



NORTH BRIARCLIFF Civic Association

(formerly Hawthorne Civic Association)

Winter 2006 Newsletter

Distribution: 1400+

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Renée Scalzini..... *graphics*

Next board meeting: Mar 1

Board Meeting dates:
1st Wednesdays, 7:30 pm.

2006 Dues: \$25/address

NEW YEAR ... NEW NAME

Notice the new name on the header? We are now officially the **North Briarcliff Civic Association**. Start telling people you live in the North Briarcliff community.

Those present at the Annual Meeting of the Hawthorne Civic Association (October 20) voted to change the association's name and to elect the board members listed in the column at the left. We're working on a spring get-together (maybe April 29), street sign toppers that will say North Briarcliff, and a new logo that conveys something about our residents, setting and/or future vision. If you've got a logo idea, please send in your thoughts or sketch. Re-usable signs that announce upcoming events are in the works and we're asking permission to place those signs at strategic locations. We have reserved the web domains northbriarcliff.org, northbriarcliff.com and northbriarcliff.net and a website is in the works.

In this newsletter, you'll find an **annual dues** reply envelope. 2006 calendar year dues are \$25 per household. Last year, more than 75% of the civic association's expenditures were for the newsletter. Smaller amounts were spent on the I-85 interchange landscaping project, a donation to the KaBoom playground at Hawthorne Elementary and the legalities of the name change. This year's planned expenditures include newsletter, website, event signage and sign toppers. Your support of this civic association makes a difference for the neighborhood.



PLEASE SUPPORT North Briarcliff Civic Association by responding promptly with your annual dues check and info about how you'd like to participate during 2006.

PDK WATCH Headlines

(1) Open Government Hero Award

Mickey Feltus, plaintiff in the successful Georgia Open Records Lawsuit against PDK Airport and DeKalb County, will receive an Open Government Hero Award from the Georgia First Amendment Foundation at their Weltner Freedom of Information Banquet on January 28, 2006. United States Senator Johnny Isakson will be honored with a Freedom of Information Award at the same banquet. For more details, see www.pdkwatch.org or www.gfaf.org

(2) Large Public Meeting on PDK Issues at Maloof Auditorium

On September 19, 2005 at a meeting called by and presided over by DeKalb CEO Vernon Jones, some 350 concerned citizens packed the Maloof Auditorium to express their concerns about future plans for the development of PDK Airport and about PDK Master Plan policies. For more details on this meeting and on the debate over the policies that were being considered to guide the future development of PDK Airport during the next several decades, see www.pdkwatch.org

(3) DeKalb Board of Commissioners approves PDK Master Plan Policies

After a sometimes contentious process lasting throughout much of the preceding months of 2005, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners on October 11, 2005, approved a set of ten policies to guide the development of the PDK Master Plan. For the a discussion of the approved policies and the text of those policies, see <http://www.pdkwatch.org/masterplan/112905-masterplan-adopted.asp> For the three earlier Master plan policy proposals--from the Master Plan consultants, the PDK Airport Advisory Board, and Concerned Citizens--see www.pdkwatch.org, under "Master Plan Concerns."

(4) Midway in Chicago; PDK in Atlanta--Could it Happen Here?

The recent crash at Midway Airport in Chicago raises concerns about whether a similar accident could happen at PDK Airport as it increasingly allows oversized jet traffic over densely settled residential areas in DeKalb County. What would the County's legal liability be if a similar accident were to occur at PDK Airport, at a time when PDK Airport is allowing jets that exceed the county-specified weight limits to use the Airport? For details on the Midway accident, see www.pdkwatch.org

(5) Validity of PDK Environmental Assessment Challenged:

Information obtained as a result of the success of the PDK Open Records Lawsuit on August 8, 2005, raises grave questions about the validity of the data used in the PDK Environmental Assessment that was submitted in fall 2005 to the Federal Aviation Administration. For details about the Environmental Assessment, why it is important to you, and what is being done to counter this seriously flawed study which will significantly impact our lives, see www.pdkwatch.org and www.opendekalbinc.org

--Larry Foster, for PDK Watch

New DOG PARK Opening

from a Jan 5 press release published on the county website

Man's "best friend" has a new place to frolic. DeKalb County will hold the official opening of a new off-leash dog area on Saturday, January 14, 11 am, at Brook Run Park (in the center of the park), 4770 North Peachtree Road, Dunwoody. Dogs are an important part of many people's lives. The 2.5 acres of fenced land will allow dogs to run free, roll over and socialize with other canine friends. Bring your precious pup and your pooper-scooper!

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement in collaboration with the Governor's Office and the Georgia Department of Education recognized public schools across Georgia for improving and promoting excellence in student academic achievement. Hawthorne Elementary was recognized as a **2005 Platinum Award Winner** for Greatest Gain in meeting and exceeding academic standards. The Platinum Award is the highest award that is given. Results from statewide accountability testing show that 91.2% of Hawthorne students are meeting or exceeding standards during the current year. The percentage reflects a gain over the prior year of 6.67%, which is more than the achievement of 99.45% of the elementary schools in Georgia.

POSITIVELY HAWTHORNE Hosts Events For Families with Young Children

Positively Hawthorne, a PTA-sponsored group whose aim is to increase communication between families in our school district and to inform parents of young children about Hawthorne Elementary School, is planning two upcoming events for members of our community.

The first event is the **annual Meet the Teachers Meeting**. This event provides parents with an opportunity to tour Hawthorne Elementary School, meet HES staff members, interact with parents of both current and future students, and learn more about the benefits of attending Hawthorne Elementary School. The event will be held at Hawthorne Elementary School, February 27th at 6:30 pm, and childcare will be provided. For more information and to make childcare reservations, contact Angela Maki at angela.maki@comcast.net or (404) 248-0224.

The second event is the **annual Kindergarten Round-up**. On March 28th at 10am, rising Kindergarteners and their parents are invited to spend part of the day at Hawthorne Elementary School to experience what Kindergarten is really like! To receive an invitation, please contact Angela Maki at angela.maki@comcast.net or (404)248-0224.

Please join the Hawthorne community for these informative and fun events!

GREENSPACE

Mary Scott Nature Preserve (10.6 acre wooded tract, at 4150 Briarcliff Road, acquired 2003, with funds from DeKalb County Bond Program, Georgia Greenspace Program, & Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation). The master plan has been approved and will be implemented in stages. Watch for a public meeting about the implementation details in the first quarter of 2006. In late fall 2005, a potential trail was flagged (pink/black) through the wooded side of the park by a workday group; it may be modified by requirements such as maintaining a low grade or safeguarding valuable plants. Trail creation and the entry/parking area will be among the first features installed. All existing grant funding has been committed to design costs and to continued stewardship efforts. Invasive bamboo has been retreated but it will take several years for the energy in the underground root system to be exhausted. English ivy has been sprayed and will probably be sprayed several more times in 2006. As of this writing, March 11 is penciled in as a workday, perhaps for path clearing work, perhaps for a small amount of planting. If you're not already on the mailing list of people who want to be notified by the civic association about happenings at Mary Scott, send an e-mail to HCA@gazebosoftware.com.

I-85 @ Shallowford Interchange. Billie Sherrod has taken on the role of North Briarcliff's coordinator for the Interchange project. She's been active on the interchange and brings her organizational skills to the project. Contact her at billie_sherrod@bellsouth.net or (770) 939-2583, especially if you are willing to commit an hour or two a month to weed and pick up trash. Nikki VanDerGrinten of DECA (Dresden East Civic Association) worked with the county to clean up the former Waffle House site and install a railing so that no more trash could be dumped there. The HCA sign at the interchange will be replaced with an NBCA sign this winter.

CURBSIDE RECYCLING

DeKalb County is finally offering curbside subscription recycling. Since August 2005, DeKalb has offered curbside mixed paper and container recycling. Mixed paper includes newspapers, magazines, phone books, catalogs, cardboard boxes, cereal boxes, junk mail, and many other paper items. Acceptable commingled container items include plastic beverage, food, and household cleaner containers; glass beverage and food containers (clear, brown, green, and blue); and aluminum and tin beverage and food containers.

All residential customers who presently receive solid waste collection service from the DeKalb County Sanitation Division are eligible to subscribe to the recycling program. "There are no annual fees for subscription to the curbside recycling program. There is a \$15 one time fee for the mixed paper blue recycling bin and a \$15 as needed fee for the blue commingled bags (box of 100)." The subscription recycling is collected on Wednesdays.

For those who do not want to subscribe there are other recycling opportunities in DeKalb County, including: FREE aluminum can recycling on the first household garbage collection days of the week (Monday or Tuesday) and FREE newspaper recycling on the second household garbage collection day of the week (Thursday or Friday). In order to recycle cans or newspaper place the items in plastic bags on your curb separate from your regular trash. You can also drop-off your recycling for free at all DeKalb County Fire Stations and many DeKalb County Public Buildings.

The most effective recycling program exists where residents participate at the maximum levels possible. If you participate in the program, only place items to be recycled that have been identified as part of the program and follow all rules associated with the correct ways items should be prepared and placed at the curb.

To participate in the residential subscription curbside program you can call the Sanitation Customer Service at 404-294-2900 or email sanitation@co.dekalb.ga.us. You can subscribe at anytime. For more information please visit the website <http://www.co.dekalb.ga.us/publicwrks/sanitation/recycling.htm>.

Thank you for recycling (and remember you can recycle this newsletter)!

Amy Funk Wolkin, neighborhood resident

SIDEWALK NEWS

from a Jan 3 press release published on the county website

The following nearby 2006 sidewalk projects will be financed by the Transportation Bond:

- Briarcliff Road, from Briarlake Road to Lakeside High School (2000')
- Briarlake Road –W, from Briarcliff Road to LaVista Road (4500')
- Dresden Drive, from Appling to Shallowford (3500')
- Oak Grove, from LaVista to Woodleaf (1500')

JOIN THE CLUB

The idea of forming some special-interest groups in our neighborhood has been around for a while, and here is an opportunity to do something about it. Whether your passion is bridge or board games, personal collections or great painters, books or writing your memoirs, let me know. I will use e-mail addresses to try to help you find like-minded others.

For starters, I will host three to four tables of Bridge at my house — afternoon and/or evening — sometime this winter. If interested, please send me your name, e-mail address and preferred days and times.

Susan Harte, susanharte@bellsouth.net

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

- September: Police reported arrest of individuals responsible for a rash of thefts from vehicles in the LaVista Rd/Briarcliff Rd/Oak Grove Rd area. Winding Woods (LaVista outside 285) saw a car break-in where one of the perpetrators was armed.
- October: Construction site on Melinda was vandalized.
- November: Burglary on Jasmine Court. Break-ins on Fisher Trail and on Crestline.
- December: Garage intruder (unlocked door) on Flair Knoll Drive. Two homes (Brookdale, Caladium) learned blank check orders had gone missing from mailboxes.

No coyote sightings since Labor Day, though I am told second-hand that they are being heard howling near North Peachtree Creek. Interesting info from the New York Times: A study around Chicago noted that when coyote population increased significantly, the Canada geese population stopped exploding. The coyotes were feasting on goose eggs, carefully cracking them and licking the shells clean (seen via infrared cameras). A quote from the NYT piece: "Coyotes will behave, he said, as long as people do not feed them. Leave nothing tasty outside in an open trash can or food dish, and definitely nothing small and fluffy at the end of a leash. Professor Gehrt says with confidence that the sensible suburban toddler has little to fear from the suburban coyote, but he will not say the same for the suburban Shih Tzu."

TREES & ENGLISH IVY

English ivy doesn't kill trees directly, but it can make them more susceptible to insects or disease within its protected spaces. It can also catch wind and ice better during storms than bare branches would, perhaps bringing down a tree that wouldn't otherwise fall. Cut English ivy at ground level and then again about a foot up and remove the stems between those cuts. It will take at least a couple months for the leaves to wilt and 3-5 years for the vines to entirely fall from the trees.

THANKS for Community Spirit

Thanks to Hoe-N-Grow garden club and to Flair Forest Garden Club for bringing the extra touch of cheer and unity to the community by placing holiday bows on mailboxes in their subdivisions.

EDITORIAL: Community

"No man is an island, entire of itself."
<John Donne, poet, 1573-1631>

No one can deny that we share air, sunshine, water, streets, schools and stores with each other. How much we can agree on the quality, nature and value of those shared features and how well we "play nice" with each other speaks of the "soul" of our community. Our home facades are all remarkably and wonderfully different, unlike communities of cookie-cutter homes. Our landscape is varied, rolling and cut-through with water features. The people within our community's borders are remarkably varied ... young to old; a multitude of ethnicities; rich to poor; conservative to liberal; straights and gays; those comfortable with t-shirts saying "He who dies with the most toys wins" as well as "Live lightly on the earth". With all this diversity, perhaps it is difficult for us to agree about what we want from the things we share. But some part of the diversity of the North Briarcliff area must have appealed to all of us or we wouldn't be living here.

Let's get to know each other, develop shared visions for our community's future, and share a laugh or a smile. North Briarcliff Civic Association will offer one such opportunity in a social gathering, probably the last weekend in April. Look for details in the spring newsletter and signs throughout the community.

Interviewed on *CBS Sunday Morning*, James Surowiecki (author, *The Wisdom of Crowds*) tells us that the average answer from a crowd is almost always better than a single answer from an expert (e.g. indexed vs managed mutual funds, audience answer vs call-a-friend on TV's *Millionaire* show). Let's pool our knowledge and insights.

Beth Nathan, editor

ZONING

Development Update: The 15-plus acres located at 3571 Briarcliff Rd (an Armstrong estate property) has been approved for development as a conservation subdivision with 29 homes grouped on smaller lots allowing for an undisturbed greenspace buffer. It has a cul-de-sac street plan, leaving Briarlyn Court and Lively Trail not connected through to each other, but each connected into the new subdivision by a 6 foot wide bike/walking trail. Adjacent property owners fully supported this concept over the R-100 conventional layout. Hopefully, many more trees will be preserved.

Residential Infill Housing Ordinances:

On December 15, 2005, the DeKalb County Commission approved the proposed changes to a portion of Chapter 7 of the DeKalb County Code which deal with “quality of life” issues related to infill construction in residential neighborhoods. These provisions limit construction activities and deliveries to certain hours and days, and address placement of dumpsters and portable toilets, drainage problems, protection of trees, retaining wall heights and placement, etc.

The commissioners tabled the proposed countywide infill ordinance amendments that would have applied a height formula to all infill homes to be constructed because no consensus could be reached on how best to structure the formula.

The infill overlay district ordinance which would permit all neighborhoods to petition to set up separate infill overlay districts was deferred to the Planning Commission’s January 11 meeting and to the Board of Commissioners evening meeting on January 24. This proposal requires residents to follow a petition procedure, similar to that in place for Traffic Calming, and obtain signatures of 60% of the owners, but does not allow the residents to set height limits.

According to Liz Beyer, former chair of the InFill Task Force, “The Task Force fully vetted the overlay idea and found far too many problems with it. In order for it to be fully effective, a neighborhood would have to be at

least a year ahead of any infill going into their neighborhood, and then have the time and energy to educate themselves and work through the process. (Even then, builders can stand up in opposition and the commissioners can vote the neighborhood's overlay down.)” Leafmore Creek Park Hills (www.leafmore-creekpark.org) and Sagamore Hills civic associations obtained overlay districts under the currently existing overlay process. The North Briarcliff Civic Association board will be considering this issue; **neighborhood input to the board would be welcomed.**

Dekalbinfill.org still exists; savedekalb.org is a new forum for DeKalb homeowners concerned about infill development. Local websites opposing the infill amendments exist at www.dekalbinfill.com and truthaboutinfill.com.

Liz Beyer has resigned as InFill Task Force co-chair and assumed responsibilities as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Private Streets: A January 10 County Commission vote was scheduled for a pair of proposals tabled seven times since February. These provisions would enable streets that don’t necessarily comply with county standards concerning width and setbacks. These streets would be totally maintained by homeowners’ groups. The proposal also allows gated communities and provides a petition procedure whereby an existing public street can be converted to a private street. A group of civic associations, including NBCA, is asking for proposal modifications. Private streets were at one time part of DeKalb code but were removed as unsatisfactory.

Reminder: According to DeKalb code, **all vehicles must be parked on a prepared surface, i.e. asphalt or cement** (not dirt, gravel, grass, etc).

FYI Leaders from about twenty central DeKalb neighborhoods met January 5 to talk about forming a new neighborhoods coalition as well as to discuss the impact a City of Dunwoody or a City of DeKalb would have.

REAL ESTATE

Through mid-December, the average home sale in the Hawthorne Elementary area during 2005 was 4 bedrooms, 3 full baths, plus a half bath, at \$361,076, on the market for 50 days. This info was provided by Amanda Fraser, THE FRASER TEAM, Keller Williams Realty, 404-513-8393.

Editor's calculations from data provided:

| Build date | # of houses | Avg # bdrm | Avg # baths | Avg sale price | Days on Mkt |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ALL | 45 | 3.9 | 2.8 | \$361,076.70 | 49.5 |
| Pre-1980 (avg 1962.5) | 39 | 3.7 | 2.6 | \$310,447.44 | 43.3 |
| Post-1980 (avg 1994.2) | 6 | 5.0 | 4.4 | \$690,166.70 | 90.2 |

This year Amanda says that she will offer seminars on "Home Selling for Seniors" and on real estate investing; she will provide a free book on staging your home for a high-priced sale to anyone who does a listing interview. She will be offering the ability to automatically notify potential buyers via e-mail of homes coming on the market that meet their criteria. In our active real estate market, it is good to know that some realtors are providing much needed public education. Beware of unsolicited inquiries and offers on your home. Through the grapevine, we have heard of one recent occasion when a developer/builder used someone who appeared to be an individual family to buy for them in our community. If you're getting unsolicited inquiries about your house, **the civic association would be interested in hearing about it.** Before making any decisions, speak with a real estate attorney, an appraiser and a trusted real estate agent. Often people are not getting market price for their home when they take a cash deal and their house doesn't go on the open market.

Have you noticed that Northbrook Apartments are now "AMLI North Briarcliff"? They were sold last fall. Completion on the second section is anticipated next fall. Hawthorne Civic Assn had been talking to Northbrook's owner about our thoughts on what to call our area; his marketing group liked the sound of our North Briarcliff idea. Evidently, so did AMLI.

TAXES

from a Dec 30 press release published on the county website

If a deed was recorded during 2005, the owner should have received a pre-printed form for the purpose of filing for the basic homestead exemption which provides significant property tax savings to homeowners. If the exemption application was not received, call 404-298-4000 to request an application or go to www.co.dekalb.ga.us/taxcommissioner to fill out an on-line application. Exemptions are not automatically granted nor do mortgage companies or any other entity file applications on behalf of property owners. Applications must be received by March 1 to qualify for 2006 tax relief. Taxpayers who have previously filed for homestead exemption do not need to reapply.

In addition to the basic homestead exemption, there are special exemptions for

citizens 62 years of age and older, determined by age and household income. There are also disability exemptions. Those wishing to apply for these exemptions must visit one of the three tax commissioner office locations, the closest one being 1358 Dresden Drive, 2 blocks east of the Brookhaven MARTA station.

March 1 is also the deadline for filing a real estate property tax return if a change was made to property affecting its value such as new construction or subdividing. This same tax return can be used to initiate an appeal of the value assigned to a property.

Also due March 1 are personal property tax returns, required from taxpayers owning a business, boat or aircraft on January 1.

NORTH BRIARCLIFF CIVIC ASSOCIATION

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Atlanta, GA 30345

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Signed articles in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Briarcliff Civic Association.

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Community Calendar



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| Feb 27 | Meet the Teachers meeting (see pg 3) |
| March 1 | Next NBCA board meeting, 7:30 pm |
| March 1 | Deadline: county tax returns, homestead filing |
| March 11 | Greenspace workday (TENTATIVE) |
| March 28 | Kindergarten Round-Up (see pg 3) |
| March 31 | Next NBCA newsletter submission deadline |
| April 29 | Community Social (TENTATIVE) |

If there's a neighborhood issue that has you concerned, e.g. traffic, sidewalks, litter, etc, please contact the NBCA board. Let's work together!