

**HAPPY  
HOLIDAYS!**



**Winter 2020**

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## Social Committee Update

The Social Committee hosted a robust schedule of events for residents to enjoy in 2020: many Food Trucks, a Jazz Concert, the Dog Park Grand Opening, just to name a few.

**Our final event for the year will be the Annual Holiday Home Decorating Contest. There is no need to sign up to participate. A non-West Highlands resident will be escorted around the neighborhood to judge decorating on December 20th at 7pm, so turn on those lights!**

Winners will receive a beautiful yard sign that can be displayed in your front yard acknowledging your win!

The Social Committee is already looking forward to a few new events for 2021 - Yappy Hour at the Dog Park, a Backyard Progressive Party, DJ Concert, and Valentine Day Activity. We look forward to seeing you next year. Thanks to Wandie Bethune and her social committee volunteers for helping adapt to the challenging circumstances in 2020 and continuing to help provide the neighborhood with fun ways to connect.



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## Pool Committee Update

By now you may have seen a lot of construction movement at our future pool amenity site. If not, please drive by and take a spectator's look. We have acquired all of the necessary permits and progress is underway. We have had more than our share of delays and setbacks but the pool project is in full-steam-ahead mode. You can visit our website to see the pool drawings. The contracted opening date is June 2, 2021. We all hope that the pool will be completed sooner for an opening date by Memorial Day Weekend.

The HOA will be creating a Pool committee to begin the process of preparing for operational and financial oversight of the pool and preparing rules & regulations upon its completion next year. Tyler Skelton will be leading this committee. An informational meeting and opportunity to sign up to participate will be taking place on January 28, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m. Potential volunteers will need to be in good standing with the HOA and cannot be in legal or collections with the HOA. Please be on the lookout for further information regarding this opportunity in early January!

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## Dues Reminder

As a reminder, please note that:

- Dues for all homeowners paying annually are expected to be paid by January 1st of each year
- Dues for all homeowners paying monthly are expected to be paid by the first of each month

As a courtesy, any homeowners paying annually, who has a zero balance on their account as of December 31, 2020, may pay in two installments with no less than 50% of the total annual dues to be paid before February 1, 2021 and the balance being paid before August 1, 2021. (For example, a homeowner with a zero balance on their account with Sentry on 12/31/2020 may pay their HOA dues for 2021 by paying no less than \$650 by 2/1/2021 and the balance by 8/1/2021 if they choose the two payment installment option. Waysome Way Lots 50% of the total annual dues is \$1,050.)

Any homeowner who is in the arrears on December 31, 2020 and does not pay their full balance by January 1, 2021, as required by the covenants, will be sent to collections.



## Security Update

At times, the Homeowners Association (HOA) receives questions relating to security, to the large budget line-item expense and what it covers, and to how we can improve security. The primary purpose of the security patrol is to serve as a deterrent to reduce the number of criminal activity in our community. They also report incidents to the proper authorities. They are **not** hired to engage in an active crime situation or pursue assailants.

The HOA security patrol helps maintain order in the common spaces. Besides enforcing some of the community rules and regulations, security has reported misbehaving juveniles to their custodian or authorities; has reported actual and suspected drug activity to the police; and has prevented robberies and burglaries from occurring by being at the right place at the right time. Once HOA security is made aware of a crime incident they will make a report for the security committee. For privacy reasons and to avoid jeopardizing ongoing investigations, the HOA will not disclose some details of reported incidents.

**REMINDER: Criminal incidents that occur in West Highlands should first be reported to Atlanta Police Department through the 911 system.**

Crime in West Highlands has decreased, along with crime in the city overall, in the recent decades. There has been an increase in crime across the city this year, some of which may be related to the pandemic and it is not clear yet how quickly incidents will return to their pre-pandemic trends. Car break-ins and thefts have increased. Atlanta Police Department (APD) stresses that this is often due to keys being left in the car, unlocked doors, or items left in vehicles that are visible from passersby; avoiding these basic risks is our responsibility. It should also be noted, that domestic-related crime has increased since the start of the pandemic and is categorized as a violent crime and will affect statistics. Additionally, there is some expected uptick in crime that comes with each holiday season. Please be aware of that as you prepare for the holidays.

There are trade-offs when you move into an urban area, especially one that is going through transition. Dealing with criminal activity is one of those pain points that we endure – not because we want to – but because the advantages of living in an urban neighborhood, and the West Highlands in, outweigh the inconveniences. Though we do not have a mechanism to quantify how many criminal incidents our security patrol has prevented or deterred, we can say that our crime rate is lower than other neighborhoods in our police zone. We also feel that the many prospective buyers who desire to move into the community acknowledging some level of the risks speaks well of our efforts. We believe most residents feel safer having a presence of security than not having security accessible on the property. By leveraging security patrol with you are each doing to increase security, we can make West Highlands an even safer place to live.

The HOA has on occasion discussed installing security cameras in the community as one way to increase security further. Installing the types of high-quality security cameras that would be useful is considered a costly financial investment which will not necessarily result in preventing and deterring crime. There are benefits to security cameras; the ability to record crime can be useful to make arrests and/or present as evidence in a court of law. But cameras are not likely to stop crimes in progress. The sorts of crime that our community experiences can occur easily while security is patrolling elsewhere in the community, as they already do.

## Security Update (continued)

In our current financial state, the HOA does not believe it can adequately finance the number of recommended cameras needed to properly surveil 39 streets, over 500 homes, and approximately 230 acres. In addition, there are associated costs and responsibilities to monitor and maintain the cameras over time. The HOA does intend to install a full security system at the pool amenity. Its smaller area should allow for the ability to help secure that high-profile location in a more cost-effective manner. Additionally, many homeowners who have installed security cameras on their property in order to police their home, did so at a fraction of the cost it would require the HOA to properly monitor the entire neighborhood.

West Highlands is an open and a non-gated community. There will always be incidents of crime relative to urban city living. This is not an ideal situation, but it is reality. The HOA is not dismissing the unsettling feeling of being a victim of crime or even the threat of becoming a victim. The fact of the matter is that our community is open and inviting with many entrance points (12 at present), and any person can enter, including those who don't belong. Private security is similar to any police department: they can't be everywhere, and they can't stop all crime from occurring. Because we have security patrol does not remove us from taking precautions. We must remain vigilant for threats and suspicious activity within our surroundings. We should also remember that experiencing incidents of crime does not mean that the security patrol or the police are not having any effect.

Security is an ongoing community effort and we do intend to constantly review our options for security in the future as the needs and resources of our neighborhood change. We appreciate that many of you are proactive in helping to secure our community. We look forward to continued discussion, questions, and discussions of these issues.

### Summary of Crime Statistics and Information for West Highlands

The West Highlands is under APD Beat 110 which also covers the neighborhoods of Grove Park, Almond Park, Rockdale, Carver Hills, Scotts Crossing. There were 529 crimes reported in Beat 110 since January 1-November 30, 2020

- 104 crimes were reported in the West Highlands community. 28 (27%) incidents were related to homeowners and the remaining 76 (73%) were incidents reported by Columbia Residential Apartments' residents. The 28 incidents report by homeowners consisted of 13 car thefts and break-ins; 5 property damage/vandalism; 5 identity thefts; 3 aggravated assaults; and 2 miscellaneous crimes.
- In Zone 1 as a whole, there were 2406 crime incidents which is 23% less than the same period in 2019. However, aggravated assaults are up by 8%. Larceny, Burglary, Auto Theft, Robbery, Murder and Rape have steadily been decreasing yearly since 2013 in Zone 1.
- In the City as a whole, there were 19,074 crime incidents which is 16% less than the same period in 2019. However, murder was up by 48%, aggravated assaults up by 14%, and car thefts up by 2%.

Source: Atlanta Police Department Crime Statistics <https://www.atlantapd.org/i-want-to/crime-data-downloads>. The information is publicly available.

## Security Update (continued)

### What can you do to be more proactive about security in West Highlands?

1. Start and Join a Neighborhood Watch Program
2. Use your garage as your primary place to park your vehicles
3. Keep all doors on your homes and vehicles locked at all times
4. Remove valuables from vehicles. Do not leave keys in your car
5. Keep your garage door closed
6. Review [Home Security Checklist](#) on the West Highlands website
7. Report any suspicious activity to 911
8. After calling 911, report any suspicious activity to HOA security
9. Post suspicious activity on West Highlands Facebook and NextDoor.com
10. Take precautionary measures to secure your property





## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

**During the Fall HOA Meeting we provided updates across the various committees and West Highlands. We have provided a summary of the questions and their answers. The virtual meeting format worked well and for future meetings, we will allow more time for live Q & A.**

### **Topic: Amenity Package**

**Q:** Can we get more detailed plans for the pool? Where can we get access to plans for the pool

**A:** Yes. Details on the architectural plans, landscaping, and structure have been posted to our [website](#).

**Q:** With the clubhouse being removed, how will access to the pool be controlled?

**A:** Access to the pool will be controlled. The pool operations committee, along with Brock Built, will determine the mechanism or devices to secure the pool area.

**Q:** Was a competitive bid process used before selecting Brock to build the pool? If not why?

**A:** Brock Built interviewed several builders and selected Morgan Construction as they felt would deliver a very good product on time and within budget.

**Q:** We were told permitting was complete a month or so ago. Full transparency would be appreciated as people have been questioning why the work is slow/stopped.

**A:** The contractor building the pool informed us that an additional permit was required on their part. The contractor submitted an application for the permit, and it was recently issued to them. Brock Built was not made aware of the additional permit requirement from the City of Atlanta.

**Q:** When do you anticipate the pool opening next year? Is the target date still Memorial Day 2021?

**A:** The contracted date for the pool opening is June 2, 2021. We are hoping that the pool construction will be finished for a Memorial Day opening.

**Q:** How does this pool design correlate to the rendering that homeowners had to pay a special assessment. I recall the drawings being a little different. Can someone speak to that point?

**A:** The design for the pools is the same from the initial renderings. The primary changed is the replacement of the clubhouse for a pavilion. The detailed plans can be found on our website.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: Amenity Package (continued)

**Q:** How will pool security be handled with neighbors who get a key fob and then sell their house and others who want to use it but are not homeowners in the neighborhood?

**A:** Residents of West Highlands HOA are allowed to use the pool amenity. The pool committee will decide on the number of guests for each Lot who can use the pool amenity depending on capacity. The pool committee will determine rules and regulations that all residents and visitors must adhere to or be at risk of losing their privileges. Those homeowners who move out of the community will have their access removed. The pool operations committee will be responsible for establishing procedures around these processes.

**Q:** Can have more transparency with the pool expenses and pool operations?

**A:** The pool finance committee is planning to hold several meetings during the year to report on pool expenses and pool operations.

**Q:** Does the proposed budget for 2021 include the costs associated with maintaining the pool, operations, and other services needed discussed? Or can we expect a dues increase to cover those costs

**A:** The 2021 budget includes the pool operations including maintenance, security, loan payment, etc. The HOA Board will assess the expenses versus income to determine if there will be a dues increase in subsequent years.

**Q:** We have been paying for the pool for years...haven't we paid for it by now? Will the dues decrease once the loan is paid off and we pay reduced fees just for pool maintenance?

**A:** The West Highlands HOA has collected approximately \$1,465,000 since 2016 related to the amenities project. This includes:

- \$880,000 raised from the assessments in 2016 and a \$575 per homeowner annual dues allocation from 2017-2020. This \$880k includes approx \$45k in receivables from delinquent homeowners.
- \$585,000 from contributions Brock Built has made for each house sold since 2017.

In addition to the monies noted above, the West Highlands HOA has taken out a \$2,000,000 loan, as authorized by a vote of residents. The combination of the two funding sources will be used to fund phase one of the amenities project. Approximately \$371k has been spent to date on designs and site work. The current term for the loan is 20 years. We are optimistic we can pay off the loan early. Upon payoff of the loan will we reassess the continued maintenance costs and required capital improvements to determine the dues amount going forward. However, we do not expect a reduction in dues in the medium term.



## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### **Topic: Amenity Package (continued)**

**Q:** \$2400 for a pool phone line?

**A:** This is the average cost for a business intercom line to open the gate for the pool.

**Q:** Is there a restroom by the pool?

**A:** Yes, there will be restrooms at the pavilion

**Q:** Regarding the dog park - when will it be finished? There is already damage to some of the fencing due to the larger dogs running into it. Do we have a plan for maintenance and what is the process for getting it fixed? This is going to be an ongoing thing so we should have a process.

**A:** The dog park will be maintained as with other existing common area (parks, walkways, etc.). Users of the dog park should report damages to Sentry Management. It's of great help to the community when issues like this are reported to Sentry promptly. Additional items are planned for the dog park such as irrigation, benches, and a shade structure.

### **Topic: Dues**

**Q:** When should those non-townhouse homeowners expect an increase in dues – 2022?

**A:** The HOA is fiscally being responsible by attempting to minimize costs in order to avoid increasing dues. Once the pool is fully operational and the remaining land is transferred to the HOA, we will reassess the budget.

**Q:** Why did dues for townhouses increase this year?

**A:** The townhomes have been operating in a deficit since their opening. We have strategically made slight increases over time to reduce the deficit and may continue to do so. The goal is for the townhomes to eventually have enough revenue to cover their costs of maintenance and surplus to put into reserves.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: Dues (continued)

**Q:** Please explain the townhome increase in more detail. The only service we receive for (now) \$250 a month is the grass cut. The irrigation still has not been installed; the lights have not been installed; the "park" across the street stays overgrown all year; and the pond is full of trash. A one month notice on a \$600 year increase is really unacceptable.

**A:** The initial dues and the increases have not been sufficient to cover the expenses of the townhomes. Expenses for townhomes cover grounds keeping, building insurance, termite bond, and a few incidentals. The HOA dues are still relatively low compared to townhomes in the Atlanta region. The townhomes should have had irrigation installed. Please report issues to Sentry Management which townhome community you reside so we can check on the irrigation system. We believe some of the other areas that you are referencing are still owned by Atlanta Housing Authority (AH). There are plans for those lands and retention ponds to be cleared, developed and then transferred to the HOA and then they will become the HOA's responsibility.

**Q:** Are my dues decreasing given the pool isn't close to be completed?

**A:** While the HOA has been collecting monies for the pool and these have been applied toward the down payment this does not cover the entire cost of the pool amenity. The dues will not decrease as there will be capital improvements that will need to be made as the amenity ages.

**Q:** Is there a 2020 Budget to Actual report? Is evidence of expenses made available to homeowners?

**A:** Yes. You can login to your account at Sentry Management to view the financials. There you can view the actual expenses against the budget.

### Topic: Brock Built Updates

**Q:** How many houses does Brock Built estimate they will sell next year and how many are remaining in the current plans and what is estimated completion date for total build out?

**A:** 470 homes have been completed so far with a conservative projection to construct and sell 50 homes next year. The current plan is to construct 800 homes in total. We don't know when the project will be completed; it is based upon the housing market and other factors.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: Brock Built Updates (continued)

**Q:** Approximate times for construction crews for Brock for on-site construction? We continue to hear music & construction after 6pm from construction sites

**A:** Brock Built is trying to complete construction phases as quickly as they can. Construction times are 7am to 7pm with some work crews continuing later for inside work. If there are problems with noise violations outside these hours, please report them to Sentry Management.

**Q:** Any updates about cleaning or clearing the retaining pond behind the houses on Drew Drive? Also the trees were cleared out this time last year and now they have grown back and it looks horrible. Who is responsible for cleaning it up or doing something with it?

**A:** The retention ponds are still owned by Atlanta Housing Authority (AH). As part of the negotiations to have all of the AH property in West Highlands transferred to the HOA, we are requesting that the retention ponds are cleared before we take on those responsibilities and costs.

**Q:** Who can I speak with at Brock about traffic control on Perry and specifically the entrance to Perry Boulevard and Habershal Road?

**A:** Perry Blvd is a public street and managed by the City of Atlanta. You can reach out to Councilmember Dustin Hillis, who is your District 9 representative, to lobby on your behalf to the city for traffic calming measures. Additionally, you can contact the city's Department of Transportation.

**Q:** Is there any update as to what's going to happen and when to the land on Westmoreland Circle below the power lines?

**A:** The land is still owned by Atlanta Housing Authority (AH). Once the land is transferred to the HOA, the plans are to add a ball field and community garden.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: ACC

**Q:** How often will the Sentry Management person out to inspect? It used to one per season?

**A:** A Sentry Management representative visits the property on a weekly basis.

**Q:** Will the Sentry person take pictures of the violations so we can see what they see?

**A:** The Sentry Management representative takes pictures of Lots that are in legal for covenant violations. If a homeowner is cited for an exterior violation that they believe is an error, they can take a picture and email it to Sentry to revisit the Lot.

### Topic: Security and Parking

**Q:** If I get a new car, do I need to change/update my parking sticker or can I just move it to the new car?

**A:** When adding or exchanging a car or parking sticker, the homeowner needs to submit a new parking application. You can reuse the existing parking sticker if you are replacing a car. Please note the exchange on the parking application.

**Q:** Will we finally be able to find out where the gunshots are coming from? I asked security about this and they acted like they don't hear them which I couldn't believe and I noticed one of the security cars looked like it had a bullet hole in it.

**A:** Gun shots that are heard from a distance are likely occurring outside of West Highlands in a neighboring community. You should reach out to Atlanta Police Department to inquire and report these gunshots.

**Q:** Can security publish public reports? Or can there be a reporting mechanism that is public so we can all see and understand the responses.

**A:** We will work on security publishing statistics on the types of crime happening in West Highlands. For more detailed information on a particular incident, you would need to contact APD.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: Security and Parking (continued)

**Q:** Are the black security cars and the white security cars with the same team?

**A:** Protect Security has white cars and black cars patrolling West Highlands, Brock Built Construction Sites and Columbia Residential.

**Q:** How has crime been compared to previous years? Are things getting better or worse? If it has gotten worse, do we have a plan for how things can be improved beyond the change of security shifts?

**A:** Overall, crime is on the decline but we have started to see an increase across the city. Usually, we see more incidents as we approach the holiday season. Though West Highlands crime is still low compared to other neighborhoods, it is not immune to incidents happening. Homeowners should take extra precautionary measures to protect themselves, homes, cars, etc. Homeowners interested in even more proactive steps are urged to start a Neighborhood Watch Program. You can contact APD for assistance in setting up the program.

**Q:** Any plans to install lights on the entrance from Perry to Sanford? There's a stretch from Perry to the first few stop signs that is completely dark. The Perry/Sanford stretch of entrance is extremely dark and in need of lighting, creating dangerous conditions at night. Are there any plans to have that area lit?

**A:** Once the Sanford phase is built out, street lights will be installed on Sanford Drive between Perry Blvd and Drew Drive.

**Q:** Any plans to install street lights on Perry and Waysome Way?

**A:** Waysome Way is a private street. There are no plans to install street lights on this street. If the residents on Waysome Way want to have lighting installed, they would need to pay for the costs through a special assessment and continue to pay for the maintenance and the utility usage.

**Q:** Can security attend our next HOA meeting?

**A:** We will schedule a member of the Protect Security Team to report on security within West Highlands and to answer questions at our next HOA meeting.

## HOA Fall Meeting: Q & A

### Topic: Security and Parking (continued)

**Q:** How does Columbia Residential's security report any incidents and do we need to sync up with them?

**A:** Currently, there is not an exchange of security reports between Columbia Residential and the HOA. The HOA does not have justification or authority to examine Columbia Residential internal security issues. The HOA primary focus is to patrol and provide security on areas outside of Columbia Residential properties

**Q:** Can we include a member of the local police in our HOA meetings?

**A:** NPU-G is the forum for residents to raise concerns and ask questions about crime and other city departments' issues. The local police attend the monthly Neighborhood Planning Meetings (NPU-G) on the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. (except for the months of December and January when no NPU-G meetings are held). Click on the following link to get meeting details <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-zoning-development/neighborhood-planning-unit-npu/npu-schedule>.

### Topic: Community Updates

**Q:** Any insight on why Westside Park hasn't opened yet? I know it's not quite HOA related but just curious if anyone has information.

**A:** Phase 1 of the park has been completed and they have begun working on Phase 2 based on the last update from Atlanta Beltline. They are waiting for the city to approve the grand opening.





## Important Contact Information

- Sentry Management: for questions relating to your HOA dues, ACC modifications & violations, park reservations, and more.
  - [atlantanorthcompliance@sentrymgt.com](mailto:atlantanorthcompliance@sentrymgt.com) 404.459.8951
- ProTech Security: 470.825.1460 **(If a crime is taking place please call 911 first.)**
- Subdivision Street Poles: [Georgia Power](#)
- West Highlands Website: [westhighlandsatl.com](http://westhighlandsatl.com)