

Inside:

A helping hand to
Brookhaven's homeless

License plate readers
focus on fighting crime

Fall fun in Brookhaven



Progress on the PCG!

Construction is progressing on Brookhaven's portion of the Peachtree Creek Greenway, with an anticipated opening of Phase 1 later this year. Once complete, the multi-use path will not only provide a crucial link along the Buford Highway Corridor, but to the rest of Brookhaven and the Atlanta trail system. Above, crews work on an abutment wall with a custom finish. Check www.BrookhavenGA.gov/PCG for updates.

From the Mayor's Desk



John Ernst, Mayor
John.Ernst@BrookhavenGA.gov

Town Hall Schedule

Mayor Ernst will host the following town halls at City Hall, 4362 Peachtree Road, 6 to 7 p.m.:

- **Thursday, Sept. 19**
- **Thursday, Oct. 17**
- **Thursday, Nov. 21**
- **Thursday, Dec. 19**

Getting ready for a game-changer

Heads up, Brookhaven! The City is on the cusp of celebrating what could arguably be the biggest milestone in our nearly seven-year history. The Peachtree Creek Greenway is about to become a reality, and later this year we'll celebrate its opening in grand style.

The impact of the PCG is going to be huge.

- It's a place for cyclists to bike, walkers to stroll, and dogs to be walked.
- It's a great way to get up and down the famous Buford Highway Corridor.
- It's eventually a connection to the greater Atlanta trail system.
- It's a new, much-needed, home for our Police Department.

And it's still so much more and something that could not have been achieved without the hard work and vision of Betsy Eggers and the Peachtree Creek Greenway, Inc. It's the hard work of passionate residents and groups like these that are the backbone of this City.

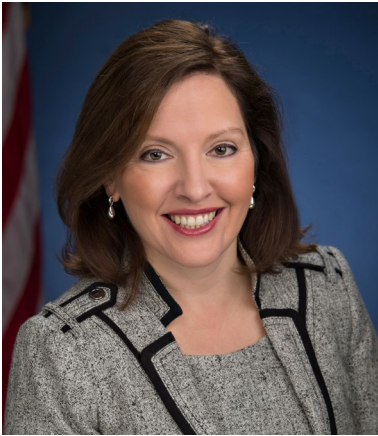
Don't hesitate to contact me at John.Ernst@BrookhavenGA.gov or at 404-637-0710 with any questions or concerns. I hope to see you at a Town Hall or City Council meeting. Thank you for all you do to make Brookhaven better!



Available now!

Check out what Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department has going on this fall! The 2019 Fall Activity Guide is available now at City facilities, online at www.BrookhavenGA.gov/parksrec/page/activities-and-programs, or by mail if you email News@BrookhavenGA.gov and let us know you would like to receive a free copy.

City Council



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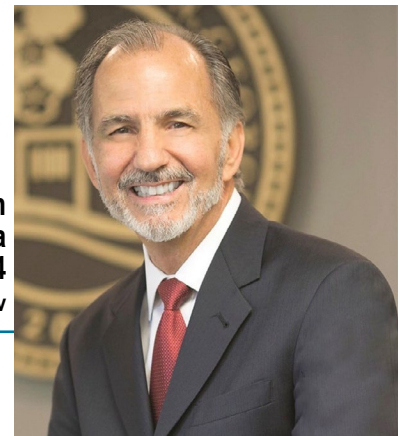


Bates Mattison
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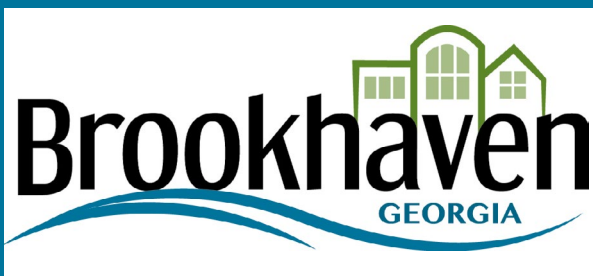


Mayor Pro Tem
Joe Gebbia
District 4
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The Brookhaven City Council generally meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 3:30 and 7 p.m. at 4362 Peachtree Road. Visit www.BrookhavenGA.gov for schedule changes.

City meetings are streamed online and archived at www.BrookhavenGA.gov. To access meetings and videos, go to the Meetings & Agendas tab near the bottom of the homepage.



City Vision and Mission

The following are vision and mission statements of the City of Brookhaven.

Vision

Brookhaven will be nationally recognized as a beautiful community where multiple generations can live in safety, flourish in business and succeed in a historic, sustainable environment with exceptional education and transportation options.

Mission

In support of the Brookhaven vision, the City government shall: encourage and maintain a beautiful community, meet public safety needs, develop an environment for business success, promote sustainable projects and activities, identify and preserve historic and neighborhood resources, facilitate educational opportunities, and improve transportation conditions, connectivity, and options while listening to and communicating with the public.

Brookhaven's 'hidden homeless' given a helping hand

City partners with The Salvation Army to assist urban campers



On a crisp winter morning last December, clouds of dirt flew into the air as federal, state, county, and local officials gathered at the gala groundbreaking ceremony for the Peachtree Creek Greenway (PCG). However, in the weeks leading to the groundbreaking, Brookhaven officials had been faced with a challenge: what was going to be done to assist a small pocket of homeless individuals living along the creek? Their safety was at risk due to the large-scale grading, clearing, and digging soon to come.

Brookhaven City Manager Christian Sigman conducted a series of brainstorming sessions with Moe Trebuchon, Project Executive for the PCG venture, and Brookhaven Police Sgt. Jacob Kissel to devise a practical, humane plan. There was one thing the trio knew for sure. They did not want to take the hardline approach of swooping in and arresting them for violating the urban camping ordinance.

Instead, the group opted for a more compassionate

The City of Brookhaven joined forces with The Salvation Army to help some of the homeless near the Peachtree Creek Greenway ease back into a stable housing environment. Shown here is an 'urban camp' along Peachtree Creek under North Druid Hills Road.

and comprehensive approach of offering a "helping hand" to these individuals with the goal of escaping the vicious cycle of homelessness.

With its physical proximity to Peachtree Creek and possessing community outreach programs, The Salvation Army (TSA) was an obvious choice to assist with the idea. Capt. Kenneth Argot, Corps Officer of the Atlanta Temple Corps, and Caleb Loudon, Salvation Army Mission Specialist, were engaged in the discussions and became immediately onboard with the proposed partnership, and a plan began to emerge.

"Unlike how many people assume, the homeless aren't all derelicts or drug users," noted Sigman. "Many



The Salvation Army facility in Brookhaven offers free food, clothing, showers, and other forms of assistance on a weekly basis for local homeless individuals. (Photo courtesy of The Salvation Army.)

are simply victims of life situations such as job loss, derailed by the ripple effect from a bad divorce, or a teen thrown out of the family home. To ignore the human side of the homeless is to ignore our own humanity. As humans, when we come in contact with a person in need, we either move towards compassion or towards indifference. As City Manager, I choose compassion.”

According to Loudon, the homeless people that he works with usually fall into one of three categories: those struggling with substance abuse, people who have fallen on hard times; and people with severe mental health challenges. “If someone experiences a crisis, whether financial, relational, or otherwise, and doesn’t have a good support network, he or she could easily become homeless,” he noted.

At the nominal cost of \$10 a day per person, the City of Brookhaven was able designate funding to lift at least six people out of squalid environs under the North Druid Hills and Clairmont bridges and put them on a, sometimes rocky, road to a normal life. One person exited the program after getting a job in a downtown hotel and another before getting into his own housing situation. That daily cost provided these “clients” (as they are referred to, once in a Salvation Army program) with a roof over their heads, food, clothing, counseling, and any needed medical attention.

“For those who did not take advantage of the Brookhaven/Salvation Army arrangement, they have always been welcomed to The Salvation Army one day a week for a shower, food, and clothing,” said Loudon. “This gives us the opportunity to focus on their situation and steer them in the right direction to get them

out of homelessness. It also allows us the time to build relationships, to get to know them and their individual needs and goals and move them in the right direction. If anything, contact with those involved with the greenway project has initiated a dialogue and pathway to extend to them the help they need.”

Making middle-of-the-night visits to the homeless camps, Kissel and Loudon handed out water and

snacks to garner trust and made an offer to individuals found under the bridges: spend the next 120 days at The Salvation Army Red Shield Shelter’s 340-bed facility and participate in counseling sessions. “When someone goes into this program, TSA provides them with a bed, housing and counseling,” said Trebuchon. “They help them get their life organized around finding and keeping a job, saving money and assist with finding secure living accommodations.”

The program has had a success rate marked by peaks and valleys. Some clients drifted in and out of the program, others realized months of sobriety only to temporarily relapse. If clients relapse, TSA case managers strive to keep working with them, often revamping their treatment and counseling programs to get them back on track. TSA rehab case managers are available throughout the day and evening, but it is still up to the individual to check in and take the initiative to pursue the different aspects of their strategy. This is important because, as they edge closer to leaving homelessness, they need to maintain this initiative to be successful.

“The main thing to remember is we are talking to a diverse group of individuals, each with his or her own unique set of problems that can vary from person to person,” said Kissel. “There is no ‘one plan fits all’ approach that can be applied to everyone. These individuals often can’t find the help they need and deserve in the first place, forcing them into homelessness. We wanted to make sure these individuals within our City were aware of the programs available to help them escape their situation.”

Continued on Page 8

License plate readers focus on fighting crime in Brookhaven

Felons intent on committing crimes in Brookhaven or passing through using City streets as escape routes from criminal behavior elsewhere are on notice: chances are likely a Brookhaven Police Department (BPD) officer knows you're here.

License plate readers (LPRs) are a form of surveillance technology that continues to grow in popularity and gain a foothold in local law enforcement's crime-fighting tool kit. Since 2017, the BPD has been utilizing LPRs with 43 cameras now spread throughout the City, primarily at major 'gateways' including Buford Highway, Ashford Dunwoody Road and North Druid Hills Road. Brookhaven's cameras are mounted on Georgia Power Company utility poles per an agreement with the power company, plus there are a few additional ones capable of being mounted on BPD mobile units. The LPR data is maintained by California-based Vigilant Solutions, who stores the information on secure servers in Virginia.

LPRs are high-speed, computer-controlled camera systems that automatically capture all license plate numbers that come into view, along with the location, date and time, and take a photo of the automobile. The information is then uploaded to a central server that can be accessed by not only local BPD officers, but neighboring police departments and even state and national law enforcement departments.

"We share with neighboring agencies such as Chamblee and Doraville police departments," said Sgt. Jacob Kissel of the BPD Criminal Investigations Division. "In all likelihood, a stolen car or criminal passing through Brookhaven could pass through these nearby jurisdictions or vice versa."

Recognized for their law enforcement value, LPRs evolved in the late 1990s from equipment used by the postal service to sort letters. The system uses an infrared camera to take pictures of license plates which are then compared to "hot lists" containing tag numbers associated with criminal activity.

These hot lists are frequently uploaded by the Georgia Department of Revenue and then, at warp speed, transmitted into the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) database. GCIC runs the plate number to verify if the alert or "hit" as it's called, is valid. Additionally, the FBI often enters critical information

on crimes such as Amber alerts, so there is a constant influx of national, regional, and local information also at BPD officers' fingertips.

In the past two years, Brookhaven law enforcement LPR cameras have read more than 71 million tags, resulting in 1.3 million "hits." Although not all hits



License plate reader technology is helping take a bite out of crime in Brookhaven.

proved to be valid, they led to countless arrests for a plethora of crimes including stolen vehicles and apprehension of wanted persons, gang/terrorist members, violent persons, and sex offenders.

The Brookhaven LPR network also includes cameras that are owned and operated by some of the various home owners associations (HOAs) in the City. The HOAs foot the bill for the cost of the cameras, but the BPD can monitor their systems for any needed information if a crime occurs in their specific neighborhood. Additionally, the City has a partnership with RING Security Cameras where if an incident occurs in a specific location, anyone that is registered on the RING neighborhood app can share videos from neighbors who may have seen a suspect in the area.

Although law enforcement agencies understand the many benefits that come from having a LPR system, often community members are skeptical and it is understandable that people have privacy concerns about such sophisticated technology. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, most privacy issues

are focused on how the information is used and how long it is kept in the database.

BPD Police Chief Gary Yandura is quick to note that for Brookhaven residents, both of these concerns should be minimal. “Our first and foremost use of the data is to catch the bad guys,” said Yandura. “We are much less concerned with a driver’s license expiration than with locating a fugitive or finding a missing child. To avoid public scrutiny, our officers strive to balance the effective use of the technology with protecting the public’s privacy. They realize that failing to consider privacy issues risks the complete loss of the technology as a crime-fighting tool.”

Yandura stressed that although thousands of license plate numbers are captured in the system, unless there is a valid hit on that number, the information is rendered virtually useless and eventually purged. “Georgia state law requires the gathered information to be purged no later than 30 months after it was collected,” noted Yandura. “The only information kept beyond that time is data that is required for long-term investigations, cold cases or in court.”

The types of crimes the BPD is primarily focused on extend far beyond merely determining if someone’s tag has expired.

“Our system is specifically designed to alert us only on major crimes, so because murder suspects, wanted criminals, stolen license plates, stolen vehicles, Amber alerts or missing people are more important to us,” added Kissel, “we only get information on those cases.”

The LPR program in Brookhaven has proven valuable by playing a key role in apprehending criminals and recovering stolen property. Installed in mid-2017, there were nine Theft by Receiving (TBR) motor vehicle arrests in the last half of that year. However, in 2018, there were 29 TBR arrests, a 222 percent increase as compared to 2017. Of those incidents, 21 resulted in recovery and arrests. According to BPD records for the first six months of 2019, 25 vehicles, with a Kelly Blue Book value of approximately \$450,000, have been recovered solely from LPR alerts.

But the success rate doesn’t stop there. According to

Kissel, during the first five months of 2019, BPD has had 59 incidents as a result of LPR alerts, 38 of which have resulted in arrests. Of these arrests, charges have included theft by receiving stolen vehicles, possession of a schedule II-controlled substance, abducted child located, wanted person located, burglary suspects located and DUI. In the May BPD monthly report, there were 47,651 hits. Yet out of those, only 2,144 hits were targeted for action such as stolen cars, stolen vehicle parts, wanted persons, missing persons, protection orders, sexual offenders, gang/terrorist members, violent person, and felony warrant. The rest of the hits were either rendered invalid or addressed by other local and state law enforcement agencies.

One particular instance stands out in Kissel’s memory. “In January, BPD officers received an alert for a missing child involving parental abduction out of South Carolina,” he recalls. “Officers flooded the area and were guided by additional alerts as the vehicle traveled through Brookhaven passing additional cameras. The vehicle was located, and a felony traffic stop was conducted. The offender was taken into custody and the missing child was found in the vehicle, unharmed. The offender had a warrant out of South Carolina for felony interference with custody. He was arrested and the child was returned to his mother.”

To have the LPR database and the catalog of vehicular information at their fingertips has proven “incredible,” said Kissel. “To be able to pinpoint where people are in the City that may have the intent to commit a crime or already committed a crime, to show we have proof of this, is huge when it comes to court cases.

“The BPD cameras average about four million reads a month and that doesn’t include the ones we may have missed due to poor lighting or camera angle. We recover stolen vehicles almost every day. We’ve had multiple cases that we never would have solved without access to a system like this or, at the very least, would have taken much longer to solve.

“This has proven to be a valuable tool for us and that is just the tip of the iceberg. There are so many other applications to explore with this system that will help us keep Brookhaven residents even safer in the days, months, and years ahead,” Kissel concluded.

The LPR program in Brookhaven has proven valuable by playing a key role in apprehending criminals and recovering stolen property.

Statistics on the homeless in America from the National Alliance to End Homelessness are sobering. More than half a million people currently meet the definition of homeless in our country and, of these, 7,000 live in Atlanta. *Wallethub* compared stats on over 180 U.S. cities and ranked Atlanta as the 11th "Most Needy City in America."

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that small clusters of homeless communities exist within Brookhaven city limits and can vary in size, depending on the location. They are not just camped along creeks or under bridges, but can often be found wherever they can manage to blend in such as behind abandoned or empty store fronts, along isolated service roads, in pockets along Peachtree Road and Buford Highway or

'The biggest impact for me is knowing we have utilized resources at our fingertips, knowing we have tried to give these individuals a better life or opportunity instead of continually locking them up for urban camping violations or for soliciting on the overpass.'
- Sgt. Jacob Kissel

just beyond the tree line bordering commercial properties or vacant parcels of isolated property.

Has there been a reduction of the homeless in the PCG area? Is the program over?

Reflecting over the past six months the program has been in effect, "success" is marked by various degrees. A significant factor affecting the success of someone's exit from homelessness is the amount of time they've been living a homeless existence. "If they are homeless for a long period of time, it is much more difficult for them to exit homelessness because the skills they have acquired to survive are not useful in the new lifestyle they are pursuing," added Loudon. "And since most of our clients are middle aged to seniors, they are more likely to have some considerable health challenges. Homelessness can rapidly age a person."

"I've made monthly inspections in this area," said Kissel. "We have begun to see a decline, but because Phase 1 of the greenway ends at North Druid Hills, we've had to shift our focus about where we want to do

our outreach next. We still pop in near the underpasses where they may be and give them our card, describe the ways we may be able to help them and contact information at the Salvation Army. We do not see any evidence that we are 'pushing' them into other areas of the City."

Those involved with this project have come away from the experience personally changed in some way.

"The biggest impact for me is knowing we have utilized resources at our fingertips, knowing we have tried to give these individuals a better life or opportunity instead of continually locking them up for urban camping violations or for soliciting on the overpass," concluded Kissel. "Seven years ago, if you had asked me if I'd one day be handing out water and fruit to individuals under bridges that were clearly breaking the law, I would have told you no way. Now, our stamp as a city and as a police agency is focused on quality community policing. We are going to utilize every resource that we have to make sure we are doing what is right for our community and, like it or not, these individuals are part of our community."

For Loudon, one memorable story born from this effort is a poignant one regarding faith. "It was about 4 or 5 in the morning when we did our outreach along the greenway," he remembered. "Still dark outside, we had our flashlights shining over toward one man who later said he was praying to God when we walked up. 'I will finally surrender to you Lord, I will live the way I know I should live if you will just get me out of this (homelessness)' was what the man later recalled and seconds later we were standing there with our flashlights offering help to get him into the shelter. He was losing hope at that point, at the end of his rope, and we came along at just the right time to help him and within a few hours he was in a shelter and he has been there ever since, making progress."

"This isn't about just reducing the number of homeless people in this area," said Trebuchon. "The better view is that we are potentially helping a small group of people get to a better place in life through this effort. It is an ongoing process. I don't believe we are ever going to be 'all done.' It would be naïve to think that. There are people becoming homeless every day and if you don't help them break the cycle, they are simply going to be homeless somewhere else. This isn't a story about 'cleaning up and moving on.' Instead it is about doing the right thing to help some unfortunate people escape their plight and strive for a better situation."

For more information about The Salvation Army USA | Metro Atlanta Area Command, its programs, services or volunteer opportunities, visit <https://salvationarmyatlanta.org/>

National Night Out



Flashing blue lights and an occasional siren filled the Target parking lot at 100 Perimeter Center Place in August as crowds gathered to celebrate the annual National Night Out. The event was co-hosted by Brookhaven and Dunwoody Police Departments, with assistance from Georgia State University Police and DeKalb Fire/Rescue.

Patrol cars, SWAT vehicles and other specialty vehicles, emergency vehicles, and a fire truck were on display for youngsters to explore and enjoy. Police officers, fire/rescue personnel and 9-1-1 personnel were also on hand to answer any questions related to vehicles, personnel, or public safety operations.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Food Truck Roundup

DATES: Wednesdays, through Oct. 2

TIME: 6-9 p.m.

LOCATION: Blackburn Park

DETAILS: Join us on Wednesdays at Blackburn Park for our weekly Food Truck Roundup. Each night will feature food trucks, a bounce house, and live entertainment. This is a family-friendly event so bring the kids, dogs, and whoever else is hungry!

Doggy Dip Day

DATE: Sunday, Sept. 8

SMALL DOGS, 0-35 lbs: 1-2:30 p.m.

LARGE DOGS, 35+ lbs: 3-4:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Murphey Candler Park Pool

PRICE: \$10 per dog

DETAILS: Brookhaven Parks and Recreation Department invites pooches to come out and enjoy one last splash of summer at Doggy Dip Day.

Peachtree Creek Greenway Clean Up - YMCA Day of Service

DATE: Saturday, Sept. 14

TIME: 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

DETAILS: Volunteers will gather for the YMCA's 2019 Day of Service to clean the Peachtree Creek Greenway. Volunteers of all ages are welcome. Register at <https://ymcaofmetroatlanta.regfox.com/days-of-service-2019-individuals>

Paint the Park

DATE: Sunday, Sept. 15

TIME: 1-4 p.m.

LOCATION: Blackburn Park Pavilion

PRICE: Free

DETAILS: Artists of all ages and skill levels are invited to "Paint the Park." To illustrate the importance of civic art, once the pieces are completed they will be displayed in the Blackburn Park pavilion until the event closes. The winning pieces will then be on display at City Hall. Art supplies and paper will be provided, but feel free to bring your own easel and canvas if you wish, and let the natural surroundings inspire you.

Indoor Movie Night

DATE: Friday, Nov. 15

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Lynwood Gym

PRICE: Free admission and popcorn

DETAILS: Bring air mattresses, sleeping bags, blankets, and lawn chairs for the gym floor and watch a free screening of "How to Train Your Dragon."

Light Up Brookhaven

DATE: Friday, Dec. 6

TIME: 6:30-9 p.m.

LOCATION: Blackburn Park

DETAILS: This free event features special musical performances, visits with Santa, holiday crafts, Toys for Tots collection box, hot chocolate sale, food trucks, holiday cartoons, and Christmas tree and Hanukkah display lighting.

For updated calendar and event information, visit

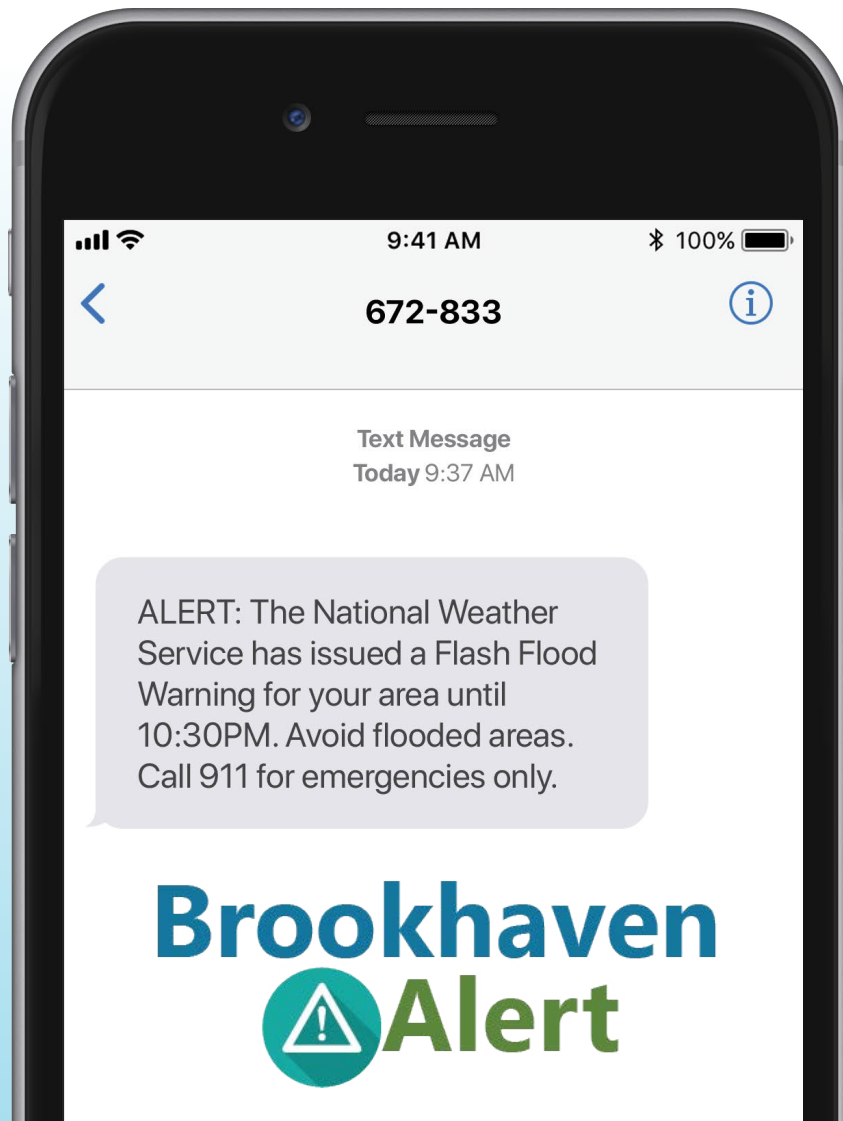
www.BrookhavenGA.gov/Calendar



2018 Paint the Park

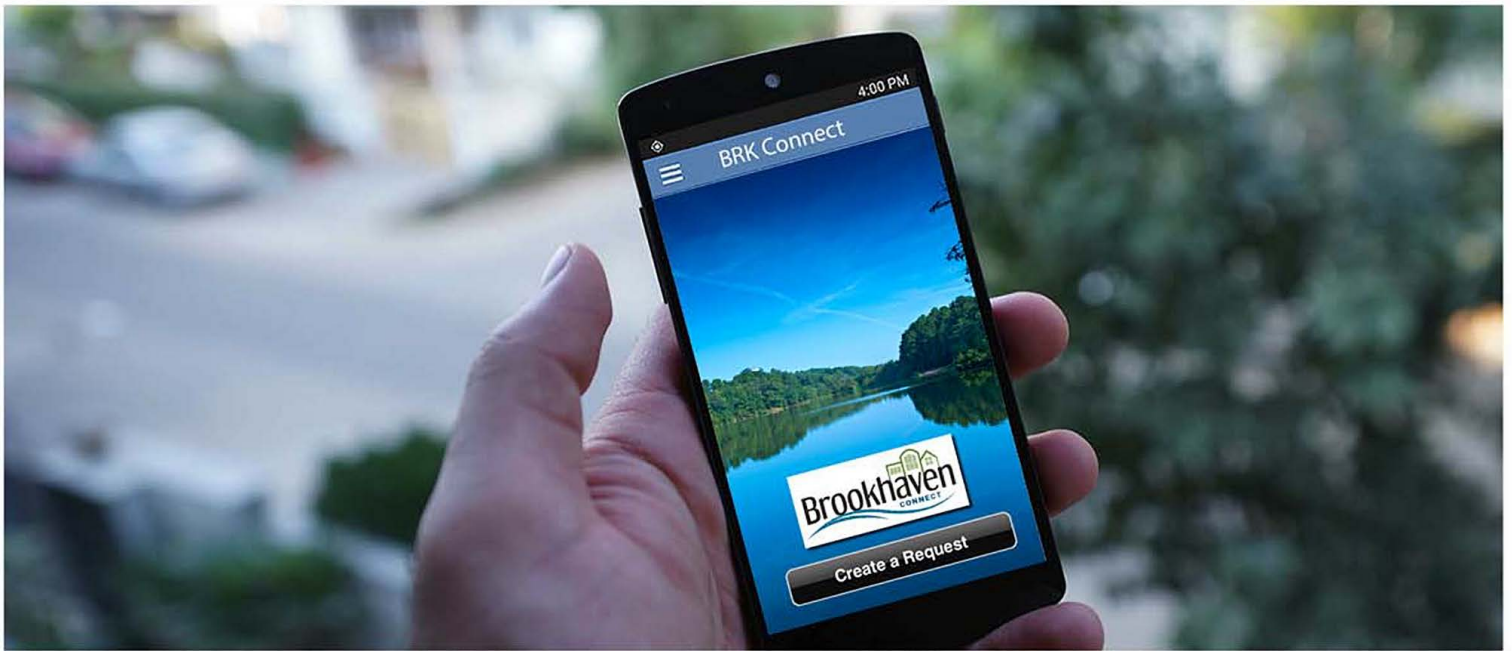
Always Be Notified.

Alerts and notifications help inform you on weather, traffic, and other emergencies in your community. When you opt-in for alerts, you will have the option to choose the kind of notifications you prefer to receive.



Sign up at www.BrookhavenGA.gov/BrookhavenAlert

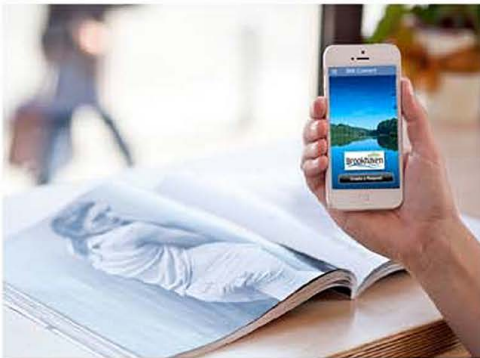
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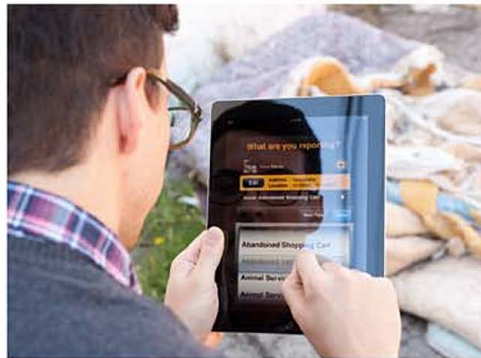
BROOKHAVEN, GA

Brookhaven Connect

EFFORTLESS CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT



Real-time Updates



Simple Reporting



Access Anywhere

The City of Brookhaven is excited to provide residents improved access to issue reporting and other helpful city information. Visit the city's website or search for 'Brookhaven Connect' in your app store to download today.