

# WOULD YOU BUILD A SHOPPING CENTER HERE? SAVE ROME'S CENTRAL PARK & BURWELL CREEK WETLANDS

**Background:** The City of Rome has agreed to sell some 80 acres of publicly-owned natural area along Riverside Parkway to local developer, Ledbetter Properties, to construct a major retail center. The property holds Burwell Creek, several acres of wetlands and an abandoned city landfill. Development will require a landfill cleanup and the filling of wetlands and floodplain. Until Ledbetter Properties approached the City, the land was being considered for development as part of Rome's "Central Park."



*Deer wade in the "Duck Pond"--part of the Burwell Creek property*

**Build a Shopping Center Here, Why Not?** Development of this tract of land will require filling some 50 acres of floodplain and four acres of wetlands.

Floodplains and wetlands perform valuable services by retaining floodwaters and filtering pollutants, protecting our property and our rivers. This natural area also provides habitat for a host of animals, including beaver, fox, waterfowl, songbirds, deer and other mammals. During a period stretching from September to December 2009, the majority of the development site was covered under several feet of water for 30 days.



*Floodwaters cover the property in 2009*

Preservation of this natural area would provide important connections between existing developed park land (Ridge Ferry Park) and significant publicly-owned historic properties (Jackson Hill)

**What About the Old City Landfill? Doesn't It Need to Be Cleaned Up?** No. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has given the site a designation of "no further remedial action planned," meaning that it is highly unlikely federal or state authorities would ever require the City of Rome to clean up the site. Based on assessments by EPA and Georgia's Environmental Protection Division, the landfill poses little threat to the environment or human health. Less than one percent of the analyses conducted on sediment and soil in the landfill show high levels of hazardous waste. Tests conducted on sediment in Burwell Creek by CRBI show no elevated levels of contamination in the creek.

**Federal Environmental Permit Issued Without Public Review:** In 2008 Ledbetter Properties received critical federal environmental permits without anyone in Rome having the opportunity to analyze and comment on the development plans. CRBI objected to the improper manner in which the permit was issued and in 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers suspended the permit for the project. The developer subsequently withdrew its permit.

**What Should Be Done?** The property should be protected as public greenspace. If development proceeds, site plans must include protection of existing wetlands and provide for substantial greenspace connections between Ridge Ferry Park and Jackson Hill.

### **What Can I Do to Make a Difference?**

- Contact your City Commissioner and encourage them to re-evaluate this development proposal and consider alternative site plans. (See back for contact information)
- Tell your friends about this project and refer them to our website: [www.coosa.org/issues-actions/hot-button-issues/romes-central-park](http://www.coosa.org/issues-actions/hot-button-issues/romes-central-park)
- Write a letter to the editor of the Rome News-Tribune expressing your support for preserving the Burwell Creek wetlands.

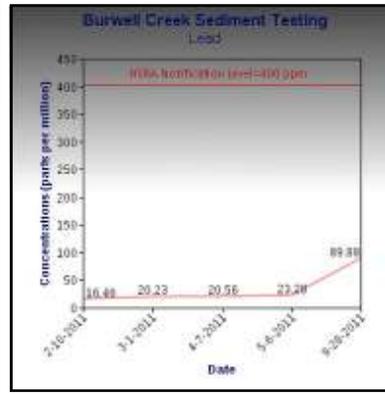
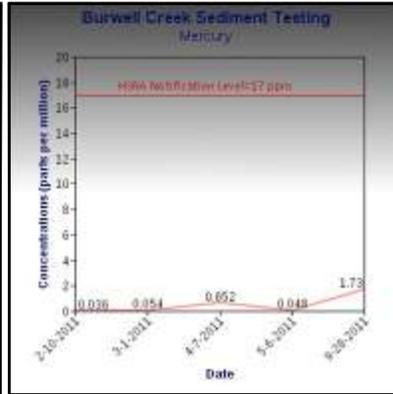
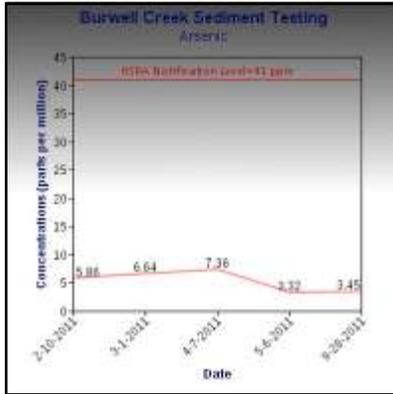


*Beaver dam in Burwell Creek wetlands.*

### Contaminants at the Burwell Creek Property:

Because of the presence of the abandoned city landfill, there are contaminants found in the soil and groundwater, but the level of contamination is limited. Since 1992, some 1,695 analyses for various hazardous waste have been conducted. Of those, only 16 turned up hazardous material that exceeded HSRA notification concentrations (levels that would trigger a hazardous waste cleanup). Contaminants have been found in groundwater at the site, but no residents in the area rely on this groundwater for their water supply. To date, neither Ledbetter Properties or the City of Rome have conducted

tests on Burwell Creek to determine if any contamination exists in the creek. In 2011, CRBI collected sediment samples from the creek which were analyzed by the University of Georgia for lead, mercury and arsenic. These tests show no significant contamination (see graphs).



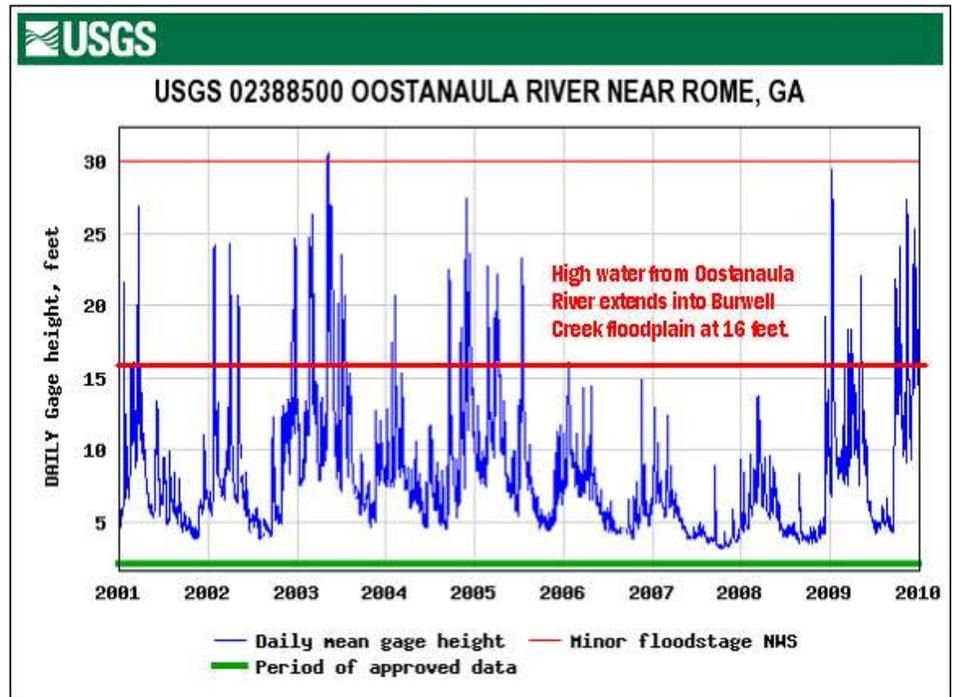
EPA has labeled the site “NFRAP”—No Further Remedial Action Planned, meaning that EPA has no plans to force the City of Rome to initiate a clean up of the landfill.

### Floodplain Impacts:

Of the property’s 60 acres, 47.9 acres lie within the 100-year floodplain. This property holds significant amounts of water during high water periods on the Oostanaula River. In 2009, the property flooded on 15 occasions. During December 2009, the development site was underwater for 25 days.

In the critical wetlands area adjacent to Burwell Creek that are to be filled, floodwaters rise more than nine feet above the current grade. At such times, virtually the entire development site can be paddled in a canoe or kayak. These flood events occur regularly.

The graph at right documents the flood events from 2001-2010 that would impact the development site.



### Contact You City Commissioner:

Please contact your city commissioners and encourage them to re-evaluate this development proposal and consider alternative site plans. Please be courteous in your communication. These individuals volunteer their time to serve their community.

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### More Information At:

[www.coosa.org/issues-actions/hot-button-issues/romes-central-park](http://www.coosa.org/issues-actions/hot-button-issues/romes-central-park)