



The Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods Board Meeting

March 8, 2018
Peachtree Presbyterian Church
6:45 – 8:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

Attendees

	Name	Neighborhood/Organization	Email
1	Evelyn Andrews	Reporter Newspapers	evelyn@reporterNewspapers.net
2	Michael Julian Bond	City Council, Post 1	mbond@AtlantaGa.Gov
3	Glenn Cartledge	Memorial Park	GECartledge@gmail.com
4	Gordon Certain	North Buckhead	gcertain@comcast.net
5	Chris Davis	North Buckhead	chris.davis294@gmail.com
6	Mary Dodson	Chastain Park	mary_dodson@mindspring.com
7	Jim Elgar	Loring Heights- J.P. Matzigkeit's office	jimelgar@gmail.com
8	Jason Esteves	BOE Seat 9 At Large	jesteves@atlanta.k12.ga.us
9	Wyatt Engwall	Garden Hills	KWEngwall@gmeil.com
10	Eric Ferrara	Paces	Ferrara.11@lycos.com
11	Ted Fleming	Peachtree Hills	tfleming@gmail.com
12	Edward Floyd	Mt. Paran-Northside	Floyd7@Bellsouth.net
13	Mary Lou Floyd	Mt. Paran-Northside	
14	Dieter Franz	North Buckhead	cdf Franz@comcast.net
15	Stephen Furr	North Buckhead	sbfurr@gnail.com
16	Jim Garcia	North Buckhead	jim.g@reagan.com
17	Beatrice Garner	Peachtree Battle Alliance	
18	Ron Grunwald	Loring Heights	Rgrunwald@bellsouth.net
19	Ben Howard	Buckhead Condo Alliance	benhoward@gatech.edu
20	Jennifer Ide	City Council District 6	jnide@atlantaga.gov
21	Barbara Kennedy	Collier Hills	bar2010@aol.com
22	Walda Lavroff	North Buckhead	waldalavroff@gmail.com
23	Nolan Leake	Peachtree Heights West	nleake@bellsouth.net
24	Francine Lowe	Pine Hills	Francine@lowetravel.net
25	J.P. Matzigkeit	City Council District 8	JP.Matzigkeit@gmail.com
26	Kevin McCauley	North Buckhead	KevinMcCauley1@netscape.net
27	Roger Moister	Collier Hills North	Moisters2@yahoo.com
28	Kathleen Moriarty	Peachtree Hills	katatl@comcast.net
29	Mary Norwood	Grant Estates	mary@mnorwood.com
30	Shawn Perez	Peachtree Park	ShawnPerez@atlantafinehomes.com
31	Garth Peters	Memorial Park & Buckhead Coalition	gpeters@thebuckheadcoalition.org
32	Jennifer Rose	Mt. Paran-Northside	jenprose@gmail.com
33	Mercy Sandberg-Wright	Tuxedo Park	mercywright@msn.com
34	Warren Small	Peachtree Battle Alliance	smallfamily@comcast.net
35	Laura Spearman	Peachtree Battle Alliance	2616@gmail.com
36	Tom Tidwell	West Paces Northside	tom@tidwell-law.com
37	Marie Tvaroch	Pine Hills	marietvaroch@bellsouth.net

Attendee listing continued on Page 2

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

38	Debra Wathen	Paces	6wathens@bellsouth.net
39	Matt Westmoreland	City Council Post 2	MattWestmoreland@gmail.com
40	Price Williams	Garden Hills	pricewilliams@pswj.com
41	Reggie Williamson	Habersham Park Association	Reggie.Williamson@delta.com
42	Charles Wilson	Peachtree Heights West	
43	Jane Wilson	Peachtree Heights West	jjwilson@mindspring.com
44	Ellen Adair Wyche	Grant Estates	eawyche@TheWycheGroup.com
45	Nancy Wylie	North Buckhead	nancywylie@mindspring.com
46	Bob Young	North Buckhead	youngbh@comcast.net

Attendance by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	Attendees
Buckhead Condo Alliance	Ben Howard
Chastain Park	Mary Dodson
Collier Hills	Barbara Kennedy
Collier Hills North	Roger Moister
Garden Hills	Wyatt Engwall, Price Williams
Grant Estates	Mary Norwood, Ellen Adair Wyche
Habersham Park	Reggie Williamson
Loring Heights	Jim Elgar, Ron Grunwald
Memorial Park	Glenn Cartledge, Garth Peters
Mt. Paran-Northside	Edward Floyd, Mary Lou Floyd, Jennifer Rose
North Buckhead	Gordon Certain, Chris Davis, Dieter Franz, Stephen Furr, Jim Garcia, Walda Lavroff, Kevin McCauley, Nancy Wylie, Bob Young
Paces	Eric Ferrara, Debra Wathen
Peachtree Battle Alliance	Beatrice Garner, Warren Small, Laura Spearman
Peachtree Heights West	Nolan Leake, Charles Wilson, Jane Wilson
Peachtree Hills	Ted Fleming, Kathleen Moriarty
Peachtree Park	Shawn Perez
Pine Hills	Francine Lowe, Marie Tvaroch
Tuxedo Park	Mercy Sandberg-Wright
West Paces Northside	Tom Tidwell

BCN 2018/19 Officers (Executive Committee)

<u>Office</u>	<u>Officer</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Email</u>
Chairman	Tom Tidwell	West Paces Northside	tom@tidwell-law.com
Vice-Chairman	Jeff Clark	Garden Hills	jeffbclark@gmail.com
Secretary	Gordon Certain	North Buckhead	gcertain@comcast.net
Treasurer	Debra Wathen	Paces	6wathens@bellsouth.net

BCN Standing Committees

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Email</u>
Executive Committee	Tom Tidwell	tom@tidwell-law.com
Education	Tom Tidwell	tom@tidwell-law.com
Transportation	Debra Wathen Elizabeth Scattergood	6wathens@bellsouth.net betsy.scattergood@gmail.com

Other (Legislative, NPU, Parks, Voter Education/Registration, etc.)

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

Meet & Greet Before BCN Meeting

At what is ordinarily the starting time of the monthly BCN board meeting, attendees were given the opportunity to meet a number of recently elected officials listed below.

- **Matt Westmoreland**, City Council Member, At-large Post 2
- **J.P. Matzigkiet**, City Council Member, District 8
- **Jen Jordan**, State Senator, District 6

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Tom Tidwell called the meeting to order at about 7:00 PM. A quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the February meeting were approved.

III. Admit New Member Neighborhoods

No neighborhoods asked to be considered for BCN membership.

IV. Speaker - Tim Keane, Commissioner of City Planning

Tim Keane said he has been in office for 2 ½ years. He did similar work for 16 years in Charleston, South Carolina.

Keane explained that the **Department of City Planning** includes five offices:

- **Buildings**
- **Zoning & Development**
- **Transportation Planning**
- **Design**
- **Housing & Community Development.**

Of these, the Office of Design is new, created six months after he arrived. He worked with Ryan Gravel of Beltline fame. Keane said that up until that office was created the city didn't have a plan. It struggled with managing projects as independent entities. Keane said what was needed was to think of the city as something that needs to be designed.

The design process has three phases: Concept, Design Development, and Specific Projects.

Concept:

- Atlanta has not had a plan for itself.
- The concept needs to be a very specific design for a growing city.
- The concept is based on the idea that more people are better.
- The reason to grow is not for the sake of growing but to make a better city.
- Having more people helps with the issues of affordability and mobility.
- Keane reported that we now have the needed plan: see atcitydesign.com.



Commissioner Tim Keane

Photo from atlantaga.gov

Design Development: This is a much finer-grain plan requiring the creation of or updating the following:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Urban Ecology Framework

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

- Housing Needs Assessment
- New Transportation Plan

Specific Projects:

- A building
- A park
- A street

Keane argued that a larger city can be more urban and more natural, providing people access to people and people access to nature. Nature can thrive in such an environment. The initial effort will be quick amendments to the tree ordinance, followed by a rewritten ordinance.

Keane asked for questions and comments.

Tom Tidwell asked about the effort to rework the tree ordinance. Keane said that next week they would have the kickoff of the urban ecology workshop. He said that a huge component of the city plan involved nature. He said our tree canopy is probably the most important aspect, as well as the creeks. An international group called BioHabitats is leading the effort. Their efforts will include a completely new tree ordinance. The first meetings will be near Five Points and they'll move around the city afterward.

Keane said the current tree ordinance "doesn't protect trees". He went on to say the only trees you cannot remove under the current ordinance are trees in the setback, as defined by zoning. But even those, if you show that they must be removed, for reasons such as grading, can be removed. He said the ordinance is not so much about saving trees as it is about collecting fees to remove them. He said that is not a good approach. What we need to move toward is: *these* trees (specific species and sizes) cannot be removed, period, unless you get a variance with a public hearing. He observed that people don't want to go to public hearings. That approach makes the trees a critical design constraint. Developers buying a site will know they have to design around the existing trees. He said developers are not used to that; they are used to writing a check. The challenge is that neither side, the tree advocates and those who want to remove trees, are unwilling to give an inch on their positions.

An example of the quick changes to the tree ordinance are to make the ordinance less permissive on which trees can be removed and require better protection so trees aren't damaged during development. They could specify what species could be planted. He suggested that as an accommodation to the other side, as such changes are negotiated, might be to relax the tree removal sign posting requirements.

Tom also asked about what was planned for traffic. Keane said they have a new transportation plan. He said that the Atlanta region has grown a lot but the city, itself, hasn't. In 1970, the city's population was almost 30% of the region's. We now have a lower population and the region has grown to about six million. That makes transportation challenging. We need to shift away from making long regional trips, which is what got us what we have today, toward more local trips. The transportation plan has a bunch of recommendations about that. He said areas that already have density, mentioning many streets such as Pharr Road, need to be provided with alternate transportation.

There were several comments about the impact of the project to replace the Northside bridge. Keane indicated that his department didn't manage projects like that and such concerns should be directed to Public Works or to Watershed Management. **Garth Peters** went on to outline some of the changes that have been made to that project's plan to reduce the impact and announced a mid-March public meeting about the project.

Keane said they were planning some zoning ordinance amendments for which public meetings would be held. He recommended visiting the City Planning Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter sites to look for postings for upcoming meetings.

A questioner asked what a trip around Atlanta would be like in 15 or 20 years. Keane said the city would be much more populated. He said, depending on how the boundaries are drawn, Downtown might now have a population of 10,000; in the future, that would be several hundred thousand people. "Every person living in Downtown Atlanta makes Downtown Atlanta better." He added that the growth needs to shift from here (the Buckhead area) to Downtown, to the west and to farther south. The second thing he would say about the Atlanta of the future is that we will capitalize on nature. He cited the 1909 Chicago plan, a model Atlanta should follow, set aside the Lake Michigan waterside to be public, an interface between nature and urban space. Third, "the quality of design will increase,

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

dramatically. ... A city full of not so beautiful buildings gets tiresome. And we need to work on that.” Fourth and last, the issue of transportation: Atlanta, more than any other city in America, has the opportunity to help everyone with transportation if we deliver on the plan. We need to be careful about building design details. He expects that we will finally see progress on transportation.

A questioner asked about the SPIs (Special Public Interest districts) established around the city. She said she participates on the Lindbergh SPI and she has seen that the planning staff ignores the SPI. For instance, the SPI calls for homes for families and the Planning staff approves a 150,000 square foot Super Walmart, instead. Her question: is there a future for the SPIs? Keane said, “there will be something new to replace them, that’s more effective. Some of that might come with a sooner round of zoning amendments we’re making. Some of it might require the big zoning rewrite. We’ve got an RFP we’re putting out soon on a total rewrite of the zoning ordinance. That takes time, probably three to five years. But there are things we can do now to improve them. One of the things we can do is to improve the design review process, which, right now, there are many design review committees; there’s not a lot of consistency. We’re getting into this right now in Midtown with this hotel, but we can improve that process tremendously.” Questioner: The SPI has been completely disregarded by the professional staff. **Walda Lavroff** commented, “SPIs are supposed to be Special Public Interest, but the *public* has been left out. It has become the *special interest* areas. We are very much impacted by that in North Buckhead.”

Gordon Certain commented on transportation. He said, when visiting the Atlanta transportation plan presentations last summer, he noticed, being from North Buckhead which borders Sandy Springs, that there was only one improvement planned that made it all the way to his neighborhood and beyond, a rapid bus line up Roswell Road. We have other cities we regularly travel to. There need to be a plan that’s Metro-wide, not just Atlanta-wide. There was nothing to facilitate traffic from Cobb County to his neighborhood. The traffic clogs West Paces Ferry Road, which used to be a beautiful residential street and now it’s a corridor. There’s no planning apparent for addressing the fact that 98% of the workers in the southern part of North Buckhead commute from somewhere else. Keane responded that obviously, his organization is not responsible for the region. There are regional plans that the ARC is part of. The issue this question raises requires a different solution than we typically think about which have normally involved infrastructure. What may be needed here may be regulation and what he calls the software side of things which is policy and regulatory. It will be very difficult. But there will be proposals beyond infrastructure to address this matter. Gordon: we’ve got a job center developed in the neighborhood and we have got to get people to the job center. Keane: What road would you propose we build? Gordon: we need a subway from Cobb County to Buckhead and get the commuters off neighborhood streets. Keane: “the more roads you build, the more traffic you have. At some point you must go to different measures. And transit is part of it. But the software side is part of it, too. The regulations, the ways in which you can regulate things, strongly encourage people to use other routes and other modes of transportation.

Tom said he works on the Beltline Advisory Task Force. By the time we can afford to build light rail, it will be outdated technology. There’ll be autonomous vehicles and lots of better things we can do for a lot less money. They are dead set to build light rail, no matter what. It’s like building highways, no matter that transit is more efficient. What’s your view on building transit? Streetcars versus whatever? Keane said his opinion is that we are evolving at the city on these issues. The market on public transportation is so dynamic as it relates to technology that we cannot think so monolithically about options. We will be so unsatisfied if we decide to build light rail everywhere. We’ll bring in the best people in the world to help us think this through.

V. Other Business – City Council Q&A Session and Property tax update from Jen Jordan

City Council Q&A

Several questions were asked of the City Council members present ranging from:

- the composition of the revised pension board (it will be revisited by City Council this year),
- the status of the unenforceable sound ordinance (a new one is coming),
- how the quality of life of existing residents will be protected as the city grows as much as Tim Kean wants (not clear but new development needs to be focused on other parts of the city), and

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

- how can affordability of housing for existing residents be ensured as other parts of the city become more developed and more economically desirable (not clear).

Property tax update from Senator Jen Jordan

Jen Jordan started by observing that transportation/transit issues, affordable housing and property tax issues all feed into each other. Each impacts the other. She said when she was elected to the Senate she didn't expect to work on property taxes. She added that she is a firm believer in local control but that we have a serious problem with Fulton County. Specifically, the problem is with the Tax Assessor's office and their inability to get a tax digest approved for years and years. For whatever reason, we have let this happen and we only get upset when we have a recession or when the real estate market is strong (and everyone gets hit).

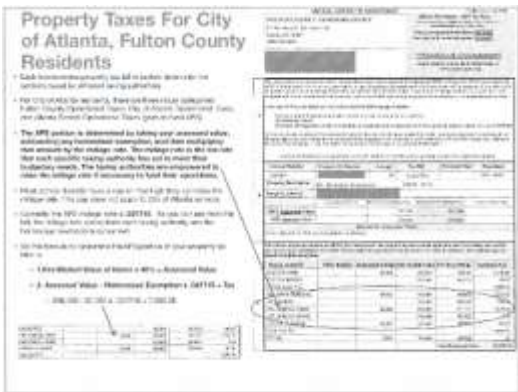


Senator Jen Jordan

Photo from North Buckhead Civic Association Annual Meeting (Mar20, 2018)

She thinks that what we need to do now is "triage a little bit". We need to give people some relief, but we also can't just put a band-aid on problems and wait for the next crisis.

She "dropped" two bills the week of the meeting that increase the base homestead exemption for the APS portion of the property tax. She provided a handout (below, left) which had a section (below) showing the widely divergent values of homestead exemptions for various taxing entities. While APS had a \$30,000 exemption, Fulton County Operations had an exemption of \$98,600. This meant the same home had a taxable value of \$366,400 for APS but only \$297,440 for Fulton Operations. The APS portion of the total tax bill is about 52%; the City of Atlanta and Fulton portions are each about 22%. The rest comes from bonds. Her bills focus on the biggest portion, APS.



The estimate of your ad valorem tax bill for the current year is based on the previous or most applicable year's net millage rate and the fair market value contained in this notice. The actual tax bill you receive may be more or less than this estimate. This estimate may not include all eligible exemptions.

Taxing Authority	Other Exempt.	Homestead Exempt	Net Taxable Value	Previous Millage	Estimated Tax
FULTON OPER		98,600	297,440	010450	3,108.25
FULTON BONDS			396,400	000250	99.10
Total County Tax					3,207.35
ATLANTA GENERAL		30,000	366,400	008880	3,253.63
ATL BONDS			396,400	001480	586.64
ATL SCHOOL OPER		30,000	366,400	021715	7,956.38
ATL SCHOOL BOND			396,400	000025	0.91
ATLANTA PARKS		30,000	366,400	000500	183.20
Total City Tax					11,989.79
STATE		2,000	394,400	000000	00
					Total Estimated Tax 15,197.14

Jordan continued, saying she understood that Representative Beth Beskin had been to BCN previously to discuss her tax bill, HB820. She said the HP820 uses a floating homestead exemption, much like is used by Fulton. If they need to, the City of Atlanta can increase the millage rate. Jordan thought it was important to have APS involved, letting her know how much increase in the homestead exemption they could bear without raising the millage rate. What she and APS came up with was a \$50,000 homestead exemption for everyone except seniors who would get \$100,000. Both Beskin's and Jordan's bill, if approved by the Legislature and Governor, would also have to be approved by the voters in November. The House and Senate bills are not mutually exclusive – both can pass. Currently, the only homestead exemption reduction to Atlanta seniors was based on having a lower income. Many seniors have been moving out of Atlanta to Cobb County because they are exempted from school taxes there. Jordan said this change may help keep seniors here.

She added that this bill is a band-aid, not the total solution. She has wondered if in the longer term whether fair market value is the right way to do property taxes. In terms of affordable housing, if someone has been in their home in Vine City for 50 years, it doesn't matter if the fair market value of their house is \$1 million, they can't pay the property taxes on it. There are different taxation models

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

we can look at to keep people in their homes while also making sure we have year-to-year consistency. Consistency has been the problem which has resulted from the up and down fluctuations of the real estate market. Another second problem has been to get the assessors to actually do regular valuations. The Legislature is going to look at the governance of the tax assessor boards across the state, not just Fulton County. We need to decide, at the state level, how we should value property taxes.

Speaking about transit, she said, it is obvious that Smyrna, for instance, needs to be linked to Downtown Atlanta – why aren't we doing that? Encouragingly, there are bills, one passed by the House, one by the Senate to link the transit planning activities of all the communities which make up metro areas. She thought these bills are an exciting bipartisan effort to take on the issue of defining what metro-wide governance of transit will look like. She said that an important deficiency exists in both the House and Senate bills: not having real people (real users and potential users of transit) participating in the process.

VI. Community Concerns I New Business / Announcements

Note that BCN dues are now payable for 2018. Neighborhoods should mail a \$100 check, payable to the Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods to:

**BCN
PO Box 420391
Atlanta, GA 30342**

VII. Next Meetings

Thursday, April 12, 2018 - ~~trying to get Mayor Bottoms or APS Superintendent Carstarphen~~

Thursday, May 10, 2018-**Brian** McGowan, CEO of Atlanta Beltline

VIII. Adjourn - The meeting adjourned at about 8:30 PM.

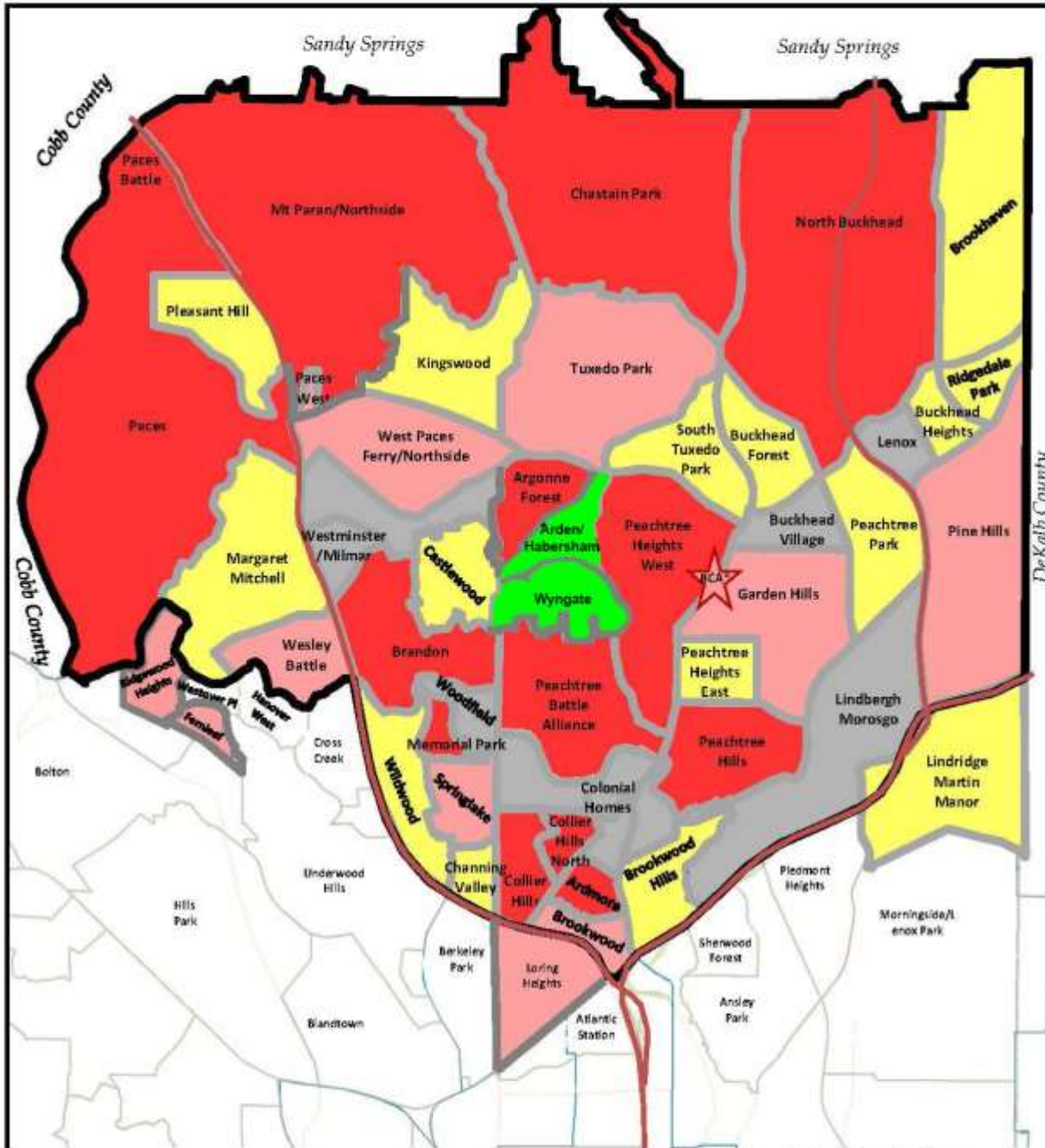
Prepared by Gordon Certain, BCN Secretary, April 10, 2018

BCN's web page is at www.BuckheadCouncil.org.

Note: *Opinions expressed by the speakers, visitors, and individual neighborhood representatives in these minutes do not necessarily represent those of BCN or its member neighborhoods.*

Buckhead Council of Neighborhoods

Paid Membership as of 04/09/18



* BCA = Buckhead Condo Alliance

LEGEND

Paid Membership as of 04/07/18

- 2018: YES (Red square)
- 2017: YES (Light Red square)
- PENDING (Green square)
- (Habersham Park)
- NO (Yellow square)
- N/A (Grey square)

BCN Board Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018

BCN Status as April 9, 2018																		
Neighborhood		Dues		Data	Neighborhood Representation at Board Meetings													
		2017	2018	2018 Census	2016	2017	2018											
					Met 10 Times	Met 10 Times	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Arden/Habersham																	
2	Ardmore Park	✓	✓		55%	13%												
3	Argonne Forest		✓															
4	Brandon	✓	✓															
5	Brookwood	✓				25%												
6	Brookwood Hills																	
7	Buckhead Condo Alliance				77%	75%	✓		✓									
8	Buckhead Forest																	
9	Buckhead Heights																	
10	Buckhead Village				44%	25%												
11	Castlewood																	
12	Channing Valley																	
13	Chastain Park	✓	✓		44%	25%	✓	✓	✓									
14	Collier Hills	✓	✓		33%	75%	✓	✓	✓									
15	Collier Hills North	✓	✓		55%	38%		✓	✓									
16	Fernleaf	✓																
17	Garden Hills	✓			44%	100%	✓	✓	✓									
18	Grant Estates								✓									
19	Habersham Park		✓						✓									
20	Historic Brookhaven				33%													
21	Kingswood																	
22	Lindbergh																	
23	Lindridge Martin Manor				11%													
24	Loring Heights	✓			77%	50%		✓	✓									
25	Margaret Mitchell																	
26	Memorial Park	✓	✓		44%	75%	✓	✓	✓									
27	Mt. Paran-Northside	✓	✓		88%	83%	✓	✓	✓									
28	North Buckhead	✓	✓		100%	100%	✓	✓	✓									
29	Paces	✓	✓		77%	100%	✓	✓	✓									
30	Paces West	✓				38%												
31	Peachtree Battle Alliance		✓		33%				✓									
32	Peachtree Heights East																	
33	Peachtree Heights West	✓	✓		55%	38%		✓	✓									
34	Peachtree Hills	✓	✓			50%	✓	✓	✓									
35	Peachtree Park								✓									
36	Pine Hills	✓			55%	63%	✓	✓	✓									
37	Pleasant Hill																	
38	Ridgedale Park				11%													
39	Ridgewood Heights	✓			11%	13%												
40	Springlake	✓			11%													
41	Tuxedo Park	✓			55%	63%	✓		✓									
42	Wesley Battle	✓				13%		✓										
43	West Paces Northside	✓			88%	100%	✓	✓	✓									
44	Wildwood																	
45	Wyngate																	
Totals		21	13		Avg:12	Avg:12	11	14	18									