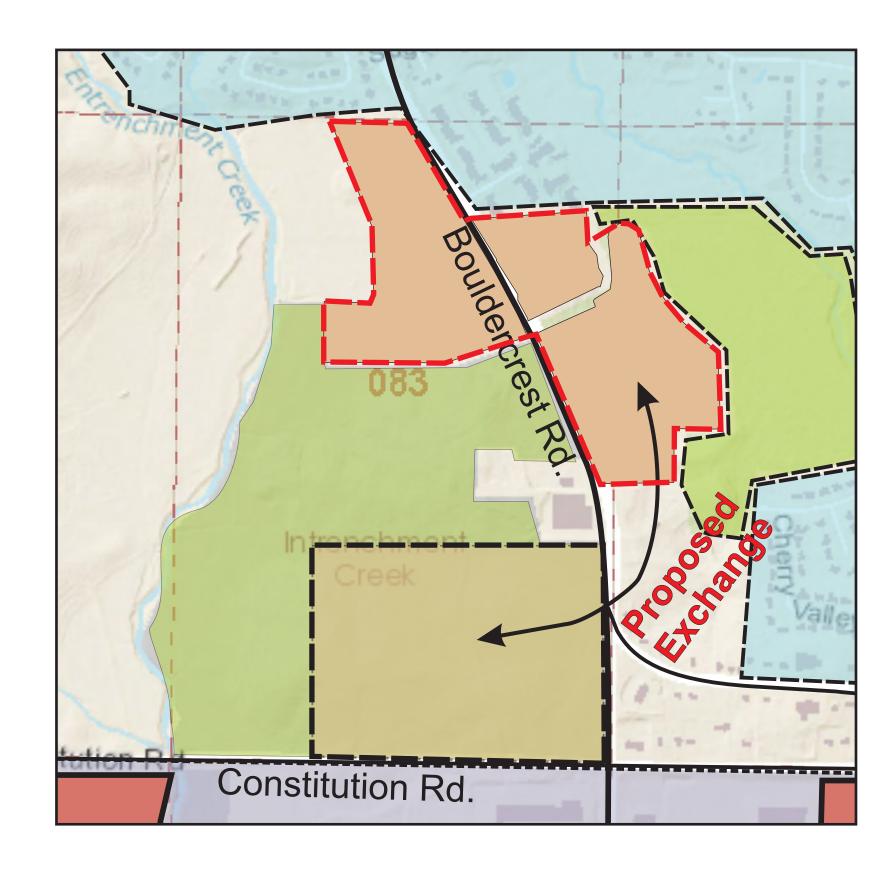
A Proposal to Exchange Open Land

DeKalb County & Blackhall Studios

To Enhance the Open Space Network
To Address Community Concerns
And to Support Economic Development









From the website of the Trust for Public Lands:

"Our mission is to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come"

"Imagine a great park within a 10-minute walk of every home, in every neighborhood, in every city across America."

"Children's use of neighborhood parks increases by 400% when parks are closer to home."

This proposed exchange of undeveloped land supports the stated goals for the Trust for Public Lands in the following ways:

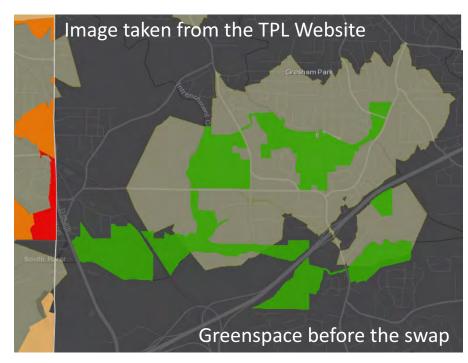
- the exchange will increase the amount of protected land
- With \$3.9 million allocated for improvements to the park, this will create new facilities to serve the communities surrounding the park
- It will dramatically reduce (by more than 3000 feet) the distance between homes and access to the park
- By reducing the distance to access the park and creating new entry points, as well as new facilities, this deal will increase TPL's impact on the communities of Gresham Park.

County	Before swap	After swap
total land	50.3 acres	55.3 acres
wooded	36 acres	39 acres
mature trees *	0 acres	16 acres
young trees **	36 acres	23 acres
cleared ***	14 acres	16 acres

mature trees ** - Along Bouldercrest Road, there are approximately 16 acres of property with mature trees - most 18" dbh and greater with some 48" dbh and larger. These trees are an important character element for the community.

young trees ** Most of this area was clear-cut a number of years ago and the resulting vegetation is very young. The vast majority (80-90% estimated, at least) are 8" dbh or less. As seen in the pictures, these trees are growing too close together for long term health. As per the DeKalb County Tree Ordinance, only trees over 18" are considered for protection and compensation.

cleared *** - The Intrenchment Creek property has a large cleared area as well as a buried gasline easement and a clearing at the trailhead. Of the land the county will receive, there are 16 acres of cleared land along Bouldercrest Road. The plans are to create on this land an urban green (it is similar in size to Piedmont Park's Meadow) for community activities - a feature that no park has in Southwest DeKalb.





Ways that facilitating the land exchange furthers the goals of TPL and improves the surrounding community:

- Location it knits together Gresham Park with Intrenchment Creek across Bouldercrest Road while preserving mature hardwood trees
- Location People living north of the park will now have access 3800 feet closer than currently exists
- Community character The swap will maintain a current buffer between Gresham Park neighborhoods and the business/industrial areas along Constitution Rd and keep truck traffic off Bouldercrest Rd. It will protect existing mature hardwoods instead of facilitation construction of buildings and fences along Bouldercrest where there are no minimum setbacks.
- \$3.0 million in additional Investment by Blackhall will be used to build new trails and facilities. The northwest Bouldercrest Property can become a community green to host festivals, events and even movies. Such a facility does not currently exist in south DeKalb County.
- This WIN-WIN-WIN improves open space, protects community and brings economic development









Intrenchment Creek Vegetation

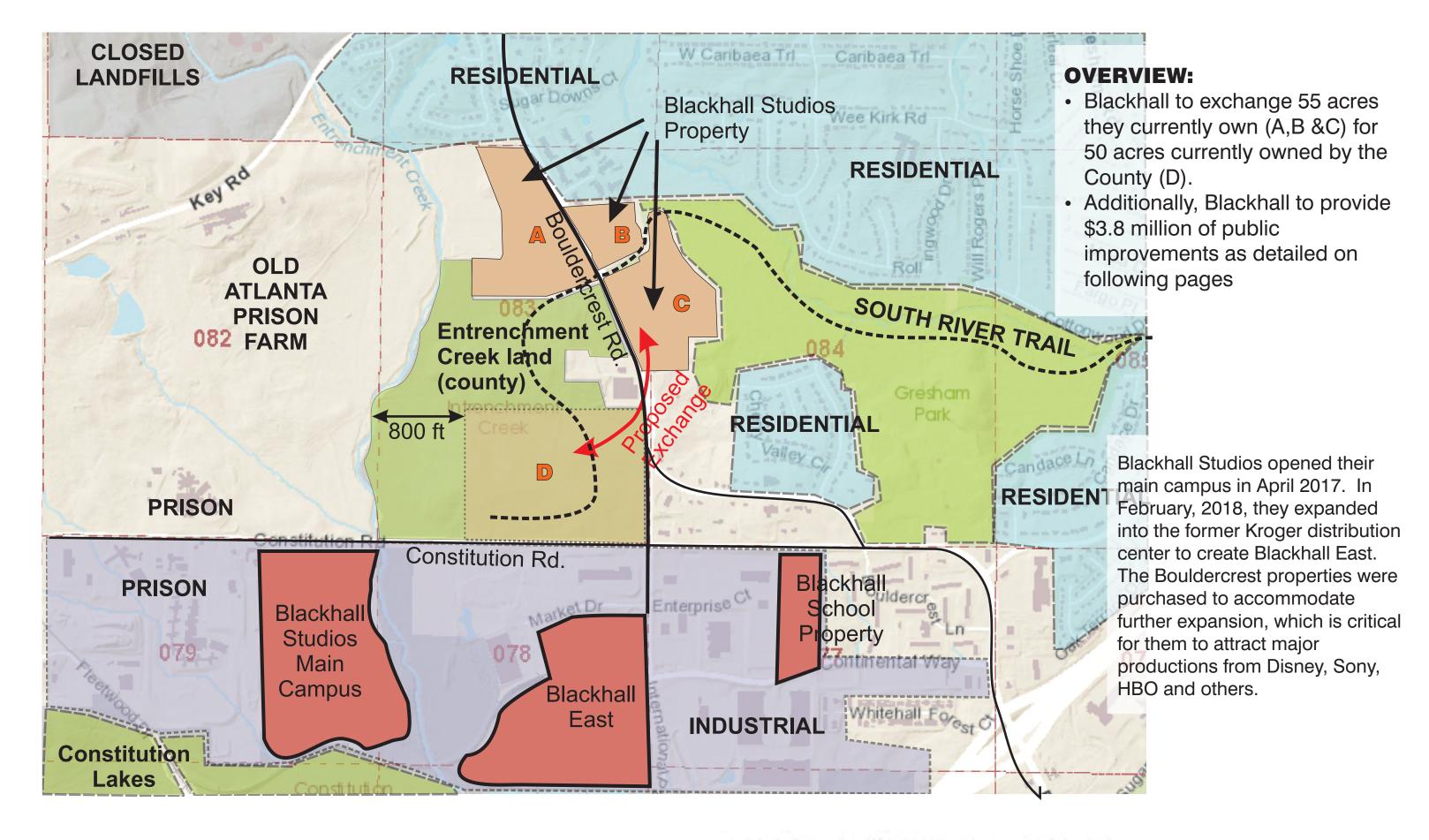
Impact of not doing the swap

Blackhall will expand. Protecting the Bouldercrest corridor while investing \$3.9 million in park improvements will provide the most long term benefits to the community.



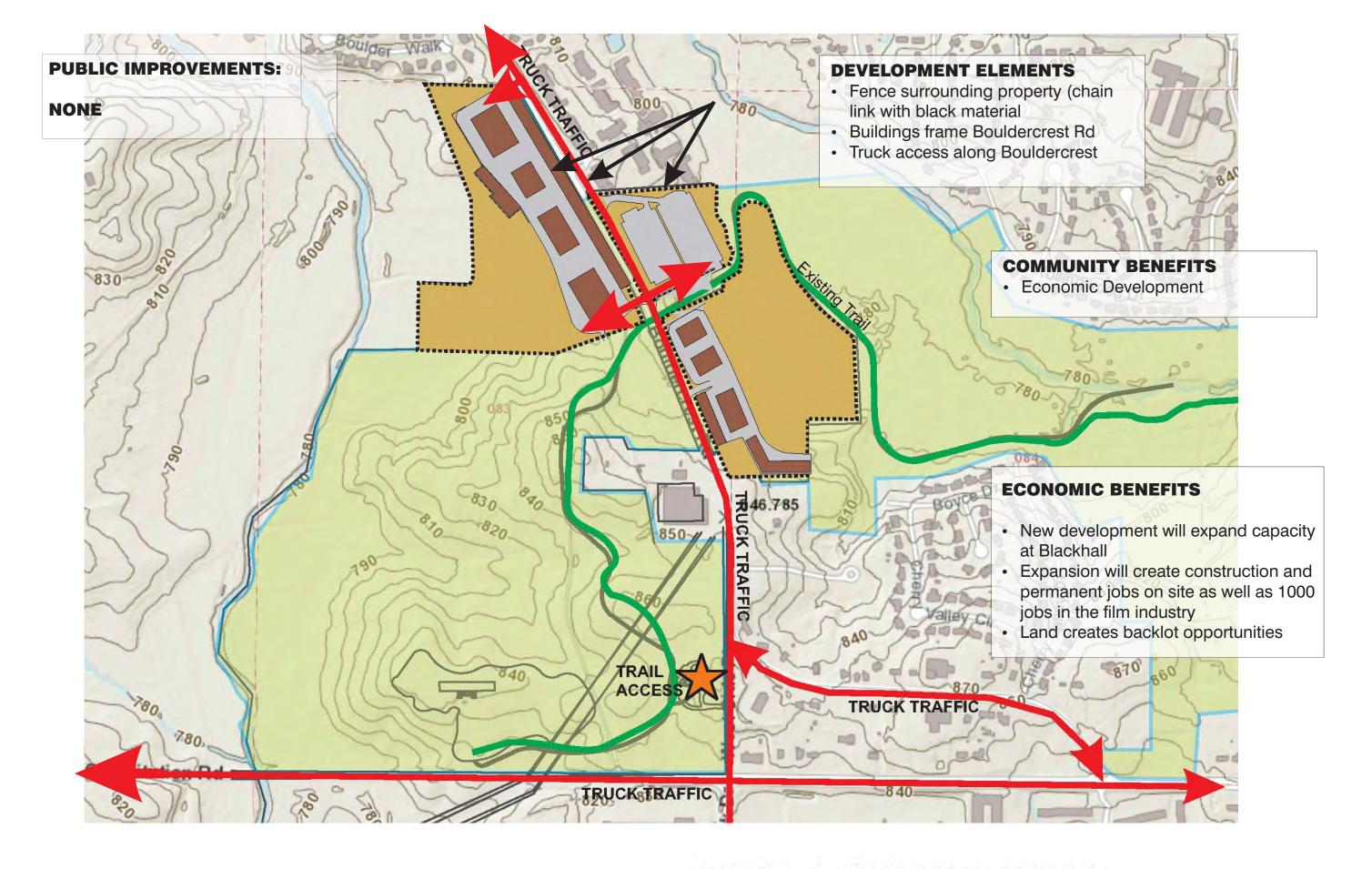






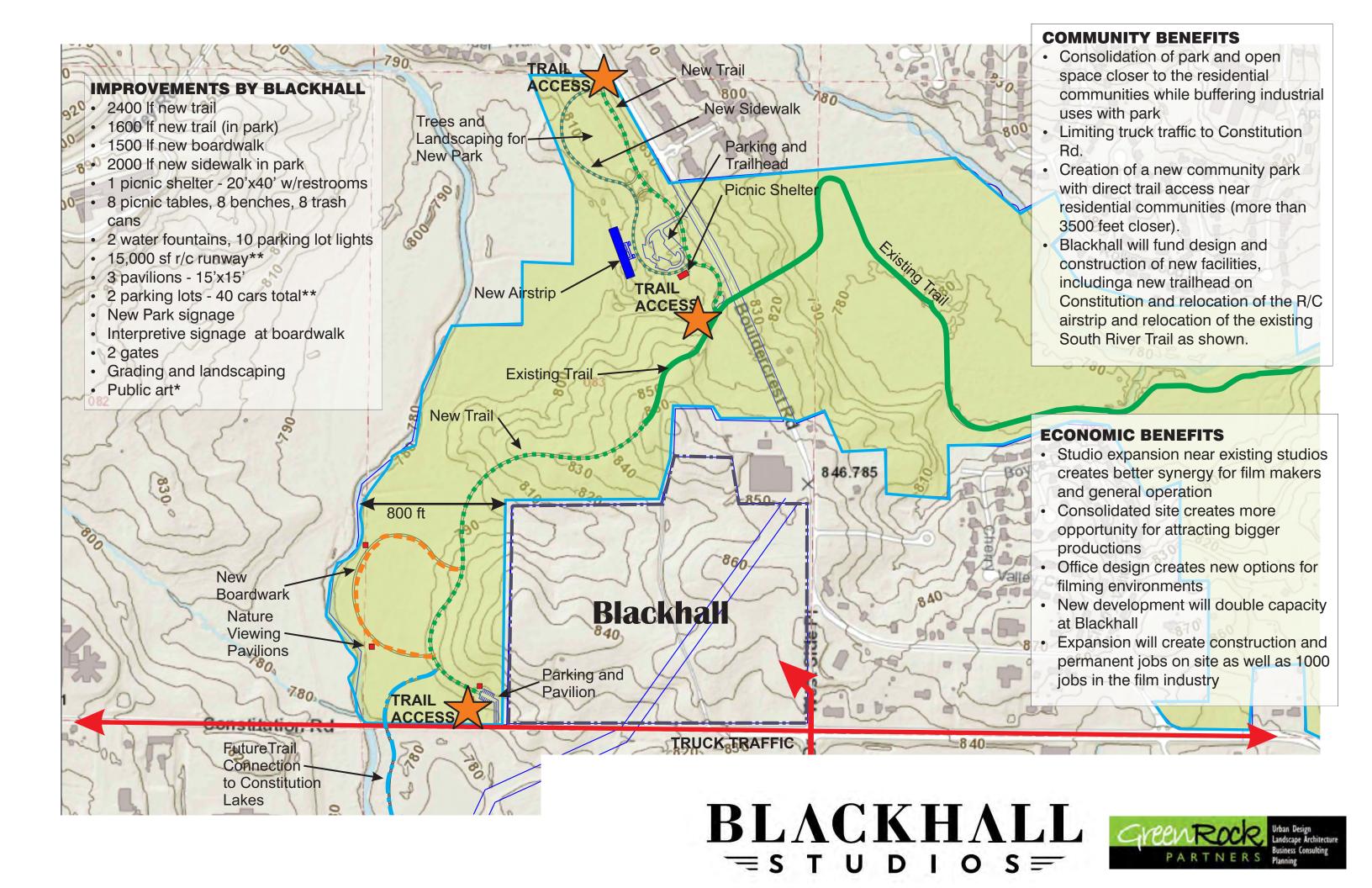


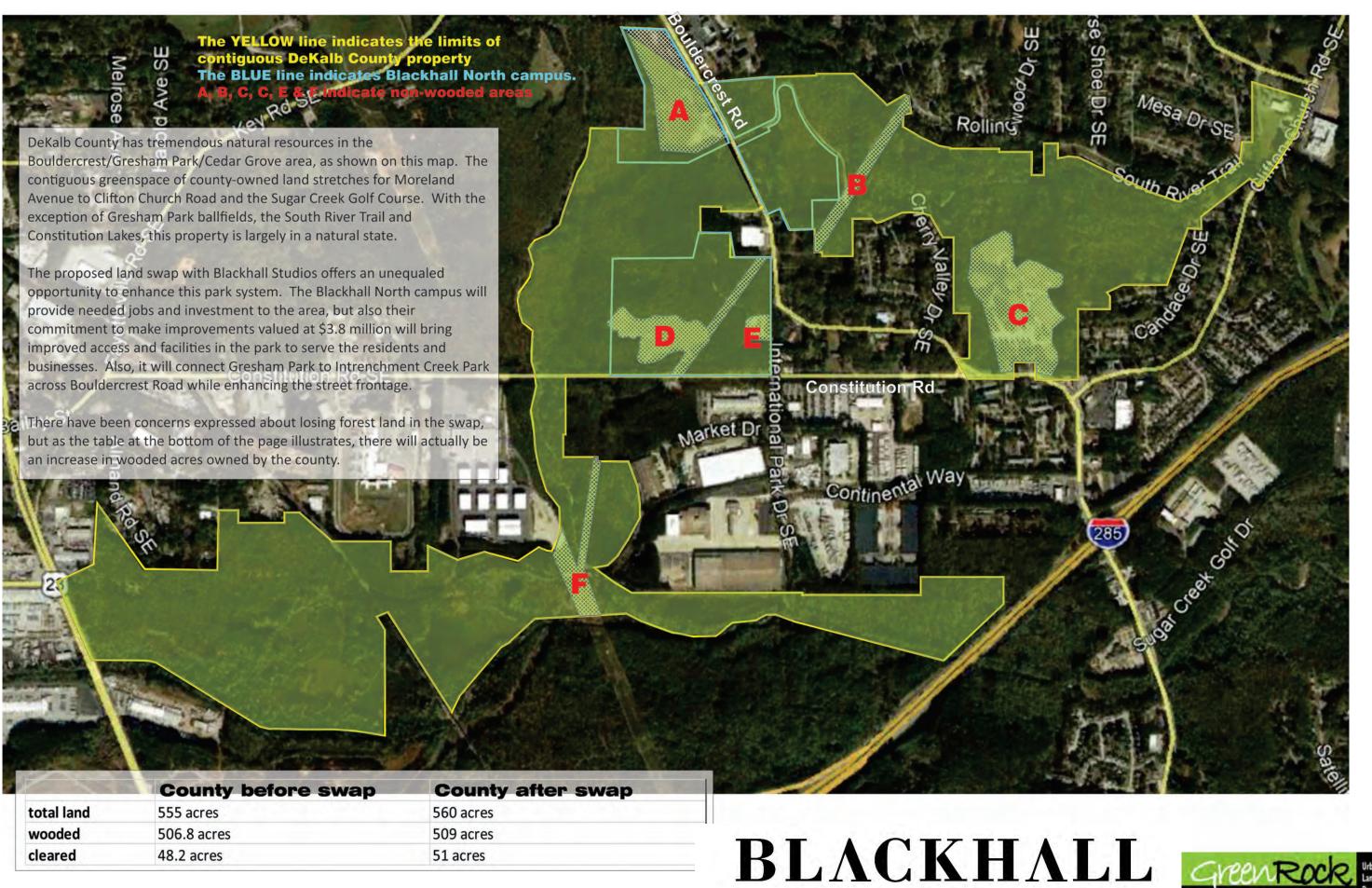












Value to DeKalb County: \$2.53 to \$1.00

	The County Provides	Blackhall Provides
Total Acreage	50.3 acres	55.3 acres
Area Cleared/Wooded	14 acres/39.3 acres	16 acres/33.7 acres
PATH Trail	2500 linear feet existing trail to be replaced by Blackhall	4400 linear feet new trail to be constructed by Blackhall
Future PATH Trail		1600 linear feet new trail to connect to McNair
Boardwalk close to river		1600+ linear feet
Trailhead Access points with	One – 4200 feet south of	two: 1) at Bouldercrest Rd
parking	Sugarcreek Lane	crossing; 2) Constitution Rd at
		South River crossing
Other Trail Access		New access point 550 ft
		south of Sugarcreek Lane
Picnic shelter/ pavilions		One at Bouldercrest Trailhead
Nature Viewing pavilions		Three
R/C facilities	140 ft runway to be replaced	200+ ft runway as per
	with new runway by Blackhall	requested specs
Landscape		Park design, trees, grading,
		landscaping, furnishings as
		requested by Parks
		Department
Value	\$2.765.846	ć7 017 000

Value \$2,765,846 \$7,017,000

Blackhall Studios – opened in 2017

- \$70+ million invested
 - Phase Two will be another \$70 million 400,000 sf new studio space; 100,000 sf new office/creative space; 100,000 sf warehouses/costume/equipment
 - o Small restaurant center, which will be open to the community
- Currently approximately 1000 full time equivalent jobs; Phase Two will be 1000 more Blackhall has had a significant impact on the local economy of DeKalb County
 - Trucking and catering businesses work on a daily basis for the movies
 - Movie jobs are union jobs, which means pay scale is much higher than normal
 - DeKalb building suppliers (Cofer Brothers) sold \$10 million to movies last year.
 - KFC and others on Bouldercrest have seen their business double since Blackhall opened
 - More jobs will bring additional demand for goods and services. This will attract new, better quality businesses to the area as residents have been calling for.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Blackhall is committed to growing the overall film industry (a clean industry) in DeKalb.

- Every movie has many high paying 'behind the scenes' jobs Carpenters, equipment operators, trucking, etc. Blackhall will support training programs and connections.
- The industry in GA is very young, so skilled people are still imported from other areas 50% of the time; In time, all production jobs and most investments will be local.
- Blackhall is working with the DeKalb Entertainment Commission and the state to support training and education programs and to build funding mechanisms to keep projects local
- The state entertainment commission will have an office in the new campus; they will work
 with Blackhall to expand relationships with McNair High School, Georgia State University
 and GPTC; goal is to create programs for developing internships, training opportunities and
 connections for students and residents to interface with industry opportunities.

This swap will exchange land on an acre-for-acre basis with undeveloped land owned by County

- Truck traffic will be limited to Constitution Rd, keeping it off Bouldercrest Rd
- A permanent greenspace buffer will be created between neighboring subdivisions and the businesses along Constitution
- New parks and new trail access points will be created adjacent to residential neighborhoods
- Blackhall will pay to replace and extend the South River Trail at no cost to the County, including these additional features
 - o Extend trail to a new trailhead at Constitution Rd
 - Build new Boardwalk to extend the trail to the South River
 - Create new trailhead/trail access on Bouldercrest
 - Build new trail connection to northern boundary of the new park property at the Boulder Walk subdivision
 - o Add new Picnic shelter and pavilions
 - o Relocate R/C airstrip
 - o Install new trees and landscaping on new park land and along Bouldercrest
- This plan allows for future connections to the Beltline and Constitution Lakes Trails;
 Blackhall is one of the largest employers in south DeKalb County; Blackhall is active in the business community and dedicated to improving the quality of life; Blackhall already contributes over \$80,000 per year towards cleanup and maintenance of the area and is active on the LINK ATL and Aerotropolis CID boards





Why the land swap is the Right Thing to do. By Jay Scott, PLA

While drafting the Greater Conley Industrial CID Master Plan 15 months ago, I learned that Blackhall Studios was about to expand along Bouldercrest Road. This would extend the business/industrial district north to the existing single family neighborhood, permanently dividing Gresham Park from Intrenchment Creek and dramatically changing the character of Bouldercrest Road in the process. From my work in the community, I knew this was not what was wanted, and I knew there was a better way – an exchange of property between Blackhall and DeKalb County. I proposed it to Blackhall and then to the county and it received enthusiastic support. I see it as a way to fix what should have been done when the Intrenchment Creek property was originally purchased.

Quite simply, the Bouldercrest property is the better land for a park for many reasons, including the following:

- **Location** It is the connection from Gresham Park to Intrenchment Creek, something that is acknowledged by the existence of the South River Trail. It completes a permanent green buffer between these residents and the business/industrial area to the south.
- Access It is adjacent to the neighborhoods of Gresham Park, which greatly improves access for residents off all ages. Currently, residents must travel 0.75 miles south in order to access the trail. Why should people be required to drive to walk on the trail?
- **Environmental Variety** While some lament the fact that the land is not completely wooded, open space is an important element in urban park design. In addition to the open area, the land also contains stands of mature trees as well as floodplain and minor wetlands. This variety will be a good addition to the overall park system.
- Variety of Potential Uses Although the existing local park system is over 550 acres, there is a limited variety of spaces and activities. Other than the ball fields and pavilion at Gresham Park an the open area at the R/C airstrip, the park is wooded with walking/biking trails. I am all for trails, but community parks need to be more. Because of the open space along Bouldercrest, as well as the stands of mature trees, this is an opportunity to create the first true urban park in south DeKalb County.
- Community Character This area of the county has a reputation (earned from many years of neglect) of poor safety and security issues. For such a community, it is hard for people to think about walking into a wooded area or anywhere where you can't see what is going on around you. At the same time, the best way to advance and convey safety is for there to be visible activity and well maintained properties. The open area along Bouldercrest can easily become a landscaped park for picnics, family gatherings, informal recreation, events and concerts. Currently there is not such a place in south DeKalb. When one considers that the cleared property on the west of Bouldercrest is roughly the same size as the meadow at Piedmont Park, it is easy to imagine the impact that such a park could have on the area.



Jay Scott, PLA



Sign riddled with bullet holes





The exchange presents a true **WIN-WIN-WIN** situation, something that is truly rare. The community will win from having a park that has better access, will better serve their stated needs as a community and will present a better impression to visitors. The county (as well as TPL and the Blank Foundation) will win by advancing the goals of connected, quality greenspace and expanding opportunities for people to interact with nature. Blackhall Studios will benefit by expanding in a way that serves their needs and fits in the community better. And DeKalb County and residents benefit from major economic development (\$70 million investment supporting 1000 jobs and other businesses). This is in addition to the significant investment volunteered by Blackhall.

At the beginning of the discussions about the swap, I developed a conceptual plan that is generally the plan included in this document. I then met with leaders of DeKalb Parks who suggested a few additions. We have also met with the PATH Foundation to be sure that this plan met their goals (it does). Without any hesitation, Millsap agreed to pay for it all – a total of almost \$4 million - as part of the agreement. Since the Intrenchment Creek property is valued at \$2,765,846, and the Bouldercrest is valued at \$3,160,000, and Blackhall is contributing another \$3.9 million for improvements, this a 'return' of 2.55 to 1 – an excellent deal no matter how it is presented.

Blackhall is already a committed member of the community. As a member of the CID, they voluntarily are paying \$80,000 per year to improving the community. (A major effort of the CID is to clean up rights of way.) They currently lease Blackhall East, and that property owner has not wanted to join, but Blackhall has encouraged them with the promise that Blackhall will pay the additional taxes. With Blackhall north, that property will also join the CID, raising their commitment even further. Ryan Millsap, CEO of Blackhall is on the Board of Directors for the CID, the Aerotropolis CIDs and is chair of Advance DeKalb, a new economic development arm of Decide DeKalb.

Millsap bought the land on Bouldercrest because it served his expansion needs. He was to be under construction July 2018, but when he saw the proposal for the exchange and he received positive feedback from people at the county, in the business community and resident organizations, he agreed to delay his plans. But Blackhall is losing business every day they don't have more space, so it must proceed one way or another. He can build on Bouldercrest without any rezoning and without spending \$4 million on community improvements – but he believes the swap is the better long term solution.

Both my professional training and experience, as well as my personal experiences with people who live and work in the area, have informed this process. This is an excellent opportunity for TPL, the Blank Foundation, DeKalb County and the entire Bouldercrest/Gresham Park/Cedar Grove communities.





Cabbagetown and Piedmont Parks are two examples of open space that is a uniting factor for the communities. Well designed urban parks bring people together. Woodlands are where people go to 'get away.' South DeKalb needs a park that is both, and this is a perfect time and place to accomplish this. There is property, funding and community support. Now is the time to act.





Benefits of the swap.





The cleared property along Bouldercrest is an excellent location for a "community green", not unlike the Meadow at Piedmont Park. It is close to neighborhoods, it will have access to the South River Trail, and it can host community events. (South DeKalb needs such a park.) It is approximately the size of the Meadow. It can also be segmented into smaller spaces, such as the successful Cabbagetown Park.



Current View







If the Bouldercrest property is developed, it will have significant impacts:

- Because of security requirements, it will be necessary to surround the
 properties with a chainlink fence with black fabric. This will result in 2500
 feet of the existing trail being along the fence and over half of this to have
 the fence on both sides of the trail.
- The configuration of the property requires the buildings to be along Bouldercrest, and zoning requires only a 5 foot setback. This will result in the removal of all the mature trees along Bouldercrest. The trees and the open space will be replaced with walls of buildings.
- Blackhall Studios had purchased the land for expansion as described above as it is the only way to get the necessary space on the property.



New Trail.

New Amenities & New Trailhead

With more than 800ft between river and the proposed property line, there is enough room to fit the new Mercedes Benz Atlanta Falcons Stadium - not that anyone wants that.

With the exchange, Blackhall Studios North will be built on the north side of Constitution Road west of the intersection with International Park Drive. This will not only unify the greenspace, but it also keeps the business and industrial uses along Constitution and away from the subdivisions to the north. This alone makes this exchange a valuable benefit to the community.

Blackhall Studios has, together with the DeKalb Parks Department, developed a list of improvements that they will fund. These include replacing the trail, trailhead and R/C airstrip. but it also includes new trails, a new trailhead, new access, new amenities and landscaping. Altogether, they will provide almost \$4 million of improvements.



New Trail,

New Boardwalk & New Trailhead





The main lawn area on Intrenchment Creek – 14 ac.



The cleared area along Bouldercrest – 16 ac.



The meadow at Piedmont Park – 14 ac.

MYTH #1a – DeKalb County is trading a 'forest' for cleared land

FACT: Intrenchment Creek includes 14 acres of cleared land. This includes the large clearing where the Atlanta Remote Control Club has their runway and the underground gas line, which has development restrictions. The Bouldercrest property has 16 acres of cleared land, which is highly visible along Bouldercrest.

The DeKalb County Parks Department has studied the property and believes this open land can be a valuable asset to the area. For reference, it is close to the size of the Meadow at Piedmont Park.







MYTH #1b – Intrenchment Creek is a mature forest

FACT: While much of the Intrenchment Creek property is wooded, the trees are young. Most trees are 8" and under with very few 24" or greater.

At the right are photos of the mature trees that will be lost if the Bouldercrest property is developed.

Additional photos of the properties included later.















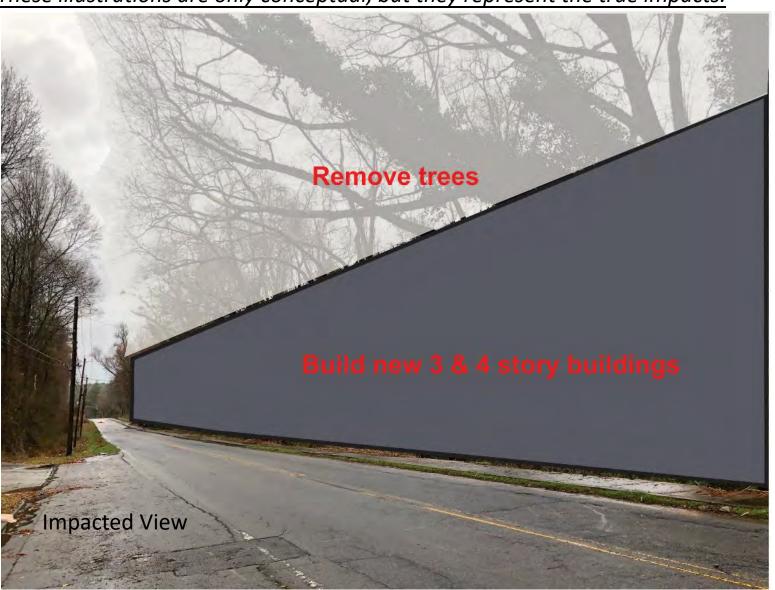


This photo was taken

at the blue arrow

Under current zoning the Bouldercrest property has no setback requirements. These illustrations are only conceptual, but they represent the true impacts.





View looking north on Bouldercrest at the south end of the property

If the swap does not occur, the character of Bouldercrest Road will be changed forever:

- Mature trees will be cut down
- Buildings and fences will be constructed along the right of way



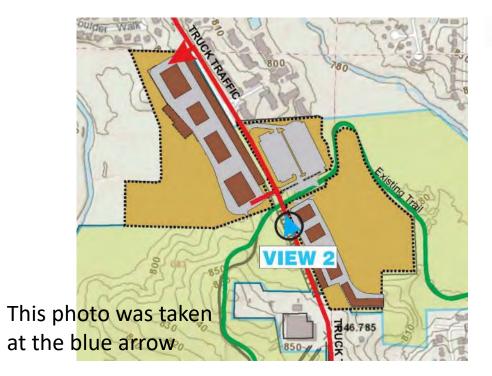




<u>Under current zoning the Bouldercrest property has no setback requirements.</u>
These illustrations are only conceptual, but they represent the true impacts.



Impacted View



Current View

View looking north on Bouldercrest, at the trail underpass

Instead of Bouldercrest being framed by open space, it will have buildings and security fencing (to screen surface parking lots).





Under current zoning the Bouldercrest property has no setback requirements.

These illustrations are only conceptual, but they represent the true impacts.



Current View













<u>Under current zoning the Bouldercrest property has no setback requirements.</u>
These illustrations are only conceptual, but they represent the true impacts.



Impacted View



This photo was taken

at the blue arrow

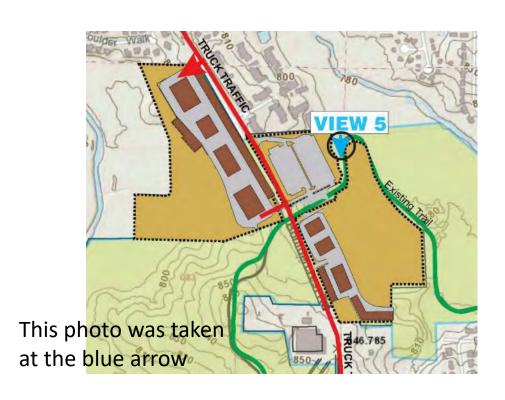
View looking north on Bouldercrest, north of the trail underpass





Under current zoning the Bouldercrest property has no setback requirements. These illustrations are only conceptual, but they represent the true impacts.

As the South River Trail heads west from Gresham Park towards the underpass at Bouldercrest, it goes between the two properties to be developed by Blackhall. Because Blackhall must secure their property, this will necessitate the installation of security fences along the trail. Approximate 1300 ft will have fences on both sides as seen at right, while another 1500 ft will have fence on the west side only.











This is a recent flyer from the South River Watershed Alliance opposing the Blackhall land swap with DeKalb County. The BLACK text is from their flyer. The RED text shows our responses to their concerns item by item.

STOP THE SWAP

#StopTheSwap

Below are 13 reasons why it is imperative to Stop The Swap. The facts are in RED.

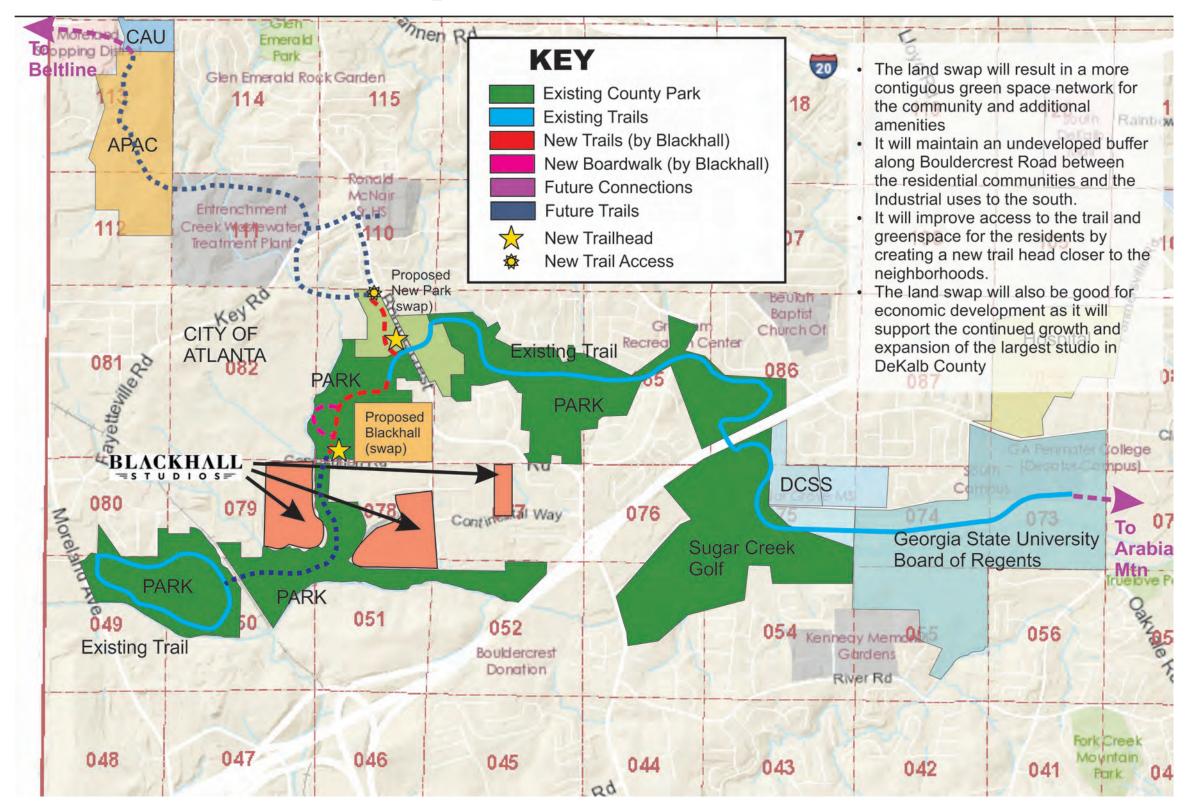
- 1. Clear-cutting 50+ acres of forested connected greenspace (only 36 acres are, in fact, wooded.) and replacing it with 50+ acres of impervious surfaces will be detrimental to the functioning of the wetland. We will not be impacting any wetlands. Furthermore, it is not physically possible under current regulations to create 50+ acres of impervious surfaces on 50.3 acres of land. Fifty plus acres of Intrenchment Creek Park receives 1.5 million gallons of water from a 1" rainfall (USGS Rainfall Calculator). When those 50+ acres are covered with concrete, asphalt, and other impervious surfaces the 1" rainfall becomes 1.5 million gallons of fast moving stormwater runoff. State and local regulations have detailed requirements for managing stormwater which will not allow this scenario to happen. After construction, stormwater will be controlled to leave the site at the same rate as at predevelopment.
- 2. Intrenchment Creek Park is public forested healthy greenspace that provides protection for severely threatened Intrenchment Creek in the most under-parked industrial area in unincorporated DeKalb County. The 'forest' consists of tress that are 25-30 years old max. there will be a net gain of green space acreage by the county that will be landscaped as approved by the county with money provided by Blackhall.
- 3. Intrenchment Creek drains virtually all of east Atlanta and adjoining unincorporated DeKalb County. Intrenchment Creek Park is vital to the protection of Intrenchment Creek, South River, downstream neighbors in south DeKalb County and neighbors all the way to Jackson Lake, fifty miles southeast. This development will not impact Intrenchment Creek. The creek (and South River) are in need of cleanup/management; Blackhall will participate in the cleanup and management of this important waterway
- 4. The large wetland that is part of the park's greenspace helps to clean stormwater runoff as well as remove pollutants from the City of Atlanta Custer Avenue combined sewer overflow facility and Intrenchment Creek Wastewater Reclamation Center before reaching the South River. Blackhall will have no impact on this wetland.
- 5. Hundreds and hundreds of relatively young trees that provide improved air quality for residents of this highly industrialized area will be lost. Blackhall will plant new trees to compensate.
- 6. Naturally functioning wetlands like the one in Intrenchment Creek Park is the most cost effective way for DeKalb County to reduce pollution and improve water quality in the South River. Blackhall will protect the existing wetlands.
- 7. This land swap is being proposed solely for the convenient expansion of Blackhall's current physical footprint across Constitution Road from their current location. The land swap was conceived by a professional landscape architect to create a permanent green buffer between the Gresham Park Neighborhoods and the industrial areas along Constitution Rd. Blackhall was prepared to build on land they own along Bouldercrest Rd and only delayed construction because of the potential benefits to the community and the support expressed by members of the community and DeKalb County government. The swap will create an enhanced park experience, preserve the character of Bouldercrest Rd and provide improved pedestrian access to the park and trails for community residents.

- 8. The lack of environmental awareness and stewardship being exhibited by DeKalb County's leadership is absolutely astounding. This proposed swap is environmentally conscious. It will result in increased public greenspace acreage. Blackhall will provide almost \$4 million dollars of improvements to the public greenspace without costing the taxpayers anything. All construction will be done to protect and improve the natural environment.
- 9. DeKalb County's leadership is condoning an environmental injustice by supporting tactics by Blackhall that pit under-served neighborhoods against their environment and each other. DeKalb County leadership is taking the long view towards the betterment of south DeKalb County. This exchange will create a closer connection between the neighborhoods and the environment. Neighborhood residents will have improved access to the park and trails. It is increasing the amount of greenspace, separating residential areas from industrial uses while supporting economic development that will attract the services, jobs and opportunities that the area needs. This solution brings people closer to the greenspace, thereby increasing the benefits.
- 10. Communities are being placed in the position of choosing between proven quality of life benefits provided by parks and greenspace and the highly speculative and questionable promise of economic development by Blackhall. There will be a net gain of parks and greenspace, both in quantity (acreage) and quality (almost \$4 million of trails, facilities and landscaping with better access). This project will provide both economic investment and investment in parks and greenspace. This swap will expand the quality of life benefits for the area.
- 11. Blackhall should be willing to invest in the community where they are located without the lure of a trade that will require clear-cutting the community's park. Blackhall is already making significant investments in the community. They contribute over \$80,000/year towards the cleanup and maintenance and improvements, an amount that will increase when their expansion is complete. The improvements they are funding were proposed by Blackhall because of their commitment to the community.
- 12. Blackhall can and should build on property they own along Bouldercrest Road that is already clear-cut and will have minimal impact on the environment or surrounding communities. Building on the Bouldercrest property will change the character of Bouldercrest Rd with industrial-type buildings on both sides of the road. It will also alter the character of the South River Trail because property must be secured with a chain link fence and black fabric (on both sides of the trail) and will do nothing to improve accessibility of the trail for Gresham Park residents.
- 13. Trading a public park to a private developer sets a dangerous precedent for future trades that could affect any park in DeKalb County. The park land is not being lost. The park is simply relocated to an area contiguous to Gresham Park and Intrenchment Creek to create a more continuous greenspace. In so doing, it will create a permanent buffer between the Gresham Park neighborhoods and the industrial uses. The new park space will be landscaped by Blackhall as approved by the county and residents.





Other Images of Intrenchment Creek and the Bouldercrest Properties.









Cracking pavement at the R/C runway



Current trailhead was not install to current PATH standards



Bullet-riddled sign welcoming people to Intrenchment Creek.





































BLACKHALL
= s T U D I O S =



















BLACKHALL

studios=



Photos of the Intrenchment Creek property







BLACKHALL

studios=

















Photos of the Bouldercrest property











BLACKHALL

studios=



Photos of the Bouldercrest property











