

Request for Proposals
Comprehensive Plan for Piedmont Park, Atlanta, GA
Piedmont Park Conservancy

Introduction

The Piedmont Park Conservancy (the Conservancy) seeks qualified proposals for the completion of a comprehensive plan for Atlanta's iconic and historic Piedmont Park. We seek an ambitious, comprehensive, and implementable plan that highlights the historic nature of the site, encompasses new park acreage and amenities planned for the park, plans for anticipated growth in the region and surrounding neighborhoods, and balances the park's multiple uses as both a local park for neighboring communities and a regional park that hosts many annual events and festivals enjoyed by Atlantans from every neighborhood and visitors from across the Southeast and beyond.

An optional pre-bid meeting will be held via [Zoom](#) at 1PM on Thursday, May 9. Questions related to the project, this RFP, or completing a proposal should be submitted in writing via email to plan@piedmontpark.org by Friday, May 10 (no phone call, please). Question responses will be sent to all prospective bidders by Tuesday, May 14 and posted to the Conservancy's planning [web site](#). Proposals are due by Friday, May 24 and should be submitted via email to: plan@piedmontpark.org. Finalist interviews via Zoom will be scheduled May 28, 29, and 30. Final selection and notification will be made by Wednesday, June 5.

History and Planning Context

The site that is now Piedmont Park was originally a family farm. Later becoming home to the Piedmont Driving Club and then the site of major events including the Piedmont Exposition of 1887 and Cotton States Exposition of 1895, the site was purchased by the City of Atlanta in 1904. The Olmstead Brothers landscape architecture firm (sons of Frederick Law Olmstead) created a comprehensive plan for the park in 1912 that, while never fully realized, largely shapes the park to this day. The park and City grew up side by side, with Piedmont Park hosting many historic and pivotal events of local and national relevance, making it Atlanta's iconic and historic park, akin to Central Park in New York City. (More details on the park's history can be found at: <https://piedmontpark.org/park-history/>).

In 1989, unwilling to accept the decline of their beloved park, a small group of concerned citizens and civic leaders joined together to form Piedmont Park Conservancy, a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the restoration and preservation of Piedmont Park. In 1992, The Conservancy established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Atlanta, making official the public-private partnership and mutual goals to rehabilitate and maintain Piedmont Park. The Conservancy is a member and donor-funded nonprofit organization working in partnership with the City of Atlanta to enhance and preserve Piedmont Park as a vital, urban green space and as a cultural and recreational resource that enriches the quality of life for all Atlantans.

The Conservancy manages over 75% of the daily landscaping and maintenance of the park. It operates the park swimming pool, concessions, and venue rentals for the park's indoor facilities. It also offers a wide variety of programs for learners of all ages including fitness classes, adult programs, school field trips, and summer camp. The Conservancy manages all volunteer activities in the park for individuals and groups. The Conservancy does not permit major festivals and events in the park (and receives no revenue from these) and does not manage the Tennis Center, Noguchi Playscape, or the Mayor's Grove Playground; all of which are managed by the City of Atlanta.

Through the generosity of corporate, foundation and individual contributions, the Conservancy has raised more than \$110 million in private funds to restore the park and add new features including the renovation of Oak Hill, Lake Clara Meer, the Meadow, and Active Oval and the addition of new park acreage in the Greensward and Piedmont Commons. Through its donor and volunteer support, Piedmont Park Conservancy helps to keep Piedmont Park safe, clean and beautiful, offers a variety of educational programming for park visitors of all ages, while serving as the park's primary steward. (More information on the Conservancy can be found at: <https://piedmontpark.org/about-us/#about-conservancy>).

In 2024, in partnership with the City of Atlanta, the Piedmont Park Conservancy will lead and undertake a comprehensive, community-driven planning effort. This plan will be externally focused, engage a broad array of citizens and stakeholders, and will guide future capital development, park expansion and related amenities, and programmatic and accessibility features for the park for the next several decades.

Comprehensive Plan Overview

Piedmont Park's last Comprehensive Plan was developed in 1995 and has largely been realized. While smaller, more targeted plans have been completed more recently, they were focused on specific areas or elements and did not comprehensively engage external stakeholders. The Conservancy celebrates its 35th Anniversary in 2024 while Piedmont Park celebrates 120 years as a city park. Coupled with the unprecedented opportunity to expand the park's acreage and amenities to the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Monroe Drive in concert with the proximate expansion of the Atlanta BeltLine and Atlanta Botanical Garden, the time is right for a new comprehensive plan and vision for Piedmont Park to guide its development and ensure its role as the Beating Green Heart of Atlanta for decades to come.

The Comprehensive Plan is envisioned to cover a time period of 15-20 years and be bold and innovative. It should push the boundaries of what the future of urban parks can be and do, set the standard for city parks in the Southeast U.S. and beyond, and reflect a diverse, growing, resilient, and sustainable Atlanta. The planning process will be an iterative activity and will begin in May 2024 by soliciting broad ideas and concepts from the community. Techniques will include community surveys, public forums, and online engagement. Key park user groups will also be engaged to provide specific input and ideas based on their unique perspectives on the park. Additional feedback will be garnered from organized community groups, NPOs, government leaders, donors, volunteers, corporate and civic leaders, and other park stakeholders. A variety of engagement strategies will be utilized with these stakeholders including focus groups, small group meetings, one-on-one meetings, and online techniques.

From these initial, varied inputs, concepts will be compiled to identify key themes and ideas and then presented to the broader community and stakeholder groups for input this summer. Once a clear set of guiding concepts and themes is determined, specific schematic designs will be developed during the fall and shared with the community to visualize how these elements may be represented throughout the park. Following final feedback in late 2024, a final draft plan will be developed for review, consideration, and official approval by the City of Atlanta in early 2025. Once completed, the Comprehensive Plan will guide the work of the Conservancy which will spearhead its implementation. A resultant capital campaign will follow in mid-2025.

With the above context and goals in mind, the Piedmont Park Conservancy seeks a qualified planning firm to assist in the facilitation and development of a new, comprehensive plan for the park.

Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives, and Timelines

The Conservancy strives for a comprehensive plan that is representative of all of the communities and visitors that utilize Piedmont Park, welcoming and inclusive of all persons, and builds on and enhances the park's position as Atlanta's iconic, historic park for now and generations to come. The plan should address all 200+ acres of the existing park while also focusing on the park's imminent expansion to the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Monroe Drive in the coming years. The plan should also focus on the 'Piedmont Commons' section of the park, which was constructed during the last expansion but not completely realized and 'Piedmont Gardens', the land adjacent to the park's main parking entrance at Monroe Avenue and Evelyn Street (owned and managed by the Atlanta Department of Watershed Management), which was planned but never realized during the last expansion.

The new Comprehensive Plan should:

- Reinforce the mission of the Piedmont Park Conservancy 'to enhance and preserve Piedmont Park as a vital, urban green space and as a cultural and recreational resource that enriches the quality of life for all Atlantans'
- Meet the goals of the Activate ATL Comprehensive Plan for Atlanta's Parks and Recreation (<https://activate-atl.com/about.html>) and specifically address many of the key amenities called for in the plan while addressing most if not all of the key goals and objectives of the plan
- Define and analyze existing park conditions and challenges as well as opportunities for the park
- Engage the various communities, stakeholders, and park user groups that utilize the park and/or that have a vested interest in the park due to proximity, program alignment, and other factors
- Identify new ways to activate or improve the existing park
- Consider new or additional use-types for the park's planned expansion areas
- Be inclusive of ongoing maintenance, landscaping, natural areas care, and litter/recycling services
- Reinforce park safety and security of park visitors
- Include park programming and events (including major festivals) in its scope
- Consider accessibility, equity, and access for visitors of all types, abilities, and backgrounds
- Plan for estimated population growth in the region and surrounding neighborhoods
- Address transportation to and from the park
- Foster sustainability and green infrastructure objectives
- Be mindful of the relationship between the Conservancy and City of Atlanta as outlined in the current MOU and related Operating Agreements (to be provided to selected firm)
- Respect and acknowledge the park's significant history related to our city, state, and nation
- Reflect collaboration with client and other key stakeholders including the City of Atlanta

Suggested Planning Timeline (preliminary)

Select Comprehensive Planning Consultant (May 2024)

- RFP developed and released (May 2024)
- Consultant selected and work commences (May 2024)

Conduct Comprehensive Planning Process (May -December 2024)

- Initial public input process (May-June 2024)
 - Public survey
 - Public forums
 - Stakeholder meetings and focus groups
- Develop key themes and priorities (July - August 2024)
 - Analyze and synthesize key findings

- Share results with public and stakeholders for input
- Refine themes and priorities based on input
- Design conceptual plans based on feedback (September - November 2024)
 - Input key findings into draft designs, schematic plans, and related cost proposals
 - Share designs with public and stakeholders in iterative stages/process
 - Refine designs based on input
- Develop final Comprehensive Plan draft (December 2024 – January 2025)
 - Create final Comprehensive Plan designs, budgets, and potential phases for implementation
 - Distribute and share for input with public and stakeholders
 - Refine plan based on input
- Approval process (February – March 2025)
 - Piedmont Park Conservancy Board of Directors
 - City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation
 - City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office
 - Atlanta City Council

Publish Comprehensive Plan and begin implementation – (April 2025+)

(Provided as FYI; beyond scope and timeline of this RFP)

- Publish, promote, and distribute Comprehensive Plan
- Plan and launch capital campaign for initial phase focused on park expansion (2025-2027)
- Implement first phase of plan focused on park expansion (2027-28)

Comprehensive Plan Scope of Services

The following list outlines the major services sought for the comprehensive planning process. The successful firm will demonstrate its ability to meet each of these areas through past work and current projects. Proposals should address the methodology and timeline for achieving each of these aspects of the project. Specific focus will also be given to a firm’s ability and propensity for collaboration with the client, given that key Conservancy staff will be integrally involved in the process including the CEO, COO, and key departmental leads (Government Relations, Programming, Park Operations, etc.).

- Analysis and Existing Conditions
 - Background analysis – park history; existing infrastructure; current park conditions, opportunities, and challenges; natural and human-elements; park programming and seasonality of events/uses; surrounding neighborhood and development context
 - Understanding of the Conservancy’s role as a manager, steward and operator of the park in partnership with the City of Atlanta
 - Understanding of the park’s dual role as a local park and regional park that offers a variety of events and festivals for visitors from across the city, metro region, and beyond
 - Analysis of the park’s existing operations, financials, maintenance, and management
 - Public perception of the park and vision for the park’s future
 - Public engagement including surveys, working sessions, focus groups, individual meetings, and online engagement techniques
 - Resultant goals and objectives for the plan from this discovery phase

- Development of Planning Concepts

- Preliminary comprehensive plan to be presented to the Conservancy Board, City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, and at public meetings for input and comment
 - An illustrated plan for the park showing existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities and written summary of the same
 - A program document for the park listing park features and new/proposed venues/features including a rough order of magnitude cost estimate of proposed changes
 - An illustrated plan showing proposed park improvements
 - A summary of public input, priorities, and suggestions for the park showing how these ideas were integrated
 - A report on current conditions of the park and plans for improving them, including park maintenance
 - Create a recommended operational structure and financials for managing proposed improvements and expansion of the Park

- Final Comprehensive Plan
 - Final Comprehensive Plan, including:
 - Executive Summary of the plan to include the history and background of the park, current park features and uses, a brief summary of the planning process, and descriptions of the suggested park improvements and new elements
 - Final illustrated plan showing existing conditions and opportunities and a written report of the same
 - A final program document for the park listing existing and new/potential park features
 - A final illustrated plan for the park showing proposed park improvements
 - A summary of public input, priorities, and suggestions and how these were integrated into the final plan
 - A report on the current conditions of the park and suggestions for improvement, including maintenance
 - Illustrative plan and exhibits use to define and showcase specific new or improved park features and concepts
 - Written descriptions of planned park elements and how they address the goals outlined in the analysis phase
 - Professional renderings to be used for fundraising efforts/capital campaign
 - Written report meeting the needs for the adoption of the plan by neighborhoods, NPU ([Neighborhood Planning Units](#): official community-governance entities for the City), Atlanta City Council, City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, and Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs
 - Implementation and funding plan(s) to realize the Comprehensive Plan
 - Detailed budgets/cost proposals for all major features and elements of the plan
 - Proposed segmentation and phasing of the plan over time
 - List of potential partners/collaborators in realizing the plan
 - Guidelines for plan implementation including for private development adjacent to the park
 - Landscape maintenance guidelines and other management best practices that are compatible with the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation

standards/policies and in-line with the current MOU and Operating Agreements between the Conservancy and the City, while being progressive and innovative to set new standards where necessary and appropriate

- Programmatic recommendations and related cost proposals and suggested implementation timelines
- Venue optimization plan for varied and diverse events leveraging current and future space for earned income opportunities
- Accessibility considerations and enhancements incorporated into the plan
- Access and equity analysis and recommendations to ensure the park welcomes and serves all Atlantans per the Conservancy's mission

Guidelines for Preparing a Proposal for Services

Proposals should address all areas contained in the RFP and outline the firm's relevant experience, technique, and approaches to be utilized in the plan. It should also include a detailed scope of services, comprehensive understanding of the project, methodology, detailed deliverables, schedule and associated consultant or planning team personnel and how they will be integrated into the overall planning team. The proposal needs to provide a complete schedule for the execution of all Master Plan deliverables as well as detailed fees broken down by project deliverables and components. Questions related to the completion of proposals should be directed to: plan@piedmontpark.org.

Proposal Review, Evaluation, and Selection

The proposal deadline of Friday, May 24, 5:00 PM ET will be strictly adhered to. Early submissions are encouraged. Proposals will be reviewed based on the components of this RFP, the experience of the firm in performing similar work in similar contexts, and for cost effectiveness, including how Conservancy staff can assist in key elements of the planning process to offset certain costs. When considering closely competitive proposals based on these other factors, additional consideration will be given to women and minority owned or managed firms in addition to local and small(er) businesses. Any questions about proposals will be directed to the key contact on the proposal. Selection will be made by Wednesday, June 5.