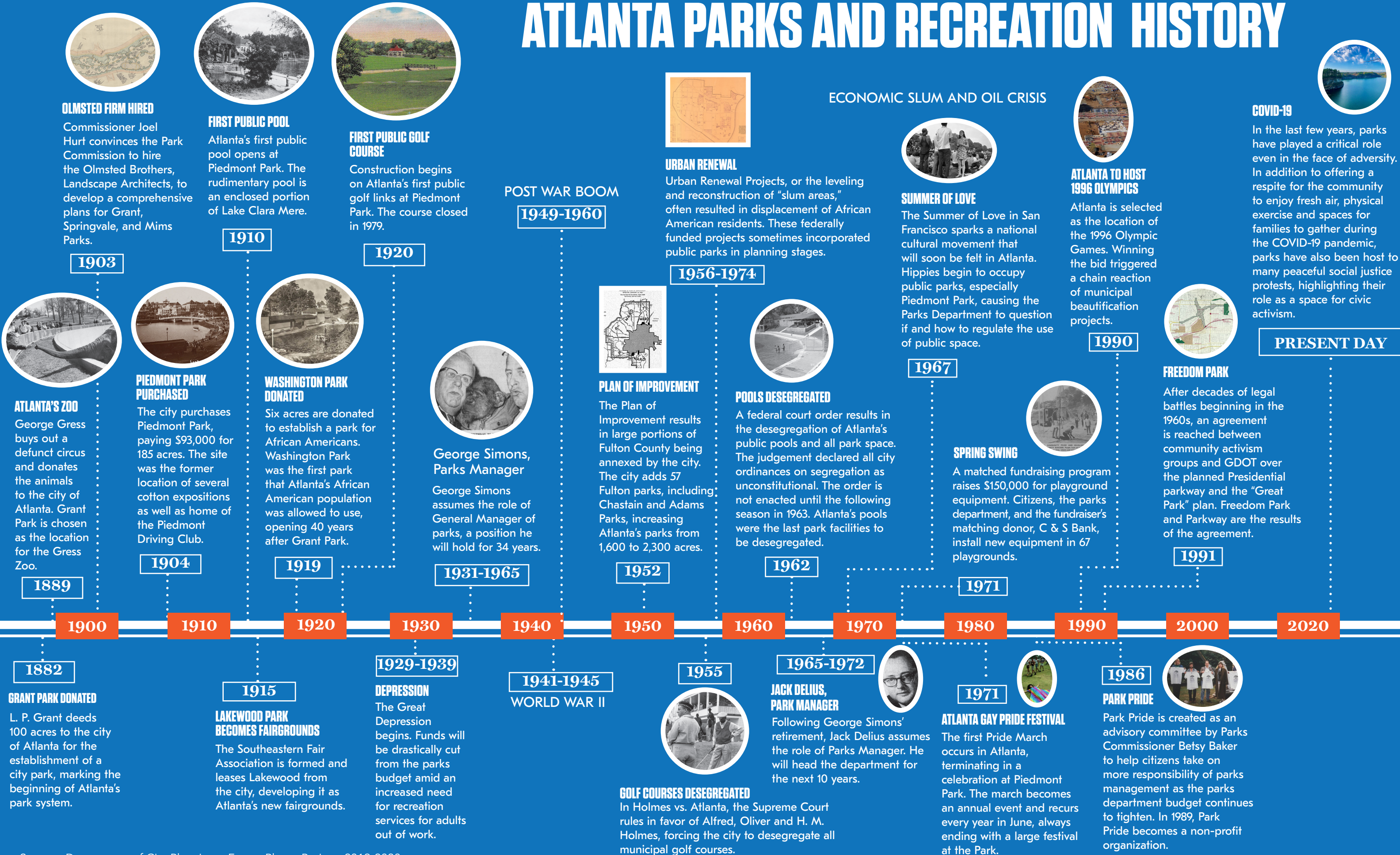


ATLANTA PARKS AND RECREATION HISTORY



OLMSTED FIRM HIRED

Commissioner Joel Hurt convinces the Park Commission to hire the Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, to develop a comprehensive plans for Grant, Springvale, and Mims Parks.

FIRST PUBLIC POOL

Atlanta's first public pool opens at Piedmont Park. The rudimentary pool is an enclosed portion of Lake Clara Mere.

FIRST PUBLIC GOLF COURSE

Construction begins on Atlanta's first public golf links at Piedmont Park. The course closed in 1979.

POST WAR BOOM

1949-1960

URBAN RENEWAL

Urban Renewal Projects, or the leveling and reconstruction of "slum areas," often resulted in displacement of African American residents. These federally funded projects sometimes incorporated public parks in planning stages.

1956-1974

PLAN OF IMPROVEMENT

The Plan of Improvement results in large portions of Fulton County being annexed by the city. The city adds 57 Fulton parks, including Chastain and Adams Parks, increasing Atlanta's parks from 1,600 to 2,300 acres.

POOLS DESEGREGATED

A federal court order results in the desegregation of Atlanta's public pools and all park space. The judgement declared all city ordinances on segregation as unconstitutional. The order is not enacted until the following season in 1963. Atlanta's pools were the last park facilities to be desegregated.

SPRING SWING

A matched fundraising program raises \$150,000 for playground equipment. Citizens, the parks department, and the fundraiser's matching donor, C & S Bank, install new equipment in 67 playgrounds.

FREEDOM PARK

After decades of legal battles beginning in the 1960s, an agreement is reached between community activism groups and GDOT over the planned Presidential parkway and the "Great Park" plan. Freedom Park and Parkway are the results of the agreement.

PRESENT DAY

COVID-19

In the last few years, parks have played a critical role even in the face of adversity. In addition to offering a respite for the community to enjoy fresh air, physical exercise and spaces for families to gather during the COVID-19 pandemic, parks have also been host to many peaceful social justice protests, highlighting their role as a space for civic activism.

1903



ATLANTA'S ZOO

George Gress buys out a defunct circus and donates the animals to the city of Atlanta. Grant Park is chosen as the location for the Gress Zoo.



PIEDMONT PARK PURCHASED

The city purchases Piedmont Park, paying \$93,000 for 185 acres. The site was the former location of several cotton expositions as well as home of the Piedmont Driving Club.



WASHINGTON PARK DONATED

Six acres are donated to establish a park for African Americans. Washington Park was the first park that Atlanta's African American population was allowed to use, opening 40 years after Grant Park.



George Simons, Parks Manager

George Simons assumes the role of General Manager of parks, a position he will hold for 34 years.

1931-1965

1952

1962

1967



1990



1991

1889

GRANT PARK DONATED

L. P. Grant deeds 100 acres to the city of Atlanta for the establishment of a city park, marking the beginning of Atlanta's park system.

1915

LAKWOOD PARK BECOMES FAIRGROUNDS

The Southeastern Fair Association is formed and leases Lakewood from the city, developing it as Atlanta's new fairgrounds.

1929-1939

DEPRESSION

The Great Depression begins. Funds will be drastically cut from the parks budget amid an increased need for recreation services for adults out of work.

1941-1945

WORLD WAR II

1955



GOLF COURSES DESEGREGATED

In Holmes vs. Atlanta, the Supreme Court rules in favor of Alfred, Oliver and H. M. Holmes, forcing the city to desegregate all municipal golf courses.

1965-1972

JACK DELIUS, PARK MANAGER

Following George Simons' retirement, Jack Delius assumes the role of Parks Manager. He will head the department for the next 10 years.

1971

ATLANTA GAY PRIDE FESTIVAL

The first Pride March occurs in Atlanta, terminating in a celebration at Piedmont Park. The march becomes an annual event and recurs every year in June, always ending with a large festival at the Park.

1986

PARK PRIDE

Park Pride is created as an advisory committee by Parks Commissioner Betsy Baker to help citizens take on more responsibility of parks management as the parks department budget continues to tighten. In 1989, Park Pride becomes a non-profit organization.

Source: Department of City Planning – Future Places Project, 2019-2020; edited by Department of Parks and Recreation