



# City of Tucker

FISCAL  
**2019**  
YEAR

# ANNUAL REPORT





# NORTHLAKE MALL



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## MESSAGE FROM THE **Mayor**

As I look back over all that we've accomplished this past year in Tucker, I am filled with appreciation, awe and a bit of exhaustion. In every facet of our city operation, we innovated and exceeded anything that we had previously done, raising the bar as we move into the future.

Last July, the City worked with corporate and community partners to put on our very first downtown fireworks show. We estimate that 5,000 people came out to celebrate America and to experience Tucker. It was a real source of civic pride and a testament to what we can accomplish when we tap into our community resources.

Just a few weeks later, we allocated funds to match a grant that our Parks and Recreation Department had secured to replace outdated playgrounds in parks throughout the City. When the work was finished this past spring, we toured these playgrounds and saw first-hand how that investment is driving more families into our parks than ever before.

In August, our transportation engineers kicked off our much-needed road resurfacing program. This effort, funded by Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) dollars, saw dozens of the worst-conditioned streets around Tucker improved, not with patches or temporary fixes, but with complete milling and repaving. These roads, as well as the ones resurfaced this spring and over the course of the six-year SPLOST, will provide Tucker drivers with a smooth ride for decades to come.

We celebrated a positive step forward in community policing in September, as leaders of the DeKalb County Police Department re-drew the precinct boundaries to ensure that all of Tucker was serviced by Tucker Precinct. The ability to communicate with one precinct commander and have officers enforcing our city ordinances keeps us safer and gives us the opportunity to better track and understand crime trends.

November saw a big change, as City Manager Tami Hanlin became our first full-time City employee. Tami has been with Tucker since we incorporated, but as a contract employee with CH2M Hill/Jacobs. Bringing her on as a City employee was another of the "firsts" we talk about as a new city, and it put her in a position where she could oversee all City contracts from a position of neutrality.







In another important step for our young city, in January I called for a Charter Review Commission. This group of Tucker residents, volunteers who have several months of work ahead of them, are tasked with taking a state-mandated look at what's working and what needs to be tweaked in our City Charter.

In April, we shined a spotlight on Tucker as a prime business destination by hosting our inaugural Manufacturing Day. Elected leaders, regional business executives, brokers and entrepreneurs all came to Tucker to tour some of our innovative manufacturing facilities and see what our city has to offer. It was a triumph of collaboration between our Economic Development Department and our two magnificent community improvement districts.

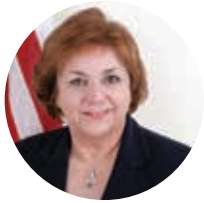
Just this spring, we unanimously adopted a pair of plans that will have long-term impacts on the direction of Tucker. The Trail Master Plan is an ambitious effort to build a network of trails connecting the different parts of the City, while also connecting to surrounding areas like Stone Mountain and Mercer University. The Parks Master Plan helps us to understand how best to maximize the potential of our parks and recreation facilities, while looking at new amenities like dog parks.

Finally, this past June we welcomed most of Northlake Mall into the City through the annexation process. The mall's ownership group decided that being a part of a city like Tucker was going to serve them well as they embark on a massive redevelopment project. We were only too happy to accept their annexation petition.

I give you this extensive look back to show you what an exciting year it's been. While we accomplished much, we are faced with more challenges and opportunities in the year ahead. I speak for myself, the City Council and our amazing staff when I say we are ready for what's to come.

Frank Auman  
Mayor

# GREETINGS FROM YOUR CITY COUNCIL



Pat Soltys



Bill Rosenfeld



Matt Robbins



Noelle Monferdini



Michelle Penkava



Anne Lerner

## **Pat Soltys** **District 1, Post 1**

This last year has certainly been one where growth was centric to nearly everything we did in Tucker. We grew as a Council in working together, our city grew in the size and scope of our responsibilities, we grew as a community, not only in size but also love, pride and respect for our community.

There is such a positive momentum that it really means we are on the right track. We have a dedicated Council, Mayor, hard-working staff, amazing volunteers and, most of all, citizens who want the best for the City. Great things and more growth are certainly in our future.

## **Bill Rosenfeld** **District 1, Post 2**

One of the major things we accomplished this year was replacing the playground equipment in most of our parks. It was done through the leadership of our Parks and Recreation Director, but with support from our Friends of Tucker Parks volunteers.

We are paving roads using SPLOST dollars and operating with a zero-based budget. Tucker is always in the black and working to conserve every dollar as we move forward.

Economic development is another area that is very busy. Our staff keeps us informed of any development requests and makes sure we are prepared for decisions we have to make at council meetings.

Thanks for so much support from all our citizens. This year will be even better!

## **Matt Robbins** **District 2, Post 1**

Where did the past year go? I think the most significant accomplishments in 2018-19 will be ones which will not see fruition until later years: the many "Master Plans" which saw extensive involvement in discussions of wish lists, plenty of reviews, heated analyses and revisions based on available and potential funding.

Special thanks to City staff, contractors and the many residents who gave of their time and thoughts to developing plans that will see exciting implementation. These include Parks, Trails, Transportation, Downtown, Historic Resources, Signage, Overlay Districts and more.

Thank you for letting me serve! It has been an honor.

## **Noelle Monferdini** **District 2, Post 2**

This past year, we were able to see our SPLOST funds in action. This is evident in the newly repaved streets throughout the City and a redesigned intersection at Fellowship Road. Keep in mind that our experienced staff have found the best and lowest costs to implement these projects, as well as applied for grant opportunities to further the use of these funds.

We are on track with our project task lists that our citizens helped to create during our Comprehensive Planning process. Each step that we take as a city from this point will have been created and drafted by the people who live here. Now that is truly exciting!

## **Michelle Penkava** **District 3, Post 1**

What an exciting year this has been! Our staff has done a brilliant job engaging both citizens and experts to help craft a vision for Tucker's future. From parks to transportation to signage, consultants and the community have worked together to thoroughly consider plans and possibilities.

But most exciting for me has been the collaboration between the City of Tucker, DeKalb County and the DeKalb County School District to improve safety around our schools. We are addressing sidewalk gaps around schools, installing crosswalk signals and investigating adding flashing beacon crosswalks in our school zones. We have made great progress in a short time and I look forward to even greater safety improvements in the future.

## **Anne Lerner** **District 3, Post 2**

There is so much to be thankful for this past year! We've paved roads, added sidewalks and other pedestrian safety improvements, acquired more park land and installed new playgrounds. In partnership with our citizen steering committees and Team Tucker, we've adopted master plans for our parks and a new Tucker Path system, along with updating our sign ordinance and zoning code.

Most important is that we've continued to keep the promises made during our journey to cityhood. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to serve you as we move our city forward by working together and doing it the Tucker Way.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

This past fiscal year truly was a turning point for Tucker. Our staff and leadership laid the groundwork for what will ultimately take us from start-up to an established and thriving city. You may not have noticed many of these steps as they were happening, but I promise you will see the results for years to come.

The Fiscal Year '19 budget had a significant amount of money allocated for various plans and studies. These are lengthy and not very flashy processes, but each one is a critical building block that we will expand upon for the betterment of Tucker. Our Transportation Master Plan will have short- and long-term impacts on traffic, transit and pedestrian safety in the City. Speaking of pedestrians, we adopted a Trail Master Plan that will solidify Tucker's commitment to being a truly walkable and connected city. Our Sign Ordinance and Overlay Rewrite was done to simplify city code for business owners, while maintaining the appearance and integrity of our business and residential corridors. I could go on about our Parks Master Plan or our Downtown Master Plan, but the point is, all of these plans and studies were completed as a way to guide Tucker toward a very bright future.

I am also proud to say that we made some significant advances in staffing. City leadership had the vision to approve funding for a Capital Programs Manager and a Finance Director. The latter position has been filled by Toni Jo Howard, a woman whose experience and professionalism will be true assets to our city. She steps into a finance department which made strides of its own this year with the introduction of a business-friendly online licensing process. That department is key to keeping Tucker on the solid financial footing we've established in our first three years.

One more note on staffing: we are now fully-staffed across all of our city departments. Don't read that to say we have the right number of people to do the job. Instead, understand that we have the right caliber of people to do the job; and the job is providing Tucker with a superior level of service across every function of our government. We are here to serve, and we are looking forward to making the coming fiscal year our best one yet!

**Tami Hanlin**  
City Manager









## PARKS & RECREATION

In its first full fiscal year, Tucker's Parks and Recreation Department made some huge strides. The most significant accomplishment was adoption of the City's first Parks Master Plan. The plan, managed and produced by Barge Design Solutions, looked at Tucker's park inventory and identified areas where residents could be better served. Over the course of the next several years, this could mean installation of dog parks, additional parking, restrooms, enhanced connectivity of hiking trails and more opportunities for family and adult recreation.

The Recreation Center, a building that's been part of the Tucker community for more than 60 years and serves as headquarters for the Parks and Rec staff, was made a priority by department leadership, as well as by the Mayor and City Council. Big investments were made to replace HVAC units and make repairs to the roof. Renovations are underway on the facility's antiquated restrooms and kitchen area. The large multi-purpose field alongside the Rec Center was dug up and re-sodded to provide a top-notch playing surface.

The City's biggest and most utilized park – Henderson Park – saw improvements to the trail system, the concession area and to the tennis courts, where the highly anticipated lighting project came to fruition. Kelley Cofer Park had its concession building renovated and pavilions re-roofed, while the pool deck was refinished, got new fencing, and the splash pad was opened to the public. Work began with DeKalb County on plans for improvements at Peters Park to be funded by Community Development Block Grants.

Safety was a top priority for Parks and Recreation, as security cameras were installed at Tucker Recreation Center, as well as at Henderson, Cofer and Peters Parks. City leadership allocated funds to match grant money to replace aging playgrounds in all of the parks. Volunteer-driven projects, like the new boardwalks at Johns Homestead and Henderson Park, flourished throughout the City.

The department took on a new challenge in April, as the City agreed to take over operation of Fitzgerald Field. A longtime hub for football, baseball and cheerleading in Tucker, this park acquisition enabled the City to get started on much-needed care for fields and facilities throughout the park. Those improvements will continue in the coming fiscal year.



**\$200,000** Invested in Rehabbing Tucker Recreation Center

**25** Special Activities in Tucker Recreation Center

**180** Senior Program Participants

**100** Adult Program Participants

**1,250** Summer Camp Participants



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

It was a focus on the future for Tucker's Community Development team during the 2019 fiscal year. The department successfully oversaw a rewrite of the City's Sign Ordinance, including changes to streamline and create a more business-friendly code. They worked extensively on an update to the City's overlays to bring them in line with the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2018. They also worked with New South Associates to compile a Historic Resources Report, which will preserve Tucker's history as the City faces future development.

Community Development officials worked closely with the City Manager, Mayor and City Council on ordinance changes to limit outdoor tire display and storage, as well as collection bins. They shepherded the City's first Green Policy through City Council approval. They also hired the City's first Land Development Inspection Manager to review building plans and land disturbance permits for soil and erosion control.

From a procedural standpoint, the Community Development Department overhauled the applications and forms for building and permitting, as well as for land development petitions. They also implemented new software programs – BS&A and Bluebeam – to speed up processes internally and to make things easier for businesses or builders working with the City. The building and permitting staff incorporated new technology into their work, using drones to perform inspections at hard to access construction sites and Facetime to perform inspections when the City is closed for inclement weather.



### Our Community Development staff

is working each day to preserve what we cherish about Tucker's history, while guiding us toward smart growth solutions for the future." – **Mayor Auman**





## CODE ENFORCEMENT

Tucker's Code Enforcement team worked proactively through the 2019 fiscal year to ensure the cleanliness and overall appearance of Tucker's residential and commercial areas was maintained. They added a third Code Enforcement officer, Nicole Adams, enabling them to perform multi-family and residential inspection sweeps of apartments and condominium complexes across different parts of the City. They worked to identify businesses who had not renewed their occupational tax certificates and spearheaded the removal of collection bins once an ordinance was passed by the Mayor and City Council. In the coming year, they will work closely with the DeKalb County Police to reduce crime and blight in the Juliette Road area.



## PUBLIC SAFETY

The City of Tucker and DeKalb County Police Department implemented their newly redrawn service lines this year, the result of an innovative intergovernmental agreement that has DeKalb's Tucker Precinct covering the entirety of the City. The result of this change has been a sharp decrease in the rate of violent crime and property crime throughout the City of Tucker.

Lt. D.G. Schoepner continues to serve as Tucker's Police Liaison, providing regular crime updates to the Mayor, City Council and staff. He works closely with the City's Code Enforcement team, as well as the Community Development staff on special projects in the City.



# COMMUNICATIONS

In the continuing effort to connect with and inform as many citizens and stakeholders as possible, Tucker's Communications staff leveraged new means of community engagement and outreach this past fiscal year. The newly redesigned and expanded *InTucker* was transformed from a newsletter to a magazine, offering readers double the content and placing new emphasis on schools and economic development. The City website was revamped, creating a more visually appealing and user-friendly experience for those seeking information on Tucker.

Communications staff organized the second annual TKR Summer of Fun, again drawing thousands of people to enjoy food, fellowship and fireworks. They also worked closely with Parks and Recreation staff to promote numerous new activities in Tucker's parks. From the Trail Mix Hike to the Pi Day Pi-K and the Valentine's Day Luncheon for Seniors, residents were able to connect with the City and with one another in ways they never had before.

From a digital perspective, the Communications Department shattered previous marks for social media engagement across all platforms. They introduced a popular new video series with "The Tucker Experience" and successfully worked with other departments to promote and market the SPLOST-funded road resurfacing program and Tucker's first-ever Manufacturing Day.



## The Communications strategy

is simple: people deserve to know what's happening in their city.

From government meetings to fun community events, we are working to ensure residents can make the most of their decision to live in Tucker." – **Matt Holmes, Communications Director**





## CITIZEN RESPONDER

The Citizen Responder position remains one of the most important jobs in Tucker’s City Hall. Taking resident calls and emails on any number of issues, the Citizen Responder works with all departments of the City of Tucker government to ensure that questions are addressed in a timely and satisfactory manner. Specifically, the Citizen Responder works with Code Enforcement to track cases and update complainants on actions taken. She also works in tandem with the City Superintendent and DeKalb County on Public Works matters, ensuring that potholes and other needed road repairs do not linger.

This spring, Jennifer Downer took on the role of Citizen Responder. A veteran of municipal government around metro Atlanta, Jennifer brought a unique skill set and experience level to Tucker. In just a short time, she has proven why she – and the Citizen Responder position – are such an asset to the City.



## CITY CLERK

In the 2019 fiscal year, Bonnie Warne continued her leadership of the City Clerk’s office, a position that coordinates the City’s judicial and legislative business. On the judicial side, the City added a monthly Offenses Court session in July. A second session was also added to the City’s Environmental Court to accommodate the significant caseload.

Perhaps the biggest project for the City Clerk’s office was the codification of all City Codes by Municode. This user-friendly, online format will help City staff, lawmakers and residents access and comprehend the various ordinances being enforced.

The City Clerk’s office also laid the groundwork for Tucker’s 2019 municipal elections, setting the qualifying fees and dates and coordinating with DeKalb County to ensure they conduct the elections on Tucker’s behalf.





## SPLOST

In November 2017, voters in Tucker and across DeKalb County overwhelmingly voted to approve an additional penny tax known as the SPLOST. The City of Tucker, which receives a share of the revenue proportional to their population, wasted no time in putting these pennies to work.

The most visible investment was in transportation. Through a resurfacing campaign in the fall of 2018 and another in the spring of 2019, dozens of roads across all parts of the City were repaved. These roads ranged from neighborhood cul-de-sacs to major arterials, but they all had one thing in common: they were rated as the worst-conditioned roads in the City; roads that needed to be fixed.

Taxpayers are starting to see the SPLOST pay off in Parks and Recreation, as well. For the first time, Henderson Park's tennis courts will see night play thanks to newly installed light stanchions. Significant upgrades are being made to trails throughout the parks system. And plans are underway for major renovations to the gymnasium at Tucker Recreation Center.





## WALKABILITY IMPROVEMENTS

In its first few years of cityhood, leadership in Tucker took a long look at feasible ways to make the community more walkable. This past fiscal year saw significant action to that effect. Seven new flashing light crosswalks are being installed at schools across the City, the first of which was put into use at Tucker Middle School in April. These solar-powered crosswalks aim to give students and teachers a deeper level of security when they cross the street on their way to school.

The City's engineering team also identified a handful of sidewalk gaps, stretches of roadway where sidewalks stop abruptly leaving pedestrians no choice but to walk along the shoulder of the road. Those gaps were closed thanks to new sidewalk construction along major thoroughfares like Hugh Howell and Fellowship Roads.

In a move that will have future ramifications for walkability, Tucker's City Council this year voted to adopt a Trails Master Plan. The plan, which lays out proposed connectivity throughout the City and to surrounding areas, should get started in the coming year.





## FINANCE

The 2019 fiscal year was a busy one for Tucker's Finance Department. Finance staff successfully oversaw the mid-year budget amendment process. They also helped author the City's \$13.7 million budget for the 2020 fiscal year. The City received a clean audit in a third-party review of its 2018 fiscal year revenues and expenditures. And, for the first time, the comprehensive annual financial report was submitted to the Government Finance Officers Association for a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting.

The Finance Department took a big step forward in streamlining the business license renewal and application process. Staff issued almost 2,000 new and renewed business licenses. Thanks to new software, companies were able to apply and pay for their Tucker City business licenses online.

The coming year promises to be even bigger for the Finance Department as Toni Jo Howard starts in her new role as the City's first Finance Director. Howard comes to Tucker with a wealth of experience in municipal government and accounting. She previously worked in the Cities of Johns Creek and Smyrna here in the metro Atlanta area, as well as in the City of Seattle.



## We went to Tucker,

told them what our plan was, they sent us through the process, laid everything out and helped us get this thing built quickly and efficiently. It was a pleasure."

– Paul Carling, Steel Mart







## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tucker's Economic Development team was busy this past year. The City hired its first Business Outreach Coordinator in August. The position is designed as a liaison to Tucker's existing businesses, giving them someone at City Hall to call on with any issues. The Business Outreach Coordinator is also the staff liaison to the City's newly created Downtown Development Authority (DDA). Meeting monthly, the DDA is comprised of business and real estate leaders who are active in Tucker and can bring ideas and expertise to help spur growth in Tucker's business corridors.

One of the department's biggest triumphs was organizing and promoting the City's first Manufacturing Day. The event, which took place in April, gave citizens, brokers, developers and economic development professionals

from across metro Atlanta a window into the innovation and opportunities happening throughout Tucker's commercial and industrial corridors. The event was also a platform to launch the City's new Economic Development webpage, as well as a video touting the benefits of doing business in Tucker.

The Economic Development team also partnered with the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District on a Downtown Master Plan study. The study examines areas of growth and opportunity for redevelopment throughout Tucker's historic downtown. The Plan moves forward in the upcoming year and will build off the restaurant and retail growth that continues to be attracted to Tucker's downtown.



# TUCKER DATA



## PARKS AND RECREATION

- 325** Acres of Land in Parks System
- 125** Acres of Land Mowed (per week)
- 20** Miles of Trails Cleaned, Cleared and Maintained (per week)
- 150** Tons of Tree/Landscape Debris Removed from Parks
- 24** Acres of Park Land Acquired in FY '19
- 2,500** Residents Attending Special Parks and Rec Community Events
- 18** Parks/Facility Rentals (per week)
- 10** Security Cameras Installed in Parks and Recreation Facilities
- 51** Season Passes Sold to Kelley Cofer Park Pool



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- 864** Trade Permits Issued
- 374** Building Permits Issued
- 60** Sign Permits Issued
- 1,298** Total Permits Issued



## CODE ENFORCEMENT (COMPARED TO FY'18)

- 753** Notice of Violations Issued (502)
- 288** Citations Issued (121)
- 964** Cases Closed (762)
- 1,010** Signs Removed from the Right-of-Way (857)



## PUBLIC SAFETY CRIME FY'19 (COMPARED TO FY'18)

- 4** Homicide (Down 20%)
- 50** Aggravated Assault (Up 11%)
- 30** Pedestrian Robbery (Down 28%)
- 12** Business Robbery (Down 36%)
- 11** Rape (Down 26%)
- 167** Residential Burglary (Down 26%)
- 99** Business Burglary (Down 3%)
- 275** Entering Autos (Down 36%)





## COMMUNICATIONS FY'19 (COMPARED TO FY'18)

- 3,598** Facebook Followers (Up 24%)
- 552** Twitter Followers (Up 38%)
- 1,274** Instagram Followers (Up 170%)
- 127** Videos Produced (Up 15%)
- 138,332** Video Views (Up 29%)
- 387** Magazine Mail Subscribers (Up 122%)
- 2,336** Email Subscribers (Up 30%)
- 287,378** Website Pageviews (Up 15%)



## FINANCE FY'19

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>\$6,433,917.00</b>
<b>Transfers for Capital</b>	<b>\$4,526,864.00</b>
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>\$13,078,150.00</b>
Business License Fees	\$3,149,900.00
Franchise Fees	\$2,740,943.00
Insurance Premium Tax	\$2,390,575.00
Millage from DeKalb	\$1,763,630.00
Building Permits	\$661,661.00
Hotel/Motel Taxes	\$588,027.00
Other	\$1,784,792.00
<b>Ending Cash Balance</b>	<b>\$2,118,119.00</b>



## CITIZEN RESPONDER

- 14,012** Phone Calls Received
- 38.3** Calls Received per Day
- 0:34** Average Speed of Answer
- 1:49** Average Talk Time



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 35** New Business License Applications – Home Based
- 1,540** New Business License Applications – Commercial
- 1,575** Total New Business License Applications Received



## CITY CLERK

- 168** Open Records Requests Received
- 30** Mayor and City Council Meetings
- 30** Ordinances Approved
- 26** Resolutions Approved
- 24** IGAs and Contracts Executed



## SPLOST RESURFACINGS

- 222,243** Square Miles of Pavement Milled
- 9.58** Miles of Roadway Replaced
- 35,448.99** Tons of Asphalt Used



City of  
**Tucker**