

MHHA • CONNECTION



Spring 2007 ♦ Volume 12, Issue 2



www.merryhills.com

A quarterly newsletter by the Merry Hills Homeowners Association

Briarcliff/North Druid Hills development study continues

Future meetings for the Briarcliff/North Druid Hills development study take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Kittredge Magnet School on the following dates:

- Thursday, May 31
- Wednesday, June 27
- Wednesday, July 25
- Wednesday, August 29

DeKalb Commissioners Kathie Gannon and Jeff Rader spoke to our membership about the study at the MHHA spring meeting on May 9. The commissioners have stated the purpose of the study is “to develop a master plan for the area that will realize its potential for economic growth while maintaining and enhancing the quality of life of those who live and work in the vicinity, and improving the performance of the transportation network that serves it.”



At our May 9 spring meeting, MHHA members voted to assist in funding the \$310,000 study with a \$500 contribution from MHHA.

Most of the study’s cost will be funded by large property owners in the study area, with smaller contributions from nearby institutions and neighborhood organizations like MHHA.

Alex Garvin, a prominent planner based in New York City, has been retained to conduct the study. Mr. Garvin previously consulted on the Atlanta beltline project that he describes as an “Emerald Necklace.”

Continued on page 5

DeKalb Commissioners Jeff Rader and Kathie Gannon at the May 9 MHHA meeting



Mark your calendars for our Block Party on Sunday September 9

Join the team to plan and staff the Block Party

Save Sunday afternoon, September 9, for the MHHA block party. Our previous block parties offered refreshments, a moonwalk, games for youngsters, caricatures, face painting, K9 rescue dogs and fire trucks on display.

Vice-President Matt Rachford is seeking additional volunteers to plan and prepare for this year’s event and to help with the day’s activities. Let Matt know you would like to help make this year’s block party a blast. Also let Matt know if you have a business or know of one that would be interested in a monetary sponsorship or in-kind donation to the block party. Contact Matt by sending a message to vicepresident@merryhills.com or by leaving a message for him on the MHHA Hotline, 404-935-6936.



New members

Treasurer Sholly Feiffer reports the following neighbors are our newest MHHA members.

Renee and Davi Kutner, Bramble Road
Ben Hiller, Christmas Lane
Terry and Zahavah Stilman, Christmas Lane
Mordechai and Naomi Cohen, Christmas Lane
Levi and Jennie Graiser, Holly Lane
David and Devorah Kapenstein, Holly Lane
Curtis Cochran, Holly Lane
Jeremy and Stefanie Sarnat, Holly Lane
Kevin and Leah Rodbell, Holly Lane
David and Amanda Copeland, Holly Lane
Craig and Caryn Ashapa, North Holly Lane
Johan and Irene Belinfante, Jody Lane
Leah and Moshe Hiller, Jody Lane
Yoel and Chavie Spotts, Jody Lane
Sarah Howell, Merry Lane
James and Barbara Kepner, Wembley Court

2007 Flag Program



The flags are coming! Flags will be waving at driveways throughout our neighborhood in recognition of Flag Day, June 14 and Independence Day, July 4. The MHHA flag program this year is again sponsored by

Marc Goldin of RE/MAX of Buckhead at Brookhead, www.marcgoldin.com and coordinated by MHHA member Larry Gilger with the assistance of a team of neighbors who will deliver the flags.

Stay informed with e-mail and Calling Post

Get crime alerts, meeting notices, and news and events updates from MHHA by making sure we have your e-mail address and telephone number. The MHHA e-mail list is maintained for MHHA activities only and not shared with other entities. E-mail is our primary means of communication. It is the most immediate and cost-effective way for us to keep you informed of activities in your neighborhood.

Do we have your phone number and e-mail address? If you are not currently receiving our e-mail or Calling Post phone messages, sign up now.



Join our *e-mail list* by clicking the Subscribe link near the top of any www.merryhills.com web page.



Join our *Calling Post list* by calling 404-935-6936, and leaving a message with your name, address and phone #. Or send this info to secretary@merryhills.com.

MHHA needs you!

Our 2007 membership drive is a success with many of our members renewing their dues and the addition of 16 new members. The response from members to the call for additional volunteers on the membership forms has yielded far fewer results.

In addition to financial support, we have some very pressing needs for assistance from neighbors. Without this assistance, MHHA will need to curtail or discontinue some of our current activities.

Support your neighborhood organization by volunteering to fill one of the vacancies listed below. Call the MHHA Hotline, 404-935-6936, or e-mail president@merryhills.com to volunteer or learn more about these specific tasks.

- **Three Nominating Committee members** must be appointed in preparation for our November election. This is an ad-hoc committee that disbands after it has identified a slate of officers for our November elections. Serving on the committee requires minimal activity, some phone calls and e-mail.

According to our bylaws, current MHHA board members may not serve on the Nominating Committee. At the very least, we will need to elect a new president since our current president has served a two-year term limit.

- **Section Representatives**, appointed to the MHHA board, are needed immediately for the following areas. The MHHA board generally meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m.

Section 4, 1349 to 1448 Christmas Lane
Section 5, North Holly Lane and Reindeer Drive
Section 9, Jody Lane

- **A database manager** is needed to maintain our membership, e-mail, and phone listings. Ability to maintain MHHA's computerized records in MS Excel or Access is desired.
- **A crime coordinator** to be our liaison with the DeKalb County police department. E-mail capability is needed.
- **Bylaws committee members** to review the current MHHA bylaws for possible expansion of our membership and for ways to make our organization more effective and meaningful for our neighborhood. The MHHA bylaws are published at www.merryhills.com/Bylaws.htm.
- **Block party organizers** to plan and staff this event on September 9. Do you have ideas for new activities, entertainment or refreshments? Join the block party team and make your ideas happen.

What's new around the neighborhood

Loehmann's Plaza

This shopping center is now fully leased and will soon be fully occupied. A new building currently under construction will be occupied by *Panera* and *Starbucks*.

Toco Hills Avis G. Williams branch library

The Avis G. Williams library is scheduled to be replaced in 2008 by a new building on the existing site that is twice as large as the current one. The 2005 bond referendum budgeted \$5,000,000 for the project. The library is scheduled to close in November 2007 and construction is expected to take about a year.

DeKalb police precinct relocates to Northlake-Tucker area

DeKalb County's center police precinct that serves our neighborhood has relocated from Memorial Drive to 1960 W. Exchange Place near Northlake Mall. The center precinct's non-emergency number is 770-724-7600.

Summer activities

Summer Program at Fernbank Science Center

A free summer public program for families, "Exploring Nature With Your Child," is offered at Fernbank Science Center on Tuesday afternoons from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on May 29, June 5, June 12, June 19, July 10, July 17, and July 24. Children must be accompanied by an adult. There is no charge for the program and no reservations are required.

The program will focus on natural species or phenomena that can be observed in the local area and includes an evening walk through Fernbank Forest to observe plants, animals and events there. The program concludes between 8:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Free admission to the Science Center and free parking. Information line with directions: 678-874-7100.

Kittredge Park Pool Summer Hours

The DeKalb County swim season begins on Saturday, May 26 and ends on August 5. Kittredge Park pool is open daily from 12 noon to 5:30pm, Monday through Saturday, and 7:30 to 8:30pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Daily swim fee is \$3 adults, \$2 children. Evening swim fee is \$2 adults, \$1 children. Children 2 and under are free. An annual pool pass is \$45. Swim lessons and pool rental are available. For more info, call 678-937-8921.

Crime update

Our quarterly report from the DeKalb Police Crime Awareness program has been delayed due to a new daily reporting system for the police officers. The crime report will be published at www.merryhills.com/watch.htm when it is available.

The following incidents were reported to MHHA by our residents:

- In mid-April, a number of vehicles had their tires slashed on Merry, Christmas, and Holly Lanes.
- In early May, two vehicles on Bramble Road were broken into.



To report a crime or suspicious activity:

Call 911 to report the incident.

Call the MHHA Hotline, 404-935-6936, to report the incident so an alert can be distributed to our residents if warranted.

DeKalb County school news

On May 14, the DeKalb Board of Education voted to approve Dr. Crawford Lewis' Consolidation Plan. According to the approved plan:

- Kittredge Magnet School will move to the vacated Nancy Creek Elementary School building in August 2008
- DeKalb School of the Arts will return to the Avondale High School facility in August 2009
- The International Center will occupy the vacated Kittredge School building

The International Center is an intake center for registration, testing, and placement of international students new to DeKalb County who were born outside of the United States or who speak English as their second language.

Dr. Lewis rescinded his previous recommendation to consolidate the county's three Montessori programs at BriarVista Elementary School near Briarcliff Road. Parents provided evidence that the dollar savings from the consolidation of the Montessori programs would be negligible.

On March 20, voters approved the Special Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST III). SPLOST III funds a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes \$10 million for the relocation of DeKalb School of the Arts and \$29,836,296 for the relocation of Open Campus, Jim Cherry Center and DECA to Mountain Industrial Center.

No details were provided about who will occupy the vacated School of the Arts space on North Druid Hills Road or when the Open Campus and Jim Cherry Center will relocate to the Mountain Industrial Center. The Board of Education did not discuss selling any school property on North Druid Hills Road.

Zoning and land use issues



1 *Congregation Shaarei Shamayim*. No further details since a letter to 1500 households in July 2006 solicited interest in a condominium project that would include space for the congregation at 2490 North Druid Hills Road. The proposed condominiums are one- and two-bedroom units. The property is zoned R-85 (single-family residential) with a Special Land Use Permit for a place of worship.

2 *Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael* received a special land use permit (SLUP) from the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners for a place of worship. The BOC approved a limited 4-year SLUP with conditions that allow interior renovation of existing structures but do not permit construction of new buildings. See www.merryhills.com/zoning.htm for the final list of SLUP conditions.

3 *Green Street Development* received approval from the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners (BOC) for a rezoning/land use change for a 2.6 acre parcel on North Druid Hills Road near Holly Lane. Approval of the rezoning is subject to a conceptual site plan shown to neighbors and a set of conditions that were negotiated by MHHA, North Druid Hills Residents Assn., and neighbors on Briarcliff Trail. The conditions of rezoning include:

- limiting construction to a maximum of 5 detached homes adjacent to Holly Lane homes and 16 attached townhouses adjacent to Briarcliff Trail
- retention of large specimen hardwood trees on the property

4 *Young Israel of Toco Hills* is planning to use property comprised of 6 lots on LaVista Road and Pinetree Circle for a place of worship. The property is zoned R-85 and is on 3 acres and on a minor thoroughfare, which allows a place of worship but requires a Special Land Use Permit from DeKalb County. We are awaiting further notification of their plans.

5 *Sembler Company* stated it has a contract to purchase the 78-acre Park at Briarcliff apartments/townhomes on Briarcliff Road. Sembler Company's offer to purchase the DeKalb school property on North Druid Hills Road requires the approval of the DeKalb School System Board of Education. The DSS Board tabled a decision on the offer in 2006.

According to Sembler's VP of Development, the residential component of the project could include up to 2,000 units, with a mix of condos, townhouses, and apartments, ranging from luxury to workforce housing.

The project would be considered a "Development of Regional Impact" (DRI) and would require review by the Atlanta Regional Commission in addition to approval from DeKalb County.

6 *North Druid Development* withdrew its application for the Druid, a mixed-use project on 4+ acres at the corner of Briarcliff and North Druid Hills Road. The application proposed to replace a CITGO station and Lutheran Church with a free-standing retail structure and an 8- to 12-story condominium tower with street-level retail stores and underground parking. The property is included in the 600-acre N. Druid Hills/Briarcliff area development study now underway.

7 *2166 LaVista Road* – Currently under renovation based on the existing land use. MHHA was notified by the owner in late 2006 that he may seek the removal of conditions that were attached to his property more than 10 years ago. These zoning conditions prevent construction of new buildings on this lot and 4 others at 2160 to 2184 LaVista Road across from Toco Hills Shopping Center. The property adjoins the Weatherstone Townhomes and homes on Merry Lane.

8 *Temima High School* and Congregation Beth Jacob (BJ) are applying for a special land use permit (SLUP) to construct an accessory girls' school on a 2-acre parcel next to BJ at 1839 LaVista Road. The parcel is currently owned by the Atlanta Scholar's Kollel. The existing building will be demolished and a new building constructed with a total square footage of about 25,000 sq. ft. to accommodate a maximum of 100 students. See www.merryhills.com/zoning to view a site plan.

New meeting requirements

DeKalb County has a new requirement for those applying for a rezoning, change in land use, or special land use permit (SLUP). An applicant must hold a community meeting with surrounding neighborhood associations and residents before the application can be filed. The public meeting must be at 7:00 p.m. at a facility within 1/2 mile of the subject property. MHHA was notified of a May 8 pre-application meeting about the construction of a building for Temima High School on LaVista Road.

Briarcliff/North Druid Hills study

Continued from page 1

The area under study consists of about 500 acres surrounding the intersection of Briarcliff Road and North Druid Hills Road. During the second study meeting, Garvin talked extensively about the “public realm”—land publicly owned, like streets and sidewalks, and land privately-owned, like parking lots. He observed that 33% of the study area is paved, and that most of the trees are concentrated around the single-family houses in the area and Kittredge Park. He talked extensively about Kittredge Park and observed that invasive plants were spreading through the greenspace. He also noted the pollution and erosion of streams in the area and around the lake in the Park at Briarcliff.

Garvin observed that traffic congestion in the area is exacerbated by too many dead-end streets, too few highway crossings, and too few major through streets.

Garvin reported the results of an on-line survey he had asked attendees of the first study meeting to complete. One of the survey questions asked residents about their greatest concerns and: 90% said traffic congestion; 67%, traffic safety; and 55%, lack of recreational facilities. A number of meeting attendees asked questions and made comments about the area and study. For instance, one attendee pointed out that Mr. Garvin’s suggestion to locate new bike and pedestrian paths within the stream buffers might be problematic environmentally.

At the study meeting, Commissioner Jeff Rader said the study is intended to guide development in the area for the next 50 years.

At the June 27 meeting, property owners in the study area are scheduled to present their plans.

To review meeting minutes and for more info, visit <http://www.briarcliffnorthdruidhills.org>.

Water restrictions in effect

The state's Environmental Protection Division Director announced level 2 drought restrictions are in effect for all of Georgia. The following outdoor watering schedules are in effect statewide:

- Odd-numbered addresses may water on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays – 12 midnight to 10 a.m.
- Even-numbered addresses may water on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays – 12 midnight to 10 a.m.
- No watering on Friday

For more info, visit www.gaepd.org.

DeKalb-Peachtree (PDK) Airport

Vice President Matt Rachford attended a meeting in April with 50 other DeKalb leaders to learn more about PDK operations and issues. Since our neighborhood is within 5 miles of PDK Airport, it is affected by noise and environmental problems generated by air traffic at the airport.

As a result of a lengthy but successful Open Records lawsuit by citizen Mickey Feltus, DeKalb County is now required to provide citizens access to PDK Airport flight records. The records released show that more than 200 aircraft that exceed the agreed upon 66,000 lb. weight limit fly out of PDK Airport each day.

Two organizations that address the issues of oversized jet traffic and noise and environmental pollution at PDK Airport are PDK Watch and Open DeKalb.

A second lawsuit is planned by Open DeKalb to require enforcement of the 66,000 lb. weight limit on aircraft at PDK Airport.

On May 9, the MHHA membership approved the following resolution in support of PDK Watch:

The Merry Hills Homeowners Association (MHHA) endorses the mission of PDK Watch and acknowledges PDK Watch as its advocate. The stated mission of PDK Watch is to:

- monitor operations and management of the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK Airport) to ensure that such activities not only are lawful but also are compatible with the property rights and the safety and environmental interests of the citizens of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- disseminate information and seek to influence governmental policy and legislation germane to this purpose.

Contributions to PDK Watch are needed to support the PDK Watch website and activities and can be made at www.pdkwatch.org or by check to PDK Watch, P.O. Box 49325, Atlanta, GA 30359.

Contributions to Open DeKalb to help fund the next lawsuit can be made at www.opendekalbinc.org or to Open DeKalb Inc., P.O. Box 19089, Atlanta, GA 31119.

More information about these organizations and their activities can be found at the websites mentioned above.

