

## PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**DATE:** *October 2021*

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS:

**Historic Montopolis Negro School Community Meeting:** The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) will host a virtual community meeting on Wednesday, October 27 from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm to share information about the Historic Montopolis School. This is the first meeting to engage the Austin community in future planning for the historic school that was acquired by the City of Austin to serve as a museum. An open house at the school will be held on Saturday, November 6 from 10:00 am to noon. PARC will share information about the history of the Historic Montopolis Negro School and how the building was acquired by the City of Austin. Additionally, PARC will discuss ways the community could get involved in shaping the planning process, which is expected to begin in spring 2022. For more information, visit: <https://www.austintexas.gov/MontopolisSchool>. **District 3**

**Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan – Pop-up Events:** On October 19, PARC and the consultant team held the project's third community-wide meeting (6 pm via Zoom and Facebook Live). Spanish interpretation and American Sign Language services were provided. During the meeting, the team shared design ideas related to the park which aimed to improve mobility and transportation, programming, environmental features, and historic resources. Following the meeting, community input will continue to shape the plan as design alternatives are incorporated into an interactive map for community members to explore accompanied by an online survey. PARC is also hosting its second series of "pop-up" opportunities in every district following the meeting through November. October pop-up events were scheduled at Onion Creek Metropolitan Park (10/23), Austin Country Flea Market (10/24), and Barton Springs Pool (10/25). Additional information including community meeting details and upcoming engagement opportunities may be found on the project website: <https://www.austintexas.gov/ZilkerVision>. **Districts 5 and 8**

### PLANNING UPDATES:

**Project Connect:** Staff are vetting with the Law Department parkland takings, assuming a twofold approach. 1) Capital Metro would pursue condemnation to take Title to parkland significantly impacted by the rail line proper (e.g., Auditorium Shores, Waller Beach). 2) Austin Transportation Department would go through a Chapter 26 process for a change of use for land that will ultimately become ROW (e.g., for improved sidewalk). Other recent focus and actions:

- Norwood Park – Blue Line Team met with Norwood Park Foundation, and PARC staff. Norwood was concerned about impacts of Blue Line to newly approved site plan and seeking intervention from DSD or other City Departments. An internal meeting has been set with the City's Project Connect Office to explore options.
- Blunn Creek – Blue Line Team has effectively dismissed all options for an underpass connection as part of Project Connect. PARC staff sees a missed opportunity but recognizes the challenges.
- Blue Line Bridge, Design Competition – Virtual public meeting held October 12 to gather public feedback prior to RFP. PARC staff briefly described PARC's role and involvement.

- Statesman Site (south shore) – Parkland will be taken similar to other parkland.
- Trinity Street Boathouse / boat docks (north shore) – Blue line will come through and necessitate removal of Boathouse and docks.
- Long Center “head house” – Orange line entrance and exit, request to explore alternate or additional locations, e.g., Vic Mathias entrance.
- Blue Line station just west of Ben White on Riverside – Opportunity for placemaking with incoming site plan, integration of new (parkland dedication) park and park and ride. PARD will be reviewing and coordinating efforts.

More information can be found at the project website: <https://www.capmetro.org/project-connect>.

**Parkland Dedication Land Requirement Appeal - SP-2020-0419C Koenig Multifamily:** This Site Development Permit requested an appeal of the park land determination under 25-1-605 (F). This site plan is located on 6.5 acres in a critically park deficient area and proposing 434 multifamily units owing 6.9 acres of parkland. The applicant is required to dedicate 0.98 acres of parkland (15% gross site area Urban Core cap) on the site and pay the remaining fees-in-lieu to satisfy parkland dedication requirements (per code criteria 25-1-602(B)). PARD staff met with the applicant early to work on a configuration that would maximize parkland while minimizing impacts to the developable site. The Parks and Recreation Board voted unanimously to deny the appellant’s request to pay fees in-lieu at a Special Called Parks Board Meeting on September 14. Subsequently, PARD requested the item be pulled from Planning Commission agenda to give the applicant an opportunity to pursue a compatibility waiver from the Boards of Adjustments. **District 4**

**Zilker Metropolitan Park Safety Improvements:** PARD is working closely with the Public Works Department on a new shared use path along the south side of Stratford Drive and the north side of Barton Springs Road in Zilker Metro Park. This project is expected to start in the spring or summer of 2022 and take about 3 months to complete. This project will greatly improve safety for hundreds of visitors currently at risk while walking or biking on Stratford Drive and Barton Springs Road. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.2 million, provided by multiple funding sources, including the Quarter Cent, Bikeway, PARD operating, and Sidewalks and Special Projects Division (SSPD) funds. PARD may lose the opportunity to use these funds if not executed within Fiscal Year 2022. PARD plans to present the safety improvements to the Parks and Recreation Board by the end of the year for further input. **Districts 5 and 8**

## DEVELOPMENT UPDATES:

**Construction Start – Rosewood Neighborhood Park Tennis Court Renovation:** As approved by Council on July 29, two existing asphalt tennis courts at Rosewood Neighborhood Park will be replaced with two new concrete courts. The existing courts have severe cracks and breaks in the current surface that limit their use. The surface of the courts will receive new striping patterns that will provide additional recreation uses including pickleball, futsal, quickstart tennis, four square and hopscotch. Improvements will also include replacing a portion of the court fencing. Construction was scheduled to begin October 18 and be completed in the spring of 2022. Project funding is provided through 2018 GO Bonds. **District 1**

**Aquatic Facility Renovations at Montopolis Neighborhood Park & Beverly S. Sheffield Northwest District Park:** These two projects are seeking Council authorization to negotiate and execute a

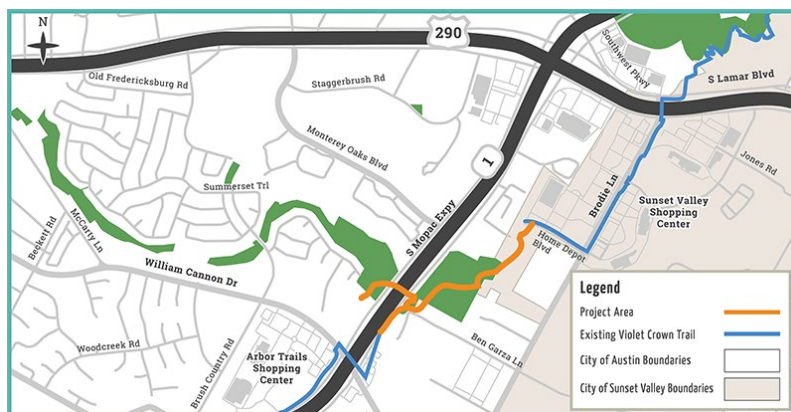
professional services agreement with Flintco, for Construction Manager at Risk (CMR) services for the renovation of the two aquatic facilities. The firm will work closely with PARD, the design consultant and the third-party project manager to rehabilitate Montopolis Neighborhood Park Pool and Beverly S. Sheffield Northwest District Park Pool. The projects are funded through 2018 GO Bonds. Community engagement is anticipated to begin in early 2022. **District 3 (Montopolis) and District 7 (Northwest)**



Rendering of the Montopolis Pool – developed through the Montopolis Recreation Center Design Process

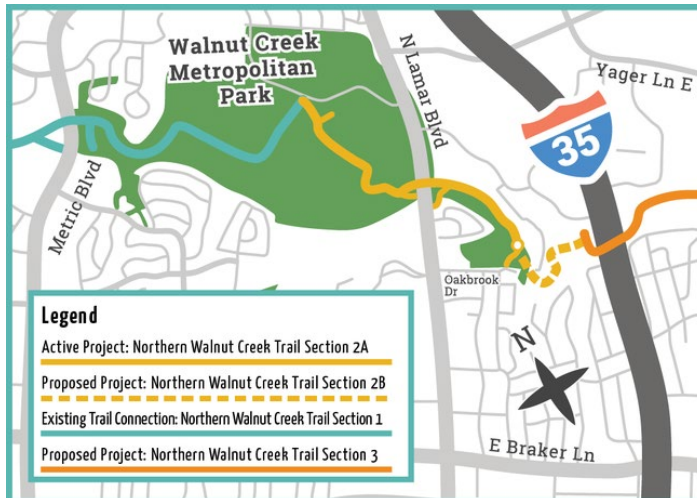
**Construction Start – Turner Roberts Recreation Center:** The Turner Roberts Recreation Center (7201 Colony Loop Drive) was damaged during winter storm Uri in February due to frozen pipes that burst. Since Uri has been designated as a Federal Disaster, the repairs to the Recreation Center fall under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines. The gymnasium floor was repaired in July and the remainder of the building repairs will begin in late October. The project is expected to be completed by the spring of 2022. **District 1**

**Violet Crown Trail North Phase 2A –** At the October 21 meeting, City Council authorized award and execution of a construction contract with MAC, for the Violet Crown Trail – North Phase 2A project. This project is being led by the Public Works Department Urban Trails Program in partnership with the Hill Country Conservancy and PARD. This trail section of the planned 31-mile regional trail system will begin in Sunset Valley parkland, continue through City of Austin parkland, and connect to shared-use paths in the Mopac right of way. Funding has been provided through a Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization grant and the 2016 Mobility Bond. **District 8**



Project Area map of Violet Crown Trail North Phase 2A

**Construction Start – Northern Walnut Creek Trail Section 2A:** In partnership with the Urban Trails Program, construction will begin on Section 2A, a roughly 1.3-mile long, 12’ wide concrete trail from the Walnut Creek Metro Park trailhead to the Walnut Bluffs trailhead at Oakbrook Dr, east of North Lamar Blvd. M.A. Smith Contracting Co. is anticipated to begin site work on October 25. Public Works has scheduled a “Meet the Contractor” virtual meeting on November 4 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm for residents to learn more about the project scope, potential construction impacts, and ask questions. **District 7**



Project Area map of Northern Walnut Creek Trail Section 2A

**Construction Start – Holly Shores / Edwards Rendon Sr. Park at Festival Beach – Lake Front Trail:** The project received Council authorization on September 30 to negotiate and execute award of contract with Muniz Concrete and Contracting. The Notice to Proceed is anticipated in late October or early November and project construction is anticipated to take six months. The project proposes to install a 12’ wide concrete trail through the 9 acres ceded to PARD from the Holly Austin Energy power plant. Additional improvements include a decorative screen wall to separate the Austin Energy electrical substation from the new trail, landscape plantings along the trail and the creation of an overall park setting on the ceded property. The improvements to be implemented align with the recommendations of the approved Holly Shores / Edward Rendon Sr. Park at Festival Beach Vision Plan approved by Council in 2014. The new trail segment will close the Ann and Roy Butler trail gap and provide a continuous trail around Lady Bird Lake. The project is funded through PARD 2012 and 2018 Bonds a matching Federal Grant through the Federal Outdoor Legacy Partnership Program, Transportation and Mobility Bonds, and the Austin Energy and Public Works Departments. **District 3**

**Kingsbury Commons project at Pease Park Awarded SITES Gold certification:** The Kingsbury Commons project has earned SITES Gold certification. This is the Department’s first official SITES certified project. The Kingsbury Commons project helps to create an ecologically resilient community, reduces water demand, improves air quality, and connects people with nature. Kingsbury Commons was designed to allow visitors of all ages to enjoy the space, while promoting physical and social activity and mental restoration. The benefits of this project go well beyond sustainable and resilient landscapes and will serve as a model for future park projects. SITES is the most comprehensive system for creating sustainable and resilient land development projects. It provides a sustainability-focused framework for design that protects ecosystems and enhances the benefits they provide to the community. More



information about this program can be found at: [SITES | Developing sustainable landscapes \(sustainablesites.org\)](https://sustainablesites.org). **District 9**



Rendering of the entrance to Kingsbury Commons at Pease Park

**Dove Springs Public Health Facility:** Construction has begun on the adaptive We-Go-Round addition to the district park playground. **District 2**

## MAINTENANCE UPDATES:

**South Austin Recreation Center Ball Field Renovations Update:** The irrigation lines have been completed and were working as of September 28. The next phase in the renovation is the installation of the cross bars and fencing for the fence and dugouts. The renovation is coming along nicely, and users are excited to see the new field. **District 3**



**Zilker Botanical Garden:** The Garden has replaced the irrigation controllers throughout the Garden. Previous controllers were very aged and beginning to fail regularly. New controllers will not only ensure regular and consistent operation but will assist in water conservation. **District 8**

## PROGRAM UPDATES:

**Waterloo Greenway, Creek Show at Waterloo Park:** Creek Show 2021 will be held in the redeveloped Waterloo Park from 6:00 to 10:00 pm nightly, November 12 through November 21. Creek Show highlights work by local architects, landscape architects, artists, and designers chosen through a public call for ideas. Each year, the selected artists explore different themes related to Waller Creek that range

from history to hydrology and beyond. While the main attraction remains the impressive artistic creations, attendees will also enjoy live music, food vendors, and family-friendly experiential activities. The annual event highlights the Greenway's impact on Austin's social, cultural, and ecological future, and is provided through the partnership between the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy and the City of Austin. Free for all with reservations to maintain adequate social distancing. Event website: <https://waterloogreenway.org/creek-show/>.



Rendering of planned concept for Creek Show 2021 installation, Chioco Design + Drophouse Design

**Walnut Creek Metro Park Playground – Earth Native Wilderness School:** The playground at Walnut Creek Metro Park was recently renovated to provide an 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, nature-inspired design, and PARD's first official Nature Play Space with the iconic Fairy Pavilion structure, re-homed from the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Fortlandia exhibit, as its signature feature. Earth Native Wilderness School (ENWS), in partnership with the Community PARKnerships program and the Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative, will be hosting programming days on **October 31, November 28 and December 18** that are free to the public. Targeting underserved neighborhoods surrounding the Walnut Creek Metro Park area, programming will be presented in both English and Spanish and focus on topics such as making art with locally sourced, mineral- and plant-based paints and pigments, the ancient art of making rope using loose plant fibers, and physically engaging nature games. This nature play expansion and programming is supported by a grant from the St. David's Foundation. Programming website: <https://www.earthnativeschool.com/walnutcreek>.



Fairy Pavilion and natural play elements at Walnut Creek Metro Park Playground

**Parque Zaragoza 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Promotion:** Since 1931, Parque Zaragoza has served as an epicenter of the Mexican American and Tejano community in East Austin and has endured as a symbol of community, strength, and celebration. The park is a testament to the community's perseverance and unity throughout Austin's history. PARD has been hard at work in recent years to improve and restore the park through a new playscape, a historical marker, and renovations to the historic bathhouse. More recently, Amigos de Parque Zaragoza formed as a community group to support stewardship efforts in the park and ensure that community traditions continue. In celebration of Parque Zaragoza's 90th anniversary and Hispanic Heritage Month, Parque Zaragoza's history is being shared with a broad audience through a special promotion with Texas Monthly. This promotion was developed by PARD's Historic Preservation, Tourism, and Wayfinding Program. As a result of City Council policy, a portion of Hotel Occupancy Tax is dedicated to the restoration and promotion of historic Austin parks. PARD's Historic Preservation, Tourism and Wayfinding Program was established to restore and promote PARD's historic and tourist sites and implement strategies to improve signage and wayfinding in the park system. Promotional materials can be found at the following link in English and Spanish: <https://www.texasmonthly.com/promotions/celebrating-parque-zaragoza/>. Other recent promotions included a special feature on Willie Wells and Downs Field for Black History Month (<https://www.texasmonthly.com/promotions/austinparks-williewells/>) and The Women of Historic Austin Parks for Women's History Month (<https://www.texasmonthly.com/promotions/austin-parks-women/>). Through the promotional funding PARD receives, the Department is able to highlight historic parks with a special focus on sites that represent under told stories.



**Deep Eddy Pool:** After a storm on the night of Friday, October 1, one of the well pumps stopped working due to a current overload. After attempts to restart the pump, the Aquatic staff contacted the City's electrical contractor. Technicians tried to restart the pump to no avail. Aquatic staff is working with a well contractor to schedule a well clean out and repair or replace the damaged well pump pending the evaluation.

**Lifeguard Recruiting:** The Aquatic Division has begun planning the Fiscal Year 2022 lifeguard training schedule as well as updating training and recruiting materials.



**Fall Softball (Athletics Office):** The second season of the year has started with 242 teams. This season will see 968 games scheduled over eight weeks at two complexes. Good Luck to these teams as they compete against the other teams to finish as the top team in their respective League.



**Therapeutic Recreation Programs (Alamo Recreation Center):** Three new adult therapeutic recreation programs are underway at Alamo Recreation. The expansion of adaptive/therapeutic programs into East Austin was made possible through funds allocated during the Fiscal Year 2020 budget process, led by the Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities.

- Capital City Explorers hosts 10 participants three days a week to travel throughout the city and experience all Austin has to offer!
- Healthy Aging is designed for individuals 50+ who want to stay healthy, active, social and develop new skills.
- The Hangout meets twice a week and is designed for individuals who seek a smaller and calmer environment. There are currently 27 individuals enrolled between the three programs, with Capital City Explorers and The Hangout both having waiting lists.



**Dittmar Recreation Center:** The Pre-K Play program started on October 5 and runs through December 16 and currently has three participants. The program is for children 4-5 years of age and runs every Tuesday and Thursday from 9 am-1 pm. Dittmar is also hosting the annual Howl-O-Scream Halloween event on October 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Participants will drive through the parking lot to view Halloween themed decorations and receive candy and prizes.

**George Morales Dove Springs Recreation Center:** The Run Drills, Build Skills Soccer clinic started October 14 and runs for four weeks with 26 participants. Participants will meet outdoors in small age groups to build their soccer skills. The Center hosted a drive through event for Varsity Generation on October 21 with 73 participants and will host their annual Howl-O-Scream Halloween drive through event on Saturday, October 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

**Montopolis Recreation and Community Center:** Montopolis Recreation and Community Center is preparing to host its annual Howl-O-Scream event on Sunday, October 31, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

**Gus Garcia Recreation Center Events:** The Center hosted Austin Code Department drive through (National Night Out) event on October 5, approximately 35 community members participated. The Center and has the following events coming soon:

- APH PPE/Food Event on October 23 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.
- Dobie Fall Festival on October 29 from 4:30 to 7:30 pm at Dobie Middle School. Center staff will share flyers for upcoming events and provide popcorn and snow cones to participants.
- Howl-O-Scream Drive Through event is scheduled for October 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm





**South Austin Recreation Center Fall Movie Series:** SARC held its first movie event in November of 2019 and has reprised the series based on favorable feedback from the community and movie goers. SARC showed a movie on October 15 and will again on November 19 at 7 pm. Attendance to date 60.

**Howl-O-Scream:** Givens and Turner Roberts Recreation Center will host their annual Howl-O-Scream event in partnership with the supporting central area recreation facilities, supporting community agencies, vendors and Austin Public Health. The event, hosted in drive-through format, will include the giveaways of prizes, candy and resources. Participants will also get a chance to get dressed in their costume this year and drive through a designated parking lot space that will be decorated by staff and vendors for their amusement. The event for Givens Recreation Center will be held on Saturday, October 30 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm and Sunday, October 31 for Turner Roberts Recreation Center from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Both events are free and open to the public.

**Mendez Recreation Center:** The Center has reprised its annual Movie Underneath the Stars, after being canceled in 2020. The event, held outside in Metz park, allows participants a chance to enjoy a night of movies underneath the stars with popcorn and a drink, in a safe and socially distanced environment. The event held each Friday during the month of October included the screening of classics such as *Remember the Titans*, *A Goofy Movie*, *The Addams Family*, *Casper*, and *Goosebumps 2*. Each night's movie will correlate with a theme that will encourage attendees to come dressed in a theme or costume, 65 attendees to date.

The Center also resumed its co-adult kickball program after being canceled in 2020. The program has been held at Martin Fields weekly on Tuesday evenings during October and included six co-ed teams. Each team played six games with the top seeded teams advancing to the playoffs for a chance to win the league championship.

**Pan Am Recreation Center:** Pan Am's PAL Boxing League resumed its operations October 12 after being closed during 2020 due to COVID-19 and repair of the facility basketball gym. New operations for the boxing program will include current standards and modifications in place at all recreation facilities to include COVID-19 guidelines limiting the number of individuals in a controlled space, as well as tracking and monitoring of participant entry. Four youth are currently registered, but it will max out at 10 per session while implementing COVID-19 capacity limits.

### **Asian American Resource Center – Tones – Sounds from Asian America:**

The AARC hosted its first in-person event since closing in March 2020. A live performance of the music series, tones: sounds from Asian America. Tones had been a monthly [virtual] series since December 2020 featuring local Asian American artists from across generations and genres that shared intimate performances showcasing their contributions to the sounds of Asian America. The series was named Best AAPI Soundtrack for Austin Chronicle's Best of Austin 2021. The September 18 outdoor show and simultaneous livestream featured performances by Seela, Shirley Zhu (fuvk), Peelander-Yellow and DJ Dan Singh, and was emceed by Tãsi, a local rapper, poet, and archivist and co-curator of tones. Approximately 108 people attended the live show and nine viewed the livestream.



### **Dougherty Arts Center – Flamenco Under the Stars:**

On September 25 and 26, A'Lante Flamenco performed *Flamenco Under the Stars* at the Zilker Hillside Theater. These nights of dance marked the first Artist Access Program performance of the season. 600 people attended.



**Roots & Wings at Zilker Botanical Garden:** The Garden will host the kick-off event on October 24 for the interdepartmental and multi-partner Roots & Wings Festival, with the extended festival taking place at numerous sites October 24 through November 6.

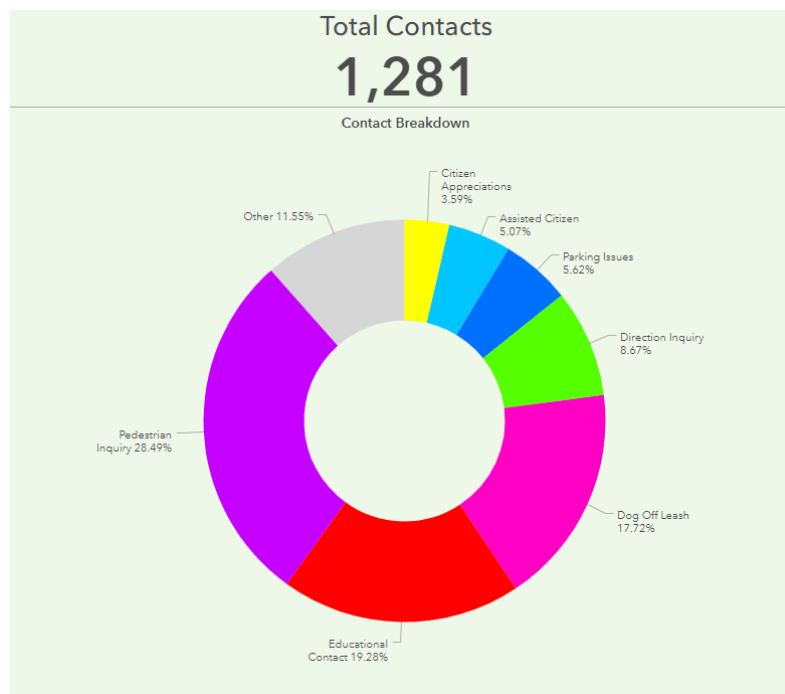
**Tito's Block-to-Block Program:** The Austin Community Gardens Program received support for the second year in a row through Tito's corporate philanthropy program that aids community urban agriculture projects. Tito's Block-to-Block volunteers worked on improvements at The YMCA North Community Garden and the Heartwood Community Garden on October 13. Local media coverage included this online article by CBS: <https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/titos-teams-with-ymca-austin-parks-foundation-to-enhance-north-austin-community-garden>.

**Thriving Cities Grant:** Fruitful Commons, a recently established 501-C3 non-profit, has been awarded a \$100,000 *Thriving Cities* grant, which included support for the Festival Beach Food Forest, Festival Beach Community Garden and the Serafina Food Pantry at the Rebekah Baines Johnson Senior Apartments. The grant will fund three positions for Fruitful Commons that will provide support for the Austin Community Gardens Program and Food Forest. Other projects receiving an allocation of this funding include \$10,000 toward an outdoor nature education pavilion that is part of the Festival Beach Food Forest expansion project and \$5,000 toward materials and supplies for the Serafina Food Pantry. The grant funding represents a significant accomplishment as only one award was made after a nationwide vetting process.

**Yoga in the Garden:** Zilker Botanical Garden will host a new program series on select dates in October and November, with yoga for all levels on the Auditorium Lawn overlooking the Austin skyline. Each class will be limited to 25 people and is included with general admission but must be reserved online in advance.

**Park Ranger Updates:** For the September 10 through October 10 timeframe, Park Rangers handled daily operations including 1,281 contacts regarding Laws, Safety, Service and Education with 227 contacts logged for dogs off-leash. Park Rangers have been focusing on providing responsible pet visitation programming at the Mexican American Cultural Center and Longview park to connect with the citizens on why leashing dogs in parks is so important. Park Ranger Program Manager, LeAnn Ishcomer is featured in the current issue of Austin Fit Magazine here:

<https://www.austinfmagazine.com/October-2021/park-ranger-spotlight/>.



As we return to in-person programming there are opportunities to earn a Junior Park Ranger Badge. Pictured: Ranger Tessa with a New Junior Park Ranger.

With the start of school, we have a new class of Park Rangers Cadets. Pictured: Rangers Kirsten, Brandon, with the newest class of Park Ranger Cadets from Aikens High.



## ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES:

**PARD's Operating Budget Status as of September 2021:** The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted PARD's General Fund budget. Of the \$101.6 million General Fund budget, 93.6% or \$95.1 million has been obligated as of the end of September as compared to 91.4% spent in the same period of the prior fiscal year. The reason obligated spending was not higher is due to the city-wide cost saving initiatives.

Due to modified operations of pools, concessions and in-person programming, PARD has experienced an ongoing decline in revenue collection. Only \$7.9 million of the \$14.5 million budgeted General Fund revenue has been collected as of the end of September.

Golf Fund revenue is up significantly compared to the same period of the prior year. Golf revenue equaling \$11.3 million has been collected as of the end of September, compared to the \$7.1 million revenue collected by September 2020. Golf Expenditures of \$8.4 million have been obligated as of the end of September, which is \$700K higher in spending over the prior fiscal year.

**The Rowing Dock:** The anticipated date for release of the RFP (Request for Proposals) is November. Potential proposers will be given six weeks to submit proposals. Due to the ongoing Vision Plan, the anticipated term for the new contract, resulting from this solicitation, will have an initial term of three years, with three 3-year extension options. For past boating concessions, the initial term has typically been 10 years with two 5-year renewals. The longer term allows the contractor to recoup the cost of its capital investments.

**Zilker Boat Rentals:** The solicitation for a concessionaire to manage and operate the Zilker Boat Rental Concession, located in Zilker Park, will be postponed pending the recommendations of the ongoing Vision Plan. The current concessionaire will be offered a one-year contract extension that will extend the current contract to February 28, 2023.