

January 2009

January Meeting

Monday, January 17, 2008

7:00 pm

Senior Center

1705 Commerce Drive

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This is Berkeley Park

by Maureen Finneran Hetrick

404-609-9873; maureenfh@mindspring.com

This issue of the Berkeley Park Bulletin is a little different than usual. If you are a regular reader, welcome back, and if you are a new reader, welcome! Here you will learn about Berkeley Park and some ways you can make the neighborhood a better place.

There are multiple ways to get involved in the Berkeley Park Neighborhood Association. Ideally, every resident of Berkeley Park will become a dues paying member and volunteer for a committee, but we know that not everyone can do that. Perhaps you can start by joining our email list. There you'll learn about various activities we may schedule and issues that you may need to know. Joining the BPNA by paying dues lets you vote at our meetings, giving you a voice in zoning issues and shaping the future of the neighborhood. And joining a committee helps us to accomplish more to make Berkeley Park the best place to live in Atlanta.

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At whatever level at which you choose to participate, please fill out the form here to form to tell us about yourself, and how you can participate.

Berkeley Park Fun Facts

Berkeley Park was established in 1921 and spent many years as a part of Underwood Hills.

In 1996, Berkeley Park was recognized as an independent and official neighborhood by the City of Atlanta.

The earliest homes in Berkeley Park were purchased for \$1000 - \$1,900.

For more information about Berkeley Park, past and present, visit www.berkeleypark.org

President's Report

by Michael Wagoner

mwagoner@clcnetworks.com; 404-351-4417

Happy New Year and welcome to 2009 in Berkeley Park. For those of you who may not know me, my name is Michael Wagoner and I have been elected as the 2009 president of the Berkeley Park Neighborhood Association. Although I have run my own business for more than 10 years now, this is my first run at any sort of politics, so please be patient with me as I figure this out.

I would first like to thank Ron Horgan for the work he has done on behalf of Berkeley Park over the past 2 years. In addition, I would like to thank the board of directors, committee members, and all of you who volunteered and supported the BPNA in 2008. Many of these board members and committee chairs have been elected or have agreed to continue in their roles, but still many more volunteers are needed to continue our direction toward a safe, clean, and beautiful community. Over the next quarter, we will have a huge push to acquire new members and update the records of our existing members.

Most of our members receive our monthly newsletter via email, but with our current membership and committee initiatives, we decided to print and deliver the first newsletter of 2009 to in order to include a brochure describing the focus of the BPNA, along with a new membership application. Membership dues for 2008 expired at the end of December, so now it the time to either renew your membership in the BPNA or join for the first time. Whether you are new or returning, please complete the included form and return it to the listed address so we can update your information in our database. I encourage you to please consider signing up as a committee volunteer as well. It is vital to have volunteers on our committees if we want to be effective and make change. Please take a look at the article written by Jeffrey Rogerson for more details on how you can help.

Just as soon as we can get the appropriate positions staffed for our committees, we can start working on the numerous issues and changes we would all like to see within the Neighborhood. I look forward to

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working with all of you to make Berkeley Park a better place to live and work. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any board or committee Member to provide suggestions on what kind of change you would like to see. Together we can make it happen.

Thanks for your time,

Mike

Get a Neighborhood Perspective in 2009 with the BPNA

Jeffrey Rogerson

BPNA Board Member at-large

Jeffrey.Rogerson@iex.com

For those that are taking the time to read this newsletter it is certain you have an interest in your neighborhood-Berkeley Park. What level of interest do you have? Even more important what commitment are you willing to make to be a stakeholder in your neighborhood?

It could simply be an interest of knowing what is going on around your home in case it impacts that significant investment you have made. For example, items such as the loss of Station 23 and how it might impact your homeowner insurance policy are of keen interest to you. Maybe it revolves around the significant traffic issues to our neighborhood, especially if you have children. Are speed bumps really an adequate solution? Is the increase in crime impacting the value of your home? Does a litter ridden neighborhood invite crime and if so, what can you do about it? Is the recent BPNA discussion around private security patrols (funded by homeowners) something I need to participate in? Do private security patrols really work?

It could be your interests are more strategic. Perhaps you want to know if infill housing is better or worse for the neighborhood in the long run. Is encroaching development better or worse for the neighborhood and home values? Is the Beltline concept really a good investment right now when the city is reducing our basic protection line of firemen and policemen?

Perhaps your time is limited, but you still desire to be a member of the BPNA. Whatever the level of your interests, the BPNA is the vehicle to drive those interests. The Berkeley Park Neighborhood Association needs YOU! If you are not a member please contact any of the officers that were just elected for 2009 or go to our website at www.berkeleypark.org to find out more about your neighborhood association and how you can join. Membership dues are only \$20 annually per household and can be paid electronically on our website.

We currently have a number of BPNA committee chairs available including Membership, Land Use & Planning, and Beautification. Additional chairs include Crime Watch, Code & Zoning Violations, NPU (Neighborhood Planning Unit), Communication (Newsletter and Website), and Parks. The chairs

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concentrate on neighborhood projects deemed significant by the greater neighborhood or the chairs themselves. We desire your input in order to get the varied perspectives and expertise a good neighborhood association needs. Some of these committees also need co-chairs as well. Please let us know how you would like to get involved.

We are all pretty well informed concerning national and/or local events with all of the mass media outlets constantly bombarding us with information. Our neighborhood association meetings provide a more local approach and filter to what is happening around us and what we can do as a group to achieve desired results. We have a rich variety of talent in this neighborhood and the BPNA is in need of all of our voices. Let us all ensure that our neighborhood, Berkeley Park, remains a desirable place to live, work, and play with our families and neighbors for years to come.

Join us at our next BPNA meeting, Monday, Jan 19, at the Seniors Center on Commerce Drive at 7 pm. We meet every third Monday of each month (7 pm) and we always post signs before our meetings throughout the neighborhood.

NPU-D Report

by Jim Martin

james.martin@me.gatech.edu

On December 23 rd we set a new low for NPU-D meeting attendance. There were only six voting members there, three city staff members, and Lorenzo Wyche from the Social House, whose application for a liquor license was the only business item on the evening's agenda.

We decided not to take any action on the city's proposed new PD-CS zoning ordinance, which we had also deferred in November, because we are expecting a revision to the legislation from the planning bureau. We also deferred action on legislation intended to clarify the term "supportive housing" because it was difficult to tell what the actual impact of the legislation would be (if any). It proposed to modify existing code in several different places, but the deficiencies in the current code that required this correction were not identified. We discussed an NPU-D resolution opposing the budget cuts to the police and fire departments as being unwise and compromising public safety. We decided to vote on this in January instead of December because there were so few people there. Paul Morley from the fire department discussed the latest cutbacks at AFR. He said that Chief Cochran had agreed to answer questions at any NPU meeting where this was requested, so we unanimously agreed to make that request. I have not heard back on this yet, but hopefully it will be in January.

After some discussion, NPU-D endorsed BPNA's decision to approve the Social House liquor license with our condition that the code violation of the un-permitted deck be corrected before the LRB hearing. Currently, that hearing appears to be scheduled for the evening of January 27 th , which is also the evening of our next NPU-D meeting, but this could easily shift into February if all the paperwork is not in

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order. There was some grumbling from our neighbors to the west about how there ought to be a better solution to the deck problem: one in which the deck is repaired and modified to meet code rather than demolished and rebuilt. This potential solution has, of course, existed for the last 10 months (since the deck was first illegally constructed) and there has been no meaningful action toward its implementation. Since the deck as it is currently built fails to meet building code (the floor is inadequately supported) or zoning code (it is too close to the street, too high, and not supported by adequate parking), it is extremely unlikely that a code compliant deck can be created without first demolishing the existing structure. The Social House site, which includes the used car lot, the restaurant and the parking lot, has been a source of ongoing code and zoning violations for many years. Most of these are the responsibility of the property owner, Mr. Spernak, rather than the restaurant owner, Mr. Wyche. The deck is an exception to this as it was constructed by Mr. Wyche last March in a thematically consistent (i.e. illegal) manner. The most notable among Mr. Spernak's many violations was when he paved over the entire lot in December 2004 without any permits. Many people don't realize that you don't really need permits if you can get all your work done over the weekend before the inspectors show up for work on Monday. This violation was a brilliant cost-saving move. It not only saved him the cost and delay of properly permitting the job but also saved him the expense of having to install the required storm water detention on the site. It all works out so much more profitably when costs such as storm water removal can be externalized (i.e. borne by Atlanta taxpayers).

The big, off agenda, discussions at the meeting were all about the city's ongoing budget problems. The mayor and city council continue to compete to see who can bury their heads deeper into the sand in dealing with these. 2009 opened with the mayor upping the stakes in this absurd contest by declaring that the city is now "poised for greatness" by her past profligacy. This is going to be a hard one to top, but I feel confident that our other elected officials are up to the challenge. My suggestion: hire a consultant to study the feasibility of a robot police force funded by the revenues from a new tax on baggy pants. The proposal practically writes itself. Remember, you saw it here first!

Next NPU-D meeting:

Tuesday, January 27, 2009, 7:30 pm

Agape Center, 2351 Bolton Road, NW

ALL NPU RESIDENTS ARE WELCOME

Crime Watch Update

Maureen Hetrick

404-609-9873; maureenfh@mindspring.com

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Crime is frequently on the minds of all Atlanta residents lately, and Berkeley Park is no exception. For those who have been following this saga over the last year, this is not new information. For those who have not, here are a few tips to help protect yourself.

Today's thieves are most interested in items they can sell quickly (eBay and Craigslist are often filled with listings of stolen items). This includes portable electronics such as flat screen television sets, laptop computers, and new video game systems. If you own any of these things and they are ever visible from the street or through a window, you are a likely target for these criminals.

Automated security systems do not seem to be much of a deterrent to these burglars. They can be in and out of your house in 2 minutes, much faster than the police can arrive.

This advice applies to your vehicle as well. Never leave anything of value (or even perceived value) in your car. This includes laptops, purses, backpacks, shopping bags, electronics, clothing or even an empty briefcase. Thieves don't have anything to lose by breaking a window to see if that shopping bag has anything in it to interest them, and you may end up with a broken window. One of the most common crimes reported on our weekly crime watch notification is a laptop stolen from a car.

Do not give any indication to the outside world that you may have made an expensive purchase recently. Any boxes advertising your new flat screen television should be broken down and placed either inside the garbage can or taken to a recycling center (there is one just off Northside Drive).

Once you have had a burglary, the thieves may assume that you will replace your missing items, and may try to break in again. Unfortunately, several neighbors who have suffered burglaries have been revisited a few weeks later.

Often, these burglars are using pedestrians as lookouts to assess which homes are the best targets for a break-in. If you see someone walking in the neighborhood who you do not know, call 911 and ask the police to check it out. Many times, that person walking around the neighborhood talking on a cell phone is also peering in windows or just sizing up the situation from the street, and notifying his accomplices about where to go.

Door-to-door solicitation is illegal without a permit, and very few permits are actually issued in Atlanta. Anyone selling anything door-to-door should be asked to leave, and the police should be called. Sometimes the person selling magazines is really trying to see inside your house to determine what you may have to steal.

Anytime you see anything that seems not quite right to you, call 911. This is what the police recommend, and it can let criminals know that we are on the lookout. If you talked to your neighbor last week and she didn't say anything about moving soon, call the police if you see a moving van in front of her house when she's usually at work.

Berkeley Park is currently exploring the possibility of hiring a private security firm to patrol our streets. We can't do this without your help. Getting involved with the BPNA will give you a chance to learn more

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about how to protect yourself and your property. Come to our next meeting, join our email list, or join the Crime Watch committee to find out what you can do to make Berkeley Park safer.

Secretary's Report

by Michael Hagearty

mhagearty@mindspring.com

Berkeley Park Neighborhood Association Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2008

Senior Citizens Services of Atlanta

There were 13 attendees at the meeting.

Lorenzo Wyche, owner of The Social House (www.socialhouseatl.com), requested neighborhood approval for his establishment to obtain a liquor license. The reason is so that the restaurant will be able to offer breakfast cocktails. Lorenzo was asked if this might lead to the restaurant opening for dinner service (currently open until 3PM during

the week and 4PM on weekends), and he replied that it was a possibility, but that "it's a breakfast place, and we'd like to keep it as such." He is not seeking approval for live entertainment or music as part of his application, and has made an agreement with Braxton Automotive to provide additional visitor parking. BPNA moves to approve the application with two conditions: the demolition of the unfinished patio, and the addition of signage to direct overflow parking across the street.

The vote was 10 in favor, zero opposed, with 2 abstentions.

Plans for BPNA to purchase lots on Berkeley Avenue for eventual conversion into park space are on hold.

Jim Martin reported that Scott Selig approved the disbursement of \$12,500 for the Howell Mill/Chattahoochee LCI study. This money will be deducted from the \$100K pledge Selig made to BP for system improvements. BPNA is awaiting word regarding the status of its application.

Mike Wagoner reported that BP has been approved for certain traffic calming measures, though none are funded. There is still \$70K available from the Howell Mill widening project, but a comprehensive plan will require more funding.

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There has been no progress on initiating a private neighborhood patrol. Mike Wagoner said that the numbers don't currently work, and that there needs to be greater awareness of the program among residents before a patrol will gain any traction

Neighborhood News

Maureen Hetrick

404-609-9873; maureenfh@mindspring.com

Due to budget cuts, the City of Atlanta has adopted an alternating weeks schedule for the pickup of recycling and yard waste. Regular trash will continue to be picked up every week at the normal time (Wednesday in Berkeley Park). However, recycling pick up will happen only every other week, with yard trimmings picked up on the alternating weeks. See the schedule [here](#) or [here](#).

The City of Atlanta encourages residents to continue recycling. If your recycling bins get full before pickup, you can put recycling in a larger bin as long as it is clearly marked RECYCLING. You can also deposit recycled materials at the Department of Public Works, located on Northside Drive just north of Myers Carpets.

For RECYCLING stickers to place on recycling containers, contact Mary Harrington at 404-865-8540 or mharrington@AtlantaGa.Gov.

About Us

The Berkeley Park Bulletin is published monthly in print and at www.berkeleypark.org by the Berkeley Park Neighborhood Association, a non-profit organization. It is distributed to all Berkeley Park residents 3 times a year. To subscribe to the monthly edition, submit an article or Talk Back letter, or inquire about advertising, contact the editor, Maureen Hetrick, at 404-609-9873 or maureenfh@mindspring.com. We accept appropriate articles from all Berkeley Park residents or other interested community members at the discretion of the editor and as space permits.

Effective January 1, 2009, membership in the BPNA is \$20 per person (up to 3 adults per address are eligible to become members), and \$10 for seniors. To join the association, attend a monthly meeting and pay dues to the treasurer, Nina-Daniela McCormack, or the president, Michael Wagoner. If you cannot attend a meeting but wish to join, or for more information, email us at info@berkeleypark.org.

Berkeley Park is run solely on dues as well as advertisements from our sponsors. Please take a moment to visit our sponsors and thank them for their support of Berkeley Park.