HOW MANY TREES AT HORSE FARM PARK?

CLAIRE TAYLOR CTAYLOR@THEADVERTISER.COM

One hundred acres of green space and hundreds of trees in the middle of Lafayette are what make the former university horse farm special.

Lafayette Central Park Inc., the non-profit group that will turn the space into a public park, has been eliminating "junk" trees and surveying others with an eye toward preservation.

Volunteers and workers recently went through the ravine, clearing out invasive species such as Chinese privet and Chinese tallow trees (chicken trees) and cayratia vine (tree killer vine), said Elizabeth "E.B." Brooks, director of administration and capital projects.

Around 30 Boy Scouts, five naturalists and other volunteers spent a day on the property.

See TREES, Page 6A

Brooks said. Their results were sent to Design Workshop, an Austin, Texas, company managing design of the park, so pathways can be designed around the trees.

Brooks is concerned that someone in the community thinks the trees were tagged for removal when that's not the case. They originally were marked with numbered paper tags but someone tore them off the trees, she said.

"We're concerned they'll do it again," Brooks said.

Motorists passing near the property may have seen what appears to be a building under construction at the farm. Brooks said the building is not on the city's property, but on private property and is not part of the future park.

Also in the past month or two a larger sewer main line was replaced on horse farm property, a move required before construction can begin on the park.

Brooks said she expects workers to break ground by March or April of 2016 with construction on the first phase of the park completed by late summer of 2017.

In July 2012, the city of Lafayette obtained the undeveloped land from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, after plans surfaced to develop it.

The legal transaction is described as an exchange in which the city of Lafayette gave the university an 8-acre youth park near Fire Station No. 5 on Johnston Street plus $5.8 million. The property previously had been used by the university as a dairy farm and later as a horse farm.