualify as a ‘national city’ – one defined as exerting a powerful economic force far beyond its normal regional functions” (Martin 317).

May, 1961: *Atlanta* magazine editorial, Volume I, Issue 1

“The famous old city of Atlanta is coming of age. This is the town which movies and books have long portrayed as the hub of Southern hospitality, and the Fried Chicken Capital of the World. But Atlanta is changing . . . has changed in fact.

“It might be said that Atlanta has seceded from the Confederacy. Rebel flags and Civil War relics came off the office walls years ago, and have been replaced with aerial photographs of the city’s impressive new skyline. Stately white-columned mansions along Peachtree, once proud homes, are now filled to their antebellum attics with office workers. Any visitor who comes looking for magnolias, mint juleps, or moonshine is bound to be disappointed; and any Atlantan will tell him that there are more peach trees in Pittsburgh than there are on Peachtree Street.

“The boom of demolition rocks the city from stem to stern. . . Broad new expressways are cutting through the city’s heart; gleaming new shopping centers are drawing a new ring around the town; and towering new skyscrapers have come along to foreshadow the Atlanta visitors once knew. In short, Atlanta has outgrown its reputation of charm and graciousness. It’s still charming, and still gracious – but in a hustling, bustling, booming sort of way” (Martin 330-331).

1964: *Atlanta* magazine

Major league sports would “complete the transformation of Atlanta from a semi-Southern to a full-fledged national and international city” (Allen 137).

May 1, 1965: Dr. Martin Luther King speech in Philadelphia

“We’re building, as you know, a new South, a greater South. And in a real sense, Atlanta is one of the brightest and most promising spots of that new South” (Allen 145).

Early 1970’s: Chamber of Commerce slogan for Atlanta

“The world’s next great international city” (Rutheiser 65).

February 2, 1971: *National Observer*

“Atlanta is the sauciest, swingiest city in America today, with more grooving guys, girls and grass per apartment than Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago or perhaps even New York.” (Allen 167).

1978: *Los Angeles Times*

Atlanta is “a 60 percent black city that floats in a sea of white suburbia whose inhabitants desperately avoid contact with the untouchables. . . (and) increasingly a holding cell for society’s rejects” (Kossoff 14-A).

August, 1980 *Wall Street Journal*

“Like a desperate Scarlet O’Hara fashioning her gown from faded drapes, Atlanta still tries to sell herself to the outside world as a city of Southern hospitality and downhome charm. But the act may be wearing thin. A growing awareness of crime here threatens to slow the city’s drive to attract businesses and become a major convention center” (Kostoff 14-A).

November, 1984: Fulton County Commission Chairman Michael Lomax comments at the Atlanta Future Forum conference

“Rather than a city, I am afraid we are building a series of unconnected enclaves, sanitized, homogenized and computerized. What is lacking is human integration. There are vast office complexes, each without any problems, without diversity, enclosures which relate so little to one another, in an environment of barriers. It is a city, not of walking distances, but of automobiles from one enclosure to another” (Walker 1K,7K).

1986: Arthur Frommer, speech to the Atlanta Historical Society

Atlanta is “characterless and without charm, dull, and exceedingly devoted to business and finance. Evening in Atlanta is a graveyard, a scene of death and desolation, a nullity as far as life, culture, and camaraderie that is present in numerous other cities” (Dolman 15-A).

April 21, 1991: Frank Wells, *Constitution*

Rand McNally publishes a book, *Places Rated Almanac*, and ranks Atlanta’s metropolitan area as the finest place to live in the United States. The criteria highlighted are the area’s transportation system, climate, colleges, and local economy (“Best Places” 1-A).

1995: Atlanta Convention and Business Bureau unveils new slogan “Atlanta – Come Celebrate Our Dream” (Allen 248).

APPENDIX III
CITY OF ATLANTA'S POPULATION HISTORY

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population ('000's)</u>	<u>% Change</u>
2000	416.5	5.7%
1990	394	-7.4%
1980	425.3	-14.4%
1970	497	1.9%
1960(*)	487.5	47.1%
1950	331.3	9.6%
1940	302.3	11.8%
1930	270.4	34.8%
1920	200.6	29.6%
1910	154.8	72.2%
1900	89.9	37.3%
1890	65.5	75.1%
1880	37.4	71.6%
1870	21.8	127.1%
1860	9.6	

(*) City annexed areas adding 100,000 in population in 1952.