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Apex Herald Staff Reflects Over 2007

By [Shawn Daley](#)

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Editor

As sure as Christmas means good will, gifts and flying reindeer, New Year's is a time for football, parties and resolutions.

Oh, yeah ... and lists. Lots of lists.

Many folks become determined to put the events of the past 12 months into some semblance of order at the dawn of a new year. Slapping a number in front of something and throwing it onto a Top Ten list seems the quickest and easiest way to achieve that goal.

Proving that we aren't above the quick and easy approach, the editorial staff of The Apex Herald has compiled a list of the top local stories from 2007.

There were certainly plenty of newsworthy events over the last year. Booming development, suffering sheep, a crippling drought, and irate parents were all in the spotlight at one time or another.

Other headliners included EQ, New Hill residents, the Apex art community and two state championship teams at Apex High.

Instead of offering a Top Ten list we decided to do something a little different. In honor of Money Magazine ranking Apex the 14th best place to live in the nation, we are listing the Top 14 stories of 2007.

If you happen to disagree with our choices feel free to include us on your Top Ten Worst Lists of 2007. We won't mind. After all, we know year-ending lists don't mean a whole lot anyway.

14. Are they here yet? After years of rumors, meetings and complaints it seems Wal-Mart is finally coming to town. The store will anchor a shopping center near the intersection NC 55 and U.S. 1. Wal-Mart ends up in practically every town so we weren't too enthused about putting this on the list. But it's a topic that seems to raise a lot of emotion in people. You either love 'em or hate 'em.

13. We pay, they don't. The good news is that the I-540 Outer Loop will be completed. The bad news is we are going to pay for it. While motorists in the rest of Wake County use I-540

for free the section in this part of the county is tabbed to become a toll road. Completion is tentatively scheduled for 2011.

12. Double trouble. In May, Apex High won the state championship in lacrosse and became the first girls' team to win a state title in school history. One week later, the girls' soccer team duplicated the achievement by capturing the state championship. It was a pretty good year to be a Lady Cougar.

11. On the rise. The art community in Apex just keeps growing. The Apex Arts Council hosted its first Salem Street Arts Festival in October and attracted more than 3,000 people to the downtown area. Also in October, Robert "Rock" Kershaw was hired as the cultural arts center coordinator. The center is set to open Jan. 10.

10. Apathy or satisfaction? In a town of over 30,000 residents not one person chose to challenge incumbents Mayor Keith Weatherly and councilmen Bryan Gossage and Bill Jensen in this year's election. Either residents are very pleased with the job their elected officials are doing or they really don't care.

9. Difficult to understand. The town made national news in a bad way last March when authorities removed 80 sheep from a downtown property. Thirty of the animals were in such poor condition they had to be euthanized. The owner, David Watts, was charged with animal cruelty and eventually received a suspended 45-day sentence, three years of probation and was ordered to pay less than \$2,500 in fines and restitution.

8. Don't let the door hit you on the way out. In October, a little over one year after its hazardous waste facility caught fire and forced the evacuation of thousands of Apex residents, EQ finally left town. The NC Division of Waste Management came down hard on the company by forcing it to give up its permit to operate the facility and levying a \$400,000 fine. EQ also had to pay the town more than \$200,000 for costs associated with the fire.

7. Bring on the rain. While Apex hasn't been hit as hard as other area communities the drought is still being felt in town. Elected officials tightened water restrictions in mid-October in an effort to conserve water.

6. Fleeting moment of victory. A group of parents upset with the Wake County Public School System took its battle to court and came away victorious in May. The group Wake Cares was hoping to stop WCPSS from implementing mandatory year-round calendars at local schools. Following the ruling, WCPSS made the year-round schools "voluntary" and by early July kids were headed back to school.

5. School daze. As a result of so many parents becoming upset and disillusioned with WCPSS, a new private school is scheduled to open in town next fall. The Thales Academy will begin as an elementary school but organizers have plans to eventually include a middle school and high school.

4. All quiet on the sewage front. When Cary and Apex set a plan into motion to build a regional sewage plant in the middle of New Hill it seemed like nothing could stop them. But the residents of New Hill fought back and have stalled the project. The delay could have a major impact on additional development in town as sewage capacity begins to dwindle.

3. Just keep building. In August, town council approved Trinity, a 1,071-acre mixed-use development that will take 10 years to complete. The development, which will be located at

the future site of I-540 near US 1 and NC 55, could have as many as 4,000 residential units upon completion along with retail shops, business space and up to three schools.

2. As if Trinity wasn't enough. After five years of talking about it the town is finally getting a developer to build Trackage near town hall. Sure, it's been given a more marketable name of "Villages of Apex" but it's still the same ol' Trackage to us. Nearly 1,300 residential units along with offices, stores, restaurants and a school will be plunked down on 170 acres of land near downtown.

1. Aren't you glad you live here? Money Magazine told people all over the nation in July what local residents have known for a long time that Apex is a great place to live. The town was ranked 14th in the magazine's 100 Best Places in America to Live (Look, it's another list!). This year's list focused on towns that had populations under 50,000 and offered economic opportunities, good schools, safe streets, things to do and a sense of community. Congratulations, Apex. You deserve it.