



## **Murphey Candler Neighborhood Association**

October 2, 2020

City of Brookhaven Mayor and City Council  
Park Bond Citizen Oversight Committee  
Submitted via electronic mail.

Dear Members of City Council and Park Bond Citizen Oversight Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Murphey Candler Neighborhood Association (MCNA), which represents more than 730 households in District 1. We are appealing to the City of Brookhaven to honor the wishes of thousands of residents living around Murphey Candler Park by closing the east side horseshoe loop road (loop road) to vehicle traffic.

The loop road should be reserved for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation such as bicycles. For nearly four decades, the loop road has been closed to vehicle traffic to protect the safety and security of the children and families that visit the park. Every day, families and visitors of all ages and diversity visit the east side of the park to walk, admire the lake, use the playground, exercise, ride bicycles, cookout, and gather. These groups walk from the gravel parking spots along Candler Lake East to their destinations. They easily access the park through the stone entrances and walk along the loop road. Some carry baskets, coolers, and fishing gear, while others push strollers and ride bicycles.

Should vehicles be allowed to travel on the road, the nature of the park will dramatically change and no longer serve as a leisurely and safe path for park visitors of all ages to access the park amenities. Families and visitors will not be able to enjoy the east side of the park in peace, but will be interrupted by the smell of car exhaust and engine sounds. Children will not be able to freely move from the playground to the forest and to the lake bank. Parents will have to guide children across yet another road of traffic peeking out between parked cars to safely move through the park.

During the Master Planning process, residents expressed concern and opposition to any plans to open the loop road to vehicle traffic. These concerns are documented in news articles well before the park Master Plan was assembled and bond passed. See 'Murphey Candler Park plan praised for big ideas' by John Ruch, Brookhaven Reporter, on Dec 5, 2015. Leading up to the 2018 bond vote, the City of Brookhaven promoted the Master Plan as a conceptual plan that would receive further scrutiny and invite citizen input.

If the City has overwhelming evidence of public support during the Master Plan planning process or since the bond referendum in 2018 for opening the horseshoe loop road to vehicle traffic and parking then it should release such documentation to the MCNA immediately.

The Park Bond was passed on the following question:

"Shall general obligation bonds for Park and Park Improvements in an aggregate principal of up to \$40,000,000 be issued by the City of Brookhaven, Georgia for the purpose of financing the cost of the Citizen driven and City Council approved Park and Recreational Master Plans and other related park amenities, equipment, and real and personal property useful or desirable in connection the parks therewith?"

Expenditure of the park bonds are required to be done according to citizen driven input. The Park Bond Official Statement does not require that any project in Attachment A Master Plan Projects list be completed. In fact, since the passage of the bond, the City has abandoned projects listed in the Attachment A. For example, the Lazy Brook at Lynwood Park. This is evidence that the City has the capacity to review, reconsider, and refine the projects listed in Attachment A.

How can the City Council justify its decision to make changes to the Master Plan in the case of the Lazy River at Lynwood Park, but refuse to be responsive to taxpayers concerns about the horseshoe loop road. The Lazy River was abandoned due to cost and lack of functionality. The changes proposed to the horseshoe loop road are already above budget, opening the road for regular vehicle passage and parking is not necessary for the functionality of the park given that there is sufficient public access to the pavilions and other park amenities including ADA access from Candler Lake East, and operationally it has already proven to be a public safety hazard.

To date, the City has limited taxpayer access to provide citizen input on the operation of the horseshoe loop road. City Council meetings allow no more than three minutes of public comment, to which there is no opportunity for dialogue with Council members.

The Citizen Oversight Committee meetings do not allow for public comment and neither is there an opportunity to engage in dialogue with its members. Councilwoman Linley Jones of District 1 has closed her door to constituent pleas for support.

The City of Brookhaven has waived the independent performance audit and performance review further highlighting the City's reluctance to transparency and sunlight.

We implore you to engage in open dialogue with us to sincerely address our concerns. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from both the City Council and the Citizen Oversight Committee.

Sincerely,



Zane Douglass  
President