

Merry Oaks

Neighborhood Newsletter

Merry Oaks Neighborhood Association • P.O. Box 18131 • Charlotte, NC • 28218-0131

Volume XII Number 2 June 2010

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

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Renew your membership for 2010!

Membership form on back

\$10 per household, \$5 if on a fixed income and are due each Jan. 1 for the following calendar year.



Bulky Trash pickup: 311



Stay in touch! Join the Merry Oaks Google Group!

<http://groups.google.com/group/merry-oaks>

www.underoak.blogspot.com

www.neighborhoodlink.com/charlotte/merryoaks

www.merryview.blogspot.com for photos

MONA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 16 Fall potluck (6PM) Meeting (7PM) 2301 Arnold Dr.

2011

February 17, 2011 Annual meeting. 7 PM Merry Oaks School Media Center

MONA meets once in the fall for a potluck/social, and once in February for an annual business meeting. The Board meets more frequently. Join the Google Group or check out the MONA website to be fully informed. Any MONA member is encouraged to attend Board meetings if they wish or suggest an agenda item by contacting Cate. To join the Google Group, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/merry-oaks> and click on "Join this group" on the right hand side of the page.

Newsletter Will Be Online Only

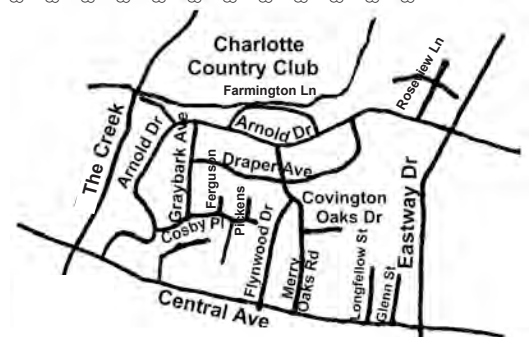
This will be the last printed and mass distributed MONA newsletter. We can communicate faster and more effectively with an online newsletter at a lower cost. If you do not use the Internet, please call Cate Martin @ 704 535 3501 to arrange for delivery of a printed neighborhood news.

Neighborhood Energy Challenge MONA has the Energy for a Challenge!

The City of Charlotte has implemented an exciting new neighborhood grant program to encourage energy conservation called the *Neighborhood Energy Challenge*.

Five neighborhoods will be selected to participate in the *Challenge*. There are two components to this initiative.

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Living in Merry Oaks

Home Improvement Upsurge

There seems to be an upsurge in small home improvement projects. Merry Oaks Road takes the prize—at least five homes have had quite visible improvements. Currently, Jennifer Hurd's house at 1715 is getting a beautiful front porch and rounded roof entry. Also check out <http://hgtv.com/smart-fix/contemporary-kitchen-correction/index.html> to see her kitchen getting updated on HGTV in 2008. An investor is upfitting the house at the corner of Merry Oaks and Flynnwood, (a run-down rental since the late 1980s). He's adding a master bathroom, small porch front entry, and doing other aesthetic improvements, after which he will sell it.

It's More Than A Church

St. Andrews Episcopal Church on Central Avenue provides many services other than "church on Sunday." There is a senior exercise class on Wednesdays and Fridays at 10am, a "Young at Heart" luncheon for persons 55+ every Thursday (great lunch for \$1.50) and more. Church space is shared with two other churches, First Church, an African service and the Church of the God of Covenants, a Hispanic Church. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are sponsored by Catholic Social Services and taught by CPCC instructors throughout the week.

Most of the ESL students are refugees from countries such as Nepal and Bhutan and several of them are involved in the community garden at St. Andrews, which is open to anyone needing

a sunny space to grow vegetables or flowers.

Loaves and Fishes food pantry (which provides a week's worth of groceries to over 250 people per week) also has several garden plots there where volunteers grow vegetables for Loaves and Fishes. Anyone from our neighborhood who has any food donations for Loaves and Fishes, including extras from your garden, can deliver it to St. Andrews on Wednesdays and Thursdays 9 to noon.

Stone Soup, a free lunch program for mothers and children will start on Friday July 23rd at noon and continue each Friday until school starts. Volunteers and donations are needed.

Church services are at 8am and 10am. For more information, go to <http://standrewscharlottenc.org/> or contact Austin@austinseagrave.com.

Merry Oaks Recreation Center And School

Merry Oaks Recreation Center personnel will be assisting other recreation centers in different locations this summer. For a complete list of Park and Recreation events and locations, go to www.parkandrec.com.

Real Estate Update

Available

14 properties with prices ranging from \$119,900-339,000

Average days on market: 133

Average asking price: \$195,000

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*Merry Oaks Resident
Excellent Local References*

continued from page 2

Sold Between December 1, 2009 and June 10, 2010

9 properties sold from \$97,000-\$200,000

Average days on market: 93 at an average sales price: \$143,000

Withdrawn or Expired

10 properties have been withdrawn from market since December 1, 2009 after an average of 139 days on market. Three listings expired after an average days on market of 283.

Sold Between June 1, 2009-December 1, 2009

7 properties sold from \$114,000-201,500 with an average sales price of \$171,071 and an average of 81 days on market

Withdrawn or Expired

7 properties were withdrawn with an average of 75 days on market

9 properties expired after an average of 169 days on the market.

Most recent sales and prices:

Nine sales ranging from \$97,000 to \$200,000. 1 on Merry Oaks Dr, 1 on Cosby, 2 on Arnold, 2 on Covington Oaks, 3 on Draper.

Thanks to Austin Seagrave for compiling this report.

Newsletter changes

Merry Oaks is planning to move the neighborhood newsletter online, starting gradually in the fall, and we need your thoughts to make sure everyone still gets the information they need and we still serve our sponsors.

Our initial plan:

The fall newsletter will be available to be downloaded and printed from the neighborhood

website at Neighborhood Link, at http://neighborhoodlink.com/Merry_Oaks/pages. Newsletters are currently provided at that site for online viewing or downloading, and this won't change in the fall. That fall newsletter will look just like this one, but providing it only online will save the neighborhood printing costs and distribution time. We are planning to print some copies to be distributed as usual to nearby newcomers, businesses and advertisers.

The **Winter 2011 newsletter**, delivered usually in February, is planned to be on an online website, with the ability to print directly from the site. We're hoping our advertisers will move with us to the online site, offsetting the costs of website hosting and development.


Why we're doing this:

People are online: We think that many of our residents now have computer access, and moving online will help us save paper costs and distribution time.

We're hoping to be able to integrate the newsletter with the neighborhood Google group.

We're hoping to be more environmentally sensitive: It's possible that going online only might also be "greener," though some people have begun to analyze the relative environmental costs of renewable paper products with the environmental costs of online access to information. If we compare our financial and environmental costs carefully, we'll be able to gather some information about whether this move is indeed greener and share that information with others interested in sharing information sustainably.

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continued from page 3

We'll be able to share information more easily with other nearby neighborhoods going online: The Chantilly neighborhood is one example nearby that is retooling its communication efforts and focusing online only. Other nearby neighborhoods like Country Club Heights have online sites and are able to offer community sponsorships and links to local merchants and service people; this move will give us the same tools.

We'll be able to share information more easily possibly with news organizations: News organizations like WBTV and The Charlotte Observer are seeking out local people providing neighborhood news, and they're selling sponsorships of that news. Examples: <http://eastcharlotte.wbtv.com> and <http://charlotteobserver.com/villa-heights/>

What we ask from you:

Ideas on reaching people not online: We all have great neighbors who don't have computers, and we don't want to leave anyone out of the information loop. We're seeking ideas on how to

reach those people. Printouts of online information shared by neighbors seem the simplest solution, but we're open to alternatives.

Volunteers to help: Online tools have evolved dramatically in recent years and are much simpler and cheaper than they have been in the past. Wordpress is likely the simplest, cheapest tool, but we will seek ways to own our own neighborhood's name online and protect our neighborhood's history by owning the information we produce. Still, later this year, we'll be looking for neighbors who can provide secure, reliable web hosting cheaply, neighbors with "back end" skills to help set up the site and neighbors who want to write articles or provide photographs. The idea could broaden the number of voices heard from our neighborhood and possibly broaden our reach.

Background on our current communication tools:

Printed newsletter, produced four times a year;

Google group, moderated by three neighborhood volunteers: <http://groups.google.com/group/merry-oaks?hl=en>

Neighborhood Link website: http://neighborhoodlink.com/Merry_Oaks/home

Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/Merry-Oaks-Neighborhood-Association/182230841330?ref=search>

(And of course, we have the sidewalk network of talking face to face, as well as periodic neighborhood meetings.)

How you can help:

Please share your thoughts, and please volunteer to help. You can email akrewson45c@mac.com or talk with any neighborhood association board member.



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Merry Oaks Environment

continued from page 1

In the first component, selected neighborhoods will be awarded up to \$20,000 to help support and implement projects within their *Energy Conservation Action Plan*. The second component, the *Household EnergyFund*, provides \$60,000 for weatherization and insulation to individual households within the selected neighborhoods.

We need your help! **FIRST**, we need you to help us decide which projects to implement as a part of our Energy Conservation Action Plan. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT FUNDED (\$) PROJECTS MUST BE LIMITED TO EDUCATION ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RECYCLING, PHYSICAL & TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS, AND PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION. Community gardens, urban forestry and stormwater improvement initiatives canNOT be funded by this grant. BUT, we can still create a community garden with volunteer labor and we are also looking into applying for matching grant dollars from the Urban Costshare program for stormwater improvements. For specific details log on to <http://nbs.charlottenc.gov>.

Go to <http://bit.ly/monrg> and **VOTE** on your favorite ideas. If you don't have a computer, call me (Heather Bolick 704-608-0496) Some of our ideas include:

- Hold a workshop and meeting with vendors of services and supplies that would help us reduce energy usage in our homes. Ask the vendors to provide coupons for services to those who attend; ask for donations for raffles or prizes for those who attend.
- add solar powered lights along the greenway to encourage biking and pedestrian use.
- get a company like Boxman Studios to donate or discount renovated boxcars as bus shelters at the two bus stops in Merry Oaks in order to encourage more bus riders
- Have a bike tune-up event with information on traveling by bike (bike routes) from Merry Oaks.
- Build a community shelter with sustainable materials where we can host energy efficiency workshops.
- Have composting workshops with supplies provided to help participants start composting

their own food scraps in either a hot compost pile (for those with a lot of leaves) or worm composting (food scraps only).

- Raise money to get a matching grant from the Urban Cost Share Program to build a stormwater wetland to reduce stormwater runoff. It could be used for educational purposes as well.

Second, we need to know if you are willing to volunteer. Email me preferably (mona_energy_challenge@yahoo.com) or call 704-608-0496.

Third, we need to know if you are interested in participating in the *Household EnergyFund*. Would you like to receive up to \$2,000 in energy audit and retrofit services? Participants will receive 80-100% assistance for upgrades based on income.

% of Median Income*	HEF Coverage
≤ 80%	100%
81-120%	90%
> 120%	80%
*Income verification required	

If interested, please email me (mona_energy_challenge@yahoo.com) or call 608-0496. Make sure you meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Homeowners and renters have occupied residences since October 1st of 2009
- Residence is not in the CMPD Rental Database
- Residence is not for sale or in foreclosure
- Taxes are current on the residence
- Utilities must be in resident's name
- 1 year of utility bills (prior & post installation)
- Proof of Income

Need More Info? Check out: <http://nbs.charlottenc.gov>.

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How to Make Your Home Comfortable and Energy Efficient

Problem: My home is drafty and my energy bills are through the roof! I want to make my home more comfortable and energy efficient, but I don't know where to start!

Solution: an Energy Audit!

Energy costs keep rising as well as our energy requirements for our high-tech lives. How do we cut down on these costs while still meeting our energy and comfort needs? We have to figure out where we are losing and wasting energy. Energy audits can be done by a professional or you can do it yourself. The goal of a professional energy auditor should be to find where you are wasting energy and prioritize retrofit tasks that will save you the most energy and make your home comfortable and less drafty. Generally an initial energy audit will include the following steps:


- Homeowner Interview: Information is obtained from the homeowner including their home's comfort and air quality issues as well as energy usage. This will allow the auditor to focus on the top concerns of the homeowner.
- Exterior and Interior Visual Inspection: The auditor will look for potential sources of air leakage, assess the presence and/or effectiveness of the insulation, identify moisture and potential indoor air quality problems, identify energy-saving appliance and lighting upgrade opportunities, inspect windows and doors for fit and performance and find potential fire and electrical hazards.
- Combustion Safety Testing: The auditor will assess any potential safety issues regarding combustion appliances (typically gas-fired furnaces, water heaters and ranges). *It is very important that a combustion safety test be done if the auditor performs a blower door test.*
- Pressure Testing: Typically an auditor will use blower door equipment to depressurize (suck air out of) a house. This is done to determine the amount and source of air coming into and out of a house.
- Evaluate Opportunities for Improvement:

The auditor will compile all of the information gathered from the audit and suggest the most cost-effective improvements the homeowner should make.

Other options include pressure testing HVAC ducts and infrared thermography imaging.

Energy efficiency retrofits can be very inexpensive but make a HUGE difference in your energy savings and thus utility bills! Make sure in hiring an energy auditor and retrofit contractor that they are either Certified BPI Building Analysts/Envelope Professionals or HERS raters. These professionals will make sure that after air sealing, you have adequate ventilation and can ensure your energy efficiency retrofit is done properly.

Is there anything I can do now? YES! **Air seal and insulate.** If you are a knowledgeable and do-it-yourself homeowner log on to energystar.gov for guidance. Make sure not to make your home too airtight! Your home needs a certain amount of ventilation. A professional may better help you with this assessment.



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Plant Stewardship

If the City planted street trees in the planting strip in front of your house, please care for them. Trim excess sprouts, keep them growing tall and straight so they will enhance our streetscape. Protect them from lawn mower nicks. Also: recycle your grass clippings. Do NOT leave grass on the sidewalk or street. Put it in a pile to biodegrade or spread it on your lawn or around plants as mulch to add nutrients.

New Recycling Bins

New Information on Trash Pickup!

Starting in July, Merry Oaks households will have a new trash pickup day. Our new day is MONDAYS on the week starting July 5, 2010. Your regular black/gray cart will be picked up every Monday on a weekly basis. The NEW recycling carts will be picked up every other week starting Monday, July 12. Start using the new recycling bins after the June 24 pick-up.

If you prefer not to use your 96-gallon recycling cart you can continue to use your current red recycling bin. Only 2 red bins OR 1 cart will be picked up from each household. No matter which bin or cart you decide to use, the pickup will always be every other Monday, starting July 12. Call 311 to get the city to come pick up old red bins OR new rolling carts. You can also go to <http://charmek.org/Departments/Solid+Waste/Home.htm>.

What can be recycled: all plastics marked #1-5 and #7 (no #6). Remove tops from containers. Look for the number inside the recycle symbol on the bottom of the container. aerosol cans, aluminum, cardboard, juice boxes, milk cartons, paper, newspaper, spiral paper cans, magazines, steel cans, and glass. According to state law, plastic 1 and 2 and aluminum MUST be recycled. What should NOT be put in recycling carts: yard waste, pizza boxes, clothes, paint cans, wax covered boxes, hazardous materials.

By Liz Primm

Merry Oaks
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Advocacy and Updates

Briar Creek @ Central Development (former Renfrow property)

The former Renfrow property, 8+ acres at Central Avenue and Briar Creek Road, is being developed by Peak Resources into a 142-bed skilled nursing facility. See: peakresourcesinc.com Grading began June 1 and they hope to have the facility up and running by June of 2011. This institutional use is allowed with no rezoning (hence no required neighborhood input), but the developers have promised to work with the neighbors on issues such as buffers and lighting. City code requires tree save only along the Central Avenue frontage. As of this writing, the City is requiring the developer to extend Briar Creek Road through the property for a future intersection with Cosby Place (under the City's Connectivity Policy) when that area re-develops. While it will not immediately impact neighbors in the Cosby area, at some point in the future it will. On the other hand, houses on Flynnwood Drive near Central will have "double frontage"—ie, their back

yards will abut the new street. MONA is on record opposing the extension for vehicles but favoring a ped/bike connection for future streetcar access from the neighborhood interior. At this writing, MONA Board member, neighborhood advocate and Flynnwood Drive resident Nancy Pierce was working with the City and the developer on this issue. Call her with questions or comments: 704 458 5503 nancy@nancypiercephoto.com.

Streetcar

Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) will find out mid-June whether they will receive up to \$24.99 million from the Federal Transportation Administration Urban Circulator Grant to build a 1.5 mile segment of the Charlotte Streetcar from Presbyterian Hospital (Elizabeth Avenue) to the Charlotte Transit Center at Trade and College. If the grant comes through, City Council will vote on up to \$12 million in City money to add to the Federal money.

By November, CATS hopes to be at 30% design phase for the entire streetcar, including from Presbyterian east out Central Avenue to Eastland Mall. Extensions of the streetcar east and west will depend on City Council support.

Several neighborhood sessions were held early in 2010 to gather input on Streetcar Shelter Design and to report back. Merry Oaks citizens were invited via the Merry Oaks Google Group (join it!).

A third round of public meetings for streetcar design will be in September. Stay tuned (guess how?) for dates.


Some people wonder why the City is planning for a streetcar during bleak economic times. The only way to obtain federal grant money is to have plans in place and this is an important infrastructure improvement for the way Charlotteans will live and move around in the future. Also, it stands to be a major economic driver for corridors along the route, including Central Avenue. A planned streetcar to Eastland Mall will give much more weight to any attempts to redevelop that site.

Visit the streetcar website at www.charlottefuture.com.

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The Vyne

The Vyne condos at the corner of Briar Creek Road and Central Avenue are now bank-owned. There are 33 units total, of which 12 have been sold and are owner-occupied. There are 21 remaining to sell. Phases two and three are on hold. Nestlewood Realty is handling sales. Their phone number is **704 302 4464**. Two bedroom, 1000-square foot condos are priced at \$155,000 and one bedroom, 675-square foot condos are priced at \$109,000. All amenities including a swimming pool are fully operational.

Briar Creek Sewer Relief Project

The Briar Creek Relief Sewer Project will provide increased sewer capacity, reduce the risk of sewer overflows, protect water quality in Briar Creek, and meet demands for growth.

Phase I of the Briar Creek project, expected to be completed by Winter 2009, extends from the Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant off Tyvola Road to Eastover Park off Randolph Road.

Phase II (along Briar Creek from Randolph Road to Country Club Drive) of the project should begin early Summer 2011.

The sewer project will tunnel under Central Avenue and Masonic Drive. From there the pipe will be installed under Masonic Drive and an 1100-foot section of the existing greenway. While crews are installing pipe in this area, the greenway will be closed. Once complete, the greenway will be restored. Public meetings will be held before construction begins on the section affecting Merry Oaks Neighborhood, probably after January 1, 2011.

Dr Michael Berglass

Dr Berglass is working on City permits and now says he will open his family dentistry practice at 3410 Central Avenue at the end of the summer.

Merry Oaks Business

M.O.N.A. is always looking for people to serve on the Board or volunteer for special projects. We would especially like to have a replacement for our present treasurer who would like a break from treasurer duties. It consists of depositing dues, writing checks, an occasional treasurers report, etc. and is easily done using QuickBooks. Contact Cate Martin at 704 535 3501 if interested in either the treasurer position or to volunteer. Cate's email is: cate1868@yahoo.com.

MONA

Call any MONA Board Member listed on the back of this newsletter with questions/suggestions about your neighborhood association.

The MONA newsletter is hand-delivered to about 500 single family homes and made available to several hundred apartment residents. Ad rates are a steal at \$25 (business card size) or \$50 (double business card size) with discounts for multiple-issue insertion. Half- or full-page ads are available. Call Pam Sigg 704 535 1051 psigg@carolionarr.com

The MONA newsletter is compiled by Nancy Pierce, Nancy Krewson and Andria Krewson. Carol Herrington does the layout. Pam Sigg manages the advertising. Liz Primm and Scott Canup manage circulation along with a dedicated crew of volunteers.



MONA Board & Volunteers

Cate Martin
President
704-535-3501
cate1868@yahoo.com

Nancy Krewson
Webmaster
704-451-1540
nkrewson@earthlink.net

Carol Herrington
Newsletter Layout
704-563-0288
robcar1823us@yahoo.com

Tom Poston
Outgoing President
704-567-0020
tom@tranquility-base.us

Nancy Pierce
Neighborhood Advocate
704-535-7409
nancypierce@carolina.rr.com

Pam Sigg
Advertising
704-535-1051
psigg@carolina.rr.com

Donna Howard Peters
Treasurer
704-563-1422
dhowardpeters@carolina.rr.com

Liz Primm
ekprimm@gmail.com
Newsletter distribution

Andria Krewson
Board Member
704-451-7870
akrewson45c@mac.com

Scott Canup
Newsletter distribution

Russell Ferguson
Board Member
russell.fergusson@gmail.com

Merry Oaks Neighborhood Association Financial Statement

through June 15, 2010

Income

Newsletter Advertising	8,743.50
1999-2008 Member dues	3,021.00
2009 Membership dues	315.00
2010 Membership dues	185.00
Contributions Income	
Restricted	560.00
Unrestricted	1,385.00
Grants	637.50
Uncategorized Income	1,426.67

Total Income 18,068.67

Expenses

Office supplies	652.41
Postage and Delivery	414.95
Printing/reproduction	11,328.58
Supplies	297.13
Program expense	444.00
Contributions	61.45
Dues & Subscriptions	75.00
Bank Fees	131.00
Bank Service Charges	81.00
Neighborhood Improvement Proj.	842.50
Total Expense	14,328.02

NET INCOME \$3, 740.65

(does not include current newsletter or expenses)

Join the Merry Oaks Neighborhood Association

Name(s):

Address:

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Area of interest/concern:



Dues are \$10 per household per year. Make checks payable to **MONA**.

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