

History in the Path of Growth

CCHA has taken an active role in efforts to preserve Chatham's architectural heritage and history. These efforts have taken a number of forms and have met with considerable success.

The rapid growth of Chatham County since the mid-1990s has put many historical structures and sites in the path of "progress." An ongoing project of CCHA is to bring these historical structures and sites to the attention of all involved in the county's rapid growth and development so that informed decisions can be made about their preservation.



Since 1998 Chatham County's subdivision ordinance has required developers to contact CCHA when either a structure 50 years old or older or a cemetery is on the property to be subdivided. Once notified, CCHA volunteers, visit the property to examine and document all evidence of human occupation, and then research any structures of potential historical interest. A CCHA representative attends Planning Department work sessions and Planning Board meetings to monitor new developments and, when

appropriate, lobby for the preservation of some structures, the recycling of historical materials from others, and the documentation of those slated for destruction. CCHA's involvement has been well-received by many developers, who realize that the area's interesting history can be a valuable selling point.

In an important step toward educating developers, attorneys, and others involved in the subdivision process, CCHA developed the brochure, [*Historical Preservation and Development: A Guide for Developers*](#). The goal of this publication is to make developers aware of existing regulations regarding cemeteries and historic structures and to encourage them to recognize the value of Chatham's historic features. The document is available on the county website, and CCHA representatives continue to work closely with the county Planning Department staff to see that historic structures are preserved when appropriate and are documented when preservation is not an option.



County residents can assist with this effort by letting CCHA know about any old structures—houses, sheds, barns, walls, wells, or other man-made creations—or gravesites—that exist on land slated for development or that are deteriorating and should be documented.