

**OPPOSITION TO REZONING of 4994 Rockbridge Road
(Z-22-1245331)**

Neighborhood Petition



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.Petition 3

2.Online Petition/ Signatures4

3.Leading to the Petition5

4.Current Development Proposal.....6

5.South River Watershed Alliance Statement.....7

6.Environmental Repercussions/ benefits8

7.Flood Maps in Downstream Area.....10

8.Testimonies from Residents.....11

9.Map of Public Parks.....12

10.Potential Evidence of Historical Artifacts/ GSU Archeology Survey.....13

1.PETITION

SAVE 40 ACRES OF OLD FOREST IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Community Message to The Dekalb County Representatives:

Residents of DeKalb County want the wooded parcels at 4994 Rockbridge Road to be protected in perpetuity as a nature preserve.

We oppose any development of the land at 4994 Rockbridge Road that reduces forested greenspace, neglects to protect the environment, and increases density.

Many important developments are being built in the surrounding neighborhoods, and we embrace growth. But these specific parcels of land are home to 40 acres of large specimen trees, a unique ecosystem of waterways, and abundant wildlife.

We petition to see this particular land become a nature preserve to protect one of the few remaining large forested greenspaces in DeKalb County.

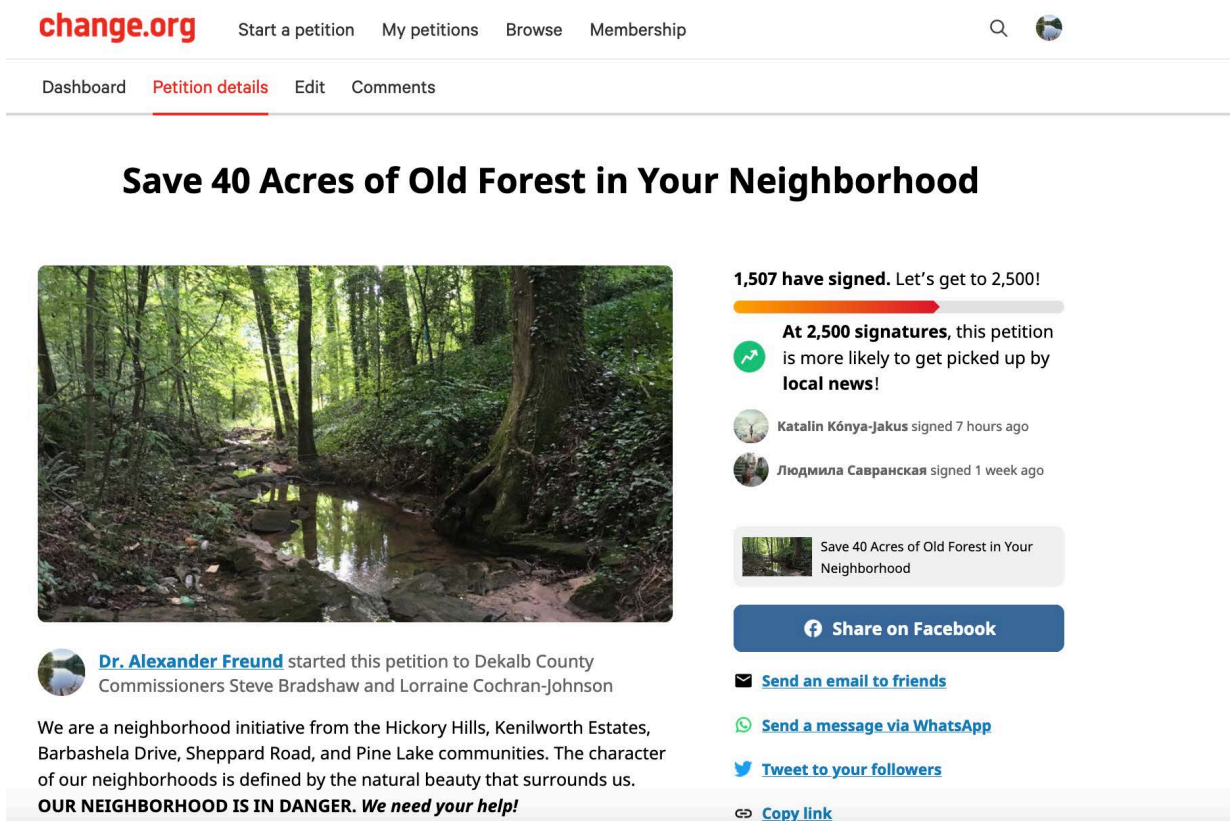
We appeal to our representatives and friends in local government to reject development projects at 4994 Rockbridge Road that are not consistent with these community wishes. We depend on your intentional care to strengthen our local economy, provide greater equality, and to support innovative growth for a promising future for our communities.

Signed,

Residents of Kenilworth Estates, Hickory Hills Community, Sheppard Rd, Barbashela Drive, Pine Lake, and other Neighboring DeKalb County Communities

2. ONLINE PETITION - SIGNATURES

<https://chnge.it/cRY5b25ft4>
(1507 Signatures on Jan 4, 2023)



The screenshot shows the Change.org petition interface. At the top, the Change.org logo is on the left, and navigation links for 'Start a petition', 'My petitions', 'Browse', and 'Membership' are in the center. A search icon and a globe icon are on the right. Below the navigation bar, there are links for 'Dashboard', 'Petition details' (which is underlined), 'Edit', and 'Comments'. The main heading of the petition is 'Save 40 Acres of Old Forest in Your Neighborhood'. To the left of the text is a photograph of a forest stream. To the right, there is a progress bar showing 1,507 signatures out of a goal of 2,500. Below the progress bar, there is a green checkmark icon and text stating that at 2,500 signatures, the petition is more likely to be picked up by local news. Below this, there are two user avatars with their names and the time they signed: Katalin Kónya-Jakus (7 hours ago) and Людмила Савранская (1 week ago). At the bottom right, there are several social sharing buttons: 'Share on Facebook', 'Send an email to friends', 'Send a message via WhatsApp', 'Tweet to your followers', and 'Copy link'. At the bottom left, there is a profile picture of Dr. Alexander Freund and text stating he started the petition to Dekalb County Commissioners Steve Bradshaw and Lorraine Cochran-Johnson. Below this, there is a paragraph describing the neighborhood initiative and a bolded statement: 'OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS IN DANGER. We need your help!'.

change.org Start a petition My petitions Browse Membership

Dashboard Petition details Edit Comments

Save 40 Acres of Old Forest in Your Neighborhood

1,507 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

At 2,500 signatures, this petition is more likely to get picked up by **local news!**

Katalin Kónya-Jakus signed 7 hours ago

Людмила Савранская signed 1 week ago

Save 40 Acres of Old Forest in Your Neighborhood

Share on Facebook

Send an email to friends

Send a message via WhatsApp

Tweet to your followers

Copy link

Dr. Alexander Freund started this petition to Dekalb County Commissioners Steve Bradshaw and Lorraine Cochran-Johnson

We are a neighborhood initiative from the Hickory Hills, Kenilworth Estates, Barbashela Drive, Sheppard Road, and Pine Lake communities. The character of our neighborhoods is defined by the natural beauty that surrounds us.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS IN DANGER. We need your help!

We do have PHYSICAL SIGNATURES from the affected neighborhoods in support of this online petition.

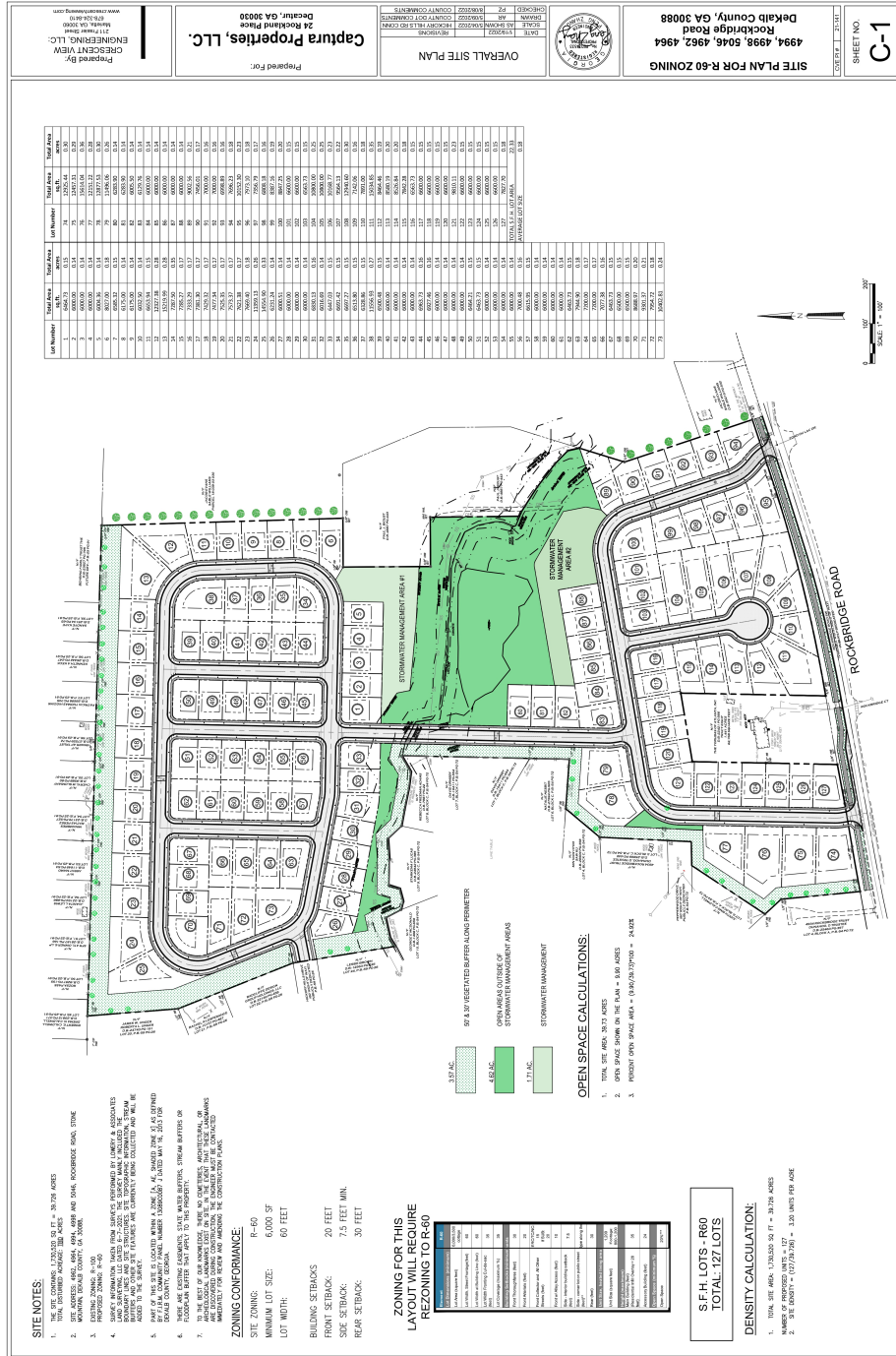
3. LEADING TO THE PETITION

So far, no action has been taken to give a voice to a large number of residents, who clearly oppose the development.

We question that the developer Gus Abalo is the right choice for this land for the following reasons:

- We noticed a significant **lack of awareness within the neighborhoods** about the planned development itself, its details and the resulting environmental issues, **due to minimal communication from the developer** to the residents.
- During the community meetings **the developer refused to add defined areas of protected greenspace into his proposal** except for the agreed extra buffer zones. Instead, he argued that the required 75 ft federal and state protection zone on each side of the creek and pond within the property would be greenspace, which he implied was added as a favor to the community.
- **The developer's plan indicates construction within the required buffer zones.**
- **The developer has been unwilling to negotiate about anything else than R60 re-zoning**, and threatened to omit the negotiated extra 30ft buffer zone to Kenilworth Dr and extra 10 ft from Hickory Hills, if R60 does not get approved.
- In spite of repeated requests from the community to protect and convert at least one part of the property into a nature preserve or park, Gus Abalo insists in a **high density development, which is absolutely inconsistent with the character of our neighborhoods and will cause significant environmental repercussions.**

4. CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL



5. SOUTH RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE STATEMENT



10.30.2022

**4994 Rockbridge Rd
Stone Mountain, GA 30038**

DeKalb County commissioners Cochran-Johnson and Bradshaw:

The proposed 40-acre development will forever alter the surrounding neighborhoods' physical character and natural environment. The community of neighborhoods - Kenilworth Estates, Hickory Hills Community, Sheppard Rd, Barbashela Drive, Pine Lake - were historically and intentionally centered around the most important environmental feature in the area more than 60 years ago — the invaluable forested greenspace anchored by Kenilworth Lake and the functioning ecosystem created by the lake. The downstream flow of the natural headwater stream, on which the health of the lake depends, will be irreparably harmed by the proposed development. The additional stormwater runoff created by so much impervious surface will permanently erode, disfigure, and ecologically degrade the stream with a variety of pollutants. Sediment, the number one pollutant of freshwater resources worldwide, will essentially suffocate aquatic life. Irreplaceable aquatic, arboreal and avian wildlife habitat will disappear which will impact biodiversity far beyond these neighborhoods.

Environmental and human health go hand in hand. The combined effects of the conversion of forest into impervious development will decrease quality of life and impose economic costs that cannot be mitigated, including but not limited to increased frequency and volume of flooding as well as sanitary sewage overflows that violate the federal Clean Water Act and DeKalb County's federal consent decree.

The community is asking for your help to deny upzoning of this property to protect environmental health, human health and quality of life for residents of the entire area. Please help your constituents lead the effort towards sustainability in your District. Only by working with communities like these to plan and develop in smarter ways that protect the integrity of the natural environment does DeKalb have a chance of a sustainable future in the face of climate change.

Thank you.

Margaret Spalding

Respect. Recreation. Restoration.


southriverga.org

P.O. Box 1341 Decatur, GA 30031

**6.ENVIRONMENTAL REPERCUSSIONS IF DEVELOPED vs.
BENEFITS THROUGH PRESERVATION**

The forest on the 4994 Rockbridge Rd property is Working Land. For all the acreage and decades of trees, there is an even more complex root system, all of which manages erosion, runoff, and water management more effectively than any engineered system we could ever design.

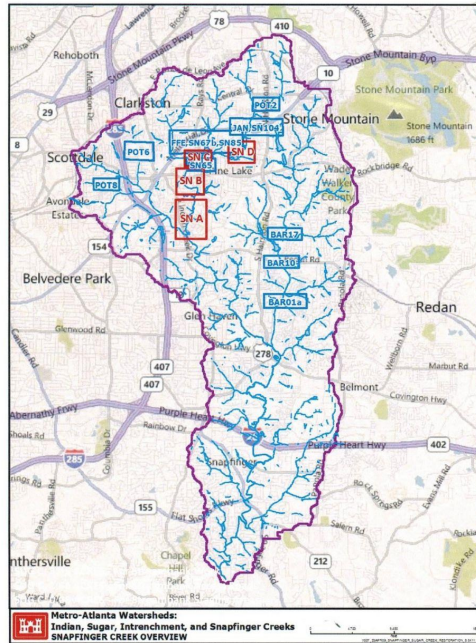
Quality of Life and Environmental Destruction by the Development	Benefits of Preservation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With Barbashela Creek running through the property, houses downstream, will be directly affected. Already, we have collected evidence of residents across the street from the property, who have experienced expensive flooding, sewage overflow and damage to their houses with slow or no response from the county. ● Within the developer's plan states, <i>"Sewer capacity request needed. May be capacity restricted"</i> -pg 10. DeKalb County is in violation of the Clean Water Act and is under a federal consent decree to fix it and eliminate spills. The Snapfinger treatment facility, where the developer plans to send sewage from this site, regularly overflows. * * see Testimonies under 9. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The adjacent neighborhoods have been and are still going through SIGNIFICANT and POSITIVE CHANGES TOWARDS DIVERSITY. Creating a park in the very center of them would enhance the connection and identity of District 4, creating a stronger community while bringing together people of different socio-economical and racial backgrounds, leaving the tarnished past behind. ● Providing a park would benefit the immediate areas and greater communities (the closest park is Wade Walker Park, 2 miles away). ● Only 2% of Dekalb County is undeveloped. We would protect one of the last large canopies of older forest within Dekalb County as well as a pond and creek.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FEMA hazard areas pertaining to flooding are indicated on County G.I.S. mapping records of the property. ● Utilization of a current natural pond and 100 year old flood plain on the property as a stormwater management area - destroys an eco-system. This is unsustainable for the amount of potential runoff with the torrential rains we are continuing to see. ● Increased pollution to South River Watershed and loss of habitat with more pests on roads and in neighborhoods. ● The property would be built above an old dam (category 1, Sheppard Lake Dam) that is not monitored by the county. If left unmonitored with this new development, the increased run-off could negatively affect the old dam and potentially break, which would mean massive damage to houses and roadways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working towards the goals of the consent decree for the Clean Water Act to decrease flooding and spillage from the Snapfinger treatment facility. ● Educational and recreational opportunities for surrounding schools including Rockbridge Elementary, Freedom Middle, Eldridge L Miller Elementary. ● Opportunities for exercise, recreation, and education to residents within the area providing environmental justice for equal accessibility to parks and greenspaces to >5000 residents within 1 mile radius. ● Improve water quality, protect groundwater, improve the quality of the air we breathe.
---	---

6.FLOOD MAPS OF DOWNSTREAM AREA

Snappfinger Creek

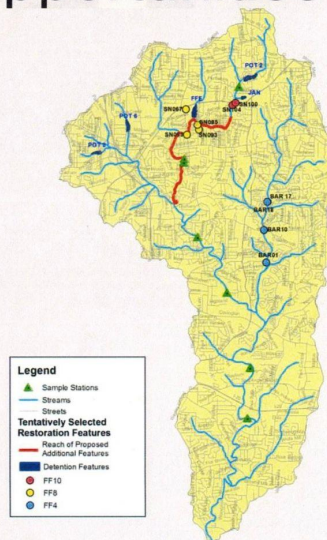
- 10 wet/dry peak flow attenuation features
 - POT2, POT6, POT8
 - FFE, JAN
 - SN104, SN085, SN065, BAR01a, BAR17
- 1 enhanced swale
 - BAR18
- Bank restoration
- Weir at Pine Lake



12

Watershed Opportunities

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3 – Evaluating Plans
 - ▶ Concentrate projects in headwaters
 - ▶ Areas with large drainage areas



BUILDING STRONG®₁₀

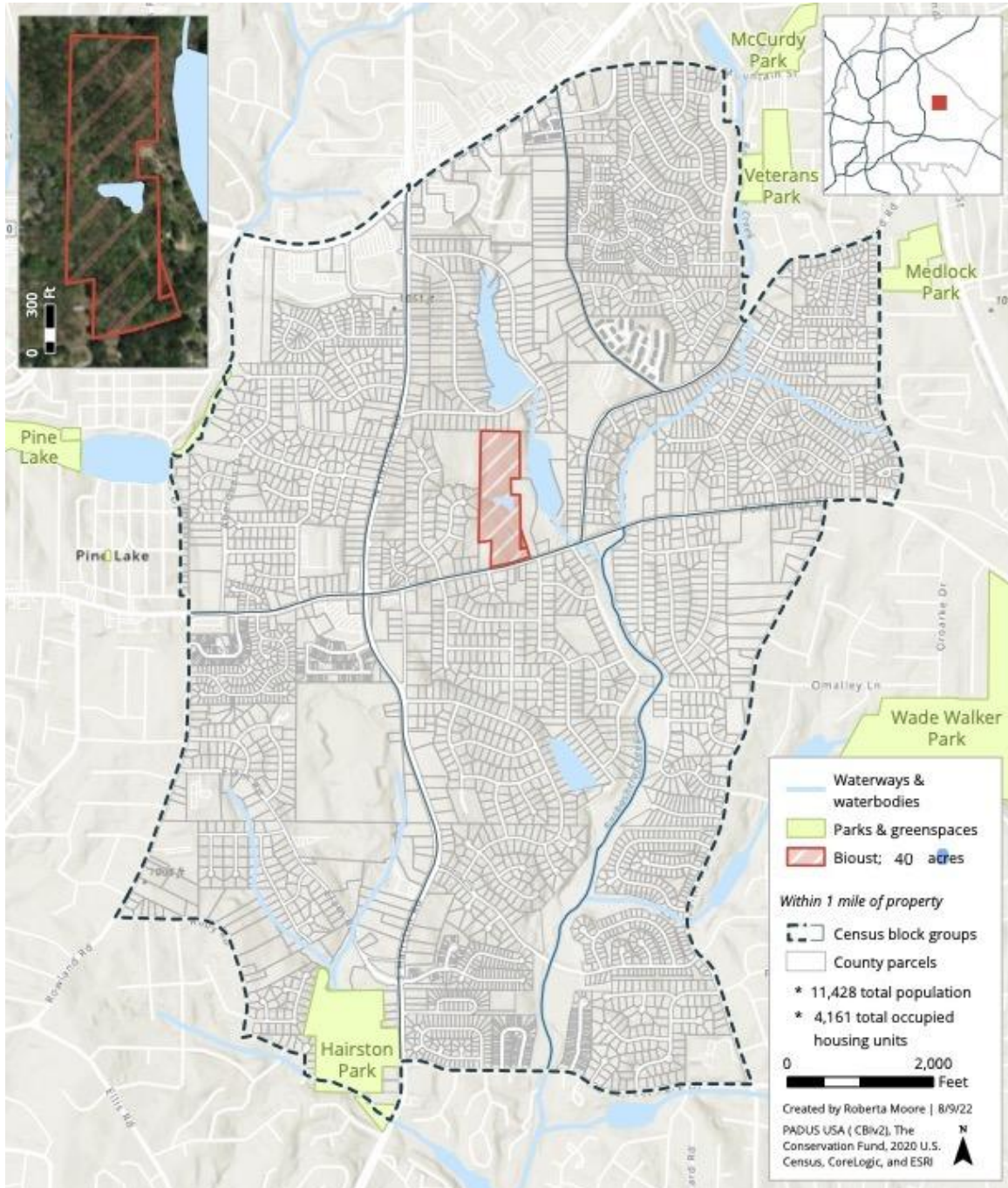
7.ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE OF FLOODING (FROM RESIDENTS DOWNSTREAM ON BARBASHELA CREEK)

- 446 Barbashela Dr.
A man reported that 3 years ago, the sewer system was stopped up and “busted” as he called it. The water from Barbashela Creek came all the way up to his back porch. His house had major damage and it took the county about 3 months to visit the site and compensate for repairs.
- On Fond Du Lac Dr. a resident reported that a neighbor down the road had a house that flooded. The resident of this house called the County many times without any help from them concerning the flooding. Finally the flooding and its after effects (mold and rot) was so destructive and continuous that he had to vacate the property. The house is empty.
- 416 Barbashela Dr.
2013 A flood about 3 feet high in the basement. Flood insurance didn’t pay for replacing their refrigerator and freezer and they paid for them themselves.
- 400 Barbashela Dr.
A woman moved into the house recently and built a fence in the backyard. A flood came and took it out almost immediately.
- 392 Barbashela Dr.
Flooding occurs on the front of their house and in the yard where one creek flows to another. Drains were put in on the street, but were not successful in eliminating floods. At times cars cannot pass through flooded streets.
- 374 Barbashela Dr.
The house has flooding every year and they have to get a pump to pump out the water from the basement.
- 366 Barbashela Dr.
A flood damaged the basement. The family cannot utilize their basement because they are concerned about future flooding.
- 432 Barbashela Dr.
5 years ago 1 ft flood in the basement and 10 years ago 3.5 ft flood in the basement, they had to replace the AC unit and Furnace. If it rains more than 3 days then it floods.

8.PARKS SERVING SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES and THE PARK DESERT

Resident of 336 Barbashela Dr.

“I have Multiple Sclerosis and I have to walk for my health. I don’t have a car and I can’t walk to Wade Walker Park. I would love a park there, then I could walk.”



10.POTENTIAL EVIDENCE OF HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS

- Many neighbors, who are living a life-time in the area, are mentioning **Ancient Indian Burial Grounds** on this property, as they have learned from their ancestors. This is feasible as the ancient *Standing Peachtree Trail* passed through what is today known as Rockbridge Rd.
- **Stone Carvings** have been found on the property, which resemble similar ancient Native American carvings (2-5000 B.C.) from the region (for example in Lithonia Hills, <https://www.lithiaspringwater.com/index-3d.html>)

We have requested a professional survey of the land with Dr. Jeffrey Glover, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Georgia State University and Board Member of the Greater Atlanta Archaeological Society (GAAS), and Johannes Loubser from Stratum Unlimited Rock Art Conservation and Archaeology. Both are specialists in Historical Archaeology, Urban Archaeology, Built Environment, and Community Archaeology.



