



THE ATHENS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2003 ♦ VOLUME 7. ISSUE 1



This creek bed could be permanently protected.

Breaking New Ground: Fourth Street Village

On May 6th, 2003, the Athens-Clarke County Commission (A-CC) unanimously gave their support to *ALT's* application for Low Income Housing Tax Credits for a multi-family development called *Fourth Street Village*. *ALT* is pleased to be involved in a proactive initiative which will be able to provide permanently affordable rental housing for 120 working families of Athens-Clarke County. If the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) approves our proposal, through *ALT's* land trust model, the land will provide permanently affordable rental housing in Athens-Clarke County. *ALT* is partnering with the *Cooperative Resource Center of Atlanta (CRC)*, an experienced non-profit housing provider and the *East Athens Development Corporation (EADC)*.

There are two reasons why *ALT* is so excited to be part of *Fourth Street Village*: the first is that we are well aware of the critical shortage of affordable rental housing for families and working people of low-to-moderate income. This need was confirmed by the recent committee to study multi-family housing which was reported at the A-CC's April Commission meeting. We have seen the loss of affordable housing in our county—*ALT* was involved with the relocation of residents from Garden Springs mobile home Park and Athens Arms Apartments. The second is that the project supports neighborhood revitalization. With the land

permanently secured for affordable housing, its location close to existing community services and supportive services provided on the site (discussed below), the development will positively benefit the entire community.

Here are some relevant numbers: 80% of *Fourth Street Village's* one, two, and three-bedroom apartments will be reserved for low-to-moderate income residents (20% will be available to anyone at the market rate). 69% will be reserved for residents of 50% Area Median Income (AMI) or less. 11% of the units will be reserved for residents of 30% AMI or less. The rent for a tenant of 30% AMI or less is based on government caps determined each year. So, for example, a one-bedroom apartment would run approximately \$225/month.

As excitingly, the *Fourth Street Village* will provide or assist tenants with support services such as child care, employment programs, education, health services, homeownership counseling, resident involvement in decision making, a safety program and tenant counseling. *ALT*, *EADC* and *CRC* will administer these programs in partnership with many local agencies and businesses. *Fourth Street Village* is already located along the public transit bus line. It is less than one mile from schools, grocery stores, day care, restaurants, retail, banking, a pharmacy and other essential services. There will be a community building on the site with a technology center, meeting rooms, a fitness center and other amenities. Quality of life features are also planned, such as walking trails and benches, a picnic and barbecue area, a sheltered bus stop, and a playground. The apartments will be located directly across from the Fourth Street Elementary School on a 9.45 acre tract, currently zoned for multi-family housing (characterized as infill development with utilities currently available on site).

CRC is an experienced, non-profit Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) with 29 projects throughout 14 counties in Georgia. Their mission is to provide affordable housing and to assist other non-profits with

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*MONTHLY BOARD
MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE
THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH
AT 7:00 PM AT THE ATHENS
LAND TRUST
OFFICES AND ARE
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.*

Affordable Housing Update Biggest CDBG and HOME grant allows for hire of two FT Housing Employees

On April 1, 2003, the Athens-Clarke County Commission approved ALT's largest affordable housing grants to date for Fiscal Year 04 (July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004), a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of \$105,000 and a grant from the HOME program of \$105,000.

The CDBG grant will enable ALT to have two full-time positions, Housing Coordinator and Project Coordinator, to administer our homeownership program. This staff growth is a very exciting development for us! ALT plans to continue our work of rehabilitating vacant houses in the Hancock and East Athens neighborhoods.

ALT Outreach Coordinator Assists Fire Victims

ALT's Outreach Coordinator, Alvina Gilham assisted four families whose apartments caught on fire on February 2, 2003. Ms. Gilham assisted the families in their relocation and coordinated a fundraiser with the staff of the East Athens Development Corporation.

Ms. Gilham worked with the Athens Housing Authority to help the Hill family, the Hamm family, the Freeman family, and the Bradford family.

Travels with the new Mayor

On May 2nd and 3rd, Outreach Coordinator Alvina Gilham was invited by Mayor Heidi Davison to travel with a group of UGA students from the School of Environmental Design to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to visit the Rural Design Studio of Auburn University's School of Architecture.

The Rural Design Studio has been providing affordable housing for low-income residents of rural Alabama for many years, through the volunteer work of Auburn's architecture students.

Rocksprings Back On Track

The rehabilitation of 235 and 245 Rocksprings for ALT's homeownership program came to an unexpected halt, when our previous contractor declared bankruptcy last January. ALT just finished negotiating a new contract in late June with a local contractor. We are excited to be getting the rehabilitation work underway again, and expect that the homes will be completed by the end of 2003.

Sutherland, Asbill and Brennan, LLP., to serve as ALT's Legal Counsel; Skipper StipeMaas steps down as Legal Counsel

Skipper StipeMaas is passing legal duties on to her friends at Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan, LLP. (SAB). Skipper, now a Specialist Attorney in Community Economic Development with Georgia Legal Services, co-founded ALT with Nancy Stangle in 1994. While Skipper's relationship with ALT goes beyond that of lawyer & client, she took on the role of legal advisor at ALT's inception. In a recent email, Skipper said that attending to her legal duties has "been fun and I look forward to seeing where and how my non-legal relationship with ALT proceeds from here." Even though Skipper is moving out of ALT's legal arena, she's made sure we will be in good hands. SAB is a national law firm located in six offices around the U.S. While most of their clients belong to the for-profit sector, SAB has had a long tradition of public service through pro bono legal and non-legal volunteer work in its communities. Skipper has had a working friendship with SAB for four years and they have provided legal services for her other clients around the state. Now SAB will bring their considerable resources and expertise to bear on ALT's legal needs. We're pleased to have SAB onboard and happy to have Skipper rejoin the ranks of the valuable and flexible ALT volunteers.

T H A N K S!

*...to the firm of Sutherland, Asbill and
Brennon, LLP., and their employees,
Charles Flickinger and Quito Anderson.*

*...to volunteers Sue Wilde, Kate Blane and
our website designer, Philip Juras.*

Brooklyn Transforms Lot Into Community Garden

The Athens Land Trust has been working with Brooklyn Neighborhood residents and Greenfest members—including Nancy Lindbloom, Students for Environmental Awareness, the NE GA Food Bank and Athens Clean and Beautiful—to transform a vacant lot into a community garden. The project is part of a greater effort to help revitalize the Hancock Neighborhood.

A community garden is a park-like space where neighbors garden together to grow food and flowers. This particular garden is exciting because it is located adjacent to several gardeners' homes and was previously being used as a hangout and a place to sell drugs. Eleven residents have worked hard to make this project successful, especially long-time resident Barbara Sims. Ms. Sims organized a ceremony to dedicate the garden, which was held June 12. Close to 60 community members came to the celebration!



A Brooklyn resident gets down and dirty!



Ms. Barbara Sims and Ms. Bernice Jones planting

I asked Ms Sims a few questions about the project (Ms. Barbara Sims is an ALT board member):

LHG: *What impact do you think the garden will have on the neighborhood?*

BS: It has brought the community together. We are working together. This is the first step to bring us back together to reclaim our community. That's so important. Once you do that you can see people caring about their properties again, and see them working out in their yards.

LHG: *Do you think the kids will become interested in the garden?*

BS: Yes, my grandboy, Meyikie (7 years old) planted flowers out there. He planted some flower seeds and a plum seed, and after several days, he said, "Grammy they are coming up and Harold (Barbara's brother)

taught him how to water them. Now whenever someone comes over to work in the garden Meyikie will say, "welcome to the *beautiful* garden. I explained to him the garden is dedicated in memory of Mrs. Mae Willie Morton, the woman who used to live here. Meyikie still says when someone comes, welcome to the *beautiful* garden.

I would like to thank to Reverend Morton for allowing the use of his land and also for his enthusiasm for the project. Because Reverend Morton now lives in Philadelphia, where community gardens are plentiful, he was especially receptive to this project. I would also like to thank all of the individuals and organizations who helped make this project possible: The Rotary Club, Barron's Rental, Fencemaster, Cofer's, Carl Schnittjer of the "Home Doc," Judge Pat Barron Jim Corley of A-CC Solid Waste Dept., Gary Duck of A-CC Public Utilities, Roger Cauthen of A-CC Landscape Management Division, and Frank Henning of Cooperative Extension Service.

We are hoping to purchase picnic tables, benches, additional plants and seeds for next season. If you would like to help, please send your tax-deductible donation to the following address. Please reference the Brooklyn Neighborhood Garden in your memo line.
The NE GA Area Food Bank
P.O. Box 48857
Athens, GA 30604.

—Laura Hall Gabriel

How Will We Grow? Conservation Subdivision Guidelines

In January, acknowledging the serious flaws in Athens-Clarke County's Conservation Subdivision regulations, the ACC Commission voted to impose a temporary moratorium on this type of development. Since then, ALT, along with the Oconee River Land Trust and other groups, has been working with the Planning Department to help revise the regulations. Draft 4, which went before the Planning Commission on June 5, incorporates many of ALT's suggestions. Some of the most significant changes proposed are as follows:

Lower Density in the AR zone

AR density would go from the current 1 unit per acre to 1 unit per 10 acres, if a large-lot conventional subdivision is built, or 1 unit per 5 acres with a Conservation Subdivision. This would finally make AR zoning consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. ALT supports this change, but opposes a provision calling for the creation of a new Rural Residential zone (RR) that would encompass any tracts in the current AR that lie within 1500 feet of public sewer. RR densities would be 1 unit per 5 acres for a conventional subdivision and 1 unit per 2.5 acres for a Conservation Subdivision.

New "Yield Plan" method of calculating lots

Currently, developers base the number of lots on the

total gross acreage of the tract. This means that even if a 100 acre tract contains a 50 acre pond, the developer is allowed to build 100 houses if he builds a Conservation Subdivision, whereas with a conventional subdivision he would be allowed 50 houses. Under the proposed new regulations, developers would be required to first draw a conventional subdivision layout, taking into account the physical features of the site. This would determine the number of lots that could be built in a Conservation Subdivision.

Better design process

The new regulations would require that developers meet with representatives of the local land trusts and adjoining property-owners before any designs are committed to paper. They would also have to follow a four-step design process, first mapping the areas to be protected, and only then siting houses, streets, and lot lines.

Use by right

Another change would be to allow Conservation Subdivisions as a use by right. Under the current regulations, developers must seek approval of the ACC Commission.

These are just a few of the many major and minor changes proposed. The Commission votes on this issue on July 1. For more information, see the Athens Grow Green Coalition Web site: www.AthensGrowGreen.com.

—Beth Gavrilles

GCLF News

The Georgia Community Loan Fund (GCLF) has just hired its first executive director! A recent graduate of the University of Georgia, Delene Porter completed her Master's Degree in Social Work with a concentration in Community Empowerment and Program Development, and has been volunteering with GCLF for the past 9 months. She is excited about joining GCLF full time and working for a sustainable response and solution to the lack of capital available to low-income individuals and groups in Georgia.

"Many people across the state are working to build economic and environmental justice from the ground up, but the same grassroots organizations and community members that generate the best solutions have trouble finding the financial and support services to make their visions a reality" Porter says. So, to become a broker, conduit, and bridge between traditional sources of capital and the greater community, GCLF will act as a revolving loan fund, creating a vehicle for individuals as well as banks, foundations, and the government,

to invest dollars into sustainable community development state-wide. Through low-interest loans, grants, and technical assistance, GCLF will support projects of affordable housing, protection of environmentally-important land, community and economic development, environmental justice and equity, and sustainable development.

GCLF will rely on its clients' repayment of loans to replenish the pool of capital being lent out. In this way, GCLF's clients, both its investors and borrowers, build equity (fairness and property) for themselves, their families and their neighborhoods while at the same time creating community solutions based on the relationships of individuals to one another, to their communities, and to the natural world on which they depend.

To generate lend-able and administrative capital, GCLF is about to begin its first fund-drive. If you are interested in learning more about GCLF and would like to become a donor or a borrower, please contact the Georgia Community Loan Fund at (706) 613-8116.

ALT'S WEBSITE UPDATED IN JUNE 2003

Thanks to the joint efforts of volunteer Website Designer, Philip Juras, staff member, Laura Hall Gabriel, and former GA Legal Services volunteer, Delene Porter, the text of the ALT database underwent a long overdue revision. Images and links have also been updated. PDF files of many of ALT's past newsletter articles are available for downloading, in case you want to share info with a friend.

Conservation Update

Farm Preservation in Oconee County

The Athens Land Trust is working to preserve a very scenic and important several-generation farm located in Watkinsville. The farm includes a historic farmhouse and outbuildings, a pecan orchard, livestock and cropland. Oconee County has very high rated soils for farmland and a strong agricultural community. However, development pressures are increasing and many farmers are starting to sell their lands for development, primarily for subdivisions.

Oconee County has agreed to use their \$165,000 of State Greenspace funds for a match of USDA Farm Bill

funds. If the grant is approved by the USDA, The Athens Land Trust will receive a total of \$497,000 to purchase the development rights from this farm. A conservation easement will then be placed on the farm to ensure that the land is protected as a working farm in perpetuity.

We are really excited about this partnership with some great folks, including the Oconee County Farm Protection Partnership. They were instrumental in putting this grant together, and have worked tirelessly for the past two years to educate and garner support from their community about Farmland Protection.

—Laura Hall Gabriel

Kenney Ridge: A New Conservation Easement

Kenney Ridge is donating a Conservation Easement on an additional 18 acres of mostly hardwood forest. This land is home to many important wildlife and plant species including the native American Holly, buckeye shrubs and Crane's fly orchid. This open space is close to 21 acres at Kenney Ridge, which was already protected with an easement.

Residents of the neighborhood, Dave Lindsay and O.C. Dean took me for a walk through this beautiful forest and helped document and identify some of the important natural resources here.

We will use this information in our Baseline Documentation which we compile to document what we are actually protecting when we accept a Conservation Easement.

O.C. maintains walking trails throughout the property, which are used by the residents and their children.



Tulip Poplar protected by the Kenney Ridge Easement.

Thanks to Dave and O.C. and to the entire Kenney Ridge community for valuing this important land as open space.

—Laura Hall Gabriel

More Information on Kenney Ridge

Kenney Ridge is an intentional community founded in 1994-95. It is located on 132 acres of rolling woods and farmland off Tallassee Road in Athens-Clarke County. When a 37-acre tract within the neighborhood came on the market two years ago, several of the Kenney Ridge community members purchased the land, preserving half with this easement and subdivided the other half into 7 lots.

The Kenney Ridge Community Association promotes environmental responsibility by protecting open space, having a "tree ordinance"

for the property, and encouraging lot owners to build energy-efficient houses that use renewable resources and fit in naturally with their surroundings. With this latest easement, the common open space at Kenney Ridge totals 53.6 acres. For more information see www.kenneyridge.org.

—Note by Nancy Stangle • Photo by Laura Hall Gabriel



Al Pless gets high helping out! Here he is painting Mr. Floyd Kittle's house at 146 N. Peter Street.

Carl Vinson Institute of Government volunteers help to repair 225 Vine Street, the home of Eva Horne.

ALT Provides Hands to Hands-On-Athens

ALT members should be proud of the contribution made by Board members Al Pless and George Wright to this year's Hands-On Athens program!

On the weekend of April 4-6, 2003, Al and George coordinated materials for the project so that hundreds of volunteers could paint, repair and landscape 12 homes in low-income Athens neighborhoods. 12 homes were a threefold increase from previous years in this worthy project funded by federal CDBG grant money, and coordinated by the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation.

Through excellent coordination from all the organizers, and from wonderful volunteer effort by students, civic organizations, individuals and neighbors the homes were finished in just three days.

The dozens of hours that Al and George contributed as representatives of ALT went a long way towards fulfilling ALT's mission of conserving affordable housing stock and promoting healthy and diverse communities. Thanks guys!

—Maureen O'Brien



Demolition of a rear porch at 645 Dearing Street.

SPECIAL NOTE:

***Hands on Athens** is a collaboration of many groups in addition to ALT and the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation. Other steering committee members are the Habitat for Humanity, Athens Housing Authority, A-CC Department of Human and Economic Development, UGA's Office of Campus Architects and Historic Preservation students, the East Athens Development Corporation, Hancock Corridor Community Development Corporation, and Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful.*

—Nancy Stangle

Photos courtesy Amy Kissane, except top right, by Allison Roy.

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Breaking New Ground cont.

increasing their capacity to be affordable housing developers. According to Skipper StipeMaas, a Specialist Attorney in affordable housing who works statewide at Georgia Legal Services and who was ALT's legal counsel for 9 years (*see p. 2*), "CRC has been involved with numerous present and former clients of mine throughout the state. I have watched tax credit projects CRC has been involved in from inception to creation and have been impressed not only with the quality and services of affordable housing they have created, but also with their willingness to work with non-profits—such as EADC and ALT—to create the necessary skills and financial resources to address local communities' needs."

According to a recent *Washington Post* article (2/11/03; Page A04), the *Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program* has been "the country's most successful program producing and rehabilitating affordable housing." It allows for private funds in the form of tax credits to be raised from corporations who willingly participate. If the Georgia DCA grants us the award, *Fourth Street Village* will enable us to leverage a large

amount of private funds for permanently affordable housing in our community.

Our application was submitted to on May 15, 2003. If approved, the construction would begin in Spring 2004, with an expected completion date anticipated in 2005. The awards won't be announced until late September 2003, so cross your fingers!

—Nancy Stangle & Lizzie Zucker Saltz



View of nearby school from property

ALT NEEDS COMPUTERS...

Do you have some old computers or PC network cards lying around? If so, please let us know! Specifically we could use the following:

- 2-3 Pentium II or III CPU's (III's preferred of course!)
Minimum 128k RAM (256 preferred.)
- Network PC Cards

Your equipment donations are tax deductible!

...AND COMPUTER EXPERTISE

Do you know the *Outlook Express* program well enough to help us figure out some problems with Message Rules? Please contact Lizzie at 613-0122 or admin@athenslandtrust.org



New Outreach Coordinator Juana Gnecco enjoys the picnic held after a POH community trailer park design meeting. Next to her is Latitia Franklin. Behind them, from left to right is Lorena Casales and Gloria Flores.

POH Update

Wow! What things have been cooked up in the ALT kitchen! Not only has *People of Hope Cooperative, Inc.* created an office there, they staffed it with the talented bilingual Juana Gnecco as their new Outreach Coordinator, and Maureen O'Brien as the Land Development Coordinator. Then they proposed a new model in affordable housing for Athens-Clarke County and got it funded!!!

The *People of Hope Cooperative* will receive money from the A-CC Department of Human and Economic Development that will help them purchase property for their resident-managed mobile home park and provide staff funding for the next fiscal year. The Athens Land Trust has agreed to accept ownership of this land, providing the mechanism to ensure that the project will be sustained as affordable housing for low-income residents.

The project is now in its next phase with a design meeting planned between the residents and the firm of Beall Gonnissen Associates, Inc. during June. Preliminary plans will be presented to the A-CC Planning Department this summer, and development loans are being negotiated. Meanwhile the members will be attending housing and credit counseling, park management courses, and continuing to hold fundraisers. (The tamale sale has been our best so far so watch for a repeat this summer.) Our project is cooking!

We would like to thank ALT and the many, many people who have provided support to us, and now add the Pinnacle Group to our list. Do you need soil testing or environmental clearance? Call them up.

—Maureen O'Brien

To contact *People of Hope*, write them at 195 Park Ave, Athens, GA 30601, or call and leave a message at 546-5051.

May you all be blessed with a comfortable, safe and affordable home.

Please Join the Athens Land Trust:

The Athens Land Trust would like to welcome new supporters and thank all of the individuals and organizations who have been supporting our work over the years. Your support is critical to our continuance. We greatly appreciate all donations of time and money. During the past year, \$.90 of every dollar donated went directly towards our programs and efforts.

If you would like to renew your membership or join us for the first time, please complete the following and mail to: **ALT, 195 Park Avenue, Athens, GA 30601-1749.**

Please check one of the following levels:

Forest \$1,000 _____ Grove \$500 _____ Oak \$250 _____ Seedling \$100 _____
Acorn \$50 _____ Family \$20 _____ Individual \$10 _____

Name _____ New _____ Renewal _____

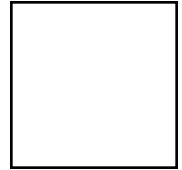
Address _____

Telephone # (s) _____ Email _____

Would you like to Volunteer? Skills or Interests: _____

Please make your checks payable to the Athens Land Trust, Inc. ALT is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible as provided by law.

The Athens Land Trust, Inc.
195 Park Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30601-1749



THE ATHENS LAND TRUST MISSION
The mission of the Athens Land Trust is to promote quality of life through integration of community and the natural environment by preserving land, creating energy-efficient and affordable housing, and revitalizing neighborhoods.