

HISTORY OF DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL PKWY

FORMERLY BANKHEAD HWY

The Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway corridor got its start when a streetcar line was extended from the present-day downtown to the Chattahoochee River in 1872. The Atlanta and Chattahoochee Railway Company trolleys traveled along Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy (previously known as Powder Springs Road, Bellwood Avenue, and Bankhead Highway) to Hollywood Road and on to Bolton. The 1893 City Directory praised the new streetcar service saying “one of the chief features of a visit to Atlanta is a ride on this delightful line.” Since this time, several neighborhoods have developed along the corridor, including Almond Park, Bankhead-Bolton, Bankhead Courts, Bowen Homes, Carey Park, Center Hill, Collier Heights, Grove Park and Watts Road.

Almond Park a neighborhood built before World War II, consisting mostly of bungalows and cottages. The Bankhead-Bolton area is primarily industrial in nature. Bankhead Courts was constructed in 1970 under the federal government’s turnkey program, whereby the project is built by a private developer and then managed by the Atlanta Housing Authority.

The Carey park neighborhood is located generally in the area of James Jackson Parkway and North Hightower Road. It is an older single-family residential area initiated when John Carey, for whom Carey Park and Elementary School are named, subdivided his estate in 1907. The subdivision was located along Hightower Road near the River Car Line and its streets were named for noted religious figures.

Collier Heights is an area of 2 square miles of wooded ravines 6 miles west of downtown. It lay undeveloped until the 1930s when Collier Drive and a few remote houses were built. By 1940, the difficult terrain had yielded somewhat to dirt roads and limited development. At that time, there were about 900 residents, 80 percent of whom were white. After World War II, the African American bourgeoisie moved into the neighborhood. Collier Heights was developed in earnest in the late 1950’s and early 1960s as a public-private effort with African Americans handling most of the “hammers and cash.” The City of Atlanta published its “Neighborhood Plan for Collier Heights” in 1961. The neighborhood would accommodate 7,000 residents and help solve the shortage of quality homes for African Americans. It quickly became one of the most exclusive communities for African-Americans in Atlanta. Collier Heights has been home to State Representatives, Atlanta’s first black assistant police chief, construction magnate Herman J. Russell, college educators and alumni,

Center Hill and Grove Park were both developed during the early part of the 20th century. Center Hill Street was a prominent street in the new community and land was set aside for a

Center Hill School. Prior to 1960 Grove Park and Center Hill were all-white communities. African-Americans began to move in to these areas during the 1960's.

Grove Park was named for Dr. E. W. Grove, president of the Grove Park Development Company. Grove Park was developed in the 1920's & 1930's by various developers, but primarily by the Grove Park Development Company. The community was initially known as Fortified Hills, a name stemming from the Civil War. Grove named the streets for his wife, Gertrude, his daughter Evelyn, and his son, Edwin. Other street names are believed to have been inspired by his grandchildren: Matilda, Hortense, Emily, Elizabeth, Francis, Eleanor, Florence, Margaret, and Eugenia. Many of the side streets created in the '30s, '40s and '50s are wide, tree-lined avenues with well-tended frame cottages, brick Tudors and ranches.

In summary, Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, one of the major corridors in Northwest Atlanta, was in its splendor during the 1960's, and the area was stable until the early 1970's when suburban growth began to drain the area's vitality. As a result, many longtime businesses closed and were replaced by low-rent business; and as population decreased the area began to deteriorate. In fact, through the turn of the 21st century, the entire study area witnessed a steady decline in population, property conditions and the local economy.

However, conditions in the study area have changed over the past few years as the current trend towards in-town living gains popularity. Neighborhoods throughout the City and especially Northwest Atlanta are experiencing a resurgence of development including new infill residential units and subdivisions as well as major renovations. The Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway Corridor is poised to experience some of this resurgence.