

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



GEORGIA BUSINESS HISTORY INITIATIVE

Sharing the Stories of the Businesses that Built Georgia





Centennial Olympic Park July 4, 2014. *Courtesy of Georgia World Congress Center Authority.* Next page: Crowds at the Olympic Stadium. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson.*



A CASE STUDY IN GEORGIA'S
BUSINESS HISTORY

1996 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES

Atlanta hosted the Centennial Summer Olympic Games from July 19-August 4, 1996. This was the largest event in the city's history and it helped establish Atlanta as the business and sports capital of the Southeast. Atlanta spent millions of dollars in preparation for the Games, including building new sports venues, improving streets and sidewalks, and altering housing patterns. The Centennial Games brought global attention and investment to Atlanta.

BIDDING PROCESS

In 1987, Atlanta attorney Billy Payne and Mayor Andrew Young began developing a bid for Atlanta to host the 1996 Centennial Olympics. The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) had the difficult job of competing with other cities around the world—including Athens, Greece, home of the first Olympics—for the chance to host the Summer Games. Manchester, England; Toronto, Canada; and Belgrade, Yugoslavia were also vying for the honor of hosting the 100th Olympic Games.

Committee members worked tirelessly to convince local business leaders, the U.S. Olympic committee, and members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that Atlanta was the best place to host the Olympics. They published a two-volume document outlining the city's plans for sporting events, financial support, and accommodations for visitors. Their hard work paid off: in September 1990, the IOC selected Atlanta as the host of the 100th Olympic Games.



Clockwise, from left: Andrew Young and Billy Payne holding the five-ringed symbol of the Olympic Games at the Atlanta Organizing Committee Celebration Parade. Archives Division, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System; Techwood Homes, 1993. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS GA-2257-C; Tickets to the 1996 Olympic Games. Courtesy of Ed Jackson; Olympic Headline. Scanned by the Georgia Historical Society.

Atlanta Gets '96 Olympics

TOKYO (UPI) — The 1996 Summer Olympics will be held in Atlanta, Olympic officials announced Tuesday.

Atlanta was chosen over five other cities — Athens, Greece, Toronto, Canada, Melbourne,

tations at the 96th IOC session hoping to win support from the 86 voting members.

International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch, who chose not to vote, open the sealed envelope

vision audience. "The IOC 1996 Games anch said.

Atlanta w na, showing video messa



PREPARING FOR THE GAMES

Preparation for the 1996 Games took Atlanta almost six years. The city expanded existing venues and built several new buildings such as Olympic Stadium and McAuley Aquatic Center to host sporting events. A lot of work went into preparing the city to host millions of guests: roads were repaired, sidewalks replaced, trees planted, new lighting installed, and public art displayed.

People living in Techwood Homes—the first public housing development in American history—perhaps experienced the greatest upheaval during the city’s transformation. The Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) demolished Techwood Homes to build mixed-income housing and the Olympic Village that housed Olympic competitors during the Games. Georgia State University turned the Olympic Village into student dorms after the Games.

PAYING FOR THE GAMES

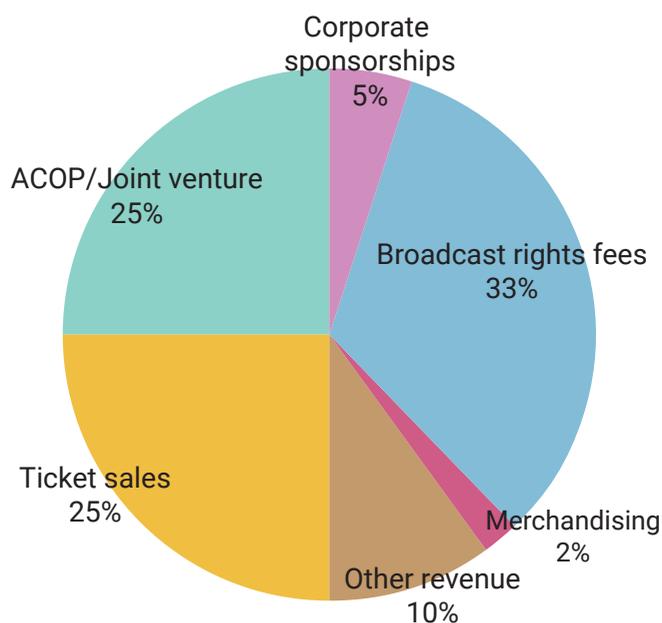
Have you ever wondered who pays to put on the Olympics? On average, a host city will spend \$5.3 billion to implement the Summer Games. The answer is a little complicated because there are multiple organizations involved in making the Olympics happen, and every host city does things differently. Some host cities go into debt or are forced to raise taxes on citizens to pay for the Games. The Atlanta Games were unique because organizers placed very high importance on paying for the Games without causing financial harm to the city of Atlanta.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is the institution behind the Olympics. The IOC has many different projects, but its biggest responsibility is making sure there is regular celebration of the Olympic Games. The IOC selects the host city and provides support, but it is the job of the local organizing committees to make all the practical and financial arrangements for the Games. For example, the organizing committee has to make sure the city has the right kind of venues and equipment needed for every competing sport. These organizations also provide housing for athletes, organize cultural events, solve transportation problems, and coordinate medical services.

The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) took on the responsibility of staging the 1996 Summer Olympics. The non-profit, civic organization had the goal of using only privately-raised funds to present the Games—something no other host city had done before. ACOG spent about \$1.7 billion over six years to put on the Games. The largest expense was construction, which represented 24 percent of the total money spent.

Where did the money come from? The biggest source of revenue, approximately 33 percent of the total, came from selling the rights to broadcast the Olympics on television. The IOC handled negotiating the broadcast rights and shared the funds with ACOG. Another 5 percent of funds came from international corporate

PERCENTAGES OF REVENUE BY SOURCE



Left: Sources of revenue for the Atlanta Olympic Games. Data from *The Official Report of the Centennial Olympic Games*. Above: Centennial Olympic Park Bricks. Courtesy of GWCCA.

sponsorships negotiated by the IOC. ACOG created a joint venture with the United States Olympic Committee to offer national sponsorships. This joint venture raised \$426 million dollars for ACOG. Ticket sales and official merchandising helped round out ACOG's budget.

Corporations and individuals also gave generously to support the Olympic Games. A great example of this giving was the funding of Centennial Olympic Park. The \$75 million needed to develop the park all came from the private sector. Genuine Auto Parts donated land worth millions, and the Woodruff Foundation gave a generous donation to kick-start the project. Thousands of individuals and businesses contributed to the park by buying commemorative bricks. The approximately 500,000 bricks sold not only provided needed funds, but also formed the Centennial Plaza and several pathways in the park.

Although ACOG used only private funds to host the games, government money was spent on infrastructure projects, support for the Paralympic Games, and additional security. It is estimated that the federal government provided \$609 million for the 1996 Olympic Games. The majority of spending (\$424 million) went to highway, transit, public housing, and other capital improvements.

RECAPPING THE GAMES

The Olympic Games took place from July 19 through August 4. More than 2 million people visited Atlanta during the Games and nearly 3.5 billion people around the world watched on television. The opening ceremony on July 19, 1996, attracted a crowd of approximately 83,000 to Olympic Stadium. The ceremony included an artistic showcase celebrating the history and culture of the American South and a special tribute to the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympic Games. Legendary boxer Muhammad Ali lit the cauldron with the Olympic flame.



Clockwise, from left: Olympic fans in Atlanta. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson*; Track and Field Race at Olympic Stadium. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson*; Izzy and Olympic volunteer. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson*.

Accompanying nearly 10,318 competitors were millions of spectators and members of the international press who traveled to Atlanta to watch the world's greatest athletes compete. All Olympic host cities struggle with the logistics of hosting so many people in a short span of time. This drastic increase of people in the city resulted in transportation and housing challenges. Some buses broke down, drivers got lost, and traffic was congested.

Tragedy struck the Games on July 27 when Eric Robert Rudolph set off a 40-pound pipe bomb at Centennial Olympic Park, killing one person and injuring more than 100. The fatal terrorist attack disrupted the peaceful atmosphere that marked the first days of competition, but the Games continued with increased security measures put in place. The park reopened on July 29 with a moving ceremony attended by 40,000 people.

The Games provided several firsts and many exciting moments. Softball debuted as an Olympic sport, along with beach volleyball, mountain biking, lightweight rowing, and women's soccer. Gymnast Kerri Strug secured the U.S. women's first-ever team gold medal, despite having an injured ankle. American Michael Johnson became the first man in history to win the 200m and 400m at the same Olympic Games. He also set a record by completing the 200m in 19.32 seconds.

LASTING IMPACT

Although the Atlanta Games took place 20 years ago, the effects of this historic event can still be seen in the city's landscape and economy. The most obvious lasting symbol of the 1996 Games is Centennial Olympic Park. This iconic space helped shift the center of downtown to the northwest, drawing people, businesses, and residential developers to the area. In March 2016, the Georgia World Congress Center Authority reported that since the 1996 Olympic Games, Centennial Olympic Park has attracted



Top: 1996 Olympic Medal. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson.*
Bottom: View of Centennial Olympic Park from Above. *Courtesy of GWCCA.*

\$2.2 billion in new development downtown. This includes 9 hotels, 7 residential towers, and new attractions such as the Georgia Aquarium, the World of Coca-Cola, Center for Civil and Human Rights, College Football Hall of Fame, and SkyView Atlanta. Olympic Stadium, which is now known as Turner Field, remains a staple of Atlanta's cityscape. The Stadium had been home to the Atlanta Braves baseball team from 1997 until their move to a newly-built stadium in Cobb County in 2017. It now belongs to Georgia State University.

The attention Atlanta received from hosting the Olympics helped turn the city into a destination for sporting events. Since the 1996 Games, Georgia's capital has held events like the NCAA Men's and Women's Final Four, Super Bowl XXXIV at the Georgia Dome, and multiple professional All-Star games.

Many Atlanta-based companies saw large numbers of television viewers as an opportunity to promote their businesses. Corporations such as Home Depot, Delta Air Lines, Coca-Cola, and UPS spent millions of dollars on television advertisements, solidifying these Georgia companies as nationally and even internationally recognized brands. The Games contributed to making Atlanta the business capital of the Southeast, boasting 18 Fortune 500 companies. Atlanta experienced new growth after the Games with more corporations and talented people moving to the area.

Successfully hosting the Olympic Games brought international attention to the city of Atlanta. Business leaders built on this recognition to attract new clients and investors to Georgia. All this success started with the vision of leaders like Billy Payne and Andrew Young who believed in Atlanta's ability to come together and pull off a task that so many thought was impossible.

OLYMPIC SITES STILL USED TODAY

Centennial Olympic Park is the most recognizable physical legacy of the 1996 Summer Olympics. The site of the park was once a run-down area, but it was transformed into the central gathering place for the Olympic Games with \$75 million in private-sector donations. The Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) helped the state of Georgia manage development of the site and took over management of the park after the games. The park now serves as the center of Atlanta's downtown entertainment and hospitality district

with new restaurants, hotels, and residential development along with popular attractions like the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, the Center for Civil and Human Rights, and the College Football Hall of Fame.

The McAuley Aquatic Center has a 10.5-foot-deep, 10-lane pool built to meet U.S. and international standards. In 1996, the center



Fountain of Rings at Centennial Olympic Park. Courtesy of GWCCA.

hosted Olympic swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and water polo competitions. Today, the center is home to the Georgia Tech swimming and diving teams. It is also used for classes, clubs, and recreational swimming. In 2016, the U.S. Olympic swimmers used the facility to train for the Rio Olympics.

Lake Lanier Olympic Park served as the venue for events such as rowing, canoeing, and kayaking during the 1996 Olympic Games. The Lake had been around for many years, but new stands and other infrastructure were built for the Games. More recently, the site began a \$10 million renovation project to make it ADA accessible, in hopes of attracting more Paralympic events. In 2018, the venue will host the Dragon Boat World Championships.

The Olympic Stadium housed the opening and closing ceremonies and all track and field events for the 1996 Olympic Games. After the Games, Turner Field became home to the Atlanta Braves baseball team for 20 seasons until the team moved to a new stadium in Cobb County. Georgia State University bought the property in a joint venture with private developers. The stadium will be repurposed for Panthers Football and the surrounding area will be redeveloped with new housing and retail spaces. Some community members are protesting the redevelopment because they believe it will lead to displacement of residents currently living near the site.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Georgia Standards of Excellence, SS8H12, SS8E2, L-6-8RH1, L6-8WHST1

How did hosting the 1996 Summer Olympics impact Georgia? Hosting the 1996 Summer Olympics had short-term and long-term impacts on the city of Atlanta and the State of Georgia. Describe at least two short-term impacts and one long-term impact of hosting the Games.

Who should pay for Olympic Games? Leaders like Billy Payne and Andrew Young wanted to make sure Atlanta did not get stuck in debt by hosting the Olympic Games. They formed ACOG and relied on revenue from the Games and support from the private sector. In some countries, the government takes on the responsibility of managing and paying for the Games. Imagine your city put you in charge of hosting the Summer Olympics. How would you pay for it?

RESEARCH AND REPORT

Georgia Standards of Excellence, SS8H12, SS8E2, L-6-8RH1, L6-8WHST1, L6-8WHST7, L6-8WHST8, L6-8WHST9

Research Question: How does the economic impact of hosting the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta compare to other Games?

Directions: Now that you have learned a little bit about the 1996 Summer Olympics, it is time to dig deeper. There is so much more to discover about the Atlanta Games and its impact on Georgia's economy and society. Use the resources in the bibliography to get started on your research.

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Crowds at the Olympic Stadium. *Courtesy of Ed Jackson.* Next page: Centennial Olympic Park. *Courtesy of GWCCA.*



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