



INTUCKER

OCTOBER 2021 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 10

EMORY HEALTHCARE

NORTH LAKE

ON THE RISE

TUCKER'S NORTH LAKE AREA IS GROUND ZERO FOR THE REIMAGINING OF WHAT MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS COULD LOOK LIKE

EDITOR'S NOTE



In the nearly five years we've been printing *InTucker*, we've never done a true themed issue. This October, we're changing that.

Mayor Auman has

chosen to present his Mayor's Business Award to the team that is redeveloping the old Northlake Mall and, in planning for the event, he had the idea that we use this month's magazine to really look at the past, the present, and the future of Tucker's Northlake area. The Mayor and John McHenry will get into the details later in this issue, but I wanted to share with you what I love about Northlake.

Back in 2009, my wife and I went house hunting in Tucker, Decatur, Lilburn...you know, the local neighborhoods that young couples look at. One of the things that caught my eye about Tucker was the Fuddrucker's at Northlake. Now, before you go judging me – and maybe you're right to judge – I have always loved a good Fuddrucker's hamburger. Or their hot dogs; boy, were those good. So yes, Fuddrucker's was a factor in my decision to move to Tucker.

Sadly, the Fuddrucker's shut down shortly after we closed on our house. But there have been so many other great things over the years to draw me and my family to the Northlake area (and, no, I'm not, nor have I ever been, a mallrat, so Northlake Mall was never a draw). Breakfast at the Old Hickory House is always a treat. The Dick's and Sprouts at Tucker Meridian are family favorites. One of my top rainy day activities is going to see a movie at the Movie Tavern; those leather recliners can't be beat!

When talking about the center of activity in Tucker, nine times out of ten the conversation gravitates toward Main Street. But this issue aims to show you there's another great dining and entertainment center in town. Read on as you get to know Northlake!

MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER

As Northlake Mall turns 50 years old, we're looking back and looking ahead. On page 3, Mayor Auman shares his memories, as well as a vision for how the old mall is being reimaged.



BUSINESS BOOM

From restaurants to shops and a movie theater, you likely know what Northlake Festival Shopping Center is. But do you know what it could be? John McHenry examines that in Business Boom on page 8.



GREEN THUMBS

One Tucker elementary school is joining the outdoor classroom craze by installing their own garden. On page 10, find out how the installation was a true community effort.



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

He's a Main Street business owner and the driving force behind the popular Taste of Tucker festival. On page 14, get to know our Citizen of the Month, Art Wood.



ASK RIP

Now that fall is upon us, our Parks and Recreation staff is jumping into overdrive. Get the low down on page 15 about all the events happening this fall in our Tucker parks.



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From the Mayor:

THE TRIUMPH OF NORTHLAKE



Architectural rendering courtesy of ATR Corinth Partners

For people of a certain age, it's perfectly normal to look back and remember fondly "the good old days". Those days could be a few years ago, a few decades ago...or they could be sitting right in front of us.

That's certainly the case with Northlake Mall, which opened for the first time on October 6, 1971. Hard as it is for some of us to believe, that's now 50 years ago this month. Northlake has served millions of happy customers and served as a gathering place for our community for a half-century. Over that time, countless teenagers had their first jobs there, hung out in the food court with friends, shopped with their parents for new school clothes and joined thousands of other frenzied Christmas shoppers searching for that perfect last minute present. My wife Gaye grew up on Henderson Mill Road and graduated from Henderson High School, and I can tell you she lived those times.

But, as the years have gone by, newer malls have been built and innovations like online shopping have gone mainstream. It's robbed Northlake and other malls of that

era of the vibrance of their halcyon days. In recent years, Northlake has gone noticeably quiet. The parking lots are mostly empty. Several big box retailers have moved out. It's just not the place it used to be.

So, it's counterintuitive to say that the Mall's best days are ahead of it, but that's exactly the stage that's being set. Tony Ruggeri and Frank Mihalopoulos are believers. Tony and Frank are principals in a company from Dallas, Texas called ATR Corinth Partners. This group purchased Northlake Mall some time ago, holding a vision that this once great mall could be reimagined into something bigger and better, and with an elevated regional significance. These men aren't selling a dream; they're replicating a proven product that they created.

In Nashville, Tennessee, their firm looked at an aging, lagging 100 Oaks Mall and saw opportunity. They partnered with Vanderbilt Medical and converted roughly half the space to medical office space. That brought thousands of employees. Know what thousands of employees need? Places to eat. Places to shop. Places

(continued on page 6)

City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and City Council met twice during the month of September, holding several public hearings and casting votes on several important issues. The biggest of those votes, which happened at the meeting on September 13, was to begin distributing money from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Council decided unanimously to approve a \$1.2 million contract with local non-profit NETWorks to assist with housing relief in the area. NETWorks previously partnered with the City on the federal CARES Act program.

There were four public hearings at that September 13 meeting. The first was for an ordinance to amend the Fiscal Year '22 budget. The ordinance, which was necessitated in part by ARPA funds, passed on a 6-0 vote. Next, Council heard discussion on a proposed special land use permit (SLUP) to allow an automobile repair shop at 2101 Northlake Parkway. This issue passed on a 5-1 vote. They then held a public hearing on an ordinance that would strengthen and clarify the City's sign code before hearing discussion on a SLUP for a personal care home at 3710 S. Marlborough Drive. Both of these

issues came before Council on a first read, meaning that no vote was taken on either issue.

Council gathered again on September 27 for a work session and special called meeting. During the work session, they received a presentation on efforts to calm traffic along Brockett Road. They also had discussion on designations for sidewalk cafes and an entertainment district in downtown Tucker.

The special called meeting saw several votes taken, including approval of updating the contracts for sidewalk construction in Henderson Park and construction of the memorial at Probst Park. After a brief executive session, Council returned and voted 6-0 to authorize the Mayor to sign a contract for the purchase of four parcels in downtown Tucker. The contract comes with a price tag of \$1.2 million. It will allow for new downtown community greenspace, as well as housing a stretch of Tucker's multimodal trail.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will be on October 12 at 7 p.m. at City Hall (1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B).

DATES TO KNOW

October 4
Downtown Development Authority

October 6
Traffic Court

October 12
City Council

October 13
Traffic Court

October 19
Zoning Board of Appeals

October 20
Municipal Court

October 21
Planning Commission

October 25
City Council

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nextdoor



Last month, Mayor Auman toured Tucker's Pepsi plant with representatives from Decide DeKalb and the Department of Economic Development (Credit: tuckerga.gov)



ON THE BEAT *with Lt. Berg*

Lt. J.W. Berg is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be contacted by email at jwberg@dekalbcountyga.gov or by phone at (678) 597-9040.

First, on behalf of the dedicated staff and the officers here at Tucker Precinct, I'd like to say "thank you" and "bon voyage" to Lt. Schoeppner. While he is leaving his position as our Tucker Liaison officer, his next voyage takes him to another important job as a supervisor in the DeKalb Police Major Felony Division. Lt. Schoeppner's new duties will involve him responding to crime scenes around the County, including within the City of Tucker, ensuring our detectives thoroughly investigate these disturbing crimes. Hopefully, we will see Lt. "Shep" again in a more benign way, at one of Tucker's restaurants or coffee shops enjoying a much deserved break.

Unfortunately, it appears that Lt. Schoeppner will not get much of a break, as this transition occurs during a time of increasing violence nationwide. As he discussed in his August 2021 *InTucker* article, many of these violent crimes, such as aggravated assaults, begin as domestic disputes, obviously involving parties that are known to each other. These domestic violence-related crimes are difficult to predict and, more importantly, tug at the heartstrings of any officer who has had a parent, sister, brother, etc. that have suffered from domestic abuse. Fortunately, our officers are highly trained and highly experienced at making the tough decisions needed to intervene in these sad situations.

More recently, it appears the stress and anger that often result in domestic violence inside our homes is increasingly spilling out onto the roadways and highways of our nation. According to an NBC News report earlier this year (07/08/21), law enforcement agencies nationwide are seeing an increase in what are grouped together as "road rage" incidents. In a recent WSB/95.5 article (09/02/21), it reported that death related to road rage incidents in the Metro Atlanta area has "spiked" in 2021. Indeed, so far this year our DeKalb County officers have responded to more than 80 road rage shootings.

While we can all speculate about the root causes of this trend in violence on our roadways – an increase in traffic with the lifting of COVID restrictions, more firearms being stored inside vehicles, etc. – I want to take the remaining time in this article to discuss what our Police Department is doing to respond to these violent incidents. More importantly, I also want to provide some ways in which you can more safely handle these incidents if they occur to you or someone in your family.

Earlier this year, when our crime analysts began to notice this road rage trend, our professional Command Staff formulated an operational plan. Beginning this past summer, a dedicated detail of officers from throughout the Department, including

officers from Tucker Precinct, flooded the highways and roadways of our community. Since the start of this targeted detail, our officers have written over 1,600 citations and made nearly 20 felony and misdemeanor arrests, including two recent road rage arrests involving armed suspects (*Atlanta Journal Constitution*, 09/17/21).

In Georgia, we are fortunate to have a very good set of traffic laws to enforce, including the "move over" law (OCGA 40-6-16), the "super speeder" law (OCGA 40-6-189), the long awaited "hands-free" law (OCGA 40-6-241) and, most recently, an updated law that addresses the growing issue of highway "street racing" (40-6-390.1).

Hopefully, no citizens of Tucker have been stopped and ticketed during this "sweep" of our highways and roadways. After reading this article you should now be able to appreciate, or at least understand, the purpose of this increased enforcement. Of course, if you were recently caught speeding or holding your cell phone while driving, I hope you were cooperative with the officer, handing him or her your driver's license and any other documents that were needed. Trust me, it is not fun for either party when a ticket has to be issued!

As far as what you can do to reduce your chances of being involved in a road rage incident, as Lt. Schoeppner mentioned in his August article, the word "patience" is now more important than ever. Given these road rage incidents seem to be getting more and more violent and often involve weapons, even if you are in the right, these situations can end up with someone hurt. Arriving to where you need to be safely is worth more than a few minutes of saved time or your life.

If you do find yourself being followed by someone with bad intentions, please drive to a well-lit public place. Inside the City of Tucker, for example, we are fortunate to have our own precinct (4451 Lawrenceville Hwy.) and also the headquarters of our Police Department (1960 West Exchange Pl., behind the LA Fitness). If you need to drive to either of these locations, be sure that you are calling 911 while en route so that we can have an officer respond to meet you as quickly as possible. Having a good description of the other vehicle and driver involved will help our officers and detectives locate the potential road rage suspect.

As I mentioned earlier, our DeKalb officers have been very busy patrolling our streets and highways during these urgent times. We want everyone, including ourselves, to get home safely.

FROM THE MAYOR (continued from page 3)

to get personal services from workouts to dry cleaning to technology repairs. That brought a bevy of restaurants, service providers and even some great retail options to what had previously been a lost cause.

This success story is very similar to the blueprint ATR Corinth Partners has for Northlake. Early on, they partnered with Emory Healthcare to bring about 2,000 jobs to the former mall. Those employees will be moving in early next year. Before the pandemic, they were in serious talks with major restaurant and retail chains to locate their brands in and around the mall. Since the onset of COVID, some of those businesses were forced to drop out, but others have stepped up and expressed an interest. We can't say who those businesses are just yet, but I know you'll enjoy eating and shopping at some fantastic new establishments – and some familiar ones, as well.

It is because of this vision and this multi-million dollar investment in Tucker that I decided to give the 2021 Mayor's Business Award to Tony, Frank and the team that is redeveloping Northlake Mall. This is an award that honors businesspeople who are doing well, while also doing good in our city. When this Northlake project comes to fruition, ATR Corinth Partners will see revenues, of that I'm sure, but they are also committed to being good partners and supporting the City and its residents.

One last thing I'd like to mention is that a mall is being redeveloped because of the foresight and innovative spirit of Tony, Frank and their associates. This mall is being redeveloped because of you. ATR Corinth Partners could have picked any aging mall anywhere in metro Atlanta as their project. Instead, they chose Tucker's mall. They chose it because of proximity to the Perimeter, sure, but they also wanted to be part of a close-knit community. That means a community that loves its neighbor, puts others first and, yes, supports its businesses. Tucker is all of those things. When these businesses open over the course of the next year or two, I hope you'll patronize them as you've patronized the countless new businesses we've seen open here in Tucker since the pandemic started. At Northlake, and across this city, I believe our best days are right in front of us.



FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR



Architectural renderings courtesy of ATR Corinth Partners



THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS AWARD

Since 2018, Mayor Auman has given out the coveted Mayor's Business Award to a diverse group of businesses who have enjoyed success in Tucker, while also giving back to the community. The award, which comes in the form of a giant key, is the top honor that a business in the City of Tucker can receive.

2018: The Local No. 7 2020: FODAC

2019: Cofer Bros. 2021: Northlake

Your Northlake Mall Memories

Countless memories have been made over the past 50 years at Northlake Mall. We asked our Facebook followers to share some of their favorite memories from youth, when their lives centered around the Mall.

Melanie Kraar Marks

I worked at Limited Too upstairs by Macy's in '95 and Parisian from '96-'99. I also would spend a lot of time with friends shopping. Later in 2008, my son loved the train and the indoor jumping place downstairs by Sears. He loved both places so much he even had his third birthday at the Mall.

Hydi Dickstein Kalmin

I was a key holder at the Gap upstairs and worked there '93-'96, and always went to get a Barnies coffee during my break. My mom gave me a permanent pass to leave high school during the day for yearbook and we dropped off film to process at Wolf Camera just so we could get Chick-fil-A or Japanese for lunch.

Alexandra Hoefler

Singing Christmas carols there in the '80s and '90s when I was a student at Sagamore Hills Elementary. I also loved shopping at Sanrio Surprises back in the '80s. Great memories!

Paula Kuniarsky

Loved going to Farrell's Ice Cream Parlour with friends and sharing huge ice cream sundae in a giant bowl!

Barbara Stewart Metz

I worked at WicksNSticks (candle shop) while attending Tucker High School. One Saturday morning in November 1980, a handsome man wandered into the store as he was waiting for his car to be worked on at the Sears Auto place. That's how I met my fantastic husband!

Stan Hodgin

I used to hang out there in the '70's-early '80's. I remember going to Piccadilly, Record Bar, Pickle Barrel, El Chico, The Gold Mine, Farrell's Ice Cream, Spencer's Gifts, The Magic Pan, etc.

Donna Hester Powell

I worked at Butler Shoe Store in 1972-'73. My boyfriend at the time worked next door at Schowbilt Mens Store. I remember seeing Dolly Parton at JC Penney once and following her all over the store!

Ed Nash

I was there in the '70s, '80s and '90s. Worked Security at Turtles. And loved The Gold Mine Game Room as a kid. Met Daisy Duke while she ate with her mother at Piccadilly.

Curt Walker

In 1973 my wife Kathie Folk Walker and I drove from Georgia Tech Married Student Housing on 10th Street all the way out in the country to Northlake Mall to buy my suit for graduation from Tech.

BUSINESS BOOM

by John McHenry, Community and Economic Development Director



Last fall, city staff applied to the Urban Land Institute Mini Technical Assistance program to leverage local real estate leaders who could provide free technical assistance to reimagine Northlake Festival. In a competitive process, the City was selected for a feasibility study to develop

potential opportunities for Northlake Festival and to bring vibrancy back to this prime location. Built in the early 1980s, Northlake Festival is a 38-acre, aging shopping center that is prominently located along Lavista Road and nearby I-285 in the City of Tucker. The 367,000-square foot center has deteriorated with a vacancy rate of 40 percent and is defined by empty parking lots, crumbling pavement and poor lighting. Easily spotted by the Cox Communications radio tower in the middle of the shopping center, Cox owns the land, and the development was built predicated on a 75-year lease, of which 30 years are remaining. Both the location of the radio tower in the middle of the development and the land lease make redevelopment a challenge.

NORTHLAKE AREA BOOMING

Meanwhile the adjoining area around Northlake Festival continues to grow and redevelop. To the south, Sugar Bowl Bakery located its East Coast headquarters and to the east, Green Park apartments which opened in 2017, has over 300 luxury townhome apartments. On the north side of Lavista, Northlake Mall is transitioning into a mixed-use community with office, new retail and Emory Healthcare opening offices for nearly 2,000 employees in January. There is some thriving retail along Lavista Road on the Northlake Festival property including Chick-fil-A, Verizon, and Red Lobster, as well as stalwart businesses such as Tucker's Movie Tavern, but these are the outliers. The City adopted the Northlake NL-1 zoning to enhance the long-term economic viability of this regional activity center. The goal of this new zoning district is to encourage innovative development projects that set high standards for landscaping, green space, urban design, and make productive use of transit, ridesharing, bicycling and walking. Higher-density housing, office and mixed-use is permitted up to a maximum height of 15 stories to match the Edge City nature of the area.



There was a time when Tucker's Northlake Festival was nothing but farmland and a radio tower.
(Credit: ULI Center for Leadership)

TOWER PARK

After a six-month process of research as well as discussions with the City and the Tucker Northlake CID, the team presented a dramatic concept for redeveloping the property to the Tucker City Council in May 2021. Building off the success of other regional projects, including Sandy Springs City Center, Suwanee Town Center and Peachtree Corners Town Center Park, the design is a mixed-use development focusing on entertainment in the form of a theater and convention center with a hotel, residential units in the form of apartments, townhomes, and flats, and a variety of retail spaces catering to everything from big box retail to small grocery stores down to small boutique spaces.

"Following conversations with the City of Tucker and various stakeholders, our reimagined plan concentrated on creating a financially viable redevelopment while incorporating elements that further the City's long-term vision benefiting the greater community," said Eric Liebendorfer, one of five real estate professionals who hatched the plan. "Fundamental to the plan was an emphasis on providing much needed event and convention space along with substantial communal amenities such as public outdoor greenspace, pedestrian oriented streetscapes, and integration into the existing and planned trail network. A complimentary mix of uses such as residential, office and retail were woven into the development creating a true 24/7 district that would not only rejuvenate the subject site but serve as a catalyst for further redevelopment and investment in the Northlake market."

The proposal leans into the existing radio tower centered within the development site as it provides an instantly recognizable focal point that can be seen from miles away. The tower is the center of Tower Park with greenspace underneath the tower and park-like boulevards creating developable blocks that can be built in phases. Parking is addressed through a combination of parking structures, shared and off-street parking. A path connection through the site knits together the Urban Plaza and the Pedestrian Retail Plaza with all the restaurants, cafés, and shops along the way, while connecting users to the Emory Healthcare Development at Northlake Mall. This thoughtful and economically feasible proposal developed by regional real estate leaders was enthusiastically received by both City Council and staff. Conversations have occurred with representatives of the owners and the City is continuing to work on advancing these catalytic recommendations.



There is a marked difference between the current layout of Northlake Festival (above) and the conceptual drawings completed by the ULI Center for Leadership team (below).



HANDS-ON LEARNING

MIDVALE GARDEN GIVES STUDENTS NEW OPPORTUNITIES



Hands on learning is something you see in practice at schools all across the City of Tucker. In some cases, it's happening inside the classroom. In others, students get to go outside to innovate.

At Midvale Elementary School, students have a brand new outdoor laboratory, the learning garden. Positioned behind the school, and a stone's throw from the playground, students will be able to learn about plants, how they grow, and their role in the ecosystem.

"The garden creates a space for our school community to collaborate across grade levels with a hands-on, inquiry-based, schoolwide initiative that will infuse every part of our curriculum," explained Principal Dr. Tara Dougherty. "The learning garden will allow our boys and girls to develop connections between concepts taught in the classroom and issues facing world food supply, along with environmental concerns and environmental stewardship."

Several community groups collaborated to make the learning garden a reality. Nonprofit STEM for Every Child donated needed supplies like interlocking garden beds and pallets of soil. Many Midvale families chipped in with

donations of soil or gift cards. Eagles Scouts from Troop 15 donated lumber for the project, ultimately taking all the supplies and getting to work actually building the gardens.

The school has two teachers who are leading this project, kindergarten teacher Julie King and second grade teacher Hope Hoge. In addition to being educators, both women are master gardeners.

"We have noticed our students being highly motivated by gardening as it provided a hands on, real world experience to learning," King said. "It allows children to take ownership and feel proud of the work they put into it."

"Our students at Midvale will be able to gain hands on knowledge by utilizing the outdoor garden for all subject areas!" Hoge added. "We can't wait to watch our students and our garden flourish and grow!"

This project has been a long time coming, as Dr. Dougherty and her team have had it in the planning stages since before COVID. Now that the beds are set, students can look forward to learning in a new way while getting their hands dirty.

Tucker Cluster

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

October 7-8

Schools closed for Fall Break

October 11

Schools closed for Columbus Day

October 18

Board of Education Meeting

BRAG SHEET

BROCKETT ELEMENTARY

- As they seek International Baccalaureate (IB) certification, 12 of 26 teachers at Brockett have begun their coursework to become IB certified.

IDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

- Last month, the team at Idlewood kicked off their One Million Word Challenge, a yearlong effort to ensure students are reading.

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- For the first time, Livsey is participating in the popular STEM program "Girls Who Game". This is the second year they've participated in "Girls Who Code".

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

- The school received a \$5,000 donation from Smoke Rise Civic Association which enabled them to purchase items for outdoor classrooms like tables and chairs.

TUCKER HIGH

- On October 1, Tucker will hold its annual Homecoming festivities. In addition to the football game against North Atlanta, there will be the customary parade down Main Street. For the second straight year, there will be no Homecoming Dance due to the pandemic.



BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

BURLINGTON

What's in a name? For the management and staff at Burlington, plenty.

"We are no longer Burlington Coat Factory," explains Burlington District Manager Monique Alexander. "Of course, we became world-known as the Burlington Coat Factory. About five years ago, we changed our name to Burlington and that means that we're encompassing not just coats, but this is a place now for everyone in your family."

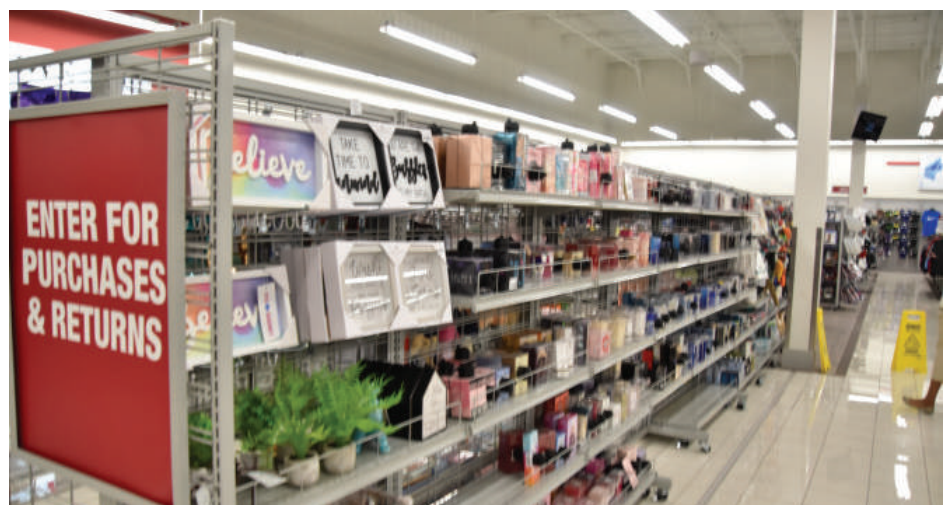
One look around the brand new Burlington store in Tucker's Briarcliff Village proves she's not overstating things. Men's and women's clothing, shoes and accessories, undergarments, and toys line shelves and racks throughout the store.

"We are absolutely a discount retailer, and you can get everything here from name brands like Michael Kors and Kate Spade, but you can also get things here that you might be able to find in your Walmarts or your Targets," Alexander says.

Burlington is also about giving back to the community. The principal and vice principal of nearby Henderson Mill Elementary School were on hand at the store's August 20 ribbon cutting celebration to accept a donation. That donation, which came through Burlington's involvement in the Adopt A Classroom program, came in the form of a giant check for \$5,000.

"What we love about Tucker is...it's community-oriented," Alexander shared. "We can feel the community in this area. We can feel our family, we have our friends. We can grow here. This is a place for home and this is a place for happiness for our company."

Burlington is located at 2126 Henderson Mill Road. You can find more information at www.burlington.com.



TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

RACHEL BRANIGAN, CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE



What was your professional background before arriving here in Tucker?

Before arriving in Tucker, I was working in the hospitality industry. Most recently, I was working in food and beverage at the Omni Resort in Amelia Island, FL. Prior to that experience, I was working at the Ritz-Carlton Resort in Naples, FL. There, I worked my way through the spa, front office, and food and beverage departments.

What are your day-to-day job responsibilities at City Hall?

My daily job responsibilities are to assist the public with any court matters. If someone comes in to pay a citation, reschedule a court date or speak with someone regarding court, I am here to help them. I also just started learning about Business Licensing so I soon will have added responsibilities!

What do you like best about the job?

My favorite part about my job is learning so many new things. It is exciting for me to have this opportunity to be exposed to so much knowledge. I work with an amazing group of people who are always available to help and encourage me.

What have you found challenging?

Truthfully, I am not a morning person, so getting up early every day and driving from Acworth has been the most challenging for me. When I first started, there was so much I didn't know, so that was a little overwhelming for me, too.

Even though you moved from out of state, you already had a connection to Tucker...

Yes, I have a sibling that works here, too! Moving from a small town to a big city and starting a new job, it has been really nice to have my family here with me.

Off the Wall

What do you think of living in Georgia so far?

I could do without the traffic, but other than that I love it! There is always something fun to do, or a new restaurant to try. I love going to sporting events, so I can't wait to go see all of the Atlanta teams in action.

Are you an introvert or an extrovert?

I am probably an even mix of introvert and extrovert. I have days that I just want to stay in all day and watch movies, and I also have days that I love being out and having fun. When I am in a new environment, I am definitely an introvert until I'm comfortable.

Have any hobbies?

One of my favorite things to do is bake. I have a huge sweet tooth, so I love making any kind of treat. Especially around the holidays, baking is something I really enjoy doing with my family.

What is your most cherished possession?

The most precious possession I have is a ring that my sister gave to me. She had it made out of a stone from my grandmother's collection. My grandmother was my favorite person in the world, and I loved spending time looking through her collection every time I visited with her. It is a special reminder every time I wear it.

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

ART WOOD

Born and raised in Tucker, Art Wood personifies the spirit of this amazing community that saw him grow up, start a family, and thrive with his Main Street business, which bears his name. What sets him apart, however, is his relentless involvement with our community, making him deserve the honor of being the City of Tucker's Citizen of the Month.

Shortly after moving to Tucker, I accepted an invitation from a neighbor to walk around downtown Tucker and check out the local businesses. Suddenly, she stopped and pointed to a tall guy and said, "That's Mr. Tucker!" Little did I know that a couple of years later, I would be working with Art Wood, a.k.a. "Mr. Tucker". I met him at a function of a networking organization he had founded and organized, "Fuse Networking & Mastermind," attended by over 100 businesspeople. When it came time to get everyone's attention, he got up on a chair and just began talking. Art does not need a microphone. His voice and friendly demeanor are certainly discernable.

What I didn't know then, was that besides "Fuse," he had also, along with his wife Karen, founded "Taste of Tucker," a Main Street festival that is now in its 12th year of existence, with the main goal to showcase local eateries while fundraising for local organizations Camp Kudzu, NETWorks, and OTTMA. In 2019, the event raised over \$40,000 for these non-profits, and in 2020, it was "reinvented" as "30 Days of Taste of Tucker," encouraging the community to visit 30 local restaurants on designated days to support them during difficult pandemic times. This year, Taste of Tucker takes place on October 2, and is "Back on Main."

For 15 years, Art also led contemporary music worship at Tucker First Methodist Church and formed "Pints and Praise," where the P&P Band played contemporary Christian music at local establishments. Art also helped start the Christmas on Main Candlelight Service, inviting the community to sing carols from 11 p.m. until midnight while sipping on hot chocolate. He also continues his



father's legacy by raising tens of thousands of dollars and collecting toys for the local Salvation Army. Yearly, he hosts both golf and tennis tournaments for this purpose. He and his family also sing carols while ringing the bell for the Salvation Army in front of a local grocery store.

Art is also an active member of Tucker Business Association and a board member of the Smoke Rise Country Club, and speaks at local organizations and schools about community, business, and mortgages. In addition, he coordinates education and networking opportunities for local real estate agents. He and his wife Karen and their two pre-teens, Trace and Makenna, like to play tennis and take mini vacations to the beach or the mountains.

For all his involvement with and support of the community, I would like to nominate Art Wood as the City of Tucker's Citizen of the Month.

Nomination by Dana Plazyk

“ASK RIP”

Rip Robertson is the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He brings to the job years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works.



Since acquiring our parks and beginning to build our department in 2018, we have worked hard on developing facilities, programs, and events. We strive to serve everyone with a variety of programs and events for kids, young adults and our senior population. I have had several conversations asking for “things to do” this fall in and around Tucker. Well, as I’ve answered that question to each, I thought I would take some time to expand on our fall 2021 programs and events.

Coming this month in Henderson Park, our Haunted Trail makes its return with an exciting new twist. This family-friendly event will thrill and challenge kids and parents as they travel through a time portal, where they must collect clues on how to return to present day Tucker.



In November, we are adding a twist to our Campfire Night with featured cocktails sponsored by Local 7 and Ford’s BBQ. Our partners will create a signature cocktail for this popular fall activity that will pair with our ever-popular s’mores. This event will be held at Cofer Park in the Peach Pit. Come out and enjoy a nice venue, pit fire, drinks, and snacks for adults and kids alike.

For December, we will be participating in the “Empty Stocking Fund”, the North Pole at Tucker Recreation Center, a visit to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens lights and a Winter Break Camp for kids. The “Empty Stocking Fund” aids with those in need during

the holidays. Check our website at www.tuckerga.gov/parks for links to participate. We will also have information available for those who would like to volunteer to help distribute gifts at Tucker Rec. Our North Pole at TRC is Saturday December 11 and will feature “Singing Santa and Mrs. Claus”. We will have crafts, cookies, and ornament making and decorating. Come to the happiest place in Tucker to create lasting memories and take your holiday pictures. We are offering our senior participants a chance to travel to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens to view the holiday lights and enjoy the gardens during this festive time. For those days when the kids are out of school and you need some time to shop and prep, we are offering our Winter Day Camp for kids 5-12. Check our website for more details and registration information.

We also have several sports during the fall/winter months:

- Youth basketball registration begins October 15 and runs through December 4. We will begin practices in December with the regular season and tournament play beginning after January 1. We are working with several surrounding communities to organize a league that will provide fun and excitement to our program. We will once again participate in GRPA play at the conclusion of our regular season and hope to host an age group at TRC.
- We will also be offering a winter indoor pickleball league. These adult leagues have been very popular and fill up in an incredibly short time. We will be offering some clinics throughout the fall, as well, so come learn to play and join us in the next league.

We currently have several projects under contract and hope to have most completed in the next several weeks. The boardwalk and bridge at Probst Park should be completed by mid-month with construction on the new Probst Memorial beginning in October and being completed before the end of the year. The sports field lighting at Henderson Park will be completed shortly and we have the sidewalk project being completed by the end of this month, weather permitting. The sidewalk will allow access from the Livsey entrance to the parking lot for the soccer field along the east side of Henderson Park Road. Rosenfeld Park sidewalk will be completed this month and will provide easier access to the tennis courts, pool and future playground. We are moving quickly to install new park entrance signs and hope to begin construction of these this month, as well. Our Fit Court at the new greenspace on Church Street should be ready before the quickly approaching holidays.

TUCKERGA.GOV

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TUCKER *Community Corner*



10/2 – Taste of Tucker
1-6 p.m., Main Street

Taste of Tucker is Back on Main! Come out to enjoy live music, a kids zone and, of course, great food from restaurants all around Tucker. It's not too early to get your tickets at www.tasteoftucker.com.

10/9 – Tucker Cruise In
11 a.m.-2 p.m., Main Street

The Cruise In is back in full swing! A cool city packed with cool classic cars? It's an event you don't want to miss! For more details on attending or entering your car, visit www.facebook.com/tuckercruisein.

10/16 – 12th Annual
Rivers Alive

4-7 p.m., South Fork
Peachtree Creek

The Tucker Civic Association is once again sponsoring the Rivers Alive stream cleanup of the South Fork Peachtree Creek. Visit www.tuckercivic.org for details.

10/8-10/23 – Things
My Mother Taught Me

Fridays-Sundays at various
times, 4898 Lavista Road
Main Street Theatre roars back to the stage with Katherine Disavino's Things My Mother Taught Me. Visit www.mainstreettheatre.org for information and tickets.