

Park Status: Little Nancy Creek Park

By Gordon Certain, NBCA President

Much has happened regarding our new park on Peachtree Dunwoody Road, though you can't tell it by taking a look as you drive by the site. Since the last issue of this newsletter, we have had a number of contacts with the City's Parks Department and with Park Pride, the non-profit that works closely with the City.

Meeting with the Commissioner

On November 2, a delegation from our civic association, V-P Rita Christopher, Mandy LeCompte (now Playgrounds Committee Chair), and I met with City officials. We met with Dianne Harnell Cohen (Commissioner, Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs), Ken Gillett (Director, Office of Parks) and Sushma K. Dersch (Director, Office of Park Design). We outlined our interest in working with the City to have our park site turned into a real park, complete with a playground.

We learned that the City didn't have much money for park improvements, other than enough to make sure that the existing dilapidated house and other structures were torn down and removed. As we talked, they were concerned that we might want to cut down a bunch of trees; we assured them that we

hadn't seen any need to do that. We showed the City a map we had prepared using City data sources which showed that playgrounds were unusually sparse in the northern end of the City. The small property tax millage for parks is insufficient to equip new parks. We learned that most of the existing playgrounds had been equipped by non-profits. We learned that we probably wouldn't qualify for help from some of the usual playground development groups which have been active in other parts of the City, such as KABOOM, since our area was too far on the affluent end of the economic scale.

We talked about our concerns of traffic whizzing by on Peachtree-Dunwoody Road, how people would get to the park, and, if they came in cars where would they park and dozens of other issues. The Commissioner outlined the need for preparing a "park master plan" that would deal with those issues and many more. So how do we get a park master plan? She said our best approach was to work with Park Pride to see if we could qualify for a "park visioning grant". Typically, Park Pride awards four such grants a year to neighbors who want to create or improve their local park — Park Pride refers to such groups as "friends of the park".

Initial contacts with Park Pride

After that session, NBCA applied for membership in Park Pride and the three of us (Mandy, Rita, and I) started taking what Park Pride calls Lead Volunteer Training, so we would understand how to mobilize and direct the volunteer effort which will be involved in creating our park. In the initial training, we learned a lot about the invasive plant species that degrade the usability and appearance of parks and threaten the trees and other living things. It turns out that our park has an abundance of invasive plants, particularly privet, bamboo, and English ivy. We learned how to remove such environmental threats safely and, last week, we had hands-on experience in Adams Park in southwest Atlanta helping to remove privet and ailanthus (ironically also known as "tree of heaven", given its thorns). We are scheduled to attend upcoming park conferences and workshops offered by Park Pride.

Park Visioning Grant Application

Our most recent effort with the park and Park Pride was to apply for the park visioning grant mentioned earlier. This application explains to Park Pride where the park is, what condition it is in and who was willing to help.

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Park Status — continued

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In our case, our team needs to include volunteers and leadership from both North Buckhead and Brookhaven, since the park lies on our mutual border and people on both sides, especially parents with kids who need a playground, are eager to help.

We (Mandy, Brookhaven Club Neighborhood Association board member Lisa Dickerson, and I) met on-site in the park with Park Pride's Walt Ray on February 12. Walt is Park Pride's Director of Park Visioning. We walked the site for an hour. We saw a lot of work that's needed (such as removing invasive plants) and considered some of our opportunities.

We have opportunities such as: Where do we put the playground? Where would parents congregate while the kids played? The old house has an interesting and apparently sturdy chimney — do we keep it or have the City tear it down? Where do we put the sidewalk and how do we slow traffic so a mom can make it across the road with a stroller?

These and many other questions need to be considered in our park master plan. While we probably can do the park plan by ourselves, we hope that Park Pride will award us their visioning grant, since they have a lot of experience and credibility in planning parks. Once we have a park master plan, which might take eight months to develop, it must be approved by our neighborhood planning unit (NPU-B) and by the Parks Department. Only then, can we start making permanent improvements. During the interim, we do plan to have volunteer work days in the park to start removing the privet and other problematic plants.

We submitted our application on February 12; however, the cutoff for the visioning applications to Park Pride is May 1. Some time after May 1st, we will know if we have won and can get down to the task of planning.

What comes next?

We need to establish our "friends of the park" group. As stated previously, this group needs to be a joint effort between North Buckhead and Brookhaven and possibly other neighborhoods. Once we are organized and have a master plan, we have our work cut out for ourselves: getting volunteers, raising money, and creating our park.

In our visioning application to Park Pride, we listed the following individuals on our list of "Potential Steering Committee Members".

Initial Steering Committee Members

North Buckhead

- Gordon Certain (NBCA president)
- Rita Christopher (NBCA VP, Chair of NBCA Beautification Committee)
- Nancy Jones (NBCA Environment Chair, Executive Director of Blue Heron Nature Preserve)
- Mandy LeCompte (Chair of NBCA Playground Committee)

Brookhaven

- Lisa Dickerson (Brookhaven Club Neighborhood Association (BCNA) board member)
- Meade Conley (Brookhaven resident)
- Tucker Greene (Brookhaven resident)
- Mark Stovin (Brookhaven resident)

Contact us

If you have questions about the NBCA Playgrounds Committee, e-mail Mandy LeCompte at Mandy.LeCompte@mindspring.com.

If you have questions about Brookhaven's involvement in the park, contact Lisa Dickerson at dickerson_lisa@mindspring.com.

If you want to be a Friend of the Park and make sure you are notified about volunteering opportunities for our park, e-mail me at gordon@nbca.org.



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