
Clairmont Heights

CIVIC ASSOCIATION NEWS

Summer 2008

Learn the facts about the PATH bicycle/pedestrian trail.
Visit the CHCA website www.clairmonthights.org/PATH which is updated regularly.

CHCA Board Members:

Nancy Ciliax
President
Transportation Chair
pres@clairmonthights.org

Charlie Bleau
Vice President
Zoning Chair

Jim Smith
Corresponding Secretary
ListServe Administrator
info@clairmonthights.org

Catherine Larson
Treasurer

Jeff Mercante
Parks Co-Chair

Tim Bryson
Recording Secretary

Diane Buch
Newsletter

Tom Kovarik
Website
Tom_kovarik@yahoo.com

Don't forget:
CHCA Annual Meeting
May 15th 7:00 PM

Location: North Decatur Presbyterian Church
611 Medlock Road at Scott Blvd. & North Decatur Road

If you are a resident of CHCA, sign in with proof of address, get a card and you can vote for the upcoming year's CHCA board members. Sign up to be a member – **it's just \$10/household.**

Agenda items/information tables:

- Bike Pedestrian Trail/Path
- Neighborhood Signs
- Traffic Control
- Development of N. Dekalb Mall, Old Cub Foods site, Suburban Plaza, Executive Park
- Medlock Park
- CEO, Commissioners Candidates Fair
- CHCA Website
- Plantings along Desmond, N. Superior, Mason Mill and Medlock Parks
- Sidewalk update
- Newsletter
- Nightclub ordinance

And more...

The purpose of our Association is to preserve the residential character of the Neighborhood and to foster an increased sense of community among its residents.

We need volunteers. The CHCA board meets monthly, attends meetings and committees, plants trees and flowers, manages the website and listserv, responds to emails and phone calls, oversees county projects, floodplain, sidewalks, traffic and more. Members of the CHCA board all work and have families and volunteer our time that we don't have. We need help from you. Instead of suggesting, volunteer.



Flooding



Although we've been in a drought for quite some time and there is a good chance it may continue, areas of our neighborhood still experience extreme flooding even during

moderate rain. The reason for this is that there is too much impervious surface – roads, parking lots, roofs, and driveways – and too little mitigation of runoff in our watershed basin. Under natural conditions, the soil and vegetation can absorb enough water so that it percolates slowly over time into the creeks. As a result of overdevelopment and/or inadequate stormwater management, too much of the water from rainfall goes directly into the streams and creeks through the storm drains. That causes flooding of low-lying properties, not to mention trashing, erosion, sedimentation, and polluting of the streambeds. So, apart from the losses to property owners as well as tax payers who pay for FEMA buyouts, other side effects impact everyone's quality of life. They include flooding of parks and greenspaces, loss of trees that fall into the creeks, invasions of non-native species like privet that fill in the gaps, and loss of the small fish and other aquatic life on which wildlife like birds and mammals depend.

Our neighborhood lies about two thirds of the way downstream in the South Fork Peachtree Creek Watershed. That means that a large portion of the water from rain falls upstream of us. And because unfettered commercial and residential development has been allowed in the upstream areas as well, the rain water becomes a tidal wave by the time it reaches us. A map of the watershed, including the major streams and a satellite image overlay showing impervious surfaces, can be found on our website at the following url. <http://clairmontheights.org/watershed>

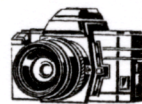
Can anything be done? Although it would have been easier had there been adequate stormwater ordinances before all the development occurred over the last fifty or sixty years, there are opportunities to retrofit commercial, residential and public properties.

Redevelopments offer us the opportunity to have large commercial properties retrofitted with stormwater structures that reduce run off from their parking lots and roofs. They are required by county ordinance now to manage stormwater from the site. In addition, we could also ask them to consider grass pavers for parking or some other innovative ways to reduce impervious surface.

Commercial enterprises get a break on the stormwater utility fee if they reduce impervious surface. Runoff mitigation at these sites could have huge impact. Take a look at some of the developments/redevelopments in our area at this url on our website: <http://clairmontheights.org/development> Please consider attending meetings or sending emails or letters to our commissioners.

Neighborhood streets and yards. Almost all stormwater runoff from roofs, driveways, and roads goes straight to our creeks via storm drains, carrying with it any trash in the street as well as yard and vehicle pollutants. A neighborhood campaign – perhaps in coordination with upstream neighborhoods – could help mitigate this with street clean ups to remove trash before it goes into the creeks, rain garden and rain barrel promotions to catch the rain from our roofs, and tree plantings. Tree leaves, branches, and trunks catch a lot of rain and it is helpful to have them reach out over roofs, driveways, and roads. By the way, if you observe that a storm drain needs cleaning out, you can call the county at 311. They should put you through to the Roads & Drainage department who will send someone out to inspect it and schedule a cleaning or repair as needed according to their assessment of its urgency.

Public Spaces. Many of our parks are honeycombed with compacted dirt trails, not to mention dirt areas used as parking lots. Our heavy clay soil under compaction becomes nearly as impervious as concrete. The Parks department will soon begin asking for public input on a new set of master plans for the parks. It would help to have them to plan for AND implement some sort of trail and parking management system so that vegetation is protected and runoff minimized. The community can also push the county to implement restoration of streambanks using natural materials as well as installation -- again with natural materials -- of stormwater detention ponds along the creeks. It has been done in other parts of the country. Why not here?



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PATH Update

On April 7, the PATH Foundation, under contract to DeKalb County, began construction on phase one of the South Peachtree Creek Trail from Medlock Park to Mason Mill Park. The primary purpose of the trail, according to commissioner Jeff Rader, is not only recreation; it is to provide connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. Phase one ends at the stone bridge over Burnt Fork Creek. Completion of phase one is estimated to take three months.

Phase two of the project would connect the stone bridge to McConnell Drive via a tunnel under the railroad tracks. The county and the PATH Foundation have received approval from CSX to prepare engineering plans for the tunnel to submit to CSX for final approval. The other proposed segments in our area which would connect Medlock Park to North DeKalb mall are still many years and many meetings in the future.

An oversight committee that includes community representatives from CHCA, MANA, and the Medlock Floodplain Coalition met with Commissioner Rader and the PATH Foundation on April 18 to review construction issues and will continue to meet monthly until construction is finished.

Most of the clearance for the trail has been completed. Silt fencing was installed throughout the construction route to prevent the disturbed soil from being carried by runoff into the creeks. Approximately sixty five pines and sixty hardwoods over 6-7" in diameter were cut. After construction, the access road from Willivee Place will be replanted as will areas on either side of the trail itself. They will monitor the plantings until they are established and the soil stabilized. In addition to removing any trash or debris along the route, PATH will also remove two large pieces of loose sewer pipe and a junk motorcycle that have been sitting in the woods for years. PATH will have responsibility for maintenance of the trail into the future.

For more information and updates, join the the Clairmont Heights listserv (info@clairmonthheights.org) and check our website at <http://clairmonthheights.org/path>

Garden Club

The CHCA board is in possession of a three ring binder with over one hundred typewritten and handwritten notes from meetings of the "Clairmont Heights Evening Garden Club" from 1957 to 1976. It is the earliest known community organization in our neighborhood. There are gaps in the records and residents with old documents or memories of this or other early neighborhood organizations are invited to share them with the CHCA board. In particular, we would be delighted to see records or hear recollections of the "Civic Club", "Clairmont Heights Garden Club" and "West Clairmont Heights Garden Club" as well as the "scrapbooks" and "yearbooks" mentioned in the club minutes.

The earliest surviving page is dated March 7, 1957 and records "the regular monthly meeting of the Clairmont Heights neighborhood Garden Club." That implies the club had been started earlier. The meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Donald J. Langland. Edith Langland is the secretary of the last meeting recorded on March 11, 1976.

The mission of the club was "beautification of our homes and gardens." The notes indicate the club hosted many social events at private homes, local restaurants and occasionally at resorts like Stone Mt Inn. At the same time, the club actively undertook many projects to benefit the neighborhood and made many donations of both craft projects such as floral arrangements, Christmas gifts and terrariums as well as money to local charities, especially hospitals and childrens' homes as far away as Milledgeville. The club arranged for planting of trees like dogwoods and redbuds in the neighborhood. They even arranged for clean-up and beautification of the Desmond/Densley corner and local park areas just as the present civic association does as part of the annual MANA/CHCA/DeKalb Clean Up Day. At one point (October 10, 1963) they tried to get the "Civic Club" (also referred to as the "Civic Association" of which a Mr. Jackson was president) to get the county to help the neighborhood buy an empty lot at the corner of Densley and Desmond when the owner declined to let them clean it up. The county, it was reported, would not help, although the county did help clean up a "sewer" (storm drain?) on Desmond. In addition, they organized home tours and field trips, attended film screenings and lectures, and produced neighborhood flower shows, fashion shows, and Christmas door decoration competitions. Invited guest speakers spoke on diverse issues, mostly having to do with gardening and home decoration, but there was reference also to talks from county police representatives on crime prevention.



Clean Up Day

This year on Saturday, April 19, 2008, CHCA joined MANA to take advantage of Keep DeKalb Beautiful (KDB)'s annual cleanup campaign. The county provided trash bags and tools and guaranteed pickup of whatever we collected. This is also part of a national movement, Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup initiative.

KDB invited community groups to clean up dirty streets, waterways, and illegal dump sites as well as parks, schoolyards, MARTA bus stops and other public spaces in DeKalb County. MANA provided bagels and coffee at Medlock School and also served as the distribution point for the county's trash bags, t-shirts, and tools. CHCA volunteers cleaned up Melton Park off Desmond Drive as well as the street side of Desmond Drive from Webster to Densley. In addition, thanks to the generous donation by Home Depot on Lawrenceville Highway, we planted 25 azaleas on Desmond and in the median islands on North Superior. Volunteers at Melton Park included Charlie Bleau, Catherine Larson, and Tim Bryson from the CHCA board as well as Valerie Boss, who cleared the original trails in Melton Park. Volunteers planting on Desmond included Jim Smith from the CHCA board as well as John Maynard and John Drann who also did the planting on N Superior. Sharon Johnson and Jeff Mercante (also on the CHCA board) helped with clean up near Medlock Park. It was a beautiful day and we all enjoyed being outdoors with our civic-minded friends. We also appreciated those who stopped to say thank you. Photos can be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.flickr.com/gp/70278809@N00/90DeN9>

Subdivision History

A look at the plats submitted to the county before construction reveal some interesting facts about our neighborhood's history. A plat is a map, drawn to scale, showing the divisions of a piece of land. The original plats

for Clairmont Heights subdivision dating back to 1946 are on file at the DeKalb County Courthouse.

According to the assessor's records, Emory Woods was part of the original Clairmont Heights project. I believe Emory Woods was constructed first, in the early 1940's. At that time, the corner of N Decatur and Clairmont Road is described as "woodland." After that, the sequence of development seems to have been the following:

Clairmont Heights proper: N Superior to Superior Place, Park Lane to Superior Place, Webster Drive to Clairmont Circle, and Clairmont Circle to Emory Woods.

Clairmont Heights "North Park Addition": Park Ln north of Superior Pl, Densley, and Woodmoor. According to the plats, Woodmoor Place was originally to be called Cauba Place.

Clairmont Heights "North Park Addition Section Two": N Superior from Superior Pl up to the end (Heritage Heights entry), Desmond from Superior to Park, and Webster from Clairmont Circle to Desmond.

There were "restrictions or covenants" placed on the properties that were in effect for about twenty years from the time of construction. Among those covenants are prohibitions against "noxious or offensive activity." In addition, "no dwelling costing less than \$10,000 shall be permitted on any lot in the tract." More specifically, "No temporary house, small trailer or tent shall be erected on said property to be used for residential or church purposes, and no lot shall be used for schools or kindergartens." That is, "Said property shall be used for single family residence purposes only."

We noted also that a creek or spring "branch" is noted as running through the two northern corner lots on N Superior at Desmond and another further down around 699 N Superior.

Photos of these plats together with fairly complete transcriptions of the texts attached to them may be seen at the following url.

<http://www.flickr.com/gp/70278809@N00/tMM1G3>

We apologize for the less than 100% clarity or resolution of these photos. They were taken with an early digital camera in the year 2000. If you want to check out the originals, see the following assessor maps that show the book and page numbers where the subdivision plans are kept.

<https://dklbweb.dekalbga.org/taxAssessor/maps/18060.pdf>

<https://dklbweb.dekalbga.org/taxAssessor/maps/18051.pdf>



N. Decatur/Emory: 2126 N. Decatur Rd.
404.320.0101
Midtown: 985 Monroe Drive at 10th Street
404.917.1100
Open 7 days a week

Website Revamp

Thanks to Tom Kovarik who set up our website on a more flexible and powerful software platform called Drupal, the CHCA website (<http://clairmonthheights.org>) has a new look. Thanks to the intensive and extensive work of CHCA board members on behalf of the community over the year, there's lots of substance on the website as well. In addition to mirroring the listserv posts, the website has an events calendar and detailed articles in the following categories:

- **Issues** such as the PATH trail, Flooding, and Traffic Calming
- **Development Projects** impacting our area
- **History** of our area as far back as the early 19th century up to the original subdivision plats and early community organizations
- **Maps** including tax assessor maps, aerial photos from the 1940s onward, and interactive maps of the PATH trail and our watershed.
- **Community Contacts** for the County and other relevant entities
- **Activities** such as our annual Clean Up Days.

If you log in, you can post comments and subscribe to our RSS feed so that you receive notice of any updates by email.

Neighborhood-wide Traffic Control Planning Meeting

District Commissioner, Jeff Rader, and DeKalb County Roads and Drainage Director, John Gurbal, have met with residents of Clairmont Heights and other neighborhoods concerning plans for traffic control (not traffic calming) in

their area. The Clairmont Heights Civic Association has scheduled a meeting for interested residents at the North Decatur Presbyterian Church on **Thursday May 22th from 7-9 PM.**

Traffic Control consist of working with the County and possibly the State Department of Transportation to install signage and other devices (examples include: no- turns, no right turn, no left turn, one way streets, and do not enter signs) that serve to decrease or exclude cut-through traffic from residential areas. Residents of Sagamore Hills have already taken advantage of traffic control measures on an interim study basis in their neighborhood.

Development and re-development is on-going in our area. This development will lead to increased traffic, and in turn increased cut-through traffic on our residential streets. To give you an idea of the amount of development, current projects underway or planned include: Sembler's mix-used project, COSTCO at North DeKalb Mall, Suburban Plaza, the Lou Sohb Ford site, large scale expansion underway at both Emory and the CDC, increased service plans at the VA Hospital, and various medium to large scale residential projects within a ½ to one mile radius.

The amount of traffic we experience now and the speeds at which cut-through drivers drive degrade our residential quality of life. This is our opportunity to address the problem in a very effective way that minimizes physical changes to our streets and there is no monetary cost to residents.

What are your ideals? How would you decrease or exclude cut-through traffic in Clairmont Heights? Where would you place no turn signs? Are you in favor of any one-way streets? Come and have your ideas, thoughts and concerns recorded and work with your neighbors to develop a traffic control plan for our neighborhood. We will be using large maps and a facilitated discussion to develop a plan to submit to Commissioner Rader and the Roads and Drainage Department.

If you live in Clairmont Heights within the area of Willivee Drive West to Clairmont Road and from the Heritage Hills Subdivision/Desmond Drive South to North Decatur Road, please consider attending, and providing input at this important meeting.

If you live in the Clairmont Heights area but not within the above boundaries please contact the Medlock Area Neighborhood Association for information on traffic control planning in their area.



Current Development Projects

- North DeKalb Mall - Charlie Hendon, owner of North DeKalb Mall, has called for a meeting with all interested neighborhood residents, tentatively set for Tuesday, May 13. This latest plan does include the Costco and does not involve the floodplain. Beyond that, not much detail has been forthcoming. A small group of representatives from surrounding neighborhoods will be meeting with Mr. Hendon next week to give everybody a heads up on what will be presented at the larger public meeting. Please stay tuned for a final date/time/location on the large, public meeting.
- Suburban Plaza - Since our meeting with Selig last year, we've not heard much about further progress on plans for redeveloping Suburban Plaza. The last concept we heard being discussed involved putting 4~5 story condos (possibly with retail underneath) along the back property line (all existing structures to be removed), with more retail/office further out towards N. Decatur with some greenspace in the middle. Most, if not all tenants are on month-to-month leases, with no word as to which ones would be offered space in the new configuration.
- Lou Sobh Ford - An article in the Atlanta Business Chronicle (<http://tinyurl.com/4y2uet>) states that the Lou Sobh Ford property has been sold to a developer based in Roswell to be developed as a 300,000 sq. ft. shopping center. By comparison, North Dekalb Mall is 628,029 sq. ft. No contact with neighborhoods has occurred.
- Cub Foods - The majority of the property downhill from the Home Depot has been bought by a pharmacist from New Jersey who moved down here last year to be near his wife's family. He has two main redevelopment projects -
 - 1) Tear down the part of the strip mall parallel to L'ville Hwy and rebuild it with the existing restaurant at the end it is currently at, but with a "banquet facility" taking up the rest of that part of the mall, down to the nail salon near the interior corner. This "banquet facility" would have one main hall that could be separated into smaller rooms and also a few smaller meeting rooms upstairs. The projected clients would be weddings and professional conferences.
 - 2) Build a stand-alone hotel in the corner where the car "Quick Lube" business is located. This would be a Hilton/Marriott/Ramada level hotel aimed at business travelers. The structure is planned for 7 stories with a helipad on the roof.

The "banquet facility" does not require any special rezoning or permits to proceed and demolition is

expected to start shortly. The hotel as planned will require a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) for 7 stories (5 are permitted) and for the helipad. The Valley Brook resident's association that backs up to the project site is very opposed to both the extra height and the helipad. CHCA will stay in the loop and offer support as requested, but is not leading the meetings.

- Executive Park - A public meeting was scheduled for April 29th, after this newsletter went to press.

Good Bye and Good Luck

It's time to leave my position as CHCA President and pass on the responsibilities to some other poor, I mean lucky, soul. Four years as president has taught me many things. I am thankful for neighbors who plant gardens in their front yards so I can appreciate them when I walk my dogs, clean up after their dogs, plant trees, clean up trash, sit on their front porch and call out to passersby, have neighborhood parties, volunteer for civic projects, walk on the new sidewalk on Desmond, scooter, bike or walk to work.

We've got a great neighborhood.

Most of all I'm thankful for my board members Tim Bryson, Catherine Larson, Charlie Bleau, Jim Smith, Jeff Mercante, John Maynard and Diane Buch. They are a dedicated hard working bunch and I rely on them daily for information and suggestions and they always come through. If I have one wish for the next president of CHCA it is that his/her board is as outstanding as mine has been.

What is it like to be president of CHCA? Well, you get to hear a lot of comments, complaints and opinions from your neighbors. Some are good, some are helpful and some are ridiculous, but all are taken to the monthly board meetings and discussed. There is usually controversy involved, because most people don't get involved in their civic associations unless there is a problem. I've received the most comments and email about two things: the bike/pedestrian trail and development.

The bicycle/pedestrian trail through Medlock/Mason Mill parks has held the most controversy this past year. While the Three Forks Alliance claims to represent what the neighborhood wants, they really only represent a very small number of CHCA residents, some of which live in Heritage Heights and on Willivee Place. I've make a point of asking every neighbor I run into throughout our neighborhood what they think of the trail and the majority think it will be a great asset to the neighborhood, and I agree. The trail will connect Medlock and Mason Mill Parks, the newly expanded library, and eventually the Nature Preserve, the Horse Farm, Emory, Sage Hill Shopping Center and



beyond. It is unfortunate that the Three Forks Alliance has spread so much misinformation, but the CHCA has countered that, thanks to Tim Bryson, with an incredibly informative website. Everything you want to know about the trail is posted there, and it's all factual. CHCA board members do more than give TV and newspaper interviews. They have gone into the park to take out native plants in the path of the trail to be replanted when it is finished. The CHCA board members regularly walk the trail to be sure things are progressing according to plan and attend PATH oversight committee meetings. While the construction is messy, the end result will be a valuable asset to our neighborhood. Medlock and Mason Mill parks are public greenspace areas belonging to everyone, including seniors, families, children, bicyclists, walkers and joggers.

The CHCA board also keeps an eye on development around us. Our board members attend as many meetings as humanly possible, sometimes on very short notice. We're members of all kinds of zoning, development, floodplain and oversight committees. Our commissioners Rader and Gannon know where Clairmont Heights is. Just a couple of years ago Druid Hills was the only civic association consulted in this area. Now CHCA is too, thanks to our board members. Because of that, we have a say in what happens around us. We're also actively involved in committees at Emory, because what happens at Emory affects us in every way – our quality of living, traffic, development and housing prices.

When you vote for your CHCA board members on May 15, think about all that they do, and vote for members that will continue to represent the entire neighborhood on a variety of issues, not just their own self interest. Thank them for giving their time. They all have jobs and families to juggle along with their board responsibilities. Good luck in the coming year. I look forward to not being CHCA president, and to meeting you while out gardening, walking, jogging, bicycling and having fun.

**COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15, 7PM
AT N. DECATUR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.
VOTE FOR YOUR NEW CHCA BOARD MEMBERS.**

Candidates Fair

**Thursday, June 5th, 2008 7-9 PM
Greek Orthodox Church/ Hellenic Community
Center
2500 Clairmont Road NE, Atlanta**

Dekalb County's Civic Association Network(CAN) is sponsoring this event so that citizens can meet the candidates, talk with them one-on-one, hear their vision for Dekalb County, and learn about their experience. This is all to better prepare and educate you, the voter, for the upcoming elections.

The Primary election is July 15, with early voting held July 7-12th. Voter registration deadline for the Primary is June 16th. Candidates for the following offices have been invited:

DEKALB COUNTY:

Board of Commissioners, Districts 1&6
Board of Education, Districts 2,4, & 8
Sheriff
Tax Commissioner

GEORGIA:

House, Districts 57, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, & 85
Senate, Districts 40, 41, & 42
Public Service Commission- 2 Seats

FEDERAL/CONGRESS:

Senate- 1 Seat
Representative, Congressional Districts 4&5

COURT SYSTEM:

9 Different Seats

More information: www.dekalbpolitics.org or
CAN@northbriarcliff.org

Citizens will be able to meet the candidates and ask questions. For residents of Dekalb County this is a great opportunity to get involved and to hear the candidates' positions on various issues. Citizens can also provide information to the candidates about the concerns of Dekalb residents, and the issues in the communities they hope to represent. Depending on the number of candidates qualifying, there could be as many as 100 candidates attending the event. This Fair is a good way for citizens to participate in the elective process. A person can stay the full two hours or come for just 10 minutes. Neighbors can talk to all candidates or just those in whom they have an interest. They don't have to wait through presentations on issues that don't affect them.





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Clairmont Heights Civic Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Clairmont Heights Civic Association invites all members of our Neighborhood to become members. Get Informed & Involved!

Membership runs annually. Dues are \$10.00. Make checks payable to Clairmont Heights Civic Association.

Name: _____

Street Address: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Please send this application form and check to
Catherine Larson: 855 N. Superior Ave. Decatur, GA 30033