

MHHA ♦ CONNECTION



Winter 2006 ♦ Volume 11, Issue 1

www.merryhills.com

A quarterly newsletter by the Merry Hills Homeowners Association

What's New in 2006

You will see some changes this year in how the Merry Hills Homeowners Association (MHHA) operates. To better communicate with you, MHHA board members are taking the following initiatives:

- We are in the process of securing a “hotline” number that you can call to report the occurrence of a crime to our Neighborhood Watch or to contact MHHA.
- We plan to use an automated phone service to send crime alerts and important messages to those without e-mail. We will continue to send newsletters, crime alerts, and other notices by e-mail as well.
- We have created a new delivery team to distribute newsletters and other items. Several of our board members and neighbors have already joined the delivery team, but we need more volunteers on each street. Will you consider joining the delivery team that makes sure all our neighbors are kept informed of our activities?

What events and programs are planned this year? MHHA will have a general meeting on May 7 and an annual meeting on November 12. We need a coordinator and volunteers for our popular Block Party on September 10. (See *Volunteers Needed* on page 4.) Mark your calendar now for these events. Larry Gilger has again volunteered to coordinate our flag program to place a flag at your mailbox in recognition of Flag Day and July 4th.

Debra Edelson, our current Zoning Chair, will keep us informed of proposed changes in zoning, land use, and development of property in our area. As pointed out by State Representative Mike Jacobs recently, an important function of a group like ours is its ability to address zoning and other issues with government officials.

Please keep all these activities in mind when you consider renewing your membership or joining as a member this year.

2006 Membership Drive Underway for Merry Hills Homeowners Association

We appreciate your continued support and welcome new and returning members. Membership is on a calendar year basis, January to December. Dues are \$20 per year for each household. To renew an existing membership for 2006 or to become a new member, make your check payable to Merry Hills Homeowners Association and mail it with the following form to: Treasurer, Merry Hills Homeowners Association, P.O. Box 98490, Atlanta, GA 30359. You can also complete this form online at www.merryhills.com and send it with your check to the treasurer. In addition to money, it takes volunteers to keep our association strong. Please lend any skills or time you can.

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New Member Renewing Member Owner Renter

Name(s): _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

List my household in the membership directory: exactly as above, or as follows: (does not list E-mail addresses):

E-mail address(es): _____

I am interested in volunteering for:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board position | <input type="checkbox"/> Section representative | <input type="checkbox"/> Block party |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter or website | <input type="checkbox"/> Delivery team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming newcomers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Crime News

- In late January a break-in to a residence on Merry Lane occurred.
- In December and again in February, a series of break-ins occurred in nearby neighborhoods along LaVista Road and Briarcliff Road. Arrests were made in the December burglaries—two adults and five juveniles with stolen property and a vehicle still in their possession.
- Neighborhood Watch Coordinator needed. Consider volunteering for this essential task. You need not be a homeowner or MHHA member to fill this job—only a resident.

Crime Update 6/1/05 to 1/15/06

A report from the DeKalb Police Crime Awareness program showed officers responded to 56 false alarms and 17 requests to check a house or location in our community. Also listed in the report were the following incidents:

Bramble Road

8/23/05 Suspicious Person

8/31/05 Suspicious Person

Christmas Lane

9/5/05 Fraud (identity)

9/30/05 Abandoned Vehicle

10/3/05 Abandoned Vehicle

10/7/05 Loud Party/Noise

11/28/05 Suspicious Vehicle

Holly Lane

7/2/05 Loud Party/Noise

7/11/05 Suspicious Vehicle

Suspicious Person (3)

Jody Lane

6/11/05 Suspicious Person

Patrol Request (3)

Lavista Road (2002-2066)

6/25/05 Loud Party/Noise

Merry Lane

11/4/05 Abandoned Vehicle (impounded)

N. Druid Hills Road (2497, 2515, 2771-2801)

8/11/05 Suspicious Person

9/24/05 Disturbance

N. Holly Lane

--

Pinetree Circle

--

Reindeer Drive

--

Wembley Court

10/27/05 Loud Party/Noise

For Safety's Sake

Many of our residents walk and jog on our neighborhood streets. For safety's sake, observe the following precautions when walking or jogging. Parents, encourage your children to follow these safety rules.

- On a street with no sidewalks, always walk on the side facing traffic. Use sidewalks where available.
- Cross at a pedestrian crosswalk.
- After dark, wear a reflective vest or band to increase visibility. Add reflective material to your stroller. Use a reflective pet leash or collar. You can buy reflective items at Target and REI Sporting Goods stores.

To report a crime or suspicious activity:

- Call 911. Give your name. Describe the event: where, when, how, and who. Tell if a crime is currently in progress. Describe the suspect and vehicle, if one was involved.
- After calling the police, call or e-mail an MHHA officer or section representative and provide the same details so a neighborhood alert can be distributed if necessary.

Infill Overlay District Added to Zoning Code

The proposed county-wide infill housing ordinance to regulate the construction of "McMansions" has been set aside by the DeKalb Board of Commissioners (BOC). The BOC had been asked to change the current zoning code to prevent such problems as excessive height and grading that have occurred with the replacement of a demolished house. Because of strong opposition to the county-wide ordinance by realtors and other individuals, the BOC instead revised the zoning code to allow for the creation of an infill overlay district by neighborhood petition.

What will be the result if a neighborhood succeeds in creating an infill overlay district? An infill house constructed in a residential infill overlay district cannot be taller than 28 feet, measured from the front door threshold of the demolished house to the highest point of the roof of the replacement house. The front door threshold of the replacement house cannot be more than two feet above that of the original house.

How does a neighborhood create an infill overlay district? A neighborhood must submit an application to the county Planning Department along with an initial petition signed by at least 20 percent of the property owners within the proposed district boundaries. The application will go through the full process of public hearings before the Community Council, Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners. The final petition must be signed by 55 percent of the property owners in the proposed district before it will be heard by the Planning Commission.

More Zoning and Development News

- An ordinance to permit the construction of private streets is being considered by the Board of Commissioners. The ordinance could result in the gating of existing communities, dividing established neighborhoods. A private street ordinance could result in higher density development.
- Construction has stopped on North Druid Hills Road at the site of Congregation Shaarei Shamayim's new building. The site remains under the ownership of the congregation, but the completion of the building is in question, according to Rabbi Mark Kunis, the congregation's religious leader.
- Gatchell Home property — no news to report.

State Legislators Meet with MHHA Leaders

In December, leaders from several central DeKalb neighborhood associations, including Merry Hills, attended a meeting with State Senator David Adelman, and State Representatives Mike Jacobs and Mary Margaret Oliver. Topics discussed included City of Dunwoody and City of DeKalb proposals, the effectiveness of the current DeKalb County system of government, and pending DeKalb County legislation. A follow-up meeting is anticipated in March.

Curbside Recycling Fees Reduced by \$25

On January 1, DeKalb County eliminated \$25 of the initial \$55 fee for residents joining the new voluntary curbside recycling collection program. It now costs only \$30 to begin curbside recycling. The fee covers the cost of a mixed paper recycling bin and a supply of 100 co-mingled blue bags. Recyclables are collected on Wednesdays. To sign up for the program, call (404) 294-2900 or see the DeKalb County Public Works website, www.co.dekalb.ga.us.

Meanwhile, the fee for general residential trash collection increased \$40/year to \$265 on January 1 to cover increased operating costs without reducing service. Twice-weekly garbage collection and weekly yard trash collection continue in 2006. The trash collection fee is included in a home's annual property taxes.

Code Enforcement Update

Our DeKalb County Center Precinct no longer assigns an officer to investigate code enforcement problems. These are now handled centrally by DeKalb County's Code Enforcement Unit. Call (404) 417-1240 to report property maintenance problems such as the following: cars parked on grass, grass or weeds higher than 12 inches, junk cars or commercial vehicles at a residence, open storage of trash in carport. You must provide the address of the problem residence, but you can do so anonymously.

Note the case number and officer who is assigned to investigate the complaint so you can follow up on its status. An officer has up to 30 days to inspect the property.

Barking Dog Problems

DeKalb County now handles barking dog problems through its Animal Control office. Call Animal Control at (404) 294-2996. You must provide your name, address, and phone number—an anonymous complaint is not possible.

The DeKalb County noise ordinance states that domesticated or caged animals may not make any vocalizations for more than 15 minutes without interruption or more than 30 minutes if intermittent.

Neighborhood News

- A flashing school zone traffic light will be added to LaVista Road near Torah Day School, according to State Representative Mike Jacobs.
- Jody Lane, from LaVista Road to Holly Lane, is among the first one-third of the new sidewalks to be built with the DeKalb County transportation bond funds approved by voters in November 2005. The remaining projects are scheduled to be constructed in 2007 and 2008.
- Toco Hill Promenade has been sold to Edens and Avant. The property is anchored by a Publix with a long-term lease expiring 2024. The new owner has not indicated any plans for future redevelopment. The previous owners had announced plans to donate space to DeKalb County Police for use as a mini-precinct; however, this did not come to fruition.
- Loehmann's Plaza is currently renegotiating leases and under redevelopment according to its owner, Regency Centers. No further details were provided.

Our Neighbors

Ashley Carraway, Christmas Lane, is a new member of the Merry Hills Homeowners Association.

Edith Westbrook has moved from Holly Lane to a retirement home in Lawrenceville.

Adeline Bauman, Reindeer Drive, passed away in December.

Isaac Alvo, N. Holly Lane, passed away in December.

Nellie Dolan, passed away in December. Nellie resided on Holly Lane with her daughter Betty Jean.

Welcoming new neighbors

We are resuming our new neighbor welcome program. If you are aware of a neighbor who has recently moved here, or if you are a new neighbor whose household we have missed welcoming recently, please let us know by sending a message to welcome@merryhills.com or by contacting a board member or section representative.

More Volunteers Needed to Sustain MHHA

MHHA exists because neighbors like you volunteer their time and energy to sustain its activities. Please remember that our activities are carried out solely by unpaid volunteers. Call or e-mail a board member to volunteer your time or services.

The following streets are currently without section representatives. If you can attend monthly board meetings and live on any of the following streets, please consider serving as a section representative:

- 1246-1341 Christmas, 1724 and 1725 Pine Tree Circle (Section 3)
- 1348-1448 Christmas (Section 4)
- 1260-1402 Holly (Section 6)
- 1406-1519 Holly, 2487-2515 N. Druid Hills (Section 7)

If you cannot or do not wish to attend monthly meetings, you can still volunteer as:

- A neighborhood watch coordinator to maintain our system of communication about criminal activity.
- A member of our delivery team, especially if you can deliver to any of the following addresses: 1246-1341 Christmas, 1348-1448 Christmas, and 1260-1402 Holly.
- A coordinator or volunteer for a Block Party in the fall.
- A traffic and pedestrian safety chair to advocate for improvements in our area.
- A parks chair to advocate for public park facilities that benefit our residents.

MHHA Calendar

The MHHA board is scheduled to meet at 7:00 p.m. on the following Tuesdays during 2006: March 7, April 4, June 13, July 11, August 8, October 10, and December 5. Call Flo Wolf or send a message to president@merryhills.com for meeting details if you wish to attend a board meeting.

Please mark your calendar for the following MHHA events:

- May 7: Spring General Meeting
- September 10: Block Party
- November 12: Fall Annual Meeting

Announcements

- Glenn School Children's Clothing Sale on March 3, 9:30am-7pm, and March 4, 9am-2pm. At Glenn Memorial Youth & Activities Building, 1669 North Decatur Road. For more info, call (770) 331-5731.
- Atlanta Purim Parade on March 12, 11am. Parade route from Toco Hills Shopping Center on LaVista Road to Arbervista Drive. Traffic on LaVista Road will be closed intermittently by police escort. Purim Carnival at Congregation Beth Jacob, 11am to 3pm. For more info, call (678) 244-6648.

Thank you to members of the delivery team that delivers this newsletter to our homes, including: Tracy Alexander, Arlene Gross, Erin DiChiara, Tracy and Doug Callas, Shirley Brickman, Ariana Fass, Hannah and Simon Ghertner, Nelda and Victor Rousso, Linda Billingsley, Larry Gilger, Sharon Harris, Marcy Karon

MHHA Connection

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