

Chattahoochee Hills Charter School

The case for building a sustainable school in Chattahoochee Hills

We love living in Chattahoochee Hills, but we've got our son's future to think about.

We're concerned over the future of public education, and with the cost of private schools on the rise, we may have to consider leaving the community to find a better option.

~ Adria Whitford, Chatt Hills Resident



Adria, Ty & Baby Braeden Whitford

It's an age old problem. Stay in the community you love, or move to a better school district. Except now, even better school districts are in flux. As the economy forces deep cuts, thousands of teachers will lose their jobs, smaller schools will close, and programs such as art, music, and physical education will vanish from the classrooms, perhaps forever.

While school boards nationwide are going back to the drawing board to create a leaner education model, many communities, unwilling to settle for less, are building sustainable schools that offer a more robust education, designed in part by the community. They are building charter schools.

Charter schools are primary or secondary schools in the United States that receive public money, and like other schools, may also receive private donations. But they have been freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, which are set forth in each school's charter.

The first charters opened in the late 1980s when Philadelphia started a number of schools-within-schools and called them "charters." In 1991, Minnesota passed the first charter school law, with California following suit in 1992. By 1995, 19 states had signed laws allowing for the creation of charter schools, and by 2003 that number increased to 40 states.

As of 2010, the Georgia Department of Education lists 121 charter schools in Georgia, with 12 in Fulton County. Yet all of those schools remain out of reach for children in south Fulton, an area traditionally underserved. Residents in Chattahoochee Hills have come together to change that by building the first sustainable charter school in south Fulton that will serve as a model for a future charter school network that will support the area's projected growth.

Examining the need: A look at the past and the future

In the early development of the area that is now Chattahoochee Hills (1828-1860), five communities formed at major crossroads to serve the nearby farming communities in Campbell County and each supported a school. In 1932, following the consolidation of Campbell, Fulton, and Milton Counties, Fulton County built a new elementary school in the Rico Community, which served grades 1-7. Many locals who attended the school have said that Rico Elementary was a charter school before its time. With a small student population of 60 students taught by teachers that lived in the community, the students received an excellent education, grounded in the core values of the community. The school closed in 1980 due to consolidation, leaving no public schools within the boundaries of Chattahoochee Hills and students were transferred to Palmetto and Fairburn.

Today, Chattahoochee Hills is a city that includes 33,000 acres of land and an estimated population of 2,316, making it the lowest density city in metro Atlanta. However, careful planning for the future must be considered due to pending development. Chattahoochee Hills is mostly zoned for agricultural, which allows for one house per acre. With 33,000 acres and an average of 2.6 people per household in south Fulton, the potential population could reach 85,800, including approximately 20,000 children under the age of 18 (using Fulton County metrics).

While the timing of development is uncertain, it is imminent. The following developments have been approved and many are already under construction.

Development	Status	Units Planned
Serenbe	Under construction, currently 120+ units	1,000
Bear Creek	Under construction, site prepared , no units built yet	250
Petersburg Rd Dev	Site prepared, no units built yet	350
Friendship Village	Site work to begin in 2011	5,981
Foxhall Village	Plans under review by Palmetto	4,600
Foxhall Farms	Plans approved by Chattahoochee Hills	92 units
Chattahoochee Hills Village	Plans in development	10,000-15,000
Total projected new units		22,273

If south Fulton is going to meet the needs of its residents today—and the needs of its anticipated future population of 85,000—it needs a viable solution for quality education; a solution it can grow, maintain, and sustain through community partnerships. That solution is to create a network of charter schools, with Chattahoochee Hills Charter School serving as a replicable model.

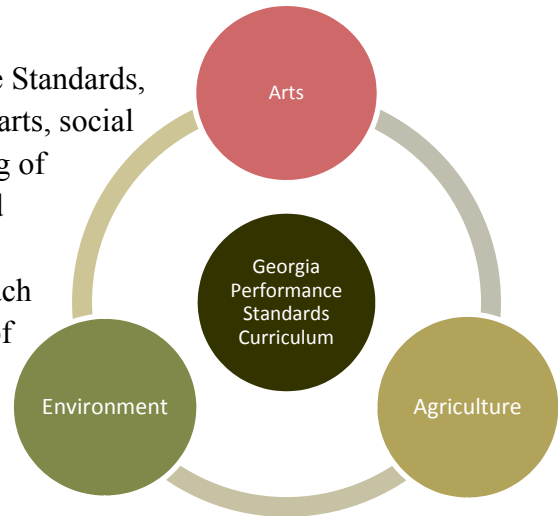
Chattahoochee Hills Charter School: A school built on community values

CHCS will meet the education needs of students in this community by providing a charter school as a public school choice, offering a curriculum that integrates traditional education with community values such as the arts, agriculture, and the environment; and preparing for future growth by building a community-based charter school now, that can be replicated in a future charter school network.

A Nature-Based Curriculum

The CHCS curriculum is based on Georgia Performance Standards, which sets criteria for teaching math, science, language arts, social studies, and physical education. It integrates the teaching of these subjects by using a multidisciplinary approach and multicultural themes: the arts, agriculture, and the environment. At its core, the CHCS instructional approach is not a subtraction of but a simultaneous reorientation of and addition to the Georgia Performance Standards.

Through this integrative model, CHCS will cultivate the following attributes:



- **High academic achievement** by creating an environment that supports individual learning styles and stimulates the imagination and creativity of students
- **High standard of ethics and good character** by providing consistent examples of meaningful relationships, positive discipline, and mentorship
- **Physical health and well-being** by integrating a dynamic health program into the school curriculum that will include a meal program that emphasizes fresh, local, and organic food
- **Strong commitment to social responsibility** through an overarching focus in both the curriculum and school ethos of civic engagement and appreciation of diversity in communities
- **Dedication to environmental stewardship** through the emphasis on learning through the lens of natural processes that promotes a sense of wonder about the world and nurtures students

CHCS Governance

The school's governance is founded on the effective and proven stewardship and the values that led to the founding of Chattahoochee Hills, combining deep knowledge of issues of sustainability with a successful track record of transforming challenging areas such as land and resource use and political and community structure. The legal entity that will organize and/or operate the school is Chattahoochee Hills Charter School, Inc., a Georgia not-for-profit corporation.

The school's governing board will consist of seven voting members and the principal as a nonvoting member. The governing board will always contain at least two but no more than three parents of current students at the school.

Specifically, the governing board will have the following responsibilities:

1. Establishing general policies of the school and monitoring the implementation of these policies by the principal and/or duly constituted committees
2. Ensuring that the activities of the school are in full alignment with the mission of the school
3. Addressing property grievances against the school from teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders
4. Approving, adopting and monitoring the school's annual budget and employee salaries, including teacher salaries
5. Receiving funds for the operation of the school in accordance with the charter school laws
6. Soliciting grants and donations consistent with the mission of the school
7. Appointing and evaluating the principal
8. Complying with the annual reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. 20-2-2067.1(c)
9. Other responsibilities described in the articles of incorporation and the bylaws, to ensure the proper functioning of the school

The governing board will create and appoint an advisory board to provide advice and counsel to the board, as the board deems necessary, and will reflect, to the extent practical and possible, all diverse interests in the school (e.g. community members, staff, parents). The advisory board will consist of no more than 40 people. It is anticipated that by implementing and utilizing an advisory board composed of diverse experts throughout local communities, the school will generate a deep reserve of potential governing board members ensuring consistent and solid governance.

CHCS Governing Board

John Reid – Chairman

John has devoted much of the last 20 years of his 36-year career to education. He has led five start-up businesses, three of which were in education, and has led two companies dedicated to building national school systems where he assembled a team of educational professionals who successfully built and operated more than 60 charter schools. John is currently Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility for the Coca-Cola Company. Prior to this assignment, he has served as the Global Director of Coca-Cola University; the Chief Environmental Officer of Coca-Cola; the Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Atlanta; Assistant Secretary for Education of New York State, and Deputy Director of State Operations of New York State. John is a graduate of MIT and Brandeis University.

Bonnie Goode

Bonnie Melear Goode is a fifth generation resident of the Rico community of Chattahoochee Hills. She is a retired school teacher with 33 years of experience working in her own community at Western High School, Campbell High School, Palmetto High School, and Creekside High School. Bonnie holds a B.S. in Education and a Masters of Business Education from the University of Georgia.

Shamona Harrell

Shamona is a certified school counselor with six years experience teaching in the public school systems of Miami Dade County and Fulton County. She is a dedicated community leader and currently serves on the Cedar Gove Community Association Board of Directors and as its education chair.

Willie J. Lovett, Jr.

Willie currently serves as the Director of the Fulton County Child Attorney's Office. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Lovett served as Deputy County Attorney for the Fulton County Attorney's Office. Willie is a graduate of Yale University, Harvard Law School, and Emory Law School. He currently serves as Immediate Past President of the Gate City Bar Association.

Lindsey Mosby

Lindsey has 10 years experience in organizational management, with a focus on using strategy and design to bring change and innovation to businesses. She was instrumental in helping the Chattahoochee Hills community develop its vision. Lindsey holds a B.A. in English from University of Georgia and a M.S. in information design from Georgia Tech.

Jon Neiditz

Jon is a lawyer, consultant, and community leader with a focus on cost-effective solutions to complex problems and on establishing innovative relationships of trust and transparency. He is a partner in Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough's Atlanta office and founder of the firm's Information Management Practice. He is a graduate of Yale Law School and Dartmouth College.

Monica Olsen

Monica is an 18-year veteran of media strategy, public relations and brand marketing, and a partner in the media consulting firm BrandCottage. Monica has a deep knowledge of communications and a keen ability to assess situations quickly, listen carefully, and above all, reach out to others.

Advisory Board

- Golden Anderson, Founder and CEO of Fulton Leadership Academy
- Lisa Babb, Professor of Graphic Design, SCAD Atlanta
- Carl Bouckaert, Co owner of Beaulieu Carpet and major land owner in Chattahoochee Hills
- Judy Henderson, Founder of Community Brickworks
- Steve Hurwitz, CHCS Planning Committee, Development Chair
- Russ Kiefer, CHCS Planning Committee, Planning Chair
- Chip Kohlweiler, HCS Planning Committee, Finance Chair. Chief Financial Officer for CHCS
- Evan McGown, Executive Director, Institute for Wild Intelligence
- Steve Nygren, CHCS Planning Committee, Facilities Chair. Managing Partner of Serenbe
- Stacy Patton, Environmental Coordinator for Minerva Development
- Christina Pardue, CHCS Planning Committee, Applications Committee Co-Chair
- Rodney Peek, Chattahoochee Hills City Council Representative, District 5
- Waynette Peek, Founder of Race for Riley, a fundraising event for Mitochondrial Disease
- Jennifer Rippner, CHCS Planning Committee, Technical Review Committee
- Laurie Searle, CHCS Planning Committee, Application Chair
- David Shaginaw, Main Street Academy Founder
- Shelton Stanfill, Former President and CEO, Woodruff Arts Center
- Tamara Toth, CHCS Planning Committee, Outreach Committee
- Darla Vetter, CHCS Planning Committee, Education Committee
- Maribeth Wansley, Executive Director, Cochran Mill Nature Center

The CHCS Building Project: An eco-friendly modular concept

In January 2010, CHCS invited the community to attend a charrette led by the renowned global architectural firm Helmuth, Obata and Kassabum (HOK) to begin planning the charter school's facility. The community placed a high priority on designing a facility that was environmentally friendly, supported the nature-based curriculum and encouraged creativity, and was scalable so it could start small and grow to meet future enrollment needs. HOK designed a concept that exceeded the community's expectations.

The concept drawing on the following page illustrates the CHCS school campus. The design features a series of modular buildings for classrooms, community, office, and support. In this way, the school can start small and add classrooms as enrollment increases.

The buildings are designed simply, yet efficiently. Classrooms offer open space that can be used in a variety of configurations to support learning and encourage creativity, and also include the necessities such as storage, restrooms, and mechanical space. Community, office, and support space can be configured to support multiple purposes. The buildings will be connected through a series of trails, offering children and staff ample opportunities to connect with nature.

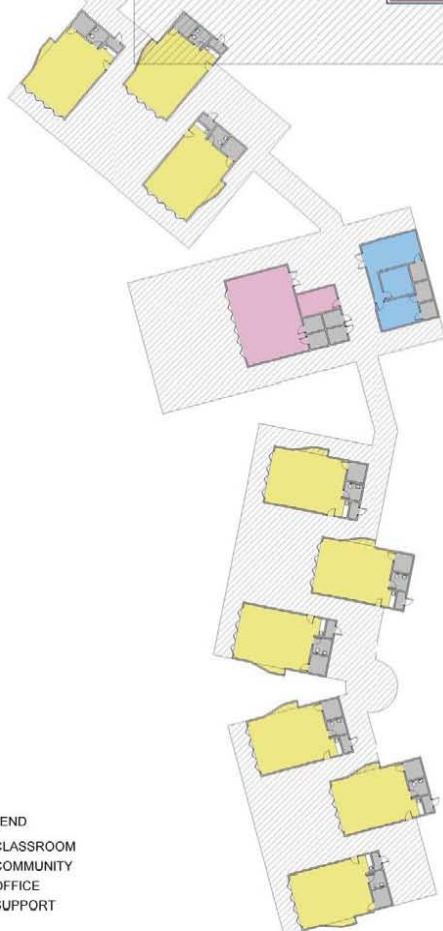
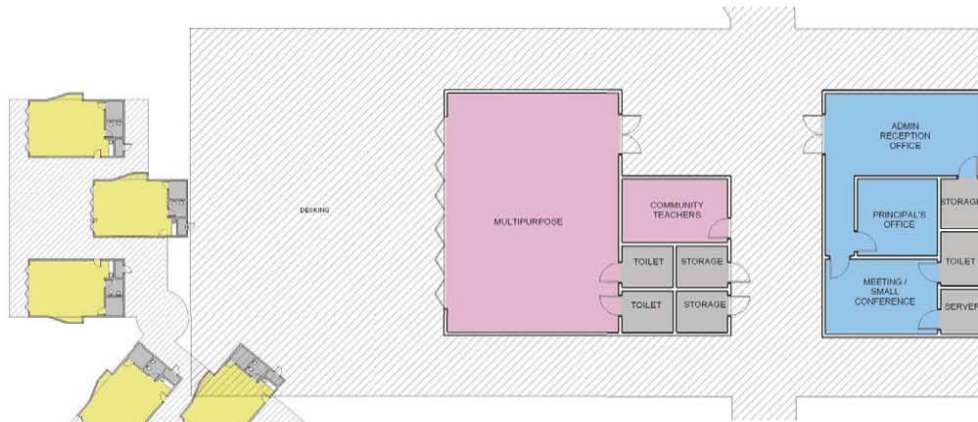
The facilities are designed to achieve the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating. LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance across all the metrics that matter most: energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

But most importantly, the school's design reinforces the nature-based curriculum. Students can learn first-hand about environmental stewardship by experiencing the many eco-friendly features of the school including:

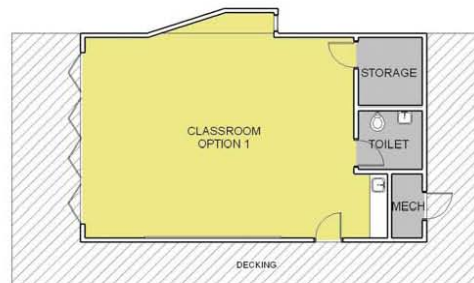
- Sustainable Sites – foster natural systems of soil, air, vegetation, water, and wildlife
- Water Efficiency – rainwater collection / reuse/ living machine
- Energy and Atmosphere – solar, geothermal, light harvesting, orientation, solar tubes, skylight, clerestory
- Materials and Resources – recycled and recyclable materials, and local materials
- Indoor Environmental Quality – natural ventilation, low VOC materials

CHCS has created a strategic fundraising plan to raise the estimated \$3.5 million needed to build the school. In the first few months, it raised more than \$800,000 in pledges, funds, and in-kind donations. Once the goal of \$3.5 million is reached, the second phase of the fundraising plan will create funds to sustain the on-going operation of the school.

OPTION 1 PLAN



- LEGEND
- CLASSROOM
 - COMMUNITY
 - OFFICE
 - SUPPORT



Chattahoochee Hill Country Charter School

APRIL 23 2010

