

Submitted By: Oconee River Land Trust
Steffney Thompson
Phone: (706) 552-3138 Alt. Phone:
Email: steffney@oconeeriverlandtrust.org

Project Classification: Environmental Protection
Project Focus: Quality of Life
Project Type: Park Renovation, Improvements, or Expansion

Previously Submitted and Rejected:

Continuation Project: Yes - SPLOST 2005 030-Greenspace Acquisition Program

Project Total Cost: \$ 3,822,000

Total Operating Cost: \$ 170,000

Project Description: The requested SPLOST 2020 funding will fulfill the ACC investment and vision for Tallassee Forest (TF) by implementing a county-approved master plan that provides sustainable public access and benefits, consistent with the property's exceptional environmental quality and protected status. Funding to create TF Park will open TF to the public and offer much needed opportunities for outdoor recreation for families, seniors, students, individuals, and groups. TF Park is outside the loop in northwest ACC, an underserved area that has limited park access. (See Maps) It will be an educational, recreational, and social resource and part of a hub for school and neighborhood engagement. The park will also attract regional visitors and promote economic development in the area.

Park amenities may include but is not limited to, elements such as short, medium, and long walking trails; additional land; children's nature education and adventure areas; interpretive signs, shelters, and boardwalks; ecological restoration and natural resource monitoring programs; and parking, restrooms, and a park office. Master planning is underway with public input from surveys, community meetings, and a stakeholder committee. Ultimately, the master plan and any improvements made through this SPLOST program must be approved by the Mayor and Commission. TF is unique in ACC in that it has mature, intact habitats with minimal recent disturbance or invasive plants compared with other county greenspaces. Springs and streams supply clean drinking water, and the broad floodplain mitigates flooding. This project will recognize, protect, and enhance these important habitats and their ecological services while creating an opportunity for the public to experience and recreate in an exceptional natural area. In addition, funding for this project will ensure support for ecological management that enhances and protects the many environmental benefits.

The 310-acre forest is protected by a Conservation Easement held by the Oconee River Land Trust. It was purchased in 2012 by ACC with \$525,000 of SPLOST funding and a \$250,000 Riverview Foundation grant. The Foundation is also funding master planning and will consider additional support if SPLOST 2020 funding is awarded. (See Foundation Letter of Support) With SPLOST 2020 funding, the County will continue its financial investments and commitments to opening TF to the

public and protecting greenspace.

Project Mission Statement/Goals & Objectives: The mission of TF Park is to provide opportunities for public recreation, education, activities promoting health and wellbeing, and environmental protection. It preserves an exceptional natural environment, gives public access to existing community greenspace, and yields sustainable environmental, economic, and social well-being benefits to the citizens of Athens-Clarke County. Goals and Objectives include: 1) Construct a park on land already owned by ACC with trails and amenities to encourage appropriate public use and access; 2) Create opportunities for local neighborhoods, schools and all residents of ACC to experience the physical and psychological health benefits of recreating in nature; 3) Protect and enhance TF's ecological value and benefits, including the water quality of streams and the Middle Oconee River, Georgia High Priority Habitats, and native and unique plant and wildlife species; 4) Provide a neighborhood resource for local schools and those throughout the county to experience and learn about this exceptional natural environment.

Projected Useful Life of Project: 75 years

To meet the Project Goals & Objectives, when should this project be completed? This project should be completed within 5 years in order to ensure that the important environmental, recreational, educational, and health & wellbeing goals and objectives are met and that the county's past investment is acted upon. A SPLOST investment in site stewardship and amenities will ensure that our citizens can access the property for public use. The quality-of-life benefits, as well as the environmental benefits, are needed now so that the current population and future residents can experience the benefits that TF Park will provide.

If this project is not funded, public access will not be provided to the community. The property will remain dormant and at risk for environmental degradation, trespass, and illicit uses. Neighboring residents will not benefit from the increased property valuation created by the proximity to public parks. Our partners from foundations are likely to withdraw their financial support from the project. Ultimately, this SPLOST cycle will determine which generation of Athenians will benefit from TF's incredible treasures.

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building System compliance: Park construction will follow sustainable practices similar to those found in the Sustainable Site Initiatives, Green Building Council.

How will this project help meet the Public Safety, Basic Facilities/Infrastructure, and/or Quality of Life needs in Athens-Clarke County? The TF Park will meet Quality of Life needs in ACC by providing a much-needed opportunity for ACC residents to access and recreate in a 310-acre county-owned greenspace property. Without SPLOST support, this property will not be available for public use and is at risk of environmental decline. TF Park will be the County's third largest park and will serve as an anchor for the Greenway system. It will provide walking trails of varying length, which are the number one park amenity requested by residents, according to the Tallassee public input process. Access to green space has demonstrated measurable positive health benefits, which can reduce disparate health outcomes in urban settings due to economic, social, and/or environmental disadvantages. (See "Promoting Environmental Justice Through Urban Green Space Access - A Synopsis," Environmental Justice, 2012.) The ability to

experience nature in nearby TF Park will provide physiological and psychological benefits to residents and school children in an underserved area of the county. Further, the infrastructure and public access to TF will promote the health and wellbeing and Quality of Life for ACC residents of all ages.

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Study, Service Delivery Plan, Envision Athens, etc.? TF is included in the Greenway Network Plan 2016 update (GNP). By designating TF an Exceptional Resource Area, the GNP recognizes the outstanding nature of TF, including its biologic diversity and well-preserved habitats. Legacy Forest (>80-yr-old forest) covers 58.3%, American Holly forest covers 24.2%, and 8 state recognized High Priority Habitats can be found in 72.5% of the 310 acres (data provided by Andrew Saunders, Sustainability Officer). TF Park will support GNP environmental goals: to improve water quality and biodiversity and to conserve native species and habitats by ensuring proper ecological management, including the removal of invasive species.

TF Park will address Envision Athens Action Items (EAAI) in the following areas: 1) Land Use: By contributing to a physically attractive community and providing equitable access to parks and open space; 2) Environment: By requiring ecological management that will protect and enhance the natural environment and improve water quantity and quality, and air quality; 3) Neighborhoods: By creating a recreational, educational, and social hub associated with area schools and neighborhoods; 4) Transportation: By providing pedestrian trails in a greenway park. (See EAAI sections E4, E6, N1, N2, AG6, ED6, ED7, EC4, HE7, CE1, TR1, TRI4.) Connectivity to other areas in ACC is proposed in the GNP and Athens in Motion Bike and Pedestrian Plan. TF Park supports future growth in the area as shown in the Comp Plan Future Land Use Map.

Triple Bottom Line Impacts

Positive Benefits for the Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: Briefly describe how this Project positively benefits the economy and the tax base of Athens-Clarke County

The construction of TF Park, by providing an opportunity for public recreation in a natural environment, will positively contribute to the economy of ACC and support the local tax base. Greenspace and the ability to recreate in greenspace are key community amenities that are sought by both existing residents and prospective residents and employers. Trails consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners (National Association of Homebuilders).

A 310-acre nature-based park with walking trails and the opportunity to experience beautiful natural areas will draw visitors from outside the county. Gameday visitors will find a reason to stay longer. These visitors will come to recreate and, as part of their visit, will spend money at local businesses and restaurants. The existence of publicly accessible greenspace will be considered an amenity that will draw visitors, new residents and employers, thereby providing economic benefit to ACC.

In addition, ACC already owns the property, so additional land will not need to be removed from the tax digest to create a public facility. The creation of a public use greenspace has been shown to increase the value of homes in neighborhoods adjacent to them. Opening this facility will help to grow the tax digest, keep ACC attractive to families, and offset operational costs.

Detrimental Impacts to the Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: This project would require a moderate increase in ACC General Fund expenditures to provide for maintenance and operations. We believe this impact is offset by the fact that, by purchasing the property, ACC has already made these operational commitments and that opening this property for public use has the ability to grow the tax digest.

Positive Benefits for our Citizens and Visitors: The TF Park will positively benefit equity and overall livability for ACC residents and visitors. TF Park is located outside the loop in northwest ACC, an area that has fewer parks and less access to greenspace than most of the county. There are more than 700 households located within 1 mile; 6,900 households and businesses within 3 miles; and 5 schools within 5 miles of the property. Thus, constructing TF Park will ensure that residents in the area have equitable access to greenspace and public recreation

TF Park is across the street from Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School (BHL). (See Map) BHL student population is 87% minority, and 92% are eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NCES, Georgia Department of Education). TF Park will create an educational, recreational, and social hub with BHL Middle School and in the area with 3 other public elementary schools and numerous neighborhoods, thereby providing a more equitable allocation of county recreational facilities and SPLOST funding. In addition, TF Park will improve ACC's livability by creating public access to public greenspace via trails and other amenities. Community greenspace and the ability to recreate are high on lists of livability metrics. Trails were the top responses to an ACC Leisure Services community survey of recreational needs for this property (See Tallassee Forest Public Input results). Walking trails, parks, and playgrounds were the top amenities requested by participants in the Athens Wellbeing Project. Finally, this project will provide facilities for use by families and youth. The Envision Athens plan identifies the need to create vibrant public spaces and activities for youth engagement as strategies to enhance public safety.

Detrimental Impacts for our Citizens and Visitors: The construction of a properly constructed park, guided by a Mayor and Commission-approved master plan, is not expected to cause detrimental impacts to citizens or visitors.

Environmental Benefits, including but not limited to Positive impacts on existing Infrastructure/Systems: The construction of TF Park, coupled with sound ecological management, will ensure that the environmental quality and services provided by this county greenspace are enhanced and protected. These include clean water, habitat and species preservation, air quality, and flood control. TF has had more extensive natural resources surveys and GIS resource mapping than any other county greenspace (Tallassee Forest Inventories, Baseline Data and Recommendations by Contributors, Sustainability Office Legacy Forest Project). Legacy Forest (>80-yr-old forest) covers 58.3%, American Holly forest covers 24.2%, and 8 state recognized High Priority Habitats can be found in 72.5% of the 310 acres. Many of these are refuges for wildlife species not observed elsewhere in Athens-Clarke County. TF has unique habitats that include the very large American Holly forest and canebrakes in the bottomland forest, with only minimal privet present at this time. The project ensures that these unique communities will be here for future generations. An ecological management plan will be a component of any public management and will ensure that recreational uses and park management are sustainable and conform to the conservation easement. This plan will: protect and enhance the TF's exceptional and High Priority Habitats and the wildlife that depend on them; promote biodiversity by removal of exotic species; and protect the watershed. TF has more than 6,000 feet of frontage on the Middle Oconee River-an important drinking water source for ACC residents- and includes approximately 4,000 feet of a second order stream. Proper management will enhance the water flows and quality of the Middle Oconee River, which in turn benefits the community's drinking water supply and the river's aquatic ecosystem. Proper use and management will also enhance the ability of TF's

forest to improve the community's air quality by carbon dioxide removal and to mitigate temperature increases due to urban construction. Because of its exceptionally high quality natural environment, TF has been designated as an Exceptional Resource Area (ERA) in the GNP.

Detimental Impacts for the Environment, including but not limited to Negative impacts on existing

Infrastructure/Systems: The construction of a properly constructed park, guided by a Mayor and Commission approved master plan, the ecological management plan and the existing Conservation Easement, is not expected to cause detrimental impacts to the environment.

Positive/Negative Impacts on ACCGOV Departments, Agencies, or other Organizations, if not covered in one of the above questions: The development of TF Park will necessitate the appropriate operating funds for staffing and maintenance. If the project is implemented without those funds, Leisure Services would struggle to operate the park to a safe and consumer friendly standard.

Project Costs

Detailed project capital budget costs (to be funded from SPLOST 2020 only):

Project Costs (round to thousand)	Amount
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:	\$ -
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 298,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 75,000
4. Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (for a facility): A detailed estimate is preferred – but dependent upon the specific project, utilize at a minimum \$15 to \$20 per square foot.	\$ 4,000
5. Construction:	\$ 2,476,000
6. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 248,000
7. Acquisition of Capital Equipment:	\$ 45,000
8. Testing:	\$ 75,000
9. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 129,000
10. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 335,000
11. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 25,000
12. Other 1:	\$ -
13. Other 2:	\$ -
Project Subtotal:	\$ 3,710,000
14. Program Management (3% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 112,000
SPLOST 2020 Project Total:	\$ 3,822,000

Operating Cost

Total Annual Net Operating Costs when Project is complete:

Only identify additional or net operating costs to be paid by ACCGOV. Identify the additional or net costs needed above ACCGOV's current operating budget to operate the requested project and any additional project related revenues that would be generated. Provide budget costs for each identified category below.

Operating Costs (round to thousand)	Estimated Impact for Annual Operating Expenditures
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT	-
PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	
1. Personnel Costs: from Appendix A	119,000
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Gas:	1,000
• Electrical:	2,000
• Water:	2,000
• Sewer:	2,000
• Phone:	2,000
• Solid Waste Collection:	1,000
• Other: fuel	5,000
3. Operating Supplies:	5,000
4. Equipment Maintenance:	6,000
5. Facility Maintenance:	2,000
6. Fuel:	-
7. Other: hazard tree felling	2,000
8. Other: invasive removal and habitat restoration	20,000
9. Other: alarm system	1,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	170,000
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	\$ 170,000

Project Financing

Is the proposed Project to receive funding from source(s) other than SPLOST 2020? Yes
 If yes, please fill in information below.

Total Capital Financing for Project:

If the proposed Project is to receive funding other than SPLOST 2020, provide a listing of amounts from each of the categories listed below. Please round all dollar amounts to the nearest \$1,000.

Project Sources (round to thousand)	Amount
1. SPLOST 2020 ¹ :	\$ 3,822,000
OTHER SOURCES	
2. ACCGOV General Fund:	\$ -
3. ACCGOV Enterprise Fund:	\$ -
4. State Grant:	\$ -
5. Federal Grant:	\$ -
6. Previous SPLOST:	\$ -
7. Other (describe): Riverview Foundation earmarked funds for public access and use of Tallassee Forest Park	\$ 90,000
8. Other (describe):	\$ -
TOTAL SOURCES:	\$ 3,912,000

¹ If any additional sources of funding other than SPLOST 2020 are indicated above, please provide information related to the source here. Be specific and be prepared to provide all necessary written approvals. (For example: Roadway projects that have approval for Federal Aid and will utilize SPLOST 2020 funding for matching funds, you would need to provide specific written approval by GDOT)

Describe the current commitments for the other sources funding this project: Riverview Foundation funds are contingent on SPLOST 2020 funding for the project. Other sources of supplemental funding could be leveraged if the project is funded through SPLOST 2020.

New Staffing

Position	Title	Hourly Rate	# of Hours /wk	# of Positions	Total Annual Expense
Full Time	1 - Police Officer			1	\$60,099
Part Time	Maintenance Worker II	\$22	29	1	\$33,176
Part Time	Park Assistant	\$17	29	1	\$25,636

1 - Police Officer – Responsible for patrolling the Tallassee Forest Park and ensuring rule and ordinance compliance and public safety in an ecologically sensitive habitat. Duties also include community outreach.

Maintenance Worker II – Responsible for all custodial services at the staff office and restroom building as well as facility maintenance of the trail segment, including general maintenance of park amenities.

Park Assistant – Responsible for monthly trail inspections, trash pickup, trail maintenance, and assisting with volunteer workdays and programming.

Project Site

Will the proposed Project require any land, whether existing sites, new site, easements, or Rights of Way? Yes

Will the proposed Project be on a site currently owned by ACCGOV? Yes

Approximately how many acres is available or will be needed for the new facility or Park? 310

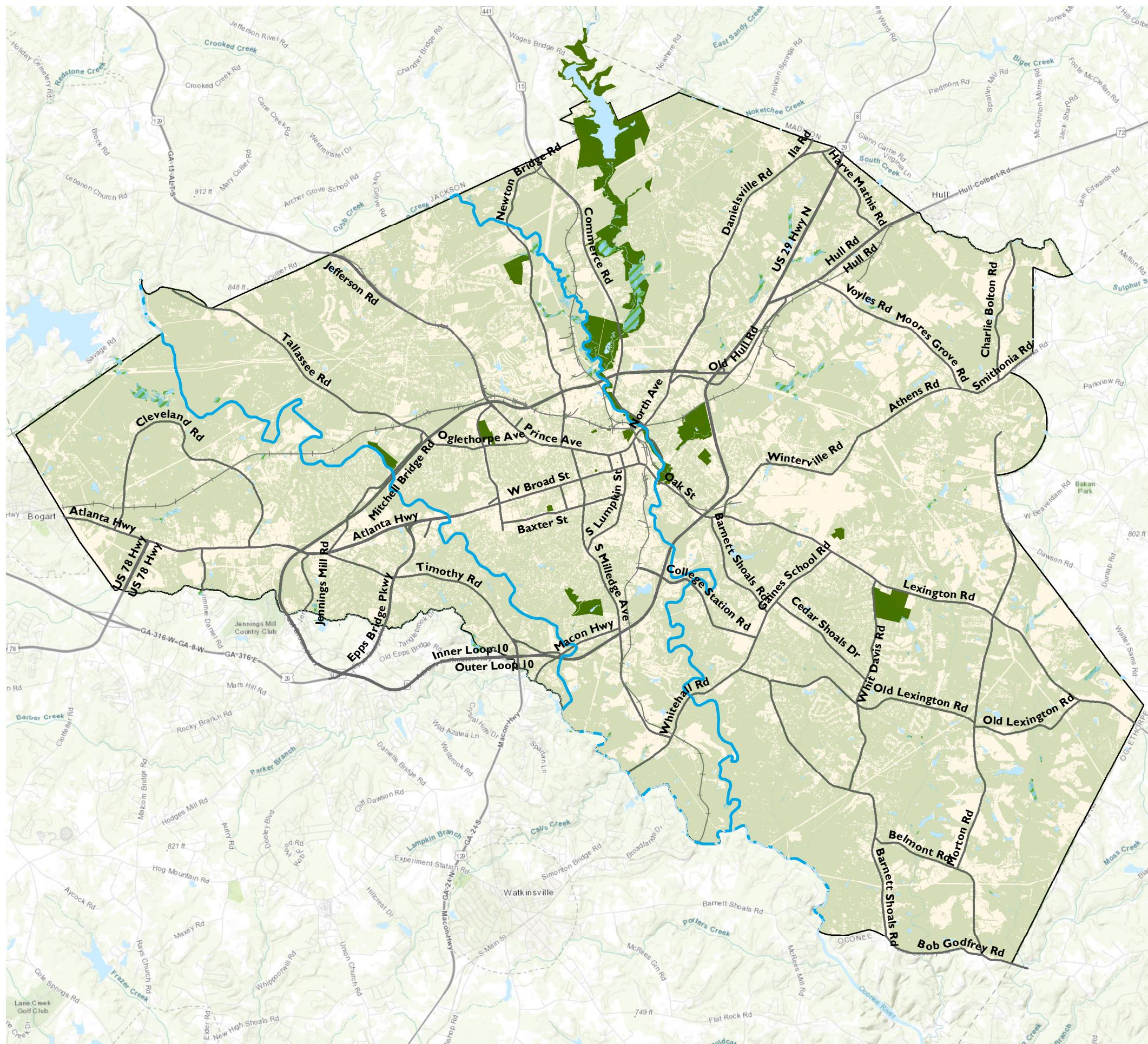
Project Location/Address (Existing or Proposed): 1625 Tallassee Road, Athens, GA 30607

Will the Project require fee simple additional land acquisition? No

Will the Project require Rights-of-Way or Easement acquisition? No

Site Criteria and Standards

Current Property Owner (if applicable): ACCGOV



- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Rivers
- Parks and Open Space

0 1 2 Miles

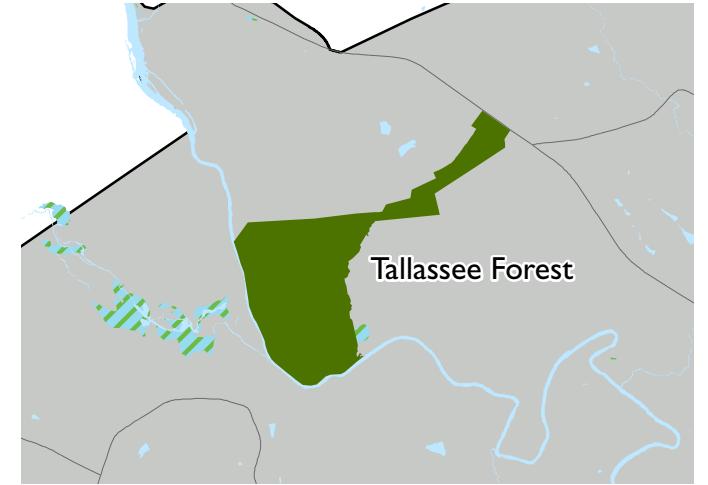
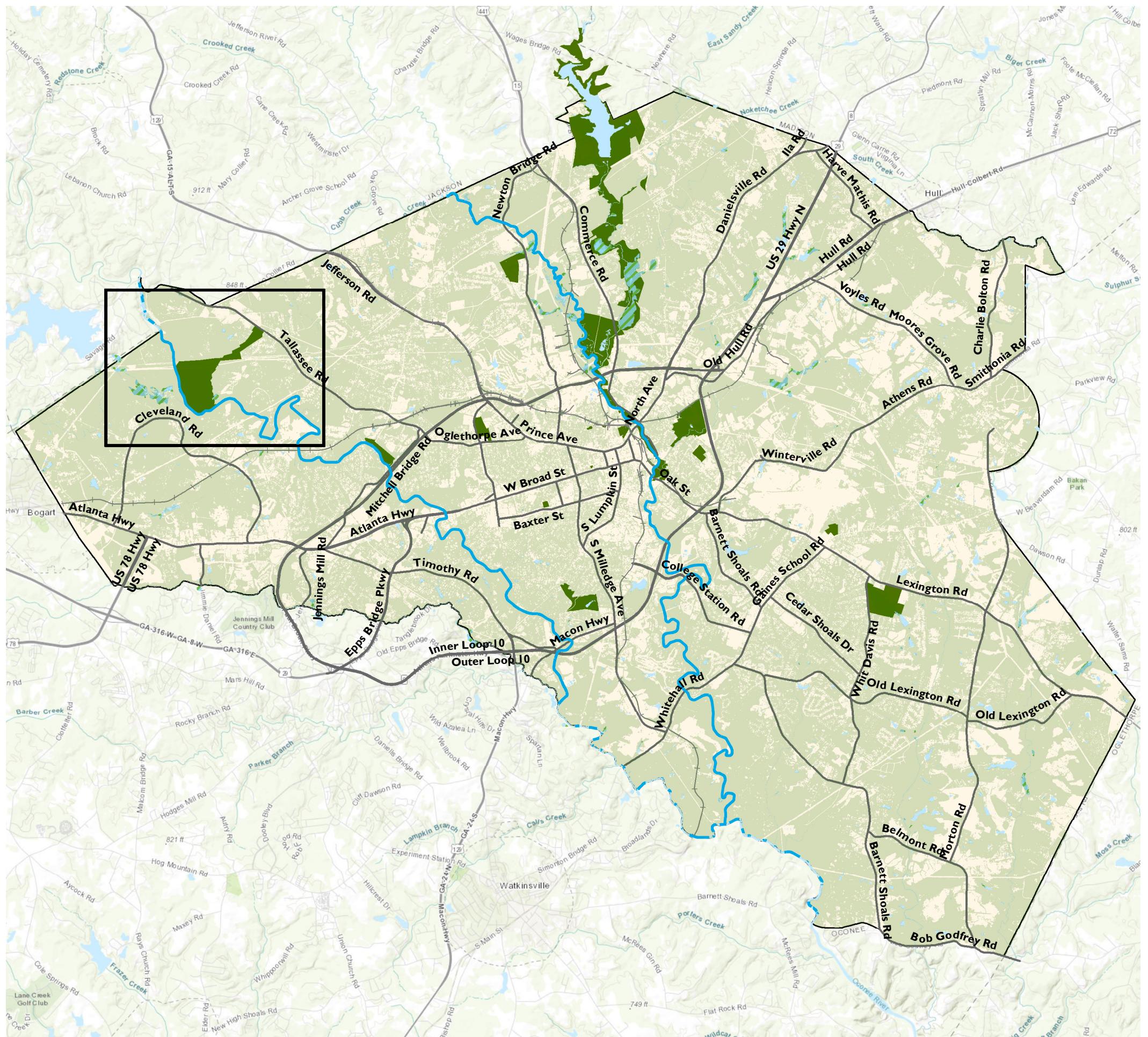


CURRENT PARKS IN ATHENS

Tallassee Forest
SPLOST 2020 SUBMISSION

Athens, Georgia

October 30, 2018 Sheet 1 of 2



- Major Roads
- Railroads
- Rivers
- Parks and Open Space

0 1 2 Miles



FUTURE PARK IN ATHENS

Tallassee Forest

SPLOST 2020 SUBMISSION

Athens, Georgia

October 30, 2018 Sheet 2 of 2

Project Cost round to thousand)

Bear Hollow Zoo Conceptual Improvements

	Original #	Rounded #
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement: Estimated value of property.	\$0.00	\$0
2. Design Fees Minimum of 12% of Construction costs for New Construction, 14% for renovations, and 16% for LEED designed projects.	\$297,014.00	\$298,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.	\$74,253.00	\$75,000
4. Fixtures, Furniture, and Equipment (for a facility): A detailed estimate is preferred – but dependent upon the specific project, utilize at a minimum \$15 to \$20 per square foot.	\$3,500.00	\$4,000
5. Construction: Provide a detailed cost estimate of this component.	\$2,475,116.00	\$2,476,000
6. Construction Contingency: Calculated at 10% of the Construction line item. If additional Construction Contingency is needed, use one of the "Other" fields below.	\$247,511.60	\$248,000
7. Acquisition of Capital Equipment	\$45,000.00	\$45,000
8. Testing Minimum of 3% of construction costs for projects whose construction component is over \$1 million and 5% for those whose construction component between \$1 million and \$500,000 and 10% of construction costs for projects less than \$500,000.	\$74,253.48	\$75,000
9. Project Management Calculated at 4% of the total budget line items above.	\$128,665.92	\$129,000
10. Project Contingency Calculated at 10% of the total budget line items above. If additional Project Contingency is needed, use one of the "Other" fields below.	\$334,531.40	\$335,000
11. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$24,751.16	\$25,000
12. Other	\$0.00	\$0
13. Other	\$0.00	\$0
Project Subtotal:	\$3,704,596.56	\$3,710,000
14. Program Management (3% of Project Subtotal):	\$111,137.90	\$112,000
SPLOST 2020 Project Total:	\$3,815,734.46	\$3,822,000



November 1, 2018

SPLOST 2020 Citizen Advisory Committee
Honorable Nancy Denson, Mayor, Athens-Clarke County
Commissioners of Athens-Clarke County
301 College Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30601

Re: Tallassee Forest Park and Conservation Project

Dear Committee Members and Elected Officials,

I am writing to express the Riverview Foundation's support for the dedication of SPLOST funding to facilitate public access and enjoyment of the Tallassee Forest property, along with the enhanced ecological restoration and stewardship of this important natural and historic community asset.

The Riverview Foundation has provided more than \$310,000 for the purchase of the Tallassee tract since 2012. The foundation has also funded initial planning efforts for this parcel in partnership with Athens-Clarke County Government, the Oconee River Land Trust and Athens Land Trust, the University of Georgia, and others. Since the project's inception, the Riverview Foundation has advocated for the development of a park experience that emphasizes the inclusion of low-impact infrastructure and affords the public with opportunities to engage in recreational activities such as walking, hiking, trail running, and paddle sports while also being able to observe wildlife and study ecology, forestry, and history. It is our belief that natural area parks represent the most economical investment for municipalities from a development and operations standpoint and are increasingly being embraced by the public, particularly as metropolitan areas become more urbanized.

The Riverview Foundation has earmarked an additional \$89,750 to support public access and use of the Tallassee property provided that Athens-Clarke County and its partners can demonstrate their commitment to move forward with phased development of this park *in a timely fashion*. Pending the outcome of the planning process and a mutual agreement that the resulting park plan is suitable for the character and location of the land, additional resources may be available from Riverview in the future to pay for trails, wayfinding, observation and picnic areas, etc.

The Riverview Foundation's prior investments at Ben Burton Park, Southeast Clarke Park, Trail Creek Park, Beech Haven, Boulevard Woods, Lake Herrick, and the

November 1, 2018
page two

Firefly Trail are indicative of our interest in working with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to create great public spaces where nature and people prosper. With more than 1.2 miles of frontage along the Middle Oconee River, a forest canopy that is approaching eighty years of age over much of the acreage, the presence of Native American history and artifacts, and superlative ecological attributes, the Tallassee parcel is a gem that is waiting to be polished and incorporated into the county's portfolio of parks and open spaces.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this letter of endorsement for the allocation of SPLOST funding to create a new public park at Tallassee Forest. If I can be of further assistance on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kindest regards,



Benic M. "Bruz" Clark III

/bmc