



ATLANTA, GEORGIA

# Peachtree Heights West

## *Carrere and Hastings Only Suburb*



Peachtree Heights West is an early 20th century suburb designed on land that once belonged to pioneer Atlanta resident Wesley Gray Collier. Begun in 1910, Peachtree Heights West it is the only known suburb designed by the illustrious Carrere and Hastings architectural firm. Many nationally – and locally – noted landscape architects and architects designed its homes and gardens, and the suburb was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. Peachtree Heights West evinces an enormous visual consistency due in part to the common palette used by the architects and landscape architects. Today, the demolition of the original houses – and their replacement by houses two and three times the size of the original structures – threatens to destroy the fabric of the community, the original setbacks of the residences, and the remaining original gardens. Public awareness, historic district preservation guidelines, conservation easements, and private agreements between neighbors could help to retain the design heritage of this historic suburb.

### HISTORY

“The Peachtree Heights West subdivision was sited near the community known as Buckhead, and the property included a lengthy frontage along (then rural) Peachtree Road. Development of the suburb began in 1910 with the construction of Habersham Road. Housing construction began soon thereafter. By the 1930s, about 75% of the lots were built, many of them



with houses and gardens designed by architects and landscape architects. While the Peachtree Road boundary has lost its single-family neighborhood identity over the last 40 years; the interior of the neighborhood has retained much of its original historic character and was listed on National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

Much of the unique character of Peachtree Heights West can be traced to its design lineage. It is a 20th century suburb designed by Carrere and Hastings, the only known suburb planned by this illustrious architectural firm, and it includes some of the finest early 20th century residential architecture by the best architects practicing in Atlanta at the time—including Neel Reid, Philip Shutze, Pringle and Smith, and Tucker and Howell. Some of America’s finest landscape architects also were at work in Peachtree Heights including Robert Cridland and Ellen Shipman; sadly, little of their work remains. However, work by less well-known local landscape architect William Pauley is well represented, mostly intact, and generally well maintained.

Today, the suburb is characterized by an enormous consistency of its architectural and landscape architectural treatment. The feeling is very much as if design guidelines had been in place when, in fact, none existed beyond the simplest of covenants. Much of the original platting of lots was ignored as multiple lots were joined into larger estates.

Peachtree Heights West also shows the result of careful site design. The planners exhibited great restraint in the land plan, respecting stream buffers and preserving tree stands with a specified building limit line and areas of reservation. The divided roadway of Peachtree Battle Avenue bears the distinctive influence of Druid Hills, the Olmsted suburb across town.

## THE THREAT

The threat to the community takes the form of the demolition of original structures and their replacement with houses two and three times the size of the original structures. This ‘tear down’ phenomenon has accelerated in recent years, erasing the original setbacks of the residences as well as some of the original gardens, thus altering the historic character of the community. “Free market” advocates are willing to see the neighborhood preserved as long as there are no further constraints placed on their private property rights. Speculative developers also are engaged in this ‘tear down’ phenomenon. Further pressures include new construction and continued subdivision of original lots into smaller parcels. Originally outside of Atlanta’s city limits, Peachtree Heights West was incorporated into the city in the early 1950s. Unfortunately, incorporation brought with it a zoning ordinance that doesn’t reflect the historic built pattern of the Peachtree Heights West neighborhood. New construction can occur with no variances required, no public hearings or comment. Awkward juxtapositions occur with new construction at a 50-foot setback sitting in front of original houses with a 125-foot setback or more. Visual discontinuity approaching chaos is beginning to take its toll.

In addition, traffic calming measures are being studied within the neighborhood that further threaten the integrity of the original street pattern and park reservation as well as the overall spatial orientation. Any traffic calming measures employed should be investigated carefully within the context of this important cultural landscape.

## HOW TO HELP



is a starting point, followed by efforts to identify and implement solutions. The Atlanta Preservation Center, the Atlanta Urban Design Commission and the City Council are the strongest proponents for this, as are concerned citizens throughout the preservation community. Let them know of your support for the preservation of the historic character of Peachtree Heights West and encourage the community to consider developing and implementing historic district guidelines, conservation easements and/or private agreements between neighbors.



To do this call, write, or email:

Boyd Coons, Executive Director  
Atlanta Preservation Center  
tel. 404-688-3353  
[www.preserveatlanta.com](http://www.preserveatlanta.com)

Atlanta Urban Design  
Commission  
tel. 404-330-6200  
[rducharme@atlantaga.gov](mailto:rducharme@atlantaga.gov)

Lisa Borders, President  
Atlanta City Council  
tel. 404-330-6035  
[lborders@atlantaga.gov](mailto:lborders@atlantaga.gov)

Shirley Franklin, Mayor  
City of Atlanta  
tel. 404-330-6100  
[mayorfranklin@atlantaga.gov](mailto:mayorfranklin@atlantaga.gov)

Clair Muller  
Atlanta City Council  
tel. 404-330-6051  
[cmuller@atlantaga.gov](mailto:cmuller@atlantaga.gov)

Mary Norwood  
Atlanta City Council  
tel. 404-330-6302  
[mnorwood@atlantaga.gov](mailto:mnorwood@atlantaga.gov)

**Site Address**

Peachtree Heights West

(Parts of Land Lots 111, 112, and 113, 17th District Fulton County including portions of Habersham Road, Peachtree Battle Ave, Rivers Road, Vernon Road, Andrews Drive and more)

Atlanta, Georgia 30305