

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Our purpose is to provide, protect and preserve a park system that promotes quality recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin community.



The Austin Parks and Recreation Department has been the trusted steward of our city's public lands since 1928. By protecting and maintaining parkland, preserving trails, managing green spaces and nature preserves, we provide more than **29,000 acres of parkland** for our community to enjoy quiet retreats and lively play, to commune with nature and to connect with each other.

BY THE NUMBERS

Major Amenities Managed by the Department



271 parks

211 miles of trails



172 playscapes

76 picnic shelters



12 off-leash dog areas

11 museums, arts and cultural centers



10 stages/amphitheaters

5 public cemeteries



124 tennis facilities

94 ball fields



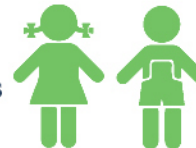
77 basketball courts

50 aquatic facilities



50 volleyball courts

20 recreation centers



6 golf courses

5 disc golf courses



3 senior activity centers

Total Program Participants:

FY 2014 = **17,527**

FY 2015 to date = **6,445**

Total Afterschool & Youth Camp Participants:

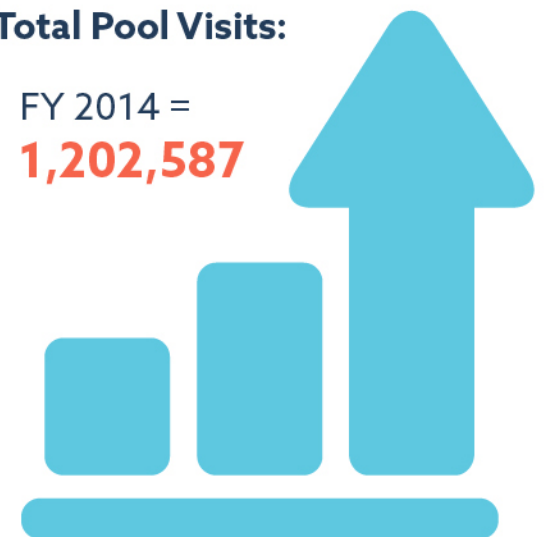
FY 2014 = **2,819**

FY 2015 to date = **610**

Total Pool Visits:

FY 2014 =

1,202,587



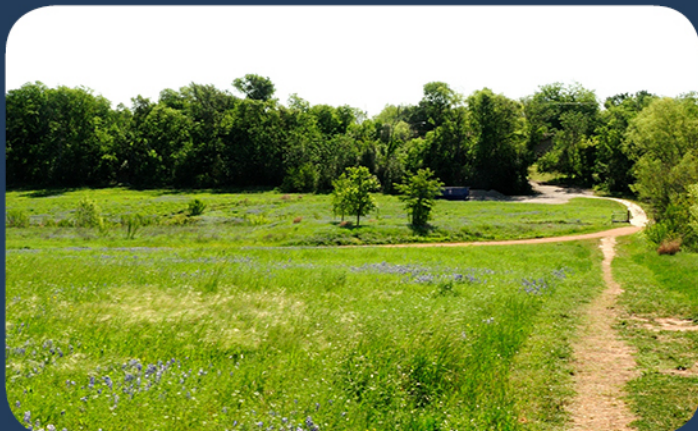
OPEN SPACE

Open space is defined as land that is undeveloped. It can be protected, unprotected, public or private.

In Austin, open space is land held in public trust for specific purposes. The public purpose is usually defined by the funding source (bonds).

Parks and Recreation:

- Parks
- Green Space
- School Yards/Playgrounds
- Public Seating Areas
- Public Plazas
- Vacant Lots
- Green Ways



WATER SERVICES

Balcones Canyonlands Preserve:

- Endangered species
- Preserves that also serve as a mitigation bank

Water Quality Protection Lands:

- Conservation easements
- Publicly held fee title to protect sensitive landscapes in the Barton Springs Zone in order to benefit water quality

Both Balcones Canyonlands Preserve & Water Quality Protection Lands:

- Enhance water quality and quantity
- Protect current and future water supplies
- Provide groundwater protection
- Protect endangered species
- Support carbon sequestration
- Conserve Austin's natural heritage

Big Trends

1. Technology: Parks and Recreation is going High Tech
 - Mobile apps: Park Scan, Geocaching, Information Signage
 - Online Services: Registration and Payments, Inventory Management, Ball field Lighting, Security Monitoring
 - WiFi in the Parks: Digital Devices for Staff, Internet Access for All
2. Environment: Extreme Weather Events – flooding, storm surges and drought impact what we do. Natural resources are being stretched.
 - Parks are in the forefront of public education and the protection of resources
 - Reduction of infrastructure in storm water management areas by providing green infrastructure solutions through parks and open space
 - Natural play areas
 - Outdoor education focus

Big Trends

3. Demographic Shifts

- We have to shift our thinking to serve more community members, with a quality focus and more diverse programs
- We need to be ready to/for rapid change as the population ages and they desire active activities
- We must create a continuum of services to grow with the users
- Multi-generational facilities
- Multi-services facilities

4. Compact and Connected: Urbanization

- With the rapid urbanization of cities, parks and recreation will play a huge role in shaping successful cities
- Provide better connectivity through trails, greenways, blueways and sidewalks
- Look for ways to jointly develop city facilities
- Proactively purchase land or dedicate land in key areas

Big Trends

5. Parks as an Economic Engine

- Innovation Districts
- Urban revitalization strategies
- Destination points/tourism
- Rebirth of Economic Development around a park – spurs employment
- Attracts peripheral commercial/retail usage

6. Parks and Recreation Leads to Healthier Populations

- Community gardens
- Food forests
- Walking trails/ walkability
- Paddling trails
- Natural playscapes
- Partnerships with health and wellness organizations
- Urban farms
- Outdoor fitness centers

Big Trends

7. Collaboration and Partnerships: Stretching the dollars

- Joint developments
- Better innovation and efficiency
- Sharing of risk/costs
- Relationship development
- Bigger voice/Bigger resources
- Interdepartmental collaborations

What is the Role of Council

Leadership role in setting policy in relation to the issues

ISSUES IN THE NEXT 60 DAYS

Events in Downtown Parks



Events in Downtown Parks

Zilker, Auditorium Shores, Festival Beach and Downtown Squares



Downtown Event Venues:

- Downtown Austin: Iconic event destination
- High demand for Music & Cultural Events
- Attract locals and tourists from across the country
- Generate: ~ \$375,000/Year
 - 1.4 M in ticket remittance funds in FY 2014
- Collectively Downtown Venues Host:
 - 38 events/ year; 108 event days/year
 - Require: 151 days for set/up & take down

Current Reality:

- # of Event requests exceed venue capacities
- Existing events attract record crowds which compound:
 - Neighborhood impacts
 - Traffic congestion
 - Parkland wear & tear
- Operate w/ Standard Event Management Requirements that strive to:
 - Maximize parks open to public
 - Minimize adverse neighborhood impacts
 - Maximize safety concerns and traffic impacts
 - Require event organizers to repair and restore
- Impact of Fee Waivers

Events in Downtown Parks

Zilker, Auditorium Shores, Festival Beach and Downtown Squares



Policy Considerations:

- Achieving a “Balanced Approach”:
 - Public vs. private use of parkland
 - Right-sizing the # of events per venue
 - Sufficient neighborhood protections
 - Diversity of event experiences downtown
 - Downtown vs District-based event mgt.
- Event Ordinances and Compliance
 - Citywide requirements
 - Uniform Event Penalties/Fines
 - Conditions for approval and appeal
- Uniform Fee Waiver Policy and Criteria
- Maintaining Events Affordability
 - Organizer costs vs. Participant ticket

ISSUES IN THE NEXT 60 DAYS

Partnerships / Conservancies



Partnerships / Conservancies

Department/Department:

- Animal Services
- Austin Water Utility
- Fire Department
- Health and Human Services
- Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
- Office of Sustainability
- Police Department
- Public Works
- Watershed Protection
- Transportation

Public/Public:

- Austin Independent School District
- Neighborhood Associations/Groups, including Colony Park, Dove Springs, Ramsey, and Windsor Park
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- African American Cultural Heritage District

Public/Non-profit:

- Barton Springs Conservancy
- Lonestar Soccer
- North Austin YMCA
- Onion Creek Park District
- Pease Park Conservancy
- Shoal Creek Conservancy
- Umlauf Foundation
- Waller Creek Conservancy
- West Austin Youth Association
- Zilker Botanical Gardens

Public/Private:

- Seaholm Intake Facility
- Decker Lake Golf

ISSUES IN THE NEXT 60 DAYS

Parkland Dedication



Parkland Dedication



Current Reality:

- 5 acres per 1000 pop. or a fee-in-lieu of \$650 per unit is insufficient, antiquated and outdated
- The current parkland dedication requirements are not keeping pace with population growth

Best Practices:

- Dr. Crompton, field expert, suggest a per person fee based on density rather than per unit plus a development fee to maintain the existing level of service

Consequences:

- Existing residents will continue to subsidize development in order to maintain Austin's current level of service

Consideration:

- Have development pay for the demand it generates
- Adjust the fee-in-lieu of to reflect current cost of land and park development

Park Acres Per 1000 Population

