

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DATE: *December 2020*

PLANNING UPDATES:

Roy G. Guerrero Metro Park – Right of Way (ROW): Update on the City Council direction to vacate Right of Way (ROW) in Roy G. Guerrero Metro Park. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) will serve as the applicant for the ROW vacation process and will file an application, along with a survey of all ROW to be vacated, with the Office of Real Estate.

PARD has identified portions of existing undeveloped ROW in Roy G. Guerrero that have not been vacated and ordered a survey through the Public Works Department. Once the survey is completed, the application will be submitted, and it will go to various reviewers for comments. PARD, as the applicant, will respond to clear the comments. When comments are cleared, the case will be scheduled for public hearing with the Urban Transportation Commission and then by Planning Commission. Once approved by the Commissions, it will be submitted to City Council for final approval.

The survey was ordered through the City Surveyor's Office in the Public Works Department in July 2020. However, there has been a heavy volume of work and a backlog at the City Surveyor's office, and work has not yet begun on this series of surveys. As of November, the estimated time for the City Surveyor to begin this work is January 2021 and will take a few weeks to complete. From there, a typical timeline for a ROW vacation is 6 – 12 months for the application to make it through to City Council. **District 3**

Beverly S. Sheffield Northwest District Park Vision Plan: PARD is working with RVi, a local landscape architecture/planning firm, to engage the community in developing a new vision plan for the park. The plan will provide recommendations for enhancement of the existing facilities and development of new facilities to meet recreational needs through a well-documented community engagement process. The first meetings will be held in early 2021 with a final vision plan, including design and phasing recommendations, presented to Boards and Commissions for approval in summer/fall of 2021. For additional information and updates, please visit the project's webpage at: <http://austintexas.gov/departments/beverly-s-sheffield-northwest-district-park-vision-plan>. **District 7**

George Washington Carver Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center Facility Expansion Plan: On October 3, PARD and the consultant team, Smith & Company with Perkins & Will, hosted the second virtual community meeting to discuss the facility expansion plan. Community members were presented with three concepts for the expansion and discussed each option during the virtual meeting and/or provided feedback on the concepts via SpeakUp Austin. The planning team used the cumulative input to refine a single concept presented at the final community-wide meeting on November 21. PARD and the consultant team continues to engage with the project's Technical Advisory Committee and the African American Resource Advisory Commission throughout the planning phase. Plan information is available at: <https://www.austintexas.gov/CarverATXplanning> and https://www.speakupaustin.org/carveratx-planning/forum_topics/community-meeting-2. **District 1**

Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan: The planning team has completed the development of a community-wide survey, which will be available on the project's webpage. The survey will gather feedback on how park visitors are currently using the park, assessing their overall experience, as well as improvements and amenities they would like to see in the future. Methods that PARD will utilize to distribute the survey include the following: banner on Barton Springs Road and along the fence line of Austin Science and Nature Center, link to City Council offices, Rec-Track, public service announcements for the radio, and PARD's social media. **Districts 5 and 8**

Central Williamson Creek Greenway Vision Plan: The partner team led by Community Powered Workshop and Asakura Robinson hosted the second round of virtual community picnics on October 15 and 17 where community members discussed and prioritized concepts using "Creek Idea Cards." The "Creek Idea Cards" were available for input on the Social Pinpoint voting platform through November 7. The team will present the concepts in a Participatory Budgeting Capacity-Building activity for the Community Working Group, which will also be available to the broader community. The final community-wide event to present the draft vision plan is slated for mid-December. More information is available at: <https://cpworkshop.mysocialpinpoint.com/creek-idea-cards-ideas#/> and <https://www.centralwilliamsoncreek.net/>. **District 3**

Project Connect: PARD staff have participated in Project Connect technical meetings, along with other City of Austin staff. Recent discussions have been about locations of potential stations and entry portals – where the train tracks would go underground. In the latest preferred scenario, the orange line would tunnel under the river in the vicinity of South First Street/Guadalupe and would run underneath the north shore of the Butler Hike and Bike Trail. There are potential underground stations at Auditorium Shores, Republic Square and Woolridge Square. These station locations are not finalized, and the project team is aware that a Chapter 26 process will be required for the placement of any station or the running of any track underneath or through parkland. **All Districts**

Land Development Code (LDC) Rewrite: The LDC Leadership Team will be holding one-on-one meetings with City Council offices to gauge priorities and direction regarding the LDC. There has been some interest in bringing forward Code Amendments to the existing Title 25 and Watershed-related amendments have been highlighted. No Parkland-related amendments have been proposed at this time. The draft LDC that was prepared for third reading, now called the Reference Document, and a staff report, have been completed, but will only be published if requested by Council offices. PARD staff have some concerns with the Reference Document regarding Parkland Dedication criteria and have informed the LDC Leadership team of their concerns. **All Districts**

Parkland Acquisitions – recently approved and upcoming

July 29, 2020 City Council Meeting

- 4616 West William Cannon Drive, approximately 2.66 acres. Access and connectivity to Williamson Creek Greenbelt. **District 8**
- 8803 Georgian Drive, approximately 0.25 acres. Address park deficiency and provide access and connectivity to Little Walnut Creek. **District 4**
- 8805 Georgian Drive, approximately 0.7 acres. Address park deficiency and provide access and connectivity to Little Walnut Creek. **District 4**

August 27, 2020 City Council Meeting

- 8610 North IH 35 and 606 Barwood Park, approximately 7.25 acres. Access and connectivity to Little Walnut Creek Greenbelt in a park deficient area. **District 4**

October 29, 2020 City Council Meeting

- 702 Wood Street, approximately 0.21 acres. This historic site is located along the banks of Shoal Creek downtown. Historic significance and improved access to Shoal Creek Greenbelt. **District 9**

December 3, 2020 City Council Meeting

- 1901, 1903 and 1907 E 11th Street, as well as 1904 and 1908 College Row, five parcels amounting to approximately 0.65 acres. This acquisition is for an infill pocket park to address park deficiency. **District 1**
- 5613 Joe Sayers Avenue, approximately 0.25 acres. This acquisition is for an infill pocket park in the Brentwood Neighborhood, on a corner lot to address park deficiency. **District 7**
- 6901 Pasture Road, approximately 3.17 acres. The site is located within a park deficient area, and on a bluff overlooking Oak Hill with views of downtown Austin. This acquisition will serve as a neighborhood park and a popular destination. **District 8**
- 7410 Cooper Lane, approximately 5 acres. The parcel is located within a park deficient area. The site is gently sloped with a diversity of open fields, creek corridor and large live oaks. This acquisition will serve as a neighborhood park in a rapidly densifying area. **Districts 2 and 5**

DEVELOPMENT UPDATES:

Comal Pocket Park – Renovation: Substantial completion for “Parque Comal” as it is known by many residents was achieved on November 19. The park is nestled in central east Austin on the corner of Comal and 3rd Street, two blocks south of Plaza Saltillo. The neighborhood has been changing dramatically during the last few years and the park renovation is designed to address and accommodate the needs of this community, while replacing the rapidly aging infrastructure. The public engagement process included multiple opportunities for the community to provide input through stakeholder meetings, surveys and public meetings held between 2016 and 2019.

The park renovation includes improved and ADA compliant access, a new playground and a resurfaced basketball court that was reduced to half court to allow for the playground relocation. The picnic area was expanded to include a concrete cutting table, two picnic tables, two grills and seat walls creating a gathering place for families. A new element introduced to the park is a bocce ball court. The court will have raised deck seating and work seamlessly with the other park improvements. New fencing, lighting for safety, landscaping, and a new irrigation system complete the infrastructure improvements. The project was funded from the 2012 and 2018 G.O. Bond Programs. Austin Parks Foundation funded the new playground structure and swings. **District 3**



Circle C Metropolitan Park – Playground: The Circle C playground replacement provides a new, enjoyable playground in Circle C Metro Park that meets and exceeds accessibility and playground standards, while providing play opportunities for children of all abilities. Shade structures were integrated into the new playground equipment with nature play and picnicking opportunities provided under the existing live oak canopy.

Funding for the improvements was provided through Parkland Dedication fees and the 2018 G.O. Bond. Project completion is anticipated in early December. **District 8**



Nature play elements, swings and seating areas under the shade of live oak trees



Barton Creek Trailhead Restrooms at Zilker Metropolitan Park: Located adjacent to Zilker Hillside Theater and Barton Creek/Violet Crown Trailhead, the new 448 sq. ft. restroom will serve trail users, theater patrons and the general public. Amenities and improvements include water conserving plumbing fixtures, changing tables in both men's and women's restrooms, energy efficient lighting fixtures and motion sensor lighting, new accessible walkways and water quality features adjacent to the restroom.

The project was funded by 1998 and 2012 G.O. Bonds. Final completion and opening of the trailhead restrooms is anticipated by mid-December. **District 8**



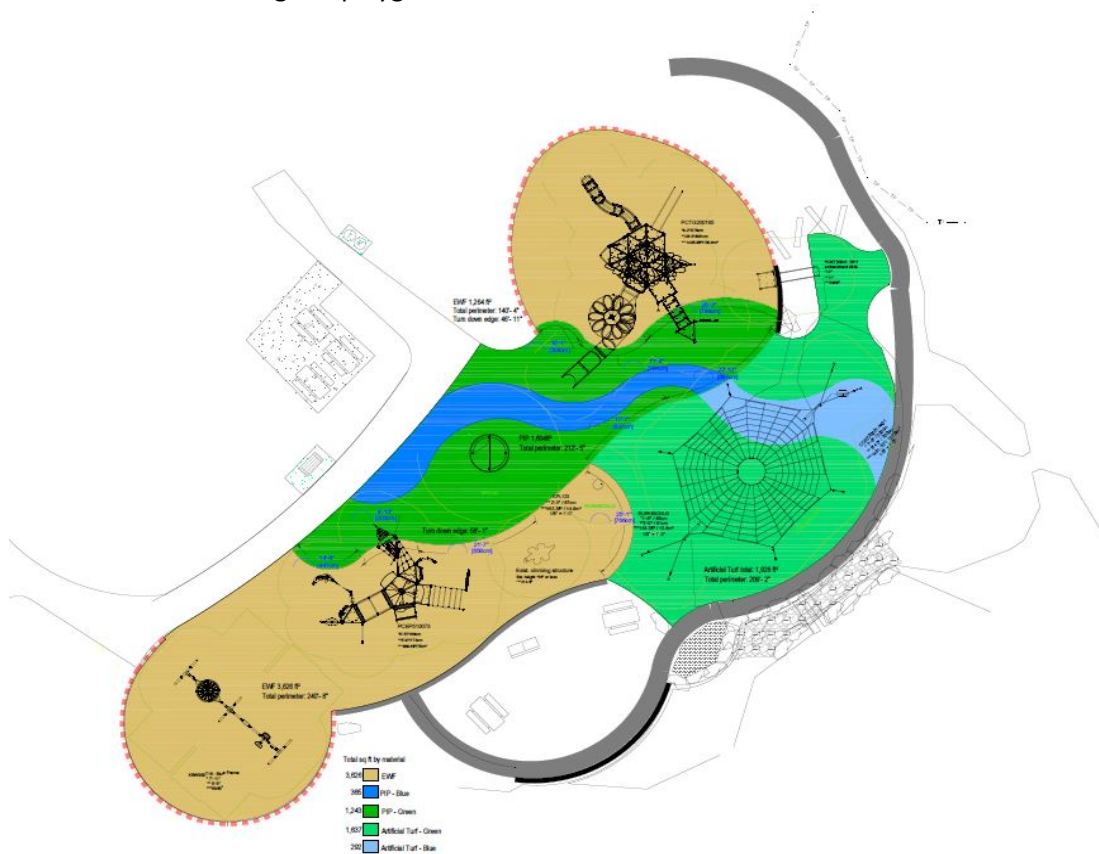
Veterans Pocket Park: The newly developed park will provide space to celebrate Texas veterans and will enhance the exhibition of three war memorials commemorating the Korean War, Vietnam War and the Beirut Conflict. The memorials were removed early in the construction from Waterloo Park to avoid any damage to the monuments while the inlet/bypass tunnel project and other improvements were under construction.

The proposed design creates a setting for the monuments that expresses a respectful and peaceful sense of place. In addition, the project incorporates into the design space for future Veterans' memorials. A large promenade and lush landscaping provide seating and event space for ceremonies, dedications and local, regional, and national holiday observances. The display of the monuments is fully accessible, including the ability to touch and read inscriptions on any part of a memorial. The project was funded by 2012 G.O. Bonds. The completion of the Veterans Pocket Park is expected in late November with opening in mid-December. **District 10**



Monuments and Memorials at Veterans Pocket Park

Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park Playground: The playground at Walnut Creek Metro Park will soon be replaced to provide a leading, accessible playground for children of all ages and abilities in North Austin. The design features a loop exploration path through a sensory garden, rubber safety surface with a variety of ground-level play opportunities, and an iconic platform structure that thematically aligns with the natural areas surrounding the playground.



Proposed playground and Safety Surface Layout



The site permit for the project was recently approved through the General Permit Program. Construction is expected to begin in December 2020 and continue through May 2021. The project is funded through the 2018 G.O. Bond Program and through a generous contribution from the St. David's Foundation of \$199,122 for nature play opportunities. **District 7**

Platform Structure (5-12 age group)

Dougherty Arts Center: Community engagement for the redevelopment of the Dougherty Arts Center (DAC) project continues and the project team has scheduled a series of 10 small group meetings to take place in the months of November and December. These small group meetings consist of focused conversations for more specific aspects of the DAC project program, including considerations for arts programming, theater organizations, gallery artists, youth program participants, adjacent neighbors and Friends of the DAC. The opportunity to connect with these small group discussions was advertised at the first community meeting on October 28 and made available through the project website. In addition, a survey remains open through December 8 for more general feedback on the qualities and characteristics that should inspire the design of the new building: <https://publicinput.com/X640>. For additional information please contact: dacproject@austintexas.gov. **District 5**

Tuesday, Nov. 10 (10:30am-12pm) DAC Staff
Thursday, Nov. 19 (6-7:30 pm) Adult Painting, Drawing, Photography
Tuesday, Dec 1 (6-7:30 pm) Youth Program Participants
Wednesday, Dec. 2 (6-7:30 pm) Gallery Artists
Thursday, Dec. 3 (6-7:30 pm) Artist Professional Development
Monday, Dec. 7 (6-7:30 pm) Theater Organizations
Tuesday, Dec. 8th (6-7:30 pm) Adult Ceramics
Wednesday, Dec. 9 (6-7:30 pm) Friends of the DAC
Monday, Dec 14 (6-7:30 pm) City of Austin Organizations
Tuesday, Dec 15 (6-7:30 pm) Toomey Rd. Residents and Neighbors

Hancock Golf Course: PARD has modified the Hancock community engagement plan and had meetings with two newly formed Conservancy groups as well as the representatives of the surrounding neighborhood associations to discuss the golf course and potential Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The Department will conduct small group meetings in January/February 2021 to provide opportunities to the community to weigh-in on options available for the golf course. **District 9**

MAINTENANCE UPDATES:

New Ball Field Lighting: Community Recreation is working with Musco to replace ball field lighting at five Recreation Center Fields – Parque Zaragoza, Givens, South Austin and Duffie as well as Martin Fields. Benefits of this project include better lighting for participants, less light pollution for the community, energy efficient technology, 25-year warranty and remote monitoring and control of the lighting via a mobile app. Currently staff is working with the vendor on planning and bids with an estimated completion date by the end of Summer 2021. **District 1 and District 3**

OLD LIGHTS



NEW LIGHTS



Evergreen Cemetery: Cemetery staff, in collaboration and consultation with Tri-County Gravesite Maintenance LLC., have successfully removed the “ghosting” element that remained of the vandalized monuments at Evergreen Cemetery (photos below). An archeological firm, AmaTerra, has been hired to evaluate and identify additional burial spaces at Evergreen Cemetery for cemetery expansion. **District 1**



Austin Memorial Park Cemetery: Cemetery Operations are working with the City Law Department and Forestry to finalize an agreement between Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and the Texas Department of Transportation for tree plantings at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery to help mitigate sound from MoPAC.

Road improvements including resurfacing the road system and construction of a curbing system to delineate between road and grounds surface will begin in the Cemetery. The resurfacing and curb construction (Phase II & III) scoping began on November 16. Estimated project completion is the beginning of spring 2021. **District 7**

Butler Pitch and Putt: Butler Pitch and Putt remains closed for maintenance. The golf course planting and irrigation repairs have been completed. The contractor is making additional maintenance repairs and working to complete construction of a new ADA accessible bathroom. These improvements were fully funded by the concessionaire. The anticipated soft opening of the course is scheduled for late January 2021. **District 9**

Jimmy Clay Golf Course: The irrigation maintenance project is in full implementation. The contractor has completed four holes and is on track to complete nine before Christmas. The irrigation project is anticipated to last five months. The course will close two holes at a time to accommodate continued play and discount fees during the project. **District 2**

PROGRAM/EVENT UPDATES:

Modified Thanksgiving Day Pool Operations: Barton Springs, Deep Eddy, Stacy, Bartholomew and Springwoods Pools will be closed for Thanksgiving Day. Barton Springs pool will operate swim at your own risk from 5:00-8:00am but will be closed the remainder of the day.

Deep Eddy Pool: A water leak was identified in late October and a portion of the pool deck was removed and re-installed to fix the broken line.

Stacy Pool: The pool continues to be utilized on its closed days to facilitate in-service training for staff.

Lifeguard Recertification: The recertification process has begun for current lifeguards in small groups. All recertifications were scheduled to be complete in November. The training schedule is under consideration with the recent move to Stage 4 Risk.

Trail of Lights 2020: Pre-credentialed enclosed vehicle event begins November 29 and runs through January 3 with closed holiday nights on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Zilker Holiday Tree Virtual Lighting: This year's tree lighting will be presented virtually on November 29 across multiple platforms including PARD's YouTube Channel, ATXN and other social media platforms. Austinites will be able to enjoy the video at any time after the premiere. More information can be found at: <https://austintexas.gov/departments/zilker-holiday-tree>.

Zilker Holiday Tree Onsite Management: In consultation with the Health Authority, access management mechanisms will be required on site during the 2020 season to ensure safe assembly and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Conditions are subject to change based on local health conditions and public behavior. In order to prevent unsafe assembly, the area under/at the tree will be closed and fenced for 2020 and parking lots adjacent to the tree will be secured. Viewing will be allowed from area roadways and park roads in vehicle only. Should health conditions worsen, or public behavior create unsafe conditions park roads near the tree may need to be redirected to ensure safe behavior on site.

Athletic Programs Virtual Marathon: 350 individuals participated in PARD's Inaugural Virtual Marathon by logging 26.2 miles running or walking between October 19-November 13. Participants received a t-shirt, race bib and completion certificate.



McBeth (Therapeutic) Recreation Center: A virtual Thanksgiving Luncheon with Adult Day-Hab participants, families and friends was held on November 20.

Totally Cool, Totally Art: TCTA Online Experience Session II runs from November 9-December 17 with the following schedule:

- Performing Arts (Acting/Improv/Sketch Comedy) Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00-6:00pm.
- Visual Arts (Painting/Sculpting) Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00-8:00pm.

Central Texas Food Bank Youth Afterschool Meals: Meals continue to be distributed at six PARD locations through the end of December. Youth will receive meal packs supplied with seven dinners and seven snacks, intended for consumption each day of the week.



Recreation Center	Service Day	Service Time
Dittmar	Thursdays	1:00-2:00pm
George Morales/Dove Springs	Fridays	11:00am-12:00pm
Givens	Wednesdays	9:00-10:00am
Montopolis	Fridays	9:00-10:00am
South Austin	Tuesdays	9:00-10:00am
Turner-Roberts	Wednesdays	1:00-2:00pm

Halloween Events – EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL!

Howl-O-Scream was offered as a drive through event on October 31 from 5:30-7:30pm. Recreation Center staff provided the community an opportunity to dress up and have fun with a safe alternative to trick or treating. Howl-O-Scream was hosted at Dittmar, George Morales Dove Springs, Montopolis, Givens, Turner-Roberts and Gus Garcia Recreation Centers. The busiest site had 844 attendees in 255 cars. Survey responses from those participants were overwhelmingly positive with some participants asking for a bigger drive through next year.



Asian American Resource Center – Romeo and Katrina: On October 10 the AARC in collaboration with Color Arc Productions hosted a virtual presentation of Romeo and Katrina, a new musical set in post-Katrina New Orleans by Christine Hoang and Tyler Mabry, directed by Ya'Ke Smith. This musical was scheduled to be on site but due to COVID-19, Hoang and Mabry decided to work with Smith to create an imaginative [video of the opening scene](#) so the community could view it in a safe virtual environment. After the presentation, AARC & Carver managers facilitated a [live talkback with the cast and crew](#). There were 261 registered attendees, 140 attendees (including Councilmember Tovo), and 12 artists.



Brush Square Museums – O. Henry Museum Pun-Off World Championship: The 43rd Annual O. Henry Museum Pun-Off World Championship was held October 17-24. Thirty-two contestants competed for the title of Punniest of Show which can be viewed at www.Punoff2020.com. The website analytics report that during the contest we had 9,022 site visits, 6,794 unique visitors from all over the country and international visitors from the United Kingdom, Norway, France, Spain, Israel, Mexico and the Virgin Islands.



Dougherty Arts Center – International Clay Week: International Clay Week was celebrated virtually this year with the DAC ceramics team hosting virtual studio tours and live demonstrations from their home studios. Participants learned how to make textured tapas plates with resident Bonnie Brushwood, took a virtual tour of Ryan McKerley's newly built studio, learned about smoke firing with Jennifer Hill, saw resident Katie Lehn's favorite tools for throwing and trimming on the wheel and learned about different surface decoration techniques with Sarah German.



Elisabet Ney Museum – Virtual POLKAPOCALYPSE! On Sunday October 25, the Ney held its first-ever VIRTUAL POLKAPOCALYPSE!, enjoyed by over 1,200 people worldwide (including viewers in Europe, Central America and Asia)! Usually presented live, this year two recorded performances were commissioned and many existing videos were curated to assemble three hours of Polka fun. Among viewers' comments were, "It brought me to tears! I remember how we used to dance!" Since it is still viewable on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), numbers will increase.



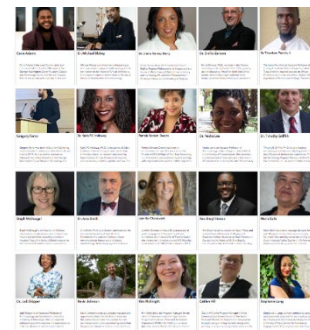
ESB-Mexican American Cultural Center – Dia de los Muertos: The ESB Mexican American Cultural Center presented its virtual Día de Los Muertos 2020 on November 1 and 2. Local artists and the community participated, making this a collective digital event. The public shared their home altars, photos of their artwork, crafts or calavera-inspired attire and even picked up a free sugar skull kit at the MACC. Visit the event website for more details at www.dayofthedeatx.net.



George Washington Carver Museum Cultural and Genealogy Center – Black Elders Conversation: In collaboration with the Black Leaders Collective (BLC) and Austin Area Urban League, CarverMuseumATX convened a socially distanced conversation with elders in the Austin area about the role of Black leadership in our movements for justice and equity. The conversation featured Rev. Freddie Dickson, the Honorable Wilhelmina Ruth Delco, Tommy Wyatt and Mrs. Jeffrey Archer. The conversation took place on Sunday, October 25 and will be turned into a learning tool for emerging Black leaders of Austin by BLC. Segments of the conversation will be turned into an episode of Small Black Museum podcast scheduled for release in January 2021.



Oakwood Cemetery Chapel – All Together Here: "All Together Here" was a symposium and digital exhibit on the archaeology of burials discovered in the rehabilitation of the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel. Forty speakers discussed this topic in a two-day symposium October 9 and 10, for which 317 people registered. From October 10-31 there were 230 views of the session videos posted online on [PARD's YouTube Channel](#), the website was viewed 2,840 times and the detailed digital exhibit has had 765 unique views.



Zilker Botanical Garden: October visitation at the Garden was 12,509 with about 35% being from outside of Austin and over 300 individuals entering free as part of the Museum for All program which honors free entry for any SNAP, WIC EBT card holders. In partnership with Travis County Audubon Society, Zilker Botanical Garden is replanting an existing area to establish a new Hummingbird Garden—the first dedicated Hummingbird Garden in Austin!

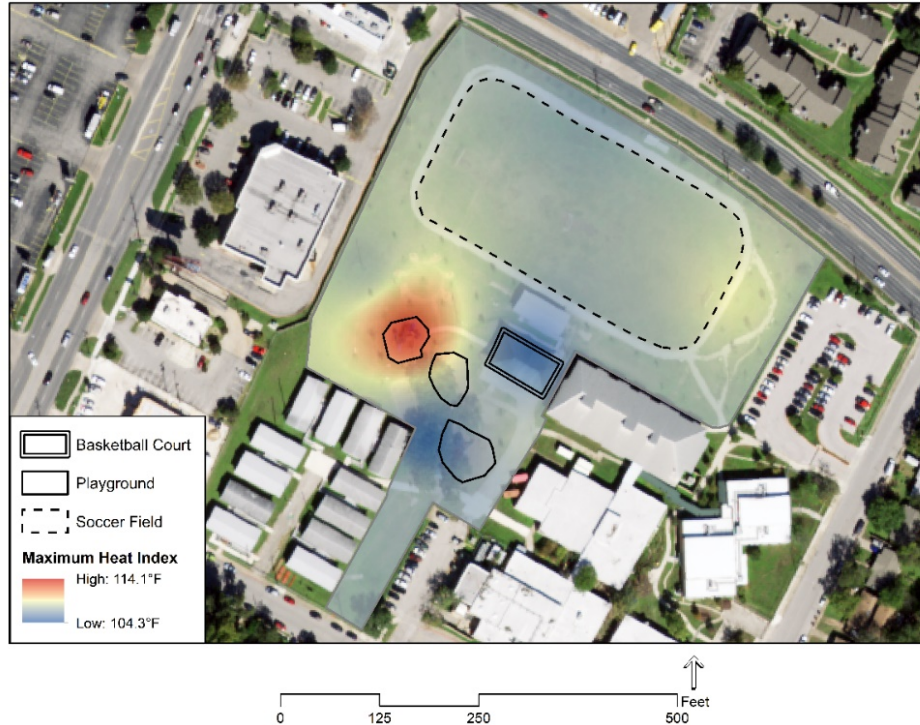
Austin Nature & Science Center: This year's Fall Festival went virtual with presentations about monarch migration, star stories and other nature activities. The playlist can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLelTMMBW0YOQSecgdaE1HclTOjRvZDSOe>.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES:

PARD Position Vacancies: Effective November 2, the City hiring freeze impacting PARD was lifted. Departments are urged to fill positions exercising caution, analyzing positions based on operational needs, the department and the City's financial risk. PARD had approximately 89 positions frozen and due to budgetary constraints, the Department is moving forward with recruiting 26 positions during the 1st quarter of FY21 including the four new positions approved as part of the City budget for Trails Operation and Maintenance. The Executive Team is committed to regular review to balance personnel resource needs and fiscal goals. A second wave of hiring will be considered after the holidays.

Partnerships: In August 2019 **The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)** awarded a \$341,000 grant to PARD, in partnership with **Michael and Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living**, to study the physical and emotional health effects of worsening extreme heat due to climate change. At the halfway point of the project period with data collection ongoing, we have started to form a story around the spaces within each park, particularly around temperatures and use of these spaces. Two playgrounds within Barrington Elementary School Park had a near 10°F difference in temperature. An unshaded playground saw a heat index of 114.1°F, while just 141 feet away, a shaded playground only reached 104.3°F. That range is the difference between “Extreme Caution” and “Danger” levels for likelihood of extreme heat disorders.

Barrington Park (Sep. 16–30 2019)
Maximum Heat Index



In collaboration with **Austin Parks Foundation**, and **Austin ISD**, six Austin ISD joint use sites (Andrews, Cook, Oak Springs, Odom, Pecan Springs, Pickle) that have a strong need for outdoor seating will receive

30 stumps, mulch and 14 limestone blocks. This initiative is in direct response to COVID-19, to increase opportunities for teachers to take students outside and provide additional seating to general park users.

In partnership with **Austin ISD**, **4ATX Foundation**, the charitable arm of Austin FC, and the **U.S. Soccer Foundation**, a new mini-pitch was installed at Wooldridge School Park. The partner-funded mini-pitch improvements include lighting, fencing, goals, and benches. The ribbon cutting was held on October 24. More information on the project and partnership at: <https://www.austinfc.com/post/2020/10/24/state-art-soccer-mini-pitch-unveiled-wooldridge-school-park>.

