

Mebane gets familiar with 'Pocket Parks'

BY KELLY HUNTER
SPECIAL TO THE MEbane ENTERPRISE

The construction of Giles and McKinley Street Pocket Park is close to completion as the last-minute finishing touches are being made. This park marks the execution of the fourth pocket park in Mebane.

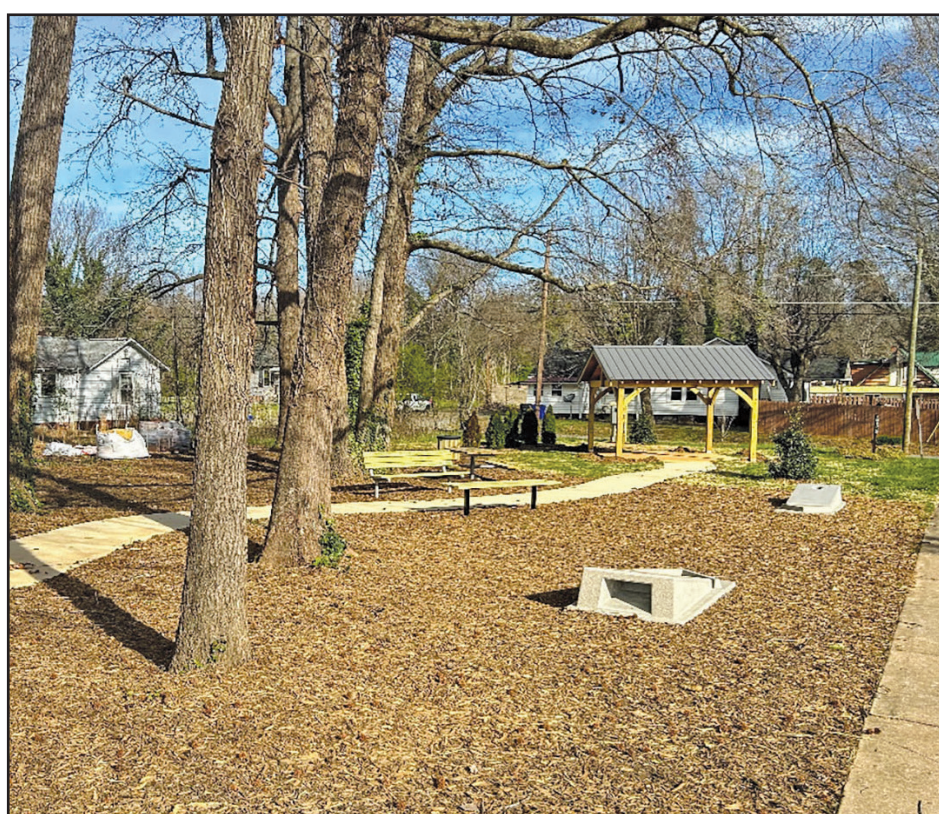
MEBANE CITY BEAT

Public pocket parks typically occur via unique opportunities developed from localized citizen feedback. A pocket park is a small outdoor space, typically no more than a quarter of an acre in size, often located in an urban area surrounded by commercial buildings or houses. Pocket parks are often called vest pocket parks and are an excellent resource for people to gather and enjoy the outdoors. As Mebane continues to grow, the city remains committed to providing its residents with places to go where they can improve their overall well-being and health while also taking in the sights of our positively charming community.

The Giles and McKinley Street Pocket Park was initially planned for 2021, with construction beginning in 2022. The park sits on land leased to the city by the Johnson Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The park, located at the corner of Giles and West McKinley Streets, holds historical significance within the West End Neighborhood as it served as the original Johnson Chapel A.M.E. Church location in










the 1900s. Margie Alston, a Johnson Chapel A.M.E. Church member for 65 years, appreciates the partnership with the City of Mebane, "We are extremely excited to partner with the City of Mebane to create the Giles and McKinley Street Pocket Park. The park is located on the grounds of the first Johnson Chapel A.M.E. Church built in 1920. The park will greatly benefit the West End Community. The Senior Citizens can enjoy the walking trail and places to read and rest on the park benches. The youth can enjoy



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games as well as study with their electronic devices with the installation of WiFi connections. The Johnson Chapel Church Family is proud to honor our forefathers in preserving this historical site."

The park will serve as a passive recreation experience for citizens, allowing for a quiet nature setting. It will be accessible via a walking path connecting it to the City's existing sidewalk system. Biking is strongly encouraged, as there will be a bike rack for the public to use. The New Leaf Society provided the funding for all the landscaping materials needed. Therefore, the Giles and McKinley Street Pocket Park offers a gazebo, picnic tables, benches, cornhole boards, free WiFi, and a small open lawn area for play.

The public will have access to use the WiFi while enjoying this space. You can even "Download the iNaturalist app on your phone and explore the plant species or small critters roaming the park," Aaron Davis, Recreation and Parks Director. The Giles and McKinley Street Pocket Park will be open to the public in mid-2023.

The third pocket park that opened towards the end of 2022 in Mebane was the North First Street Pocket Park; located at the corner of North First Street and Stagecoach Road. It is also connected via a sidewalk system, allowing people to walk or ride bikes to the park.

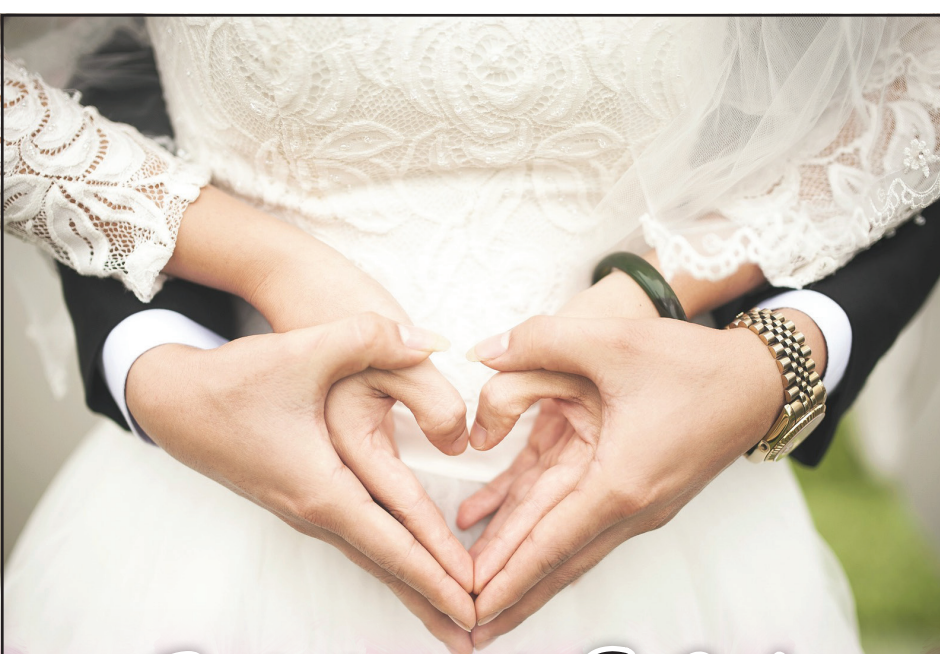
For this park, the City converted an undeveloped, brushy property donated to the City via the White Family of White's Furniture association for an accessible and inviting area for residents to gather, relax and enjoy the outdoors. The land was originally within the Mebane Land Improvement Company, which historically sold property lots within Mebane. The North First Street Pocket Park provides the community with a large open lawn area for play, a small stream and natural woodland area, benches, cornhole boards, bike racks, and a picnic table. A walking trail was added through the park to encourage pedestrian activity. This park

is open to the public; however, tree removal is still needed in certain areas, so not all of these amenities have been installed.

Mebane also has two other pocket parks for its residents to enjoy, Fifth Street Pocket Park and Downtown Pocket Park. Fifth Street Pocket Park is located behind Walgreens on Fifth Street and offers a gazebo, bench swing, and walking path. The Downtown Pocket Park is located at 102 East Ruffin Street and contains benches for shoppers and bakery enthusiasts to eat at while enjoying the sights and sounds of downtown Mebane.

"Pocket Parks are essential to any City as they provide aesthetic passive recreation and parks opportunities," stated Recreation and Parks Director Aaron Davis. The City of Mebane is dedicated to improving its residents' quality of life, which means focusing on all aspects of the community. Pocket parks serve as a resource for unorganized/unstructured play, connecting with people, boosting your immune system, and getting fresh air. They provide a safe place for one to gather while working on enhancing your multi-sensory experiences, such as auditory, visual, and vestibular which include movement and balance. Sandi Bagby, Facilities Assistant who oversees the landscaping and special projects for Mebane, shared, "Mebane is fortunate to have great facilities for structured activities and an excellent sidewalk system. The purpose of Pocket Parks is to create places for people to gather and enjoy the outdoors. We've converted overgrown and unused spaces to provide passive recreation opportunities in older residential neighborhoods, for whose use they are intended, and to encourage biking and pedestrian activity with walkways that connect to our existing sidewalks. These small park projects provide opportunities in parts of town that don't have many options for activity and add value to neighborhoods."

Kelly Hunter is the Public Information Officer with the City of Mebane.



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