

# Private grants help deliver on park's promise

By Leslie Williams Johnson

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Private donors are helping restore the central fountain, install a sustainable water source and create a unique play space at Woodruff Park, which is likely to bring even more visitors to the gathering spot, already a favorite with office workers and college students.

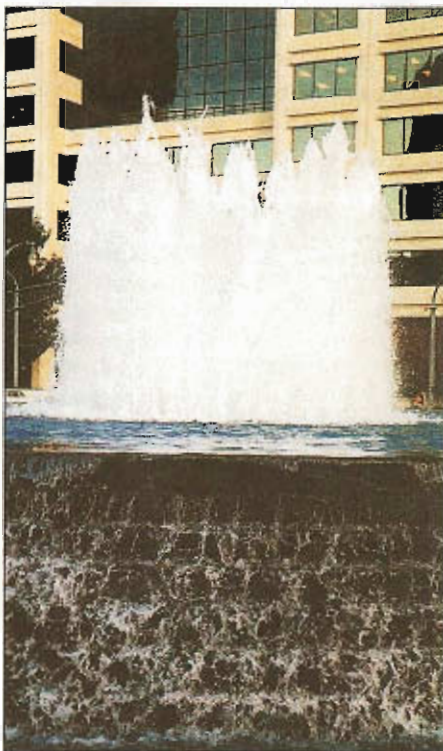
The work being done now will help prepare Woodruff Park for its future as one of the favorite stops along the streetcar route, which is expected to begin construction this year, said leaders of a downtown community improvement organization. The park, which has undergone a number of enhancements since 2006, will further evolve this year into a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather, not only families with children interested in the new-fangled playground.

"Quite frankly, Georgia State students are going to love it," said Cynthia Gentry, founding director of the Atlanta Task Force on Play, of the play space, her brainchild.

Among the grants that made the current work possible were **Bank of America's** \$25,000 for the play area, a \$25,000 grant from the **Waterfall Foundation of the**

**Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta** and \$250,000 from a donor who requested anonymity.

"What's interesting beyond the funders' generosity and strategy is what it represents outside the park's perimeter," said **Central Atlanta Progress Inc.** President A.J. Robinson, through e-mail correspondence. "These grants represent ongoing and increasing ambition at our end — we believe the progress of the park is the beginning of a process, not the end or the result. It shows that if we articulate our case in a compelling way, we can attract



SPECIAL

**In the flow:** Grant money helped obtain a sustainable water supply for Woodruff Park's fountain and water wall.

funders who understand that government grants are leveraged more fully when philanthropists grasp what falls outside typical federal or state grants."

Sustainability is a huge issue in the park's improvement plans, and there's been success in finding a viable, environmentally friendly water-source option.

As a result of the drought conditions, the central circular fountain near Auburn Avenue and the water wall feature at the park's north end were shut off in 2007. The water wall resumed working about a year ago, and repairs to the round fountain were to be completed around the end of March, CAP said.

"Ongoing shutoff is really the worst thing you can do to the mechanics of a

## Woodruff Park funding sources include:

- Bank of America — \$25,000 grant
- The Waterfall Foundation of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta — \$25,000 grant
- Donor (requests anonymity) — \$250,000 grant

Sources: A.J. Robinson, [www.atlantadowntown.com](http://www.atlantadowntown.com)

## Facts and figures about Woodruff Park

**Named after:** Robert Woodruff

**Opened:** In the 1970s

**Covers:** 6 acres

**Improvements and enhancements:**

- Began incrementally since developing the Woodruff Park Reading Room in 2006 and signing its memorandum of understanding in 2007.
- Include hardscape repaving, repairing seat walls, and restoring the park's main fountain.

Sources: A.J. Robinson, [www.atlantadowntown.com](http://www.atlantadowntown.com)

fountain, and certainly above ground, they were a depressing eyesore. Everyone really missed them," Robinson said in his e-mail. "Their absence and the reality that drought can strike in any given year revealed an issue we felt compelled to address. We needed a responsible, sustainable water source in order to secure the future of the fountains and enhance Woodruff Park's self-reliance."

The more than \$250,000 grant for the survey for the water, well-digging and other park upgrades — such as paver replacement, granite wall repairs,

"Woodruff Park ... is an urban sanctuary for reading and a practice field as well. Our park is a place for people and their vibrant activity."

A.J. Robinson  
Central Atlanta Progress Inc.

installation of skate stoppers and landscaping — was provided by "one of Atlanta's greatest pioneers whose name I would love to tout, but in his characteristically generous way, he wishes to be anonymous," Robinson said.

A "fantastic supply" of water was found, he said. Work on the well connection is slated for a March completion, CAP says.

The groundbreaking for the play space is slated to occur in late summer.

"I think it will add a new dimension to the park," Gentry said.

Woodruff Park will have a stop on the new streetcar route as well, giving people another transportation option for outings to the park. Powered electrically, the first part of the streetcar project will run just under three miles through downtown Atlanta.

CAP may be getting some funding for the park's streetcar stop, too.

"As another example of how philanthropy intersects with everything at Central Atlanta Progress, we are talking with an organization about funding a really terrific shelter for the stop that would bear its name and stand as a marker for this organization's downtown legacy," Robinson said in his e-mail.

Gentry said Woodruff Park has come a long way since the negative press it fetched a number of years ago. "They've just transformed it," she said.



Gentry

Atlanta Task Force  
on Play