LOCAL NEWS

Master plan ready for Easley nature park

'Green oasis' planned on 38-acre site

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With a master plan now in place, work on Nalley Brown Nature Park is moving forward and could bring outdoor classrooms, trails and an environmental education center to the 38-acre space in Easley.

"Nalley Brown Nature Park is poised to become the green oasis of Easley and Pickens County, providing an opportunity for retreat, discovery, wonder and education," said Rick Huffman, owner of Earth Design, the group that did the master plan for the park, which is slated to be created along Adger Road.

He said the master plan was recently completed and work on the design development phase starts next. The board of trustees for Nalley Brown Nature Park is also working to get its nonprofit status, according to Huffman.

"We've been working for seven, maybe eight, years toward creating this nature park," he said.

The whole project has an estimated price tag of about $5.6 million, including the creation of an estimated $3.3 million education center, Huffman said.

He said the board of trustees and others involved are going to work to get funding through grants, endowments, donations and fundraisers.

Cynthia Bunton, chairwoman of the board of trustees for the Nalley Brown Nature Park, said those involved have some money so they can get started in the design development phase, but said fundraising will pick up once they get the approval for the nonprofit status.

Bunton said they applied in July and said it could take a few months to a year to get the approval.

The master plan for the park calls for about three miles of trails, outdoor classrooms, observation decks, picnic shelters, benches, tables, a woodland amphitheater to seat about 150, and an environmental education center, according to Cheryl Brown, a landscape architect with Earth Design.

"We plan for this to be a state-of-the-art exhibit and teaching facility that meets LEED standards," Brown said of the education center.

She said plans also include Native American and colonial exhibits that would connect the history of the region to the natural resources and nine education stations proposed along a trail in the park that would cover subjects from geology and soil to water quality and mammals.

"These will serve as miniature outdoor classrooms with hopefully locked compartments where teachers can access educational materials for their classes," Brown said.

Bunton said they would like to have the project complete in two years but said that depends on funding.

"I think it's a drawing card for people to come see something that's not anywhere else in the Upstate or even the state," she said.