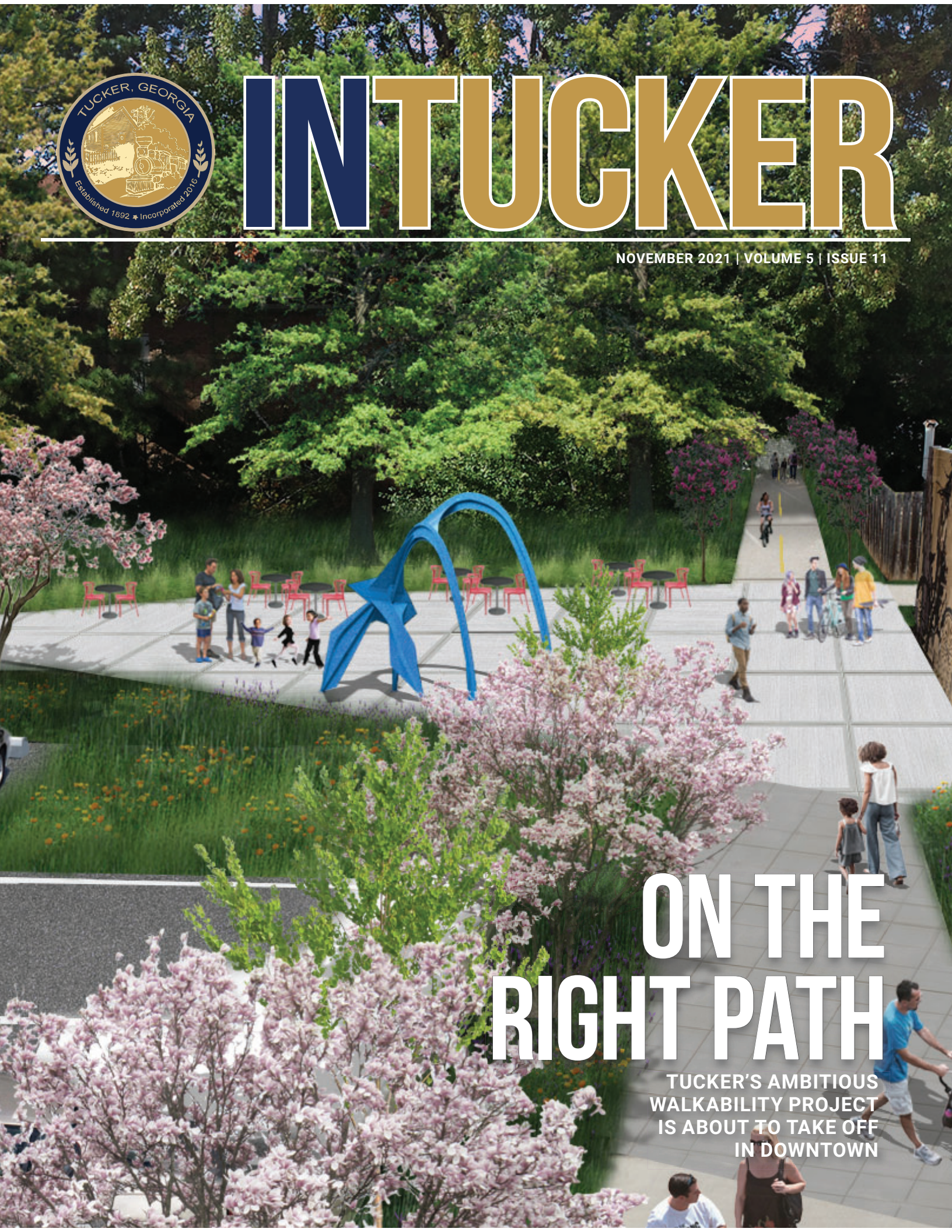




INTUCKER

NOVEMBER 2021 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 11



ON THE RIGHT PATH

TUCKER'S AMBITIOUS
WALKABILITY PROJECT
IS ABOUT TO TAKE OFF
IN DOWNTOWN

EDITOR'S NOTE



Tucker is a great place. That much goes without saying. But to make a great place requires great people and, inevitably, if you want to keep the place great, it necessitates great change. That's precisely what you see happening in Tucker in this November issue.

The first area of change you're seeing is in progress on our trail system. "What trail system?" you ask. Great question. Our community helped author a Trail Master Plan a couple years back and we're finally seeing some of that hard work come to fruition. It's a huge project that ultimately will span more than 30 miles throughout Tucker, connecting it to neighboring cities and trail systems. Why did it take so long to get started? We share some of that in our cover story on page 3.

As you'll read on page 5, last month our City Council approved a resolution that essentially declares Tucker to be an inclusive and welcoming city. It's a common sense statement to some, but to others this is a document that truly has a deeper meaning. Either way, it's the first step toward codifying certain protections in our city, a process that will rely heavily on public input and something to keep an eye on in the weeks and months to come.

And finally, our Tucker Cluster schools are looking at the prospects for change. A Comprehensive Master Plan is about to go before the DeKalb County Board of Education and several of the recommendations could have gigantic impacts on our neighborhood schools. You can read the details and decide for yourself on page 10.

A lot's changing, and that's a good thing. If we don't change, we grow stagnant. And that's something Tucker will never be accused of.

MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER

Tucker's trail project is getting a jump start! When will we see ground broken? And when will there be an actual trail? Those answers on page 3.



BUSINESS BOOM

One of the longest running businesses in the City of Tucker has a great story to tell. Find out why customers have gone to Northlake Mall for their niche needs for 50 years on page 8.



COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

DeKalb County's schools have been under the microscope as consultants look at the best ways to optimize area schools. What that means for the Tucker Cluster on page 10.



CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

From soccer to social and flying the friendly skies, there's nothing our Citizens of the Month can't do. Get to know them on page 14.



ASK RIP

The Tucker Parks and Recreation staff are doing their part to help for the holidays. Get to know the program that's giving families in need a merry Christmas on page 15.



INTUCKER

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 11

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From the Mayor:



This image and cover rendering courtesy of PATH Foundation/KAIZEN Collaborative.

We've made a lot of progress here in the City of Tucker both recently and since we incorporated as a city in 2016. I often talk with community groups about that progress and I try to emphasize that it's about getting a good result, but that getting the process right can be even more important. As the government, we have to consider and protect the rights and interests of all the parties involved, often with special attention to those with the smallest voice, since the loudest usually take care of themselves.

This was a concept I wrote about at length in the March 2020 issue of *InTucker*. If you recall, there had been a lot of talk in the community about a huge sinkhole on the old Tucker Tire property along Lawrenceville Highway just east of Main Street. It was a sinkhole that started small, but grew exponentially over the course of several years to the point where the business had to relocate and we had to cordon off the property to keep someone from falling in. People were concerned about the aesthetics, they were concerned about safety, and they were concerned about the perception that the City of Tucker had done nothing to fix the problem. In reality, our role was limited, as this sinkhole was on private property and was the subject of lawsuits and legal actions between the property owner, DeKalb County, GDOT, and others. Eventually, we were able to use our local city code and environmental court to force the property owner to remediate the problem and ultimately fill the sinkhole. Today, you pass by that property and you would never know there was once a sinkhole there.

We got the right result because we went through the right process.

Similarly, it's been slow going in getting our Tucker trail off the ground. In 2019, our City Council approved a Trail Master Plan, calling for more than 30 miles of pedestrian and bike-friendly trails to run through the City and connect to trail networks in neighboring communities. It was an exciting prospect for our future, but we understood clearly that there would be a lengthy process before people were actually walking on a new trail. It was an easy decision that the first leg of the trail would be a natural fit downtown, where it would add to all the other exciting development of sidewalks, streetlights and so on. Accordingly, our staff reached out to roughly 20 property owners along the site of the proposed trail to see about acquiring the property we would need. Some were very small pieces, and others were more significant. Over the last couple of years, some owners have donated or sold us the property, others have given or sold us easements, and some negotiated other improvements in an exchange (to preserve parking or access, for example).

Just within the past month or so, we were able to secure the biggest piece of the trail puzzle: a group of four parcels behind Local 7 that will enable us to get the trail started, and also allow us to have some additional downtown greenspace and parking. The land was owned by the Cofer family, who you likely know from Cofer Brothers, the Tucker Cruise In or Holiday on Main. Before reaching any

(continued on page 7)

DATES TO KNOW

November 1
Downtown Development
Authority

November 3
Traffic Court

November 8
City Council

November 10
Traffic Court

November 11
Veterans Day observed
(City Hall closed)

November 16
Zoning Board of Appeals

November 17
Environmental Court

October 18
Planning Commission

November 22
City Council

November 25-26
Thanksgiving observed
(City Hall closed)

City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and City Council met twice during the month of October, discussing and deciding on several important issues. At their meeting on October 12, they held seven public hearings on what was a very busy night for the body. The first of the public hearings surrounded an ordinance to amend the City Code to update exemptions to local occupation taxes. That measure passed on a unanimous vote, as did an ordinance to amend the Fiscal Year '22 budget. Council then voted unanimously to approve a special land use permit (SLUP) to allow a personal care home at 3710 S. Marlborough Drive. That was followed by approval of an ordinance to strengthen and clarify the City's sign code.

There were three other public hearings on issues that did not go for votes. First, Council heard discussion on an ordinance that would create an entertainment district in downtown Tucker, as well as set new standards for sidewalk dining. Next, they held a public hearing on an amendment to the City Code that would make several changes for the purpose of cleaning up issues in the Zoning Ordinance. The final public hearing was for a SLUP and concurrent variances for a proposed Chick-fil-A at 4435 Hugh Howell Road. All three of these issues should come back before Council for a vote at an upcoming meeting.

Council also took action on a handful of other issues that did not require public hearings. Those included:

- approving a resolution to provide for an inclusive, fair and welcoming city. This resolution must be posted on all of the City's communications channels and be distributed to all licensed businesses at least once per year (see page 4 for full text).

- awarding a contract to DAF Concrete for \$175,867.50 for sidewalks to be constructed along Church Street and Tucker Industrial Road.
- awarding a contract to Bliss Products for \$93,820.76 for construction of a new playground and swings in Rosenfeld Park.
- approving a resolution to submit a pre-application for the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant. The \$3 million grant would be used to repair or replace the existing dams at Twin Brothers Lakes.
- approving a resolution to dedicate a privately owned portion of Richardson Street, officially making it a public right-of-way.

At the Council work session on October 25, they received updates from staff on several topics including transportation projects, park projects and filming in the City.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will be Monday November 8 at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall (1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B).

FOLLOW US



nextdoor



Councilmembers Pat Soltys and Michelle Penkava look on during a presentation at the October 12 City Council meeting. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

Resolution of the City of Tucker, Georgia To Provide for an Inclusive, Fair and Welcoming City

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of Tucker recognize the importance of embracing our City's diversity; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of Tucker desire to ensure that all persons within the City have equal access to employment, housing, and public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, it is the purpose and intent of the Mayor and City Council of Tucker to protect and safeguard the right of all persons to be free from all forms of discrimination in regard to employment, housing, and public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council of Tucker affirm Federal laws and those of the State of Georgia that define illegal forms of discrimination, including case law decided by the Supreme Courts of the United States and the State of Georgia,

Now therefore be it Resolved, that the Mayor and City Council of Tucker adopt this Statement of Values providing for an inclusive, fair and welcoming City:

People of every sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, age, physical/mental ability or disability, national origin, religion or beliefs, marital status, familial status, veteran or military status, who seek its peace and prosperity, are welcomed and encouraged to reside, work, recreate and worship in the City of Tucker; and

Discrimination by any individual or organization, whether public or private, based upon any person's actual or perceived sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, age, physical/mental ability or disability, national origin, religion or beliefs, marital status, familial status, veteran or military status, will not be tolerated in the City of Tucker; and

The health, safety and welfare of the City of Tucker increases when we regard and treat each other with respect, kindness and love; and

We add to the quality of life in the City of Tucker when we endeavor at every turn to gain understanding from our diverse backgrounds, experiences and individuality, and strength from our shared values of being inclusive, fair and welcoming.

Be it further resolved, the City Manager will cause this resolution to be distributed immediately through all communication channels operated by the City of Tucker; and

Be it further resolved, the City's Finance Director will ensure that a copy of this resolution be distributed to every holder of an Occupational Tax Certificate within the City of Tucker at least once per year.

So Resolved and adopted this 12th day of October 2021.

Attest:


Bonnie Warner, City Clerk

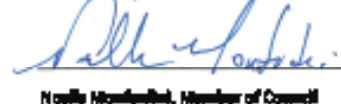


Signed


Frank Annunzio, Mayor


Pat Soltyz, Member of Council


Mark Robbins, Member of Council


Noelle Nimschewski, Member of Council


Anne Lerner, Member of Council


Michelle Pankava, Member of Council



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.

For this month's article, I'd like to introduce you to three of our newest Tucker Precinct staff members. Our officers are important parts of our community and it is critical for you to know who they are, as well as for them to get to know you. Later in this article, I'd like to reintroduce a feature that longtime readers of this column might remember, the "Police Blotter". I think you will find this month's Blotter a little different (and a little lighter) than previous versions.

Even before the COVID crisis temporarily shut down our world, law enforcement agencies nationwide had struggled to recruit and retain good personnel. Unfortunately, the DeKalb Police Department has not been "immune" to this trend, and indeed has experienced a good number of officers departing our department for a variety of reasons. However, over the years our department has been fortunate to have a strong Background and Recruiting Section. These hardworking detectives and support personnel have done an excellent job at finding new and experienced individuals to answer our "call to serve".

One of the individuals that has answered this call is my new boss, Assistant Precinct Commander Captain Emanuel McCown. Originally from the Bronx, New York, Captain McCown received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Pennsylvania. After joining our department in

2007, Captain McCown quickly hit the ground running, rising through our ranks through his hard work and his many well-researched and well thought-out decisions.

Prior to coming to Tucker Precinct, Captain McCown spent several years as the Commander of our Internal Affairs Unit. For those who may not know, our Internal Affairs Unit is an independent unit within the Department which reports directly to the Chief of Police. Our "IA" detectives are tasked with thoroughly investigating officers that may not be following departmental policy or state and federal law. Trust me, our Internal Affairs detectives are determined individuals who do not hesitate to shed light on what we do, both internally and externally when needed. Captain McCown brings this determined sense of duty and integrity with him, together with the empathy of a great leader, to help us manage the professional officers of Tucker Precinct.

Another great addition to Tucker Precinct arrived here in August. Originally from New York and raised in Florida, Sergeant Adrian Thompson migrated to South Carolina many years ago with his new wife, having met her at the great Florida A&M University. After spending eight years as a sheriff's deputy in South Carolina and becoming somewhat famous (see various episodes of COPS, season 28), Sgt. Thompson once again



(l to r) Sergeant Adrian Thompson, Officer Jumi Lee and Assistant Precinct Commander Captain Emanuel McCown.

(Credit: tuckerga.gov)

became a traveler, looking to find a bit more excitement and glamor here on the outskirts of Atlanta.

Sergeant Thompson comes to Tucker Precinct after a long stint at our sister precinct, North Central. During his tenure with the Department, Sergeant Thompson spent several years as a beat officer and later moved on to become a detective in our Criminal Investigations Division. Thanks to our Background and Recruiting Unit, we were fortunate to land the experienced and humble Sgt. Thompson several years ago. I am sure we will soon be hearing from the producers of the "Hill Street Blues" reboot to see if Sgt. Thompson is available for a leading role!

Finally, I'd like to introduce the newest member of our Tucker staff, Officer Jumi Lee. Not only is Officer Lee new to Tucker Precinct, she is literally new to the Department, having just graduated from our 126th Police Academy in September. While at the academy, Officer Lee quickly excelled, becoming both the 126th class leader and winning the "Instructor's Choice" award due to her leadership and strong commitment to learning.

It's no surprise that she excelled at the academy. During her previous service in the Army Reserves, not only was Officer Lee awarded the highest academic award in her basic training class, she was also presented with the "Ironclad Award" for her commitment and dedication to learning and physical fitness. Like Sgt. Thompson, Officer Lee is also famous in her own right, having made the State of Georgia's High School Band as a top oboe player. Who would have thought a top Gwinnett County oboe player would turn out to become an award-winning police recruit in DeKalb County? A big "thanks" again to our Background and Recruiting unit!

After reading these short biographies, I hope you feel as fortunate as I do to have these three individuals join our already strong team at Tucker Precinct. Not only are these three superstars very intelligent and hardworking individuals, they all have a sincere mission to serve and protect the citizens of this community.

POLICE BLOTTER

TAKING A SNOOZE

On October 18, Tucker Precinct officers responded to a residential location off Old Norcross Road. The caller was concerned about an individual's health due to his vehicle not having been moved in quite a while. The complainant was also concerned due to the large number of vultures sitting on the roof of the home.

Upon their arrival, the officers were able to make contact with the occupant who stated he had been "asleep". There was no explanation for the abundance of vultures observed on the roof.

KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

On October 18, a Tucker Precinct Officer on the way back to the station observed a vehicle disregard a red light on Lawrenceville Highway. Unfortunately, the traffic signal was directly in front of Tucker Precinct. When stopped, the driver was revealed to not have a driver's license. He was subsequently arrested and taken to the DeKalb County Jail.

Fortunately, the vehicle was able to be released to the driver's brother, who was found to have a valid license. While driving the vehicle away, the driver's brother did stop at the red light in front of Tucker Precinct.

FROM THE MAYOR (continued from page 3)

agreement, the City of Tucker hired an outside engineering firm to conduct both Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental studies, to ensure there was no hazardous condition left there from any previous use of the property. Then we had an independent, third-party appraisal of the property conducted. Meanwhile, the Cofer family had their own appraisal done. All of that took time, and then there was a lot of back and forth about whether we might take a long-term lease on the property, purchase it outright, or enter into some kind of partnership. In the end, all sides agreed a purchase by the City would be best for everyone. We ultimately settled on a sale price of \$1.2 million; higher than our appraisal, but lower than theirs. It's a fair deal for both sides that will allow for some exciting improvements downtown, which has been everyone's goal.

With this piece now fit into the puzzle, we move forward. It may be ambitious, but I hope to see ground broken by the end of the year. In 2022, you're certainly going to see a lot of construction going on parallel to Main Street just behind that row of restaurants. And once that construction wraps up, you're going to have a walkable path that activates our alleyways and gives new life to our beautiful downtown.

It didn't happen overnight, but it is happening. And because we got the process right, the results will be well worth the wait.



FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR

BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



Last month, *InTucker* was dedicated to telling the stories – past and present – of Tucker’s Northlake area. One of the stories we didn’t get to share in that issue was of one of the original tenants of Northlake Mall: Gilbert Kann of Northlake Stamp & Coin.

Since the onset of the pandemic, we’ve heard story after story about how online shopping has skyrocketed, often negatively impacting small, local brick and mortar businesses. However, this is not one of those stories. Why? After all these years, Kann credits one thing with his continued success: steadfast customers. The business has experienced a slight uptick because people are staying at home more and discovering or rediscovering hobbies and other creative things to do.

“Our customers are very loyal,” Kann explained. “They come back, and they bring their friends and generations of their family. I don’t know how many times a day somebody comes in and says “I was here as a child” or “this is where I started my penny collection” or “I bought a package of Pokémon cards, and I got a Charizard card.””

Stores large and small, chains, and boutiques have come and gone from the mall over the years, but Stamp & Coin has stood the test of time through economic downturns, changes in management companies, and now COVID-19.

Kann’s loyal customers also create what’s called a niche market that the big box stores can rarely replicate. Stores like Stamp & Coin can’t compete with their mass production and distribution, but their winning strategy is to offer products that are unique or one of a kind or hard to find items and a level of personal service that the big boxes cannot.



"It's all about the experience that we create for each customer," Kann explained at the beginning of our conversation and repeated many times all throughout the interview. "You pretty much know that the person has some type of interest in history or collecting when they come in the store, so it's not about selling them something. Whether it's for themselves or perhaps a gift, they more than likely have some level of appreciation of what the store has to offer."

And, speaking of offerings, Stamp & Coin has tens of thousands of pieces of inventory, and that's just what they're able to display. Coins and paper money from around the world, postage stamps, games, and cards; you name it, they have it. And on the off chance they don't have it, they're happy to research and find it for the customer.

"It's about the experience we can create for that person or that family. Not only are you telling a story, but you're also giving them something that they can look at and touch to help appreciate the history even more."

"We can spend hours and hours doing research offline to fulfill a customer request," Kann said. "Not only are we serving our customer, but we also often gain knowledge that we can then pass along to others who come in the store."

When you enter Stamp & Coin, the staff has a way of seemingly transporting you back in time through the stories they can tell and the artifacts they can show.



"It's not about if you buy something or not," said Kann. "It's about the experience we can create for that person or that family. Not only are you telling a story, but you're also giving them something that they can look at and touch to help appreciate the history even more."

Kann was still in school when his parents opened Stamp & Coin and he now says he's seeing things come full circle.

"Now I get to see parents bring their children in after they were here as a child. They come back with their children or grandchildren, and they want to show them how excited they were about the things they got here and enjoyed and try to make them interested as well."

In this digital age of endless scrolling on social media platforms, it's refreshing to know that there's still a market for this ode to historical preservation and that there's another generation of young people who are still being exposed to this leisure pastime that requires little to no technology to enjoy it. That's not to say the store hasn't kept pace with modern times, though. In addition to the brick and mortar, they have a website, and they even sell through Amazon and Walmart.

"People from across the country, and even around the world, who have bought something on Amazon or bought something through our website have made it a point to come into the store while visiting Atlanta," Kann explained. And, while he could use a bit more space to display his wares, "as long as the mall is here, we don't see ourselves going anywhere."

Northlake Stamp & Coin is located inside of Northlake Mall on the second level. Despite the construction activity around it, the store is open seven days a week.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

DEKALB SCHOOLS MASTER PLAN COULD HAVE SEISMIC IMPACT ON TUCKER CLUSTER

In a school district the size of DeKalb County, change is inevitable. With overcrowding of some schools, underutilization of others and facility maintenance needs across the board, the Board of Education recently decided the time was right to undergo a Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) process. The CMP process included hiring an outside consultant, Perkins & Will, to interview community stakeholders, volunteers, teachers, staff and administrators from all schools, as well as to perform an exhaustive analysis of the district's assets.

"It has been a long process," explained Trenton Arnold, DeKalb's Region II Superintendent. "We're at a point now where through our vendor Perkins & Will, who has

"As they say in the presentation, everybody's going to get something, but it may not equate to everybody getting everything that they want. That's always the challenge when you start talking about projects of this scope and scale."

been guiding us through this process, that they are now presenting recommendations to the public."

Those recommendations raised some eyebrows among many Tucker parents last month, with some pleased and some not. The biggest proposed changes included:

- consolidating Livsey and Midvale Elementary Schools. This would mean Midvale would be shut down and a new school building would be built on the existing Livsey site. This is a long-range plan that would not be executed for a decade.
- building a new Idlewood Elementary School building. The current Idlewood has been overcrowded for years and has scores of maintenance needs. The building, as with a new

Livsey, would be contingent on approval of future ESPLOST funding.

- expanding the student body at Smoke Rise Elementary to include sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. This would help with underutilization of the new building, as well as easing some of the strain on Tucker Middle School.

"These are recommendations right now, and both [Perkins & Will] and the District and the Board understand that," Arnold explained. "What's critical and why we're bringing this forward now, before the Board gets a first final look at it in December, is to continue to get input and encourage participation from our community."

There are a number of ways for Tucker parents or other community stakeholders to express their agreement or disagreement with facets of these recommendations. The first is to speak at the Board of Education meeting on November 15. They can also send comments directly to the superintendent or regional superintendent. Allyson Gevertz is the Board of Education member representing most of Tucker, while Dijon DaCosta represents Idlewood Elementary. All of these email addresses are posted to the City of Tucker school webpage at tuckerga.gov/schools.

"What I want to make sure of is that there's no feeling as though [interested parties] are having a hard time reaching out or getting in touch with somebody because, trust me, the board member wants to hear from them. The superintendent wants to hear. The district offices want to hear. Operations wants to hear. Even our vendor wants to hear back," Arnold said. "As they say in the presentation, everybody's going to get something, but it may not equate to everybody getting everything that they want. That's always the challenge when you start talking about projects of this scope and scale."

Many of these projects are long-term and would not affect current students in these schools. Others would take effect more quickly. Either way, none will take effect until the Board of Education and Superintendent gain additional input. The clock is ticking.

The PowerPoint presentation made by Perkins & Will consultants last month to the school community can be found at tuckerga.gov/schools.

Tucker Cluster

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

November 2

Schools closed for Teacher Workday

November 15

Board of Education Meeting

November 22 26

Schools closed for Thanksgiving Break

BRAG SHEET

BROCKETT ELEMENTARY

- Students and parents at Brockett held a Walk to School Day on October 13 to celebrate the walkability of their school community.

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- The Livsey PTO put on its annual Whooo's Reading fundraiser, bringing in nearly \$24,000 for projects at the school. Students pre K through 5th grade read a collective 151,698 minutes.

MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

- The Midvale PTO will host a Spirit Night on November 9 from 5 8 p.m. at Blue Ribbon Grill.

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

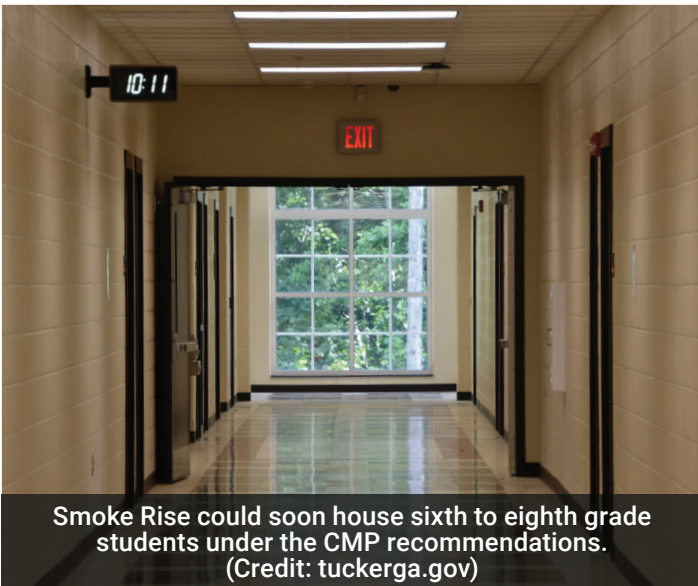
- Smoke Rise was named an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Distinguished School. This prestigious honor is awarded based on the success of educational programs and student progress.

TUCKER HIGH

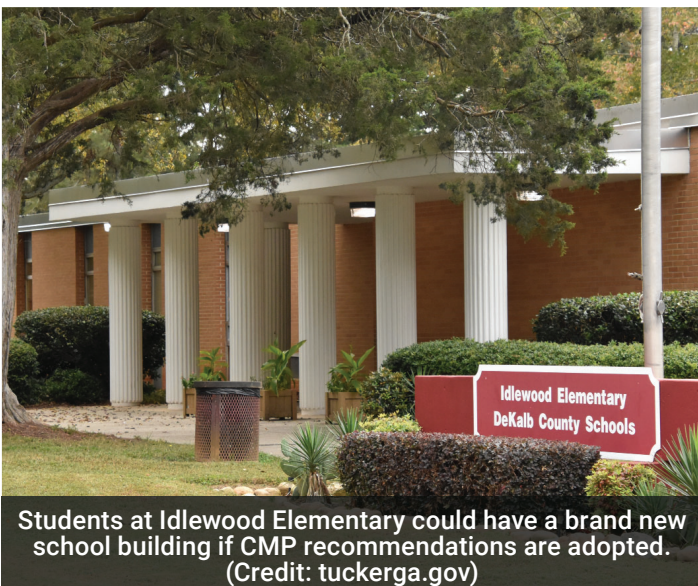
- The Tucker High School Foundation will hold its annual Casino Night virtually on November 6. For tickets and more information, visit the Foundation's website.



The draft CMP recommends shutting down Midvale Elementary School by 2031. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)



Smoke Rise could soon house sixth to eighth grade students under the CMP recommendations. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)



Students at Idlewood Elementary could have a brand new school building if CMP recommendations are adopted. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

PAPA ALI'S

Mikail Ali is presiding over what he hopes is the start of something big. The entrepreneur and vegan food enthusiast started a food truck last year just as the pandemic hit. His truck was so profitable he was able to save up money to open his own brick and mortar restaurant on Tucker's Main Street.

"This is going to be a start for me," Ali predicted. "There are going to be multiple Papi Ali's in my future. I want to open up as many of these restaurants as I can to help spread affordable vegan food that's responsible and healthy for people."

Named for its owner, Papi Ali's held a ribbon cutting and grand opening at its location on Main Street on October 15. The restaurant offers plant-based food at affordable prices, something downtown Tucker has never seen before. Ali said his fresh mix of sandwiches, wraps, bowls and smoothies is really a labor of love.

"Papi Ali's is the fusion of my two great passions... solving problems and creating food," he explained. "Mostly with vegan food and plant-based food you get a lot of gluten-based items, a lot of things that aren't healthy for you, so I wanted to bring the same Latin American flavors that I enjoy and I'm passionate about and put them onto fruits and veggies and things like that."

Based on the business he did with his food truck, Ali estimates that his most popular menu item was a BLT with avocado where the bacon is actually made from mushrooms. He's banking on Tucker having a taste for mushroom bacon just as his previous customers did.

"I've been in Tucker a lot. I've run my food truck through Tucker, so I know that the community's amazing and it was the perfect location and it was the perfect set up," Ali recalled. "It just seemed like it was destined to be."

Papi Ali's is currently open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. at their new location at 2323 Main Street in the heart of downtown Tucker. You can see menus and find out more about the restaurant at papialis.square.site or on social media @papialisatl.



TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

LISA OWEN, RECORDS MANAGEMENT CLERK

Tell us about the path that led you to work for Team Tucker...

For the last 20+ years, I have worked for small businesses managing their operations and finances. Prior to that, I was an internal auditor in both the private and public sectors after having started my career working for a large southern municipality. I suppose I've come full circle!

What made you want to come work in local government?

As a Tucker resident, I feel compelled to be involved and to understand the growth that Tucker is experiencing as a relatively new city. I love where I live and working for my local government is a way for me to contribute and grow my knowledge and skills.

What are your day-to-day job responsibilities?

I work directly with the City Clerk in many areas including open records requests and procurement. But I have the privilege of working with many different departments and learning from dedicated professionals.

Have you eased into your role or been thrown in the deep end?

Since my position is new for the City of Tucker, there is a LOT to learn and do. After having worked for small businesses for so long, I'm used to a steep learning curve, and I do love a challenge!



Off the Wall

Tell us about your family...

My husband Jamie is a retired teacher and he is now a home inspector for a fabulous company, Home Probe, Inc. Both our children, Gillum and Jay, are Tucker High School graduates. Gillum is carrying on the teaching tradition and teaches fifth grade in Gwinnett County. Jay is a freshman at Georgia College and State University studying Exercise Science. We love to camp and hike and see live music together.

How many pets do you have?

We have a brindle rescue pup, Tigger, a pit bull/boxer mix, who has mellowed in his old age (thank goodness) and loves to take long walks.

What's your favorite season?

I love the mild temperatures and changing colors that the fall brings. Cooler temps mean sitting around our backyard firepit with friends and college football!

What was your favorite subject in high school?

English/creative writing was always my favorite. I am a voracious reader and devoted journal writer and honing those skills is a lifelong passion of mine.

CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

ALEX & SUSAN FERNANDEZ

Alex and Susan Fernandez. What can I say? You will never meet a more down-to-earth, fun-loving couple. It is an honor to write about them for Citizens of the Month in the City of Tucker.

While raising three children, Susan and Alex have had a big impact on their community in so many ways. For starters, Alex has served on the board of the Westhampton Swim Club as President for the last five years or longer. We all know when one spouse volunteers for a large role, they can rarely be successful without the support of their other half. From general maintenance to zhuzhing up the appearance with a fresh coat of paint and a new rug in the entryway to buying supplies and manning the grill for our annual pool parties over the major holidays, these two are an integral part of keeping the pool running and aesthetically nice. When our Pool Operator needed to step down this year, Alex not only volunteered but had to attend a lengthy class and pass a test to perform these duties. His constant tending kept the water nice and blue all summer long! He has even been known to serve fruity beverages while wearing his famous coconut bra. On any given day, you'll find Susan tirelessly cleaning the bathrooms, tidying the chairs and picking up trash on a regular basis as one of our most unsung heroes. Thank her next time you see her because those bathrooms are no fun!

When the summer months are over, you will find this pair at the soccer fields. With two daughters who are excellent soccer players, Alex has been coaching and assistant coaching a high school girls team in the TYSA league for many years. Susan can be seen promoting the high school team and gathering volunteers at high profile events like Tucker Day at the team booth. From coordinating practices and assisting when a player needs a ride or an extra hand, they are the epitome of the Soccer Mom and Dad.

In addition to their community service in the recreational realm, they have been involved in running the Intown Coffeehouse. Intown Coffeehouse exists to support local music and art, promote community building and enhance cross-cultural friendships. Alex started the program from



scratch through Intown Community Church located off Lavista Road just a few minutes outside of Tucker. He orchestrated renovating a small building on the campus, adding planks to the wall and painting the rafters with a fun and colorful pattern, as well as many other upgrades to the facility. In the beginning, Alex coordinated with local singer/songwriters to perform, but after word got out, there were bands coming from out of state. In true hospitable fashion, Susan and Alex have on numerous occasions taken the out-of-town performers out to dinner and helped them find a comfy place to sleep. While the pandemic put a damper on this wonderful program for quite some time, give them a follow on Facebook (Intown Coffeehouse) and see what has been going on. You may want to check out the next performance!

Keep an eye out for Susan on your next flight with Delta Airlines. As a senior flight attendant, she not only keeps passengers on her flights safe while serving a beverage with a smile, but she also manages the training program. When you are the best of the best, they promote you to train the rest. She has also been known to volunteer in a program for refugees and internationals who have a desire to work on their English skills. While I'm sure she has been helpful in her endeavors to assist with learning our language, I have no doubt her company was the highlight of their week.

You'll never find better friends and neighbors than the Fernandezes.

Nomination by Lenne Nawyn

“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.

Tucker Parks and Recreation is proud to partner with the Empty Stocking Fund for the 2021 holiday season. Not familiar with the organization? In 1927, the Empty Stocking Fund was created by a small group of employees of The Atlanta Georgian, the predecessor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Through relationships with wholesale distributors and in-kind donations from trusted corporations, the Empty Stocking Fund acquires new items in quantities sufficient to offer a variety of age- and gender-appropriate holiday gift choices and essential school supplies.

Those families that qualify for benefits through the State of Georgia are invited to register and shop for gifts through this program. In December, qualified families are invited to shop for gifts and supplies for their children (birth to 12 years old).

This program is unique in that they allow parents to choose (shop) for toys and gifts they want for their children. The gifts are prepared and packaged for giving at the family's chosen time and place. For decades, parents were invited to come to Santa's Village, a toy and gift store, to shop for their

children's gifts. To protect our staff, volunteers, and especially the families during the holidays, Santa's Village has gone digital! Now parents can register their children, upload proof of benefits and shop online from any web-enabled device. Orders will be packed at ESF's warehouse facility in southeast Atlanta and parents may choose a convenient location for pick up, whether it's at the ESF facility or one of the distribution partner events.

The City of Tucker has been chosen as a distribution site for the Empty Stocking Fund. Parents can choose to pick up their holiday packages at the Tucker Recreation Center on December 5, 7 or 9. If you are a family in need of support, or would like to volunteer to distribute gifts at the Recreation Center, please register on our webpage at: tuckerga.gov/esf.



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH TUCKER PARKS & RECREATION

**DEC.
1**

Also in December, our senior groups will travel to the Botanical Gardens for the holiday light show. We will leave Tucker Recreation Center on December 1 at 4:30 pm. You can register now at tuckerga.gov/parks.

**DEC.
11**

Tucker Recreation Center will host its second annual North Pole at TRC on Saturday December 11 from 3-7 p.m. We will have cookie decorating, winter arts and crafts, hot chocolate, and Singing Santa. Come out and have a fun day and let the kids tell Santa everything they want for the holidays.

**DEC.
18-19**

Want some holiday competition? Join us for our inaugural "Dink the Halls" pickleball tournament on December 18 and 19. You can register online beginning on November 8 at tuckerga.gov/parks.

**DEC.
20-23
and
27-31**

If you're looking for some time to take care of those holiday chores without the prying eyes of the kids, register now for the TRC Winter Break Camp. Camp will be daily from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. This time will be full of fun, sports, and play on December 20-23 and December 27-30. Spots are limited, so register today!



TUCKER *Community Corner*



11/5 – Tucker Job Fair
10 a.m.-1 p.m., 2997
Lawrenceville Highway

In honor of veterans, the Tucker Civic Association is hosting its seventh annual Tucker Job Fair at Rehoboth Baptist Church. Visit tuckercivic.org for details.

11/13 – Campfire & Cocktails
5-8 p.m., 4259 N. Park Drive

This is a free family event sponsored by Tucker Parks and Recreation. Come enjoy s'mores, hot dogs and a specialty fall cocktail. Bring your favorite chair and relax with live music next to the fire pit.

11/4, 11/11, 11/18
– Tucker Farmers Market
4-7 p.m., 4882 Lavista Road

The Tucker Farmers Market continues both in-person and online. Complete online orders by the Wednesday morning before market day at www.TFMonlineStore.com

11/20 – Electronics and HME Recycling Day
9 a.m.-2 p.m., 3969
Lawrenceville Highway

Recycle working and non-working electronics and donate gently used medical equipment like wheelchairs and crutches in the front parking lot of Ace Handy Hardware.