

EDITORIAL

At least make the walls aesthetically pleasing

Forest Hill Road is the byway that keeps on giving — and that 's not meant as a compliment. As part of the 1994 Roads Improvement Program it has been a constant headache for opponents and proponents for its constantly shifting purpose and design. Nineteen years ago when plans for the road first raised the hackles of residents, it still has the power to illicit disdain — and for some — rage.

There have been lawsuits, injunctions, demonstrations and heated words. The reason for the expansion of Forest Hill along with Park Street and Log Cabin Drive, the so-called, Northwest Parkway — a more direct route to the Macon Mall — has disappeared. After years of delay and who knows how many design changes, construction of “improvements” on Forest Hill Road finally got underway in 2014.

Lindsay Holliday, who sought the injunction to keep the Georgia Department of Transportation from working on the road said GDOT's premise “to improve safety and operational efficiency on the road” wasn't supported by data. It is unfortunate, but GDOT has a habit of making the data say what it wants it to say. Holliday also opposed the removal of the tree canopy.

Holliday eventually lost that battle, but he's still fighting as construction swallows up Forest Hill. His latest gripe are three retaining walls between Green Oak Terrace and North Laura Ann Place. Two of the walls have what Holliday calls a “stone textured surface.” They are actually called “parapet walls.” However, one wall, the one in the middle, is just a smooth surfaced concrete wall that doesn't match the other two.

Holliday thinks the smooth wall will attract graffiti artist and that the parapet walls do not. We don't buy that logic. Spray paint sticks to either surface. Where Holliday makes his point is consistency of appearance. Aesthetics are important. It is not an unheard of concept. It's what ties an area together. Forest Hill Road from Forsyth Road to Northside Drive is only 2.8 miles. It would seem natural to try and make the “improvements” match and that is what the contractors should do.

The next phases of the project will draw even more angst. An accident Thursday morning at Forest Hill and Ridge Avenue turned both streets into a one lane roads. We can only imagine what's going to happen when the orange barrels move northwest.