

THE CITIES OF ATLANTA

Pine Lake, riding a wave of renewal, goes artsy

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The allure of **Pine Lake** is not one thing, but three, say its habitants. Sandwiched between Stone Mountain and Decatur, it has a convenient location. Home prices can be modest, with some cottages selling for as low as \$47,000, though the average is a good bit higher. Most important, residents say, are the forest view and the geese-filled lake. "You turn off Rockbridge Road (the main thoroughfare) and step back 30 years in time," said City Council member Judith Weisberg Thomas. Althea Sumpter is a television and film professor at Clark Atlanta University and a two-year resident. She said **Pine Lake** is attractive to the "creative types." "This community really appeals to a lot of artists," she said. "The atmosphere is so conducive for generating the creative juices. It's filled with so much natural beauty."

The allure of **Pine Lake** is apparently the same as it was when it was officially chartered in December 1937. The community was a resort that wooed landlords and renters alike, said City Administrator Jim Thomas. "Because the area attracted so many people who weren't looking to become long-term property owners, they didn't make an investment in the community," Thomas said. "So it basically became down-trodden and a bad place to be 15 years ago." Neighborhood Association President Bruce Bartow said that as recently as five years ago, 40 percent of the homes were rental properties. "To put it bluntly," Bartow said, "we had a lot of slumlords, run-down homes and junk cars."

Residents say the **Pine Lake** government has cleaned the town up. "Under the new administration," the blight "has been booted out," Bartow said. "The trickling effect is, we're starting to get people who are seriously looking at properties as long-term investments." The new administration is that of Mayor Mike Stuckey, a longtime politician and resident of 10 years. Rose Parsons is mayor pro tem. With a city operating budget of about \$700,000, which includes grant money, Stuckey said he and the council aggressively set out to reclaim the community. "A lot of homes were abandoned and burned out," Stuckey said. "We identified who the owners were, cleaned them up and got rid of all the junk cars. I just wouldn't take no for an answer."

Map and chart: THE CITIES OF ATLANTA Map shows locations of Avondale Estates and **Pine Lake**. Avondale Estates Population: 2,200. Major employer: The town is largely residential with a small business and industrial section. Public transit: Take eastbound MARTA train to Avondale or Kensington stations, both of which are within walking distance of Avondale Estates. Driving time from downtown: About 15 minutes, non-rush hour. From downtown: Take I-20 east to I-285 east. Exit Memorial Drive, take a left on Memorial, right on Mountain Drive.

Points of interest: Avondale Estates has a 1920s English Tudor commercial district, a lake and many 1920s homes. **Pine Lake** Population: 900. Major employer: The town is almost completely residential. Public transit: Take eastbound MARTA train to Kensington station, board the 118 Rockbridge bus. Driving time from downtown: Take I-20 east to I-285 east. Exit Memorial Drive, take a right on Rockbridge Road and a left on Clubhouse Drive. Points of interest: Heavily wooded, **Pine Lake** is near Stone Mountain Park.

Color photo and teaser box: (Appeared on C/01 with reference to C/03 story) Lisa Lee plays with her pet duck, Allie Goose, at a **Pine Lake** gathering. / LAURA NOEL / Staff