

Dear Neighbors:

The Laurel Ridge Shamrock Civic Association has taken to heart our legislators' suggestions to create a survey on the topic of cityhood/annexation. Volunteers are helping distribute this survey to each home in the community. In order to ensure that the data gathered are true and secure, we can accept only one survey response per household, and it must contain a name and address.

The purpose of this survey is to gather input from citizens, residents and property-owners in the neighborhoods where multiple future visions of DeKalb County governance collide. It contains 14 questions, plus space for you to add comments of your own. It should take only 5 minutes or so to complete.

Our hope is to help provide the legislators and other decision makers with better information about the hopes, concerns and general preferences of the people who would be affected by these visions.

Our pledges to you:

- 1. We will not share any information that could be identified with any individual respondent, to protect everyone's anonymity and encourage directness and candor in responses.
- 2. We will share all aggregate information and comments publicly, without bias toward/against any of these futures.

There are 5 ways to return completed surveys:

- 1. Drop the survey off on the front porch of 1281 Fork Creek Trail. Please place in the plastic folder on the porch labeled Surveys.
- 2. Mail the survey to: LRSCA Survey, 1281 Fork Creek Trail, Decatur Ga 30033.
- 3. Scan all pages of the completed survey and email to LRSCASurvey@mail.com
- 4. Bring it to one of the meetings on Nov. 19 or 20 and give it to an officer or board member.
- 5. Call 404-633-0881 or 412-608-7694 and leave a message with your address and that you'd like your survey picked up and an officer or board member will pick your survey up in the plastic bag that it was delivered in from your front door the following day.

LRSCA will accept surveys through Nov. 20, as we need to get the data analyzed and delivered to the community, the press, and to those deciding the fate of our community, before any action is taken by the state legislature.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your input!

Background

As you probably know, our area of DeKalb County is the subject of ongoing planning and debate about the future governmental structure. That involves inclusion in a new city, annexation by the City of Atlanta, or remaining an unincorporated part of DeKalb County. Other proposals exist but have less traction at this time.

The plans are not specific, and the three proposals collide with one another, making it difficult to understand all the ramifications in order to decide which is best for our community. However, state legislators strongly encourage us to

survey our neighborhoods to get a general understanding of what we want. In other words, they need our input to go forward. The General Assembly convenes in a matter of weeks, so time is of the essence.

The Choices

New City

Organizers of last year's failed Briarcliff and Lakeside city initiatives are working on a proposal for the Georgia Legislature to consider that includes much of the unincorporated areas lying between Atlanta, Decatur, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Doraville and Tucker. This new city would assume responsibility for police, planning, parks, and roads--some of the services currently provided by the County.

Annexation into the City of Atlanta

The City of Atlanta is open to annexing neighborhoods that are interested in joining. An initiative based in Druid Hills has been facilitating discussions with neighborhoods that include the current Fernbank and Briar Vista Elementary attendance areas. This would have serious implications for DeKalb County Schools.

In an effort to keep the current Druid Hills cluster intact--which would add Laurel Ridge, Medlock, and Avondale elementary schools, Druid Hills Middle and Druid Hill High--the possibility exists to annex greater areas into Atlanta, but nothing concrete has been proposed to that effect.

Remain Unincorporated

We could choose to remain unincorporated.

While the boundary lines for cityhood and annexation are currently unclear, the legislature will not allow "islands" and other strange configurations that leave areas isolated. Our options hinge on the direction of neighboring communities, especially that of Medlock and Clairmont Heights.

More options will likely open up in the future, allowing us then to make better informed, more deliberate decisions. We can act on those decisions later.

Most Recent Feedback from Elected Officials November 5, 2014 Laurel Ridge Town Hall

Lower taxes are often stated as a reason for incorporation. Senator-elect Parent, who has experience with the founding of Brookhaven, stated that she believes cityhood areas will not be able to keep taxes low over time, as DeKalb was born with the understanding of economy of scale. Sen. Henson stated that most cities with long standing have higher taxes than unincorporated DeKalb, and that they have lucrative fees that unincorporated areas cannot have. DeKalb's taxes might have to rise if cities take away from its base.

Commissioner Rader pointed out that certain residential areas are included in city boundaries only because of their proximity to commercial properties. Residents need to be aware of boundary lines because they will have no voice if they remain unincorporated.

Transfer of assets is an issue. Rep. Mayo stated that transfer of assets is one reason why the DeKalb Delegation has mixed feelings about cityhood and annexations. The current initiative for Fernbank and Briar Vista attendance zones to annex into City of Atlanta means that those school buildings, along with Druid Hills High, will transfer along with those students.

Police is one of the services that proposed cities are adopting. Rep. Henson pointed out that DeKalb County provides crucial services that smaller communities cannot. She also cautioned that people are rushing into decisions for fear of being left behind, not a good place from which to make important decisions. She suggested working with Kathie Gannon's Blueprint to Redefine DeKalb as a way to address concerns about DeKalb County.

What was clear from all of the legislators is that they need our input! They want us to attend meetings and contact local and state representatives. Our opinions matter to them! This survey is a crucial part of learning where Laurel Ridge Shamrock stands on these issues.

The Survey

Definitions:

The absence of concrete proposals presents real challenges in surveying! The proposals could change at almost any time. What we present here is based on the most recent information that we have had access to. Because of this vagueness, please consider the following definitions to be "placeholders" that represent the general concepts:

NEW CITY

For the purposes of this survey, consider "New City" to represent a plan that would include much of the unincorporated areas lying between Atlanta, Decatur, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Doraville and Tucker. Also consider that this new city would assume responsibility for some services currently provided by the County-- police, planning, parks, and roads.

ATLANTA

For the purposes of this survey, consider "Atlanta" to represent an extension of Atlanta by annexation. The actual boundaries remain in flux, mostly because of the complications with school attendance zones and cluster configurations. The most concrete proposal currently has the Fernbank Elementary and Briar Vista Elementary attendance areas being annexed into the City of Atlanta, extending from current city borders, northeast roughly to North Druid Hills Road and east roughly to Clairmont Avenue. They would take with them part of the population of Druid Hills High School as well as their school buildings and other properties currently operated by DeKalb County Schools, such as Fernbank Science Center and Adams Stadium.

REMAIN UNINCORPORATED

For the purposes of this survey, consider "Remain Unincorporated" to represent remaining unincorporated and not isolated - but recognizing the possibility of a new city having been incorporated nearby, as well as the possibility of Atlanta having expanded somewhat nearby. (That is, not exactly the status quo, but remaining in a potentially changed DeKalb County.)

Please return this section.

Survey Submission Deadline is Nov. 20, 2014.

Only surveys that are completely filled out will be used for data analysis.

	1.	Your	name
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[CONFIDENTIAL - only for purposes of validating eligibility to be included in survey results]

2. Address (street <u>and</u> number, please)

[This helps with validation, and also in analyzing differences in preferences by street and neighborhood.]

- 3. Connection to neighborhood (please circle ALL that apply)
 - Resident (I live here)
 - Owner of residential property
 - Occupy commercial or retail property (I run a business here)
 - Owner of commercial property

INITIAL MATCH-UPS: HYPOTHETICAL COMPARISONS.

In answering #4, #5 and #6, please assume the following:

- A. Your overall taxes and fees would remain roughly the same, and
- B. Your children's school assignments would not change.
 - 4. Assuming (for now) that taxes/fees and school assignments would not change, circle which of these two hypothetical futures you would prefer (or "No preference" between these two).
 - New City
 - Atlanta
 - No Preference
 - 5. Assuming (for now) that taxes/fees and school assignments would not change, circle which of these two hypothetical futures you would prefer (or "No preference" between these two).
 - Atlanta
 - Remain Unincorporated
 - No Preference



6. Assuming (for now) that taxes/fees and school assignments would not change, circle which of these two hypothetical futures you would prefer (or "No preference" between these two).

- Remain Unincorporated
- New City
- No Preference

Your Opinions

Here is your opportunity to express your opinions about the three possible entities whose visions intersect in our area. Please try to articulate specific issues that drive your interest and support (or lack thereof) for each of these entities.

		Positives: Issues that would drive my support toward this vision.	Negatives: Issues that would drive my support away from this vision.
•	7. NEW CITY		
	8. ATLANTA		
•	9. REMAIN UNINCORPORATED		

10. Now, please gather your opinions into a single forced ranking:

	Ranking
	(1 = favorite, 2 = middle, 3 = worst)
NEW CITY	
ATLANTA	
REMAIN UNINCORPORATED	

Laurel Ridge Shamrock cannot consider annexation into Atlanta until neighboring Medlock and Clairmont Heights communities have agreed to it. To date the only annexation discussions are with Druid Hills, specifically the Fernbank and Briar Vista school attendance zones.

	Decrease	Decrease	Remain	Increase	Increase
	greatly	slightly	unchanged	slightly	greatly
11. If Medlock and Clairmont Heights are annexed into the City of Atlanta, my own preferences for becoming part of the City of Atlanta would					

- 12. Would you support a one-year moratorium on all new cities and annexations in DeKalb Couty?
 - Support one-year moratorium.
 - Legislation should decide now.
- => :
- 13. How strongly do you feel that the Druid Hills school cluster (Druid Hills High, Druid Hills Middle, Laurel Ridge, McLendon, Avondale Elementary, Fernbank and Briar Vista) should remain united?
 - Very strongly
 - Somewhat strongly
 - Don't care either way.
 - 14
- 14. Thank you for getting this far.

Now it's your turn: Please provide any additional comments to share with planners and decision makers.