



INTUCKER

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TUCKER 2020

OUR TOWN HAS COME A LONG WAY, BUT
WHERE WILL IT BE 20 YEARS FROM NOW?

EDITOR'S NOTE



It's a new year and a new decade in Tucker, a relatively new city.

As we thought about content for this month's magazine, it seemed natural to focus on the future.

The thought of Tucker in the future is intriguing. We have a lot of history to be sure. But we also have all the hallmarks of a city on the rise: great location, charming downtown, a dedicated citizenry. So, what will it all look like? We put that question to you on Facebook and got some pretty interesting responses, some of which you will find on page 8.

We're also looking at the future of the arts in our city. We caught up with the chorus director from Tucker Middle School to talk about how he's taking his group from Tucker, Georgia all the way to the bright lights of New York City. These talented youngsters are getting experiences that could spark them to a career in music or the theater or...who knows? What you'll find out on page 12 is that these kids are super-talented, and their future is super-bright.

So, join us in a toast to the future; a toast to Tucker. We think that 2020 and beyond are going to be pretty fantastic!



MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



From the Cover

Ever dreamt about what Tucker will look like a generation from now? We asked our Facebook friends to dream with us. See their vision on page 8.



Beautiful Music

He went from the bus to the classroom. On page 12, meet the teacher whose determination has the Tucker Middle School chorus earning national accolades.



On the Beat

What's the best way to alert police to a crime concern in your neighborhood? Lt. Schoeppner is here to help in his column on page 5.



Business Boom

Tucker is just finishing up a banner year for economic development. On page 10, John McHenry takes a look back at a very successful 2019.



Ask Rip

Rip's opened up the mailbag for this month's column. On page 15, he tackles questions on everything from skating to softball and more!



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From the Mayor



One of our challenges as elected representatives is to always be mindful of the future as we make decisions. Whether it's land use, capital projects or any number of transportation related issues, everything we do is going to have an impact on Tucker's long-term future. Fortunately, we are guided by an expert staff. With their help, and lots of community input, we developed our Comprehensive Plan and several detailed master plans that help us navigate the best way forward. Still, the future can be hard to predict, and these decisions are often made with anything but certainty.

There are two things I know for sure: Our people are our future, and there will be more and more people in Tucker in the future. I'll speak for all of us on Team Tucker when I say we want to be the most welcoming community in the State of Georgia. In fact, I think we already are. Anyone looking for a place where they can live their whole life – the length of it, regardless of age or stage of life, as well as the full breadth of it, as I've summarized in the

idea of Live, Work, Play and Pray – will find it in Tucker. Regardless of who you are or where you're from, you'll find you're at home in Tucker.

To that end, one of our new initiatives for 2020 is outreach to new residents. For those who are new to town, we'll be sending you a postcard with essential phone numbers, email addresses and an invitation: come to City Hall, meet our staff, and get what we're calling a "Welcome Kit". I won't spoil the surprise, but rest assured these new neighbors will leave City Hall more connected, more informed and with some pretty great Tucker swag.

As we enter a new decade, I see a bright future for Tucker. We'll need our longtime residents and our newest neighbors to continue to engage by volunteering, serving and caring for one another. Tucker is a special place and I intend to nurture and protect that culture as we move forward.

FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR

City Council Update



Because of the busy holiday season, Tucker's Mayor and City Council held just one scheduled meeting during the month of December.

That meeting saw Council take action on three items. The first was a vote to authorize the Mayor to execute an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Gwinnett County on a study of the Mountain Industrial/Jimmy Carter corridor. The study, which would be a collaboration between the City, DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties, and multiple Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), would examine issues like traffic growth, safety, and transit along that corridor. Next, they voted 6-0 to approve an IGA for the distribution of Equalized Homestead Option Sales Tax (EHOST) proceeds with DeKalb County. The final vote was 6-0 to approve a contract for construction of parking lots at Johns Homestead and Smoke Rise Park.

Council held a public hearing and second read on a special land use permit (SLUP) and concurrent variance petition to allow a personal care home to operate at 5002 Chamblee Tucker Road. Council voted 6-0 to defer action on that petition.

Another item that was up for a vote was a pair of SLUPs to allow fuel pumps and alcohol sales at 4246 Lavista Road. The applicant asked for a deferral, which Council granted, because of potential impact to the property from a bridge widening project that GDOT is anticipating in the next five years.

Council also held a public hearing on a SLUP petition for a personal care home at 2722 Regal Way. The issue was up for consideration on a first read, meaning no vote was taken.

All three of those issues will be taken up at the next scheduled City Council meeting on January 14, 2020.



Students from Midvale Elementary led the Pledge of Allegiance at the meeting on December 9. (Courtesy: tuckerga.gov)

DATES TO KNOW

January 1

All City buildings closed
(New Year's Day)

January 8

Community Council

January 14

City Council

January 15

Municipal Court

January 20

All City buildings closed
(Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

January 22

Municipal Court

January 23

Planning Commission

January 27

City Council

TUCKER SOCIAL



 **Nextdoor**

ON THE BEAT *with Lt. Schoeppner*

Lt. D.G. Schoeppner is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be followed at [facebook.com/dgschoeppner](https://www.facebook.com/dgschoeppner) or emailed at dgschoeppner@dekalbcountyga.gov



Most of the police related complaints for the City come across my desk in one way or another. These are typically inquiries about addressing issues like burglaries and entering autos, among other issues in various neighborhoods. Sometimes the police have legitimately made a mistake. When this happens, we take whatever steps are necessary to fix it. However, most of the time the issue can be attributed to poor communication between the public and the police, or a misunderstanding of what the police are capable of doing.

The most recent complaint that I received was regarding homeless people squatting in a vacant house. The complaint went into detail about how the police have been called, but the homeless keep returning. It also talked about how neglected the property is and how the neighbors feel unsafe to live nearby. After researching the call activity for the area, I discovered that for the entire year of 2019 there had been one police call associated with that address. Likewise, there had been also only one code enforcement complaint ever filed. This complaint had just come in the previous day.

Looking at the one call that we had received, the comments stated that two homeless people were arguing in the front yard and that the subjects were leaving as the call was being placed. It further said that the caller did not wish to speak with the responding officer. In this instance, our officer is really only able to go to the location, verify that everyone is gone and then leave.

This is the poor commination that I talked about earlier. The citizen thinks they have done their civic duty by calling. They will also likely be unhappy with the outcome because nothing was done to correct the problem. From our perspective, the information provided gave no indication that there may be homeless living on the property. Even if we did suspect something like this, we would not be able to take action without a complaint from the property owner or one of the squatters having committed some sort of crime in our presence. There is still a small chance that we may be able to take some sort of action, but the chance is very small.

In order to increase the chances of a positive outcome we need the public to make the most of the calls they make to us. If the caller had said something about the homeless squatting in the house, we would have known that it was the underlying problem of the argument. Even better, if the caller would meet with the officer, the citizen could tell us in their own words the nature of the problem. We also need citizens to be willing to testify if charges are made. I know it can be scary, but most of the time cooperative witnesses are the only way cases can be successfully prosecuted. Lastly, keep calling if the problem persists. We may not be able to resolve a situation every time, but if you keep calling, the circumstances may eventually line up where we can take action.

The bottom line is that neither the police nor the citizens can correct these problems on our own. If we work on communicating better, it will almost certainly result in better neighborhoods for us all.

TUCKER TURNING OVER A “NEW LEAF” IN 2020

You’ve read in these pages about the City of Tucker’s “Green Team” (September 2018 issue), a group of staff members who are so passionate about sustainability they have helped to implement common sense policies for city staff like turning off lights at the end of the day or not idling vehicles in the parking lot. Now this group of eco-warriors has its sights set on a new challenge for 2020!

Tucker has filed an application with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) to earn the “New Leaf” designation, a preliminary level to official Green Communities certification. The designation would put Tucker on the road to earning the ARC’s Green Communities bronze level certification within two years.

“We are excited about the New Leaf program and what the Atlanta Regional Commission is doing to encourage sustainability in our cities,” said Tucker’s Planning and Zoning Director Courtney Smith. “We know that residents and businesses around Tucker are passionate about the environment and we look forward to joining them in finding implementable green solutions to make our city a model for sustainability.”

If you’re interested in learning more about green initiatives and how you can make a difference in your own home, visit www.tuckerga.gov/green.



ALL ABOARD THE CENSUS EXPRESS



The City of Tucker wants to make sure YOU are counted in this year’s Census. Look for mailings from the U.S. Census Bureau starting in March and be sure to count everyone in your family. It’s good for you and it’s good for Tucker! [#tkrcensus](https://twitter.com/tkrcensus)

STEVE AND BETH HENSON

CITIZENS OF THE MONTH



"It is my pleasure and honor to nominate my friends, Steve and Beth Henson, for Citizens of the Month. For decades, Steve has lived a life of service as a Georgia State Senator from 1991 to 1999 and again from 2003 to the present. During his time in the State Senate he served as the Assistant Floor Leader to the Governor, Chair of the DeKalb Senate Delegation and the State Senate Minority Leader. Steve has worked tirelessly through the decades and has always been a friend to Tucker, his chosen hometown, especially during the tumultuous time of the cityhood debates.

In the past few years, Steve met and married his love, Beth. In true partnership, Beth immediately immersed herself in the Tucker Way and has been an active and integral volunteer in Tucker's Smoke Rise community by joining the Smoke Rise Mountain Mums Garden Club and with events like the Walk to Remember. The walk takes place later this month and is in honor of seven lives lost too soon due to irresponsible driving. The Walk to Remember is free to participants, but donations are welcome to provide scholarships to local area teens for driving school and to raise awareness for no texting while driving.

This past year, Steve announced that he will not be running for re-election in 2020 and this will be his last session as a State Senator. No matter what your political affiliation is, Steve's presence on the floor and support for the Tucker community will be missed but we are excited for him, Beth and their next adventure."

Nomination by Gaye Auman

REMEMBERING JOHN KEETER

In our April 2019 issue, John Keeter was recognized as our Citizen of the Month. A leader in the community, especially with Tucker's Scout Troop 129, John was a model of selflessness and volunteerism. Just before Thanksgiving, we found out that John passed away suddenly leaving behind his wife Patrece and two wonderful children. He also left behind countless scouts who looked up to him as a mentor. John's loss was felt across the entire Tucker community. His life touched so many and he will be missed.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

WITH THE GROUNDWORK LAID, TUCKER IS PRIMED TO FLY INTO THE FUTURE

A new city is a lot like a child. Once they're born, they take a lot of work. They can't do very much at first and then eventually they learn how to crawl. Very soon after, they're cruising around walking as if they'd been doing it for years. And then finally they're running, able to hold their own while playing with friends and older siblings.

That's where Tucker is. Over the first four years of cityhood, it's gone from no money with no staff and no direction to a thriving and experienced city government that is balancing fiscally responsible budgets year in and year out. A brand new city was never going to be able to compete with established neighbors like Dunwoody or Chamblee when it came to capital projects and major improvements. But now, thanks to some guiding documents, Tucker is poised to make long-term changes that will impact residents for generations to come. Those documents include:

- **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** – Tucker began its Comprehensive Plan process in the very first year of cityhood, 2016. Hundreds of residents and stakeholders provided input on what their vision for Tucker was and what they wanted to see changed as the City moved ahead into the future. This document, which was formally adopted about a year and a half later, lays out how zoning and development decisions should be made for the next couple of decades and beyond.
- **TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN** – Formally adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, this was crafted by engineering professionals, shaped by public feedback, and formally adopted by the Mayor and City Council in 2019. This very thorough approach to the City's future transportation

needs looked at transit, intersection safety, road design and walkability. While it is a long-term planning document, it is already being used to make substantive changes in Tucker.

- **TRAIL MASTER PLAN** – Knowing that any strong community needs a component of walkability, the City partnered with the PATH Foundation in 2019 to take an in-depth look at how a system of trails could be constructed through Tucker and connect to surrounding cities. The process got tremendous public engagement and residents should soon see the first fruits: a multi-use path that winds right through the heart of downtown Tucker.
- **DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN** – Tucker's downtown, and Main Street in particular, is iconic. So iconic, in fact, that brokers and developers are keen to jump in and capitalize on what Tucker has to offer. Before they are able to put their thumbprint on Tucker, the City decided to contract with experienced consultants to look at how best the downtown can be built out and its history maintained over the next generation.
- **PARKS MASTER PLAN** – When the City of Tucker assumed responsibility for its parks and recreation services in 2018, there was a lot of work to be done, but also a lot of opportunity. With about 300 acres of parkland to examine, consultants polled the public and used their own expertise to offer recommendations on how to improve Parks and Recreation in the future. The approved Master Plan has already yielded a renovation of the Tucker Recreation Center gymnasium and there are other major improvements planned in the years to come.



“Three housing with service”

“I see celebration”

CELEBRATING 85 YEARS! 1955-2040

“Three-to-five story building in downtown area with frequent train service east and west.”
~Steve Hagen~

“Very walkable, with bike lanes everywhere for bikes and electric scooters.”
~Daniela Cartledge~

“I would like to see Main Street pedestrianized and closed to vehicle traffic.”
~Camille Mahdi~

“Will we graduate from drones to something even more Star Trekkie? Will we enjoy community events virtually, so grandparents in Florida can attend?”
~Claire Hayes~

MATTHEWS Cafeteria

Buy Tickets Here
2040 TUCKER HIGH HOME-COMING GAME

October 25, 2040

NO HOVERBOARDS ALLOWED ON MAIN STREET

BUSINESS BOOM

by John McHenry, Community and Economic Development Director



As we head into a new year, it's a fine time to reflect on some of the continued expansion

over 2019 as the City's Economic Development staff works on ensuring that existing buildings are fully leased and our business owners are able to flourish right here in Tucker.

A 190,000 SF light industrial warehouse building that was built in 2018 on spec at 4561 Greer Circle is now almost completely leased with two prestige tenants. They are Industrial Valco, a national industrial piping company, and Anker International, which provides freight forwarding and third-party logistics services.

Broker Joseph Kriss of Seefried Industrial Properties says that leasing a new modern industrial building with high ceilings so close to the core of the region is a major driver.

"This is a great location for our tenants with direct access to Highway 78," Kriss explained. "In addition, we market the community of Tucker as a responsible and responsive city – something we've experienced first-hand through the construction and leasing process."

Right nearby at 4473 Sarr Parkway, the 120,000 SF distribution facility for Georgia Furniture Mart (formerly known as Underpriced Furniture) will open in April 2020. Heading a little further to the south, the recently renovated 130,000 SF property



Brand Vaughan's 44,000 SF building on Lawrenceville Highway is just the latest example of industrial expansion and investment in the City of Tucker. (Courtesy: tuckerga.gov)

at 5356 East Ponce de Leon is close to being fully leased out. Tyler Fann, who represents the property, is bullish on the location.

"Tucker's industrial market is driven by strong labor demographics, excellent transportation infrastructure and a business-friendly City government," Fann said. "The combination of these factors has resulted in significant new job growth, which should continue well into the future."

The City of Tucker works closely with the talented economic development staff at Decide DeKalb and participated in a tour of industrial sites with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and other economic development project managers in mid-December. Three of the locations were in Tucker.

Randi Mason, Decide DeKalb Vice President of Economic Development shared, "Partnerships like the ones we have with DeKalb's cities are important to businesses when they are making decisions about where to relocate or to

expand. We want to make sure businesses know we are one team supporting them as they grow."

Along Lawrenceville Highway at Brand Vaughan's 11-acre property, the company is building a 44,000 SF facility to accommodate continued growth for this family-owned business.

On the retail front, when the Pollo Tropical closed in front of the Target at Lavista Road and Northlake Parkway as part of a corporate restructuring, it left a newly constructed vacant restaurant site. Fortunately, Del Taco Fresh Mexican Grill opened in that location on December 4. Del Taco has almost 20 locations in Georgia and focuses on burritos and tacos, but also offers burgers and fries. Read more about them in the Business of the Month feature on the next page.

Looking forward, staff at the City will be working to continue to champion, accommodate and retain new businesses as we build on the success story that is Tucker.

Keep tabs on the Tucker business scene at tuckerga.gov/biz

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

DEL TACO



Many around Tucker were disappointed when the Pollo Tropical restaurant at 4227 Lavista Road abruptly shut down last year. The Tucker location was one of the chain's newest buildings, yet one of many across the region that closed as a result of corporate decisions.

Fortunately, the space is being put to good – and familiar – use.

On December 4, Del Taco held a grand opening and ribbon cutting in that same space, joined by Mayor Auman, members of the City Council and Tucker area business leaders.

"We've come to Tucker to basically serve the community great food and

hopefully make a difference," said Del Taco manager James Harris. "We want to bring them some authentic Mexican-American cuisine and...make our mark in Tucker so we can build our brand."

The restaurant, which is expanding with several new locations across Metro Atlanta, boasts a diverse menu of offerings. Customers can choose from things like tacos, burritos, and salads or more American fare like traditional and meatless burgers.

So, what's the difference between Del Taco and their competitors? Harris says they take a unique approach in the kitchen.

"[The difference is] the quality and the time that we spend making our food," he explains. "All of our prep is done fresh every day. So, we grate our own cheese, we slice our own avocados, tomatoes, all of that's done fresh and at a lot of other companies it comes pre-bagged."

Del Taco also sits in an enviable location for customer traffic. Situated across from I-285 at the intersection of Lavista Road and Northlake Parkway and right in front of the Northlake Target, thousands of cars pass by the restaurant each day.

You can view menus and specials at www.deltaco.com.

MR. SIMMONS' OPUS

TUCKER MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER STOKES A PASSION FOR THE ARTS



As Timothy Simmons conducts his choir at the Tucker Middle School Winter Concert, he looks back at a crowd of familiar faces. It's not just his students' parents who have come to see the performance tonight. It's more than his coworkers or some supportive friends. On this night, he sees faces from the past; students he mentored years ago, who have come back home to see their old chorus teacher work his magic with the next generation. He sees family.

"I think as a teacher we want to see our former students succeed in life," Simmons says. "Having them come back [and] to see how they're doing I think it says a lot to me because it means I had some type of impact on their life."

Simmons has run the chorus program at Tucker Middle for the past decade and, while he's built it into one of the most successful programs in DeKalb County, it was a long and unusual road to get to this point. A native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Simmons attended Winston-Salem

State University, where he got his degree in Music Business. He then moved to the metro Atlanta area, taking a full-time job as a staff musician at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. It was a position that allowed him to flex his musical muscles, but he felt something missing.

"It was good, and the money was good. But I enjoy making a difference."

He decided that education was his best path toward making that difference. So, in 1998, he applied to drive a bus for the DeKalb County School District. It wasn't a stretch; a state law in his native North Carolina allowed licensed drivers 16 and older to work as school bus drivers. Simmons took advantage of that policy and actually drove his own classmates to school his junior and senior years of high school.

"I think driving the bus helped me to learn that classroom management is paramount," Simmons explains. "One of my friends told me, 'you cannot

teach in chaos.' So, I think driving the bus helped me bring those same ideas and same principles into the classroom."

After four months driving for DeKalb County Schools, he found out about an opening at Livsey Elementary. The school needed a paraprofessional and, thinking Simmons would be a good fit, the principal at nearby Midvale Elementary referred him for the job.

That paraprofessional position eventually turned into a chance to lead Livsey's music department. After mentoring elementary school children for more than a decade, he finally decided it was time to seek a new challenge. He found that challenge two miles across town at Tucker Middle School.

"Mr. Simmons is an exceptional Chorus Teacher!" says TMS Principal Dr. Kathy Cunningham. "He is extremely talented and has the ability to teach students at all levels of competency. He has led our students to reach new heights in the music arena."

TUCKER CLUSTER

Updates & News

Important Dates

- **January 1-3** - Winter Break
- **January 6** - First Day of Second Semester
- **January 20** – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

THE BRAG SHEET

Brockett Elementary

- Brockett got into the holiday spirit, hosting a very successful toy drive in December. Thanks to generosity of parents, faculty and the community at large, they collected over 200 toys to donate to Toys for Tots.

Livsey Elementary

- Livsey's fifth graders attended an outdoor education field trip to Camp Jekyll 4-H Center on Jekyll Island, one of the barrier islands located along the Georgia coast on November 18-20. This was a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about the unique Georgia coast through hands-on experiences.

Midvale Elementary

- Midvale is spending December giving back to the community. They started the giving season by collecting and donating socks to a shelter for women and children. Next, they turned their focus to their Midvale family. Through their annual Giving Tree, they were able to provide much needed items to Midvale families in need.

Smoke Rise Elementary

- The SRES National Jr. Beta Club took first place in the Songfest category at the Georgia Elementary Beta Convention. They are now eligible to compete at the National Beta Convention in Fort Worth, Texas this summer.

Since arriving at TMS, Simmons and his students have made some sweet music, traveling to compete in cities like Nashville, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Last school year, though, the group traveled to New York City for an invitation-only performance at the famed Carnegie Hall.

"I would have never thought in this life that I would have an opportunity to step foot in there and to take a middle school choral group there. That was a highlight of my life," Simmons says.

While basking in the glow of such a hallowed venue, he admits to also thinking ahead and asking himself, "Okay, now what's next? Because for some, that's the pinnacle of their career to be able to go and sing [at Carnegie Hall], but I'm thinking 'what's next?'"

For students like eighth grader Jackson Pickett, "next" is a trip to compete at Universal Studios in Orlando.

"We are excited to go to Orlando in the spring," Pickett says. "Mr. Simmons is a wonderful music teacher. He is excited about teaching music and he takes us on wonderful music trips."

The Tucker chorus often competes against bigger schools from around the country with more choral participants and more money, but Simmons says that his students' talent is the great equalizer.

"We are a DeKalb County public school," he explains. "We're not a performing arts school. These are just ordinary kids who enjoy singing. Many of them come with

no musical experience. Some come with a lot of experience. So, I just accept who's willing to work hard and, if they can sing or match pitch, I'll do the rest."

He also credits the Tucker community for much of his program's success. Last year, as the chorus prepared to travel to Carnegie Hall, they quickly realized it would be the most expensive trip the group had ever taken. Rather than burden parents with covering the full cost of travel, Simmons turned to local restaurants, churches, teachers and other Tucker Cluster schools. In all, he raised about \$5,000 in donations, making the trip possible for his students.

"Tucker really appreciates the arts," Simmons says. "I've been in this community since 1998 and I've developed friendships with families...and they have been so supportive of the arts, particularly the chorus.

"The arts really broaden [students'] perspectives socially, really help them make new friendships while learning music at the same time, building healthy relationships outside of their regular classes. I believe the arts add a healthy balance to any child's life."

And thousands of children have gained an appreciation for the arts thanks to Simmons' work. He'll continue to be reminded of that each time he sees an old student come back to say thanks.

Want to see your Tucker Cluster chorus students in action? Check out the Cluster Festival on March 27 at 9 a.m. at Tucker High School.

TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

KATHY HUFFORD, FINANCE COORDINATOR

What was your path to working for the City of Tucker?

While my previous roles in finance were in the private sector, I've served public customers throughout my career. First, at public pension manager INVESCO Capital Management and, following a break to rear young children, I worked for locally founded USATestprep for the past eight years. My experiences working with public purchasing agents helped prepare me to work on this side of public contracts.

What are your responsibilities in the Finance Department?

As Finance Coordinator, I work with all city departments to manage the procurement of goods and services for the City. In addition to managing procurement, I work with the Finance team to ensure timely and accurate communication with local businesses about the business licensing process. We are continually working to improve efficiencies in the application and renewal process for all Tucker businesses.

What is procurement and why is it important to the City?

Procurement is the process of finding and acquiring goods, services or works vital to the mission of the City. As stewards of the City's assets and resources, the staff and Council follow procedures for competitive procurements to ensure that all contracts for goods and services are in the best interest of the City. To that end, I assist all city departments in finding vendors and acquiring necessary goods and services through competitive quotes, invitations to bid (ITB), requests for qualifications (RFQ) and requests for proposals (RFP).

What do you enjoy most about working for Team Tucker?

As a lifelong resident of DeKalb County, I've lived in Tucker for more than 20 years and know first-hand the pride of place shared among the people who live here and the people who do business here. I'm proud to now be part of the team that honors Tucker's traditions while working to ensure a prosperous future for our city.



Off the Wall

What are some of your favorite things to do around Tucker?

I really enjoy walking in Tucker. Whether walking in my neighborhood, along Main Street, or on the track at the high school, I love meeting and greeting the diversity of people who make Tucker truly a city for all.

Have any New Year's traditions?

I resolved long ago to never make New Year's resolutions.

What's the best part about being a mom?

I can't think of any part that isn't the best! I've enjoyed every stage of rearing my three kids and am making the most of the short time we have them remaining home with us. They are fun and funny. They certainly keep us young.

“ASK RIP” *Answers Your Park Questions*



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. Rip is a former Military Intelligence Analyst for the U.S. Army and is active with the Army Reserve.

Happy New Year, everybody! It's been a while since we've done a mailbag and we got a lot of great questions this month. So let's dive in!

Bruce Nutter - Now that the City of Tucker is collecting property tax revenue for the purpose of parks and recreation, will a citizens oversight board be assembled to see that those funds are spent most effectively, to work with Park Pride and to work with the Friends of Tucker Parks groups?

Bruce, these revenues are collected and administered by the City Manager, Finance Director and myself with all expenditures approved in the annual budget by the Mayor and City Council. As part of our budgeting process, we work closely with each of the Parks Friends groups to identify projects and utilize our recently adopted Master Plan to help guide what is budgeted on an annual basis. We also have a contract and a great relationship with Park Pride and are able to use their expertise as we improve, expand and maintain our parks. Just this year, we were able to leverage our funds through grants from Park Pride (in partnership with three Friends groups), DeKalb County and the State Department of Natural Resources to help us improve several parks. This was all done through advice, assistance and partnerships within our community. We are diligent in all of our expenditures and we solicit input from all of our resources as we plan and move forward. Finally, the City is audited annually to ensure funds are expended in accordance with state and federal regulations/laws.

Matt Skidmore - Any plans for a skatepark in Tucker?

At this time, there are no plans for a skatepark. After undergoing a lengthy Master Plan process and gathering extensive community feedback, a skatepark was not an amenity that was recommended.



Friends of Tucker Parks hosted an information night on December 5 at Blue Tarp and High Card Brewing to greet people from the community and answer questions about volunteer involvement in Tucker's parks. (Courtesy: tuckerga.gov)

John Brieske - Are there any plans for a softball league at Cofer Park?

We are always excited about bringing new programs/activities to our parks. This is one that has been discussed recently and we will be offering this spring. Please stay in touch and be on the lookout for news. Also, we could always use input from teams and other leagues about what they would like to see as part of a new league.

Chris Harshman - Will the Tucker Nature Preserve still be connected to the paved multi-use trail system that Tucker has planned?

Yes, as the trail plan is expanded, each of the Tucker parks will be connected. They are currently working on the initial phase of the path and you will see it expanded over the coming years. We are excited about getting this project started and seeing access increased to all of our community parks.



TUCKER Community Corner



1/14 – University of Government Affairs at Tucker
6 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road

Our class of 2020 has its penultimate session at the Tucker Recreation Center, learning all the ins and outs of Tucker's Parks and Recreation Department.

1/15 – Tucker Lifelong Community Committee Meeting
7 p.m., 4358 Lynburn Drive

Join Tucker residents of all ages who have a vested interest in the community and its growth. This group supports Tucker as a Lifelong Community.

1/20 – Day of Service
Various sites

Hundreds of volunteers from across metro Atlanta come to Tucker each year to take part in a variety of Parks and Recreation service projects. Whether you can give an hour or a whole morning, come lend your talents!

1/28 – Tucker High School Basketball Senior Night
6 p.m., 5036 Lavista Road

Come watch the young men and women of the Tucker High School basketball program take on Mundy's Mill and prepare to celebrate the senior class in their final regular season home game.