CHATHAM
County Line
where all voices are heard
WWW.CHATHAMCOUNTYLINE.ORG

vol. 6, issue 8 FREE ~ GRATIS October 2008

FOCUS: **POLITICS**

◀ **Market savvy.** Page 11

Only online at...
www.chathamcountyline.org
- Candidate endorsements
- Chatham candidates make their pitches
- Answers to League of Women Voters questionnaire

Go 'green' to grow Chatham jobs

By Randy Voller

In an article by Paul Davidson of USA Today published on July 28, he writes "since May, computer powerhouses Intel (INTC), IBM (IBM) and National Semiconductor (NSM) have barreled into solar energy, joining hundreds of fellow technology mainstays. Virtually every chipmaker is weighing a solar play" and according to Rhone Resch, head of the Solar Energy Industries Association, "semiconductor companies are rushing into the solar power business faster than a Pentium-driven computer, promising to turn a niche form of renewable energy into a mass-market product."

Why is this important to Chatham County? Jobs. Gartner analyst Jim Hines says that these firms are drawn by "solar's 40 percent annual growth."

As the Mayor of Pittsboro and a board member and former vice-chair of the Chatham Economic Development Corporation (EDC), as well as a member of the N.C. Association of Realtors (NCAR), and the N.C. Homebuilders Association (NCHBA), I have been inundated with powerful messages on alternative energy and sustainable green business and building practices from many different sources. Organizations as diverse as the North Carolina Homebuilders Association (NCHBA) and the Sierra Club are all thinking green. We may not all be on the same page, but assuredly we are in the same book. That is progress.

How do we adapt to the changing climate and new business conditions? Our regional Homebuilders Association (HBA) is taking the lead by researching, promoting, and certifying "green building" practices and Chatham County is moving toward LEED certified construction for its buildings.

Government leaders realize that a major component of the effort will be effective stimulus from the federal and state level to ensure that we incubate and grow this vital industry. Jobs created by and affiliated with alternative energy and green building can stay local and will payoff now and well into the future.

Over two and a half years ago I presented our town board a resolution, which it passed, endorsing the green energy forum held in Pittsboro and our leaders began to understand the wisdom of encouraging and evaluating a variety of alternative energy solutions and becoming more energy efficient.

Lt. Governor and Gubernatorial candidate Bev Perdue, Speaker of the House Joe Hackney, Senator Bob Atwater, Congressman David Price and Bob Etheridge, and local candidates for County Commissioner Mike Cross and Sally Kost are all committed to these ideas.

Recently, Chatham County's EDC has endorsed a "Strategic Plan" from the Center for Competitive Economies at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina. One of the important areas of business development that we intend to encourage will be green energy and sustainable energy production such as solar and biodiesel production. Expanding our foothold in these industries will give Chatham County a head start to win this race to the future.

To that end, Chatham's Board of Commissioners, the EDC leadership, and the leadership of Goldston, Pittsboro, and Siler City will be meeting together on

GO GREEN continued on page **7.**

Hispanic vote on the rise

By Luis Melodelgado and Nora Haenn

In 2006, Chatham County had just 209 registered Hispanic voters, according to the NC Board of Elections. Overall, Hispanics account for 2 percent of North Carolina's eligible voters. These numbers, however small, may portend significant changes. The national picture describes what may be in store for Chatham County and why the issue of Hispanic votes is a complex one.

> Hispanics make up 9% of the national electorate & 2% of the state's eligible voters.

Hispanics now make up 9 percent of the U.S. electorate. Hispanic votes tend to cluster in a few states, like California (where 23 percent of eligible voters are Hispanic) and Texas (where they equal 25 percent of the electorate). At the same time, Hispanic populations are growing fast in some swing states: Colorado, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and here in North Carolina. Hispanic issues in these places quickly become national issues when presidential hopefuls seek electoral votes.

Hispanic voters have a reputation for backing Democratic candidates, but a closer look shows that Hispanics are not reliable partisans. In the last few elections, two-thirds of Hispanic voters supported the Democrats. But, in 2004, George W. Bush received 44 percent of the Hispanic vote. That year, a similar percentage backed Republican Senators from Texas and Arizona.

The surprising stands Hispanics take on the issues also argues against the idea of this as a homogenous, predictable voting bloc. Despite the prevalence of Spanish in Arizona, recently, 48 percent of the Hispanic voters there supported a law making English that state's official language. This year, a nation-wide poll shows Hispanic voters listing education, the cost

HISPANIC VOTE continued on page **16.**

Briar Chapel opens to the public

By Julian Sereno

Briar Chapel has arrived. Ten years after the plans were first introduced and after subsequently surviving more perils than Pauline, Briar Chapel held its media grand opening Thursday morning, September 25. It invited the public on Saturday, September 27. Mitch Barron, who took the helm at Briar Chapel for Newland Communities in November 2002, said that the controversies, the obstacles and even the defeat of the first plans by the Chatham Board of Commissioners earlier in 2002 helped Briar Chapel in the long run.

"It will be much better," he said. "The long application process made it become much more green ... it will be a more sustainable community."

It is also coming on line during the worst housing slump in decades, with Wall Street reeling, banks failing and merging and credit evaporating. Barron looks at it as a temporary problem. "It will return," he said of the housing economy. "It always does."

Briar Chapel, which has a Chapel Hill address, encompasses 1,589 acres and, over the next five to 10 years, will feature 2,400 homes, two schools, a marketplace with 200,000 square feet of retail space and 270,000 square feet of office space, as well as walking trails, a 25-mile mountain bike trail, nature reserves,

Ceramic art along Briar Chapel's entry helps evoke the drive up to Asheville's Biltmore House.
PHOTO BY JULIAN SERENO

shelters and public art. The drive from U.S. 15-501 to the center of the development is nearly two miles long, and passes trails and bridges, naturalized landscaping and public art. It was inspired by the drive at the Biltmore House in Asheville.

When Barron addressed the press gathering in the 7,500-square-foot house that is used as an information center, he talked about the 900 acres that has been set aside for parks, about the trails, and about the use of the most up-to-date green building practices. He talked about donating acreage for schools: Woods Charter School, which

BRIAR CHAPEL continued on page **7.**

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
CHAPEL HILL, NC
PERMIT #251

*****ECRWSS*****
Postal Customer
Rural Route Boxholder