

Smoke Signal Aug, 2008 SUBJECT FILE

Greenspace in Our Area

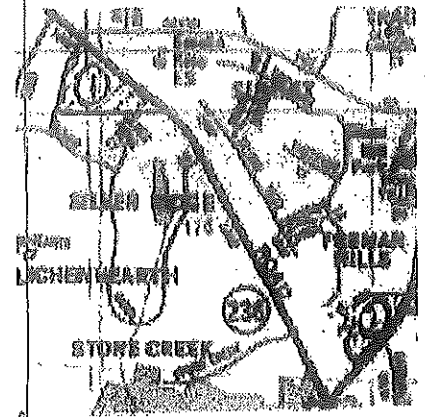
by Gene Wise

Tucker Nature Preserve is 8.86 acres on Lawrenceville Hwy. across the highway from Cofer Crossing between LaVista Rd. and Old Norcross-Tucker Rd. It is already marked with a sign. No vehicles are allowed on the property and it is planned to have walking paths and marking identifying different types of trees, flora and fauna. Tucker Civic Association is working with DeKalb Recreation. This was purchased from Commissioner Lou Walker's allocation of funds from the 2002 Bond issue of 125 million dollars.

Area 1 on the sketch, is 10.54 acres directly across Hugh Howell Rd. from Smoke Rise Elementary property and SRCA is working with DeKalb County in retaining a landscape architect for passive recreation plans. Public funds are allocated for paying for the planning but none set aside for the actual work. Consideration is being given to recruiting volunteers from the community, garden clubs, scouts or others to carry out the architect's recommendation and the plans have been completed and accepted by the community. This was purchased from Commissioner Boyer's allocation of Bond funds.

Area 2 is 5.6 acres on Lilburn-Stone Mountain Road, from behind Commercial properties on Hugh Howell to opposite Old Stone Mountain Rd. This also is planned to be used for passive recreation, with no schedule yet established. This was purchased from Comm. Boyer's allocation of Bond funds.

Note: Information has been recently circulated that these properties were bought to avoid more retail development in our community, which might be an admirable situation, but the truth is their topography and the unavailability of sanitary sewer lines make them impractical if not impossible to develop as commercial properties. These purchases only enable the community to be certain anything done on them will be for the community's best interest-so long as we stay alert and do not allow the government itself to put anything offensive on them.



parcel 1 - 10.54 Ac
parcel 2 - 5.6 Ac.

Tucker Nature Preserve

Dedicated *Tucker Times*
Aug, 2004



Left to right: Marvin Billups (in straw hat), Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation; Lou Walker, DeKalb County Commissioner; John Drake, DeKalb Parks & Recreation; Mark Pozner, chairman of Citizen Advisory Committee; a community participant; and DeKalb County CEO Vernon Jones.

DeKalb County Commission CEO, Verrion Jones and Commissioner Lou Walker unveiled the Tucker Nature Preserve located at 4408 & 4422 Lawrenceville Highway in Tucker, across from the Cofer Crossing Shopping Mall.

The Tucker Nature Preserve, located in the heart of Tucker, is one of a number of sites that have been acquired with the park bond fund which affirms the vision of saving the precious natural resources of DeKalb County.

CEO Jones said the unveiling of this site will put into motion a chain of events that will include the hiring of a consultant to conduct a site analysis of the preserve, community input meeting and the design of the preserve that will include a nature trail for leisure and educational use.

Since 2001, the county has purchased over 2000 acres of land in the effort to preserve green space. This track of land is especially important because there are only 2.7 acres of green space per 1000 citizens in this

Continued on page 7

FOR THE TUCKER NATURE PRESERVE

Nature Preserve, continued from page 1

area while the county average is 8.4 acres per 1000 citizens.

Commissioner Lou Walker thanked Mark Pozner, a community leader, for convincing him that this land is important as a preserve. This piece of property, along with 3 other areas that he has worked on in his district, will now forever be owned by the DeKalb County citizens.

Pozner, the community member who headed the Citizen Advisory Committee, thanked all those members of the community that have been involved and also thanked the more than 85 members of the community who attended a meeting in January that set the direction for this project.

Pozner related that this nine-acre site has a very unique tree that is actually four trees that have grown from one root system, located at the site where Jackson Creek springs from the earth. He said that this site is also the habitat of a countless number of unique flora, most of which has not yet been cataloged but does include a variety of orchids, five different types of fern and much more.

In addition to the flora, a variety of wildlife are thriving on the property, and the Tucker Nature Preserve will protect this natural old growth environment.

Another unique feature of this track of land, said Pozner, is that the western edge is actually a mini-continental divide, which means the water located to the west of this line has a natural flow towards the Gulf of Mexico while the water on the east side of this line naturally flows toward the Atlantic Ocean.

—Steve Liuzza

DeKalb NEIGHBOR 7-21-04

■ NATURE PRESERVE UNVEILED: DeKalb Chief Executive Officer Vernon Jones and District 7 Commissioner Lou Walker last week officially dedicated the Tucker Nature Preserve. The 9-acre site in the Tucker community contains



Lou Walker



Vernon Jones

old-growth hardwoods and pines and also is the site of the headwaters of Jackson Creek. The area has a large variety of species of birds, flora and other wildlife in sight of a major shopping center and highly traveled Lawrenceville Highway.

DeKalb County plans to improve access to the nature preserve, develop a nature trail for leisure and educational use and improve the habitat for animals and birds.

6/26/04

Green space: State reclaims funding not spent by deadline

01/10/01
SUBJECT FILE

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required to buy more time. "It wasn't for lack of trying," Gardiner said.

Walton County officials were confused about the June 30 deadline and had to return \$225,000 — half their grant. "We missed it," said Mike Martin, the county's planning and development director.

Clay Long, an Atlanta attorney appointed by Barnes to lead the Georgia Community Greenspace Commission, which doled out the funds, said spending the money "took longer than we had hoped. Maybe we were just overly optimistic."

But with the state facing a third year of budget cuts, Long, who is also leading Gov. Sonny Perdue's green space task force, said leaving money on the table wasn't an option.

"Particularly in these times, there are a lot of serious needs for money," Long said. "Just to have it sit there will only be tolerated for so long."

DeKalb County, which received more state money for green space than any other Georgia jurisdiction, still has more than half its \$6.1 million grant to spend by Aug. 31.

No easy task

Dan Magee, a DeKalb resident serving on a county advisory committee for parks and green space, said he's frustrated that it has taken so long to spend the money.

"This is a county that's already overly built up," Magee said. "We can't afford not to spend every available dollar for green space."

DeKalb officials say they still can meet their deadline. The county recently bought 40 acres near North DeKalb Mall for \$1.1 million and has 38 acres elsewhere under contract, said Susan Hood, director of the county's parks and green space program.

"You would be surprised how difficult it is to acquire

property," Hood said.

DeKalb officials ran into one seller who was out of the country and difficult to reach, and others who wanted more than their properties were appraised for. One negotiation, which took more than a year, ended when the south DeKalb site failed the environmental assessment for reasons Hood would not disclose.

"I just went on and on," she said.

Part of the problem, Hood said, is that DeKalb also has been busy buying green space with the \$125 million county bond money approved by county voters in 2001. Since March, the county has spent \$60 million and acquired more than 2,000 acres of green space, she said.

Gwinnett County has been similarly blessed, with faster results. Since 1998, the county has spent \$57 million on more than 4,650 acres for hiking, bicycling and fishing. Most of the money came from a new 1 percent sales tax. Gwinnett got \$54 million from the state, which it spent almost as soon as it came in 2001 and 2002.

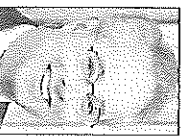
"We were ready for it when it came in," said Phil Hoskins, director of Gwinnett's Department of Community Services. "We were already involved in an aggressive green space program."

One of the first acquisitions with state money was an old 12-acre farm on the Alcoy River near Lawrenceville, where a historic gristmill still stands. The county paid \$350,000 for it, Hoskins said.

Cobb got busy

Cobb County Commission Chairman Sam Olen said "it's unbelievable to me" that other governments had trouble spending their allotments.

With the exception of a 150-acre property tied up in probate court, Cobb has spent its \$55 million state grant. The county bought land along creeks and next to Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, and it will be able to open its first nature center.



Sam Olen, Cobb County Chairman

Olen says he can't believe some governments had trouble spending green space money.

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The city of Alpharetta, in north Fulton County, returned \$83,000, one-fifth of its state grant, when it couldn't find a suitable and affordable tract of land within the time limit. Mary Peak, the city's deputy finance director, said the city used \$322,500 to save a historic landmark on Crabapple Road: three old grain silos sitting on about half an acre.

The state's green space money was distributed based on the taxable value of the jurisdictions' residential properties. Most cities and counties, eligible because of their population growth, had to scramble to put together green space plans to get the grants. The funds also jump-started various efforts, including new tree ordinances and development regulations that require some conservation.

And despite the hiccups, the state green space program has pressured more than 9,000 acres statewide that will never be cut up for roads, subdivisions or shopping centers. If the conserved land were all clumped together, it would be about three times the size of Stone Mountain Park.

That's still a long way from the goal. Barnes and many state leaders embraced to set aside 20 percent of Georgia's land. About 8 percent of land in the state is now perma-

nently protected.

The lessons learned have shaped Perdue's plans to remake the state green space program. This week, his 19-member land conservation task force will recommend that governments compete for state dollars based on specific projects. Task force chairman Long said local governments "will say, 'This is what we plan to do with [the state money], and they'll have to explain how they are going to be able to do that.'"

Perdue also wants to encourage partnerships between private land trusts, which have expertise in buying land, and state and local governments. He foresees more state dollars matched by private donors and local governments, and the money further stretched by using conservation easements that keep properties in private hands while preventing future development.

Barnes opposes move

Barnes, who now has his own law practice in Marietta, said pitting local governments against one another will destroy the program, as will giving state legislators a chance to reduce the amount of money dedicated to green space protection. It will become just another grants program, he said.

"Low on the priority list [in the General Assembly] will be anything that has to do with protecting the environment," Barnes said. "You have to target this to the counties and cities that are rapidly growing, that do not have long to protect the land."

If not, he said, "In a few years, when our children do not have a place to ride a bike or to walk and enjoy the natural beauty of Georgia, we will look back and say, 'Why didn't we do enough to protect this?' And the answer will be, 'Our leaders of just a few years ago didn't think it was important enough.'"