

# The Paper

of Flowery Branch



Youth get tips at baseball camp. **1B**

## Redevelopment analysis of Old Town to begin

BY DANA TOWNS  
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Flowery Branch's redevelopment plan will soon be on its way, with its main focus being on the downtown historic area, Old Town.

"We are looking to have the draft redevelopment plan presented to the council in November and two public meetings with the first one tentatively scheduled for Aug. 27," said John McHenry, Flowery Branch city

planner.

McHenry said that city officials hope to have robust citizen involvement.

"We are experiencing, already, increased building permits and business licenses ... downtown's spaces are virtually fully leased."

Flowery Branch City Council approved Pond & Co., an architectural, engineering and planning firm, to conduct the downtown redevelopment plan and marketing analysis June 6.

City council members Fred Richards and Tara Richards, will be part of the project management team, which will also include downtown merchants, historic preservation commission members, local faith-based representatives and major business owners McHenry said.

As for the new city hall and police department buildings that were proposed in the plan, feasibility will continue to be discussed. "We are certainly pursuing this option," said McHenry.

## McEver road detour concerns some residents

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The McEver Road/Radford Road detour is raising concern about emergency response time for some local residents. The detour was put in place after the culvert, serving Mud Creek, under McEver Road failed under heavy rains and flooding May 19.

Officials were forced to close the heavily-traveled artery between Flowery Branch and Oakwood until repairs can be completed.

Traveling north on McEver Road, drivers are diverted to Radford Road, which connects to state Route 13/ Alanta Highway and is the beginning of a 7.5 mile loop that leads back to McEver Road, beyond the culvert project.

"We live off Jim Crow Road so we have been taking the detour like everyone else since the heavy rains last month," said Lucary Henson, a Flowery Branch resident.

The looped detour adds approximately three miles to the drive to continue south along McEver.

Henson said that while driving, she sat at the Radford Road detour for over 30 minutes waiting for trains to pass. "What if there was an emergency during these times? You

would have to get out the helicopters to make a rescue."

"The railroad crossing at Radford Road is but one of five in proximity to the city," said Flowery Branch Police Chief David Spillers. Other crossings include Chattahoochee Street, Spring Street, Snelling Avenue, and Gaines Ferry Road.

"The issue of heavier traffic along Radford Road, most recently, is as a result of the McEver Road issue, more so than trains," he said.

Hall County Fire Chief, David Kimbrell, said that the detours are already factored into emergency response time. "Our station eight is on a bridged road," said Kimbrell, and would be the first in on an incident in that area. There would be minimal difference in response times."

Kimbrell also said that the other stations that would assist in an emergency, may have to go all the way down to Gaines Ferry Road to cross over.

"I just feel that priority should be given to these main roads for contracts and repairs," said Henson.

The culvert project is expected to be completed by August.

In addition to road repairs, Flowery Branch hopes to remedy the issue of trains stifling local and emergency access.

See **DETOUR**, page 4A

## Local woman supports national disaster relief



Photos For The Paper

Amy Johnson and National Civilian Community Corps members are "on call," serving communities in need of disaster-relief services.

BY LISA LASKEY  
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Twenty-four-year old Amy Johnson decided to make a move, across the country and into disaster's way. As a member of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps, she is spending a year volunteering in areas in need of disaster-relief services.

A 2007 graduate of Flowery Branch High School, Johnson completed studies at Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Services and applied to the AmeriCorps program. After her year with the NCCC, she plans to attend University of North Georgia to study human services delivery and administration. "I have been entertaining the idea of the Peace Corps after I get my bachelor's degree."

AmeriCorps NCCC is under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The FEMA-devoted unit consists of about 330 active corps members and is part of President Barack Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

Beyond helping communities recover from disaster, once they've completed their initial training, corps members spend 10 months working on four to six projects including youth engagement; homebuilding for families in need; park, stream, trail and shoreline remediation and wildfire fighting and prevention.



Amy Johnson will spend one year in the corps' program that trains young adults in disaster-relief and civilian support.

Johnson said that her biggest factors in joining the corps' program are its post-program benefits including an education award and potential

See **RELIEF**, page 2A

## Cherokee Bluffs Park to host public tour on Saturday

From staff reports

Hall County Parks and Leisure Services will host a public tour of the proposed Cherokee Bluffs Park from 2-5 p.m. June 29.

"The tour opportunity was prompted by citizen input at the Cherokee Bluffs public information meeting held in April," said Hall County District 1 Commissioner Craig Lutz. "We think this is an excellent way for citizens to see the property firsthand and better visualize future develop-

ment."

Cherokee Bluffs Park is located off Blackjack Road in Flowery Branch near Sterling on the Lake subdivision. Plans for the more than 100-acre park include walking trails, an amphitheater and a disc golf course. Hall County purchased the bulk of the park's land in 2006 using SPLOST V funds.

Anyone requesting additional information about the meeting is asked to contact Hall County Parks and Leisure Services at 770-535-8280.

## Corps: Campground hours to be reduced

From staff reports

Van Pugh South campground is among four parks around Lake Lanier now with limited hours of operation, said the Army Corps of Engineers.

Duckett Mill, Bolding Mill and Sawnee Park campgrounds will also cut open hours to between 7 a.m. Thursday and 3 p.m. Sunday every week.

While the corps' recreation budget has remained largely consistent over the past few years, the rising cost of operation and maintenance has made it difficult to keep the parks open seven days a week, said Operations Project Manager Tim Rainey.

"We went over our recreation budget in previous years and we realized this year that we cannot afford to keep operating the way we have been," Rainey said. "We hated shutting it down on everyone but we needed to."

The corps chose the four parks with the lowest occupancy rates for the weekly closing, Rainey said.

"There have been very few nights, even on the weekends, when these parks have reached 100 percent capacity," he said.

"Often I hear people say the government should operate more like a business. In this case, I think we have done that."

Van Pugh South Park contains 55 campsites including both electric and primitive camping.

Van Pugh North Park, also located off Gaines Ferry Road, is a fee-based, day park. It remains open for normal operational hours.

Van Pugh North is popular, especially on summer weekends when many use the facilities for barbecues and parties. Amenities include: a boat ramp, picnic and grill amenities, a playground and a picnic pavilion.

## Lane to close on Spout Springs

From staff reports

Temporary lane closures are expected on Spout Springs Road throughout the week as part of its planned widening project.

The road will remain open to traffic, but there will be temporary lane closures through Friday between Interstate 985 and

Thompson Mill Road as Wilmer Engineering workers collect asphalt samples as they begin pavement design for the project.

Plans call for Spout Springs, which is mostly two lanes, to be widened between Hog Mountain Road in Flowery Branch and Thompson Mill Road in Braselton.

According to Hall County's 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the project could take place between 2018 and 2030.

In 2011, when the project was set as part of the 2040 plan, the estimated total cost was \$44.8 million. The inflation-adjusted estimate in that 12-year time frame is \$58.3 million.



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