

# PROGRESS

Chronicling Smart Growth and Development in Fairburn

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This quarterly newsletter is designed to inform Fairburn residents, property owners, business owners and others about events, challenges, changes and facts relating to Development in our City. This publication will keep you up-to-date on all development issues including news, highlights, events, business tips and tourism efforts.

## Fairburn Nature Preserve Dedication

The Environmental Institute of Georgia hosted a dedication ceremony for the new Fairburn Nature Preserve on October 17. The dedication of the preserve on Bohannon Road was the first step in the creation of a multipurpose eco-center that will include a Mitigation Bank, Nature Center, Environmental Education Center, and Conference Building on 310 acres of protected and preserved land.

The preserve consists of wetlands, streams, riparian buffers and greenspace. Through special projects and educational programs, the plans are to restore and preserve the 110 acres designated for Mitigation, and enhance the 200 acres designated as the Environmental Education Area for educational and public use.

This vision, once realized, will offer families, students, and professionals nationwide a unique opportunity to learn about nature

in this “lab-without-walls,” while helping to preserve and enhance the environment and wildlife habitat of this protected area.

Mayor Hannah issued a proclamation stating, “The city of Fairburn and the Environmental Institute of Georgia dedicate the Fairburn Nature Preserve for environmental education and conservation to serve future generations in ways that go far beyond its physical boundaries.”



Mayor Hannah Issues Proclamation

## Authority News

The Development Authority October meeting was held at Fairburn City Hall providing members of the Authority, City Council and others an educational opportunity to hear a presentation by Attorney Dan McRae on *The Role of the Development Authority in the Growth and Development of the Community*.

McRae, a partner in Seyfarth Shaw LLP, was the first practicing attorney to be elected a director of the Georgia Economic Developers Association. The only attorney to ever receive that honor, Dan is one of the main presenters at Development Authority Training offered by the Fanning Institute of the University of Georgia.

# Environmental Institute of Georgia

## Excerpts from an interview with Connie (Biemiller) Thomas, Chair - Environmental Institute of Georgia

*What can you tell us about the Institute?*

The Environmental Institute of Georgia (EIOG) is a nonprofit that provides education, advocacy, advice, and action on a full range of environmental issues for communities across Georgia. Working in partnership with the city of Fairburn and educators in Georgia, the Institute serves as trustee of the Fairburn Nature Preserve and EIOG's Center for Environmental Education.



*What are your initial goals*

Our goal is to provide environmental education and legislative support to communities throughout Georgia by protecting the state's diverse and sustainable natural environment. We want to establish a state-of-the-art greenspace to serve the community; which will provide opportunities for environmental science and interdisciplinary studies and research. We hope to impact the legislative and political process through statewide training and seek to inform and educate citizens through a statewide environmental magazine, newsletter and website. We've managed to take many of these all important first steps in our first year here and look forward to doing even more.

*How will this benefit the city?*

Fairburn will reap the rewards of a green and prosperous future. Environmental issues aren't trendy; they're realities that bolster the health, economic viability and growth of a community. Your Development Authority is currently contemplating green and sustainable initiatives which will help position you as one of the innovative leaders in south metro Atlanta. Environmentally friendly businesses and individuals will seek out Fairburn as a desirable location for their needs.

*Any other thoughts you'd care to share?*

Its not often you get a chance in life to do something for a higher good but this is one of those times ... and we intend to take every advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Not only is it good for EIOG and host of others but it can also help create a high profile for Fairburn as a leader in the green cities movement providing opportunities to host eco-friendly conferences, seminars and trade shows for participants from all over the nation. Its' a bright future for EIOG and Fairburn ... and I look forward to the journey.



Pond on Nature Preserve



EIOG Presentation to Council



Symbolic Tree on Nature Preserve

# Fairburn's Wetland Mitigation Bank

Steven Glickauf, Senior Project Manager at Wildlands Environmental Inc., gave a presentation on Phase Three of the mitigation-bank process at a recent City Council meeting. Wildlands currently manages a diverse portfolio of wetland and stream mitigation banks throughout the southeast. This includes two single user banks and ten commercial mitigation banks that offer both wetland and stream credits as compensatory mitigation.

## What is Mitigation Banking?

According to the federal government, Mitigation Banking is defined as wetland restoration, creation, enhancement and, in exceptional circumstances, preservation undertaken expressly for the purpose of compensating for unavoidable wetland losses in advance of development actions, when such compensation cannot be achieved at the development site or would not be as environmentally beneficial.

## How Does Wetland Mitigation Banking Work?

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, any landowner who encounters jurisdictional wetlands on a development site must try to avoid filling in (impacting) the wetlands. If avoidance is not possible, the impact must be minimized. If the impact is unavoidable and non-trivial, that landowner must then "mitigate" the impact by replacing the impacted wetland with a similar type of wetland. Such mitigation must be accomplished either on the impact site or off-site, ideally within the same watershed or ecosystem.

## What Does Mean For Fairburn?

Our Nature Preserve property has been designated for environmentally sensitive uses such as education, wetland mitigation, water resource preservation and future groundwater exploration. A mitigation bank is established and operated in phases. If each phase independently meets the requirements for the establishment and operation of a mitigation bank then credits are awarded. These credits can then be sold by the city of Fairburn on the open market to agencies like the Department of Transportation and to private developers and others. It is anticipated that sales of these credits as they become available, will over period of ten years, return \$5million or more to the city which will be utilized to retire long term debt.

**The Development Authority/Downtown Development Authority meets at 4:00 p.m. on the third Monday of every month at the Freight Depot. The public is encouraged to attend. We're on the web. Visit us at [www.fairburn.com](http://www.fairburn.com).**

**The Authority is composed of seven (7) members appointed by the City Council and recognized by the State of Georgia as a public corporation with a specified set of powers and a specific purpose and mission to:**

- Revitalize and redevelop the central business district
- Develop and promote for the public good and general welfare, trade, commerce, industry, and employment opportunities
- Finance projects within the central business district that will develop and promote the public good and general welfare
- Issue bonds to finance projects

### Authority Members

Jean Barkley Russell, Chair, Steve Thomas, Vice-Chair, Hal Shields, Secretary-Treasurer, Lawrence Byrd, John Carr, Sr., Jeff Couch, Ray Hannah

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## Fairburn Voters Approve Sunday Sales Referendum

Sixty two percent of those casting a vote on November 3 approved a referendum authorizing Fairburn to permit and regulate Sunday sales of distilled spirits or alcoholic beverages for beverage purposes by the drink.

Passage of the referendum removes impediments from the path of citizens and travelers to consume alcohol in restaurants on Sundays. It still maintains the right of choice for anyone who does not want to consume alcohol on Sundays. Dining establishments that do not want to open on Sundays can remain closed should they choose to do so.

It becomes a simple matter of economic development. Seven day a week sales

places Fairburn in a much better light when national and local restaurant management personnel evaluate our city as a potential site location. Fairburn can now be “short listed” for consideration and compete with cities that already have restaurants offering alcohol on Sundays.

Additional dining establishments will provide an increase in revenue for the city and other businesses as well. Additional income, in these extremely difficult economic times, can make the difference between some local businesses surviving or failing.

City hotel properties, as an example, currently lose thousands of potential room nights when business travelers

stay in surrounding cities during the week. Members of our business community indicate that while they would be happy to house visiting suppliers and customers in hotels in Fairburn, they choose to send them elsewhere given limited attractions and dining choices currently available. The revenue lost by these properties is significant and Fairburn suffers a corresponding loss of Hotel/Motel taxes .

Allowing restaurants the ability to do business seven days a week increases potential revenue and makes our community more attractive to visitors. It makes little economic sense to restrict businesses that provide visitors an opportunity to stay longer and spend more.