

Auction items abound for Taste of Dunwoody patrons

The plates are set. Delicious treats are being planned. Auction items are being finalized. The Taste of Dunwoody is almost upon us.



DeKalb exhausts its reserve fund

With only a month left before DeKalb county commissioners have to adopt the 2011 budget, their budget committee received grim news last week about the county's finances.



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Wednesday January 26, 2011

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News

County to begin work on new Chamblee senior center

Wednesday, January 26, 2011 6:51 AM EST

By Don Memberg For The Crier
This building on Malone Drive in Chamblee will be razed to make way for a new senior center. Construction is scheduled to begin in late fall or winter. Crier photo: Don Memberg

Construction is expected to begin in the last quarter of 2011 on a new senior center in Chamblee, according to Chris Morris, the DeKalb County community development director. The Chamblee facility will be one of three new county senior centers to be constructed with funding obtained through the Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"Loan repayment will come from other HUD grants, not from local DeKalb County taxpayers," Morris said.

DeKalb County's age 55-plus population has increased by some 33,000 people in the last five years and is expected to reach 300,000 over the next 20 years, said Morris. The Atlanta Regional Commission's DeKalb County profile for adults 55 and older shows a projected 118 percent population increase between 2000 and 2030.

About 18 months ago, DeKalb Co. CEO Burrell Ellis and District 2 Commissioner Jeff Rader formed Lifelong DeKalb, a task force to address the needs of the county's active seniors. The county effort is in partnership with the ARC's Lifelong Community initiative to incorporate housing and transportation options, health and wellness and access to information to allow all residents in the region the ability to live in their communities for as long as possible.

"We are preparing so we can have the best community for seniors," said Morris. "The centers are part of our process to make sure we're getting ready for the active senior increasing population."

The Chamblee center will be located on Malone Drive. The other new centers will be built on Candler Road in south DeKalb, replacing a facility the county has owned since the 1970s; and in central DeKalb at a site still to be determined. Other county senior centers are located in Lithonia, Scottdale and Atlanta/DeKalb.

Chamblee previously had a senior center on property not owned by the county on Johnson Ferry Road near Blackburn Park. It was torn down during a redevelopment project. Some senior services, including meals and activities, have been provided for north DeKalb residents at the Chamblee headquarters of Senior Connections, which provides Meals On Wheels and operates the county's senior centers. But residents have long hoped for a new senior center.

"[A senior center] is very important for many people," Evelyn Kennedy, 83, told The Crier in September 2010. "We have been promised a new facility. If it was expanded, many more people could use it," said Kennedy, a former mayor of Chamblee.

In the same Crier article, DeKalb County Super District 6 Commissioner Kathie Gannon said that when she visits the Chamblee Senior Connections location, "North DeKalb residents say, 'we are long overdue [for a new facility] and when is it coming?'"

Following the announcement that a senior center will be built in Chamblee, Gannon said, "It is a renewal of the county's commitment to seniors and my personal commitment. I have made seniors, and aging in place, a priority."

Morris said an architect for the north and south centers has been approved by the county board of commissioners and a contract is expected to be signed within days. Before the architect was selected, the county's community development planners met with senior residents to gather input on their needs.

The state-of-the-art centers are expected to include a community kitchen, dining room, meeting rooms, fitness center, computer lab and activity rooms, according to county planner John Jaugstetter. Additional community meetings will be held to help architects refine the two centers' designs to accommodate local programming needs, said Morris.

The county has been very strategic in its site selection process, Morris added, "Looking comprehensively [at locations that are] consistent with lifelong community principles."

ONLINE POLL

What are your thoughts about the proposed Chick-Fil-a drive-through proposal on Mt. Vernon Drive near Jett Ferry?

- Great idea, let's do it
- Traffic will be a nightmare - no let's look at it a little closer before deciding

The Chamblee site was selected for its proximity to MARTA and nearby housing, retail and recreational opportunities, among others. The center will be next door to Chamblee Senior Residences and two doors from the Senior Connections building.

"[The center] is a great opportunity to provide services to the aging population and senior citizens in the area," said Dan Schultz, the development director for the city of Chamblee. "We've been working with Chris Morris for about two years looking for properties."

Following meetings to hear input from seniors, formal architectural and engineering plans will be drawn for each center, a process that is expected to take four to six months. A 45-day call for construction bids will occur this summer. In addition, staffing options will be explored. Gannon said she hoped Senior Connections will remain under contract with the county to operate the new centers. "They've done everything right for the right price," Gannon said.

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