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A guide to buying, selling and renting homes in metro Atlanta

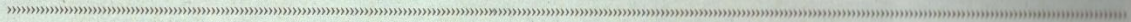
Making music
Active couple in
Hoschton jazzed
about Village. **E2**

The search
Peripatetic man puts
down roots in choice
of ranch homes. **E7**

1010 Midtown
High-rise condos
have a great yard
— Piedmont Park. **E8**

Inside Advice
Tips on getting the
most out of the
current market. **E8**

Looking for a place?
Check out homes for
sale, rentals and open
houses starting on **E9**.



Community Spotlight Midtown

Energy, diversity for every budget

Midtown housing is
as wide-ranging as the
people who live there.

H.M. Cauley For the AJC

When it comes to neighborhoods, many are homogenous. It's common to find houses that date from a similar era, sport similar styles and sit on same-sized lots.

There may be a smattering of condos or apartments and a small commercial district nearby, but even those are apt to share a distinctive flavor, a design that makes Dunwoody Dunwoody or East Atlanta East At-

lanta. Putting Midtown into one category is more difficult. The section of town sandwiched between downtown and Buckhead is more akin to a separate city, with a main thoroughfare, business district, historic homes, apartments and chic high-rise condominiums.

It's also home to Piedmont Park, the city's cultural hub and a wealth of new residents who come for the mix they say can't be found anywhere else.

"Midtown has so much to offer," said Patrick Hill, who moved to a condo in the Spire building last spring. "Here, you can get contemporary,

traditional, old and new housing. I lived in Buckhead, but Midtown was where I hung out, where I ate, so it was where I wanted to be a homeowner."

Hill looked at a range of options before buying his first home, a one-bedroom unit on Spire's 20th floor with granite counters, hardwood floors and an oversize garden tub in the master bath.

"I like the allure of the older buildings that are being renovated, but since this was my first home, I wanted it very simple," said Hill. "I sold all my furniture and bought new piec-

Midtown continued on E4

cover story



Pulsing with energy and diversity

Midtown

continued from E1

es to fit."

Not only was Spire close to Hill's job at Coca-Cola and the nightlife he enjoyed, it also came with security features and amenities that he liked.

"I wanted to feel safe, and having a gated garage and cameras everywhere was part of that," said Hill. "It's like Fort Knox, getting into the building: The card I scan in the elevator only gets me to my floor and the amenities floor where there's a workout center, cardio room and pool. There's even a dry cleaner in the building who delivers to the 24-hour concierge, so I can get my laundry even if I come home at 10 p.m."

Midtown's housing melange attracts a range of buyers, from young professionals to empty nesters trading in their single-family suburban abodes for intown living. Real estate broker Thom Abbott works with clients from age 20 to 70.

"The younger demographic likes the nightlife; others like the arts and theater – the High, the Fox, the symphony, the 14th Street Playhouse," said Abbott, a resident of the Plaza Midtown building for the past four years. "It's the kind of area where you could live initially in a mid-rise or high-rise, and if you wanted more space, you could move into a home. There are townhouses where you can get more square footage than a condo. And there are lots of people here who have done the opposite: They've gone from big house to townhouse to condo."

With a broad price range – from \$100,000 to almost \$2 million – Midtown has a real estate market to fit almost any budget. The area's elegant high-rises, including Viewpoint, Spire, 1010 Midtown, Luxe, Aqua, the Reynolds, Metropolis and the Mayfair, to name a few, often get the most attention.

But there are plenty of options beyond having a skyline view. There's a smattering of quaint, older buildings with only 20 units; historic homes on the tree-lined streets off Ponce de Leon Avenue; and mid-rises in a mix of new and old styles.

"The high-rises attract buyers because, if you were going to buy a single-family home, you're looking at something older with average prices around \$700,000," said Abbott.

The appeal of restoring an older house just blocks from Piedmont Park wooed Dana Persons and her husband, Michael. The mother of three boys, Persons picked a rambling two-story frame Victorian home with room to expand the attic for additional living space.

"We found Midtown to still be affordable compared to Ansley and Morningside," said Persons. "But with a 100-year-old house, we had to replace systems, make the fireplaces work, redo the kitchen and fix up the back porch."

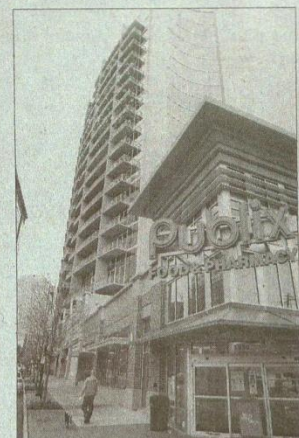
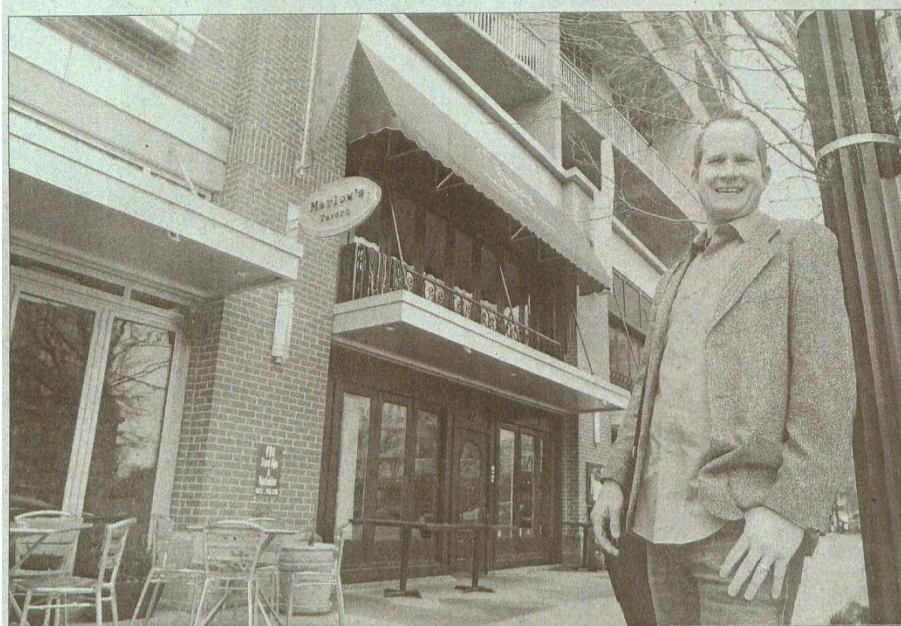
Being intown was key to the moving decision, said Persons. "We liked the architecture here that reminds us a lot of New Orleans in places," she said. "We liked that you can park the car and not get back in. And we liked that the area is extraordinarily diverse: There are singles, dual-incomes with no kids, gay couples, empty nesters and families with kids."

Persons is part of the Midtown Parents Group, a club of about 100 parents who have kids from kindergarten through high school who connect through play groups, parties and holiday events. Most recently, Persons has been part of a committee working on establishing a charter school in the neighborhood.

"We want to attract families into the intown area, and you can't expect people to move where schools aren't as good," she said. "But it's still a really great place to live. There's a lot of energy here."

Midtown's vibe also attracts people such as Shane Sandridge and Jordan Rowley, who are currently renting a two-bedroom apartment with an eye to finding a home in the neighborhood.

"I was living out near the Mall of Georgia, but I went to Tech and really liked this area," said Sandridge. "It's small, with a lot of trees, and quiet – almost like being out in the country. But it's in the middle of Atlanta, with lots of places to eat, where I can walk to the dog park at Piedmont [Park]. We just moved in about a month ago, but I'm definitely looking to buy eventually."



Plaza Midtown is surrounded by stores and places to dine. Real estate broker Thom Abbott, a resident for four years, works with buyers from 20 to 70 years old.