Memorial Lawn

Thomaston’s Greatest Generation Memorial Park

Hon. Hayes Arnold, Mayor
Patrick Comiskey, City Manager
1. NORTH PARKING AREA
2. WOODLAND LANDSCAPING
3. "VIRGINIA STYLE" SPLIT RAIL FENCING
4. WOODLAND Mulch PathS
5. EXISTING PINE STAND
6. OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
7. ASPHALT WALKING PATHS (6' TO 8' WIDE)
8. EXISTING WATER TOWER
9. FREE PLAY AREA AND LAWN
10. CENTRAL PARKING AREA WITH PRESERVED TREES
11. REFURBISHED SCOUT HUT AND COMMUNITY HALL
12. REFLECTING POOL
13. GAZEBO
14. "HOME FRONT" MEMORIAL
15. FORMAL LAWN
16. WORLD WAR TWO MEMORIAL
17. MEMORIAL PAVILION
18. EVENT LAWN
19. VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PLAZA
20. WATER FEATURE
21. PICNIC PAVILIONS
22. FISHING POND BULKHEAD AND PAVILION
23. EXISTING COMMUNITY GARDENS
24. PLAY FIELD
25. EXISTING TENNIS COURTS
26. PLAYGROUND
27. GROUP PAVILION
28. DROP-OFF
29. SOUTH PARKING AREA
30. REST AREA/INFORMATION KIOSK
31. PEDESTRIAN ENTRY
32. RESTROOMS

GREATEST GENERATION MEMORIAL PARK
THOMASTON, GEORGIA
MASTER PLAN
Introduction

The Site

The site has several aspects. The first is the parcel which fronts Highway 19N and which is referred to as the “pine thicket”. This parcel consists of about 9½ acres of gently rolling, grassy land and is planted almost entirely with healthy, medium sized pine trees. It is a very handsome acreage and has a park like feeling even in its undisturbed state.

The second part of the land wraps around the pine thicket on the west and south and has two distinct environments. The land to the west is mostly wooded with a mixture of pine and hardwood, is naturalistic and has portions with dense underbrush. This western parcel contains an open area with a recently unused detention basin that covers about an acre. It also has a Scout hut and an out parcel at its southwestern corner which the city is considering purchasing from the owner while granting a life estate. The parcel to the south of the pine thicket has two circular water reservoirs which are both about one hundred yards in diameter. The reservoirs once served the Goodyear plant and are currently maintained as reservoirs but are not in active use. One of the reservoirs sits low, near the highway and is very visible. It is stocked and used for fishing on a controlled basis. The other reservoir is higher in elevation than the first and is less visible due to blocked sight lines. The combined parkland of this land adds up to about fifty acres and presents a diverse, attractive and interesting setting for a passive park.

The vision for the park is that it will be used for “…passive recreational uses and not for larger, organized activities…” and that the planning for the park will “…ensure and preserve the stability and natural habitat of the Pine Thicket area…” (quotes from the Pine Thicket Policy Statement). Therefore, elements of this work should reflect a theme which reinforces the vision. One such theme that has been proposed is a commemorative park honoring the “greatest generation” as memorialized by Tom Brokaw in his recent book about the generation preceding (and parenting) the baby boomers. The park would become a place for passive exercise of walking, biking, fishing or just sitting and visiting with friends. It could include paved walkways, a picnic pavilion, an outdoor classroom, a low key playground and
naturalized garden areas. A subset of the program includes the introduction of a series of monuments dedicated to the achievements of the greatest generation. The Battle of the Bulge monument which was earlier commissioned and placed in an inauspicious location should be relocated and can be placed here and serve as a centerpiece for the overall theme.

The Master Plan

The plan does not call for a major development in the site but does provide for the creation of passive uses that will make the park a centerpiece for the City of Thomaston. The park is large enough that a portion of the park should be dedicated as preserved greenspace. In time, as additional passive uses such as trails or facilities are called for, there will be ample room. The park is separated into several districts: The pine thicket in the eastern section of the park, the Woodland in the northwest corner, the Hilltop, encompassing the water tower, house, ponds and the Open Field, in the southern portion.

The Master Plan shows the future build out of all park features, but certain elements have been prioritized by the City for construction to encourage immediate use of the property. The elements, in priority, are described below.

Walking Path System

A system of trails will be built traversing the park. Walking is one of the top passive uses in recreation parks, especially when built in a wooded, well landscaped and designed area. The first stage will be the creation of a loop path eight feet wide routed through the pine grove. The ground is level enough to make the entire trail accessible to the disabled and also preserve most of the pines. With additional landscaping in certain areas and with proper maintenance a pleasant natural area would be enhanced and become a welcome place for exercise and strolling. The path material should be asphalt as to blend in aesthetically to the environment.
Landscape improvements should be implemented within the pine grove to add to the seasonal beauty of the area. To enhance the appearance along Highway 19, a split rail fence, built in the Virginia style could be built along the right of way. This will provide a park-like rustic appearance. As a buffer between the park and highway, additional flowering plantings should be added, such as groups of dogwoods, redbuds and hawthorne and masses of indica and formosa azaleas along with sprays of wildflowers and bulbs. The effect will make the park more inviting and serve as a community attraction.

The plan incorporates multiple uses on the trails to allow small children to ride bicycles and allow rollerblading and other non motorized uses. Children will be able to use the trail system to learn to ride bicycles and to ride along with their families.

Once the walking path loop is completed within the pine thicket, extensions of the walking paths through the rest of the park could be completed as each stage is funded and built.

**Parking Areas**

Parking areas will need to be provided in order to promote access to the park. The Master Plan shows the final build-out with ample parking that will not be necessary in the first few phases. The parking lot on the north side of the park will be able to serve the walking path loop and should be constructed first. As the rest area pavilions and playground are built, the southern lot should be built, and the center lot would be built to serve the memorial plaza.
Playground and Rest Area

A large playground built to serve the children of Thomaston is located in a conspicuous location near trees for shade. The playground could be a community project that involves citizens, community leaders and children to build a customized project that involves the wishes of local children and parents.

The edge of the pond on the east side of the park was chosen as a site for the playground at the base of existing pine trees surrounding the pond. A large family pavilion should be placed at the playground entrance to encourage other group activities. The park restroom would be adjacent to the pavilion and could be utilized as a public rest area along US 19. The old pump station at the edge of the highway could be renovated to serve as an information station. The south side of the playground should be flanked with pines and other fast growing trees to provide additional shade. The existing field beyond should serve as an open play field, and as funds are available, the field can be ringed with walking paths connecting the south and north sides of the park. An alternate site for the playground could be considered in the center of the park on the site of the old treatment settling pond.
Greatest Generation Memorial Garden and Veterans Memorial

Many small cities in Georgia have developed privately funded Veteran’s memorials honoring all veterans. Thomaston has an opportunity to develop more than a memorial in the proposed park.

Thomaston’s role as a major textile manufacturing center during World War II, and the concurrent role of the troops that served in that war promote the idea of a more significant memorial to the “Greatest Generation”.

While promoting the development of a “Greatest Generation” memorial it is also important to remember those that fought in other wars. An accompanying Veterans memorial meant to celebrate veterans of each of the armed forces as well as all other American wars have been included in the overall master plan.

A memorial garden concept is proposed as the basis for the broader memorial. A formal lawn space could be used for special community events as well as for general reflection. On one side of the lawn, overlooking the woodland would be a “Home Front” memorial and on the other side a WWII memorial. These two memorials would frame the lawn and be, ringed with ornamental benches, seat walls and landscaping.

A pavilion will be built as a formal element of the new garden to enhance the appearance and function. In addition, the large spray fountain planned for the eastern pond will serve an excellent backdrop and create interest from the street leading visitors into the memorial space.

The entry into the memorial from Seventh Street will become the main park entrance when all phases are complete. This will lead directly to the Veterans Memorial Plaza. Brick paving, seat walls, granite memorials and flags for each of the Armed Forces will serve as appropriate memorials.
**Fishing Pond Improvements**

A walking path around the two large ponds will be a pleasant addition to the park trail system. People are drawn to the edge of a body of water, and providing a place for seating and walking will make the ponds more accessible. The current pond to the east is stocked with fish and is a popular fishing spot. However, its location near the highway means that it is not necessarily a quiet peaceful spot. By relocating the fishing area to the pond on the west, visitors will find a quieter, more desirable place to fish. The earthen peninsula that juts out into the center of the pond could be improved with a bulkhead and a pavilion, a perfect place to fish. The pond on the east will have a large floating spray fountain installed. The fountain will serve as a backdrop to the Veterans memorial and a point of interest visible from the highway.

**Center Parking Area, Reflecting Pool and Outdoor Classroom**

The area in the center of the park is level enough for a parking lot which can be carefully laid out to avoid the removal of trees. By creating a parking lot designed with nature, the park will have a naturalized look that will create a shady parking area to serve the Greatest Generation Memorial and trail system. The existing water settlement pond could be retrofitted as a contemplative space with a gazebo, reflecting pool, seating, and a garden area.

A small area of the pine thicket near the reflecting pool is ideal for a small outdoor classroom or amphitheater. Its location would be adjacent the walking path system but sheltered from highway noise. The amphitheater would be constructed of stone seat walls and a small speaker’s platform. School groups would be able to use this space for teaching and giving nature talks. The classroom could also be used for acoustic or bluegrass performances. Sunrise Easter Services, group meetings, and other outdoor gatherings could be held in the space as well.

In conclusion, developing park improvements as suggested in this Master Plan will require several phases of construction as funds...
become available. But the overall impact of the features of the park will create a more visible, usable and beautiful park space for the citizens of Thomaston and will benefit future generations than just those memorialized here. Parks are not only the “lungs of a city”, they are ways to express civic pride, experience nature and memorialize the past. The Thomaston Greatest Generation Memorial Park can be used to fulfill all of these roles for the City of Thomaston.