




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

THRU: Christopher Shorter, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: October 14, 2020

SUBJECT: Update on Ordinance No. 20200917-107 – 2020 Trail of Lights

On September 17, 2020 City Council approved Ordinance No. [20200917-107](#) increasing the maximum number of special event days for the 2020 Trail of Lights Event at Zilker Metropolitan Park from 15 to 30 days.

Authorization

As a result of safety requirements and health protocols, pedestrian-based attractions or activations are impacted. The Trail of Lights Event this year will not include the following:

- Event community performance stages;
- In-person pedestrian experiences;
- Walk-up ticket purchases and
- Carousel and Ferris wheel activations.

The above changes have allowed the event to mobilize, become feasible through an ease in on-site logistical needs and decrease impacts affecting park access.

Fall Park Seasonal Availability

In a typical calendar year at Zilker Metropolitan Parks (Zilker), there are five events that utilize 27 event days at Zilker plus set up and take down needed to safely produce each event. Due to COVID-19, no events have been able to occur to date resulting in 38 days of access to park users not available in a typical calendar year.

In addition, as a result of required health and safety changes to the Trail of Lights, load in day use and equipment safety needs associated are reduced. This will result in an additional 10 days of access where the park will not be encumbered by event fencing while still allowing minimal load in activities to occur due to reduced logistical needs.

Maximizing Park Grounds Access

The Trail of Lights Foundation has worked to provide additional public access to 17 acres at Zilker Park. A map is attached to show the 2019 (red) and 2020 (green) approved use areas for the Trail of Lights.

- Great Lawn – Total Area 54 acres
- Traditional Trail of Lights Use 42 acres
- 2020 Approved Use Area 25 acres (net gain of 17 acres of access)

Traffic and Mobility Mitigation

In addition to less impacts within Zilker Park, the Trail of Lights Foundation and City of Austin's Austin Center for Events has worked to create less impact on the roadways.

Barton Springs Road:

- Mobility will be enhanced, and congestion greatly reduced.
- Typical Year: Barton Springs Road is closed for event days.
- 2020 Year: Barton Springs Road will remain open throughout the event schedule to allow mobility by the general public throughout the event period.

Access:

- Pre-credentialed vehicles will only be allowed to access the event by using Lake Austin Boulevard.
- No pedestrian or walk up access will be allowed from any other park area.
- Trail of Lights and City staff are working on comprehensive messaging to credentialed attendees as well as the general public to create awareness of the changes for 2020 due to COVID-19.

Attendees:

- A nightly cap of no more than 1,300 vehicles per night can be accommodated.
- A normal year Trail of Lights Event would have vehicle demands that included 1,900 pre-paid vehicles per night and 20 additional shuttle buses on busy nights. In addition, pedicabs, transportation networking companies, scooters, bike arrivals and park and walk attendance from a number of area garages, lots, adjacent neighborhoods and businesses all combined created a number of additional impacts that will not be felt this year.

If you have additional questions, please contact Jason Maurer, Sales and Event Manager, Austin Parks and Recreation Department at 512-974-2427, or jason.maurer@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
 Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Deputy City Manager

Attachment:

1. Park Access Map

Attachment 1 – Park Access Map

2019 use area – RED area and outline

2020 approved use area – green shaded area

