

# AVONDALE ESTATES GREENSPACE AD-HOC COMMITTEE

## INVENTORY AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

November 7, 2018

### Our Mission Statement:

*“To provide assistance and support, through professional expertise in matters of open space planning and design, to the City of Avondale Estates Board of Mayor and Commissioners and, as requested by the City, to other City boards or departments.”*

# Avondale Estates Greenspace Ad-Hoc Committee Inventory and Recommendations Report October 26, 2018

[https://www.avondaleestates.org/DocumentCenter/View/2546/Greenspace-Committee-Final-Report-2018\\_10\\_26](https://www.avondaleestates.org/DocumentCenter/View/2546/Greenspace-Committee-Final-Report-2018_10_26)

## Background and Purpose

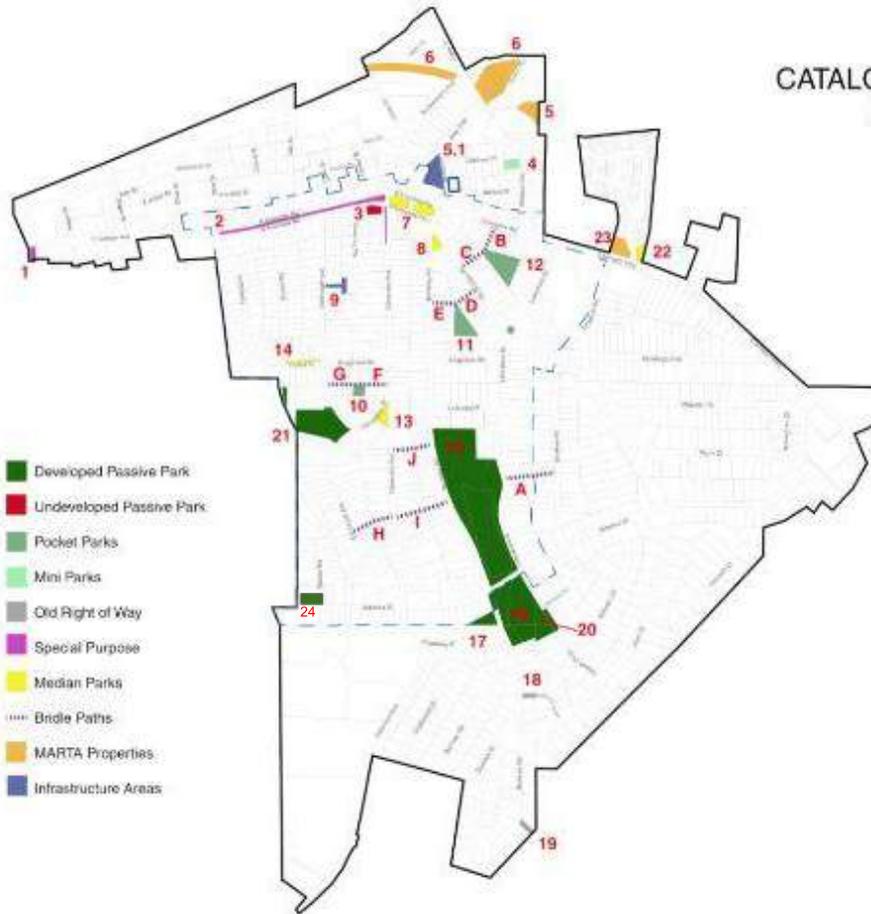
The following report is a catalog of all known City owned greenspace and the Committee's recommendations for each space, to be implemented in phases as the City moves forward. An appendix to the site specific recommendations includes a summary of all public outreach and meetings.



## METHODOLOGY

- Researched city zoning maps and county GIS data to identify and categorize all City-owned greenspace property.
- Identified greenspace typologies.
- Conducted site visits at Greenspace properties.
- Developed an on-line survey to gain an understanding of community needs.
- Held two community workshops for input, each workshop was attended by up to 36 people.
- The on-line survey resulted in 70 responses.
- Survey data was compiled for a record of public input.
- Final presentations to the public in Oct 2018.
- Final recommendations developed for each greenspace site and report published to City website.

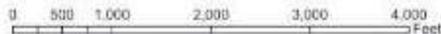
# CATALOGUE OF PUBLIC GREENSPACE AVONDALE ESTATES, GA



1. Lanier Gardens (DeKalb County)
2. Carl's Corner/Abels Hedge
3. Clarendon Gateway Lot
4. Oakham Place Park
5. Greenspace behind Windsor Terrace (MARTA property)
- 5.1 Area N of City Hall Parking
6. PATH Stone Mountain Trolley Trail area
7. Dewey Brown Plaza
8. Berkeley Triangle
9. Coventry Close Drainage Easement
10. Dartmouth Avenue Pocket Park
11. Berkeley/Kingstone/Kensington Pocket Park
12. Kensington/Covington Pocket Park
13. Clarendon Place Triangle
14. Fairfield Plaza
15. Lake Avondale - Northwoods
16. Bird Sanctuary (Lake Avondale - Southwoods)
17. Berkeley Road Trail/Greenspace
18. Banbury Cross ROW
19. S. Berkeley Road ROW
20. Fletcher Park
21. Willis Park
22. Stratford Green Gateway
23. Stratford Green Gateway - MARTA property
24. Sussex Road Greenspace

**Bridle Paths:**

- A. Stratford to Lakeshore
- B. Covington Rd to Park #12
- C. Park #12 to Kensington Rd
- D. Kensington Rd to Park #11
- E. Park #11 to Berkeley Rd
- F. Clarendon Ave to Park #10
- G. Park #10 to Dartmouth Ave
- H. Dartmouth to Clarendon
- I. Clarendon to Berkeley
- J. Clarendon to Berkeley #2



# Types of Greenspace



Developed Passive Park (Willis, Lake)



Undeveloped Passive Park (3: Clarendon gateway lot)



Pocket Parks (interior sites)



Mini Parks (4: Oakham Pl.)



Old R/W (Trolley line; Banbury Cross; S. Berkeley)



Special purpose (1: Lanier Gardens)



Median Parks (plazas and triangles)



Bridle Paths



MARTA properties (6,5)



Infrastructure areas (9: behind city hall)

# Conducted site visits at Greenspace properties.



Example from site visits

# (11) Kensington/Berkeley/Kingstone "Pocket Park"



1.44 Acre

Walk date: 2016.04.23

Pocket Park



Example from site visits

## (11) Kensington/Berkeley/Kingstone "Pocket Park"



### Benefits:

- Undergrowth cleared and now maintained by City - improved aesthetics and safety
- Ecological benefits - wildlife, stormwater, air quality, temperature
- Enjoyed by immediate neighbors

### Recommendations:

- Clear and grub to permanently remove invasive Wisteria. Plant pockets of native shrubs and trees. Potential volunteer planting projects.
- Provide a mulch or gravel path within the space
- Designate as a "Bird Sanctuary" as opposed to a "park" allowing public access but not encouraging overuse. Use sign similar to that at Carl's Corner to signify entrance.
- Provide at least one clear entry, potentially provide sidewalk connection on Bridle Path.
- In future acquire property for clear access to site and use as public open space.



Pocket Park



## **Key Recommendations for Existing Greenspace Typologies:**

### **Bridle Paths:**

- Many have blended into adjacent properties and appear “lost”.
- They need to be cleared, marked on the abutting sidewalks, and/or signed.
- At a minimum, at least one path leading into each Pocket Park should be cleared to provide access.
- Potentially pave as permanent sidewalks.

### **Pocket Parks:**

- Due to lack of accessibility behind backyards, designating the pocket parks as city park “facilities” is not recommended.
- They should be retained as informal areas that serve as bird sanctuaries/nature preserves or be permitted to be maintained by “friends groups” for the development of specific improvements.
- Recommend targeted invasive vegetation removal and control.
- Plan for future volunteer plantings of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers by the Tree Board or other groups to maintain biodiversity.

### **Developed Passive Parks:**

- Willis Park: After recent upgrades some maintenance needs will be identified, such as irrigation, drainage improvements, and tree care.
- Lake Avondale: Uncompleted elements of the Lake Master Plan should be implemented (Bird Sanctuary area, Proposed Rain Garden, etc.)
- Additional parks will be needed as Avondale’s population grows. A Town Green can serve this purpose.

## **Key Recommendations for Greenspace Typologies:**

### **Undeveloped Passive Parks:**

- “Tree Lighting” lot on Clarendon should be developed to read as a public space.

### **Mini Parks:**

- New park at South City Partners site.
- Oakham Place Park should be improved with new play equipment and furnishings.
- Promote Mini Park development as a part of new developments.

### **Special Purpose Area:**

- Lanier Gardens should be acquired from DeKalb County and improved as a gateway to the city and connection to the East Decatur Greenway.

### **Median Parks (plazas and triangles):**

- These highly visible areas can be important for stormwater management, public art, and/or canopy street trees. Improve street furnishings as necessary.
- Reprogram/landscape Dewey Brown Plaza.

### **MARTA properties:**

- With the loss of the old soccer field to development, MARTA should be consulted on surplus right-of-way or property for use as permanent greenspace.

### **Infrastructure areas:**

- These areas could be used for green infrastructure planning and potential stormwater control to allow passive uses at the surface.

# Public Outreach



- Held two community workshops for input in January 2018 - 50+ attendees
- On-line survey to gain an understanding of community needs - 70 responses.
- Presented the report October 11 and 13

Example from survey results

# Q1 – What are your favorite outdoor places in Avondale Estates?

Lake	<b>56</b>
Willis Park; Avondale Park	<b>36</b>
Streets- tree lined streets; Sidewalks; walking the neighborhood	<b>10</b>
Woods	<b>9</b>
Pool	<b>7</b>
Bridal Paths	<b>6</b>
Yard	<b>6</b>
Bird Sanctuary	<b>5</b>
Downtown	<b>5</b>
Fletcher Park	<b>3</b>
Pocket Park	<b>2</b>
School kids in Willis Park are a problem	<b>2</b>
Berkeley Triangle	<b>1</b>
Downtown	<b>1</b>
Pickle ball courts	<b>1</b>
Walking path around lake	<b>1</b>

### **Q3 Favorite Activities in Avondale?**

Walking, running, biking, playground, events/festivals, social spaces

### **Q 4 What activities would you like to do, but Avondale does not have the appropriate space?**

Top three responses:

- Outdoor events,
- Dog park, and
- Safe-connected walking paths



Workshop discussions highlighted the need for walking infrastructure particularly in our downtown, safe routes to MARTA, a community garden, outdoor dining, and a community center.

# Community Needs:

## 1. New “Town Green” Park

- a. Downtown park with open lawn that supports community wide events.
- b. Events are very popular and a downtown event space is recommended.

## 2. City wide Open Space/Parks and Recreation Master Plan

- a. Provides an official framework for implementing recommendations of the Ad-hoc community, sets budgets, and identifies gaps, opportunities, and best practices.

## 3. Acquisition of additional Greenspace

- a. As the city grows there will be increasing need for additional space for sports fields and courts, free play for pick up games, off-leash dog areas, and organized activities.
- b. City should continue discussions with MARTA, the American Legion, and DeKalb Board of Education and explore opportunities to acquire or utilize areas large enough to support multiple activities.
- c. Acquisition of the old High School ballfields can provide the following program:
  - Active Park - Multi-purpose fields, add courts
  - Dog Park - Identify area for fenced off-leash area
  - Walking paths

# Community Needs:

## 4. City wide pedestrian / bike plan

- a. Can be included in Open Space Master Plan scope.
- b. Identify sidewalk, crosswalk and other pedestrian improvements.
- c. Consider lower scaled pedestrian lighting to replace streetlights and overhead utilities, free up shoulders and verges for street trees.
- d. Upgrade bicycle facilities through improvements such as signage, striping, multi-use trails and protected bike lanes

## 5. Improve Pedestrian Connectivity

- a. Potentially add connections between blocks in Majestic Acres and Avonwood.
- b. Improve pedestrian/bike access to and through downtown.
- c. Pedestrian/bike routes to MARTA and Decatur were mentioned by workshop attendees and in the survey.
- d. Provide social spaces, people watching, outdoor eating, places to sit along sidewalks
- e. Establish median parks and connected streetscapes in downtown.
- f. Include open space/streetscape concepts in Street Grid planning.

## 6. Dog Park

- a. Prior committees worked to locate a dog park within the community but existing greenspace could not accommodate dog park needs effectively.
- b. Acquisition of property or use of non-traditional sites should be considered.

# Community Needs:

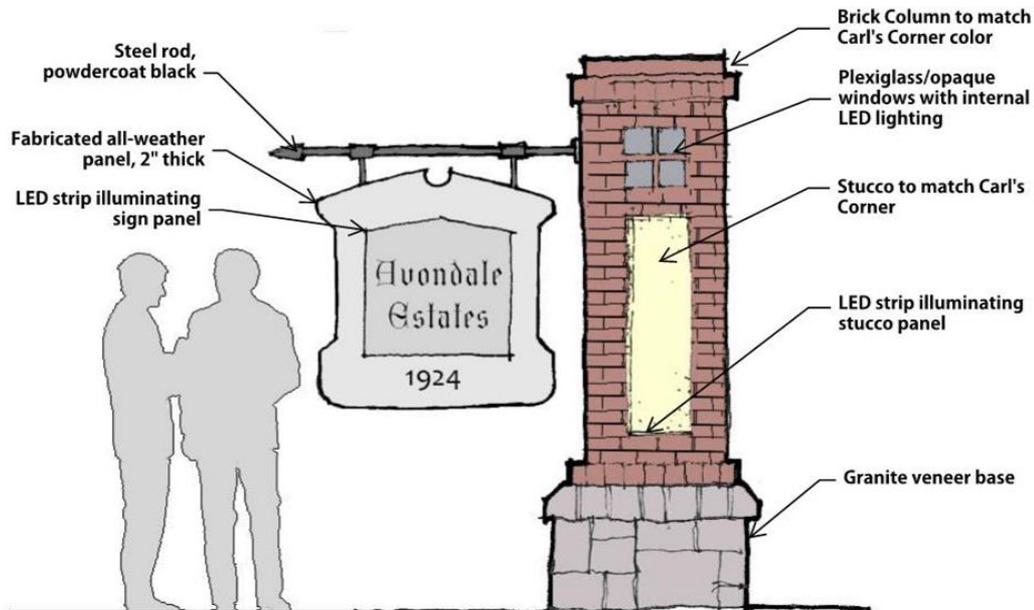
## 7. Community Garden

- a. Several groups have advocated for a Senior or Community Garden.
- b. Location south of the lake at Berkeley Road should be considered.

## 8. Leverage stormwater management to create public greenspace. Develop city policies that encourage stormwater ponds as amenities.

## 9. Improve public open space requirements/incentives in zoning.

## 10. Provide a coordinated branding/signage plan for the City.



Example of a potential gateway sign for Lanier Gardens, which could be part of a larger branding/signage plan.



# Priority Issues

1. Cross walk at Oak Street
2. Bridle path encroachment
3. Designate the pocket parks as pollinator gardens/Bird sanctuaries
4. Acquire Lanier Gardens and annex the piece not in the City. Build a new gateway sign there
5. Build the town green
6. Implement rest of Lake Master Plan (rain garden a part of that)
7. Acquire the Old HS baseball fields (tough but a goal) or other site suitable for informal athletic fields.
8. Improve public open space requirements/incentives in zoning
9. Create a non-profit foundation that could raise funds for greenspace/green infrastructure in the city. Initial focus could be to raise funds for the town green.

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## **Committee Background:**

The Greenspace Ad-Hoc Committee was created Volunteer group chosen by Board of Mayor and Commissioners, based on experience as greenspace design professionals:

*Brad Jones, Dee Merriam, Jen Pindyck, Steve Sanchez, David Sacks*

## **Work performed:**

October 2015: Greenspace Committee formed

November 2015 - March 2016: Create draft of Avondale Estates Residential Tree Ordinance

April 2016: Identification of all greenspaces for review

April 2016 - August 2016: Walkthrough of all identified greenspaces

September 2016 - December 2017: Documentation and Review

January 2018: Community Presentations/Discussions and Survey

October 11 and 13, 2018: Final Presentations

October 26, 2018: Submit final report to City