



2009 - Letter from Larry Young as President  
Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods

Dear Members:

The last year was a period of transition for the City of Sandy Springs, and your Council of Neighborhoods as we completed our 10th year of service to this community. The City had its first election after becoming a full-fledged City and four years of operation. I believe most citizens of the City would generally agree that the first term of our City Council was successful.

In our ongoing effort to provide up-to-date information to our members, we have continued to update our "Get Smart Sandy Springs" database available at our website - "sandyspringcouncil.org". This database identifies and summarizes the votes of the City Council that we believe impact our mission - working for the preservation and improvement of our neighborhoods and quality of life in Sandy Springs.

Before the latest City elections, we also created a separate summary that included some 38 key votes of the City Council that directly affected a neighborhood or the stability of the residential areas of our City. We ranked each vote as "favorable" or "unfavorable" to our member's interests. This offered interesting insights into each councilmember's voting record. We also co-sponsored the Candidates' Forum to give our members a chance to hear some of the views of all candidates for contested positions.

The elections saw minimal changes in the make-up of the City Council. Chip Collins, Esq., replaced Rusty Paul in the 3rd District and John Paulson, P.E., replaced Doug MacGinnitie in the 1st District. Rusty offered steady and mature insights as the only member of the original City Council that previously had held elected office. While serving for a relatively short period, Doug championed fiscal controls with a practical bent suited to his district. We thank them both for their service.

As with the entire region, we saw a major reduction in development and fewer issues in dispute. Successful outcomes were limited last year. The decision to preserve the historic rock chimney at Overlook Park at Morgan Falls was good. Withdrawal of the petition to expand the Epstein School was applauded by their neighbors. Purchase of the abandoned Target retail site has great potential.

Controversial decisions by the City included: granting Holy Spirit School a new lighted stadium; approving intense redevelopment for the corner of Hammond Drive and Roswell Road; expanding an overgrown private pre-school in an already congested residential area on Riverside Drive; and converting a heavily traveled business location into a center for the study of Scientology. Each of these votes were vigorously opposed by our members.

We have noticed what may be troubling trends by the City: 1) bringing forward redevelopment petitions in the City's own name to resolve litigation with no real citizen input, and 2) waiving development requirements with long-term effects on local areas to "reduce" owner or builder costs. We also hope the City Council will put more faith in the recommendations of their citizen Planning Commission.

Issues being watched in the new year include: an expected City-sponsored petition for the Lakeside redevelopment on Glenridge, expansion of Hammond Drive between Roswell Road and Glenridge Drive, and planning for the future use of the City-owned Target site. We also hope the City will consider improving guidance on the growth of institutions within our neighborhoods to avoid impact on the local residential community.

Please let us know if we can be of help to your neighborhood. We hope you will join us at our annual meeting on **Wednesday March 31, 2010** to hear about efforts by the City to manage the storm water issues that we observed in historic proportions last September.