



DeKalb County Government



**PARK PRIDE IN DEKALB COUNTY
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

DeKalb County has retained Park Pride—the only metro Atlanta nonprofit working with communities to improve local parks—to provide volunteer coordination services and guidance to a network of Friends of the Park groups. Park Pride will partner with the DeKalb County Natural Resources Management Office (NRMO) and the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs Department (Parks Department) to encourage neighborhood involvement in building and maintaining DeKalb’s green inventory of more than 140 parks.

FRIENDS OF THE PARK GROUP PRIMER

A Friends of the Park group is formed as a first step in creating positive long-lasting change in a public park. Friends of the Park groups may start as a committee of a civic association or school or simply a group of concerned energetic citizens.

Forming a Friends Group

Citizens interested in forming a Friends Group may contact the Natural Resources Management Office at (404) 371-2540 or Ayanna Williams with Park Pride at (404) 723-3116. There is a simple 2-page form to complete to register the group. There is NO FEE for becoming a Friends Group in DeKalb County. Friends Groups are encouraged to involve as many people from the surrounding community and park users as possible in their group so that there is broad representation of opinions and views from various park users.

All Friends Groups will receive three documents:

- A contact list (who to call) for issues related to a park such as vandalism, dogs off leash, fallen trees, broken equipment, facility rentals, and most other issues that may be of interest to park users.
- A procedure document for cleanups and other work projects in parks.
- Standard Operating Procedures for Friends Groups (this document).

Although any citizen can contact the Parks Department (or other county department) at any time, it is helpful if the lead contact for a Friends Group is the main point of contact for that group with the county. This cuts down on confusion, reduces phone time, and allows more time for *action* by county staff.

Friends Groups Involvement in Parks

The Park Pride program in DeKalb County varies somewhat from the program in Atlanta. The DeKalb program focuses on citizens' volunteering for a variety of projects in a park such as stream cleanups, trash pickup, invasive plant control, and other park maintenance activities. Projects may be initiated by the county or by the Friends Group in collaboration with county staff. Other activities that Friends Groups may choose are as follows:

- ❖ Alert county staff to maintenance needs, vandalism, unauthorized activity, and other park issues.
- ❖ Assist county staff with planning and implementation of volunteer projects in a park.
NOTE: it is vitally important to notify and coordinate all activities at county parks with the Parks Department (and/or NRMO) including cleanups and other volunteer projects. County staff can often provide oversight and equipment making a project more successful.
- ❖ Plan and coordinate events in a park (with approval of the Parks Department) such as wildlife tours, sports events, neighborhood gatherings, etc.
- ❖ Raise funds for a park amenity such as a picnic shelter or playground. Park Pride can act as the fiscal agent for the group, holding the funds until spent on the improvement. Procedures for this activity are as follows:
 - The Friends Group chooses an improvement for which they would like to raise funds.
 - The Friends Group submits their plan to the Parks Department for review (contact Director Roy Wilson at roywils@dekalbcountyga.gov).
 - If the plan is approved by the Parks Department, the group raises the funds for the amenity (Park Pride may hold the money for the group or the group may choose another fiscal agent).
 - If any county funds are used for the improvement, the purchase and installation will go through the normal county purchasing procedures including bidding and procurement. If no county funds are used, the group may purchase the equipment and use their own contractor for installation, *provided that the plan is approved by the Parks Department* and the contractor is licensed and insured as per county requirements.
 - Once an amenity is installed on county property, it becomes the property of DeKalb County and will be maintained by the Parks Department. The Parks Department may choose to enter into an agreement with the Friends Group to maintain the amenity.

Park Planning and Development

All planning for parks, including new park property development, is done by the Parks Department. The county's contract with Park Pride does not include provisions for Park Pride to engage in park planning and/or development with Friends Groups. Park Pride does offer an annual design clinic for those interested in learning more about park planning and development (see Additional Support for Friends Groups below).

To discuss planning and design of DeKalb County parks, please contact Director Roy Wilson at roywils@dekalbcountyga.gov.

Additional Support for Friends Groups

Park Pride supports DeKalb County Friends of the Park groups through an array of programs and services.

Park Pride Tool Shed

Park Pride maintains a collection of tools that it makes available to community groups conducting volunteer work days in their parks. We have enough tools to accommodate groups of up to 50 volunteers.

Corporate & Civic Volunteers

Many corporations and civic organizations come to Park Pride seeking volunteer opportunities in parks. Park Pride works to connect these volunteers with needs identified by the Parks Department and Friends of the Park groups.

Park Design Clinic

Every September, Park Pride hosts a park design clinic at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. The clinic helps community groups develop landscaping plans for park gateways, beauty spots or other prominent locations. Residents can register for the clinic by submitting an application that includes a map and pictures of the site.

Annual Parks and Greenspace Conference

Every spring, Park Pride brings national park and Greenspace experts to Atlanta to join state and local park leaders for a stellar, one-day park and Greenspace conference.

Networking

Park Pride brings together Friends of the Park groups through monthly PARC meetings and provides interaction with environmental and park professionals at their annual conference

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