



## 'Midtown Mile'

Redevelopment plan puts sleek high rises on sites of former gay bars. **Page 5**

# Spring preview

Jackie  
Warner,  
Page 29



Gay Spring  
Break,  
Page 32



Rufus  
Wainwright,  
Page 34



Your guide to the season's gay offerings in local events, TV, Film, Music, Theater, Travel and Books. Coverage begins on **Page 25**



**HRC AT HRC:** Presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton meets with national gay group. **Page 16**

**PASTOR'S APPEAL:** Atlanta's Bradley Schmeling fights Lutheran gay policy. **Page 6**

**COUNTERING COULTER:** How to stop the right-wing darling's gay-bashing. **Page 20**



## atlanta news

## Demolished gay bars make way for Midtown's future

Phoenix for sale; fence limits Ansley Square bars

By RYAN LEE

The future of Midtown Atlanta is currently being built on top of the rubble of the neighborhood's gay past.

Several marquee nightclubs that gay men and lesbians flocked to for three decades — venues that owners credit with instilling a sense of belonging in young gay people, as well as helping Midtown transform from dilapidated to highly desirable — were razed in 2006, and now serve as the building foundation for two development projects city leaders hope will elevate Atlanta to a level of cosmopolitan living comparable to New York and Chicago.

For 30 years, Backstreet Atlanta, a 24-hour gay club, occupied the space at 845 Peachtree St. Atlanta police officers padlocked the club for good in July 2004, after Backstreet owner Vicki Vara lost a series of lengthy legal challenges to city ordinances targeting Backstreet and other 24-hour clubs.

Vara sold the plot of land that Backstreet called home to the Novare Group in June 2005 for \$1.7 million, according to the Fulton County Tax Assessor's office.

The Novare Group, which built the gay-popular Metropolis and Spire condo towers along Peachtree Street, is erecting a 36-story mixed use tower of cutting-edge condos positioned above trendy retail stores at the former Backstreet location.

The first phase of the tower, known as ViewPoint, is expected to be complete by summer of 2008, said Novare spokesperson Cathy Wooten.

ViewPoint is one of the latest additions to a 14-block development project along Peachtree Street that is intended to upgrade the heart of the city. From North Avenue to 15th Street, city planners envision Peachtree Street evolving into Atlanta's "Midtown Mile" — an extended stretch of luxurious office towers, condos and retail shops intended to be comparable to Chicago's "Magnificent Mile" and Madison Avenue in New York City.

Vara considers the mainstreaming of Midtown at the expense of gay institutions like Backstreet to be almost sacrilegious,



Out with the old, in with the new. Former gay bars like Backstreet and Metro Video Bar were torn down in 2006 to make way for mixed-used towers like ViewPoint (lower right) and 1010 Midtown (upper left).

"comparable to politicians waltzing into Ebenezer Baptist Church and pronouncing the building had to be demolished for the sake of progress and moving forward."

"Where will we gather to join ranks when the world places yet another hurdle in our path?" Vara said shortly after Backstreet was closed in the summer of 2005. She added that she was disappointed by "the apparent apathy of our brothers and sisters in this community as the elected, and appointed, city officials successfully railroaded new rules and ordinances into place, slicing out the very heart and soul of the roots of our freedom to express ourselves and gather with members of our 'family.'"

But not all gay Midtown residents mourn the replacement of gay nightclubs with a string of condo and retail towers.

"The plans for 12th & Midtown and ViewPoint provide for very high-quality residential and retail development that brings new life and uses to these underutilized blocks of real estate," said Will Herbig, director of urban design for the Midtown Alliance, which is spearheading the "Midtown Mile" project.

## 'Midtown Mile' on the way

Like Backstreet, the Metro Video Bar, located at 1080 Peachtree St., had a reputation as a place where drug use was frequent. And like Backstreet, the Metro was

targeted for closure by neighborhood activists and city officials, forced to shutter its doors by the Atlanta Police Department and eventually sold to elite development firms.

The Daniel Corporation and Selig Enterprises now own the land on which the Metro sat for almost 15 years, and are constructing 1010 Midtown, a 35-story mixed-use tower.

The Fulton County Tax Assessor's office has no records on the purchase price of 1080 Peachtree St., and officials with the Daniel Corporation and Selig Enterprises were unavailable for comment by press time. Former Metro owner Don Hunnewell declined an interview request.

The 1010 Midtown high-rise is part of the burgeoning 12th & Midtown complex — a 2.5-million-square-foot mix of condos, office space, luxury hotels and retail shops.

The massive project will help anchor the northern end of the "Midtown Mile," which was launched during a Midtown Alliance meeting in December 2005. A "Who's Who" list of Atlanta development firms are lined-up behind the "Midtown Mile" — including the Novare Group, Selig Enterprises, Loudermilk-Rohrig and Cousins Properties.

"The Midtown Mile represents our



The Phoenix on Ponce de Leon has been closed since late 2006, and is now up for sale.

HIGHLIGHT & CUT: \$55  
EYEBROW WAX & HAIRCUT: \$25  
GOOD THROUGH 2/28/07



**R&R**  
HAIR SALON  
(FORMERLY REY RONALDO)

**NEW LOCATION**  
SAME PROFESSIONAL, FRIENDLY STAFF  
**NOW OPEN!**

1874 PIEDMONT RD. STE. 4-B  
ATLANTA, GA 30324 404.685.9611  
www.alteregohairusa.com

**AMARYN'S THAI BOWL & SUSHI**

Authentic Thai Cuisine & Large Selection of Sushi

Build your own noodle bowl with fresh meats & veggies

Wide selection of Asian beers and sake

DECATUR • 265 Ponce de Leon place (behind CVS) 404.373.2788

2900 Peachtree Rd. NW  
Atlanta, GA 30305 404.841.2990  
Open everyday lunch & dinner

