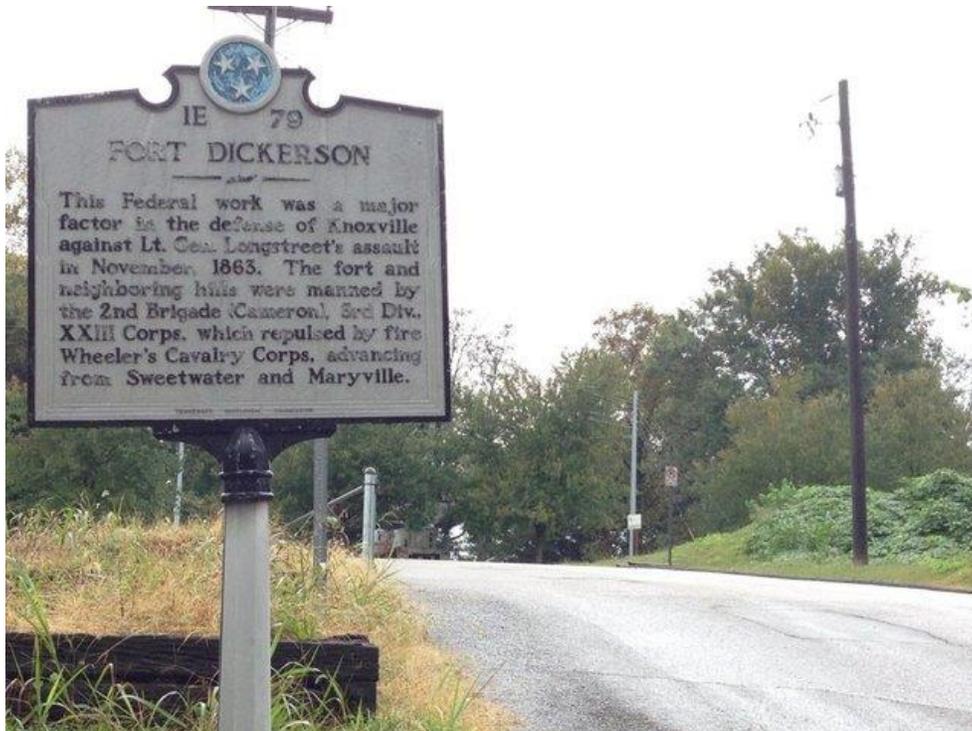


Fort Dickerson to get new entry

Tony Hernandez
5:55 PM, Oct 7, 2014
local news



The current entryway into Fort Dickerson Park sits about 50 feet north of the Woodland Pike intersection with Chapman Highway in South Knoxville. Construction crews will soon replace this entrance with more a more appealing entryway at the intersection.

Public park enthusiasts and motorists on Chapman Highway soon will see a new entryway into Fort Dickerson Park in South Knoxville.

Crews this week have begun working to remove any remaining hazardous materials from the G&R Automotive building near the intersection of Woodlawn Pike. That property, donated to the city by The Aslan Foundation, will be razed and converted to green space to make a new entryway into Fort Dickerson more appealing to Chapman Highway users.

Jeff Mansour, the foundation's executive director, said the park's entryway would complement future developments, such as planned use of the old Baptist Hospital and other nearby areas.

"With the Henley Bridge closed for so long and people paying more attention to Chapman Highway and south of the river, people are thinking about what can be done with that stretch of the highway," Mansour said.

The foundation deeded the property to the city July 31, city officials say.

"It's a great way to highlight the realignment with the park's opening giving more attention to the community's historic legacy and hopefully setting a higher expectation for how development might occur along Chapman Highway," Mansour said.

The city issued a Notice To Proceed to Bell & Associates to demolish G&R and build the new entryway approximately 50 feet south of the existing park entrance.

"As long as that building was there, the whole entrance was really just a street," said Jim Hagerman, the city's engineering director. "It completely changes the nature of how the entrance interacts with the highway."

The park contains lots of green space, a panoramic view of Knoxville, a quarry pool and a historical connection to the Civil War, but it's considered one of the city's least used parks.

The park is the site of one of 16 earthen forts and artillery batteries that in 1863 defended Knoxville. About 1,000 Confederate soldiers launched an unsuccessful attack, planning to capture it and use its guns.

Today the remains of the fort, named for its first commander, Union Army Capt. Jonathan C. Dickerson, are said to be among the best preserved earthworks dating from the Siege of Knoxville.

In June, City Council approved a \$1.1 million contract with Bell & Associates to build about 475 feet of wider, two-lane roadway and an entrance with a less steep entryway. Hagerman said crews will need to build a retaining wall along the newly designed curved entrance.

Crews will have 180 days, or by early March, to complete the project.



The G&R Automotive building sits west of the intersections of Woodland Pike at Chapman Highway Oct. 1, 2014. The building soon will be demolished after city officials plan to build a new entrance into Fort Dickerson Park.



G&R Automotive and the entrance into Fort Dickerson Park, shown behind the building, will soon be razed. Crews began the week of Oct. 7, 2014 to remove any remaining hazardous materials from the building before beginning work to demolish it. The city plans to build a new entrance into Fort Dickerson Park.

Demolition sets pace for new entryway to Fort Dickerson

Nichole Stevens

3:49 PM, Oct 13, 2014



AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL Employees with Bell Construction begin demolition on G&R Automotive on Chapman Highway on Monday, Oct. 13, 2014 in Knoxville, Tenn. The demolition will allow for construction of a new entryway into Fort Dickerson Park.

Knoxville - Demolition sets pace for new entryway to Fort Dickerson

Demolition of a business Monday in South Knoxville will lead to the reconstruction of the Fort Dickerson Park entryway off Chapman Highway.

G&R Automotive, near the intersection of Woodlawn Pike, had been around for over 50 years.

The Aslan Foundation originally had purchased the site in order to create easier access to Civil War hill sites around Chapman Highway but donated the property to the city, which razed the building so the entrance to the park could be widened.

Mansour said the extra space would add to the attractiveness of the park.

Ray Bell Construction demolished the former automotive business and will continue to clear space for the entryway.

KUB power lines over the site will be disconnected, and the entryway is to be realigned with the stop light at Woodlawn Pike. Construction workers plan to cut the embankment, build a retaining wall with a rock facade along the entrance and pave sidewalks into the park.

"It's always good to see dirt being pushed around," Mansour said.

Mansour said this is the first time the foundation has worked so closely with the city. The foundation also owns Fort Higley and Fort Stanley, but Dickerson is maintained by City Parks and Recreation.

"The challenge has always been helping people find the park," said Joe Walsh, director of City Parks and Recreation.

Walsh said the city is still in the design process of creating the easiest way to access the park.

Mansour said the South Knoxville community is rich in Civil War history and retains many inviting environmental amenities as well. Mansour said the historic and environmental preservation overlap was ideal for the foundation's involvement in the project.

An obelisk monument will be erected at the park that memorializes its Civil War history. Visitors can see Civil War cannon replicas and walk through the park reading signs detailing South Knoxville's historical involvement.

Fort Dickerson is considered by Parks and Recreation to be one of the most well preserved, yet least visited among of the 16 earthen forts in Knoxville. Walsh and Mansour said they hope the more convenient entryway will change that.

Improvements set for Fort Dickerson Park in South Knoxville



A rendering of the proposed Fort Dickerson Gateway in South Knoxville.

By *Megan Boehnke* of the *Knoxville News Sentinel*

Posted: February 17, 2016

City officials and a local nonprofit will soon finish turning a beloved but once hard-to-find park into a standout destination in South Knoxville.

A new, roughly \$500,000 gateway to Fort Dickerson Park will include a circular lawn, stone pillars and signs. The 30-foot retaining wall at the Chapman Highway entrance will get a decorative stone face, and a new bus stop will be installed near the intersection with Fort Dickerson Road.

The city has also set aside \$275,000 to improve access to the quarry lake through the second entrance off Blount Avenue, said Joe Walsh, Knoxville's parks director.

"It's always been a great asset," Walsh said. "It has a Civil War fort and is a draw not only for people in Knoxville, but also out-of-town visitors.

"One of the drawbacks is that it's been difficult to find because of its location on Chapman Highway."

The city recently spent \$1.4 million to build a new two-lane road going into the 85-acre park and to realign the entrance with Woodlawn Pike. The Aslan Foundation purchased the former G&R Automotive on Chapman Highway next to the entrance and donated it to the city.

Now the nonprofit is leading the effort — and paying most of the costs — to beautify the entrance, Walsh said.

"We were ready to leave (the donated property) as a grassy area, but they did the design and are going to pay for the construction of a new park area," Walsh said.

City officials will show the rendering to the public at a meeting next week at Flenniken Landing, off Maryville Pike in South Knoxville. Officials will collect public input at the 5:30 p.m. meeting on Feb. 24. The project is expected to cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000, Walsh said.

The future of the park also includes connecting it to other Civil War sites — Fort Stanton, Fort Higley and the recently donated site of the Battle of Armstrong Hill — through what's being called the Battlefield Loop.

The city plans to issue a request for proposals in the coming weeks for a firm to design a master plan of that loop and the rest of the city's Urban Wilderness trail system, Walsh said. He expects it to cost about \$100,000.

Meanwhile, the city recently took possession of the 70-acre Armstrong Hill site and plans to improve the gravel parking lot and install trash cans.

Walsh has requested funding for more improvements to the park. While the Armstrong Hill property, which includes a stunning overlook of downtown, is open to the public, the city has not advertised it as a park until safety measures and other upgrades can take place, Walsh said.



Kelly Henson takes part in a work day April 6, 2013, at Fort Dickerson Park in South Knoxville. Knoxville officials next week will hold a public meeting on future improvements at Fort Dickerson Park. The city will soon begin improvements

to the park's entrance improvements, which include landscaping, signage, a new transit stop and a decorative veneer for the 30-foot-high retaining wall. Additionally, the city Parks and Recreation Department has \$275,000 in funding to improve access to the quarry lake and the overlook..(Paul Efird/News Sentinel)



Quarry Lake is pictured May 8, 2013, at Fort Dickerson Park in South Knoxville. Knoxville officials next week will hold a public meeting on future improvements at Fort Dickerson Park. The city will soon begin improvements to the park's entrance improvements, which include landscaping, signage, a new transit stop and a decorative veneer for the 30-foot-high retaining wall. Additionally, the city Parks and Recreation Department has \$275,000 in funding to improve access to the quarry lake and the overlook. (Paul Efird/News Sentinel)



Kudzu envelopes the hillside at Fort Dickerson Park on Sept. 4, 2013. Knoxville officials next week will hold a public meeting on future improvements at Fort Dickerson Park. The city will soon begin improvements to the park's entrance improvements, which include landscaping, signage, a new transit stop and a decorative veneer for the 30-foot-high retaining wall. Additionally, the city Parks and Recreation Department has \$275,000 in funding to improve access to the quarry lake and the overlook.. (SAUL YOUNG/NEWS SENTINEL)



A rendering of the proposed Fort Dickerson Gateway in South Knoxville.