

# THE STORY OF PIEDMONT HEIGHTS

## Prologue

Piedmont Heights is the **oldest community in Atlanta**, first settled almost 200 years ago. In the early 1800s a grist mill on Clear Creek, a tributary of Peachtree Creek, spawned a village called Easton, now almost forgotten, which evolved into one of Atlanta's most unique neighborhoods.

## Beginnings

In 1823 Benjamin Plaster was granted 3,000 acres of land along Peachtree Creek and Clear Creek in recognition of his military service during the War of 1812. This was two years before Archibald Holland acquired a similar tract several miles to the east where another village called Terminus was founded in 1837, later renamed Marthasville and eventually Atlanta.

Plaster's tract, former Indian tribal land, featured a prominent knoll called "Council Bluff" where local chiefs met for their important meetings. Plaster built a bridge across Peachtree Creek and the trail to it became known as Plaster's Bridge Road. The bridge's stone abutments still remain on the creek banks and a short section of the old road, running along the northern boundary of today's Piedmont Heights, is now called Plasters Avenue.

As other settlers followed a township called Easton grew up around Walker's Grist Mill on Clear Creek near the site of today's Ansley Mall at Piedmont Road and Monroe Drive.

In 1831 the Clear Creek Post Office was established in the home of Meredith Collier, also on Clear Creek. Collier helped survey a road from Decatur, Georgia passing through Easton to a proposed ferry crossing on the Chattahoochee River. James Montgomery built the ferry in 1833 and the road became Montgomery Ferry Road.

In 1835 a one-room log schoolhouse was built near Council Bluff, at the intersection of today's Piedmont Road and Rock Springs Road, beside a "cool, clear sparkling spring" bubbling from under a rock and the area became known as the Rock Spring Community.

Around 1850 Captain Hezekiah Cheshire arrived from South Carolina. His sons, Napoleon and Jerome, settled on opposite sides of the south fork of Peachtree Creek. They built a bridge across the creek near to connect their farms and the road to it became Cheshire Bridge Road.

In 1864 General Sherman's Union soldiers swept through Atlanta. General T. J. Wood's troops built entrenchments along the eastern edge of Easton on the property of Benjamin Plaster's son Edwin, putting the little community in the battle of Atlanta. These entrenchments remained until the 1950s when they were destroyed by the construction of a Holiday Inn. Today a few crumbling stone steps and historic marker on the site honor the Edwin Cheshire family's handyman "**Gold Tooth John**" whose ghost is rumored to still wander the halls of the old hotel at night.

After the war Captain James M. Liddell acquired 40 acres in the Rock Spring Community and built a two-story house on Montgomery Ferry Road, said to be the second (or third) oldest in the city.

A new schoolhouse was built also and in 1868 Professor Joel Mable, a Scottish Presbyterian, arrived from North Carolina and expanded its curriculum to include religious principles and technical training. He also organized the Union Sunday School which met in the schoolhouse.

Rock Spring Presbyterian Church was formed in 1870 and the following year a church was erected near the school house. The Atlanta Constitution newspaper described it as "...on a level and beautiful spot with a noble forest growth around it...a neat-looking attractive church, flanked by a cozy little school house..." Hezekiah Cheshire was a charter member and his descendants remain active in the congregation. Barbara Wright Cheshire, seventh generation, documented the history of the church and surrounding area in her book "The Spirit of Rock Spring." The cornerstone of the present church, designed by noted Welsh architect Henry H. Hopson, was laid in 1922.

In 1871 the Atlanta and Richmond Air Line Railway opened a line between Atlanta and Toccoa, Georgia with a depot at Easton. Its "**Air Line Belle**" train, said to be the finest on the line, allowed Easton residents to commute to Atlanta without having to ford Clear Creek which still had no bridge. Train service spurred growth of the township to 100 residents by 1888 but the surrounding area remained rural and mostly devoted to farming and dairying. The rail line serving Easton was called the "**Southern Railway Belt Line**" and in 1883 the "**Georgia Pacific Belt Line Railroad**" connected with it just north of Easton at **Belt Junction**, an area which later became known as Armour Station, then Armour Yards and later as Armour/Ottley.

In 1895 North Boulevard was built, running through Easton parallel to the railroad, as a main route into Atlanta. In 1904 the Clear Creek post office closed but the Ansley Park neighborhood was created the same year and spurred new interest in the area.

In 1909, just north of Easton on the old Benjamin Plaster property the Reverend George Gladson formed the **Mayson Chapel Baptist Church** to serve the African-Americans in the **Armour Community**. In 1930 the church doubled as an African-American school. The Church still holds weekly Sunday services and since 1987 has been pastored by the Reverend Leroy Durden.

In 1912 Fulton County annexed Easton and renamed it Piedmont Heights. Plaster's Bridge Road was paved in 1917 and its name changed to Piedmont Road. In 1918 Air Line Bell service was discontinued and in 1924 the Governor's Horse Guard Stables were moved out of Atlanta to a more rural area near Montgomery Ferry Road.

In 1925 Landscape Architect W. L. Monroe bought 15 acres on North Boulevard at Wimbledon Road where he operated a popular nursery and landscaping business for many years, attracting more businesses and residents to the area. Remnants of two small stone structures that Monroe built (one actually a bomb shelter from the 1950s), today resembling English garden "follies," remain on the grounds of today's Ansley-Monroe Villas Condominiums. In 1927 a portion of North Boulevard was renamed Monroe Drive in honor of Monroe's many landscape projects in the city.

Also in 1927 the small Morningside Shopping Center opened on Piedmont at Monroe with a florist, grocery, hardware store, bakery, organ company and a Masonic Lodge. The lodge later became a noted cabaret, "Upstairs at Gene and Gabe's," frequented by visiting celebrity entertainers and other notables and then became a playhouse which featured the long-running play "'Della's Diner."

## **An Emerging Urban Neighborhood**

In 1928 the City of Atlanta began annexing Piedmont Heights by taking in the lots along North Boulevard. In the 1930s a new home could be bought for \$4,700 on North Boulevard or Wimbledon Road, a cross road connecting North Boulevard and Piedmont Road.

By the late 1940s Piedmont Heights was experiencing fast residential growth on Flagler Avenue and Monroe Drive, up Rock Springs Road, Allen Road and Piedmont Way. There was still the small cluster of businesses around the intersection of Monroe Drive and Piedmont Road but the land along Clear Creek from Piedmont to Montgomery Ferry Road was still mostly open pasture. The area east of Monroe Drive to Rock Springs Road was undeveloped except for the Liddell House on Montgomery Ferry Road and a few others. North of Wimbledon Road was all heavy forest.

Because Piedmont Heights had no official boundaries its edges were susceptible to expropriation. The most significant loss of land occurred in the late 1940s when a large swath of right-of-way was acquired in the northern part of the community to build Interstate Highway 85. The new highway, elevated on earth fill, created a barrier between Piedmont Heights and the Armour/Ottley area, limiting access to a single street off Monroe Drive which subsequently funneled heavy truck traffic through the neighborhood. Commuters from the highway access ramps began to clog Piedmont Heights' streets and compromise residents' access to their homes.

In 1951, a newly formed church in the adjacent Morningside neighborhood needed a building site. The congregation purchased the 14-acre tract between Piedmont and Montgomery Ferry Roads in Piedmont Heights, which included Council Bluff, where they erected the Morningside Baptist Church. In a small deep ravine along the Montgomery Ferry Road edge of the property an early parishioner created a beautiful azalea garden but time and neglect have since erased all trace of it.

**In 1954 a car wash opened on Piedmont Road near Rock Springs Road. In the late 1970s a new owner placed a life-sized automated gorilla out front which waved to passing cars. Although a bit creepy to some as first after a customer named it "George" it became a popular landmark and the business is now known throughout Atlanta as the "Gorilla Car Wash." George has had three new "suits" and two operations on his innards over the years and still waves to passersby.**

### **Piedmont Heights Civic Club**

On the evening of **October 12, 1956** a group of one hundred and three residents met at Rock Spring Presbyterian Church and formed the **Piedmont Heights Civic Club** to protect the "vitality and beauty of the neighborhood" which was severely threatened by urbanization from the growing, sprawling City of Atlanta. The group adopted bylaws and elected Mr. Howard Allison President. Atlanta **Mayor Hartsfield** attended the meeting which lasted until 11:30 p. m. **The minutes of the meeting defined the boundaries of the neighborhood as the area bounded by "Piedmont Road, Montgomery Ferry Drive, Belt Line Railroad, Expressway, Plaster Road to Piedmont."**

In the fall of 1957 Stein Printing Company applied to re-zone a land parcel on Monroe Drive at the northern edge of the residential area to build a printing plant. Negotiations between Stein and the Civic Club were facilitated by City officials including the Urban Renewal Director, the Director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Joint City-County Planning Board, City Planning and Zoning Committee and the City Board of Alderman. The result was a donation to the Civic Club of

2-1/2 acres of land to buffer the existing homes. Initially called Monroe Park, in 1961 the property was dedicated as **Gotham Way Park** but remained unimproved for the next 45 years except for some modest playground equipment.

This rezoning was the first of many to follow which slowly ate away at the undeveloped land in the neighborhood, eventually fixing the number of house lots at roughly 470. At the same time the single-family nature of the existing homes was changing as houses were being re-purposed as duplexes, triplexes and more. A house that W. L. Monroe built in the 1940s for his daughter now contains eight such “apartments.”

In 1964 **Ansley Mall** was developed along Clear Creek at the corner of Piedmont Road and Monroe Drive near the old Easton depot. It boasted a 35,000 square foot Colonial super market and 24 stores, later adding a 175-seat mini-cinema and more stores. A smaller center, Ansley II, was built on the opposite side of Monroe Drive. Today Ansley Mall is listed prominently in the “**Mall Hall of Fame.**” Three of the four corners of the intersection had gas stations, two of which have been converted to other uses, and more businesses slowly spread north on Piedmont Road.

In 1968 another mall, **Ansley Square**, was built along the railroad across Clear Creek opposite Ansley Mall. Originally just a typical strip center of miscellaneous stores, restaurants and bars a two-story office building was added later which today has a drugstore occupying the ground floor.

In **1992** the Civic Club changed its name to **Piedmont Heights Civic Association (PHCA)** but since only homeowners could vote the single-family district remained its sole focus. This myopia was so strong that in 1994 Board meeting minutes recorded a discussion about redrawing neighborhood boundaries to exclude “...all commercial districts and Morningside Park Apartments.” Although the Board took no action to change its boundaries, as late as 2005 the association’s map of Piedmont Heights still focused on the single-family area. Ironically, several apartment complexes had since been built by then with a total number of new units over twice that of the single-family homes.

### **Planning Committee**

With the arrival of the twenty-first century, the neighborhood dynamic began to change. Young couples with children began moving in, traffic became more congested and there was a growing problem with undesirable “adult” businesses in certain areas of the neighborhood. Fortunately, the PHCA Board began to change also. For years it had been dominated by a core group, some of whom had served many years. Now it included newer residents with fresh ideas and more energy.

In 2005 the City announced the **Atlanta BeltLine**, a transit system to circle the city which would run the length of the neighborhood’s western border in the old Air Line Belle railroad corridor and promised that one day Piedmont Heights’ residents would be able to “commute to Atlanta” again.

The following year PHCA formed its first **Planning Committee** to prepare for the anticipated new development related to the BeltLine, as well as its changing demographics and ever worsening traffic problems. The committee’s first action was to update the neighborhood’s map to match that of the City. The new map revealed that single-family homes were less than 1/4 of the total dwelling units, barely 1/3 of the land area and that almost **50% of Piedmont Heights was commercial.**

The BeltLine activity drew an invasion of land speculators trying to get ahead of the expected real estate boom. Several multi-family and multi-use developments were announced. Although only

one apartment complex and a few townhouses were actually built, the number of residential units in the neighborhood increased virtually overnight from about 1,500 to over 2,000.

Because Piedmont Heights developed around old farm roads it had no regular street grid. At dead center of a cluster of seven neighborhoods, the Armour/Ottley industrial area and a transitioning commercial district on Cheshire Bridge Road, it is impacted by a unique convergence of transportation infrastructure including an interstate highway, MARTA rail line, Atlanta BeltLine, AMTRAK and commercial rail lines, thoroughfares and multiple streets interconnecting all the neighborhoods. Monroe Drive is the only north and south “street” running through the neighborhood and the too few cross streets create intersections almost a quarter-mile apart.

Over time the residential area became more and more saturated with traffic. The almost total lack of sidewalks made it dangerous for residents to walk safely inside the community. Until recently, only three streets had sidewalks. Two more have since been built, but only on one side of the streets. Today many residents must still walk in the streets with the traffic to visit neighbors or the nearby businesses.

It was also obvious that Piedmont Heights could not solve its problems within its own borders so the Planning Committee created a map of Piedmont Heights within this larger context called “**Greater Piedmont Heights**,” and began to engage its neighbors.

A comprehensive plan for Piedmont Heights was needed. PHCA persuaded the **Livable Communities Coalition** to facilitate another workshop to assess the neighborhood’s liabilities and assets. The result was a list of goals with the strong recommendation that Piedmont Heights engage its neighbors as equal stakeholders in a master plan for the greater area.

PHCA expanded its communications network to include businesses as well as renters and to broaden its data base of neighborhood liabilities, assets and opportunities. Although it’s bylaws offered “supporting” memberships for anyone, albeit without voting rights, there were none on the rolls. Businesses and renters had no voice in neighborhood affairs and the roughly 200 PHCA members represented only a fraction of the total residents.

### **Blueprint for the Future**

In 2007, while the BeltLine, and private developers were busily creating their plans in Greater Piedmont Heights, PHCA was still pondering how to create its own master plan. Hoping for help from an intern from the Georgia Tech School of Urban Planning, a PHCA Board member called Professor Michael Dobbins, former Atlanta Planning Commissioner and a Board member of the Georgia Conservancy. This resulted in the Georgia Conservancy agreeing to conduct a “**Blueprints for Successful Communities**” exercise for the neighborhood.

Representatives from all the abutting neighborhoods and non-residential districts in Greater Piedmont Heights were invited to participate and **Blueprints Piedmont Heights** was launched. \$11,225 was raised to cover the cost of the project, the majority from businesses in Piedmont Heights. In appreciation for their support PHCA made them Supporting Members, the first on record and an important step toward bringing all the constituents of the neighborhood together.

In the fall of **2007 PHCA celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** with its eyes turned to the future.

Then, a local television station purchased a building on the old Stein property and proposed to build an addition which would infringe on the Gotham Way Park buffer. Negotiations resulted in the station's contributing \$70,000 for landscaping in the buffer and park improvements. A master plan for the park, on hold for lack of funds, was implemented and a functional neighborhood park emerged. The following year PHCA membership increased by 20% and the future looked bright.

In 2008 Atlanta City Council unexpectedly expanded the neighborhood's boundaries to include the southern portion of Armour/Ottley. The action was quickly and mysteriously reversed, but drew the neighborhood's attention for the first time to its neglected relationship with this dynamic area.

Armour/Ottley had previously been seen by Piedmont Heights simply as a cluster of train yards, a lumber business, warehouses and cement plants which generated too much objectionable truck traffic through the neighborhood. A closer look revealed a mixed-use community including a locksmith, pet groomer, service station, snack bar, caterers, interior designers, professional offices, 350 apartments, and even a church. One cluster of businesses had banded together and named themselves "**Sweetwater Design District**" after the popular Sweetwater Brewery which regularly sponsored social events. Armour/Ottley was actually a surprisingly vibrant, exciting district.

As BeltLine planning proceeded, Piedmont Heights' residents played significant roles. PHCA members assumed leadership positions as volunteers in the process and the neighborhood was often cited by BeltLine planners as an example other neighborhoods should emulate. The BeltLine plans incorporated the Blueprints Piedmont Heights concept for Ansley Mall and Ansley Square to convert them into a "town center" with small blocks, streetscapes, plazas and better connectivity to the residential areas as well as to abutting neighborhoods. The PHCA Planning Committee, however, felt the plans fell short of fully resolving the neighborhoods infrastructure problems.

**Other planning activities** began rippling through Greater Piedmont Heights. **Lindridge/Martin Manor Neighborhood** did a **Blueprints project**, a **Lindbergh LaVista Corridor Coalition** was formed and created the "**North Fork Trail Study**" for a **Peachtree Creek Greenway**, and the **South Fork Conservancy** designed the "**Confluence Trail**" along **Peachtree Creek's South Fork**. A **Cheshire Bridge Road Business Association** was launched (but, unfortunately, quickly sank) and the **Clifton Corridor Coalition** was pursuing plans for a **new transit line** connecting **Emory University to the BeltLine and MARTA at Armour/Ottley**.

To lay the groundwork for its future master plan PHCA compiled an "atlas" of Piedmont Heights, assisted by Architect David Green, delineating all its physical characteristics such as topography, flood plains, parcel lines and land uses as well as a conceptual plan identifying areas with redevelopment potential. Then, Atlanta initiated the "**Connect Atlanta**" plan, the City's first comprehensive transportation plan and began seeking input from the City's neighborhoods. David helped prepare a submission from Piedmont Heights identifying vehicular and pedestrian problem areas and a detailed spread sheet of proposed improvements.

## **A Thousand Pictures**

The many plans by others over the years had created a multiplicity of scenarios for areas in and around Piedmont Heights with widely conflicting concepts which, if were all realized, would result in a chaos of uncoordinated development. As PHCA characterized it, "**A picture may be worth a thousand words, but Greater Piedmont Heights is faced with a thousand pictures which do**

**not fit together.”** The future of the neighborhood hung in the balance.

While the BeltLine plans demonstrated how public transit could improve inter-neighborhood connectivity they also awakened Piedmont Heights to a **multi-modal transit opportunity** in the Armour/Ottley area. There the BeltLine could merge via a multi-modal station with MARTA, Amtrak, the proposed Clifton Corridor transit line, highway I-85 and surface streets to create a transportation nexus unique in Atlanta. Ironically, this opportunity was **enmeshed** in a tangle of **governmental authorities** as well as complicated by overlying **political jurisdictions** of **Fulton** and **Dekalb** Counties, four **State Representative Districts**, two Atlanta **City Council Districts** and three Atlanta **Neighborhood Planning Units**. Fortunately, the linkages Piedmont Heights had forged with the surrounding neighborhoods and business districts had generated a keen awareness of the **need for a comprehensive transit vision** for the greater area.

In June, 2011 PHCA asked **Georgia Conservancy** to facilitate another workshop, with all the stakeholders in Greater Piedmont Heights, to review the four-year old Blueprints Piedmont Heights documents and re-focus on the issues in light of current conditions. Several architects, an expert on Peachtree Creek, and the Chair of Neighborhood Planning Unit F guided the discussion. The issues centered on vehicular and pedestrian networks, connectivity between neighbors, and green space, i.e. the underlying framework of the greater community. An important admonition resulting from the event was that **“change will happen, it should be anticipated, it will be incremental, continued stakeholder participation will be critical and success will depend upon ongoing communications between all the neighborhoods.”**

Next PHCA needed to determine **who should design the master plan** – and who better than the planners most familiar with the area; **Peter Drey** (Peter Drey Architects) who had designed an innovative plan for the Buford Highway/Monroe Drive corridor, **John Wyle** (Rosser International) who had designed a proposal for a Peachtree Creek recreational greenway through Armour/Ottley, and **David Green** (Perkins+Will) who had done years of pro bono planning for Piedmont Heights.

Peter, John and David knew each other and quickly agreed to collaborate. Adding depth to this team was **Heather Alhadeff**, formerly Atlanta’s Assistant Director for Transportation Planning who authored the Connect Atlanta Plan, and **Ryan Gravel**, “Father of the Atlanta BeltLine.” Georgia Conservancy planner **Johanna McCrehan** assisted and **Andrew Tate** documented the process.

The planning team agreed to a fee of \$15,000, a contract was signed in December, 2011 and PHCA launched a fundraising campaign with \$1,000. The City contributed \$1,000 and Piedmont Heights residents and businesses who had contributed to Blueprints Piedmont Heights pitched in again.

Donations came in from other neighborhoods and businesses as well. One business executive, whose company had contributed to the Blueprints project, expressed regret that due to economic conditions he had strict orders to not spend any money not already budgeted. Then he paused and added, **“But, I think the project is so worthwhile I will donate \$500 out of my own pocket.”** The largest contribution of \$2,400 came from the Sweetwater Design District, whose members were key participants in the planning process and earned much praise from the community.

By the spring of 2012 the planners began, guided by the following objectives:

1. Unify the many plans by others in and around Piedmont Heights into one implementable master framework plan leveraging community assets, respecting the interests of all persons

and following the **Hanover Principles** ([www.mcdonough.com/principles.pdf](http://www.mcdonough.com/principles.pdf)).

2. Modify Buford Highway, Monroe Drive and Piedmont Road for more appropriate interface with abutting neighborhoods and to divert through traffic around residential areas.
3. Transform open space under highway I-85 and along the Peachtree Creek and Clear Creek waterways into cultural and environmental assets.
4. Alter internal neighborhood streets and intersections for safety and walk ability, to minimize vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and encourage appropriate new development.
5. Create a plan for additional green space and a pedestrian network connecting the neighborhood to the BeltLine, nearby trails, parks, creeks and open spaces.
6. Integrate existing and proposed transit systems to ensure minimum disruption and optimum access.

The BeltLine plans were the foundation to build on as they already had broad support and had been adopted by the City. However, two BeltLine Subarea Plans overlapped on the northern edge of Piedmont Heights and showed different transit, trail and station locations. Also, some plans by others contained innovative concepts which could enhance the BeltLine plans. Adjustments would be required but the intent was to adhere to the spirit of the BeltLine plans where appropriate.

**On March 28, 2012 the planners' first public meeting was attended by over 50 stakeholders** from Greater Piedmont Heights. The planners presented a composite plan of the "thousand pictures" (the BeltLine plans and all the plans by others) and a preliminary sketch of how they might be merged into a unified plan. Most attendees were already familiar with Blueprints Piedmont Heights, the BeltLine Master Plans and the many plans by others, so the ground work was well laid and the objectives for a new plan very clear.

As planning proceeded reports were sent out monthly to over 80 stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhoods, the business districts, Neighborhood Planning Units E and F, various other civic organizations and those with an interest in Greater Piedmont Heights such as Atlanta City Council Member **Alex Wan** and Georgia State Representative **Patricia Gardner**.

The final presentation of the "**Greater Piedmont Heights Master Framework Plan**" was held on September 13, 2012 and enthusiastically received by a group of approximately 40 stakeholders. What emerged from the original potpourri of plans was a tapestry of the best ideas and concepts woven into a dramatic vision for a "much greater" Piedmont Heights.

The plan was composed of several "layers," showing streets and intersections, future transit alignments and station locations, flood plains, topography, green space, etc. Its most important feature was a road network with European-style roundabouts which would efficiently divert commuter traffic around the residential areas.

A grand plaza underneath the I-85 highway overpass would reunite Piedmont Heights with the Armour/Ottley area, the Sweetwater Design District, other businesses in the area and the hundreds of apartment residents.. A nature trail along Peachtree Creek would link up with the Lindridge LaVista Corridor Coalition North Fork trail and the South Fork Conservancy's greenway system.

A multi-modal station in the Armour/Ottley area would integrate existing and proposed transit lines, streets and trails to provide access to all parts of the city. Monroe Drive would become a boulevard, narrowed from four lanes to two, with turn lanes, bicycle lanes, a landscaped median and multiple crosswalks. A reconfigured neighborhood business district organized around the

BeltLine Arboretum Water Gardens on Clear Creek, anchored by a town square and two BeltLine transit stations would blend seamlessly with the residential districts and adjacent neighborhoods.

The highlight of the evening occurred when a lady stood up and said, **“I came tonight because I was against the plan – but now I’m for it!”** The audience burst out in laughter and loud applause.

In 2013 the Greater Piedmont Heights Master Framework Plan received an **“Award of Excellence”** from the City of Atlanta Urban Design Commission, the Georgia Planning Association cited it as an **“Outstanding Planning Document”** and a past president of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Institute of Architects praised the plan as **“Very nicely done!”** with **“...good/practical solutions.**

### **Small Town in the Big City**

An unexpected bonus of the planning exercise was the confirmation that **Piedmont Heights is truly unique among its neighbors.** Its over 3,000 residents occupy single-family homes, town homes, condominiums, one of Atlanta’s first co-op apartment complexes and mid-rise apartments. It has two shopping centers with two major grocery stores, two drugstores and shops of every variety providing all manners of goods and services. Piedmont Heights has 16 restaurants, a bowling alley, several bars providing entertainment and even a tattoo parlor. It has three banks, two pharmacies, doctors, dentists, veterinarians, a Red Cross Blood Center, a hotel, two churches, many restaurants, a gym, an elementary school, three gasoline stations, three auto repair shops, an automobile body shop, a bicycle repair shop and most notably the landmark “Gorilla Car Wash”.

Piedmont Heights may be far removed from its origins but the new master plan harks back to its township roots. BeltLine transit will one day replace the old Air Line Belle, long neglected Clear Creek will become the centerpiece of a revitalized business district and residents will one day be able to walk throughout their neighborhood on safe sidewalks.

In **2013** the **Piedmont Heights Community Improvement Foundation** was created and quickly raised over \$5,000 to help fund a neighborhood map, identification signage and to develop a new image for the neighborhood.

In **2014** the **PHCA Business Alliance** was formed to more fully integrate local businesses with the Civic Association, recognize their contribution to the community and give them a louder voice in neighborhood affairs.

Also in **2014** real estate development firms began to **revitalize the Armour/Ottley** area by converting warehouses to office, retail and other commercial uses. A five-building complex on Plaster Avenue includes a new art gallery and is now known as **Armour Junction.** The northern district, renamed **Armour Yards,** boasts the first restaurant in the area. Both identify strongly with Piedmont Heights and the businesses eagerly join the Piedmont Heights Business Alliance.

Although Easton never became more than a village, the Piedmont Heights of today has virtually all the components of a small town. If picked up and put down 50 miles outside Atlanta it would be as self-sufficient as any similarly-sized municipality. Over 100 businesses provide Piedmont Heights, as well as adjacent neighborhoods, with all manner of stores, restaurants, goods and services, such that one could say that the Piedmont Heights of today really is a **“small town in the big city”.**