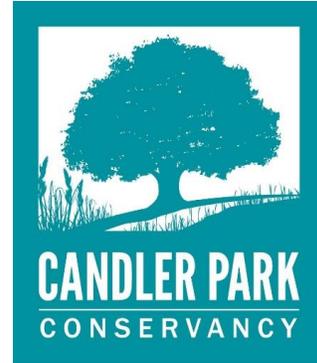


Updates from the Candler Park Conservancy

by Lauren Welsh

Festivals, plantings, and members – oh my! The Candler Park Conservancy has been hard at work over the past several months on a variety of projects that are both long and short term as well as some overall planning for the organization. We've been building our relationship with the city, strengthening our board, getting projects up and running, and setting up goals for the future.



Advocating for Our Park

Earlier this year, Candler Park was selected as the site for the Atlanta Taco Festival. As many of you know, that festival turned out to be quite a disaster due to poor planning by the event organizer as well as damage to the grounds due to heavy trucks driving on the field. The Conservancy monitored this event, took pictures and notes, and reported our findings to the city. Just a few weeks later, Candler Park was the host of the Candler Park Music and Food Festival. This particular event organizer had a significant amount of experience hosting events around the city of Atlanta, and the Conservancy was pleased to see this festival was well run. The event organizer held several meetings with the Conservancy and CPNO, created a solid traffic plan, limited damage to the park, and even donated proceeds from the park to both organizations.

In addition, our own Ben Klehr continues to serve on a Special Events Task Force to the city along with representatives from other NPUs to advocate for smart and consistent city policies around events at all of our city parks.

Bottom line – the Conservancy will continue to advocate for the best uses of the park when it comes to potential festivals and events.

Building Relationships with the City

The Conservancy has been working directly with Commissioner Amy Phoung and Parks Director Doug Voss to ensure there is clear communication and collaboration around any issues impacting Candler Park. In the spring, the board held our first walk-through of the park with both Amy and Doug to illustrate some of the assets and challenges. Since then, we have set up quarterly meetings with the Office of Parks.

Bottom line – the Conservancy continues to build a strong and beneficial relationship with the City of Atlanta.

Working with the Golf Course

Over the years, there has been concern about the future of the Candler Park golf course. The Conservancy and CPNO have been working together to increase our communication with the city around future management of the course moving forward. The City has told us that we're under a month to month contract and they do not see anything changing with that in the near future.

A key goal of the Conservancy is to preserve the natural habitat around the park and particularly around the golf course. We have communicated clearly about no mow zones around the riparian corridor with American Golf and continue to advocate for its preservation. Currently, the seventh tee has been an

area of focus as well, given the water moving closer to the golfing area. The Conservancy has been working with the City of Atlanta and a golf design expert to create a potential solution that will allow the natural habitat and also create a better golfing experience by moving the seventh tee. This solution is still being discussed with City and Golf officials.

The Conservancy continues to communicate directly with John Wood of American Golf. The golf clubhouse continues to need support and we are working to determine what makes the most sense moving forward in regard to potential short term projects.

Bottom line: The Conservancy continues to support the golf course and a way for it to work within the natural environment.

Plantings in the Park

While the City of Atlanta provides routine maintenance in the park, the Conservancy looks for areas where plantings can provide both beautification and erosion control. Currently the Conservancy is considering plantings that would help with erosion control around the slope at the parking area and field, the slope between Callan Circle and the tennis courts, and the slope between the tennis courts and the playground. In addition, we're working with Elise Cormier, a local landscape architect, on planting designs for the entry way of Candler Park. Both of these plantings will occur in Fall 2016.

Bottom line: Plantings are a priority for the Conservancy and are a key tangible way to make a difference in the park.

Raising Funds for Park Projects

One key role for the Conservancy is to raise funds for specific projects in the park. This will come in the form of money raised through membership, individual donors, and grants. Earlier this year we were excited to receive our first ever grant through Park Pride. This "Small Change Grant" allowed us to work with local artist and metal worker Cash Barnes to create the historic lighting at the entrance to Candler Park. Receiving this first grant will help the Conservancy strengthen our relationship and credibility not only with Park Pride, but with other potential funding sources as well.

Bottom line: We're beginning to build our fundraising efforts, but large investments will take time and more relationship building.

Planning for our Future

While the Conservancy considers short-term projects, we're eager to create a long-term plan that will allow us to better understand what success looks like and what is the best path to follow to create the vision the community has created for the park.

We're fortunate to be the recipient of pro bono services provided by Perkins and Will via the company's Social Responsibility Initiative Project. The project is a combination of a high-level vision plan for the park and fundraising collateral for associated improvement projects. It will build on early visioning and project identification by the Candler Park community and the board of the Conservancy.

The Conservancy has also contracted with Evident Impact to develop a strategic plan for the organization. The majority of our work has focused on potential programs within the park, but in order

to sustain the Conservancy, we need to be thinking about an overall business plan. This will help us better understand board development, fundraising, evaluation and more.

The Conservancy board started with a group of 12 founding members, and we thank those individuals for their service who rotated off earlier this year – Katharine Connell and Charles Hooker. We have also added Corey Anderson, Dan Hanlon, Scott Lenhart, and Doug Wetzal as new board members.

Bottom line: The Conservancy is making sure we focus on defining what long-term success looks like.

Growing our Membership

At the core, the Conservancy is a membership organization. We are dedicated to building our membership base, getting input from members, and making sure we're serving our members' needs. We've been working on increasing those membership numbers by having a presence at community events like the Mulberry Fields Gone Wylde celebration and the Stop the Road gathering. We'll have a table at the neighborhood's Fall Fest and will continue to find new ways to engage current and future members.

Bottom line: The Conservancy needs more support and input from members and will push more on this in the coming months.

Candler Park Conservancy is a 501c3 Non-Profit organization dedicated to providing long term solutions for Candler Park's natural environment and enhancements for the multiple uses of our visitors. Learn more and join us at our website: www.CandlerParkConservancy.org.