

MERCER UNIVERSITY

a campus in a forest...

THE OPPORTUNITY

If Atlanta is known as a “city in a forest”, then Mercer’s Cecil B. Day Atlanta Campus could well be known as a “campus in a forest”.

Situated on 295 acres Inside the Perimeter just off I85, the site offers a 140 acre urban forest that includes a pristine, yet sometimes imperiled, environment featuring:

- a mixture of upland and bottomland ecosystems,
- an abundant and diverse plant community, and
- over two miles of major streams at the confluence of Henderson Mill Creek and the North Fork of Peachtree Creek.

The size, diversity, and location of the land, streams, and wetlands afford a unique opportunity for restoration, preservation, research and education.



PROJECT VISION

Working with key partners, Mercer University will take the lead in developing an Urban Forest on its Atlanta Campus. The vision driving this project is to create a national model for restoring and conserving unique ecological environments in urban settings and demonstrating their value through research, education and outreach.

By undertaking a complete environmental restoration and long-term land management program, Mercer and its partners will provide guidance and impetus to a variety of similar efforts that seek to systematically restore fully functioning urban-based natural ecologies across the southeast region and nationally.



PROJECT GOALS

1. Create an environmental asset that connects with other green infrastructure and watershed initiatives being developed locally to provide communities across the metro area with a variety of natural resources that promote recreation, health and wellness.
2. Create opportunities for Mercer to work cooperatively with business, civic, philanthropic and governmental entities to help grow and improve local communities by enhancing their economic attractiveness and quality of life.
3. Provide educational opportunities for local K12 teachers and students, working with Mercer students, to study the environment and interactions of plants, animals and birds.
4. Provide educational and research opportunities for Mercer students/faculty in academic areas such as health and wellness (effects of nature on well-being), education (working with local K12 teachers), biology (studying environmental systems and urban wetlands), business (impact of nature-based amenities on adjacent property values), and government/politics (community decision-making).
5. Protect the Urban Forest site for future generations to study and enjoy.

PROJECT PHASING AND FUNDING

Mercer University engaged the planning and landscape architecture firm HGOR for Phase I of the project to assess undeveloped portions of its Atlanta Campus relative to ecological, educational and environmental opportunities. The University funded Phase I expenses of \$20,000 from its own resources.

Phase I included extensive field inspection and analysis of the riparian zones and adjacent upland forest areas and enabled HGOR to:

1. Determine the extent, location and complexity of various ecosystems,
2. Provide understanding of base sensitivities for increased human activity,
3. Establish geographical and accessibility constraints,
4. Gather information on sewer easement locations and potential impacts,
5. Develop a list of native plants,
6. Determine the extent and types of non-native plants,
7. Provide baseline photography to illustrate areas observed, and
8. Prepare a report on findings, ecosystems, and plant communities.

Given the results of HGOR's review, Mercer seeks to undertake Phase 2 of the project to develop a detailed master plan for the Urban Forest. The University is seeking funding assistance from partners in the amount of \$130,000 for this next phase. The time frame for completing the plan is approximately six months from start date.

Subsequent project phases will be undertaken to implement the Urban Forest master plan.



URBAN FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE

While Mercer plans to assume leadership for the Urban Forest Project, it actively seeks the advice and support of partners in the endeavor.

To help build such partnerships, the University will convene an Advisory Committee comprised of ecologists, environmental planners, foresters, geographers, geologists, historians, wildlife experts, and educators, along with community and government representatives and other experts. This group will provide guidance on integrating long-term planning and research initiatives with project implementation to assist in preserving/conserving, documenting and studying the natural forest and watershed assets found on the site.

MERCER'S MISSION

Mercer University's mission is to teach, to learn, to create, to discover, to inspire, to empower and to serve.

Founded in 1833, Mercer is an independent University that supports undergraduate, graduate and professional learning as well as basic research and its application in service to others. With a commitment to excellence and innovation, Mercer challenges members of its community to meet and exceed high standards in their teaching, learning, research, scholarship and service.

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