

Boulevard Woods

Key points

"Boulevard Woods" is a proposal by the Boulevard Neighborhood Association, Inc. (BNA) to partner with Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services to establish and maintain a 2.3 acre public green space on three vacant county-owned lots located off of Barber Street where Boulevard ends.

- **Location, ownership, zoning.** The site is comprised of three contiguous, heavily wooded parcels, totaling 2.32 acres. The parcels are vacant: there are no built structures on them. The parcels are: 298 Barber St. (#163C3 A010); 294 Barber St. (#163C3 A011B); and 0 Barber St. (#163C3 A011C). They are all zoned for single family residential. Athens-Clarke County owns these parcels, free and clear. W.H. Benson donated the largest parcel to the City of Athens in the mid-1960s. The other two parcels were acquired through tax settlements in the 1980s.
- **Proposed features, phasing.** The proposed neighborhood-developed concept plan calls for a low-cost, easy-to-maintain public green space constructed in phases that is convenient place for neighbors to relax, bring kids to play safely or take a stroll along a nature trail. Key features for the first phase of construction on the street-level include a fence, an entrance area with improved bus stop, a paved path, a play area for children, an overlook platform, benches, a bike rack, trash containers and additional plantings to protect the privacy of adjacent homes.
- **Funding sources, estimated budget.** BNA intends to raise the funds and, under the supervision of ACC's Leisure Services Department, coordinate the use of contracted and volunteer labor and donated materials to build "Boulevard Woods." BNA also plans to provide for its ongoing maintenance. BNA proposes to make the construction of "Boulevard Woods" contingent on a successful fundraising campaign. If BNA fails to raise sufficient funds by a certain date, BNA will not begin construction, and the lots will simply remain vacant as they are now. BNA is developing more precise cost estimates for the proposed features, but currently it estimates that "Boulevard Woods" will require raising between \$30,000 and \$50,000. BNA expects that a significant portion of these estimated costs will be covered through donated materials and labor.
- **Crosswalk.** BNA requests that ACC fund and install a safe crossing for pedestrians at the Barber Street/Boulevard junction. Estimated cost for installation (using ACC labor, if appropriate) of crosswalk and associated signage: \$2000.

- **Similar to existing agreement.** In many ways the framework of this proposal is similar to the recently executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Athens Chapter of Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SOBRA) and ACC's Leisure Services Department that allowed SOBRA--under supervision by Leisure Services--to construct and maintain multi-use trails on county-owned property in East Athens. Like SOBRA, BNA is seeking an agreement with ACC Leisure Services to establish a partnership to create and maintain "Boulevard Woods."
- **Backed by enduring organizations.** "Boulevard Woods" is a project of Boulevard Neighborhood Association, Inc., which has been actively advocating to protect and improve Boulevard neighborhood since the 1980s. In 1993, BNA incorporated in the state of Georgia as a nonprofit. BNA recently modified its bylaws to create a permanent "neighborhood park" standing committee. BNA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Athens Land Trust, a locally based nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization, that establishes a fundraising partnership for "Boulevard Woods."
- **Site has long been considered a possible neighborhood park location.** Since at least 2004, when the Community Approach to Planning Prince Avenue (CAPP) effort was underway, these lots have been identified as possible passive outdoor leisure site. This possibility was mentioned again more recently in the Prince Avenue Corridor Study prepared by ACC's Planning Department.
- **Design based on neighborhood feedback.** The design for "Boulevard Woods" is based on two surveys of neighborhood residents and a public charrette. Nearly all of 193 neighborhood residents surveyed supported creating a neighborhood park, which the neighborhood currently lacks. (Many residents noted that the school yard playground at Chase Elementary School is off-limits to neighborhood residents during the school day, and that dogs are prohibited.) The charrette attracted the active participation of 35 neighborhood residents. Using feedback from the surveys and charrette, a volunteer design team developed a concept drawing. The design team included UGA landscape architecture professors, a locally practicing architect and a professional landscape designer.
- **Volunteer investment.** Along with design team work, the site has been the focus of much hands-on volunteer activity. There have been 8 organized volunteer work days to remove trash and clear trails at the site. More than 82 people have together volunteered at least 2,200 hours of time for this project.

For more information about Boulevard Woods, visit boulevardwoods.net. Memo prepared by Dan Lorentz, Chairperson, Boulevard Neighborhood Association, Inc., March 3, 2012