

Greenspace at Emory: Finding the Balance

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Introduction

When Henry Hornbostel designed the first campus plan for Emory University’s Atlanta campus in 1915, he envisioned a “campus in a forest” (Sustainability Visioning Committee 2016: 6). Today, Emory’s campus sprawls over 1,000 acres between the campuses in Atlanta and Oxford. About 56% of that land is forested area, much of it protected (Exterior Services Department 2016; Master Plan Steering Committee 2005). In addition, Emory as an institution has initiated changes in the way it thinks about and maintains managed land. These changes and initiatives did not simply come about on their own, but were the work of a continually reinforced commitment to environmental stewardship promoted by Emory’s faculty, staff, students, and some community members. The history of these efforts offers insight into the repeated compromises Emory forged to balance its responsibilities to the environment with its other values and priorities as an institution. This paper focuses on the different factors Emory took into account when working to preserve forested areas and maintain managed landscapes on campus, then discusses the benefits those greenspaces have on the Emory community.

Methodology

This report was written in Spring of 2017, as part of the course, Writing Emory’s Sustainability History (ANT 385W) taught by Dr. Peggy Barlett. It builds on four reports completed in 2008:

- The Sparks of Sustainable Energy: Sustainable History at Emory (Mona Patel)
- Constructing a Movement, One Building at a Time: The History of Green Buildings at Emory University (Micah Hahn)
- Alternative Transportation (Andrew M. Foote)
- “Going Into a Place of Beauty”: Forest Preservation and Restoration (Whitney Easton)

Our 2017 class chose eight sectors of action for research and interviews, to contribute to the oral and written history of sustainability efforts at Emory. The seven other topics are:

- Institutionalization of Change: A History of Emory's Office of Sustainability Initiatives (Kristen Kaufman)
- Teaching the Future: Academic Infusion of Sustainability at Emory (Meggie Stewart)
- Carbon, Climate and Co-Generation: A History of Emory's Energy and Climate Commitments (Katelyn Boisvert)
- Sustainability in Campus Life: The Changing of Behavior (Jamie Nadler)
- Sustainable Healthcare at Emory University (Lauren Balotin)
- Emory's History of Waste Diversion and Recycling (Amelia Howell)
- Stormwater Management and Water Conservation at Emory University (Kelly Endres)

This Report was based on written materials, available quantitative and qualitative data, and interviews. Background information was obtained from the Emory Office of Sustainability website, the Emory archives, and documents provided by faculty and staff. Interviews were scheduled via email, and in the revision process, interviewees were given the chance to review the document and provide feedback. We are especially grateful to interviewees for sharing their time and insights with us, and also to Ciannat Howett and other members of the Office of Sustainability for their generous help in constructing these histories. The individuals interviewed for this Report are listed below, with the date of interview:

- **Eloise Carter** (Professor of Biology at Emory at Oxford) by phone on 2/27/17
- **James Johnson** (Campus Landscape Architect) at the Math and Science Building on 2/21/17
- **Jimmy Powell** (Director of Exterior Services and former Superintendent of Roads and Grounds) in the Dobbs University Center on 3/1/17
- **John Wegner** (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Environmental Science, former University Chief Environmental Officer and member of the Committee on the Environment (COE) and current member of the Lullwater Management Taskforce) in his office on 2/12/17

Consent for the interviews was gained via email. Once the researcher arrived at the interview location, the purpose of the study was clearly explained, namely to gather the history and timeline of greenspace at Emory from those who were key leaders in the past, present, and future sustainability movement. It was explained that eventually, these histories would be used to discuss trends in sustainability and to understand factors that contributed to its success.

Preserving the Forests: A Balance with Resources, Community Connections, and Development

Forest preservation has always been a present factor on Emory's campus. In 1919, Woolford Baker arrived at Emory's new Atlanta campus as a graduate student of biology (Seidman 2010). By the time he joined Emory faculty, he had fallen in love with the campus's natural landscapes so that when he saw construction such as telephone poles and electric wires destroying shrubs and natural woods, he complained to the president, at the time President Harvey Cox. President Cox subsequently placed him in charge of campus plantings (Baker 1980). "He was really the first keeper of the trees on campus," Dr. John Wegner, a professor in the department of Environmental Sciences said (2017).

Since then, Emory students, faculty and staff have worked to preserve the forests engaging in a number of campaigns to preserve ecosystem integrity and to oppose various construction projects. They have negotiated a shuttle road, Starvine Way, around old-growth forest in Lullwater (Seideman 2010), decreased the height of the Emory Conference Center Hotel from eighteen stories to five (Wegner 2017), and repositioned a number of building plans including the Yerkes Primate Center and Hope Lodge, that encroached on forested areas (Seideman 2010). In 1986, Professors Bill Murdy and Eloise Carter completed “A Report on the Status of Forested Land of Emory University” (often referred to as the Murdy-Carter report), which recommended that portions of the forest on Emory campus be designated as preserved spaces (Murdy and Carter 1986: 5). In 2004, Emory adopted a more specific land classification plan that was included in the 2005 Campus Master Plan (Master Plan Steering Committee 2005: 11). By 2006, Emory committed to restoring forests and removing invasive species, commitments it reaffirmed in 2016 (Sustainability Committee 2006: 2; Sustainability Visioning Committee 2016: 6).

Throughout the years, students, faculty and staff have found the Emory forests worth fighting for. While much of the Piedmont forest native to the southeastern United States was removed to make way for agriculture, forests on Emory’s campus have survived through the years. They represent the ideal pristineness of the original hardwood Piedmont forests. Because of their biodiversity, the forests offer an invaluable, but easily disregarded, resource for science, education, and aesthetics (Murdy and Carter 1986: 5). The importance of preservation is heightened by the possibility of irrevocable change. “Mature forests like those at Emory are self-perpetuating, complex associations of living species, the products of millions of years of evolution and are virtually impossible to replace or recreate if lost” (Murdy and Carter 1986: 2). It is because of the uniqueness and value of the forests that, through the challenges from both environmental and human forces, Emory has found ways to persevere in its mission of protection and preservation.

Fighting Invasive Species: Balancing Environment with Resources

One important challenge to Emory’s forests came in the form of invasive plant species. These plants are not native to the southeastern ecosystem and cause harm to the species that are native by taking up necessary resources including space, nutrients and access to sunlight. On Emory property, the most prominent problematic invaders over the years are English ivy, Chinese privet, and kudzu. Attempts to remove invasive species from natural Emory landscapes started in 1999 with the first “ivy pulls” in Baker Woodlands. “We’d get volunteers down in Baker Wood[land]s and we’d pull ivy and cut privet,” Jimmy Powell said. “Those were the first organized invasive species projects” (2017). Ivy pulls were organized by a newly formed environmental group of faculty, students, and staff called the Ad Hoc Committee on Environmental Stewardship. Before the ivy removal, wildflowers in Baker Woodlands were slowly disappearing because English ivy steals nutrients from other species and takes sunlight away. When the ivy was removed, campus services moved native azaleas from a construction area and planted native shrubs to prevent erosion of the soil that the ivy had held in place. By 2002, the native wildflowers were flourishing in Baker Woodlands (Barlett 2004: 74). Invasive species removal was later explicitly included in Emory’s 2006 sustainability strategic plan vision (Sustainability Committee 2006: 2) which laid out expectations and goals for the university to reach. It set a lofty goal of complete invasive species removal in all Emory forested areas by

2015. Powell thought the broad idealistic goal and suggestions for implementation were impractical. “I think one of the first sustainable visions was remove all invasive species. Well, that really probably is not an attainable goal, realistically. It’s a nice thought, but I don’t think you’re going to be able to get 100%,” Powell said (2017).

Nevertheless, both campus services and Trees Atlanta, an outside nonprofit organization, have made strides in the right direction. In 2010, Trees Atlanta approached Emory about invasive species removal. They had received a grant from National Wildlife Federation and had extra money after completing their initial project. They collected volunteers and put the remainder of the money toward pulling invasive plants from Lullwater (Powell 2017). Trees Atlanta volunteers returned in 2016 to hand pull plants that regenerated along the creek and to plant new native shrubs. They recently contacted Powell about returning with volunteers in 2017 to maintain the area. For their part, campus services does invasive species removal whenever possible. They have a team of professionals with a reasonable knowledge of plant identification and work with an outside contractor highly experienced in these kinds of tasks. Powell said removal of thick, visually obstructive plants like privet is important not only to the health of the woods, but also for the safety of people walking by (Powell 2017).

While individual removals are important to preserving the native landscape, both Wegner and Powell discussed the importance of continued maintenance and the need for a consistent plan going forward (Wegner 2017; Powell 2017). But, Powell said, sometimes it’s hard to work that maintenance into the budget every year. Though he has asked for more money specifically to deal with invasive species, he had never gotten any. “The administration would look at campus services’ budget and say, ‘well, you’ve got enough money. If you want to fund invasive species [removal] internally, go right ahead,’” Powell said (2017). This means that some years, there will be extra money in the budget for such projects while other years there will not. For example, if there is a particularly icy winter, campus services will have to use funds for salt, thawing machinery, and other costs to maintain campus safety. Since 2016 was a mild winter with only one minor snow incident, Powell was able to fund a large invasive species removal project in early 2017 (Powell 2017).

Fighting Trails: Balancing Environment with Community Connections

Human threats to Emory’s natural ecosystems came in the form of community interest in use of the woods. The PATH foundation, an organization dedicated to connecting Atlanta through trails, approached Emory with a plan to build paths through some of Emory’s forest area. Working with DeKalb County, the foundation mapped two trails through Emory property which were included in DeKalb’s Greenway Trails Master Plan for Multi-Use Trails in DeKalb County, GA, submitted to the DeKalb County government in January 2000. The first trail, named the Peavine Trail, proposed what the plan called a “‘dream connection’ between Emory University and the Stone Mountain Trail, Freedom Park, MARTA, and Downtown Atlanta” (Gallagher and McBrayer 2000: 25). The proposed trail followed Peavine Creek through Emory forest area behind the CDC. The second trail suggested by the PATH foundation was called South Peachtree Creek Trail which would follow the low land by South Fork Peachtree Creek. This trail would wind through the woods on the opposite side of the creek from Emory’s campus, then through

Wesley Woods and parts of Lullwater Preserve. The proposed route would serve to connect Emory with North DeKalb Mall and Lenox Road (Gallagher and McBrayer 2000: 41).

Though the purpose of these paths to connect Emory with surrounding Atlanta and Decatur communities had considerable public support, Emory faculty and staff raised other concerns with the project. Though not mentioned in the proposition for the South Peachtree Creek Trail, the trail master plan also acknowledged that “environmental concerns” may be one of the “potential obstacles to implementation” of the Peavine Trail (Gallagher and McBrayer 2000: 25). One issue was the effect the proposed ten-foot wide concrete paths would have on the surrounding forest area (Wegner 2017). The suggested paths, Wegner explained, threatened the forested ecosystem. The physical structures, along with the increased human activity they promoted, had the potential to negatively impact the natural ecosystem and wildlife because the trails could offer an edge environment through which invasive species could infiltrate the forests. Concrete path in the low-lying area by the creeks could also obstruct natural water movement and storm runoff routes. Though a path through Emory forested area could offer community members a beautiful walk in the woods, Wegner also saw the adverse effects. “There are places that you can love to death,” he said (2017). The PATH plan had to be approved by the Committee on the Environment of the University Senate (COE) which fought against the plan. It offered alternative routes to connect Emory to the community through paths and sidewalks that already existed, but PATH did not support these suggestions (Johnson 2017). For the time being, the proposition for new paths was rejected. As far as Wegner knows, the DeKalb Greenway Trails Master Plan was accepted as a document, but never formally approved. The ultimately implemented South Peachtree Creek Trail starts in Medlock Park and eventually connects to Mason Mill Park. As is, it does not cross Clairmont Road onto Emory property, but the PATH website said, “Future phases of this trail will continue to Emory University and north to North Druid Hills Rd.” (PATH 2016). The Peavine Trail was never created and does not appear in the PATH Foundation’s Atlanta Regional Trails list.

In 2016, the PATH Foundation looked again to the Emory woods as a destination for connecting greenways. The new proposition seeks to enter Emory campus by the Veteran’s Administration Hospital, run parallel to Clairmont Road, and end up at the intersection of Starvine Way and Dooley Drive (Johnson 2017). Initially, the COE voiced strong objections to the new path because it would run through a floodplain area. They supported an alternative that would replace the concrete path with a wooden boardwalk (which the Medlock Park Trail uses), but that plan was rejected because of safety concerns for bicyclists (Johnson 2017). Eventually, the PATH Foundation and the COE agreed on a solution that would use a concrete path with a gravel fill below to allow the floodwaters to flow and infiltrate the ground. “There was some back and forth but I think we came to a very workable and environmentally sensitive [solution], as environmentally sensitive as new construction can be,” Johnson said (2017). Johnson expects that construction for the path will begin during the summer of 2017.

Trails at Oxford

A useful comparison can be drawn with trails at Oxford College another Emory campus about 45 minutes east of Atlanta. In the woods of Oxford, a trail winds its way through the trees on the outskirts of campus. This trail connects to city trails created by Rails to Trails and other

organizations. On the Atlanta campus, environmentalists have heatedly contested the proposed paths but the Oxford trail is generally accepted. Dr. Eloise Carter, a professor of biology at Oxford, said this is because the trails in the two locations are not really comparable. “[Trails at Oxford] are footpaths,” Carter said. “They’re not running paths, they’re not trails, and this is not a pristine forest. This is a second growth forest.” All these factors minimize the significance of the impact a trail has through the woods.

No Net Loss: Balancing Environment with Development

Since its founding in 1836, Emory has continually expanded by buying new land and building new structures. In the 1990s, Emory experienced rapid growth. While beneficial to the university, this period of increased building activity meant a “significant loss in the quantity and quality of Emory’s forested areas” (No Net Loss of Forest Canopy Tree Bank 2009). The COE discussed its concern for the uncalculated expense the recent development was having on the campus’s tree coverage. Among those on the committee were John Wegner and JoAn Chase, the university president’s wife. They realized the need for a policy to protect the trees on campus. Wegner said the catalyst was an addition to the Goizueta School of Business that would require the destruction of a stand of trees. “I wrote an email to COE saying ‘What the heck are we doing here? Trying to make our campus look like Georgia Tech?’” Wegner said, referring to Tech’s much more urban campus environment (2017). JoAn Chase then talked to her husband, who subsequently called a meeting in late 2000 with JoAn Chase, James Johnson, and Jimmy Powell, who at that time was the superintendent of roads and grounds. “He laid out the charges: ‘I want a policy for the university that will protect our tree canopy over the entire university,’” Johnson said, adding jokingly, “So we went away and somehow I got stuck with it.”

Though he tried to find similar initiatives in other places, Johnson was unsuccessful. “I really couldn’t find any campus that had it or any city that actually had a no net loss policy,” he said (2017). As a result, Johnson turned his research to arboricultural practices and standards and engaged in numerous discussions with Wegner and Powell. Not only did Johnson have to ensure that his policy was scientifically sound, but he also had to balance realistically the financial concerns of the university, the restriction concerns of the contracting and building companies, and the environmental concerns of the COE (Johnson 2017).

The resulting No Net Loss policy is used for all construction sites where trees are taken down. Emory planners first determine the original tree canopy based on a number of factors, primarily the type of tree and the diameter of the trunk. Measuring the caliper inches of existing trees, a formula for the canopy size of the affected area is calculated. New trees are planted in the site according to a formula that takes into account the maturity of the trees lost. Loss of a large, mature hardwood, for example, might require several smaller new trees to be planted to gain the same tree canopy. Johnson also developed a formula to replace shrub and ground cover lost to construction. Based on the level of stratification (biological complexity) of the site being cut, the policy has requirements for replacements. The policy recommends replacement with native plants and has suggestions for appropriate plant choices (No Net Loss of Forest Canopy Tree Bank 2009).

Some sites are not large enough for both the new construction and replacement trees, and therefore part of the No Net Loss policy was the establishment of a Tree Bank in 2005 (Johnson 2017). The area of lost tree canopy that cannot be fully replaced on site is calculated, and the replacement cost of the individual trees needed to achieve no net loss is determined at the beginning of the project, based on Emory’s average installed cost of trees typically available. Funds for tree replacement from each construction project are then placed in the tree bank and can be used for new tree plantings as opportunities arise in other parts of the campus (No Net Loss of Forest Canopy Tree Bank 2009). Instead of relying on donations or outside sources, the Tree Bank is therefore maintained through construction funds.

The policy has effected positive change, though it is not without its flaws. “We definitely have a less mature forest canopy,” Johnson said. “In my mind a lot of our canopy is younger trees” (2017). For the most part, though, the policy has proven to be successful in its purpose. Subsequent building project plans, including the Math and Science Center and the PAIS building, were amended to preserve large trees (Johnson 2017).

This success has been reflected in the data Emory collected on its tree canopy (see Table 1). Since 2006, Emory has monitored the extent of its campus canopy biannually (Powell 2017). “Every two years we have a flyover completed and an aerial photograph taken, and then a consultant will basically trace the canopy of the entire university property and give us the total acreage,” Johnson said (2017). The most recent flyover was conducted in 2016 (Powell 2017). Johnson said that from 2008 to 2012, the Emory campus saw a slight increase in tree canopy, but since then there has been a downward trend. Powell said this is in part due to the new addition to the hospital, but Johnson does not attribute it fully to building and construction. Rather, he suggested two other factors: storms have taken out trees, and during that time, Emory sold some land which had formerly been counted toward the cumulative tree canopy. Powell is not too worried about the decrease in canopy because he is thinking more long-term. The younger trees that have been planted recently will increase the coverage of the canopy as they grow. “We’ve lost about 15 acres of canopy since 2006. I feel like really without doing anything, time alone will correct that,” Powell said (2017).

Date	Acres under canopy	Total Acres	Measured by	% under canopy
September 2006	434.66	713.34	Metro Engineers	60.93%
September 2008	436.22	713.34	Metro Engineers	61.15%
September 2010	438.58	713.34	Metro Engineers	61.48%
September 2012	427.10	713.34	Metro Engineers	59.87%
September 2014	415.70	713.34	Metro Engineers	58.28%
September 2016	415.73	713.34	Metro Engineers	58.28%

Table 1. Emory Atlanta campus tree canopy cover from 2006 to 2016

In 2011, Emory was awarded the Tree Campus USA designation by the Arbor Day Foundation “in honor of our commitment to effective community forestry management” (Office of Sustainability 2016). Overall, the no net loss policy has created a new mentality around construction projects by quantifying and minimizing environmental loss. In 2016, Emory increased its standards from no net loss to a net positive goal (Sustainability Visioning Committee 2016: 6). While the intent of the original goal was to maintain a balance, the new

initiative demonstrates Emory's commitment to tipping the scales in the direction of the environment.

Hahn Woods

An educational addition to Emory's greenspace occurred in 1993, when Hahn Woods was created. Located between Houston Mill Road and Peachtree Creek, near what is today the Emory Conference Center, Hahn Woods was a ravine used for a dump, filled with old mattresses, leaves, and miscellaneous discards from campus. This 4.7-acre preserve was reclaimed with the help of Georgia-Pacific, which wanted to honor its retiring CEO, T. Marshall Hahn Jr. Mr. Hahn was also an Emory trustee and served as chair of the Emory Board of Trustees' Investment Committee and a member of the Executive Committee. The land was cleaned up, graded into a gentle walking path, and planted with many species of native plants. At first a rather rough-looking forest, it was used by biology professors to teach "how difficult it is to restore a forest." After a decade of care, however, the forest began to mature and now is a serene walking area, used by conference participants, neighbors, and Emory classes. A large stand of wild rhododendrons and many native magnolias are highlights of the loop trail.

Managed Landscape: Balancing Environment with Aesthetics

While Emory has worked to protect acres of forest land, not all land can be set aside for preservation. As the landscape architect, Johnson has jurisdiction over, among other things, what gets planted where. "I tend to be more of a nativist when it comes to planting design, but I'm not opposed to using nonnatives when it's warranted," Johnson said (2017). Using native plants in campus landscape serves multiple purposes. First, native plants are better adapted, meaning that they are more likely to survive and thrive in the southeastern environment in which they are planted. Second, they require less irrigation, which saves water (Johnson 2017). Saving water is attractive because it yields a net positive result both environmentally and economically. Finally, the use of native plants furthers Emory's overall vision for the campus environment. "We want the campus to fit within the Piedmont landscape," Johnson said (2017). However, Johnson does not foresee Emory campus landscape ever being composed of 100% native species, in part due to the desires of the students and the administration. For example, many species of turf grass are not native to the southeastern region. "We do have areas like the quad which will probably never change from its large tree, turf, with some minor foundation plantings because we really want that to be that collegiate atmosphere of what everybody's impression of what a college campus should look like," Johnson said (2017).

While some turf will remain indefinitely, campus services plans to eradicate some of the smaller areas of turf that are "just there for the mower to cut" such as the patches around White Hall (Johnson 2017). They are also looking at turf areas like the meadow in Lullwater. By bringing the border of that area in, they can create a buffer zone of native plants between the field and the stream. This is in accordance with the 2016 Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan which sets a goal of 15% reduction of turfgrass for both campuses (Sustainability Visioning Committee 2016: 6). The idea is to remove the nonnative turf species and replace them with native shrubbery or trees in all locations. In addition to the benefits of having native species mentioned above, less grass means less mowing which uses petroleum and causes pollution. In addition, turf

maintenance can cost a lot. “In terms of landscaping cost, turf is the most expensive thing. It might be cheapest to install but over time it’s the most expensive,” Powell said (Powell 2017).

The remaining maintained grounds like the quad and the athletic fields will be cared for based on the standards of campus services’ maintenance practices and the goals laid out in 2016 for safer herbicides and pesticides (Sustainability Visioning Committee 2016: 6). Emory’s restrictions on pesticide and herbicide use are outlined in their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Principles. While the only prohibited substance is neonicotinoids, a chemical that can be deadly to pollinators, use of other substances is allowed only after analysis of the conditions and other options are considered (Exterior Services Department n/d). Powell said this process has been in effect all 20 years he has worked at Emory (2017).

Emory’s IPM Principles outline a proactive approach to decreasing pesticide and herbicide use. When landscaping a location, plants are chosen from a pre-developed palette of plants that are resistant to disease and insect problems (Exterior Services Department n/d). By planting a stronger species, landscapers reduce the need for excessive maintenance later. After initial planting, species are continuously evaluated and cared for to prevent disease and insect infestations. In the event that a plant is affected by a pest, the health and strength of the plant is assessed to determine if other non-chemical methods could be used to remove the pest. If no other methods are identified, then specific pesticides are used by a certified applicator (Exterior Services Department n/d).

In accordance with the policy, Powell said the Exterior Services Department has regulations internally. They use very few insecticides, usually only for a few select species including yellow jackets, fire ants, or army worms. They focus on minimization of insecticides in order to reduce unintended negative effects on pollinators and other beneficial insects and organisms. In terms of herbicides, campus services focuses on using “pre-emergent herbicides” to diminish the need to spray after the plant grows (Powell 2017). Emory has also opted to use herbicides whose chemicals have minimal adverse effects after being sprayed. “Most of those chemicals [in the herbicide] are very stable in the soil,” Powell said. “In other words, you apply it and its non-mobile, doesn’t really dissolve in water, doesn’t really migrate from the area that it’s applied to. And then, most of the products photodegrade, so over time in exposure to sunlight they degrade to non-toxic compounds.” In addition, professors have studied the chemicals and determined that they are safe for the soil (Powell 2017). Powell said choosing to use safer chemicals and reduce the use of pesticides is just part of standard maintenance practice now (2017).

Uses: Balancing Environment with Enjoyment

Emory uses the Lullwater Estate for recreational and educational uses. Members of the Emory and surrounding community use the preserve as a place to walk, bike, jog (Lullwater Task Force Subcommittee 2002), or set up a hammock and relax. Baker Woodlands has been used for meditation and spiritual purposes by the Carlos Museum students and faculty. In 2016, they ran a program in which those who chose to participate could make small clay offerings traditional in the Buddhist faith. These offerings were left in Baker Woodlands to disintegrate over time (Carlos Museum 2016). Places like Lullwater on campus have also proven their academic uses.

A number of professors take students out to the preserve to use the outdoors as a living laboratory.

In addition to the palpable benefits of greenspaces, preservation of Emory forests is motivated by the intrinsic benefits they provide. Many faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members feel a connection to the wooded areas. “Lullwater is used so much by the general community, not just the Emory community, and Lullwater is something people can really connect to,” Powell said (2017). Powell described the emotional importance of the woods for him as motivated by his childhood since he grew up in the area and spent many Saturdays wandering in the woods in DeKalb County. Johnson described a more abstract relationship with the forests. “For me personally, I look at forests in more of a spiritual way. I would say I’m areligious, but if there’s anywhere that I could encounter kind of that feeling, it would be in a forested area,” Johnson said (2017).

Uses at Oxford

At Oxford, protected greenspace is used for many of the same reasons. Unlike at the Atlanta campus, however, students worked to transform their 287 acres of forested areas into places of meditation and learning. They have created a meditation circle in the forest and developed an outdoor classroom (Carter 2017). Oxford has additional land set aside for science education that is used as a field lab for classes including biology and environmental science. Though the area is not generally open to the public, students can go whenever they want with their Emory ID. They have also created the Oxford Institute of Environmental Education which partners with local schools to provide a space for workshops for K-12 teachers to promote scientific inquiry in their schoolyards (Carter 2017). Carter said it is important to preserve these spaces because once converted to built space, they are hard to get back. Buildings can be constructed then torn down, she said, but once you convert a forest to a built environment, there is no going back.

Emory’s greenspace has provided an invaluable resource to the Emory community. Faculty, students, and staff have worked diligently to protect the natural and developing Piedmont forest areas. Emory has a responsibility as good stewards of the environment to protect the land and minimize harm (Carter 2017) and efforts toward that end have been successful thus far and will continue into the future.

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