



THE ATHENS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2003–2004 ♦ VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2



photo: Laura Hall Gabriel

Five Acre Wood Preserved!

This amazing urban forest, which is home to large hardwood trees and an important bird habitat, is located one mile north of downtown just off of North Avenue.

The Over the River Neighborhood (a low-to-moderate income neighborhood) leveraged Georgia Greenspace funds via Athens-Clarke County to purchase this land. The Athens Land Trust placed an easement on the property to protect it as

an urban forest in perpetuity. The neighborhood is working to remove exotic vegetation and replanting with rescued native plant species. The easement will allow for walking trails and educational signage.

—Laura Hall Gabriel

ALT Moves Office into Hancock Corridor at 2109 Broad Street

In late October, ALT moved to more spacious offices at 2109 Broad Street, on the corner of Magnolia Street. As well as being larger, the location is more accessible to the neighborhoods we serve with our Affordable Housing program in the nearby Hancock Corridor. Heather Benham, ALT's new Project Director (see page 3), located the wood-paneled wonder.

ALT has been providing office space to the People of Hope (PoH) since October of 2002, and along with our new staff, we had run out of room.

In addition to more space for ALT and PoH, we are happy to announce that we now have DSL service! This is a boon, not just for us, but for anyone who has ever



ALT Staff from left to right:
Nancy Stangle, Heather Benham,
Lizzie Z. Saltz, Laura Hall Gabriel
Not pictured: Alvina Gilham
photo: Maureen O'Brien

been frustrated trying to fax or call us when we used to tie up all our lines on the old dial-up internet access. Special thanks are due to Emuel Aldridge, the spouse of PoH's Outreach Coordinator Juana Gnecco, for his invaluable advice and assistance in getting us set up on the new service.

We also thank Kate Blane for donating so many of her lunch hours getting our new systems running.

We would also like to thank Board Member George Wright and volunteers Sue Wilde and Toni Carlucci for their assistance in helping ALT get settled in. Please come and visit us at our new place anytime.

—Nancy Stangle & Lizzie Zucker Saltz

ALT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brenda Crawford
Beth Gavrilles
Patricia Huff

Vice-President: Allen Morse

President: Nanette Nelson

Treasurer: Al Pless

Sect'y.: Dana Poole Skelton

Barbara Sims

George Wright

STAFF

PROJECT DIRECTOR

Heather Benham

CONSERVATION DIRECTOR

Laura Hall Gabriel

HOUSING DIRECTOR

Alvina Gilham

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Nancy Stangle

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Lizzie Zucker Saltz

~

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Nancy Stangle

NEWSLETTER EDIT/LAYOUT

Lizzie Zucker Saltz

Phone/Fax

706.613.0122/613.0143

e-mail

heather@athenslandtrust.org

laura@athenslandtrust.org

alvina@athenslandtrust.org

nancy@athenslandtrust.org

admin@athenslandtrust.org

website

www.athenslandtrust.org

address

2109 Broad Street
Athens, GA 30606-3545

Monthly Board Meetings

Our monthly meetings are open to the public.

They are held on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm in our offices.

Board Changes

New President

Nanette Nelson, economist at UGA's Institute of Ecology was recently elected President of ALT's Board. We are delighted to have Nanette's considerable talents to direct us into our expanding future.

...and Vice-President

Allen Morse, a fire-prevention officer (FPO), was chosen as Vice-President for the ALT Board of Directors. Allen has served on the ALT Board for many years and has an ongoing commitment to the revitalization of the Hancock Corridor. He serves on both the Hancock Community Development Corporation as a Director and on the Hancock Corridor Advisory Committee, where he serves as President. His experience working in the neighborhood has been and will continue to be a huge asset to our organization. Allen has been with the A-CC Fire and Emergency Services for fifteen years.

Board Member Profile

Barbara Sims was the catalyst for the Brooklyn Community Garden (see Vol. 7.1), and is a tireless community activist. Barbara is now an advocate for ALL GOD'S CHILDREN, an adoption agency for special needs children. The agency's focus is on finding homes for children who wait longer for families because they are school-aged, part of a sibling group, members of a racial minority or challenged by physical, mental or behavioral needs. Visit www.agcadopt.org or call 316-2421 if you can help.

Outgoing

A very fond farewell goes out to Dana Poole Skelton, who has served ALT faithfully as Board Secretary. As Director of Administrative Outreach at the Georgia River Network, she has helped Conservation Director Laura Hall Gabriel investigate water issues with many of the easements that have riparian areas. Former Board President Nancy Stangle says "We greatly appreciate Dana's hard work and commitment to ALT during her term on the Board."

Nancy Stangle & Lizzie Zucker Saltz



Nanette Nelson

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ALT Members,
I can honestly say that this is not an easy position to occupy, given the energy that the staff brings to carrying out the vision of ALT. It is all I can do to keep up with these folks. I have never seen a group complete so much with so little. Their determination to bring affordable housing to this community while protecting parcels of ecological significance is breathtaking. I'm looking forward to working with all these individuals over the coming year. I know they will continue to do great things in the service of our community.

To help support their efforts, please take the time to renew your membership, if you haven't already, or consider making an additional, tax-deductible contribution to the land trust. (Please see the panel on the back page.) Thank you and enjoy the wonderful articles that have been prepared for this issue of our newsletter.

Nanette Nelson

PLEASE DO A QUICK MEMBER STATUS LABEL CHECK: If the date above your name on your address label indicates that your membership has expired, please renew! (Form on Page 8.)

CORRECTIONS TO VOL. 7, ISSUE 1, BROOKLYN COMMUNITY GARDEN ARTICLE:
Apologies to Reverend Morton, who is now living in New Haven, Connecticut, not Philadelphia, and to the business Fencesmith, mistakenly listed as Fencemaster.

Affordable Housing Update

Heather Benham: Project Director

In August, Heather Benham joined the ALT staff full-time in the new position of Project Director of ALT's Affordable Housing Program. A recent graduate of The University of Georgia, Ms. Benham received a Masters Degree in Historic Preservation and a Law Degree (a.k.a. Juris Doctorate) in May 2003.



Heather Benham
photo: Lizzie Z. Saltz

While in school, Heather became interested in affordable housing issues as her clinical work at the law school took her on weekly visits to the area homeless shelters. The research for her thesis, *An Examination of the History of Affordable Housing with an Emphasis on Preservation Through the Community Land Trust Model*, initially led her to the Athens Land Trust.

Her previous work experience includes several summer stints at D.O.C. (Department of Corrections), the innovative Athens' restoration design firm.

She received an Equal Justice Fellowship to work at ALT during the summer of 2002, when she impressed ALT's staff and Board. Ms. Benham is excited to be returning to ALT as a full-time employee.

In the few months since her return, Ms. Benham has been a model of team-work and initiative, working closely with contractors, HED and others to get old ALT projects completed and new ones, such as the Dublin street project (described below) off the ground. Ms Benham was also instrumental in arranging for the office move to 2109 Broad Street (see cover story.)

51 Dublin Street

ALT has recently expanded its affordable housing efforts into East Athens, by purchasing its latest affordable home in that neighborhood. The house is a lovely three-bedroom brick home that is less than six years old. As the home needs very little work, we are already marketing it to our homebuyer applicants. The house is selling for the incredible price of \$55,000.

Applications for this house and the two Rocksprings Houses are being taken now. Eligibility standards require that a family of two, for instance, have an annual income below \$32,950, and a family of five must have an annual income below \$44, 500. We are targeting long-time renters of Athens-Clarke County.

Thanks to Tom Reynolds of Tom Reynolds Home Inspection for his volunteer inspection of this property.

Rocksprings Progress

We are very excited by the progress of 235 and 245 Rocksprings. The historic homes that formerly occupied the county's demolition list are now an asset to the neighborhood thanks to some TLC provided by Garnett Williams Construction.

ALT recognizes that historic rehabilitation projects can sometimes be more time-consuming than new construction, but is interested in providing this service to the community as the benefits are so great.

Maintaining the cultural fabric of the neighborhood, taking on projects that many investors would ignore, and giving low- to -moderate-income residents of Athens-Clarke County a chance to own a piece of history outweigh the difficulties of historic rehabilitation.

We are currently in the process of finding families for the two houses that should be ready to be moved into by the end of December. The houses are selling for the affordable prices of \$50,000 for the one-bedroom and \$69,000 for the two-bedroom.

Rocksprings Open House

To give everyone a chance to see the interior renovation of the Rocksprings houses, an Open House is in the planning. Watch for your invitation in January!

—Heather Benham & Lizzie Zucker Saltz



The porch of 245 Rocksprings Street
photo: Heather Benham

*Do you have old electronic junk cluttering up your life?
Don't want to take it the dump and be responsible for
leaching lead and other toxins into our groundwater?*

CALL this NEW, FREE Service:

**Green Earth Computer & Electronic Recycling
706-351-1944 — James Mullis, Jr., Proprietor.**

Conservation Subdivision Guidelines:

ALT Helps Rewrite ACC's Conservation Subdivision Regulations

When the ACC Commission adopted its new Zoning Code in 2000, it included a provision for conservation subdivisions as a special use in the Agricultural-Residential (AR) zone. These regulations required that 50% of a tract must be set aside as open space, with all the housing built on the remainder of the tract. The AR density was set at 1 unit per acre. Thus, a 100 acre tract would have 50 acres set aside as open space, with 100 houses built on the other 50 acres.

It was immediately apparent, however, that the regulations could not achieve the intended result of protecting land in the AR. First, because the number of houses allowed was based on the gross acreage, developers were able to reap a significant density bonus. For example, if a hypothetical 100 acre tract included a 50 acre wetland, the developer of a conservation subdivision would be allowed to build 100 houses – but the developer of a conventional subdivision would only be allowed to build 50 houses, because only 50 acres of the tract were actually buildable land. This bonus naturally attracted developers to the AR, leading to increased development there.

While the 50% open space was supposed to be permanently protected, there was no requirement that such land be placed in a permanent conservation easement, which is currently the only legal tool that guarantees permanent protection. And the density of 1 unit per acre was a far cry from the 1 unit per 10 acres originally called for in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The development community also had problems with the regulations because, as a special use, their proposed developments had to be approved by the Commission. Many proposals were denied because they took advantage of the loopholes in the regulations, leading neighbors to organize against most of the proposals. The developers felt that better defined guidelines were needed to help them design projects that would be approved.

Land trusts also faced particular challenges when holding easements in conservation subdivisions. For example, the protected land could be degraded by erosion and sedimentation due to mass grading on the building site; habitat could be fragmented so that it no longer supported wildlife; and the increase of

impervious surfaces could alter the site's hydrology, all negatively impacting the open space.

Recognizing these problems, the ACC Commission in January 2003 imposed a moratorium on conservation subdivisions and directed the Planning Department to rewrite the rules. The Planning Department in turn requested help from ALT and other groups, including Oconee River Land Trust, Athens Grow Green Coalition, the Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission and the Community Tree Council, as well as developers and AR land owners.

On October 7, the ACC Commission adopted these new regulations, which contain nearly all of ALT's suggestions, and solve most of the problems that plagued the existing rules.

Density: The AR density is restored to the 1 unit per 10 acres envisioned in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, with a bonus allowing conservation subdivisions to be built at 1 unit per 5 acres, to encourage their use rather than that of conventional subdivisions in the AR.

Lot Yield: Only buildable land may be used when calculating the number of lots that can be built on a tract (in other words, that hypothetical 50 acre wetland would not count toward determining how many houses could be built on the gross 100 acre tract.)

Permanent Protection: Conservation easements held by a qualified land trust must be placed on the open space.

Design Standards: The new rules explicitly set out what types of environmental areas must be protected, and require that they be set aside from the beginning and designed around. There are specific site analysis requirements that must be undertaken before any design work can begin.

Stakeholder Involvement: Neighbors and land trusts must be notified and invited to participate in the initial design process, to make sure that their needs and concerns are addressed.

Construction Envelope: Clearing is only allowed within a 30-foot envelope around the footprint of structures (including roads,) which should cut down on the mass clear-cutting that has become the norm in construction projects.

—Beth Gavrilles

The new regulations may be downloaded from the
Planning Department's Web site at:

www.athensclarkecounty.com/%7Eplanningdept/planning.html.

Land Conservation Projects



LEFT:
Kenney Ridge
Easement

RIGHT:
Laura Hall Gabriel and O.C.
Dean survey the easement

photos:
Dave Lindsay

Kenney Ridge Easement Completed

The Kenney Ridge conservation easement has been completed. As mentioned in the last newsletter (see Vol. 7.1 for details), this is a 17-acre tract of mostly hardwood forest near the Oconee River. The Kenney Ridge community had previously protected 21 acres for a total now of 38 acres in this residential development.

This land is located off Tallassee road near the edge of the county towards Jackson County. The residents in Kenney Ridge have been very supportive of land preservation in Athens and also of the Athens Land Trust. We appreciate all of their support.

Oconee County Farm Grant

Hurray! The Athens Land Trust received a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant which will be combined with Oconee County Greenspace funds to purchase development rights from an Oconee County farmer. This is a 63-acre tract, part of a 200-acre, 4th generation farm that includes a pecan grove, historic farmhouse and outbuildings. This farm will be protected as farmland in perpetuity. The easement should be complete by the end of December 2003. There will be a celebration at the farm for the community once it is completed—and when we know the date we will send invitations out to all our members!

This project is, we hope, the beginning of an active farmland preservation movement for Oconee County. This county has some of the best agricultural soils in the state and also has an active and strong farming community. If this land can be preserved now, before more residential development splits up this agricultural zone, an important resource for local food production can be protected.

A Local Organic Farm May be Protected by a New Conservation Easement

The Nature Conservancy contacted us several months ago about protecting a 150-acre farm with a conservation easement. This farm is growing a diversity of produce and is an important resource to the community. The first step in placing a conservation easement on a property is identifying the important natural resources and for a farm to create a management plan to guide future decisions that impact the land.

ALT is working with Professor Marianne Cramer's Landscape Management class, a graduate level Landscape Architecture class at the University of Georgia who will create an inventory of the farm and a management plan. They have established some guiding principles to determine the direction of this work, including promoting ecological health and sustainable agriculture. They have determined various landscape zones based on existing plant species and management plans for these zones to help create more of a closed sustainable system on the farm (with the exception of food products leaving the farm).

They propose creating areas near cropland to be planted with native meadow species. These will provide beneficial insects for pollination and pest control. The students assessed the hydrology on the site and have proposed innovative designs to use storm water for watering crops and encouraging infiltration of groundwater to reduce erosion and improve water quality to the creek on the site. We hope to protect this farm with a conservation easement in the near future.

—Laura Hall Gabriel

Fall Fundraiser at Ashford Manor

Our Fall Fundraiser was an outdoor concert at Ashford Manor featuring The Splitz Band. The event was scheduled for September 22nd, but thunderstorms and heavy rain forced us to postpone the concert to the 23rd.

The Athens Land Trust would like to thank the members of The Splitz Band for their energizing R&B and the owners of Ashford Manor for the superb venue. We also want to extend our sincerest thanks to the following businesses for their dessert & beverage donations:

BIG CITY BREAD • CECILIA VILLAVECES' CAKES • COPPER CREEK BREWING COMPANY • DEBORAH'S SPECIALTY CAKES • EARTHFARE • FIVE POINTS DELI • FOODWORKS • MARTY'S AT MIDDAY • NORMAL BREW SHOP • RIGHTEOUS JUICE COMPANY • STARBUCKS COFFEE.

Thanks too for the publicity from *the Athens Banner-Herald*, *Flagpole Magazine* and radio stations including *WGAU*. The result of all this support was a wonderful evening which raised funds for our affordable housing and land conservation efforts.

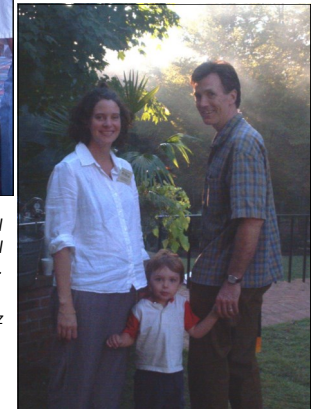
—Nancy Stangle



Board Member Beth Gavrilles and Board President Nanette Nelson serve refreshments at the Fall Fundraiser at Ashford Manor.

Land Conservation Director Laura Hall Gabriel and family members Russell and Elijah enjoy the evening.

photos: Lizzie Zucker Saltz



4th Annual Tour de Sprawl



photos: Philip Juras

Athens' 4th annual Tour de Sprawl took place on Saturday, October 11, following a keynote address the night before by architect Chuck Bohl, who spoke on "Town Centers for Post Suburban America."

Organized by BikeAthens and co-sponsored by ALT and other groups, this year's Tour saw approximately 175 participants follow a 13-mile loop by bike and bus, with five stops along the way for refreshments and speakers. Nancy Stangle, ALT's Development Director, and others provided additional commentary on the bus ride.

First stop was the future site of the Multi-Modal Center, where Athens Transit Director Butch McDuffie talked about the future of transportation in Athens, and Barbara Bacon, Housing Program Coordinator for the East Athens Development Corporation, discussed the need for better transportation services for low income individuals. The next stop was the Chase Park Warehouse Complex, where architect Bob Segrest talked about adaptive reuse of old buildings, with the Complex serving as a beautiful and functional example.

Tour participants were treated to a trapeze performance by the dancers of Canopy Studio, music by Julie Powell,

and a tour of various artists' studios and ATHICA: Athens Institute for Contemporary Art.

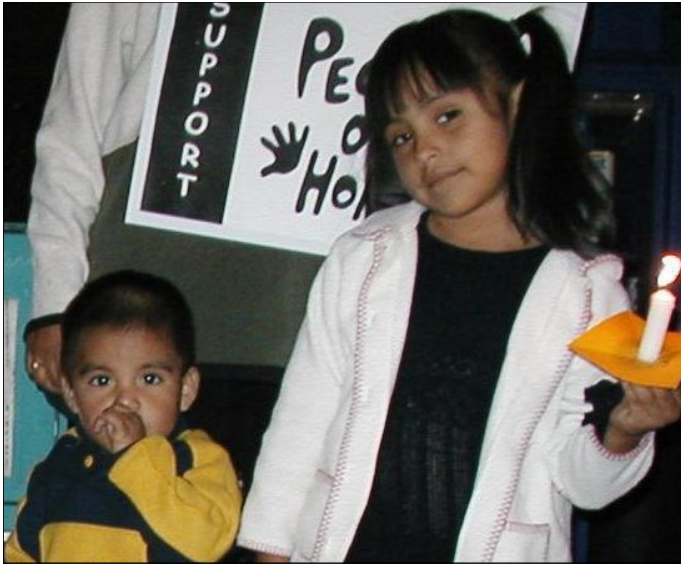
From there, the Tour rolled on to the Colonial Beechwood Shopping Center where Jack Crowley, Dean of the UGA College of Environment and Design, spoke on redevelopment and infill, particularly the adaptation of older shopping centers to mixed use. Participants continued out the Atlanta Highway to Mitchell Bridge Road, stopping at Ben Burton Park to hear Dr. Liz Kramer, director of the Natural Resources Spatial Analysis Laboratory at the UGA Institute of Ecology speak on the effects of sprawl on biodiversity. Melanie Ruhlman of the Upper Oconee Watershed Network also spoke about UOWN's streambank restoration project at the Park.

The Tour concluded back at the Old Jail, coinciding with the Daily Groceries Co-op anniversary celebration. ACC Mayor Heidi Davison spoke on community building and Robert Ramsay of the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation talked about the importance of historic preservation and the need for designating downtown Athens as a Local Historic District. These discussions brought the Tour full circle back to the topic of Chuck Bohl's keynote address, the importance of town centers, leaving participants hopeful about the potential we have to make Athens an even better place to live.

—Beth Gavrilles



Canopy Studios

GOOD NEWS...

Alfredo Flores and Joselyn Martinez at the Candlelight Vigil held on November 20th on the steps of Athens' City Hall
Photo: Juana Gnecco

People of Hope OK'd!

Wow! They did it! On Dec. 2nd the A-CC Commission voted unanimously to approve a change to the Land Use Plan allowing the People of Hope Cooperative (PoH) to develop a community-owned mobile home park on Freeman Drive. This vote indicated a recognition that mobile homes are an important source of affordable housing, and that a well-managed mobile home community, occupied and run by the homeowners, can be an asset to Athens.

In response to voiced opposition, the supporters of the PoH project presented research that mobile home communities have no deleterious effect on adjacent land values; that mobile home fire prevention standards exceed those for stick-built homes; and that corporate non-profit status does not mean that the property will be taken off the tax rolls.

What next? The PoH staff and Board will continue fundraising to cover the cost of the park infrastructure and moving homes again; and members are learning skills necessary to oversee the management of their future park. The land easement agreement between the PoH and ALT will be worked out by March so that the property can be purchased and development begun. The PoH staff and members are thankful for the courage of our elected officials in voting for this new model in affordable housing, and also express their appreciation to the ALT staff and members, and to the many people who have helped move the project forward.

—Maureen O'Brien

To contact People of Hope, write them at 2109 Broad Street, Athens, GA 30606, or call and leave a message at 546-5051.

BAD NEWS...**Fourth Street Village**

As written about in Vol. 7.1, ALT in partnership with the Co-operative Resource Center (CRC), had applied for the 2003 Low Income Housing Tax Credit and HOME multifamily housing program. On September 30, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) announced their funding selections.

To our great dismay, the score of ALT's Fourth Street Village project was 141, which meant it didn't receive funding, while projects scoring one point higher (142) were funded. DCA deducted two points for "an undesirable site" (an abandoned multi-family property) within ½ mile of our proposed location. Ironically, the abandoned property is the former Athens Arms Apartment complex, a HUD-financed project which was sold for student luxury housing, displacing many low-income residents during Fall 2002. DCA had assisted with the relocation of these families. DCA based their two-point deduction on a visit to the site on June 21st where they noted the "possible evidence of trespassers." As part of the application process, before the awards were made ALT and CRC informed the DCA that the Athens Arms Apartment complex was actively being renovated. However, this information was not considered and the Fourth Street Village application was deducted 2 points for "an undesirable site."

Distressingly, six projects surveyed in the metro Atlanta area which did receive funding all had abandoned buildings within ½ mile and they were not deducted any points.

We are most disappointed for the residents of Athens-Clarke County who are in need of affordable rental housing or are currently living in substandard conditions. If it is possible, we hope to apply for next year's allocation of tax credits. We'll keep you posted!

—Nancy Stangle with Darren Pence

THANKS to the many members who responded so generously to ALT's recent membership renewal letters!

Your continuing support of our mission is greatly appreciated.

If you received a letter and have not yet responded, please take moment to let us know you would like to continue to help protect land and provide affordable housing in this area.

We need you! Your support is essential to the work of the Athens Land Trust.

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 the continuation of our work. We greatly appreciate all donations of time and money.

If you would like to renew your membership or join us for the first time, please complete the following:

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.
2109 Broad Street
Athens, Georgia 30606-3545**



Our Mission 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. Incorporated in 1994, ALT works to protect land in many ways, most importantly through conservation easements and by rehabilitating and constructing new infill affordable housing for people of low-to-moderate income in the Hancock and East Athens neighborhoods.