



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: James Snow, Interim Director, Public Works Department
Denise Lucas, Director, Development Services Department

DATE: October 3, 2022

SUBJECT: Staff Update to Council Resolution 20210610-041: Design and Permitting of Urban Trails

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on Resolution 20210610-041, which directed the City Manager to create an urban trail stakeholder group to make recommendations to City Council on City Code or administrative process changes with the goal of making the design and permitting of urban trails less costly and more efficient while maintaining appropriate environmental protections. This memo provides an update relative to the process improvements that are complete, and provides the status of the outstanding items.

The process improvements include the following:

- **Process Improvement:** Create a formal, collaborative, pre-submittal review process among the Watershed Protection (WPD), Development Services (DSD), and Public Works (PWD) Departments for urban trails projects.
 - **Implementation Progress:** As outlined in the [October 1, 2021, memorandum](#), WPD established and implemented a standard general permit review process.
- **Process Improvement:** Accelerate the site plan review process for urban trails using a streamlined list of City of Austin reviewing disciplines.
 - **Implementation Progress:** Using a recent urban trail site plan submittal as a case study, Public Works Urban Trail Staff reviewed the site plan distribution list to identify review disciplines that approved the site plan without comments or marked “no review required.” Implementation will be dependent on staff feedback.
- **Process Improvement:** Improve communication with developers regarding urban trail easement requirements at the time of zoning.
 - **Implementation Progress:** As outlined in the October 1, 2021 memorandum, Austin Transportation Department (ATD) staff have implemented this communication during the zoning review process, to note of any proposed urban trails adjacent to the site in

question. This allows the developer to plan to accommodate the trail as site layout is designed. The easement is then required to be dedicated during subdivision or site plan.

- **Process Improvement:** Hold quarterly meetings of executive-level leadership, including PWD, WPD, DSD, the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), and any other departments necessary to address significant challenges to trail projects.
 - **Implementation Progress:** Quarterly meetings have been initiated. Attendees include representatives from relevant departments and non-profit organizations involved in trail projects.
- **Process Improvement:** Ensure consistency in interpreting the City Code provisions governing trail projects, potentially by establishing a dedicated review team familiar with trail projects and relevant requirements and variances or, more generally, with Capital Improvement Projects.
 - **Implementation Progress:** This process improvement will be complete with the launch of the recently approved Public Projects team. As a part of the fiscal year budget, the City Council approved staffing for a new inter-departmental Public Projects team that will focus on the review of public infrastructure projects. Recruitment will begin at the start of the fiscal year when positions become available. Departments who received approval for dedicated Public Project resources include Austin Fire Department, Austin Public Health, ATD, Austin Water, DSD, PARD, and WPD. Staff are estimating approximately 6 months to recruit, hire, and train.

In addition to the process improvements, Council initiated the following amendments to the Land Development Code, as recommended by PWD and WPD. These code amendments were approved by Council on December 2, 2021, and went into effect December 13, 2021:

- a) Amend Land Development Code 25-8-341 and 25-8-342 to grant urban trails projects greater cut and fill allowances under specific environmental circumstances.
- b) Amend Land Development Code 25-1-261(B)(3)(c) to reflect current policy that trails within the critical water quality zone be limited to 12 feet in surface width plus one-foot shoulders on each side.

Finally, staff from Austin Water and Austin Energy have been added to the stakeholder group to provide a more wholistic view regarding the design and permitting of urban trails. Staff will continue to work through the outstanding items, with an expected completion date of March 2023.

Should you have any questions, please contact James Snow, Interim Director, (512) 974-9795 or james.snow@austintexas.gov.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
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