



Oct. 10, 2005

Ms. Diane Harnell-Cohen, Commissioner  
Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs  
675 Ponce De Leon Avenue, 8th Floor  
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

**Re: Friends of Grant Park Pool's 2006 Partnership Proposal**

Dear Commissioner Cohen,

Although the 2005 season has come to a close at the Grant Park Pool, Friends of the Grant Park Pool (FOGPP) is looking forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Atlanta's Bureau of Parks and Recreation in the months ahead. Our mission remains the same: working together to make the Grant Park Pool a clean, safe, place that is welcoming to everyone. FOGPP submits this 2006 Partnership Proposal as a basis for formulating with you and other Aquatics Department personnel an action plan to achieve further improvements during the 2005/2006 off-season.

FOGPP members believe we have much to be proud of in our first 10 months of partnership with the City. The measurable impact of FOGPP's activities is detailed below, in Section I. But we also face the reality that the Grant Park Pool was *not* an entirely clean and safe recreational space during the 2005 season because of deficiencies in three areas: operation and maintenance, staffing, and infrastructure. We offer recommendations for improvements in each of these areas in Section II.

These recommendations come from our own experiences during the 2005 season, both as patrons and as community members who received feedback from other pool users through FOGPP's website, [www.grantparkpool.org](http://www.grantparkpool.org); various District 1 neighborhood association meetings; and conversations with patrons and staff at the pool. We offer the recommendations along with our continued commitment to provide additional resources and support for the City in addressing these cleanliness and safety concerns. Once these basic issues are resolved, FOGPP intends to build upon the programming initiatives that were instituted very successfully during the 2005 swim season.

With that in mind, we offer our own action plan for leveraging funding and support for the Grant Park Pool from the private sector and other sources, in Section III. FOGPP believes that once the Grant Park Pool is clean and safe, we can make it a truly vibrant recreational space that is a model for our city and beyond!

## **Section I: FOGPP'S 2005 Action, Innovation, and Impact**

Before and during the 2005 season, FOGPP:

- Working with City Council member, negotiated an earlier “start clock” to ensure on-time pool opening.
- Negotiated additional staff allocations and additional (non-scheduled, but necessary) maintenance for the facility.
- With City Council member, hosted an opening day party. Although it was raining, more than 60 people attended.
- Facilitated a workday by hundreds of Hands On Atlanta and community volunteers, who painted the entire outside of the facility (including the pool deck) and completed two beautiful murals.
- Hosted the first annual Midsummer Party, attended by over 250 people.
- Solicited and received \$25,000 in cash, in-kind, and matching contributions from individual and business donations, the City, and Hands On Atlanta for paint and supplies, six heavy-duty tables and umbrellas, concessions supplies(including a refrigerator and freezer), additional signage for the pool, promotional materials, and the FOGPP website.
- Received a donation of more than 250 bathing suits. Many were given to pool patrons who did not have appropriate swim attire; the others were sold. Revenues will be used to purchase suits to give away in 2006.
- Sold concessions from 12-4 p.m. every day.
- Launched Grant Park Renegades swim team.
- Enrolled 60+ children in Learn to Swim and/or Parent-Tot classes.
- Gave 2,800 hours of volunteer time.
- Reached out to thousands of South Atlanta residents through our website, neighborhood list-serves, and weekly newsletter.

## Section II. Recommendations to Achieve Basic Safety Standards in 2006

### 1. Operations and Maintenance:

- **Cordon off half the sinks, toilets and showers in men's and women's bathhouses.** *Observational bases:* Maintenance of these large areas is unnecessary, and is too much upkeep for the staff to manage. Patrons can be well served with half the facilities open, particularly if those are properly maintained.
- **Hire a janitorial service to clean and sanitize bathhouses twice weekly.** Maintenance of these areas requires too much upkeep for the staff to manage, and the staff is not trained to do it. Toilets are regularly clogged with feces, socks, and toilet paper; showers are left running nonstop; sinks leak, and are clogged on a daily basis.
- **Repair leaky faucets and showers in bathhouses.** See above.
- **Dedicate a vacuum and two skimmers with poles to remain at Grant Park Pool during the 2006 season.** The pool was not routinely vacuumed and skimmed because the staff did not have access to a vacuum and skimmers, often for weeks at a time.
- **Complete deck painting /repaint northeast corner where chipping has occurred.** The parts of the decking that were painted by FOGPP and Hands On Atlanta in June weathered the summer well. The entire deck area can be made equally safe by completing this project.
- **Trim trees hanging over both pools.** The water and decks are littered with leaves on a daily basis from the overhanging trees. Cutting back the limbs would eliminate this debris.

### 2. Staffing

- **Institute management training for Aquatics personnel in management positions.** *Observational bases:* (1) On one occasion, five guards were at the site, including a co-manager. Four guards, including the co-manager, were outside the gate in a car listening to music; only one was in the chair. This guard simply watched as four teenage boys grabbed a girl from the pool deck, picked her up, and threw her into the pool – she was fully clothed and protesting; (2) A small boy cut his finger at the pool. When he asked for a bandage, pool manager referred patron to the first-aid kit in guard room (did not go get one himself). First-aid kit was completely empty; (3) Despite regular discussions between FOGPP members and pool managers, pools were never routinely skimmed or vacuumed, bathrooms never routinely cleaned, pool decks and surrounding areas rarely swept, patrons never asked to shower before entering pool, patrons routinely allowed to wear socks or street clothes in pool.

- **Staff facility with fewer lifeguards but pay higher wages, so well-trained guards can be recruited and retained** *Observational bases:* (1) Guards observed talking on cell phones while in the chair; (2) In the latter half of the season, there was only one guard on duty in a chair at the main pool, though several guards were on the premises. It is unsafe for one guard to cover the entire length of a pool of this size; (3) A small girl who had been in the pool came to the guard room looking for a bandage. She had a wound so significant that it had been stitched, and one of the stitches had come out. She was bleeding profusely. Only then did the guard tell her she couldn't get in the pool; (4) When locks to the Berne Street gate were changed, guards drove across the park's grass to get to the parking lot beside the pool; (5) Guards were seen playing baseball using table umbrellas as bats. All these umbrellas are now broken.
- **Ensure staff and management accountability through regular supervision from upper-level management within the Aquatics and/or Recreation Departments.** *Suggestions for improving staff performance:* (1) Institute monetary/in-kind incentives program to motivate staff to fulfill job requirements; (2) Training of managers and staff should include site visits to well-run pools, both public and private; (3) In conjunction with FOGPP, host a Meet-and-Greet party for managers and staff members with local community to help set expectations from the beginning of the swim season.

### 3. Infrastructure

- **Re-plaster and paint walls of both pools before filling in 2006.** *Observational bases:* Even on those occasions when the pool water was clean, i.e., before parties, the water appeared dirty due to large stains on the walls and bottoms of both pools. Moreover, on some walls of the main pool, plaster is chipping. This deterioration will worsen if not addressed now.
- **Repair leaking roofs in the pump house and bathhouse.** Because the pump house roof leaks, the pump shorts out and stops working almost every time it rains. Because the bathhouse roof leaks, mildew grows on the ceiling and walls and water pools on the floor, making it unsafe and unsanitary.
- **Purchase and install new pump and strainer basket.** Because of outdated pump, chlorinator, etc., the pool chemical balance often gets beyond the reach of the staff (water turns green) and must be closed. This is a particular issue in the kiddie pool.
- **Fix or replace chlorinator in the kiddie pool.** The kiddie pool was operational during less than half of the days of the 2005 season because the water did not meet sanitary standards. This appears to be a historical trend.

### **Section III: FOGPP's 2006 Action Plan to Support the Grant Park Pool**

Given a commitment from the city that the Grant Park Pool will be maintained throughout the swim season as a safe, clean recreational space, FOGPP is willing to:

- 1. Raise money for “extras” or to offset expenses** (for example, do a match as we did with the tables) for agreed-upon items such as deck chairs, strainers, janitorial services, or a pool vacuum.
- 2. Work to secure a large donation of swimsuits**, which could possibly be distributed through pools city-wide.
- 3. Support guards and staff** with recognition programs, a pre-opening party, and workdays.
- 4. Support staff in implementing programs** such as swim lessons, a swim team, water aerobics classes, parties.
- 5. Further beautify the pool space** by completing deck painting, doing paint touch-ups, installing planters, and replacing the fence around the animal area.
- 6. Raise money to support these efforts** by pursuing funding from the following sources:
  - Sponsorships from businesses with a significant interest in our neighborhood (Beazer Homes, Glenwood Green, Target, Lowe's, etc)
  - Dine-outs at area restaurants. In addition to raising money, these events build community, and are a great way for local restaurants to support the pool (and get positive publicity).
  - Concession sales. In addition to raising money for pool improvements and providing a valuable service to pool patrols, this program could provide a stipend for two college or high school students to offset school expenses.
  - Individuals. We plan to conduct a “Friends” fund-raising campaign that encourages individual and family participation in the pool. One benefit will be an invitation to one private pool party each year.
  - Foundations and other entities. We plan to pursue grant money to pay for specific items such as swimsuits, swim team expenses, and partnership programs with area nonprofits (such as East Atlanta Kids Club), as well as for aesthetic improvements.
  - FOGPP has identified potential federal funding sources for programs designed to prevent and combat obesity. With the support of the Aquatics Department, FOGPP is prepared to pursue these grants, either in conjunction with the department or independently, to bring more comprehensive programming to the pool.

We look forward to meeting with you and your staff members soon to discuss this Partnership Proposal in greater detail. FOGPP's hope is that we can come to agreement on a shared vision for the pool, and an action plan for making that vision a reality for the 2006 summer swim season.

Sincerely,

Friends of Grant Park Pool

CC: Ceasar Mitchell, City Council member, Post 1 At Large  
Carla Smith, City Council member, District 1  
Curtis Winston, Director of Aquatics

*Friends of Grant Park Pool is a subcommittee of GPNA.*

