



MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: August 26, 2014

SUBJECT: Pease Park Master Plan Update

The Pease District Park Master Plan process is coming to a close after a robust public engagement period that began in November, 2013. The draft Pease Park Master Plan reveals an exciting vision for one of Austin's oldest parks. With an overall focus on enhancing and preserving the naturalistic feel of the park and adjacent Shoal Creek Greenbelt, opportunities were identified for improving gateways, sensitively adapting the historic Tudor Cottage restroom building and enhancing the playscape area. Additionally, the plan calls for additional bridge crossings across Shoal Creek and a much improved and enhanced trail system. The full draft of the master plan is posted to the Pease Park Master Plan website and will be provided to all boards and commissions for review. Please visit the website at <http://austintexas.gov/department/pease-district-park-master-plan> to access the draft master plan.

The final planning phase includes the presentation of the master plan to several boards and commissions in August and September. The Parks and Recreation Board (PARB) will be presented with the plan on September 23, 2014, before a presentation to City Council scheduled for October 16, 2014.

The Pease Park Master Plan is the culmination of a successful partnership between PARD and the Pease Park Conservancy (PPC), which raised a majority of the funds for the plan. The PPC hired the firm, Wallace, Roberts & Todd (WRT) to develop the plan, which comprises Pease Park and the associated Shoal Creek Greenbelt along Lamar Blvd up to 31st Street. Founded in 1963, WRT has established a national reputation for planning public spaces across the country. Among its numerous projects, WRT has prepared a master plan for Houston's Memorial Park and is currently working on the Trinity River Park project in Dallas. WRT also spearheaded the comprehensive "Imagine Austin" plan for the City in 2012.

Staff presented the draft master plan concepts to the Land, Facilities and Program committee of PARB on July 9, 2014. The committee made suggestions, requested additional information, and deferred action on the plan until the Land, Facilities and Program Committee meeting in September. Staff welcomes the opportunity to provide PARB members with additional information, which will also be presented at the September 8, 2014, Land, Facilities and Program Committee meeting.

Public Engagement

PARD planning staff facilitated the public engagement process to ensure that community outreach and participation was extensive and far-reaching. Outreach included signage in the park; notices to neighborhood associations and interested parties through the community registry; web page and social media; and multiple media advisories that resulted in numerous print and television stories. Further, PARD worked with the consultants to develop a survey tool that received nearly 1,000 responses. PARD maintained a dedicated Pease Park Master Plan website and posted the presentations from each public meeting. All three public meetings were well-attended with an average of 70 attendees at each meeting. PARD also facilitated a meeting with the Lamar Senior Activity Center Advisory Board to solicit feedback about how the park could better serve the center.

PARD staff served as the primary point of contact for the community to ensure that feedback received from the public throughout the planning process was conveyed quickly and directly to the master plan consultants. PARD staff convened a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to advise the master plan team throughout the process. The TAG consisted of representatives from the following city departments:

- Watershed Protection Department
- Transportation Department
- Neighborhood Connectivity
- Water Utility
- Corporate Public Information Office
- Urban Planning Division
- Capital Metro
- PARD Forestry
- PARD Operations and Maintenance
- PARD Office of Capital Improvement Program

Adopt a Park Partner

The PPC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and the “Adopt-a-Park” partner for Pease Park. Since 2008, the PPC has led efforts to improve the area’s landscape, including planting 500 new trees and restoring historic features in the park, such as the Tudor Cottage and Memorial Entry Gates constructed in the 1920s and the picnic tables installed by the Works Progress Administration. The PPC has established a permanent financial endowment at the Austin Community Foundation that is intended to be a “trust fund” for Pease Park and supplement what the city can provide on the park’s care. The endowment is presently valued at \$200,000.

Governance

Pease District Park and the adjacent Shoal Green Greenbelt that comprise the planning area are fully operated and managed by PARD. The PPC has expressed its intent to actively raise private funds to assist the City in funding approved projects in the park. PPC and the City will continue to work together with other public and private partners to fund improvements

Master Plan Implementation

The master plan provides a conceptual framework for the development of Pease Park and the adjacent Shoal Creek greenbelt for the next 20-30 years. An Implementation Guide that lists suggested priorities and cost estimates are part of the final document. The master plan, developed through a community-based process, provides a blueprint of park development and moreover, is a helpful tool in leveraging the contributions of the nonprofit and private sector for improvements. The city will likely play a role in coming years through the Capital Improvements Program, which is the voter approved bond program that addresses major capital projects. Currently, there are no funds allocated for the implementation of the master plan.

Disc Golf

The Land, Facilities and Program Committee requested additional information about the removal of disc golf from Pease Park. PARD closed the disc golf course in 2010 after years of study and consultation with the Watershed Protection Department (WPD) about the parks' severe ecological degradation. A detailed memo about this process is attached for your reference.

In April 2014, WPD began construction of a \$6.2 million restoration project on Shoal Creek along Pease Park. The project includes stream bank erosion control, invasive plant removal, rain meadows, relocating portions of the wastewater sewer currently in the creek bed, trail improvements, de-compacting soils and planting new trees and native plants. Completion of construction is expected by early of 2016 and then a 3-year landscape maintenance period follows thereafter. The scope and design of this large-scale restoration project was predicated on PARD's commitment to nurture the fragile watershed, which includes limiting recreational uses that may have an adverse effect on the environment. For the long-term sustainability of the restoration project, adverse impacts to the landscape by recreational uses along the creek will be reduced by the use of designated pathways, creek access points and creek crossings. For more information about this project, please visit: <http://www.austintexas.gov/ShoalCreekRestoration>.

PARD continues to operate and improve five disc golf courses throughout the city. In 2014, PARD and WPD jointly invested \$250,000 in the Zilker Park Disc Golf Course, including drainage improvements, vegetation management and improvement of course features. In 2012, PARD invested \$300,000 in the development of a new 18-hole disc golf course at the Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park.

For updated information about the Pease Park Master Plan process, please visit <http://austintexas.gov/department/pease-district-park-master-plan>.

Should you have further questions or require additional information, please contact Ricardo Soliz, Division Manager, at (512)974-9452.

cc: Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
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