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Plans unveiled for Gateway Park

By Pete Gawda

Plans were unveiled recently for the newest addition to Knoxville's over 1,000 acres of urban wilderness when a block party was held at the southern end of James White Parkway, the site of the proposed Urban Wilderness Gateway Park.

Plans for the park include amenities such as a landscaped access point and gathering space at Baker

Creek Preserve and at the southern end of James White Parkway, parking, pedestrian and bike pathways and trails, a bike park, additional children's nature play areas, a rock climbing wall under the overpass and improved connectivity to existing neighborhoods, businesses, schools and the planned BMX facility at South-Doyle Middle School.

"It's a big day" said city

councilwoman Stephanie Welch, whose South Knoxville district includes the area of the park. She said that when she first came to Knoxville in 1995 she discovered what she called "a road to nowhere," at James White Parkway. At that time she thought the end of the parkway would make a good park and now, 23 years later, she said they were officially starting the process to create that

park. "One of the things I like about Knoxville is how engaged our community is," Welch said.

"This gateway park is ours to shape and create," asserted Rebekah J. Montgomery, who oversees urban wilderness projects for the city. She said that conceptual plans are being formed and planners wanted to hear from the people. "What makes

Continue on page 2



A representation of the proposed Urban Wilderness Gateway Park showing its connection via greenway to Baker Creek Preserve.



Members of the Walter P. Taylor Boys and Girls Club select their gifts at a recent Christmas in June party. The presents were donated by the Friendly Readers Book Club. The book club also sponsored a citywide bus tour for the children on Saturday, June 2.

PHOTO BY KEN LAY

Amplified busking, goats, and shopping center changes

By Mike Steely
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Busking is a term used for entertaining in public, often with music or other performance, and it is more or less legal in downtown Knoxville. You've probably seen these performers at Market Square, in Happy Holler or other places around town.

The city council discussed limiting loud speaker amplification of those performances on public property and right-of-ways Tuesday and passed, on first reading, to do so.

Councilwoman Lauren Rider said she has been getting a lot of comments about amplified performers recently.

Police Chief David Rausch said that the police can respond to calls and give a warning.

"To me this is interfering on the First Amendment," Councilwoman Seema Singh-Perez said.

Rausch replied, "We are protectors of the First Amendment; this doesn't infringe, it's just the manner."

"It could have unintended consequences," Singh-Perez replied.

The police chief said that performers can get a permit for amplification at the police department and indicated the permit may be without charge.

Rick Emmett, downtown coordinator, called the no-amplification ordinance a "smart idea" to make

Continue on page 3

Local bus tour exposes youth to city history

By Ken Lay

Several local retired educators and professionals from the Friendly Readers Book Club hosted a historical bus trip for some area children recently.

The Friendly Readers and the Walter P. Taylor Boys and Girls Club hosted a bus tour that showed the club members some parts of the historical Knoxville landscape on Saturday, June 2.

The tour went past Knoxville College, the Alex Haley Statue on Dandridge Avenue and went through parts of Downtown Knoxville, other parts of East Knoxville, Lonsdale and Mechanicsville.

The tour was part of the Educational Strategies to Combat Anticipated Prison Entrance (ESCAPE) Program, which employs innovative strategies to help keep inner-city youth out of the prison system.

The Friendly Readers Book Club adopted

the Walter P. Taylor Boys and Girls Club nearly two decades ago. The club began the ESCAPE Program in 2016 after viewing a presentation by author, associate professor and civil rights activist Michelle Alexander, who wrote "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness," which was published in 2010.

At that presentation in Nashville, Alexander challenged the audience to change the epidemic of incarceration.

So the 11 retired educators and professionals who comprise the Friendly Readers Book Club went to work.

"We adopted the Walter P. Taylor Boys and Girls Club some years ago and our objective is to influence these young people by exposing them to educational and community involvement," said Geraldine Taylor, a retired educator in Knox County, who remains an advocate for the community's youth.

The recent bus tour was guided by historian Bob Booker, who explained the significance of the various stops, which included old Knoxville High School, old Knoxville General Hospital (now Serene Manor), Lonsdale Elementary School, the Green Magnet Academy, the Beaumont Community, Sam E. Hill Elementary Schools, Cal Johnson Park and Recreation Center, Danny Mayfield Park, Maynard Elementary School, the Candler YMCA, Vine Magnet Middle School and Edward Cothren Pool.

Booker said that he was privileged to narrate the tour.

"We have kids today who are between the ages of five and 12," Booker said. "We want to show them part of their community and heritage. This is important but they may not fully grasp all of the today."

"They may come back later and then that light bulb goes off and they remember being here."

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