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A City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation Publication
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ONE ATLANTA |

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PARKS
& REC



ATLANTA PARKS TAKE CENTER STAGE

The City of Atlanta is one of the nation's leading international cities offering a vast array of top-notch amenities, attractions and unforgettable experiences! Rich with historic heritage, artistic culture and southern charm, Atlanta boasts a notable roster of parks, recreation centers, nature preserves and greenspaces.

THE COMING ATTRACTION

Adding to the city's illustrious inventory is the highly anticipated, Westside Park, set to open this summer! Spanning 280 acres,

the \$44 million project will become Atlanta's largest, premiere park exceeding its predecessor, Chastain Park. The City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management (DWM) and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) worked collectively on the project. The home of the former Bellwood Quarry, the park will become a critical backup source of drinking water for the entire city.

At the helm of the transformative design project is DPR Deputy Commissioner, Alvin Dodson who for nearly 2 decades led the charge for this enormous victory! In a tribute, Lead Landscape Architect, Lauren Standish referred to Dodson as DPR's "unsung hero." "After fifteen years, over thirty different master plans, ideas and reports, Westside Park has finally come to fruition," she states.

The opening of Westside Park is expected to position the historical Westside community as a sought-after destination for years to come! Office of Park Design Director and Westside Project Manager, Keith Hicks says, "This project will serve to transform hundreds of acres with a dark past, into the City of Atlanta's largest, world-class greenspace connecting the Westside community to economic and social opportunities with the surrounding neighborhoods."



Westside Water Supply – Pump and Outfall
Photo Courtesy of Department of Watershed Management



Photo Courtesy of Mayor's Office of Communications

A LEGACY REVITALIZED

Cook Park officially opened with a special ribbon-cutting ceremony, July 7, showcasing the meticulously designed statue posthumously honoring the lifelong legacy of Congressman John Lewis. DPR Commissioner John Dargle kicked off the event with an enthusiastic welcome followed by special presentations from Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, U.S. Ambassador Andrew Young, Congresswoman Nikema Williams, George Dusenbury, Rodney Cook, Jr. and Bishop John Lewis III. Once an affluent community where civil rights icons like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Julian Bond, and former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson lived, the historic Vine City and English Avenue communities were severely impacted by torrential flooding in 2002, resulting in resident displacement. In 2012, late council member, Ivory Lee Young, Jr. led the charge for renewal. In 2016, the City of Atlanta partnered with Trust for Public Land who contributed \$13.7 million on behalf of DPR. The Department of Watershed Management also invested \$12 million to develop a water-smart component engineered to reduce flooding by capturing, cleaning, and storing up to 9 million gallons of stormwater runoff. A pivotal project, residents were keenly involved. "The



City Officials Break Ground for Westside Park September 2018



DPRs Alvin Dodson & Keith Hicks Visit Westside Construction Site



Cook Park Playground



Alvin Dodson

Keith Kicks

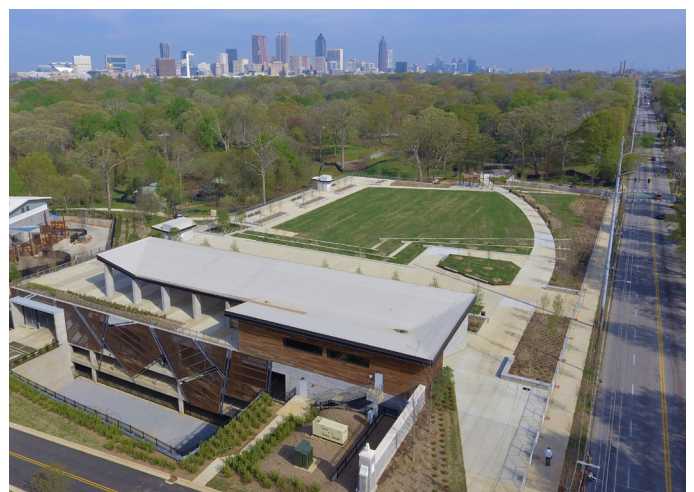
development of the park has been a total community effort!" says Project Manager Aaron Wiener. Today, the 16-acre state-of-the-art park design provides children and families a safe and vibrant destination to enjoy. Features include an enormous playground, splashpad, multi-purpose courts, a rock climbing wall, a terraced water feature, exercise equipment, lush greenspace, a majestic bioretention pond and wetlands. The park is named after Atlanta Alderman, State Representative and civil rights advocate, Rodney Cook Sr.

THE GOLDEN TREASURE

Home to Zoo Atlanta and convenient to the Atlanta Beltline, Grant Park offers many amenities to enjoy including a pool, gym, walking trails and rolling terrain. Addressing the need for additional parking at the ever-popular hot spot, Deputy Commissioner Alvin Dodson and Office of Park Design Director Keith Hicks set out to create a solution that resulted in an architectural masterpiece! The \$48 million Grant Park Gateway project was launched in 2018. Creating 1,000 new parking spaces in the semi-underground garage, the design doubles as a 2.5-acre rooftop green space perfect for picnicking, free play and overall enjoyment. The design also features a 4,000 square foot rooftop restaurant, a rainwater harvesting system planned for irrigation demands and enhancement of native vegetation and land preservation.

The design also includes an intelligent parking system that assists drivers in locating vacant parking spaces. It also includes motion/occupancy sensor LED lighting fixtures, electric vehicle charging stations and areas for bicycle parking. Opened in late 2020, Grant Park Gateway is the first project in the world to achieve LEED Silver, SITES Gold and ParksMart Bronze certifications!

We commend the Office of Park Design for their masterful planning of each of these phenomenal park concepts. With each new build, concept and design, they are creating a legacy that Atlanta residents and visitors will enjoy for years to come!



Grant Park Gateway



a message from the **COMMISSIONER**

We are delighted to present this first edition of *Inform*: your source for relevant, resourceful and reliable news and information.

In keeping with Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms' ambitious vision for "One Atlanta - an affordable, resilient, and equitable city, for all," the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation is working on the development of a 10-year comprehensive plan aimed at equitably improving and expanding our programs and facilities: ActivateATL. It is the most unprecedented and inclusive public engagement effort the city has unveiled in recent years!

Through a generous grant provided by the Woodruff Foundation, we launched a remarkable public engagement campaign which allowed us to gain direct feedback from residents. Throughout the process, we heard one resounding message: Atlantans' love and value their parks, recreation centers and greenspaces! By equitably investing in people, programs, and places, and continuing to collaborate with our partners and community, the "One Atlanta" vision can be realized.

Over the past few years, we have launched several park and recreation design projects.

Among them, Cook Park, Westside Park, Grant Park Gateway and the LEED Gold Certified Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation and Aquatic Center. The U.S. Green Building Council, Inc. recently designated the newly designed Grant Park Gateway as the first project in the WORLD to achieve LEED Silver, SITES Gold and ParksMart Bronze certifications. While these endeavors are all praiseworthy, they are merely a few key examples of DPRs plans to implement a desirable world-class park and recreation system for all. As we continue to build relationships and exercise transparency with the community and our partners, Atlanta will become a global beacon for an equitable, inclusive and sustainable parks and recreation system worthy of high acclaim.

John Dargle, Jr.



Historic Fourth Ward Park

"By equitably investing in people, programs, and places, and continuing to collaborate with our partners and community, the "One Atlanta" vision can be realized."

COMMUNITY OPENS NEW PLAYLOT

The Reynoldstown community celebrated Phase 1 of the Lang-Carson Park restoration project June 12 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony unveiling the new Manigault Playlot. Speakers included Congresswoman Nikema Williams, Atlanta City Council Member Natalyn Archibong, and COA DPR Deputy Commissioner Doug Voss. Well over 100 guests were in attendance. This diverse community, made up of young, first-time homebuyers and legacy families whose roots trace back as far as the 1920s, is bursting with stories of its rich history! One speaker, 74-year-old resident Georgia Burrell, has lived in the community since the 50's and was among the first to attend the former I.P. Elementary School which still stands on park grounds. The Hammond family has lived in the neighborhood over six decades, and matriarch Virginia Hammond (75), still lives in the family home where she grew up as a child.

The Friends of Lang-Carson Park, in collaboration with Park Pride and the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, was awarded a \$130k matching Legacy Grant to make improvements. They received an additional matching grant from Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Unit and were honored with the 2021 Impact Grant Award from the City of Atlanta for the



(l-r) Park Chair Annie Appleton, DPR Deputy Commissioner Doug Voss, Georgia Burrell, Congresswoman Nikema Williams, Council Member Natalyn Archibong, State Senator Nan Orrock, Park Pride PM Kayla Atland, Lisa Harris



The Hammond Family with Congresswoman Williams – Residents for Six Decades

restoration project. The long-term goal is to make Lang-Carson Park a “pillar of community activity and engagement.” Hats off to Annie Appleton, Chair of the Friends of Lang-Carson Park and Event Chair, Ali Tiffany!

FRONTLINE SPOTLIGHT

PATRICIA BROWN, Youth Development Coordinator

Patricia Brown is the Youth Development Coordinator at William Walker Recreation Center. She is the first to respond, stays late and instills a sense of community among those with whom she serves. The ever-consummate teacher, the learning pods and after school programs she oversees are highly impactful, engaging and well organized. At the height of the pandemic, Ms. Brown's classes consistently met and often exceeded attendance expectations. Much of her success can be attributed to her commitment to families. For example, long before learning pod hours were extended, Ms. Brown was already accommodating parents by staying well beyond the center's standard closing hours. In fact, some refer to her as "The Warden." "Ms. Brown is always ready to help," says Centers of Hope Operations Director, Tiffani Bryant.

Patricia Brown began her career with the City of Atlanta in 1984 as a work study student. Later, she accepted a position as Recreation Leader I. Ms. Brown received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Therapeutic Recreation with a minor in Physical Therapy from Morris Brown College. Born in Allendale, South Carolina, she presently serves in a dual capacity as the acting Facility Manager (filling in for Mr. William Walker for which the recreation center is named.) "William Walker set a precedent within the community

that goes all the way back to the 70s," according to Ms. Bryant. "Ms. Brown carries that torch forward... and ensures that Coach Walker's vision for the community and rec center is realized."



A former cheerleader, musician and athlete, Ms. Brown also coaches the senior men's basketball team. Under her leadership, the team received a Bronze Medal in the National Senior Olympic Games in 2017. When asked her "why," she had this to say, "I just want to make a positive difference...I enjoy working with youth, working with families...I kinda have a connection with them." In her spare time, she enjoys working out and completing jigsaw puzzles. At the top of her bucket list, Ms. Brown hopes to attend a 49ers football game in Levi's Stadium. DPR honors Patricia Brown as our first Frontline Spotlight recipient.

"I just want to make a positive difference."

POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS



NICK CLARK, Teen Program Director

When students reach the tween and teen phases of life, telling their friends that they are going to “camp” isn’t really cool anymore. Camp Best Friends created a solution for both age groups: the Atlanta Teen Leaders Junior Academy (13-14) and Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy (14-18). The Office of Recreation provides youth programming throughout the school year. As an incentive, teens 14 and up who meet or exceed program requirements are awarded a paid, summer internship. Interns also attend core classes such as Music and Film Production, Debate, Entrepreneurship and Drone Academy. Teen Program Director Nicholas Clark says, “It’s gotten to the place where the teens are selling the program better than we are!”

Clark says the goal is to expose students to a world they didn’t know existed through year-round programming. “Exposure allows teens to think and dream outside of the box.... A lot of the teens we serve want to do something outside of the box, but they’ve never seen it,” he asserts. These programs give future leaders that opportunity, and position them for success!



“Exposure allows teens to think and dream outside of the box.... A lot of the teens we serve want to do something outside of the box, but they’ve never seen it.”

the *new* normal



Camp Best Friends (CBF) has been providing Atlanta's youth with a "safe, happy summer" since 1981. Originally named the "Super Summer" program, it is what Recreation Director Ramondo Davidson refers to as a "safe haven to grow and play!" Campers enjoy exposure opportunities such as swimming lessons, rock climbing, sports and more! "There's a lot of stuff to do here like dance battles, basketball and music work outs," shares 12-year-old Alex Allen who has attended CBF for 3 years. *Day at the Lake* is the camp's premiere experience for campers at Lake Allatoona. This year, campers will enjoy day trips (no overnight stays) to the lake as well as other nature-based programming at Callaway Gardens and Stone Mountain Park.

CBF THEN AND NOW

In light of the pandemic, campers have the option to attend CBF through a hybrid model: in-person or virtually. In past years, CBF accommodated an estimated 4,000 participants. This year, capacity

is limited to just over 1,000. "Our parents are comfortable because they know we're taking the necessary precautions to ensure that kids are safe every day," says Ramondo Davidson. "All of our protocols align with CDC guidelines."

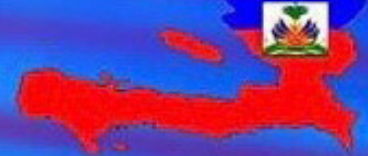
THE FUTURE OF PROGRAMMING

"We realize that our seniors are the most vulnerable group we serve," Davidson attests. To accommodate CBF at 22 locations, and to protect seasoned patrons, some senior programs are currently held virtually, while others are expected to resume in-person this fall. Currently, basketball courts, tennis courts, golf courses and all 12 outdoor swimming pools are open to the public. Registration is also underway for football and cheerleading which begin in August. There is no in-person use of recreation centers presently. However, those interested can register to use indoor lap lanes at natatoriums. As the City moves toward Phase 5 reopening, Atlanta recreation centers are gracefully adjusting to the new normal.



Alex Allen, CBF Camper

Special thanks to our partners: the Atlanta Hawks, Kaiser Permanente, Humana and State Farm. We appreciate the Hawks generosity in providing playoff t-shirts to our campers and staff. Go HAWKS!



Emilie Grand’Pierre

LEGACY IN MOTION

Emilie Grand’Pierre’s life as a swimmer has been nothing short of extraordinary! Described by her mother, Clio, as a “lifer of the City of Atlanta,” Emilie has been swimming since she was four. It all began at the original Martin Luther King Jr. Natatorium. At the tender age of 6, she was already swimming competitively. By the time she turned 12, Emilie became #1

descent, Grand’Pierre qualified to represent Haiti in the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games and will compete in the 100-meter breaststroke event. “Because our kids are dual nationality, they have been swimming for Haiti internationally,” says Emilie’s father, Reginald.

Emilie along with her siblings, Raphael, Alexandre, Audree and Naomi were all trained by City of Atlanta swimming instructor, Tommie Jackson at CT Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center. In fact, Naomi made history as the first female swimmer to represent Haiti in the Olympic Games in 2016. So far, four of the five Grand’Pierre children have received scholarships to attend college. “The focus of our programs [at the City of Atlanta] is to help kids excel! I strongly believe that whether a kid takes basketball, football, baseball or swimming [lessons], we should use that opportunity to also instill in them the life skills needed to become great citizens,” explains Coach Jackson. At press time, Emilie (20), Alexandre (18) and Raphael (16), had just returned from the Central American and Caribbean Amateur Swimming Confederation (CCCAN) Championship Games. Alexandre won the Gold Medal in the 100-meter breaststroke event; Raphael broke the 50-meter freestyle record and Emilie broke the 200-meter breaststroke record. “For the past 15 years, Coach Jackson has been a rock...pouring his heart into our kids... all of this is because of Coach Jackson’s dedication,” shares Clio. We commend Coach Jackson and the Grand’Pierre family for their exemplary commitment to the sport of swimming and wish them well!



Alexandre, Emilie, Coach Jackson, Naomi, Raphael

in the state of Georgia for her impressive performance in the 50-meter breaststroke! Equally skilled academically, Emilie is a QuestBridge Scholar and received a full scholarship to attend Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine where she is entering junior year. An American citizen of Haitian

Known as the “city in a forest,” Atlanta is abundantly rich in trees. We had the opportunity to sit down with Fernbank Museum Ecologist, Eli Dickerson recently to talk about a few astonishing facts on trees located right in City of Atlanta parks and greenspaces.

Cascade Springs Nature Preserve in Southwest Atlanta is home to one of the largest Bigleaf Magnolia trees in the city. These trees are native to the area, whereas the Southern Magnolia best known for its large, fragrant, white flower is native to the Coastal Plain.

“The Bigleaf Magnolia has the largest deciduous¹ leaves of any native tree in North America,” says Dickerson. They can be up to 3 feet long and petals can span the size of a dinner plate! According to the Fernbank ecologist, “Magnolias are some of the oldest species in the world! A champion² Umbrella Magnolia can also be spotted near the south side of Utoy Creek in Beecher Park. Avery Park, adjacent to Sylvan Hills, is home to the historic Gilbert House. Located behind the Civil War era home is a champion Post Oak and Southern Red Oak. “These trees have likely been around for at least as long as the home, which makes them over 150 years old!” Eli shares.

Join us next issue for Part 2 of this exciting series when we unveil the discovery made near Bitsy Grant Tennis Center. You don’t want to miss it!

If you would like to view the list of Atlanta champion trees or nominate a tree as a potential champion, historic or landmark tree, submit your entry to: <https://www.treesatlanta.org/resources/atlantas-champion-trees/>

¹Deciduous leaves fall at maturity.

²A champion tree is the largest tree of its species in a given area.



Fernbank Museum Ecologist,
Eli Dickerson



Big Leaf Magnolia,
Cascade Springs Nature Preserve
82 ft. tall and 31 in. circumference

ATLANTA'S AMAZING TREES PT.1

Southern Red Oak Tree – Gilbert House – 86 ft. tall, 225.5 in. circumference

creating exceptional **EXPERIENCES**

Great things are happening in Atlanta's parks and recreation centers. DPRs goal is to make every person's visit an exceptional experience! Here are a few recent highlights.



Congratulations to Jim Rolen! The 79-year-old has played golf at Candler Park Golf Course for 13 years. Recently, he made his first-ever, hole-in-one with a 7 iron from 120 yards.

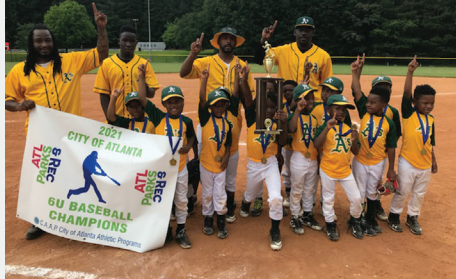
NEW HEALTH AND WELLNESS FEATURE

Public health specialist, primary care physician and television medical commentator, Dr. Saju Mathew loves Bitsy Grant Tennis Center! Recently, he filmed CNNs "Staying Well" segment at the popular tennis center. Look for our special feature story on the health benefits of tennis in the next issue of *Inform!*



Baseball season wrapped up with a grand slam! Look at the pride on these happy faces.

Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center – 6U



City of Atlanta Police Athletic League – 10U



Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center – 8U



Dunbar Recreation Center – 12U



We are so proud of our City Finals Tennis Champions!



Perkerson Park



Piedmont Aces



United Nations



Victo-Ritas



EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope that you have enjoyed this Special Edition of *Inform!* Our goal is to provide readers with a vast array of relevant, resourceful and reliable information. Next issue, our cameras capture a behind-the-scenes look at Westside Park just before opening day! Plus, we will explore ways you can improve your physical and mental wellbeing right in our parks and greenspaces. Also, look for "Passing the Torch" where we introduce you to a family who is building a legacy right within our ranks. All this and much more, next issue!

Until next time, stay well!

Yolanda Harris

Contact Us

If you have a story or topic that you'd like us to consider, email us at informdpr@atlantaga.gov.

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- Grove Park Neighborhood Association
- John Portman & Associates
- Park Pride
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- Westside Park Advisory Committee
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