



Small Town, Big Impact

Oxford Leaders Call on Community for First Active Park

THE CITY OF OXFORD, WHICH IS KNOWN FOR its trail system and lush tree canopy, recently added an “active park” to its list of amenities. As defined by city leaders, an “active park” is one where all ages and abilities are served. Though Asbury Street Park is not the city’s only park, it’s the only one with an area of land suitable for play equipment and includes a large, open field for activities, a walking track, a natural water feature and a section of the trails through the park’s wooded area.

In 2015, four years before the park’s July 2019 opening, Oxford city leaders called on members of the community to lend their ideas and community expertise to the Asbury Street Park Citizens Advisory Committee. Comprised of 20 plus residents, this committee helped plan from the ground up.

“The park was requested by citizens, would be used by citizens, paid for by citizens; therefore, their role was essential [to planning],” said Cheryl Ready, chair of the Asbury Street Park Citizens Advisory Committee. “The committee wanted to do all it could to clean up, beautify and preserve the wooded area at the north end of the four acres that had been acquired [for the park].”

Oxford Mayor Jerry Roseberry describes the new Asbury Street Park as an “introduction place” for residents and visitors who may never meet without it. This spoke to another planning committee goal of heightened connectivity and appeal.

“We wanted the park to appeal to as many residents as possible and it was encouraging to see the number of people volunteering—especially young

couples with children—to serve on the committee,” said Roseberry.

In addition to individual community members, Oxford also included the local 4-H and Lions Club chapters, Oxford College of Emory University, which is three blocks away from the park, and the Newton County School System, a public school one block away from the park, as partners. The city received funding from Newton County to assist with construction costs.

Two-thirds of the Asbury Street Park showcase Oxford’s classification as a Tree City and meets the city’s goal of highlighting its natural assets.

“We’ve been a Tree City for 20 consecutive years as proud members of the Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City USA program,” said Oxford City Manager Matt Pepper as he pointed to Oxford College joining community efforts and becoming a Tree Campus.

“Preserving the natural landscape for the park is an extension of what we try to do throughout the city.”

Since the park’s grand opening, Newton County residents and visitors have a new-found sense of place and are renting the pavilion for birthdays, barbeques and outreach meetings. To date, more than 18 groups have hosted events at the park. 

