Private donors are helping restore the Central fountain, install a sustainable water source and create a unique play space at Woodruff Park, which is likely to bring even more visitors to the gathering spot, already a favorite with office workers and college students.

The work being done will help prepare Woodruff Park for its future as one of the favorite stops along the streetcar route, which is expected to begin construction this year, said leaders of a downtown community improvement organization. The park, which has undergone a number of enhancements since 2006, will further evolve this year into a place where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather, not only families with children interested in the new-fangled playground.

"Quite frankly, Georgia State students are going to love it," said Cynthia Gentry, founding director of the Atlanta Task Force on Play, of the play space, her brainchild.

Among the grants that made the current work possible were Bank of America's $25,000 for the play area, a $25,000 grant from the Waterfall Foundation of Greater Atlanta and $250,000 from a donor who requested anonymity.

"What's interesting beyond the funders' generosity and strategy is what it represents outside the park's perimeter," said Central Atlanta Progress Inc. President A.J. Robinson, through e-mail correspondence. "These grants represent ongoing and increasing ambition at our end—we believe the progress of the park is the beginning of a process, not the end or the result. It shows that if we articulate our case in a compelling way, we can attract funders who understand that government grants are leveraged more fully when philanthropists grasp what falls outside typical federal or state grants."

Sustainability is a huge issue in the park's improvement plans, and there's been success in finding a viable, environmentally friendly water-source option.

As a result of the drought conditions, the central circular fountain near Auburn Avenue and the water wall feature at the park's north end were shut off in 2007. "A $250,000 grant for the survey for the water, well-digging and other park upgrades—such as paver replacement, granite wall repairs, landscaping—was provided by "one of Atlanta's greatest pioneers whose name I would love to tout, but in his characteristically generous way, he wishes to be anonymous," Robinson said.

A "fantastic supply" of water was found, he said. Work on the well connection is slated for a March completion, CAP says.

The groundbreaking for the play space is slated to occur in late summer.

"I think it will add a new dimension to the park," Gentry said.

Woodruff Park will have a stop on the new streetcar route as well, giving people another transportation option for outings to the park. Powered electrically, the first part of the streetcar project will run just under three miles through downtown Atlanta.

CAP may be getting some funding for the park's streetcar stop, too.

"As another example of how philanthropy intersects with everything at Central Atlanta Progress, we are talking with an organization about funding a really terrific shelter for the stop that would bear its name and stand as a marker for this organization's downtown legacy," Robinson said in his e-mail.

Gentry said Woodruff Park has come a long way since the negative press it fetched a number of years ago. "They've just transformed it," she said.

Woodruff Park funding sources include:
- Bank of America — $25,000 grant
- The Waterfall Foundation of Greater Atlanta — $25,000 grant
- Donor (requests anonymity) — $250,000 grant

Sources: A.J. Robinson, www.atlantadowntown.com

Facts and figures about Woodruff Park

**Named after:** Robert Woodruff

**Opened:** In the 1970s

**Covers:** 6 acres

**Improvements and enhancements:**
- Began incrementally since developing the Woodruff Park Reading Room in 2006 and signing its memorandum of understanding in 2007.
- Include hardscape repaving, repairing seat walls, and restoring the park's main fountain.

Sources: A.J. Robinson, www.atlantadowntown.com

"Woodruff Park ... is an urban sanctuary for reading and a practice field as well. Our park is a place for people and their vibrant activity."

A.J. Robinson
Central Atlanta Progress Inc.