



City of
Tucker



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2020







CONTENTS

A Message From The Mayor	5
Greetings From Your City Council	6
A Message From The City Manager	9
Communications	10
Community Development	11
Code Enforcement	12
Public Safety	13
City Clerk	13
Court	14
Citizen Responder	14
Public Works	15
Parks & Recreation	16
Finance	18
Economic Development	19



TUCKER

welcome home



A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Forrest Gump famously said, “Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you’re going to get.” That’s certainly true for me as your mayor. This report covers our last fiscal year, which ran from July 2019 through June 2020. And that means we had about six months of “ordinary” City business followed by six months of extraordinary, making it a year that has easily been the most challenging in the history of our young city.

In the first half, we were hard at work, focused on achieving some very specific goals across many of our departments. Our city engineer oversaw a special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) funded road resurfacing campaign for the third straight year; this one repaving more than 19 miles of Tucker’s worst conditioned roads. Our Parks team made tremendous progress in upgrading the infrastructure of our parks, as well as achieving more firsts like the organization of our first youth basketball league. Economic Development continued to build partnerships with our Community Improvement Districts on the downtown alley project and the revitalization of the Mountain Industrial corridor. Parts of two different neighborhoods decided to annex in and become a part of the City of Tucker. And all of our staff pitched in on the move to a new City Hall, one that I know will better serve our community.

In the second half of the year, we dealt with a global pandemic that hit home, especially among our community’s senior population. We experienced traumatic events that led to a community-wide dialogue on race and policing. And while these issues are still at the forefront of our collective consciousness as we head into the new fiscal year, it is important to point out that, through all the challenges, we found a way to carry on our other priorities while social distancing and wearing masks most everywhere we worked.

When the coronavirus hit and so much of our country shut down almost overnight, your City staff and elected officials worked round the clock, stepping up to the plate to keep Tucker moving forward. We issued an extension for business licensing so that businesses, already hard hit by this pandemic, would not be burdened by additional paperwork and late fees. Working with staff, I issued an executive order expanding permitted outdoor dining to help our struggling restaurants. Our City finance staff found the money to purchase 13,000 medical grade masks, which we distributed to nursing homes, businesses and residents throughout the Tucker community. Our Parks Department figured out creative ways to offer summer programming options to get children and their parents out of the house. And we, as a City Council, were able to continue the business of the City by learning how to conduct meetings via Zoom.

I was proud to stand with my fellow City Council members in unanimously passing a resolution on social injustice. We were able to lift our voices in unity to send a message to leaders under the Gold Dome and in Washington, D.C. that the time for sensible hate crimes legislation had come. To that end, the Georgia General Assembly passed hate crimes legislation that we hope will serve us all well.

As we forge ahead into the future, there’s no telling the challenges we’ll get. But whatever that future may hold, Tucker, with its outstanding professional staff, committed elected officials and strong, connected community, is well positioned to build on the accomplishments of this past year.

Frank Auman
Mayor



GREETINGS FROM YOUR CITY COUNCIL



Pat Soltys



Bill Rosenfeld



Matt Robbins



Noelle Monferdini



Michelle Penkava



Anne Lerner

Pat Soltys

This year the City took giant leaps forward in terms of services that could be seen and experienced. From paving streets to major improvements in our Parks and Rec program, our residents saw their tax dollars at work. Our mayor, council and staff addressed issues and opportunities with a view of the future, taking care of today and prioritizing fiscal responsibility.

Very visible accomplishments include the fact that the Tucker crater is gone. Businesses continue to seek Tucker as their home. Many of our streets are paved and sidewalks are being installed in downtown and along Hugh Howell.

Less visible, but highly important, is the response to citizen inquiries and complaints from “how to’s” to potholes. Our staff is diligent in solutions, communications and engaging resources.

In District One, we have a new parking lot at Smoke Rise Park, have acquired a pool and tennis courts and made improvements to all our parks. Peters Park has been recognized for its history and the passion of its resident leadership and recently received a grant for more improvements. We approved a new shopping center for the corner of Mountain Industrial and Hugh Howell.

The momentum continues and the future is bright.

Bill Rosenfeld

I would have to say the parks in our city have seen vast improvements for our citizens to enjoy. We are continuing to make great strides building new pavilions. We added another pool and tennis courts in the Smoke Rise area. We also built a new parking lot for Smoke Rise Park. Peters Park is getting a makeover adding new playground equipment for children and adults and a new parking lot.

Our SPLOST dollars are working. We are paving our way all through Tucker and I hope soon your street, if not already paved, will be on the list.

We are very happy that we have a new City Hall. This puts all of our staff in one location, making it less confusing for the public and more efficient for the staff themselves. We are getting a facelift around Main Street with new sidewalks and street lighting, making the area prime for new economic development.

Last year for me was an election year and I would like to thank each and every one of you for the honor and privilege to serve you for another four years.

Matt Robbins

This submission comes at the time when all of Tucker — all the world — is dealing with the COVID-19 virus. The answer to “What stands out in Fiscal Year 2020?” is: we continue to serve city residents and businesses effectively.

Through our dedicated staff, we were able to issue business licenses, monitor code compliance, inspect construction sites, complete priority paving, build sidewalks, develop entertaining twice-daily “Stay Away” video programs, and open our summer recreation programs with two pools. We certainly respect the public health impact of the virus, but also remember the charge voters gave in 2015 to create our city.

We are only in our fifth year. Our multi Master Plans are our future-directed baseline, adjusted now by new realities we must consider (coronavirus impacts, reduced funding opportunities). Our commitment to Tucker continues!

Thank you so much for letting me serve — even as “Mayor for a Day.” It has been an honor.

Noelle Monferdini

We cannot become what we need by remaining what we are, and that statement stands true as we understand the importance of improving our service levels within the city.

This last year, we have grown our City staff by directly hiring the entire Parks

and Recreation Department to expand our service programs. We have increased the park to resident ratio and added more opportunity for Tucker residents to enjoy outdoor activities. The Model Trail Project that will link to our proposed citywide trail system has completed its concept phase.

Our SPLOST program has provided new sidewalks, crossing beacons at our schools, repaved city streets, and intersection enhancements to improve traffic flow and safety. Our environmental court has moved from our gracious host the City of Clarkston to the Tucker City Hall Annex along with judges, clerks, prosecutors and staff. Speaking of growing, we’ve grown out of our little City Hall and moved to our new location at Lakeside Parkway in July.

All of us have these accomplishments. All of us are all trying to make this a better place to live by building up our neighbors, our neighborhoods and the people who live in them. Keep up your good work and we will get through this together.

Michelle Penkava

This last fiscal year has been one of great success. Our expert staff and contractors have continued to outpace our paving plan by stretching our dollars to include more streets. We continue to add safety features around our schools with a focus on safe walking and crossings. Our Parks Department has been making robust improvements both in our parks and in our programming, while continuing to redefine opportunities for community engagement during gathering restrictions. But the question asked for this publication, “What stands out most to you about this year?” leads me back to the last four months.

I’m overwhelmed with concern, compassion and sorrow for the generation most impacted by COVID-19; our seniors. As in many communities, our nursing home population was hard-hit by cases and loss of life. This generation that survived so much, that offers wisdom beyond years, now finds themselves at-risk and unable to embrace their loved ones. As a City and as a community, we offer support in many

ways, understanding that while we have little control over the virus once introduced, we can lift up those who dedicate their lives to caring for others. We continue to support those who support our most vulnerable while we must stay away. I’m incredibly grateful for their dedication.

Anne Lerner

There is much to be grateful for during the past year as we continued to implement the plans designed by our residents and business owners. From improvements in our parks, newly paved roads, additional sidewalks and other safety projects, I thank Team Tucker for all they do to keep our city moving forward.

The past few months have brought a level of uncertainty to our lives, so I can’t help but focus on what’s ahead and why I believe our City will be able to learn, adapt and grow from these experiences.

Tucker is resilient. We always have been, and I hope we always will be. We’ll weather this latest economic downturn because we were built on a solid foundation of fiscal responsibility. Your council has remained focused on priority needs of the community even when there is great pressure to pursue the luxury wants.

Many people forget that the movement for cityhood started because people sought to divide Tucker, literally at the railroad tracks in some areas, and through neighborhoods in others. It was our resiliency, diversity and caring commitment that kept Tucker together and made us stronger. We’ll do the same again during this uncertain time. It’s the Tucker Way!







A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER



As I write this message about the City's performance during Fiscal Year 2020, I am surrounded by reminders of just how far we have come during this past year.

Going into the year I knew that the biggest accomplishment we would have would be moving into a new City Hall. This is something I have done before at other cities and, let me tell you, it is not for the faint of heart. Such a move requires constant attention, orchestration of hundreds of minute details, good stewardship of money and adherence to a timeline that, on most days, seems impossible.

But despite the challenges, this move was necessary. Our old City Hall on Adrian Street was bursting at the seams. Even after we acquired more space in our City Hall Annex, we had employees sharing offices and a noticeable lack of meeting rooms. I would often walk through the lobby and pass one of our planners trying to review documents with a resident or a builder as they were huddled in a corner shoulder to shoulder. Business can be done that way, but the people we serve deserve better here in Tucker.

We are now at Lakeside Centre, occupying a space we can all be proud of. Staff have private offices. Residents have a dedicated waiting area. There are additional conference and huddle rooms so that private meetings can, in fact, be private. People coming to City Hall for business will see a vastly improved level of service and responsiveness. And we did it all within the relative confines of our timeline and budget.

Even though I assumed the move would be our biggest accomplishment, looking back I now realize that it pales in comparison to the work our staff did to get the City through the coronavirus pandemic. Talk about the unexpected; this was one crisis that none of us saw coming. Yet the way our staff was able to adjust to the changing circumstances, setting up home offices, working long hours while balancing family concerns, and now wearing masks in the workplace every single day, it makes me so proud to be working with this talented Team Tucker.

Now, as we go forward into a new fiscal year, our Finance Department has us well-positioned to be successful. In spite of uncertain economic times, they were able to put together a budget for Fiscal Year '21 that meets our needs, yet still reduces revenue projections to realistic levels. When we come out of this pandemic, I am confident that Tucker will continue its emergence as one of the premier live/work destinations in the metro Atlanta area.



Tami Hanlin
City Manager



COMMUNICATIONS

Fiscal Year 2020 was another banner time for the City of Tucker Communications team. Communications Director Matt Holmes oversaw the City's first-ever branding campaign, a deep dive that looked at what Tucker is, where it's heading, and ultimately gave residents and businesses the message of "Welcome Home". The department continued publication of *InTucker*, the City-run monthly magazine which captured a Silver Circle Award for excellence in municipal communications.

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, the department took on a number of important projects. One of those was outreach for the U.S. Census count. Thanks to extensive efforts, Tucker was positioned among the highest-responding cities in DeKalb County, even exceeding county, state and national response levels. The department also introduced its Welcome Kit program, designed to connect new residents to city resources and neighbors. They held a virtual prom as a morale boost for Tucker High School students who were stripped of many of the rituals of senior year. All the while, the City saw record growth across all its social media platforms, reaching more people than ever before.



Fast Facts:

Facebook Followers: **4,403** (Up 22%)

Twitter Followers: **762** (Up 38%)

Instagram Followers: **1,937** (Up 52%)

Magazine Mail Subscribers: **507** (Up 31%)

Email Subscribers: **2,451** (Up 5%)

Website Pageviews: **360,580** (Up 25%)



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Department was a flurry of activity over the past year. They oversaw the rezoning of the old Sears property at Hugh Howell Road and Mountain Industrial Boulevard. They worked closely with the ownership of Northlake Mall to begin the process of redeveloping it into a regional power center. Planning and Zoning Director Courtney Smith worked closely with the Mayor and City Council to adopt a small cell ordinance and to add regulations for vape and CBD products. Community Development was also integral in streamlining the City's land use petition process, including the creation of a Public Participation Plan to drive more robust community engagement.

The Building and Permitting Division welcomed new Chief Building Official Ken Miller to the team. Under Miller's guidance, they hit a major milestone in going digital, meaning contractors now have the ability to scan and submit plans online or via email rather than having to come into City Hall with blueprints. They also created a model home permit policy, while facilitating development of Tucker's last remaining pipe farm.

Always focused on sustainability, the Community Development Department was integral in helping Tucker to achieve New Leaf designation from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The designation is the first step on the path toward Tucker becoming a certified ARC Green Community.



Fast Facts:

556 Building Permits

755 Trade Permits

96 Sign Permits

1,407 Total Permits Issued

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code Enforcement continues to be a source of pride in Tucker, and that was on full display during this past fiscal year. The main function of Tucker's three-person Code Enforcement team is to identify properties that are in neglect and to work proactively to bring them up to code, thus increasing property values throughout the City. As part of that function, Code Enforcement helped to have several dilapidated houses demolished, as well as worked with a new solicitor to address major issues including the Tucker Tire sinkhole.

The team also pitched in during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. They helped create and enforce a COVID-19 Business Relief Policy to allow flexibility with outdoor dining, food trucks and temporary outdoor food sales. They also did outreach to restaurants, hair salons and other businesses with customer contact to educate them on Governor Kemp's executive orders.



Fast Facts:

1,355 Complaints

476 Citations Issued

1,419 Cases Closed

1,204 Signs Removed From The Right-Of-Way



PUBLIC SAFETY



Fast Facts:

6 Homicide (Up 50%)

53 Aggravated Assault (Up 4%)

33 Pedestrian Robbery (Down 15%)

12 Business Robbery (No change)

98 Residential Burglary (Down 42%)

63 Business Burglary (Down 36%)

202 Auto Theft (Down 9%)

288 Entering Autos (Up 5%)

CITY CLERK

Fiscal Year 2020 was one of growth and development in the City Clerk's office. Bonnie Warne completed her master's certification with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, while completing a bevy of projects. She oversaw implementation of a new document management program designed to improve retention of city files. New software was introduced to facilitate and expedite open records requests. The City Clerk's office held qualifying for municipal elections, as well as overseeing the ethics filings for all of the City's elected officials.



COURT

This past fiscal year was when court proceedings truly started in Tucker. Tucker's Code Enforcement staff had held environmental court dates in neighboring Clarkston's courtroom since the advent of the City, but at the start of 2020 those court dates moved to Tucker's City Hall Annex. The move saved the City money and gave its court staff greater flexibility in scheduling caseloads.

In addition to training on a number of software programs and collaborating with other government agencies for better communication, the court staff was able to safely reopen Municipal Court as restrictions were lifted during the pandemic.

CITIZEN RESPONDER

Tucker's Citizen Responder Jennifer Downer helped countless residents and business owners this year by connecting them to resources at the state and county level, as well as in the utility sector. She oversaw key performance indicators for phone call responses and managed communication through the info@tuckerga.gov email account.



Fast Facts:

14,183 Phone Calls Received

38.6 Calls Received Per Day

0:42 Average Speed Of Answer

3:01 Average Talk Time





PUBLIC WORKS

While much of Tucker’s Public Works function is handled through an intergovernmental agreement with DeKalb County, the City’s engineer and superintendent put in long hours this past year to partner with, and enhance the work being done by, the County. Much of the work has been with an eye on increased walkability in the City. The Tucker Streetscape project ramped up with sidewalks and amenities being installed throughout downtown. Ground was broken and significant progress made on the long-anticipated sidewalks along Henderson Road. Sidewalks were constructed along Idlewood Road from Lawrenceville Highway to Tucker Middle School, providing safe passage for students who walk to school. Speaking of school safety, the City installed several signalized pedestrian crossings, as well as flashers in school zones throughout the City.

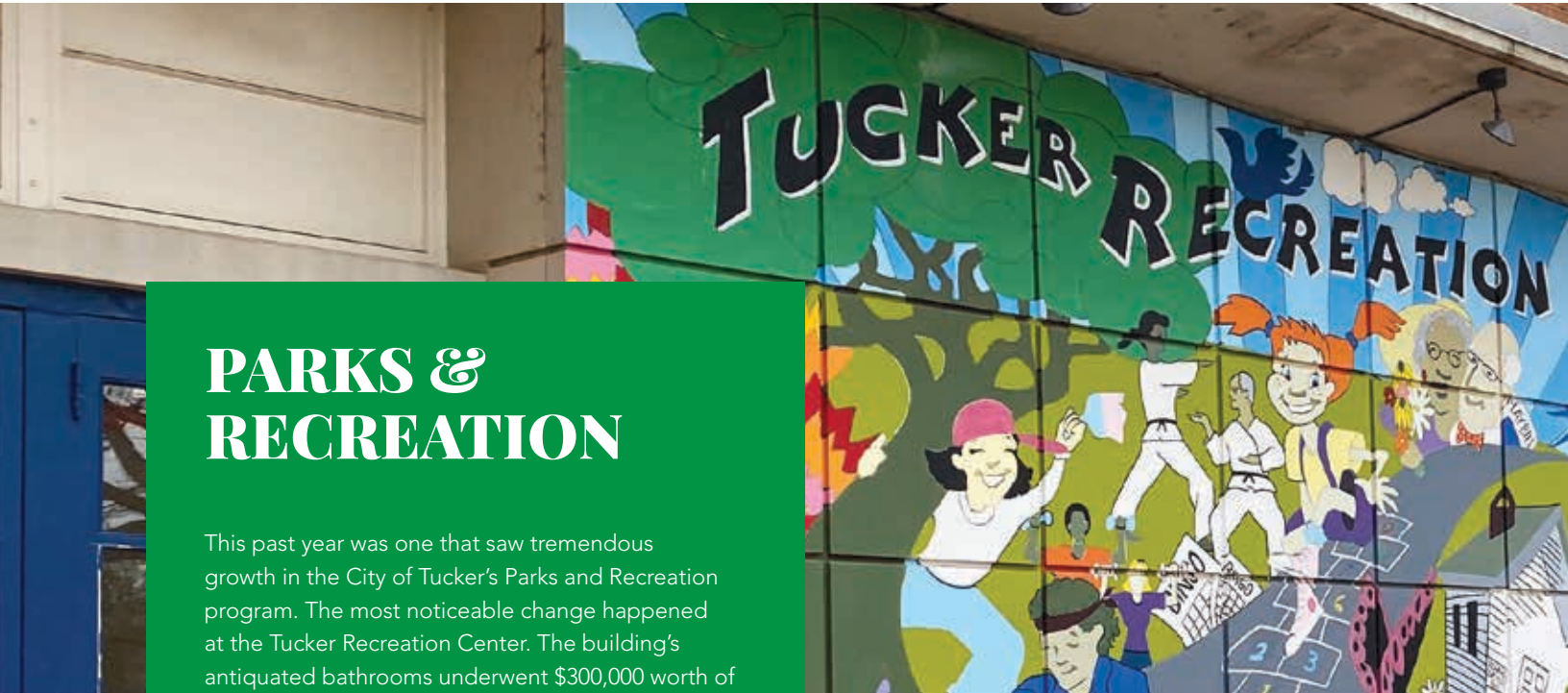
The busy Mountain Industrial corridor was another focus during Fiscal Year 2020. Vehicle detection was replaced at six traffic signals along Mountain Industrial Boulevard to improve congestion in the corridor. Consultants began design work for the intersection of Mountain Industrial and Hugh Howell Road. The City joined the Tucker Summit Community Improvement District in a traffic study of the entire Mountain Industrial Boulevard corridor.

The most noticeable set of improvements came via the City’s third annual SPLOST-funded resurfacing campaign. The additional penny sales tax paid for the majority of the 83 roads that were repaved; work that covered more than 19 miles of roadway throughout the City. Since the advent of the City’s SPLOST efforts in 2018, approximately \$10 million has gone toward resurfacing the very worst conditioned roads in the City.



Fast Facts:

- 1,125** Linear Feet Of Concrete Poured On Idlewood Road Sidewalk Project
- 83** Roads Resurfaced In SPLOST Resurfacing Projects
- 19.2481** Miles Of Roadway Resurfaced In SPLOST Resurfacing Projects
- 101,630** Linear Feet Of Asphalt Poured In SPLOST Resurfacing Projects
- 45,000** Tons Of Asphalt Poured In SPLOST Resurfacing Projects
- 7** School Flashers Installed
- 6** Pedestrian Activated Crossing Signals Installed
- 110** Signs Replaced In Pavement Safety Improvement Project



PARKS & RECREATION

This past year was one that saw tremendous growth in the City of Tucker's Parks and Recreation program. The most noticeable change happened at the Tucker Recreation Center. The building's antiquated bathrooms underwent \$300,000 worth of improvements. A massive project to renovate the old gymnastics gym brought about an array of new sports and activities. The 12,000 square foot space now features two basketball courts, two volleyball courts and six pickleball courts. The improvements helped Tucker to host tournaments, organize their first youth basketball league and provide hundreds of pickleball enthusiasts with space to enjoy their hobby.

The department also took on a new swimming pool, acquiring Smoke Rise Bath and Racquet Club. The acquisition doubles the capacity for summer swim season, along with adding four tennis courts to the city's Parks system.

In existing parks, more than 60 new trash cans and a dozen waste stations were installed to keep the parks and hiking trails free of rubbish. Fencing was replaced at Henderson, Cofer and Fitzgerald Park athletic fields. The \$500,000 worth of projects beautified these beloved parks for years to come.



Fast Facts:

230 Youth Using Tucker Recreation Center (Per Month)

350 Adults Using Tucker Recreation Center (Per Month)

400 Seniors Using Tucker Recreation Center (Per Month)

450 People Using The Tucker Recreation Center Gym (Per Month)

140 Children Enrolled In The 2019 Summer Camp Program

10 Acres Of Park Land Acquired

350 Season Passes Sold To Tucker City Pools

60 New Trash Cans Installed In Tucker Parks

12 Waste Stations Installed In Tucker Parks

4 New Tennis Courts Acquired By The City

12,000 Square Feet Of Gymnasium Renovated At Tucker Recreation Center

11 Summer Park Programs Offered For Youth And Adults





FINANCE

Tucker's Finance Department navigated uncharted waters during the 2020 Fiscal Year. Faced with the economic challenges of a pandemic, they worked with all City departments to ensure that fiscal year expenditures remained in line with projections. They also worked ahead on a Fiscal Year '21 budget that will keep Tucker fiscally responsible through the anticipated end of the pandemic.

There were several highlights for the Finance Department, including a clean audit for 2019. They also created enhanced monthly financial reports for the Mayor and City Council, implemented capital project reporting and established a payroll process for expanded City staff.



Fast Facts:

Expenditures	\$8,121,392
Transfer to Capital Projects	\$5,370,758
Revenues	\$14,532,849
Property Taxes	\$2,279,547
Franchise Taxes	\$2,931,054
Business Taxes	\$3,439,804
Insurance Taxes	\$2,540,008
Excise Taxes	\$575,972
Licenses and Permits	\$1,659,719
Other Revenues	\$1,106,745





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tucker's Economic Development Department had one eye on the future, while striving to enhance the present during the 2020 Fiscal Year. The Mayor and City Council voted to accept the Downtown Master Plan, a document laying out a long-term vision for walkability, housing and greenspace in Tucker's downtown. The plan received significant community input and was co-sponsored by the City and the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District.

On the business front, Tandem Bank opened its doors in downtown Tucker becoming the first newly chartered bank in Georgia in the past decade. Blue Tarp and High Card brought 6,400 square feet of brewery space to Tucker's Main Street. Emory Healthcare committed to leasing 224,000 square feet of space as the anchor tenant of the newly redesigned Northlake development. And in a partnership between the State of Georgia, DeKalb County and the City of Tucker, Sugar Bowl Bakery moved their East Coast operations to Tucker, a move that means 400 new jobs and a \$37 million capital investment.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Economic Development team reached out to businesses to alert them of business-friendly legislation, including suspension of late fees for occupational taxes, expansion of permitted outdoor dining, and programs at the federal level like the Paycheck Protection Program designed to infuse struggling businesses with money to make payroll.



Fast Facts:

- 53** New Business License Applications – Home Based
- 237** New Business License Applications – Commercial
- 290** New Business License Applications Received
- 549** Meetings And Outreach Calls To Business Community



City of
Tucker

