

Active Heart of the Park

The Active Oval is the historic heart of activity in Piedmont Park, acting as the focal point of the 1895 Cotton States Exposition, hosting horse buggy races, serving as the site of historic football games, and now providing softball fields, soccer fields, and sand volleyball courts. Encompassing the adjacent historic Tennis Center and Mayor’s Grove areas, this zone is the “Active Heart” of Piedmont Park.

The big pieces will remain the same here, but additional active recreation opportunities will be added in response to public input and the results of the Activate ATL plan. The new Active Heart will be a space for all Atlantans; with softball, volleyball, soccer, frisbee, basketball, tennis, pickleball, playgrounds, a running track, fitness equipment, and more.

ACTIVE HEART LEGEND

- 1 3 New Basketball Courts Nestled Under Existing Large Tree Canopies (Alternate Location Studies on Next Page)
- 2 Terrace Seating Gathering Space Next to Historic Steps
- 3 Widened Running Track with Path Lighting and Seating
- 4 New Walking Path and Seating with Views of Active Oval
- 5 Central Tree Allee and Seating Through Center of Active Oval
- 6 Additional Trees Around Running Track
- 7 Improved Fitness Equipment
- 8 Regraded Soccer Fields with Future Lighting and Spectator Seating Potential to Combine Fields as One Large Field
- 9 Relocated Softball/Baseball Fields with New Bleachers and Future Lighting
- 10 New Miracle/Challenger Field
- 11 5 Total Sand Volleyball Courts (3 New Courts)
- 12 Existing Tennis Center with 12 Courts
- 13 4 New Pickleball Courts
- 14 New Sidewalk Through Park Core
- 15 Picnic Area Around Mayor’s Grove Monument
- 16 Enlarged and Rebuilt Mayor’s Grove Central Playground
- 17 Improved Groundplane Native Planting Throughout
- 18 New Accessible Route to the Active Oval





Active Oval

ACTIVE OVAL LIGHTING AND SEATING

New benches around the running track and along the central tree allee will be installed for onlookers. New bleachers will be added next to the softball fields and one of the soccer fields.

The Active Oval is an important programmed space for the Piedmont Park Conservancy, through intramural sports rentals and other events. With additional field lighting installed near select fields, rental times could be extended later in the day. Any future lighting will be selected to direct light to the fields and away from the sky to reduce light pollution into the Park and surrounding community.

RUNNING TRACK

The running track will be widened from 10’ to 12’ to accommodate more runners and walkers, and will be resurfaced to replace the existing uneven material. Alternate track surfacing will be studied further to select the most suitable. Additionally, the plan includes the installation of path lighting and distance markers at the track.

FIELD GRADING AND DRAINAGE

The Active Oval fields need a resurfacing and regrading effort. The current fields are unable to support large crowds during events and festivals, and often puddle after rains. The lower half of the Active Oval will be regraded to create a large flat space with the potential of combining the soccer fields for use as one large field for sports like football or ultimate frisbee.

SAND VOLLEYBALL

The existing sand volleyball courts are well used and would benefit from additional courts. The northwest space of the Active Oval can accommodate 5 total courts with little regrading needed. A low curb edge will be installed to help stop hard-hit softballs from rolling onto the courts.

MIRACLE LEAGUE / CHALLENGER FIELD

Miracle League Fields are specifically designed to support children with mental and physical disabilities so they can enjoy the game of baseball. The fields have special field material to allow for wheelchairs and other devices, while also helping to prevent injuries. The proposed field is adjacent to the accessible entrance of the Active Oval.



Potential to Combine Lower Half of Active Oval as Single Large Field for Football or Ultimate Frisbee



Softball Fields with Bleachers and Shade, Central Park, NY



Running Track, Memorial Park, Houston, TX (NBW)



Challenger/Miracle Field, Lakeshore Park, Knoxville, TN (NBW)



Improved Fitness Equipment

New Athletic Facilities

Piedmont Park currently only has one basketball court, insufficient for a regional park in a city where basketball is one of the most popular sports. The existing court is tucked away behind the Tennis Center at the top of the hill. The Comprehensive Plan proposes to provide three new basketball courts in a new location, converting the existing court to pickleball. The preferred location for new courts is near the 14th Street Entrance. Additional study is warranted.

Location #1: Near the 14th Street Entrance Along Piedmont Avenue

- Advantages: Proximity to Piedmont Avenue; current low-use space; could be nestled within existing large trees
- Downsides: Would require removal of some medium trees and 1-2 large trees.

Location #2: On the Active Oval

- Advantages: Central location; no tree removals or disturbance.
- Downsides: Would require fencing on the Active Oval; reduces flexible lawn space; Without fencing, would cause conflict with other sports

Location #3: Mayor’s Grove Next

- Advantages: Central location.
- Downsides: Requires removal of many small, medium and large trees; reduces significance of Mayor’s Grove monument.

Location #4: Leader’s Grove Lawn

- Advantages: Proximity to the parking deck; adjacent to shading and seating at Leader’s Grove Arbor; minimal tree removals.
- Downsides: Would convert a space recently converted to green space back to hardscape; sports impact adjacent event lawn used for weddings and other receptions.

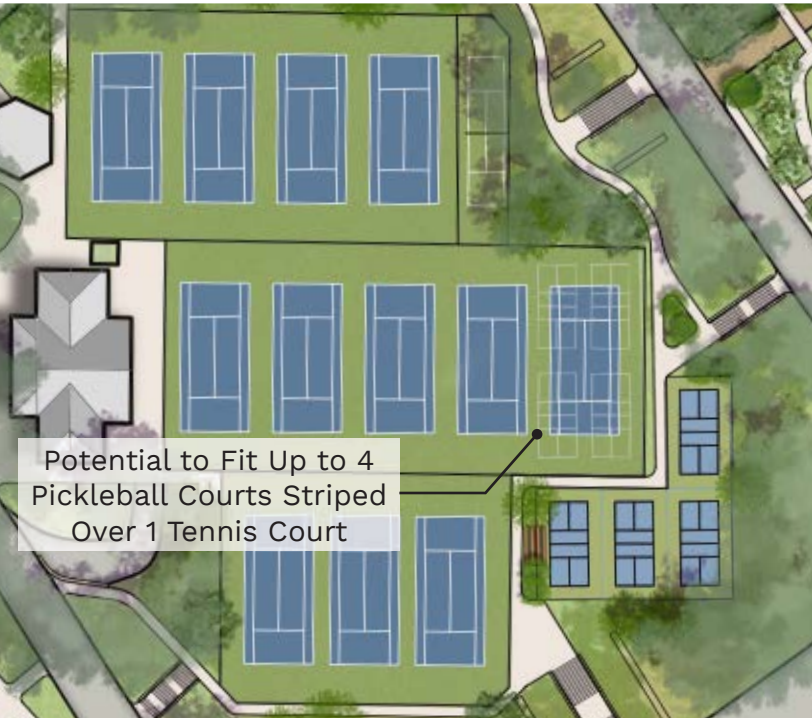
PICKLEBALL

Pickleball is rapidly growing in Atlanta. Currently pickleball players use lines on the existing tennis courts to play, but would benefit from a few of their own courts as well. The location of the existing basketball court next to the Tennis Center can be replaced with 4 pickleball courts once basketball is relocated.

Several locations for pickleball courts were studied, but the location next to the tennis courts will allow pickleball players to continue using the existing dual-lined tennis courts for additional pickleball courts when needed for tournaments and other larger events.



Basketball Courts Alternative Locations



Pickleball Court Layout on Top of Tennis Courts



Sample Pickleball Court Striping on Tennis Courts



Pickleball Courts, Lakeshore Park, Knoxville, TN (NBW)

Mayor’s Grove Playground

CENTRAL PLAYGROUND

The existing Mayor’s Grove Playground is a small playground in the core of Piedmont Park, and currently only one of two total playgrounds throughout the Park. This playground will be replaced and expanded into a large, iconic, accessible central playground under the existing trees around Mayor’s Grove.

This new Mayor’s Grove Playground will have a mix of play elements for all ages and all abilities, including natural play elements integrating under the canopy of the grove. Planting areas with sensory and textural plants, with educational signage, will surround the playground.

MAYOR’S GROVE PICNIC SPACE

Adjacent to the new playground and next to the Mayor’s Grove monument will be a new picnic area for families using the playground or wanting to sit under the shade of the existing trees.

The Mayor’s Grove granite register will remain but will be reworked to better stand out for visitors. Space around Mayor’s Grove will continue to remain for future mayors’ trees being planted around the site. Additional signage or tags will be added to identify trees and for which mayor they were planted as a unique way for visitors to learn more about the City’s history.

VIEWS TO THE LAKE AND SEATING

Mayor’s Grove is directly adjacent to Lake Clara Meer but has few sightlines and views to the water. Opening up more of these views will add to the immersive natural experience of the playground. Along with tree pruning, selective removals, and reworked understory native planting, new seating benches and swings will be added near the playground facing out to the creek.



Replace Existing Mayor’s Grove Playground



Existing Trees at Mayor’s Grove to Remain



Expansive Playground to Replace Existing Playground, Wildwood Community Park, MO (NBW)

Historic Park Core Preservation

PIEDMONT PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION

All historic elements will be preserved throughout any future construction and renovation projects. Repairs and renovations of historic elements will be completed under the guidance of local historical and cultural commissions to ensure preservation standards. Additionally, all future stone structures will be built in the character of the existing historic stone elements with the consultation of a local mason.

ACTIVE OVAL HISTORIC STEPS AND STONE BALUSTRADE

The 1895 Cotton States International Exposition involved the construction of several grand stone staircases to allow access for the 22 buildings at the event. Many of these historic elements still remain today around the Active Oval and Tennis Center, and all of these elements must be given extra care to ensure their longevity for the Park’s future. Additional signage is recommended to allow parkgoers to learn more about Piedmont Park’s fascinating history.

THE BANDSTAND

The small bandstand between the tennis courts and Active Oval was built in 1915 with the intent of bringing Atlantans to the Park to experience music. The bandstand should remain and continue to be used for small music-related gatherings per its original intent. As such, access to the bandstand will be improved, the tables will be replaced, and the lawn around it will be repaired to better allow visitors to sit and gather around the structure.

THE PICNIC SHELTER

The Works Progress Administration built the Picnic Shelter in 1936. The space will remain and continue to be rented for small events. The adjacent grills will be replaced, new picnic tables added, and better lighting provided to create a more welcoming space.



Layout of the 1895 Cotton States International Exposition, When Many of the Historic Park Elements Around the Active Oval Were Built



Photograph from the 1895 Exposition



Piedmont Park Bandstand



Rendering of the 1895 Exposition



Current-Day Photos of Historic Elements to be Preserved and Cared For at Piedmont Park, Including the Stone Balustrade, Stone Grand Staircases, and the Bandstand