



SPECIAL/Herald

The rendering, prepared by Baker Land Design, has been useful to get people to conceptualize and buy into the project, said Tim Duncan, Chattahoochee High School principal.

'Hooch carves new path for school's future

By **CARON COOPER**
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Wonders never cease when you put heads together to accomplish a goal.

For over a decade, Chattahoochee High School students have carved their own path onto the school, literally a Georgia clay trail leading from the front corner of the property down into the parking lot.

But the manmade shortcut onto campus has caused a few concerns including erosion runoff, cleanliness, appearance and even safety.

"It actually presents a dangerous atmosphere when you are moving down the hill at a quick speed into the parking lot and not able to go at a controlled pace. But that's the route that students choose," said Tim Duncan, Chattahoochee principal.

For years, that same spot has also been a source of confusion for parents and visitors. As drivers approach the school on Taylor Road, the only sign at the front corner announces Taylor Road Middle School, located just north of Chattahoochee.

Visitors attending outside events at Chattahoochee often think they are in the wrong place when they see the sign. Or worse, the confusion often turns into panic when a parent arrives

at the wrong school to pick up their child.

"It still causes a little panic between them and us when you can't find a child and you say they are not enrolled," said Duncan.

So a host of Johns Creek'ers have joined forces to solve the problems associated with this portion of the property with one plan — a prominent entrance to the school with a concrete courtyard and a staircase leading down onto the property.

Since Duncan has been principal at Chattahoochee, he has pushed the community to enhance the campus.

"A lot of people have taken that into stride and looked at where they can get involved. Brenda Yates and Jim Warren really helped push this project," he said.

But the solution didn't start off as simply as a snap of the fingers. The staircase presented some challenges to cover its cost and to ensure it is built to code, requiring the help of the Fulton County school system.

"This new entrance will really enhance an already great school," said Johns Creek City Councilwoman Liz Hausmann. Hausmann, a former member of the Fulton County Board of Education, said this was her final project with the board.

For the signage and other amenities, including two changeable banners, the group sought help elsewhere.

"And that's where everybody has come together, between the class council, the 2007 and 2008 senior classes, the PTSA, the athletic boosters — it just keeps growing and growing everyday," said Duncan.

Within minutes of hearing about the project, the 2008 senior class agreed to give \$4,000. 'Hooch student groups alone have contributed \$12,000 to the project. The total project cost is between \$55,000 and \$60,000.

To get the project off the ground, Warren, vice president of Tech Park and proud 'Hooch parent, went to the community for help.

"We wanted to find a new funding source outside of the relationships and entities that continuously make contributions to the school. We didn't want any of that energy diverted to some of these capital improvements," said Warren.

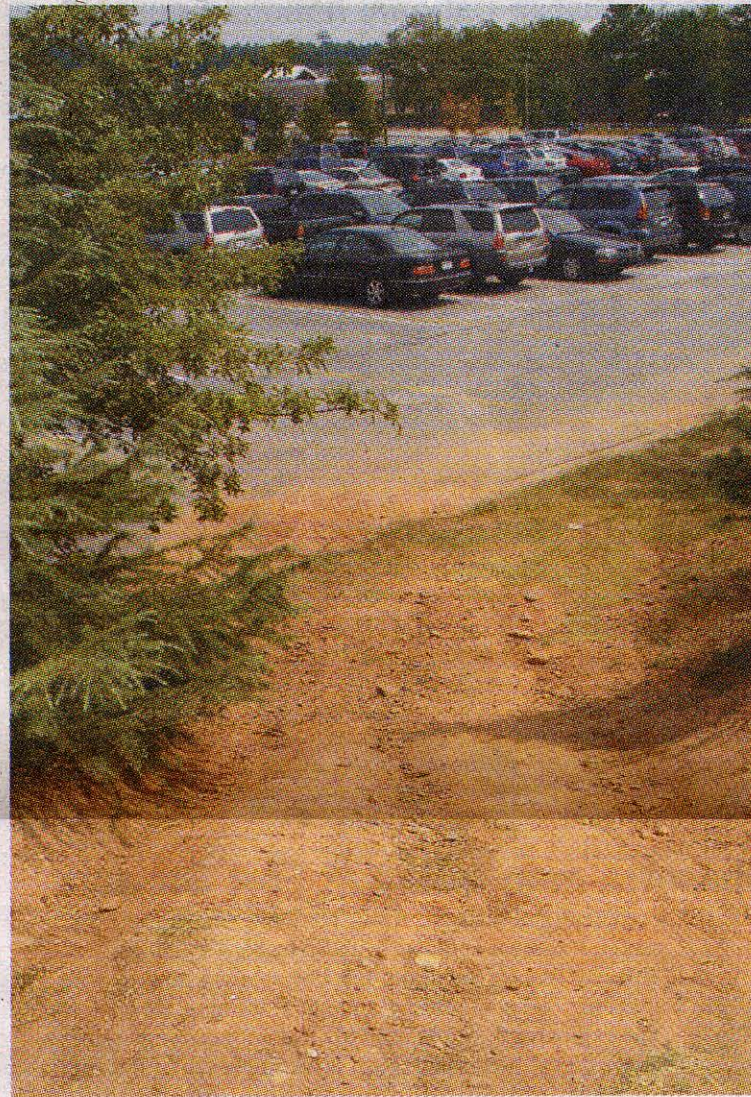
Warren said they were fortunate to find people who agreed to essentially do the work gratis.

Terry Baker of Baker Land Design prepared the design documents, Brock Design Group did the required survey work and McCar Homes wrote a check to help defray those engineering and permitting costs.

"We are really happy to help the school with this project, and we look forward to getting it built as quickly as possible," said Baker.

Yates, also a proud Cougar parent, has been instrumental in the communications, said Duncan.

"It did take everybody to politically get it through and to financially get it through. And that's what a community or a family is about, pulling through some of the struggles and working together for the betterment in the end," he said.



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In its current state, the student-made path is a steep walk downhill leading directly into a parking lot, which has brought up safety concerns.

The project, a year in the making, will break ground Sept. 1 and should be completed around Thanksgiving this year. Just in time for the holidays — not only from the students, but for them too.

Duncan said Chattahoochee has been fortunate the last few years that the senior classes have decided to give back to their school in a lasting way. But this year it's a little different.

"The senior class will be able to enjoy for the first time their gift while they are still at school,

which I think really gives them more ownership in it and real excitement," said Yates.

It will also be a great place for photo opps in 2008.

"They are going to be really proud to stand under there, with their graduate gowns and their parents, and take their picture just like people do in Athens under the arches. This is going to be a big symbol for the school," said Duncan.

Warren added, "It's the portal through which Georgia's finest pass."

'Hooch Contributors

The project would not have been possible without:

- CHS Class of 2007 and 2008
- CHS Student Council
- CHS Athletic Booster Club
- CHS Cougar Foundation
- Fulton County Commissioner Lynne Riley
- Johns Creek City Councilwoman Liz Hausmann
- Taylor Road Middle School
- Terry Baker, Baker Land Design
- Mark Brock, Brock Design Group
- Doug Strall, McCar Homes
- Day Family LLLP
- Jim Warren, Tech Park/Johns Creek
- Brenda Yates