From the Beltline to the Hooch: Exploring the Emerald Corridor

Wednesday, June 8-10, 1:00 – 4:45pm

Overview

The Atlanta Beltline is one of the city’s most ambitious economic development efforts this generation. Connecting a historic 22-mile railroad corridor to 45 neighborhoods has spurred excitement, and is part of an urban resurgence underway in many of these communities. Although the Beltline’s development has served as a catalyst for neighborhoods on Atlanta’s eastside, its impact is slow to come west through neighborhoods which have been ignored for decades.

A trip through communities abutting the Beltline – east to west – highlights the disparities that exist. But while it may not be obvious to the untrained eye, Atlanta’s westside has its own gems. One such gem is a section of trail known as the Emerald Corridor, a seven-mile stretch abutting Proctor Creek. Decades of neglect and illegal dumping have polluted the creek and created an array of environmental hazards, making this one of the most polluted waterways in the metro-Atlanta region. This field study will provide attendees an opportunity to understand the importance of taking an asset- and community-based approach towards restoring Proctor Creek as a key community amenity. It will also focus on the impact new development is having on existing residents and their efforts to ensure that this development, and the gentrification it is bound to bring, improves quality of life and, most importantly, does not result in displacement.

“Impacts of Large-Scale Development on Communities, People and Nature”
Framing Session, 1:00-1:40 pm

This session will prepare us for our field study trip with some background information and tips for what to keep our eyes and ears open for, as we consider the questions: “What might socially sustainable development look like, in vision and practice? What are its challenges? Its possibilities?”

Facilitator: Sheri Davis-Faulkner, Westside Communities Alliance, Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, Georgia Tech

Panelists:
• Carolyn Aidman, Urban Health Initiative, School of Medicine, Emory University
• Debra Edelson, Emerald Corridor Foundation
• Rev. Larry Hill, Northwest Business Association & Northwest Youth Power

Working Definition:

“Socially sustainable development aims to help human and natural communities flourish, now and in the future. It prioritizes equity and human capital development at the individual and community levels. It maximizes community assets, including community-based knowledge, history, traditions, and social networks.”
Emerald Corridor Field Study Visit
Community Visit, 2:00-4:45 pm

Bus Storytellers:
Bus 1: Gail Mapp, Northwest Business Association & NaTaki Osborne, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance & Spelman College
Bus 2: Benjamin Dickerson, NPU-J; Sheri Davis-Faulkner, Westside Communities Alliance, Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, Georgia Tech; Tony Torrence, Proctor Creek Stewardship Council & Community Improvement Association

West Highlands
*Host: Steve Brock, Brock Built (Home Builder and Developer of West Highlands)*

West Highlands is a master planned community on 230 acres. The development replaced Perry Homes, an Atlanta Housing Authority public housing development, which was a 1,089 unit, military barracks-style, isolated public housing project. In approximately six years, when it’s complete, West Highlands will have added approximately 1,500 new homes, including 700 multi-family units (completed in 2008), 50% of which are public housing and 50% market rate; 780+ single family units (250 already completed and occupied); and 109 condominium units. Of the single-family homes, 20% will be affordable, which means the buyer cannot make more than 80% of area median income. The development also includes the Westside Atlanta Charter School and more than 90 acres of green space, much for recreational use including trails, parks, and public access to other neighborhood amenities.

There have been approximately $45M worth of infrastructure built to date, financed through a public-private partnership between the Atlanta Housing Authority and a group of developers. The intent is for single-family homes to stabilize the multi-family developments of substantial public housing.

Grove Park
*Hosts: Andrea Barnett, Grove Park Community Center; Benjamin Dickerson, NPU-J; Karen Rose, Grove Park Neighborhood Association*

Grove Park was named for Dr. Edwin Wiley Grove, president of the Grove Park Development Company, a pharmaceutical magnate who also built Atkins Park near Virginia-Highland in northeast Atlanta, and many Asheville, North Carolina hotels including The Grove Park Inn. The community was initially known as Fortified Hills, a name stemming from the Civil War. Grove named the streets for his wife, Gertrude, his daughter Evelyn, and his son, Edwin. Other street names are believed to have been inspired by his grandchildren: Matilda, Hortense, Emily, Elizabeth, Francis, Eleanor, Florence, Margaret, and Eugenia. Many of the side streets created in the 30’s, 40’s and 50’s are wide, tree-lined avenues with well-tended frame cottages, brick Tudors and ranches.

Grove Park thrived until the early 1970’s when suburban growth began to drain the area’s vitality as it siphoned off its base of middle-class residents. As population decreased, the area began to deteriorate. Through the turn of the 21st century, the entire area witnessed a steady decline in population, property conditions and the local economy. As a result, many long-time businesses closed and were replaced by low-rent businesses such as liquor stores and pawn shops.
The Grove Park Recreation Center is one of the City of Atlanta’s 10 Centers of Hope. All Centers of Hope have enhanced youth development programs aimed at providing character-building skills, physical fitness, and academic enrichment.

**Bankhead MARTA Station**  
*Hosts: Debra Edelson, Emerald Corridor Foundation & Rev. Larry Hill, Northwest Business Association & Northwest Youth Power*

Bankhead is a neighborhood on the westside of Atlanta. It's surrounded by Grove Park on the west, Washington Park on the south, English Avenue on the east, with Berkeley Park and Home Park on the north. At its center is the Bankhead MARTA Station and Maddox Park. The schools that serve the neighborhood are Grove Park Elementary, A.D. Williams Elementary School, Carter G. Woodson Elementary School, Alfred Blalock Elementary School, and Frederick Douglass High School.

**Resources**