



Vista Grove Parks and Recreation Task Force Report

[Discussion Draft v.1]

Vista Grove Parks and Recreation

The geographic area that would become the City of Vista Grove currently includes 10 parks, with a mix of passive and active greenspace. The active parks have recreational equipment, sports fields, and/or trails. The conditions in these parks range from new and developing, overlooked and in need of repair, to actively well-maintained. DeKalb County Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs manages and maintains the parks supplemented by community volunteers and volunteers from Friends of the Park groups.

With formation of the City of Vista Grove contemplated to be on the ballot as early as November 2019, the Vista Grove Parks and Recreation taskforce has been in the process of gathering information and developing initial proposals for enhancing and strengthening a citywide park system.

Parks in our Vista Grove footprint*

- 1- **Briarlake Forest Park**
3330 Briarlake Road
21 acres
- 2 - **Fisher Trail**
2230 Fisher Trail NE
2 acres
- 3 - **Frazier-Rowe Park**
2886 LaVista Road.
9.5 acres
- 4 - **Springbrook Park**
1502 Springbrook Drive
1 acre
- 5- **Pendergrast Park**
1996 Chrysler Drive
3 Acres
- 6- **Mary Scott Nature Park**
4150 Briarcliff Road
10.6 acres
- 7- **Kittredge Park**
1520 Kittredge Park Road
30 acres
- 8 - **Pleasantdale Park**
3650 Pleasantdale Road
24 acres
- 9 - **McDaniel Park**
2225 Heritage Dr.
11 acres
- 10 - **Rehoboth Park**
3105 Tolbert Dr.
2.84 acres

*Parks comprise a total of approximately 115 acres – this acreage will fluctuate as parkland and road improvement in Pleasantdale Park is subtracted to create a new elementary school.

New City Experiences and Information

The Vista Grove Parks and Recreation Taskforce collected information from two cities in DeKalb County, Brookhaven and Dunwoody, that underwent the same process to become their own cities.

The City of Dunwoody was established in December 2008. It took approximately 18 months for the transition from DeKalb County to Dunwoody Parks and Recreation. During the first 2 ½ years Dunwoody worked on passive park uses and maintenance before tackling park development or capital improvements to recreation centers. This helped avoid incurring extra costs and raising the residents' expectations regarding new facilities.

Brookhaven took a different direction and did support the expansion of recreational facilities soon after incorporation. Brookhaven hired a consultant (Lose and Associates) to do a Master Plan for the parks department at a cost of \$80,000, but they had significantly more land and well-established parks and programs.

Both Dunwoody and Brookhaven contract out all maintenance and have very few employees. Dunwoody has one maintenance contract with a company that handles all janitorial, mowing and routing maintenance, and then has separate contracts with vendors who can do things like HVAC repair. The current model utilized in the county relies more heavily on county employees, with over half of the parks budget allocated to payroll and benefits.

The Director of Brookhaven Parks and Recreation recommends privatizing 80% of maintenance and hiring two city employees to operate small tools like blowers and weed-eaters to keep parks clean.

Capital projects, such as new construction and land acquisition, come from DeKalb County HOST funds. Dunwoody's annual receipts from Host are in the range of \$3-4 million and much of that goes to parks. Brookhaven receives approximately \$6 million annually for the whole city and \$2 million is typically allocated for Parks and Recreation.

Within the first year or two, it is advisable that that the city start work on a master plan, usually using a third party, for example, the consultant used by Brookhaven, Lose & Associates. The process involves public meetings to gather input from the City residents. For that reason, the Vista Grove Parks and Recreation Taskforce is not making recommendations of what the new city of Vista Grove should do in the way of adding new parks or facilities.

Transition of Parks and Recreation Function

It is expected that the transfer of the parks and recreation function from the County to a new city will occur over 12-18 months. The city of Dunwoody transition took approximately 18 months. Tucker took a longer period of time, and it is up to the new city to determine the transition plan that is the most efficient and effective taking into account Vista Grove's particular park and recreational needs.

Anticipated action items include:

- Creating a first-year operating budget.
- Hiring a Parks and Recreation Director and possibly an administrative assistant.
- Purchasing the parks from the County for \$100 per acre.
- Entering into an agreement with the County on a transition plan for parks maintenance to a time when the City will start collecting revenues from property taxes.
- Investigating establishing a relationship with Park Pride.
- Considering establishing an advisory board or committee with bylaws; or, just have the City Council act as advisors.
- Meeting with any established local youth programs to discuss plans and contracts with the City,
- Meeting with nonprofit stakeholder organizations, like North Fork Connectors, which is spearheading the Peachtree Creek Greenway.
- Obtaining bids for maintenance and repair contracts.
- Hiring any other in-house staff needed.
- Considering whether any recreational programs will be offered during the first two years.
- Creating a Master Plan with input from public meetings, and evaluate possible consultant retention to assist with plan development, refinement and implementation.

Recommendations to Enhance Vista Grove Parks and Recreation

While the community will determine, through the Master Plan process and ongoing engagement, what the new city's parks and recreation priorities should be, certain objectives have consistently emerged in community discussion. Those include

- Connecting all parks in Vista Grove through area-wide trail system
- Managing and regularly maintaining all parks as connected and symbiotic system, looking at improvements and additions together with our park systems as a whole
- Identifying opportunities to preserve and acquire more greenspace and trail property
- Working with commercial and educational institutions who have public or semi-public space, like Mercer, to protect ecosystems and encourage preservation and enjoyment of area-wide natural resources
- In connection with new development, prioritizing increased open and green space, as well as attractive and sustainable plantings and eco-enhancements
- Studying existing tree coverage and biodiversity as part of overall evaluation of current tree ordinance and other means of protecting our ecosystems
- Identifying potential sites for a multi-use community recreation center, for athletic events, performing arts, recreational activities, and community gatherings

Vista Grove Parks

1 - Briarlake Forest Park

3330 Briarlake Road

21 acres

A greenspace at the intersection of Briarlake Road and Amberwood Drive that was acquired by the DeKalb County in July of 2015 when the county purchased this space with \$9.8 million of funds from the Parks Bond and Greenspace Program.

It is an old growth forest that is heavily wooded. This urban forest consists of an old home site and 21 acres of land that was originally part of a 100-acre land lot. The Creek Indians inhabited this area of DeKalb County until they were forcibly removed in the early 1820s. The land in this area was then divided into land lots that were either awarded by a lottery or later sold. According to local resident Grace Gresham Flowers, in 1850, the first home was built on the current home site that is now part of Briarlake Forest Park.

Currently, The Friends of Briarlake Forest Park work with DeKalb County's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Affairs to provide community leadership to restore, enhance, and protect the Park's natural features, cultural history, and recreational opportunities. The Friends Group consists of neighbors who volunteer their leadership skills, time, creativity, and energy to support and sustain this unique urban forest.

(Contact: Richard Marion 404-486-7248)

<https://www.briarlakeforestpark.com/>



2 - Fisher Trail:

2230 Fisher Trail NE

2 acres

Fisher Trail Park is located adjacent to Interstate 85 and Fisher Trail Road in northern DeKalb. This small neighborhood park is a natural wooded area covered with invasive species. It has level topography but limited access.

Parts of the park appear to have flooded at times, with dead wood debris and trash strewn about. There are two foot bridges in the park and two benches. The bridges span a gully that drains from the street to the creek at the back of the property. The few features of the park, bridges and benches, are in need of repair. A few years back, the bridge was repaired and the grounds were cleared of debris by a Boy Scout working on his Eagle Scout Badge, but that work is not evident now.

The park is extremely limited by its adjacency to the Interstate and to residential areas. It is bordered by heavily trafficked vehicular roads and is in a built-out location. Perhaps in the future, sidewalk access to the park and other pocket park amenities could help make it more useful. The park runs along Peachtree Creek and might become part of the North Fork Peachtree Creek greenway project in the future.

Contact: Randy Roosa - Randyroosa@att.net)



3 - Frazier-Rowe Park

2886 Lavista Road.

9.5 acres

This park is wooded land purchased by the county in 2010 with Parks Bond and Greenspace Program funds. Located in central DeKalb County near the Vista Grove Shopping Center.

The Friends of Frazier-Rowe Park have been hosting volunteer workdays on a regular basis since 2013, clearing the park of invasive plants, brush and debris, as well as planting flowers, shrubs and trees.

Features of the park include a bridge, outdoor classroom, walking trails, benches placed throughout the park, a concrete pathway that is wheelchair accessible, a children's playground, picnic benches, trash receptacles and bike rack. Much of this progress is the result of volunteers.

The park has been the beneficiary of three Eagle Scout Projects, which include a bridge over the creek that bisects the park, a kiosk in the front of the park, which tells about the park's history, and a scout learning center located in the rear of the park. The park has also received numerous donated plants from both regular volunteers as well as the North Georgia Camellia Society. Volunteers, both neighbors and corporate have contributed mightily to the ongoing development of Frazier-Rowe.

Recently, the park won a Park Pride grant and plans to use the money for a pavilion and parking area.

(Contact: Thomas Branch tombbranch@mindspring.com)

<http://www.frazier-rowepark.org/>



4 - Springbrook Park

502 Springbrook Drive

1 acre

Located off Lawrenceville Hwy and Frazier Road, this plot of land was purchased with DeKalb County Park Bonds and Greenspace funds in 2012 to create a neighborhood park. Friends of Springbrook Park have been very active in helping to raise funds to add a 20' X 20' pavilion, play equipment, a bioswale and handicap parking.

Seventy-two trees have been planted and 12 small garden plots created for use by the community, along with a monarch butterfly habitat (Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail -UGA pollinator Garden). Ongoing seasonal community activities take place in the park. Never has so much been done in the way of providing neighborhood park space and an environmentally friendly area than has been accomplished in this relatively small area.

(Contact - Barbara Marin-Friends of Springbrook Park – barbaramarin49@att.net)

www.springbrookpark.com



5 - Pendergrast Park

1996 Chrysler Drive

3 Acres

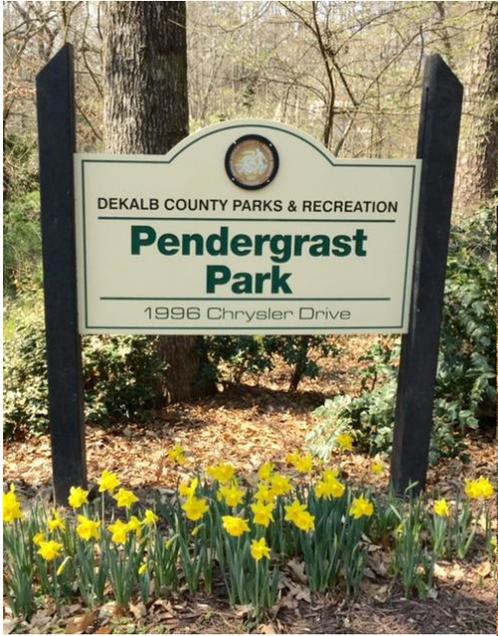
This neighborhood park located at the corner of Briarcliff and Chrysler Drive, is 3 acres of mostly rugged topography with old growth trees. DeKalb County bought the land in 2013 with funds from the Parks and Bond Greenspace Program.

The park has completed phase 1 of development which included trails and some furnishings. County Commissioner Jeff Rader has agreed to help fund phase 2 along with \$10k of community funding. Phase 2 includes a children's play area and parking. This phase is underway.

Phase 3 will complete the loop trail system. Community leaders plan to apply for another grant this fall for that phase.

(Contact Randy Roosa - Randyroosa@att.net)

Facebook – Pendergrast Park Atlanta



6 - Mary Scott Nature Park

10.6 acres

4150 Briarcliff Road

This park was purchased in 2003 by DeKalb County with Parks Bond and Greenspace Program funds, the Blank Foundation and a grant from Georgia Greenspace, with the stipulation that no more than 15% of the land be changed by adding trails, parking lots, playgrounds and other amenities. The park has many old growth trees, a walking trail that leads to the remains of an old homestead, and a playground area for children.

The trail is maintained, for the most part, by the Friends of Mary Scott Nature Park. The county has refurbished the parking area and friends of the park have planted and marked native species while trying to control invasive species.

Recently, Girl Scout Troop 11525, that has been actively working in the park, just built and installed a corn hole set to be enjoyed by young and old alike.

Contact

<http://www.maryscottnp.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryScottNP>



7- Kittredge Park
1520 Kittredge Park Road
30 acres

The park is located off N. Druid Hills Road, next to, and behind, Adams Stadium. The park has a public pool with restrooms, a picnic pavilion, two multi-use ballfields and a mile-long nature trail – Elwyn John Wildlife Sanctuary – used for walking and birding.

Dekalb Greenspace funds (\$155 million) were used for land acquisition, coupled with a grant from the Arthur Blank Family Foundation.

At the present time, the pool is in the process of being updated by adding a children’s splash pool. Updating of the ball fields adjacent to the pool should be a priority area.

The Friends of Kittredge Park who help maintain the trail was founded by residents in the surrounding communities from Merry Hills Homeowners Association, North Druid Hills Residents Association and LaVista Park Civic Association.

<https://www.facebook.com/KittredgePark>



8 - Pleasantdale Park

24 acres

3650 Pleasantdale Road

The park is an active greenspace that includes a playground, restrooms, ample parking, a storage garage, 3 ball fields; 2 of which are used by Atlanta Chiefs Soccer League. There is a press box and concession stand that are not in usable condition. Several water fountains in the park aren't operating; it is unknown whether they are broken or the water is not turned on.

The Chiefs and DeKalb County have been entering into successive one-year contracts for the use of the 2 fields. As per the agreement, the Chiefs and the County share maintenance for the park. The Chiefs fertilize and mow the 2 fields that the league uses for soccer and the County mows the other fields and common areas. The County maintains an irrigation system for the 2 fields as well as the lights for the park. The County pays for the water usage while the Chiefs pay for the power. In addition, the Chiefs provide supplies for the restrooms and make some minor repairs. The Chiefs are anxious to implement an estimated \$2.8 million Master Plan that they developed for the park and would like to undertake an aggressive fundraising campaign, but this would only be possible with a long-term agreement (15-20 years) with the County.

Recently, the Dekalb County School District purchased 7.35 acres of Pleasantdale Park for \$3.227 million to build a new elementary school. This may well impact the ongoing arrangement with the park and the Chiefs. Certainly, it will alter the configuration of the park.

(Contact: Neil McNab – neiljr@chiefsfc.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/ChiefsFC.Atl/>



9 - Rehoboth Park**2.84 acres****3105 Tolbert Dr.**

Recently Dekalb County School District sold Rehoboth Park to Dekalb County Parks and Recreation for \$280,000. Before this time, it was operated in conjunction with Rehoboth Elementary.

The park, at present, is in great need of repair.

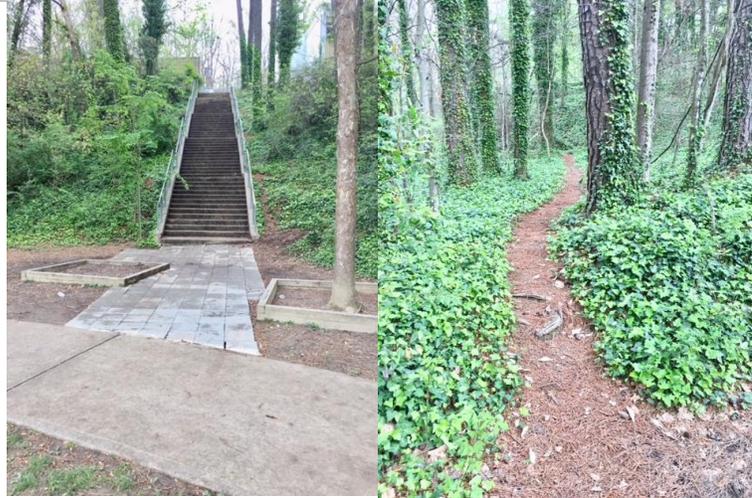
Contact: Cheri Stimson – 770-288-9115

Ken Shippey – 404-790- 4346



10 - Charles McDaniel Park**11 acres****2225 Heritage Dr.**

The active greenspace consists of a multi-use ballfield, a basketball court, fitness area, playground, picnic tables, pavilion, benches and walking trails. It is located adjacent to Globe Academy. The park is not open to the public during school hours as it is owned by the DeKalb County School System.



Volunteers for the Vista Grove Parks and Recreation Task Force

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