



INTUCKER

JULY 2025 | VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 9



CELEBRATION WRAP
TEN YEARS OF MAIN STREET THEATRE

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Frank Auman
Mayor

Roger W. Orlando
District 1 - Post 1

Cara Schroeder
District 2 - Post 1

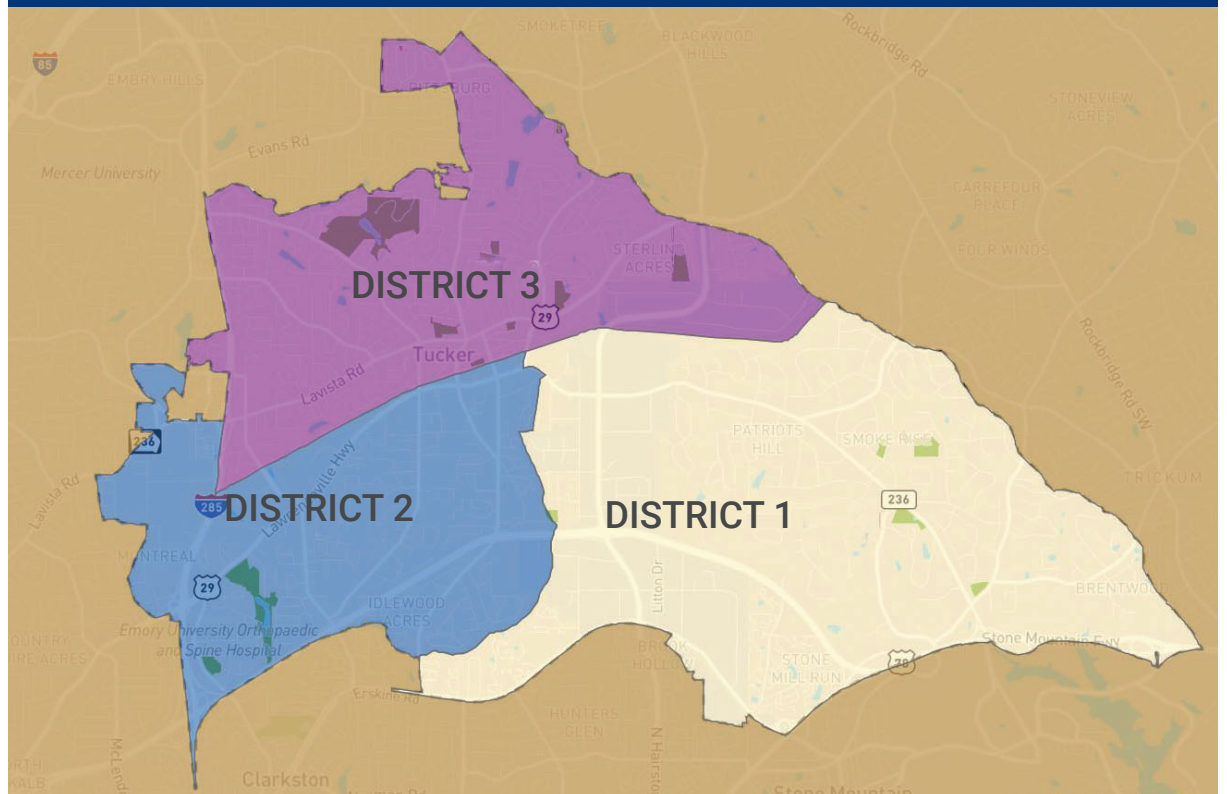
Alexis Weaver
District 3 - Post 1

Virginia Rece
District 1 - Post 2

Vinh Nguyen
District 2 - Post 2

Amy Trocchi
District 3 - Post 2

DISTRICT MAP



EDITOR'S NOTE

SONJA SZUBSKI - COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



July is National Parks and Recreation month and we are celebrating!

One of the major selling points for Tucker's municipal incorporation was the assumption of management over local parks and recreation programming. The switch took over a year and was completed in January of 2018. Since then, the City has upgraded playgrounds, added greenspace and a multi-use sports complex. Almost every park has undergone some kind of renovation amenities. In addition, our Parks and Recreation staff have expanded program offerings and athletic leagues for all ages.

JOIN IS THE CELEBRATION ALL THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF JULY:

- **Park Day of Service at Montreal Park**
Saturday, July 12, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- **Yoga on the Green at Church Street**
Sunday, July 13 at 7 p.m.
Bring your mat and water
- **Parks and Recreation Professionals Day**
Tucker Rec. - Friday, July 18
Stop by and say hello
- **Chalk the Park at Tucker Rec. Center**
Wednesday, July 23, all day
A fun, family-friendly community event where participants use sidewalk chalk to create colorful artwork in a public park

CITY SOCIALS



nextdoor

INTUCKER STAFF

Editor-in-Chief
Sonja Szubski

Design
Dede Musser

Contributors
Marcus Etienne &
Robin Stevens

NATIONAL PARK & RECREATION MONTH

JULY 12



**MONTREAL PARK
DAY OF SERVICE**

JULY 13



**CHURCH STREET
YOGA ON THE GREEN**

JULY 18



**TUCKER REC.
CELEBRATE THE STAFF**

JULY 23



**TUCKER REC.
CHALK THE PARK**



FROM THE MAYOR

FRANK AUMAN

There are so many factors that make Tucker the thriving, safe and desirable place that we are blessed to call home. At the top of the list is our people; you won't find a warmer, more welcoming group of citizens anywhere. Another is our faith community; we have countless faith-based groups doing good not just within their walls, but out in our neighborhoods as well. A third factor - and what's on my mind this month - is our business community.

Economic Development is a term that's used in many different ways. For us as a city, economic development is the equivalent of improved quality of life – the sum total of all the specific services we provide, and the reason for our existence. It's not just about businesses, but businesses provide jobs, give people a desire to live here, and drive every aspect of our local economy. When we became a city almost 10 years ago, Tucker was already home to some iconic, longstanding businesses. If you've ever had the fried chicken at Matthews or bought building supplies from Cofer Bros. you know what I mean. But it was important to our quality of life as a city to focus on marketing all Tucker has to offer to new businesses and those looking to expand or relocate. We started out with many distinct advantages over most other cities. Our location is one; Interstate 285, US 78, US 29 and LaVista Rd. all run through our city limits. We're about a 20 minute drive from Atlanta, and just a few minutes further from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. Tucker also sits on the CSX rail line. All of these location factors are very important to companies who are focused on optimizing logistics and speed to market.

But location is not all we have to offer. An existing business community like ours that is diverse in industry, size and type, provides confidence to others considering Tucker as a place to form or relocate. One of the reasons for forming a city to begin with was to focus on attracting, retaining and strengthening businesses in Tucker. We had heard from existing business owners that going through the licensing process and other government regulations was too confusing, expensive and time-consuming. It required local business operators to travel to Decatur to deal with the bureaucracy there, which was a real obstacle to growth. Not only did we promise to make that more personal and more local, but we have been able to hire

a professional team to run those efforts and focus on supporting our own local employers. That Economic Development team today includes a Business Outreach Specialist whose sole job is to help business owners get through those requirements more easily, and to be a resource for anything they need or any issue that might arise relative to their government. We also developed relationships at the County and State levels, positioning Tucker as a place where a company from, say, California, would choose to grow. That's exactly what happened when our team worked with Georgia's Department of Economic Development to welcome a new facility for Sugar Bowl Bakery. It was the first time in ten or more years that the GDECD had helped locate a large employer into this part of DeKalb County. And just a few years later, Pepsi invested an additional \$280 million in their plant here, also with state and county help.

And while we have some other major companies with big operations here in Tucker – Hormel and Quest Diagnostics, among others - it's our smaller local businesses that are nearest and dearest to my heart. Part of it is that I am a small business owner myself and so I know the risks that these men and women are taking, often staking their life savings to follow a dream. At every ribbon cutting I attend, I remind them we're very aware they could have chosen anywhere to open their business, but they chose Tucker. That means something to me, and our city is obligated to honor their confidence in us by providing the highest level of service possible, and to be an asset, not an obstacle.

Local and Small Businesses are the foundation on which we build and sustain our community. The economic impact of us spending our dollars with local businesses, who then turn around and spend them with other local businesses, who then employ local folks, is an extremely powerful and healthy cycle for our community. Next time you go out shopping or for a bite to eat, remember these stories and please prioritize supporting Tucker's businesses. They're your neighbors and they're doing amazing things for our community. And know that our Economic Development team at City Hall will continue in the months and years ahead to work to keep and bring new, dynamic businesses that will help grow the prominence of Tucker as Georgia's top destination for business.

DATES TO KNOW

- **JULY 3**
Celebration of Independence
Main Street Tucker
- **JULY 4**
City offices closed in observance of July 4. City pools open 12-8 p.m.
- **JULY 7**
Downtown Development Authority
- **JULY 9**
Municipal Court
- **JULY 14**
Mayor & City Council Meeting
- **JULY 16**
Municipal Court
- **JULY 17**
Movies on the Green
IF



FEATURE STORY

MAIN STREET THEATRE MARKS 10 YEARS ENRICHING TUCKER'S CULTURAL LIFE



Main Street Theatre (MST) is proudly celebrating its 10th anniversary, commemorating a decade

of producing quality performances, building community, and cultivating local talent in both Tucker and beyond our city limits.

Founded in 2014, MST quickly established itself as a beloved fixture in the city, staging an array of murder mysteries, comedies, and musicals. Its presence has not only entertained but united people of all ages and backgrounds.

A DREAM TURNED REALITY

MST began with President Sabrina Chambers' desire to return to acting, something she'd loved in high school and at Georgia Tech's DramaTech Theatre. A post in the Tucker Town Talk Facebook group led to a wave of community interest, in-person meetings at local restaurants, and eventually the founding of a nonprofit organization.

The theatre's first full play, *Harvey*, premiered in 2015 at the Tucker Recreation Center, which has been home to MST ever since. Community support was overwhelming on opening night. Expecting about 35 people in the audience, the cast and crew were blown away when they ended up performing for 200!

"They found and scrounged up every single chair that was at Tucker Rec and we eventually seated 200 people that night," recalled MST board member and artistic director Merle Westbrook. "It just almost brings me to tears now because it was totally unexpected—it was so mindboggling."





GROWTH ON AND OFF THE STAGE

Over the years, MST has upgraded its performance space by installing auditorium blinds, creating formal stage entrances, and adding a lighting board to improve the theatrical experience.

When the COVID-19 pandemic halted live performances, MST pivoted to video productions and implemented health precautions so that the show could go on.

"I am so proud we weathered all of that and came out the other end," Westbrook said. "I am incredibly proud of that."

A WELCOMING STAGE FOR ALL

Diversity and accessibility remain at the heart of MST's mission. There are no audition prerequisites, just a willingness to participate. The theatre has opened doors for both children and adults to explore the performing arts, some of whom have gone on to work in professional theatre and even Broadway.

"There is an opportunity for people to really get hands-on experience to explore those things they may not have had a chance to explore otherwise," Westbrook said.

MST has also broadened its cast and audience base, producing a variety of shows that reflect and include the community's voices and experiences.

LOOKING AHEAD

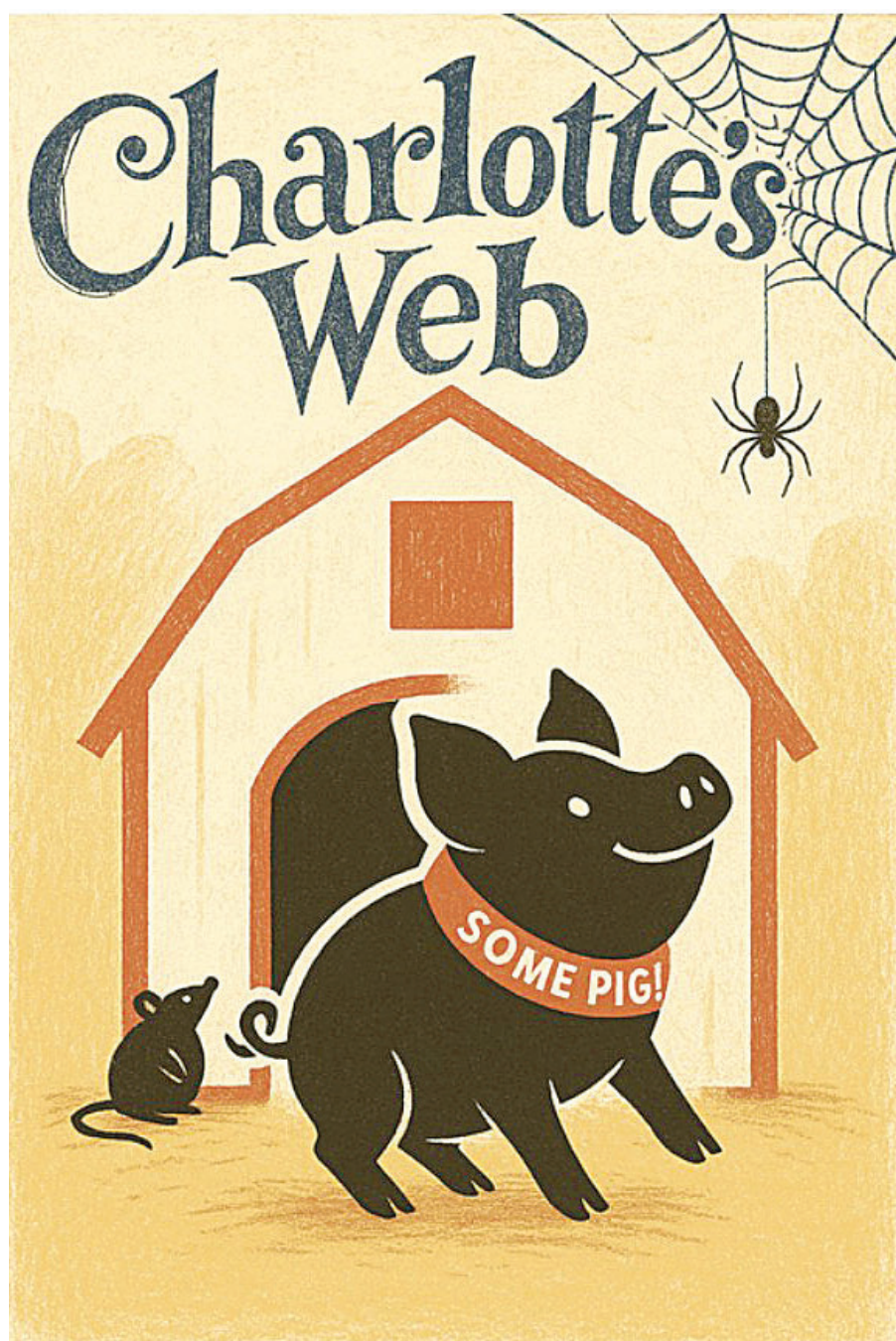
Now a staple in Tucker's creative life, MST is proud to offer opportunity, entertainment, and inspiration to its community. As Westbrook put it, "It's just shocking, it feels like two or three [years]." In the past decade, the theatre has brought forth much more than the standard full production show: original scripts for the highly heralded murder mysteries, a variety show, an immersive walking show down Main Street and holiday shorts at the annual tree lighting events. Just last month, they debuted an improv show and are opening up classes for more.

This month, MST is producing "Charlotte's Web" and "Murder at the Seaside Cottages" is the murder mystery for August. Visit tuckertheater.com for details and tickets.

With strong roots and growing momentum, Main Street Theatre is poised to thrive for another decade, and beyond.

"Charlotte's Web" will be performed at Tucker Recreation Center July 19, 20, 26 and 27.

"Murder at the Seaside Cottages" will be performed at Fresca Tratoria Aug. 14, 17, 21 and 24.



BOARD OF EDUCATION NEWS

with Allyson Gerwertz



The 2024-25 school year was a success! If graduation is the culminating goal of K-12 education, Tucker High has 297 champions! Of the recent graduates, 153 are eligible for the HOPE scholarship, 12 have IB diplomas, 60 are AP scholars, 90 participated in dual enrollment, and 193 completed career pathways. Our school district prepares kids for the 4Es: Enrollment, Enlistment, Employment, and Entrepreneurship. The THS class of 2025 has 254 students going to college, 13 to the military, 40 to the workforce, and three starting their own businesses. Congratulations Tigers!

This year, Tucker’s elementary students participated in the new elementary athletics program. Tucker teams excelled in soccer, basketball, flag football, competitive dance, and track. In fact, the Smoke Rise Elementary School boys won the county championship! Superintendent Horton brought elementary athletics to DeKalb County, and parents are seeing the benefits in their children: excitement about school, improved problem-solving, higher self-confidence, healthier decision-making, and more resilience. Be sure to catch a game, meet, or competition next year!

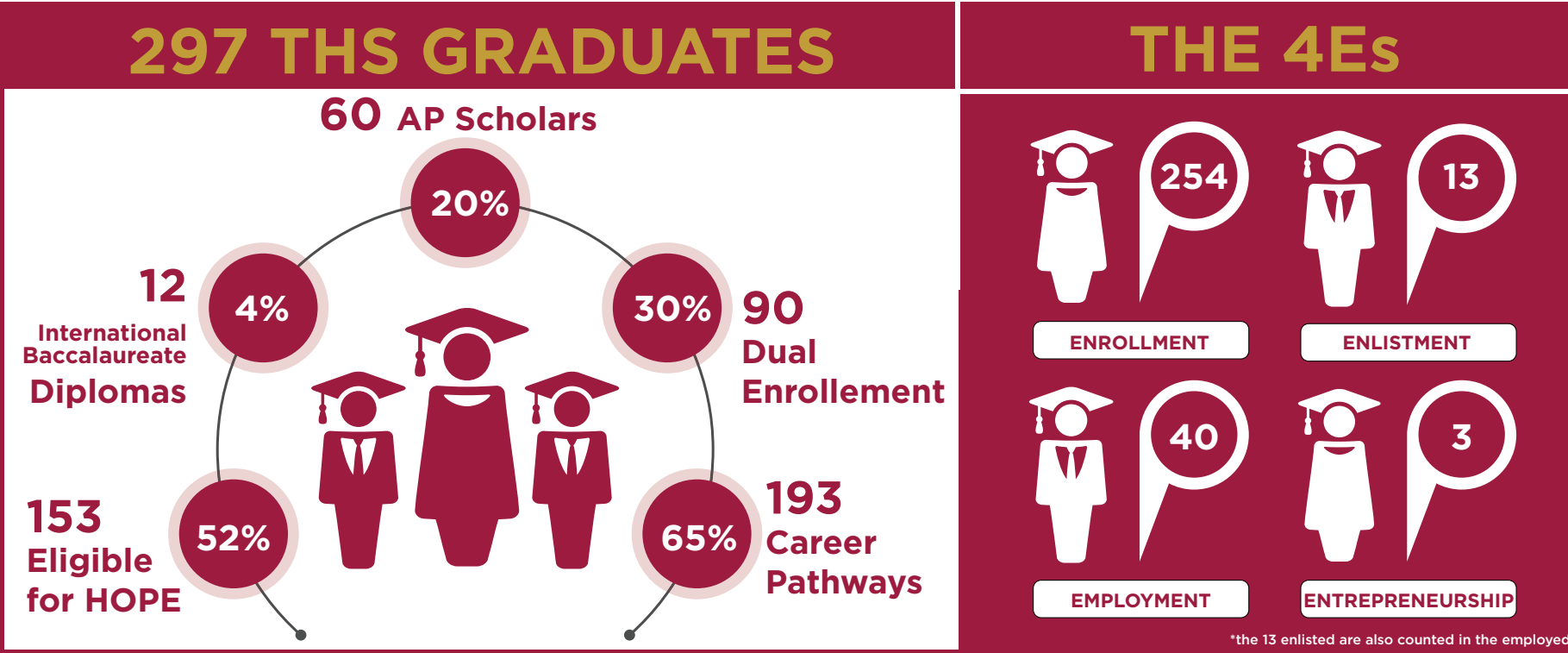
Another initiative impacting Tucker schools is the IGNITE Teacher Residency. This is Superintendent Horton’s answer to the teacher shortage, and it is working! IGNITE is an alternate route to teacher certification where aspiring educators complete courses through a university partner while training in DCSD schools. In exchange for teaching in DeKalb for at least five years, each IGNITE graduate earns a master’s degree for free. The most recent IGNITE cohort is filling vacancies in Tucker and across the district, ensuring that every classroom has a teacher in August!

Tucker schools are in the process of being reimagined—including programs, buildings, and boundaries. Superintendent Horton has tasked the Student Assignment Project (SAP) Advisory Committee to bring forward recommendations. Some of those recommendations are anticipated during the 2025-26 school year. The SAP Committee has been working diligently to understand the needs of the Tucker community as well as the district as a whole. Since this process will include building closures, redistricting, and program changes, it is imperative that the community stay engaged. Tucker’s advisory committee members, including the City’s own Sonja Szubski, are spending hours mulling over data, brainstorming, and offering solutions to the question of what DCSD should look like in 5, 10, or 15 years. In the meantime,

construction continues at many schools across the district. As Idlewood begins its major renovation project this summer, some Idlewood students will be welcomed temporarily to Smoke Rise Elementary School. Final recommendations on attendance boundaries for Idlewood, Smoke Rise, and all schools will come during the SAP process.

Finally, the Board of Education (along with DCSD administration) has been hard at work on the FY26 budget. It is an unpredictable time for public education, with the state increasing unfunded mandates, and federal funding being called into question. Despite this, DeKalb is one of two metro districts which passed a millage rate rollback. The FY26 budget includes a step increase for all eligible staff, as well as additional funds for high-need schools, special education teachers, and MTSS specialists. While the divisions supporting schools cut costs, our local schools were protected from cuts. CFO Schueneman and his team did a phenomenal job keeping students as the top priority, while meeting the changing demands and expectations at the local, state, and federal levels.

Happy Summer, Tucker! As always, if you have questions for me, please feel free to contact me at Allyson_Gewertz@dekalbschoolsga.org or Allyson@AllysonGewertz.com. I continue to offer 4 Feedback listening sessions each month.



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

LOIS SHINGLER

I am very pleased to nominate Lois Shingler as the Tucker's Citizen of the Month.

Lois is an effective do-er and an invaluable volunteer.

Lois and I met when she stopped her walk to chat with me while I was doing some work in the yard. We connected instantly - and very soon she asked me if I was interested in joining a group of people meeting about a new non-profit organization called the Tucker Arts Alliance. Lois is a people person with a great sense of serving others. She sees a need in the community and will "step in" to do something about it.

Lois' was instrumental in setting up TAA and has helped coordinate the expansion of the annual ARTucker show at the Church Street Greenspace and TAA's inaugural art show at the Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library.

Lois is a soft-spoken lady, but she is also a very strong and determined voice to serve the common good. Lois created Peter and Paul's Place, an organization which serves differently abled individuals to use their skills, learn new skills, and socialize with one another. Peter and Paul's Place hosts seasonal series of classes and dance formals at the Tucker Recreation Center.

An engaged citizen, Lois graduated from Tucker's government series class last year and makes an effort to attend the first meeting of the Mayor and City Council every month to participate in public comment. She always shares good news with the Mayor and Council and displays her sunny and positive disposition.

Currently, Lois is working with TAA to organize their second fine arts show at St. Bede's Episcopal Church just outside of Tucker. "Art from the Heart" gallery, will be a juried show, open to the public and is scheduled to start August 2, 2025.

*Nominated by
Birgit McQueen*



Lois Shingler volunteers with various organizations throughout Atlanta

Inaugural Tucker Arts Alliance Show at Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library



Members of Peter and Paul's Place participate in a movement class at Tucker Recreation Center

NEWS FROM INSIDE CITY HALL

ENGINEERING



CITYWIDE PAVING UPDATE

Earlier this year in April, Tucker Mayor and Council approved a contract with ER Snell to repave streets. The streets were prioritized from the latest Pavement Management Study based on the Pavement Condition Index scores. Tucker staff secured a Georgia DOT LMIG funding grant to resurface Henderson Road while the remaining roads will be funded by the SPLOST II tax approved by voters for a total of \$2,859,726.75 plus contingency.

AS OF LAST MONTH 15 ROADS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED:

- Brookes Walk • Tucker North Court • Tucker North Drive • Stella Burns Drive • Angie Drive • Winding Way • Wender Drive • Windview Court • Windy Court • Winding Woods Drive • Henderson Summit • Cold Water Canyon Drive • Bailey Road • Railroad Ave (West) • Bancroft Circle • Montreal Industrial Way

IN PROGRESS:

- Henderson Road • Oakwood Drive • Comanche Drive • Winbrooke Lane • Terri Lynn Court

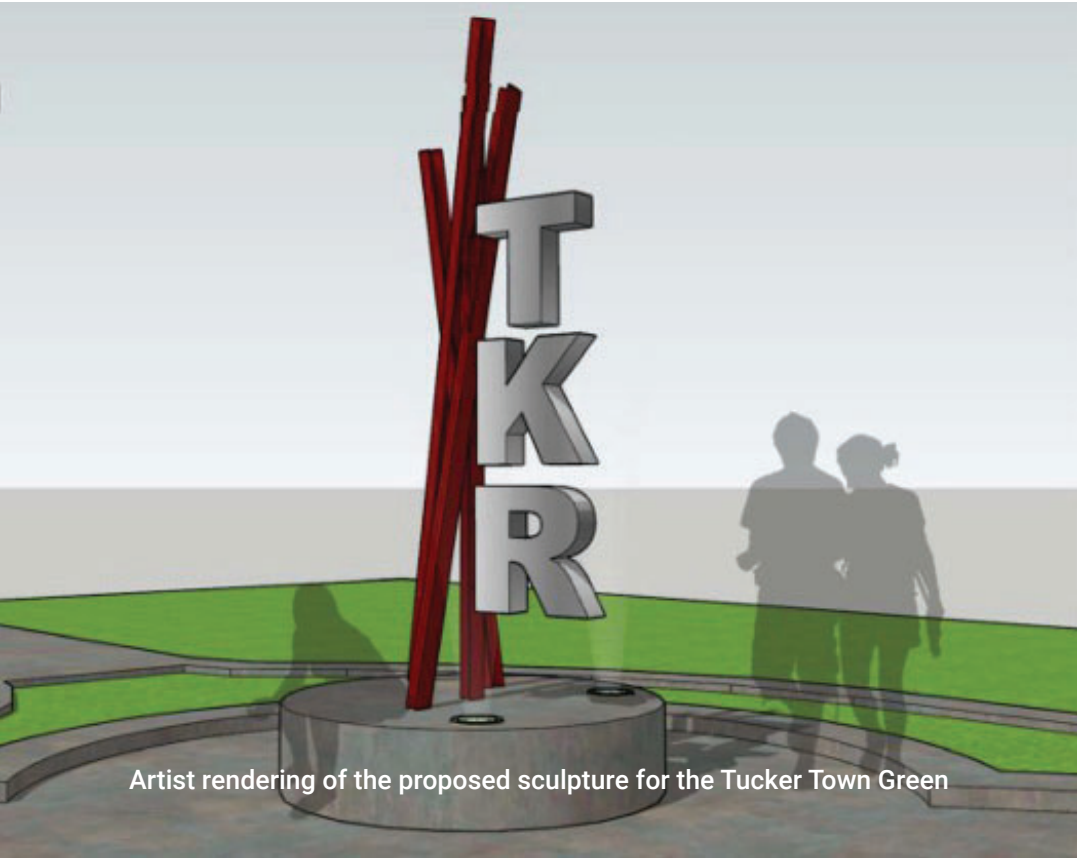
TO BE COMPLETED:

- Velma Burns Drive • Lilburn Stone Mountain Road • Silver Hill Court

PARKS AND RECREATION

TUCKER TOWN GREEN IS ON SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION

Construction continues to move forward and now upward as foundations have been laid and filled. Last month, the Mayor and Council approved a contract for commissioned sculpture art for the northwest corner of the green. The selection committee was made up of various stakeholders and local artists, and all were very excited to offer the award to Phil Proctor of Nucleus Sculpture Studio, LLC. The commissioned piece will use steel to create an artistic representation of the standard TKR that reflects Tucker's industrial past and its sense of community.



Artist rendering of the proposed sculpture for the Tucker Town Green

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

THE DREAM CENTER



From a young age, Chan'tele Rountree knew she would one day create her own style of dance. As a middle schooler, she confidently told her friends that her dance style would be called "Chan'telewa", a name she proudly wrote on her pants. Today, she's living that dream as the founder and owner of the Dance Rhythm Education Arts & Movement (DREAM) Center, operating under her LLC, Chan'telewa.

The DREAM Center is more than a dance studio. It's where Rountree teaches her original choreography and inspires students to explore and reach their full potential.

"We teach ballet, tap, jazz, hip pop and lyrical dance," Rountree said. "We believe that we can build up and inspire young people to reach for their dreams through their experiences in dance. So, what we really care about here is helping children tap into their full potential not just as dancers but as humans as children so that they can find their full potential through what they experience in the dance classroom."

Rountree's journey began in Maryland, where her mother enrolled her in dance classes at the age of four. She never looked back. She later attended Spelman College, earning a bachelor's degree in Drama with a concentration in dance, followed

by a master's in early childhood education from Georgia State University. For ten years, she taught first grade and dance at Nesbit and Graves Elementary Schools.

While teaching, she also collaborated with a local dance studio, where she launched successful summer camps. Motivated by that success, Rountree decided to start her own dance program. In 2016, she began hosting summer dance camps in rented spaces. Her goal was to offer year-round programming, but first, she needed a permanent location.

"It all kind of happened by accident, I feel like," Rountree said. "Someone took me to Donut City. I saw that there was a space for lease. When I went to look inside, I felt the vision."

She initially opened a studio off Mountain Industrial Boulevard, but it quickly outgrew the space. In the summer of the following year, the DREAM Center moved to its current home at 3955 Lawrenceville Highway, Suite A & B, Tucker, GA 30084. The Tucker community has proven to be the perfect fit.

"I really do enjoy Tucker I want to move to Tucker at some point," Rountree said. "I really like it. I like how it is a small town, and it is a tight knit community filled with community support."

At the DREAM Center, students gain more than just technical skills. The studio nurtures work ethic, creativity, and joy. Spirit Week brings fun with themed costumes and raffles for both dancers and parents. A standout tradition includes performances featuring students and their fathers, choreographed by Rountree herself. These father-child routines are highlights of every showcase and create unforgettable memories.

"It's just fun helping them learn the moves and get confident, they kind of bond with each other while in class," Rountree said. "The children think it's so much fun to dance with their dads. So, it is a really fun experience, and I love how proud they feel after they get done with the show. The funny thing about it with the dads, as soon as the dads get on stage the crowd screams. It is a really fun experience for me to create it, and for the dads to experience it on stage."

What sets the DREAM Center apart is the way Rountree has blended her educational expertise with her love for dance. From the little girl who dreamed up "Chan'telewa" to the entrepreneur helping others discover their passions, Chan'tele Rountree continues to bring her vision to life, one dancer at a time.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE COUNCIL MEETING?

CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

June was a busy month for Tucker’s Mayor and Council. In the first meeting of the month, the Mayor and Council voted to amend the evening’s agenda to add an item to discuss pickleball. At the end of the night, they approved a motion 4-3 to direct staff to re-open the RFP process for the proposed pickleball courts and parking improvements at the Tucker Recreation Center. The direction also stated that the latest iteration of the proposal be used, which includes sand volleyball, bocce ball and multi-use courts.

The Mayor honored two departments with proclamations celebrating their respective weeks of recognition. Municipal Court Clerks Week was declared for June 9-13 as was Finance, Procurement and Accounting Week.

In other news, between both June meetings, the Council approved

In other news, between both June meetings, the Council approved

- SLUP-25-0001 to allow a special event facility at 2101 Northlake Parkway with concurrent variances
- Contract award for a commissioned art sculpture for the Tucker Town Green
- Contract amendment for the Johns Homestead Park and Dam Improvement Construction Project

- Contract for bleachers and press box installation for Fitzgerald Park
- Three services contracts for Capital Project Management, Public Works Services and Call Center Services
- A Resolution to amend the FY2025 Budget
- An amendment to the purchasing policy of the City
- Three Stormwater repair projects by consent agenda

The Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 was approved as well as the updated pay structure, the schedule of fees (minus the list for Parks and Recreation, to be revisited at a later date) and the 2025 Millage Rate of 2.036.

The adopted millage rate is a rollback rate from the previous year that essentially keeps the dollar amount the same for property owners. The City has consistently adopted the rollback rates every year.

Between the two meetings, there were several presentations from staff as well as outside programs. Parks and Recreation Director, Rip Robertson presented the proposed Rosenfeld Park update to the tennis courts and parking. Trees Atlanta educated the room on their Front Yard Program and how it can benefit Tucker

residents. The Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel presented their recommendations based on their study and stakeholder feedback on the city’s current housing inventory and how to move forward in an innovative and smart way. The owners of Northlake Mall then took an opportunity to present to the Mayor and Council possible redevelopment ideas that have been in discussion. The final presentation for the month concerned the top 10 capital projects that are in progress, including the dam projects are Johns Homestead and Lake Erin as well as the Tucker Town Green.

Following executive session after the second meeting of the month, the Mayor and Council took action to approve the contract with Ted Baggett, City Attorney, and the annual salary increases for the City Manager and City Clerk of 6.5%. The Council also voted to purchase right-of-way for the upcoming roundabout project at Idlewood and Fellowship Roads.

Visit tuckerga.gov/agendas to review full agendas and council action. This is also where to find live streams of Council meetings and replays.

The Tucker Mayor and Council meet the second and fourth Monday of each month, except July when there is only the first meeting, at City Hall located at 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B, Tucker, GA 30084



AROUND TOWN

UPCOMING EVENTS IN TUCKER

TUCKER PARKS AND RECREATION INVITES YOU
TO JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE
NATIONAL PARK & RECREATION MONTH

JULY 12



MONTREAL PARK
DAY OF SERVICE

JULY 13



CHURCH STREET
YOGA ON THE GREEN

JULY 18



TUCKER REC.
MEET THE STAFF

JULY 23



TUCKER REC.
CHALK THE PARK

BUILD
TOGETHER
Play
TOGETHER



CELEBRATING **40** YEARS
OF NRPA'S PARK AND RECREATION MONTH

TUCKERGA.GOV/SUMMER

JUL. 17



7 P.M.



AUG. 1

FIRST FRIDAY
CONCERT SERIES

AUG. 21



7 P.M.



TUCKER *Community Corner*

