



February 26, 2009

Dear Members of the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods;

Many of the issues that concerned the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods (“SSCN”) in 2007 continued in 2008. Each year we ask ourselves: What is the proper role for the SSCN in our community? Were we successful last year? How can we better serve our membership this year? With the current economic reality, preservation of our home values, serenity of our neighborhoods and stability of our city concern us all. We must take care not to fall for the expedient, simple, or cheap solutions that may address the immediate situation but underestimate the long range effects.

The City of Sandy Springs is reported to be on firm financial ground. Our City Council is honorable and genuine in their efforts to do what they believe is best for the City. They work hard, serve tirelessly and try to do the right thing. Last year, the City Council took a strong stand against the visual blight of offsite billboards. They invested heavily in new road paving and more sidewalks. The police force was strengthened with new leadership and appropriate discipline for ethical lapses, and our emergency services were staffed with well-trained personnel. A future site for our City Hall at a geographic center was secured, and a massive redevelopment proposed for Glenridge Drive was denied rezoning. These were victories for us all!

When SSCN was established in 1999, there was no City government and the homeowners in our area were being overwhelmed by well-funded commercial interests. Those interests understood the zoning process and hired professionals to make their arguments to the Fulton County Commission. SSCN was created as a response to the relentless overbuilding some called “progress.” SSCN would be a consolidating voice for homeowners who had more than short term financial gain as their goal. At that time, our trees were disappearing, our roads were being overwhelmed, our parks were meager and our future was bleak.

Things are better now that we have our own government – but we all will only have as good a government “as we can keep” - to paraphrase Ben Franklin. We all must participate if it is to serve and protect our interests. We all must insist that our leaders allow us to do so. SSCN’s free monthly newsletter, the SandySpringsCouncil.org website, and the “Get Smart Sandy Springs” data base found there are some of the steps we have taken to help you participate in an efficient way.

The “rub” arises when homeowners and the City disagree on what is “good” for the residential neighborhoods. Those disagreements continue to occur in the areas of zoning, redevelopment, and transportation and land use planning. Managing these issues is the most emotional aspect of the City Council’s function, because these are the issues that literally hit us “where we live.”

There were some disagreements in the last year: Ignoring vigorous and well-organized neighborhood opposition, the City Council approved a major encroachment into the neighborhoods for a parochial school’s isolated athletic facilities - including a lighted stadium. They approved the construction of an office building at a corner on Lake Forrest that is currently

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totally residential. They also approved the construction of four 300-foot radio antennas for purely commercial interests, with no ties to the community, in the middle of one of our few green areas. Is this good for the surrounding neighborhoods?

Other controversies have arisen over:

- aggressive expansion efforts by another private school into the surrounding neighborhood in direct contradiction of their prior written promises
- Master Transportation Plan proposals for the widening of numerous secondary streets not wanted by the area residents
- refusals by the City Council to follow the recommendations of an experienced citizen planning commission
- deviations from the Comprehensive Land Use Plan adopted citywide
- the method used to determine the actual height of residential structures as code requirements to control the “McMansion” craze

SSCN will support our members in the issues that affect their neighborhoods. Our purpose is to pay attention to City proposals that affect our members, to keep our members aware of those plans, and to assist our members in presenting their views to the City when invited. We provide an extensive knowledge of these areas of City government - knowledge grown from experience and provided to our members without charge. SSCN’s leadership has no financial interest in any actions we support. We remain totally volunteer and are all residents of Sandy Springs.

SSCN’s primary mission is to do all we can to make our city a better place for us all. With your participation, we will continue in this mission. Together we all can help Sandy Springs grow in a smart way, that enhances our lives, adds value to our homes and keeps our community vibrant as we evolve from a 1960’s bedroom community to a city with an identity all its own.

Please plan to join the SSCN Board of Directors and officers at the annual meeting of the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods at City Hall, on March 25, 2009, and beginning at 7:00 PM.

Sincerely,

The Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods, Inc.

Larry Young, President