

Letter from the President – 2011
Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods

Dear Members:

The last year was a relatively quiet period with our community still feeling the effects of the economic shock that began in 2008. As with much of our entire region, we saw minimal new development and therefore found fewer “traditional” issues in dispute. Signs of renewal are slowly beginning to reappear. I believe most of our members would generally agree that the City is still moving forward in a positive way.

In our ongoing effort to provide up-to-date information to you, we continue to revise our "Get Smart Sandy Springs" database available on our website – SandySpringsCouncil.org. This database identifies and summarizes the votes of the City Council that we believe impact our mission - working for the improvement of the neighborhoods of Sandy Springs.

There were some issues to remember. Early in the year the City attempted to spur redevelopment by designating portions of Roswell Road a “Redevelopment Area & Opportunity Zone” seeking State funded incentives for new jobs. Residents originally included in this area did not think they lived in a “slum” or “blighted” area as required for that program. In the face of vigorous citizen response, the City redrew the zone by removing any owner-occupied properties from the area.

Opposition was strong over yet another Wendy’s drive-in in Perimeter Pointe that passed, but it did accomplish the redesign of a dangerous traffic pattern at an existing fast-food drive-in. The Lakeside project was rejected once again by the City Council, but we understand it likely will return yet again.

The widening of Hammond Drive still simmers. We have written to the DOT and both of our congressmen to assure that they understand local neighbors do not see a benefit to this plan. We also continue to monitor the efforts to determine an appropriate plan to address the massive traffic on I-285 in our City. The planned and funded widening of the bridge at Roswell Road and I-285 should help local traffic, but is not a solution.

Possibly the most controversial vote since last year was the approval of an offer by the City to “pay to play” for siting a new campus for the Gwinnett Technical College. While most folks seemed to support the idea of locating the school in our City, they strongly objected to the City committing up to \$5 million tax dollars to “incentivize” the selection. How can such a tax funded state institution ask for local incentives? When exactly does such an “incentive” become just an institutional bribe? The site selection is pending.

This Council continued to work with the City on updated development regulations and procedures, and to monitor proposed development that affects you. We will also be participating in the City Charter review that is just beginning. We hope to see progress this year in planning for a city hall that could inspire a real city core. We look forward to working with the new Director of Community Development, Mr. Blake Dettwiler, who has assumed the position vacated by the retirement of Ms. Nancy Leathers after years of committed service.

Storm water management is still on our minds. The City is struggling to respond to a large problem inherited from Fulton County, but progress is being made. Though the flooding of 2009 was largely focused in the 3rd District, the City lost two major bridges and a local street in the storms. Safe and effective maintenance of storm water affects the entire community. Councilman Chip Collins has taken a leading role in working with a citizens committee to attack this problem, and we believe the support of the rest of the Council is growing.

We hope you will join us at our annual meeting at City Hall on **Wednesday March 23, 2011, at 7:00 PM** to hear Dr. Ron Sawhill (UGA) and Victor Jones, P.E., tell us more about ways we can manage storm water on our own property and some of the ideas other communities are using to address this issue.