

# BUCKHEAD Reporter

Vol. 4, No. 6 • March 12 – March 25, 2010  
www.reporternewspapers.net



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## Hunting for spring



PHIL MOSIER

Andrew Dalba, 5, enjoyed some Easter fun early, searching for eggs at the Atlanta History Center's Magic Monday on March 8. Although spring had not yet arrived, the sunshine gave a hint of the season to Andrew and his brother Hugh, 2, and mom, Ky.

## Farmers markets open in April

By Amy Wenk  
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Farmer Paula Guilbeau is getting ready. Soon Guilbeau will pack her truck with lettuce, spinach, arugula, carrots and sugar snap peas and drive down to Buckhead with her dachshund Ellie May. April marks the opening of three local

farmers markets, and she couldn't be more excited. "It's been a long, cold, hard winter," said Guilbeau, who runs Heirloom Gardens in Cumming. In six greenhouses and four fields, she grows 34 varieties of tomatoes, 24 types of peppers, 15 herbs and 40 kinds of flowers. "I'm ready to see my customers." see FARMERS, page 30

## Colonial Homes plan reworked after outcry

By Louis Mayeux

After facing a crowd of angry neighbors, a developer has scaled back plans to redevelop the Colonial Homes Apartments.

The development plan for Colonial Homes drew an overflow crowd of angry homeowners to the Neighborhood Planning Unit C's on March 2.

Carl Westmoreland, attorney for Colonial Homes owner Pope & Land, said March 9 that only one segment of the sprawling apartment complex off Peachtree Road will be proposed for redevelopment, instead of the two tracts originally proposed.

Under the revised plan, to be resubmitted to the Atlanta City Council's Community Development Committee, a segment adjacent to Peachtree Road will up for redevelopment. A segment between Bennett Street and Colonial Homes Drive, adjacent to the residential Collier Hills North neighborhood, would not be redeveloped and would retain

its medium-density zoning. Westmoreland said that Pope & Land wants the deferred plan to be considered by the Community Development committee at its June meeting. The committee was to have considered the original plan at its March 8 meeting, before the decision to change the plan.

Before that, the reconfigured plan must be submitted to NPU-C, which will go through the same process it used in studying the original plan, said Chairman Paul Melvin. The NPU-C overwhelming voted against Colonial Homes owner Pope & Land's original proposal, which would have increased the number of apartments from 254 to 580 in two of five areas of the apartment complex, which was built in 1947 and is located near Bobby Jones Golf Course in lower Buckhead off Peachtree Road. Melvin said the revised plan will again be considered by the NPU's Colonial Homes Task Force and its executive committee. see COLONIAL, page 10

## 20% of city's budget goes to pension funds

By John Schaffner  
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During his mayoral campaign last year, Kasim Reed highlighted reform of the city's three pension plans as one of the most critical issues facing the city.

"The stark reality is that one out of every five tax dollars from Atlanta's general fund is going to pay for a pension system which is increasingly unsustainable," the newly

elected Atlanta mayor has said. "We need to face this challenge head on, being mindful of the responsibility to taxpayers who fund that pension system, without breaking faith with the public servants who have dedicated their lives to the city." Reed says he's trying to ensure the long-term financial solvency of the city while also recognizing the service and see PENSIONS, page 25

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# Farmers markets open in April

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For the third year, Guilbeau will be a vendor at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market, held each Saturday in the parking lot of St. Philips Cathedral in Buckhead. When it opens April 10, the market will for the fourth year offer the public locally-grown food and handicrafts from more than 45 vendors.

Two new markets open this year on April 3, the Sandy Springs Farmers Market and the Chastain Park Green Market.

"There's a huge demand for this kind of shopping experience," said Andrew Bauman, who is organizing the Sandy Springs market with Jeffrey Langfelder. The long-time residents of Sandy Springs March 2 were awarded an operating agreement by Sandy Springs City Council. "The response has been tremendous."

That is because residents see the benefits of buying fresh, naturally-grown food directly from local growers.

"It's a movement," said Guilbeau, who specializes in heirloom tomatoes. "People want to see a face with their food."

The "farm-to-table" approach not only promotes a healthier lifestyle but encourages relationships within the community. Neighbors meet and mingle and new businesses can bloom.

"The community really wants this," said Buckhead resident Randall Fox who is launching the Chastain Park Green Market with his partner Patrick Dennis, an artist and former lobbyist. "It's about bringing the community together and giving them what

they want."

## Sowing local seeds

Farmers markets offer fresh food and the opportunity to support local merchants.

"You are really paying the farmer," said Lauren Carey, manager of the Peachtree Road Farmers Market that draws around 1,000 shoppers each Saturday. There are no middle men, and you won't find any food grown with pesticides or other chemicals. Carey ensures this by making visits to the farms.

"A market is only as good as its farmers," said Guilbeau, who worked as a commercial flower grower for 20 years before launching Heirloom Gardens. "There's a lot of work to this."

She works seven days a week year round and rarely has help. It's hard, but she loves it.

"It's just so beautiful," Guilbeau said. She spoke about her "creekside café," where she eats lunch alongside a small stream that flows into the Etowah River, and how much it delights her to hear frogs croaking in the distance.

"I'm a bayou girl," said the New Orleans native. "We always had a garden growing up. It's in my blood. I have to grow."

Thankfully, sales from the two farmers markets she attends weekly sustain her business.

"The people at the market have embraced the farmers," Guilbeau said. "I sell out every



Paula Guilbeau, a farmer who operates Heirloom Gardens in Cumming, inspects her swiss chard.

Saturday."

That community support keeps her planting potatoes on a dark night just like her father used to.

## Rooting a community

Farmers markets also offer a weekly social event.

"You get to know your neighbors, friends and people you don't normally run in to," said Fox, who fell in love with markets while living near one in Washington, D.C. Fox would walk the dogs around while Dennis sold his artwork at the market.

But when they moved to Atlanta, they didn't find the same atmosphere.

In response, the two established the Atlanta Foundation for Public Spaces in May 2006. In five years, Fox and Dennis have established markets around Atlanta, many focused on arts and crafts. Chastain Park will be their fifth location.

"We took something that we loved, and we brought it to our neighbors," Fox said.

The Chastain Park Green Market will be held in the parking lot of Horseradish Grill and will offer gardening lessons along with food and art for sale. Fox estimates between 10 and 24 vendors each Saturday.

Bauman and Langfelder, who are launching the Sandy Springs Farmers Market, are not farmers or artists, but businessmen who see a market as an opportunity to improve their neighborhood.

"My real interest is the community," said Bauman, a lawyer who runs a real estate firm.

He believes the market will help develop downtown Sandy Springs by encouraging people to congregate in the town center. The market will be held in the parking lot of the former Target store at the corner of Sandy Springs Circle and Johnson Ferry Road, property the city purchased in 2008 for a future City Hall.

"Sandy Springs is really an appealing place to be for this," Bauman said. "The access is great and so is the parking."

He estimates there will be 20 to 25 vendors when the market opens in April. He hopes the event will draw more than 1,000 people each Saturday.

## Peachtree Road Farmers Market

Opens: April 10

Hours: Every Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: Parking lot of Cathedral of St. Philip, 2744 Peachtree Road.

## Chastain Park Green Market

Opens: April 3

Hours: Every Saturday, 7:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Location: Parking lot of Horseradish Grill, 4320 Powers Ferry Road.

## Sandy Springs Farmers Market

Opens: Tentatively April 3

Hours: Every Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to noon

Location: Parking lot of the former Target at the corner of Sandy Springs Circle and Johnson Ferry Road.

"There are so many neat things you can do with this," Bauman said, mentioning educational programs, health screenings, cooking competitions and weekly entertainment. He also wants civic and nonprofit organizations to promote community activities at the market. "Right now, we are just trying to get it open."

## Growing a business

In addition, farmers markets offer the community a low-cost venue to market their goods.

The result is budding entrepreneurs like Buckhead residents Dave and Leslie Lennox who have gained a local following for their pesto, which is available in three flavors — fresh basil, jalapeno and sun-dried tomato.

For the fourth year, the family will be vendors at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market. They also are signed up to sell at the market in Sandy Springs.

The pesto company is named Hope's Gardens after their 12-year-old daughter Hope. She runs her own business making clay figurines and jewelry called Awesome Animals by Hope at the market alongside her parents.

"The farmer's market was a catalyst for the [pesto] business," said Dave, a technology consultant. "Leslie is a great cook and a hobby gardener."

She sold hand-painted greeting cards at the Peachtree Road Farmers Market when it opened in the spring of 2007. "We sold some cards, but just noticed the buzz around locally grown, sustainable, organic foods," Dave said. "It was very exciting."

On the next Saturday, the Lennox family brought 10 to 15 gourmet lettuce blends to sell at the market. They sold out in an hour. In the following weeks, they brought more and more of their home-grown crops.

"People were coming back saying that was the best lettuce I have eaten in my entire life, and it was grown three miles away," Dave said.

The couple really became popular when they brought along 18 jars of Leslie's home-made pesto, a recipe loved by her family for a decade. It was an instant hit.

The business became official, and the product was soon available in seven Whole Foods stores and local restaurants, such as Souper Jenny in Buckhead.

Even though last September's floods ravaged their home and destroyed their greenhouse equipment, the Lennox family is pressing forward.

"We've got a real thing going," Dave said.

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