

City holds ribbon cutting for Woodlawn-Davis

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This past Saturday, Katrina Hourin with the city of Oxford's Planning Department used a giant pair of scissors to cut a big red ribbon at the future site of the Woodlawn-Davis Nature Reserve.

Over 100 community members and city officials gathered to witness and be part of the ribbon cutting ceremony. The ceremony was held under a tent at the end of West Oxford Loop on the site of the future park. The event featured a bird watching tour and wonder walk that gave participants an opportunity to walk the half-mile trail where the park will sit. The walks introduced the community to the many different kinds of flora and fauna that populate the area and were both well attended.

Jody Burnett of St. Peter's Episcopal Church performed the blessing of the park. His prayer was not tailored specifically toward any

particular religious inclination, but was performed in such a way that it could be applicable to the religious leanings of nearly anyone who enters the park. The reserve is intended to be a community space open and available to people of a variety of different backgrounds and Burnett said that he wanted to be sure his prayer reflected that.

Ward VI Alderman Jason Bailey also spoke at the ceremony. The park will be located in the ward of the city which he represents. He thanked everyone for coming out to be a part of the historic day. He thanked everyone for all their hard work they had poured into the project over the past few years. Representatives of Strawberry Plains Nature Center were there on behalf of the Audubon Society. Conservation Education Manger with Strawberry Plains Mitch Robinson spoke to the gathered crowd. Robinson said he was looking forward to the many educational opportu-



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Katrina Hourin with the City Planning Department of Oxford cuts the ribbon on the future site of the Woodlawn-Davis Nature Reserve at a ceremony held Saturday afternoon.

nities that this nature reserve will offer the community.

Quoting an old adage of the Audubon Society, Robinson told the crowd, "where birds flourish, people thrive." He said that this park is not only a victory for

birds and bird lovers, but all people and other animal species of the community.

Hourin later mentioned that the park is only about \$240,000 into the estimated \$1.7 million project. Fundraising efforts and different donation initiatives

will be key over the couple years in making sure that this project becomes a reality as soon as possible. Different initiatives intended to garner more donations include bidding opportunities on who the large pavilion in the park will be

named after, groups sponsoring individual areas of the park and more.

Mayor Pat Patterson was one of the first speakers at the ribbon cutting ceremony. He thanked everyone for coming out and helping to organize the ceremony. He acknowledged the hard work of all the city workers and their partners on the project and said he looked forward to seeing the wonderful things this new park would bring to the community.

"I think this is government at its best," said the mayor after the ceremony. "We were able to get the neighborhood together and work to provide everyone with something to enjoy like that, I just think that is government at its best. I think it was a great turnout and I would like to thank Katrina Hourin for organizing it and really bringing this project along. She did a great job."

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