

# ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK VISION PLAN

*An Urban Treasure in Need of a Comprehensive Plan*

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Prepared by

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Guiding Principles and Goals  
Framework of the Vision Plan  
Implementation

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





# ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK IS A PARK IN CRISIS.

The proximity to Downtown and environmental treasures like Barton Springs Pool make it a desired destination for all of Austin and visitors to our city. With the growth of the city, Zilker Park is facing increased ecological degradation, accessibility stresses due to a lack of connected circulation, and overuse in certain areas due to growing visitation and no significant changes to how the park is operated in decades. As a metropolitan park, it serves the entire community of Austin.

Zilker Metropolitan Park is Austin's oldest metropolitan park. In 1997, Zilker Metropolitan Park was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the park includes many resources of historical, architectural, and archeological significance. Today, the park serves as a hub for many recreational activities and includes major

facilities and amenities such as Barton Springs Pool, Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin Nature and Science Center, Zilker Clubhouse, Girl Scout Lodge, Sunshine Camp, Zilker Hillside Theater, Zilker Caretaker Lodge, Umlauf Sculpture Gardens, McBeth Recreation Center, the Butler Hike and Bike Trail, and Barton Creek Trail. The park is home to large-scale events such as the Austin City Limits Music Festival, the Trail of Lights, and ABC Kite Fest.

This Vision Plan is the first comprehensive planning initiative to encompass the park's 351 acres and associated facilities. The park is a special site for generations of Austin residents and needs active management to ensure it continues to be for generations to come.





# THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THIS PLANNING PROJECT IS TO DEVELOP A VISIONARY FRAMEWORK.

The framework in this plan will be used to guide the restoration and future development of Zilker Metropolitan Park and its numerous facilities and features. The planning process assessed all aspects of the site with a comprehensive lens which included programming, maintenance, environmental features and ecology, historical preservation and cultural resources, transportation, circulation, and parking, as well as business operations and management. The vision plan will be used as a roadmap for the

park's future by providing recommendations and implementation strategies that facilitate execution of phased improvements and development. The vision plan will help garner support and funding for future phases through public and private partnerships, operational strategies, revenue generation, and financial sustainability.



# PLAN OVERVIEW





## WHAT IS VISION PLAN?

Outlines the long-term vision, principles, goals, and strategies for the enhancement, management, and operation of Zilker Park.

## WHAT IS 'NOT' VISION PLAN?

Detailed design or construction plans

Detailed plans for day to day park management and maintenance

Detailed budgeting for park enhancements





## THE PROCESS

# THE VISION PLAN IS BUILT FROM ENGAGEMENT WITH THE AUSTIN COMMUNITY AND ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX EXISTING SITE.



The Zilker Park Vision Plan community engagement began in November 2020 with a baseline survey that received input from more than 4,000 participants. After the initial survey, the planning team was finalized, and a community engagement plan was developed by the team. The plan uses the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Participation to identify the level of engagement. For the public, the plan identified the participation level as "consult" with the purpose of obtaining feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions. At the "consult" level, the organization commits to "keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision" (IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation). Additional key stakeholders were noted at the "involve" level, including the Zilker Neighborhood Association and organizations now included in the Zilker Collective Impact Working Group. The planning team has worked with these organizations to ensure their concerns and aspirations are reflected in the process, even when it may not be possible to include all of them in the plan. As a standard method for identifying criteria-based decisions, the planning team created a set of planning values to guide how input should be assessed. The team presented a draft of these values, called "Guiding Principles and Goals" for community feedback. Based on the feedback received at the first meeting and the corresponding survey that followed, the final Guiding Principles and Goals were established. Since then, future community input and feedback have been explored through the lens of these shared park values.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



Accessibility



Nature and Ecology



Sustainability



History and Culture



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Vision Plan identifies Guiding Principles to guide and shape every step of the future of Zilker Park, from planning, design, construction and maintenance to future park uses.

Guiding principles are fundamental guidelines driving the project. They are big statements meant to describe the big picture. They also aid decision-making when competing ideas or interests are considered. When this happens, referencing the Guiding Principles can help determine the direction forward.



Accessibility

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The plan should knit the segmented pieces of the park together, ensuring a more accessible, safe, and connected park.
- » The park should be a place you can reach with multiple travel options.

## GOALS

- 1** Ensure there are multiple safe, enjoyable, and convenient modes of transportation to access the park.
- 2** Improve and incentivize non-automobile mode access to, from, and within the park, in support of the City's ambitious mode split and climate goals.
- 3** Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation between the north and south side of Barton Springs Rd. Make travel through the park and to various parts of the park intuitive, safe, and easy by foot, bike, and accessible paths.
- 4** Examine the surrounding trail network to create and extend safe active travel within and through the park.
- 5** Create accessible multi-modal transportation networks within the park.
- 6** Improve the wayfinding to and from different park destinations. Provide clear circulation, entryways, gateways, and connectivity between facilities within the park and throughout the park elements.
- 7** Use transportation assets efficiently, to preserve park space for ecological and recreation systems.
- 8** Collaborate with CapMetro and TxDOT to review, analyze, and recommend the transportation system to and around the park.
- 9** Achieve a high level of ADA accessibility within the park.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



## Nature and Ecology

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The Plan should treat the Park as an ecological treasure.
- » The plan should recognize the park's relation to water and explore opportunities for interaction with the lake without compromising environmental integrity.

### GOALS

- 1** Protect, enhance, and restore land and waterscape elements that are imperative for ecological function.
- 2** Establish an interpretive program to educate visitors, especially for the youth about the park's sensitive features. Public stewardship should be developed as part of the interpretive program.
- 3** The Plan should champion best practices in green design, planning and land management.
- 4** Ensure safe and sustainable access to the water including entry to Lady Bird Lake and protection of Barton Creek.
- 5** The Plan should protect Zilker's natural resources for generations to come.
- 6** Support and rehabilitate native plants and species.



## History and Culture

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The park is a metropolitan park which has a regional draw and focus.
- » The Plan should treat the Park's historic and cultural resources as a valued legacy to be celebrated for future generations.

### GOALS

- 1** The Plan should honor and respect the Park's historic and cultural resources and should integrate them into the future life of the park.
- 2** The Plan should offer a framework that provides a successful balance between historic preservation and current/future needs.
- 3** The Plan should tell the deeper and complete stories of the people and the history of the park to better enrich the visitor experience and to elevate a sense of public stewardship.
- 4** The Plan should create opportunities for local artists and art to be a part of park spaces. These opportunities may include music, performance, and temporary exhibits.
- 5** Celebrate the stories of the people that lived on the land throughout history, including the indigenous people, and bring to light those stories that are not often heard.
- 6** Establish and integrate education components such as an education center to encourage and convey cultural and historical aspects of the park.





## Sustainability

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The plan should champion sustainability best practices for the park.
- » The plan should be forward-looking and should embrace both its challenges and its opportunities for future generations.
- » Zilker Park should serve as an example of sustainability, protecting and enhancing our natural spaces and assets.

### GOALS

- 1** Implement adaptive management strategies to create a resilient landscape in the face of climate change and dynamic user needs.
- 2** Achieve balance between metropolitan use and ecological/environmental concerns.
- 3** Balance revenue and ecological/environmental health with operations and maintenance of the park.
- 4** Provide equitable opportunities for access to the park and enjoyment of amenities.
- 5** Explore new and harness existing partnerships that extend the reach of the Parks Department to accommodate new opportunities.



## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » Zilker Park should serve the entire community of Austin.
- » Programs should be aligned with community interest.

### GOALS

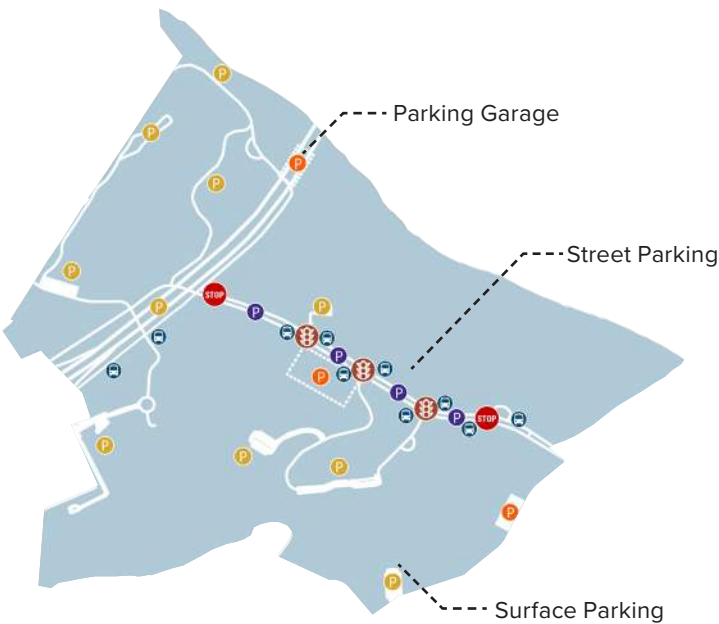
- 1** Design park elements that are welcoming to individuals and small groups and able to accommodate large groups.
- 2** Support equitable access, with special focus on:
  - Safety
  - Accessibility
  - Events and programs for diverse cultures
- 3** Support new and enhance existing learning opportunities within the park.
- 4** Sustain the implementation and maintenance of the park and stewardship of the park utilizing volunteers and partner organizations.

# FRAMEWORK OF THE VISION PLAN

There are many aspects to Zilker Park and the layering of these elements together is what produced the Vision Plan map. Those elements can be peeled apart to reveal the framework.

		EXISTING	PROPOSED
Parking	Formal	1,300	2,450
	Informal	1,150	0
	Total Spaces	2,450	2,450
Impervious Cover	Roads	20.9	19.9
	Parking	12.52	3.4
	Programs/ Structure	2.5	10.87
	Total Acres	35.92	27
Ecological Uplift	Upland Woodland Acres	96	114
	Riparian Wetland Acres	69.6	82.6
	Meadow/ Savanna Acres	0.4	49.3
	Canopy Enhancement Acres	-	10
	Drainage Enhancement Acres	-	2
	Total Acres	166	258
	Trails	Total Miles	12.6
Programs	Caretakers Cottage		Renovated
	Quonset Hut		Renovated
	Sunken Garden		No Change
	Hillside Theater		Relocated
	Girl Scout Cabin		No Change
	Zilker Club House		No Change
	Playgrounds		Existing + 4 New
	Volleyball Courts		Relocated
	Disc Golf		No Change
	Baseball Field		Relocated
	Zilker Park Boat Rentals		Relocated
	Rugby Field		Enhanced
	Informal Parking Lots		Removed
	Andrew Zilker Road		Partially Closed
	Columbus Drive		Partially Closed
	Lou Neff Road		Closed
	All of the contributing resources for National Register of Historic Places will remain.		

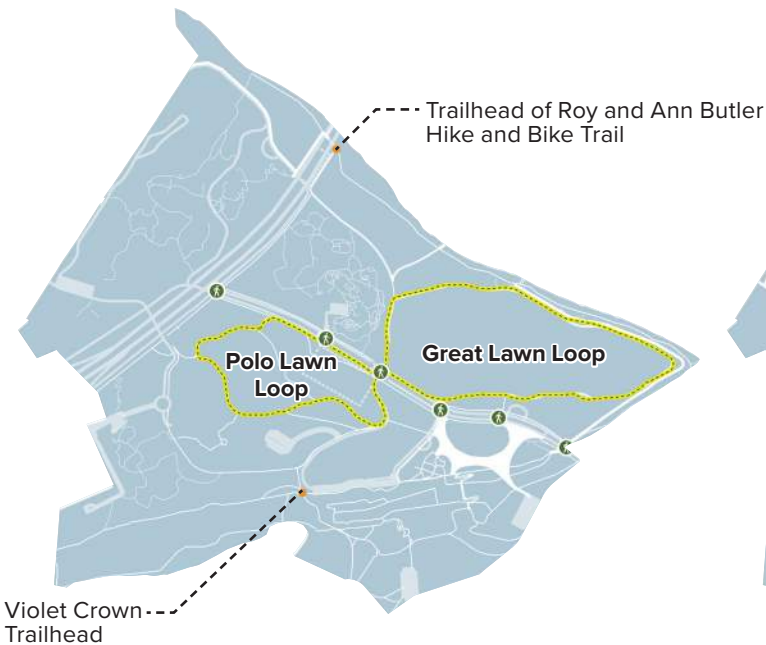
## VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND PARKING



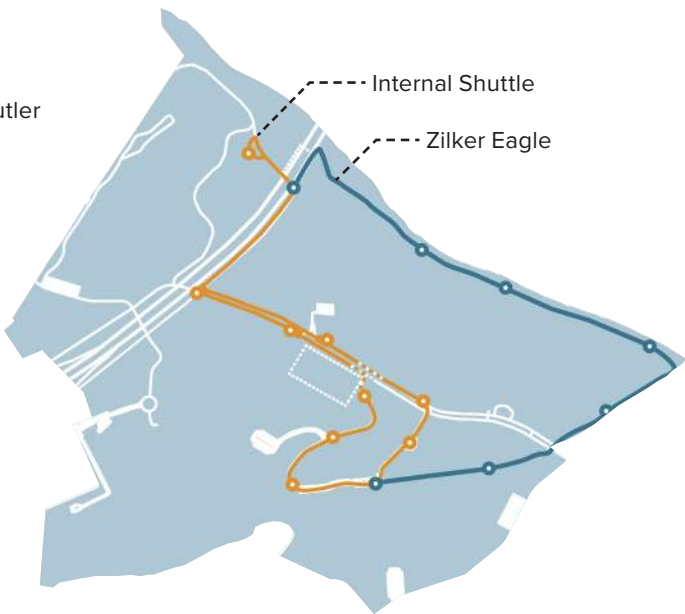
## WAYFINDING / INTERPRETIVE STORY



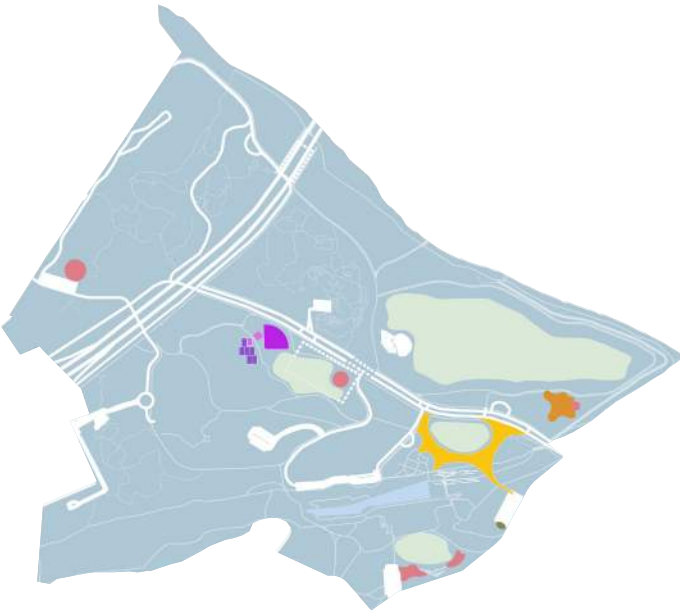
# PEDESTRIAN/BIKE NETWORK



# INTERNAL CIRCULATOR



# NEW PROGRAMMING



# ECOLOGY



- Playground
- Sports Fields
- New Picnic Area
- Lawn
- Barton Springs Pool
- Welcome Center

- Upland Woodland
- Riparian Wetland
- Meadow/Savanna
- Canopy Enhancement
- Drainage Enhancement
- Park Area with Regular Maintenance



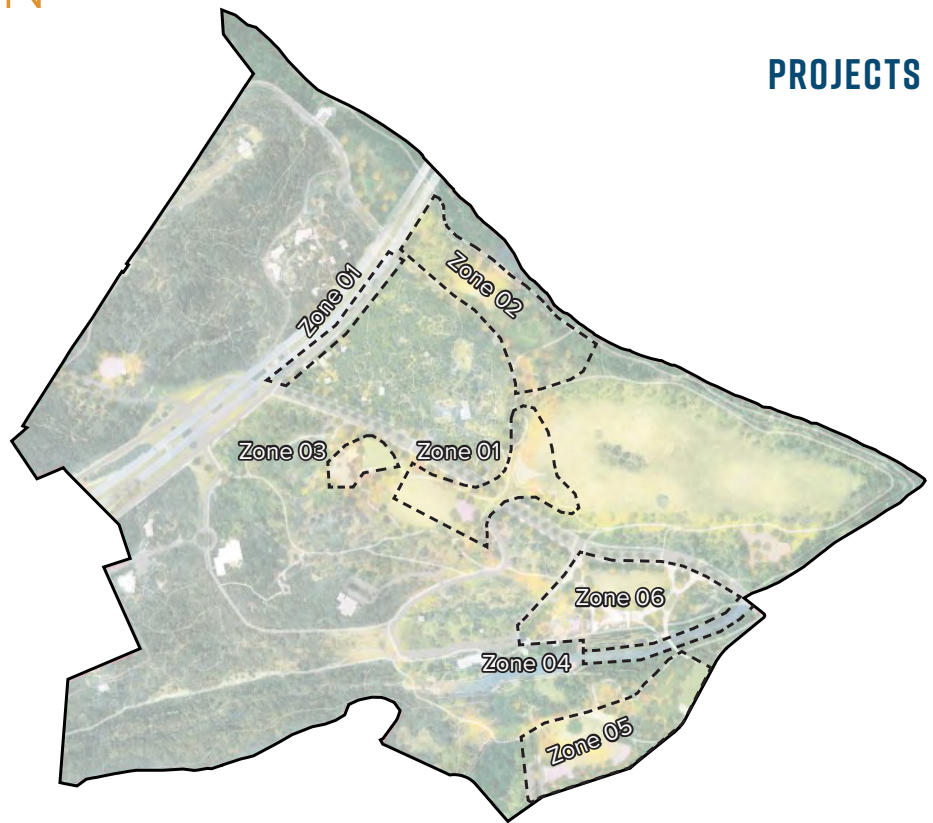
# IMPLEMENTATION

Zilker Park is one of Austin's busiest parks, given the many amenities and destinations located within its 351 acres, as well as its central location near downtown. Not only are individual community members invested in the future of Zilker, but also organizations that have operated in Zilker for decades. To support the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, the Vision Plan recommends a nonprofit partner that can act as a liaison between the Department and the many active organizations and interested stakeholders in Zilker Park. The unified nonprofit partner could also raise funds to pay for project managers, tools and supplies, and recognition programs for volunteers.

A key goal should be developing the best practice of creating zone horticultural care program, where regular volunteers are paired with City and/ or unified Zilker nonprofit staff working to plant, water, weed, and otherwise maintain different portions of the park, especially in areas targeted for ecological restoration. Details in the agreements would be worked out with PARD and the City of Austin in the future.

The Zilker Park Vision Plan will come to life over the next several decades. Drivers of the timeline include funding sources, community engagement on the planned

## PROJECTS



### ZONE 01: LAND BRIDGE

- » Restoration of Polo Field
- » Stratford Dr Realignment
- » Underground Parking Garage
- » Land Bridge
- » Zilker Hillside Theater

### ZONE 02: LANDFILL

- » Restoration of Landfill Area
- » Parking Garage under MoPac
- » Zilker Trailhead to Butler Hike and Bike Trail

### ZONE 03: SPORTS AREA

- » Restoration of Polo Field
- » Sports Area

### ZONE 04: WELCOME CENTER

- » Removal of Surface Parking
- » Enhancement of Existing Playground
- » Welcome Center

### ZONE 05: SOUTH SIDE OF BARTON SPRINGS ROAD

- » Parking Garage
- » Removal of Surface Parking
- » Drainage Improvement
- » South Side New Play Areas

### ZONE 06: BARTON CREEK

- » Controlled Barton Creek Water Access
- » Restoration of Barton Creek Bank
- » Additional Bridge along Barton Creek
- » Relocation of Ped/Bike Bridge along Barton Creek

PROJECT TIMELINE

YEAR 1-3

Restoration of Barton Creek Banks

External Shuttle

Additional Restrooms

Drainage Improvements

Wayfinding Design

Establishing Partnerships

Zilker Park Umbrella Organization

Mitigation of Erosion Issues

Barton Springs Road Improvements

Barton Creek Water Access

Internal Shuttle

Closing Lou Neff Road to Vehicles

South side new playgrounds

Nature Play at Zilker Preserve Trailhead

Departmental Partnerships

Interpretive Storyline

NEAR TERM

Land Bridge

Closing Andrew Zilker Road to Vehicles

Restoration of Old Zilker Hillside Theater Area

Enhancement of existing playground

Zilker Hillside Theater

Underground Parking Garage

Restoration of Polo Field

Additional Trails

Removal of Surface Parking

Tree Canopy Enhancement

Invasive Plant Control

MID TERM

Parking Garage(s)

Restoration of Landfill Area

Additional Bridge along Barton Creek

Relocation of Ped/Bike Bridge along Barton Creek

New Trailhead to Nature Preserve

Ped/Bike Bridge on Lady Bird Lake

Welcome Center

Extended Zilker Eagle Route

Zilker trailhead to Butler Hike and Bike Trail

LONG TERM

Sports Area

Stratford Dr Realignment

Canopy Walk

Removal of Surface Parking

Tree Canopy Enhancement

Invasive Plant Control

## SUMMARY

Zilker Park is Austin's oldest and most iconic metropolitan park. Its physical and environmental resources reflect the foresight of the previous owners and citizens who sought to preserve it as a grand park for future generations to appreciate. Previous generations could not foresee the growth that would come to Austin and how it would impact this important and central park. Two major development phases, completed between 1917 and 1939, established its nuanced and complex character and set the stage for the park we enjoy today. At over 350 acres, it offers a wide range of recreational and natural features to capture the visitor's imagination. It features over 2,000 linear feet of lake frontage. Its Great Lawn features panoramic views of the city skyline. It is the home of world-famous, spring-fed Barton Springs Pool. Zilker Park is a place of mystery and wonder, but not without its connection to darker aspects of our history.

# CHAPTER ONE

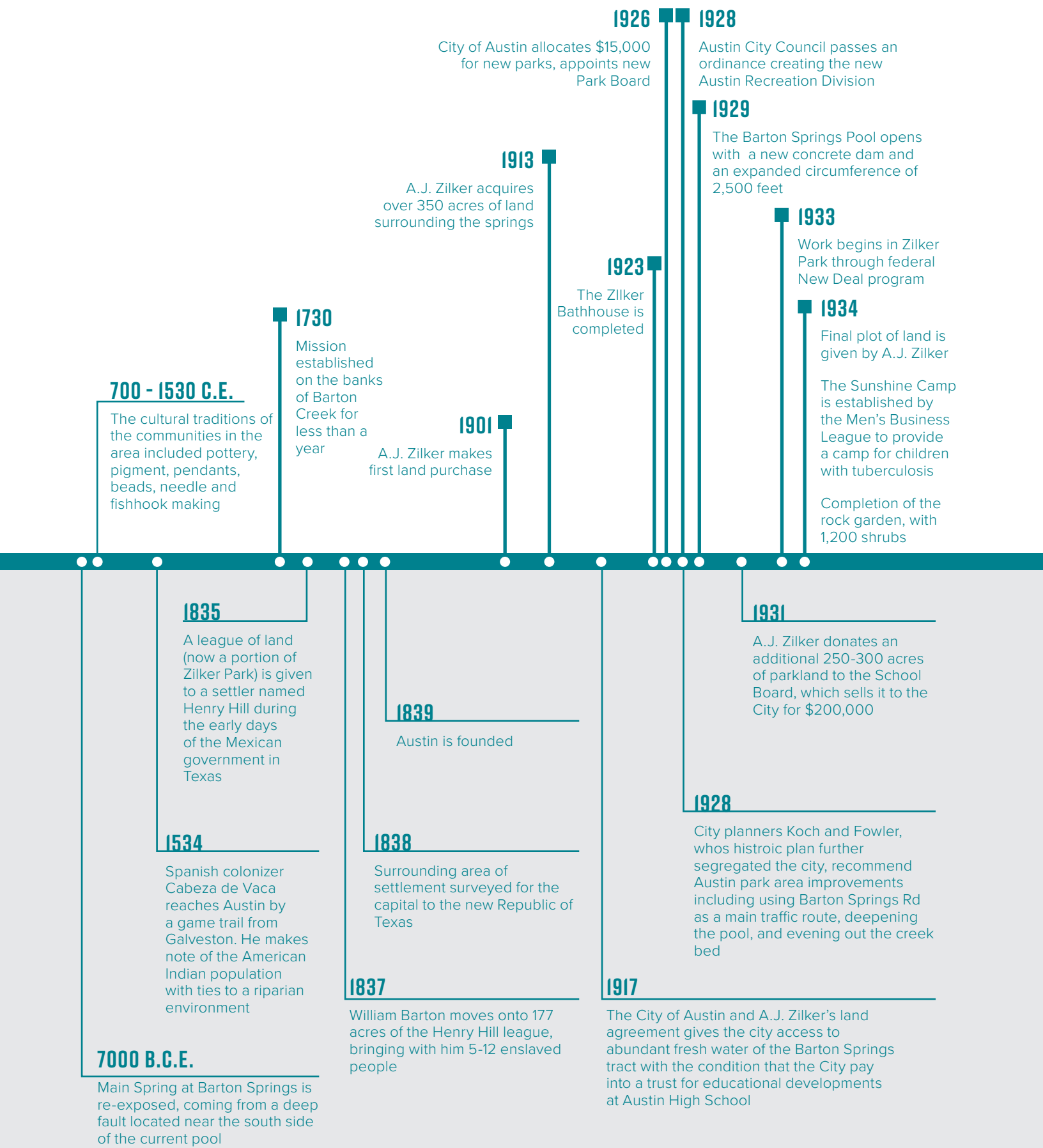
## IN THIS CHAPTER

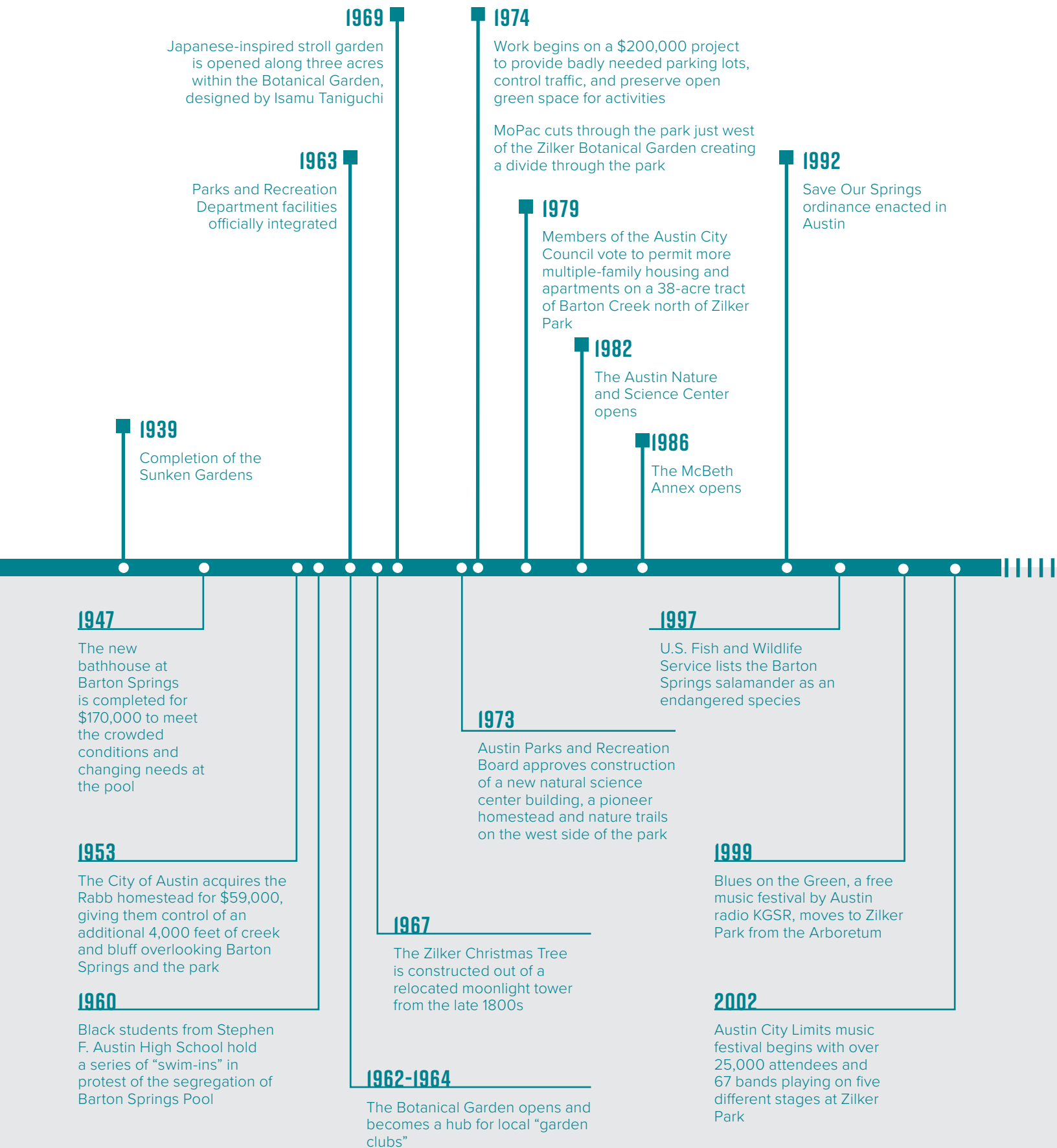
Historic Timeline  
Historic Context



# **HISTORY OF ZILKER PARK**

# HISTORIC TIMELINE







# HISTORIC CONTEXT

## SUMMARY

- 1 Zilker Park is Austin's oldest metropolitan park, providing physical and environmental resources to residents and visitors since before the land was purchased in 1917.
- 2 The park's popularity skyrocketed following Depression-era public improvements.
- 3 This Vision Plan is the first comprehensive effort looking at the park as a whole.

## INTRODUCTION

Zilker Park has long been a place of gathering for the people of the Austin area. From a verdant hunting ground for Indigenous peoples, to powering small industries and supporting ranch land, to a well-loved swimming and bathing pool situated within a large metropolitan park. The park's relationship to the springs, creeks, and Lower Colorado River creates a landscape capable of supporting and responding to a myriad of ever-evolving cultural demands.

## PREHISTORY

The modern occupation of the area around Zilker Park began at about the time the city of Austin was founded, in 1839. But for more than a few thousand years before that, the site was familiar to the indigenous people of the region and the natural forces that formed Barton Springs began hundreds of millions of years ago. The springs, actually a group of four springs, are artesian springs, issuing under pressure from a fault line in the underlying limestone formation. The springs, and the abundant plants and wildlife they sustained, and the ready source of stone for toolmaking attracted indigenous peoples to the site.

Archaeological excavations conducted in the area of the springs found evidence of middens, camps and shelters, quarries and butchering sites, as well as tools, artifacts and points. In 1928, a crew led by J. E. Pearce conducted archeological investigations near the confluence of Barton Creek and the Colorado River, with excavations made on the south side of the creek. Pearce was the chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas and had studied the archeology of indigenous natives of Texas for a decade before. From previous investigations in Central Texas, he had described a nomadic life centered on hunting, fishing and gathering of plants and nuts for subsistence. He located stone points and tools used for hunting and scraping, shells and burned rock middens, which he described as "kitchen middens." He presented his early field research and findings to professional groups and scholarly publications, establishing Central Texas archeology as a major research field. Pearce was later the director of the Texas Memorial Museum.

Although the records of Pearce's investigation in Zilker Park have apparently been lost, more recent studies were completed in the 1980s, 1990s, 2008 and 2010 at what is now called the Vara Daniel Site, prior to installation of a new sewer line in the park. Stratified buried archeological deposits from a span of more than 11,000 years were identified, representing life in the late Paleoindian through the late Prehistoric periods. The sites are deeply buried and were accessed through carefully controlled, deep archeological excavations. The artifacts and features reflect changes in climate and technology over the span of thousands of years. The Paleoindian findings date to about 10,900 years Before Present (BP) and indicate people who hunted large mammals and smaller animals, used dart points and spears and gathered plants. Evidence of Archaic occupations, dating from 8,800 BP to 1,200 BP, suggest that people hunted bison and deer with smaller dart points and spears, gathered nuts, stem and root plants, and cooked food with hot rocks and earth ovens. The excavations also suggest that the location of the river changed over time, and periods of moisture and flooding occurred when snail species were deposited on what is high ground today. Evidence of human occupancy of the site during the Late Prehistoric period from 1,200 BP to 500 BP has also been documented through archeological investigations. People hunted with bow and arrow, farmed to augment gathered plants and used pottery in this time period.



City of Austin and Vicinity, 1839.  
Source: Texas General Land Office, Map 3149

Native American people, including Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Comanche tribes, also occupied the area around the springs. By the time of the Spanish settlements in 1730, the Tonkawa and Lipan Apache tribes inhabited the area around Austin. A few decades later, the Comanche and Kiowa tribes inhabited parts of Travis County. Barton Springs was a sacred Comanche landmark, on a tribal trail between Bandera County and Nacogdoches. The creek and springs likely were used by the Comanche for bathing. Comanche Marker Trees were used to mark trails and springs and may well have been placed in areas of the park to mark those sites.

## SPRING CREEK

For a very brief time in 1730 and 1731, three Spanish frontier missions were located in the vicinity of the springs. The Franciscan missions were originally founded in 1716 in East Texas, and later moved to Central Texas on the Colorado River, in hopes of attracting the participation of local tribes. Conditions in this location were apparently unfavorable, and the missions were soon moved to the San Antonio River in 1731. The brief stop on the Colorado River is commemorated with a historical marker installed on the south grounds of Barton Springs Pool by the Texas Centennial Commission in 1936.

The Spanish also began the practice of making private land grants to individual settlers in the eighteenth century, as a way to populate the vast stretches of land that lay north of the Rio Grande. After winning independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico continued the practice, creating a system of empresarios, or agents, contracted to recruit colonists and allocate land grants. One such empresario, Ben Milam, received a contract to settle 300 families between the Colorado and Guadalupe Rivers in 1826. Milam's Colony included the land surrounding Spring Creek, which is today called Barton Creek. In 1835 League No. 21 in Milam's Colony, a tract at the mouth of Spring Creek, was granted to Henry P. Hill, a twenty-eight-year-old native of Georgia and a lawyer. Hill returned to Georgia within a few years, perhaps during the Texas Revolution, protecting his ownership of League 21 from afar.

Although he was not the original recipient of League 21, William Barton is the settler with the strongest association with the springs. Barton was born in South Carolina in 1782 and lived in Kentucky and Alabama before coming to Texas in 1828, settling a league of land in Stephen F. Austin's Little Colony, in the area near Bastrop, with his wife, five children, and five enslaved people. Barton applied to the Republic of Texas for



English & English Mill, circa 1880.  
Source: Austin History Center

additional labor (177.1 acres) of land, which he was entitled to as a head of household living in the republic in 1836. He selected a site on the west bank of the Colorado, at the mouth of Spring Creek and moved there around 1837. But a patent was never actually granted by the General Land Office because it was later determined that the land selected by Barton was on the tract already patented to Henry P. Hill.

Barton built a house on the south bank of Spring Creek near the main spring. It has been claimed that he named two of the springs for daughters Parthenia and Eliza. Barton's cabin and the springs are depicted in an 1839 map of Austin. The spot became known as "Barton's" or Barton Springs, as it is still called today.

As Austin grew, Barton Springs was a favorite spot for fishing, swimming and sightseeing. Barton kept two baby buffaloes at his place, and the tamed animals were part of the attraction. He also leased spring flow and land on the north bank of the creek to a group to erect a saw mill, beginning a pattern of small industrial uses at the spring site.

Barton died in 1840, and due to the confusion over the actual ownership of the labor of land, it took fifteen years before the estate was settled. The question of the ownership of the labor of land was finally resolved by a decree of the Travis County District Court issued in 1855. The labor of land was then sold on behalf of the heirs to A.B. McGill for \$5,044.50. The land changed hands several times, and in 1860 the land and water rights were sold to John Rabb, whose heirs would hold the land for the next century. The Rabbs lived in a log cabin at the springs and raised a herd of cattle on their 50 acres of land. In 1867, Mary Rabb had a two-story limestone house built near the log cabin. Three generations of the Rabb family lived in the limestone house until 1955, when the site was sold to the City of Austin. The house burned down shortly after the city took it over and it no longer stands there today.

After the Civil War, a gradual shift in the land uses around the springs began, as more intensive industrial uses were intermixed with ranching and farming. In addition to the saw mill, a grist mill and ice manufacturing business were built at the springs by Michael Paggi. A large, water-powered flour mill was built on land leased by the Rabbs to English & English Mill. The railroad arrived in Austin in 1871, opening the local markets to reliable transportation, and the interest in harnessing the water power of the springs remained strong through the end of the nineteenth century.



Zilker Amphitheatre at Eliza Spring, circa 1915.  
Source: Austin History Center





Stone arch bridge over Barton Creek, circa 1890.

*Source: Austin History Center*

Newspaper accounts in the 1870s also described the springs as a popular destination for Sunday afternoon carriage rides. Paggi encouraged visitors to the site, building a bathhouse for changing and renting swimming suits for visitors to use. The springs were also a popular spot for military reunions and picnics. In the 1850s, US Army troops camped at the springs on their way to the forts in West Texas, including stops by Robert E. Lee and Albert Sidney Johnston. Union troops also camped at the springs during Reconstruction in the late 1860s.

In 1889 a handsome stone arch bridge was built over Barton Creek, just upstream of the springs, which gave access to the north bank of the creek and the pasture land beyond, and also to the road to the west to Bee Cave. A heavy flood in April 1900 washed the bridge out and it was not rebuilt.

By the turn of the century, the Rabbs owned considerable acreage in portions of the original Henry

P. Hill league and beyond the south portion of the Barton labor. They began to sell these lands off to various buyers, and thus began the next major transition at the springs. A.J. Zilker had begun buying land in the area in 1901 and in 1907, Gail Rabb sold the land along the creek, including the main spring to him. Rabb reserved a tract upstream of the main spring for the Rabb residence.

Andrew Jackson Zilker, an Austin businessman, came from Indiana to Austin as an eighteen-year-old young man in 1876. He arrived with only fifty cents in his pocket, but through hard work became a successful businessman, working in the manufacture of artificial ice and eventually owning the entire ice plant. He held other business and political positions, serving as a volunteer fireman, a city alderman for the Tenth Ward, a director of the First National Bank and was the Water and Light Commissioner in Austin for a time. He was especially interested in education and was on the Travis

County Board of Education for many years. He was an advocate of practical education in public schools, including manual training and home economics, and could point to his rags-to-riches story as an illustration of the importance of this training. He married Ida Peck in 1888, and they had two daughters and a son.

In 1901, Zilker began acquiring property around the springs, when he purchased about 350 acres on the south bank of the Colorado. He continued to accumulate property in this area through 1913, acquiring Eliza Spring on the north bank of the creek in 1901 and the Main Spring and Old Mill Spring on the south bank of the creek from Gail Rabb in 1907. Zilker used the land for farming and ranching. He raised feed for horses, which were used in the ice business to pull delivery wagons to homes throughout Austin. He also raised livestock on the ranch and also leased part of the land to the Butler Brick Company.

Andrew Zilker was an early member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Austin Lodge #201, which was founded in 1891. In 1903 Lodge #201 hosted the Elks State Encampment, a convention gathering of lodges from across the state of Texas. Zilker had a stepped amphitheater structure built around Eliza Spring likely in anticipation of the event. The amphitheater is an open-air meeting space, built in a large, stepped oval around the mouth of the spring.

## **BARTON SPRINGS PARK**

The Zilker family used the springs for family gatherings and celebrations. Andrew and Ida Zilker were planning to build a house on the land in about the location of the current Zilker Botanical Garden when Ida Zilker died in 1916. Zilker reconsidered the use of the property in a way that reflected his long-term love of the springs and his firm belief in the value of practical education for young people. At the time there was a water shortage in Austin and the springs were considered a potential source of water for the City.

In 1917, Zilker approached the Austin School Board and the City Council with an offer to donate the tract of land at Barton Springs to the public realm. He proposed to donate about forty acres of land, including the four springs at Barton Springs, to the School Board, on the condition that the city purchase the land from the schools for use as a public park. The purchase price of \$100,000 was to fund an endowment for industrial education and home economics training in the schools, called the Zilker Permanent Fund. Zilker retained ownership and use of the larger, adjacent parcel of land for his livestock. The proposed arrangement included a provision for an easement from Bee Cave Road to the creek, to allow Zilker's livestock access to water. Zilker also allowed for the possibility of an easement across his remaining land in the event the City chose to use the springs as a source of municipal water. This easement would be critical for laying water mains from the springs to a remote pumping station. The proposal was approved by the citizens of Austin in an election held in the fall of 1917, and the warranty deed was accepted in early 1918. The city made the \$100,000 payment in \$10,000 increments, with 6% interest, over the course of the next ten years.

On January 15, 1928, Mayor P. W. McFadden made the final payment, in a ceremony at the Majestic Theater, to J. Harris Gardner with the Austin school board. Gardner presented the mayor with the deed to Barton Springs and read a resolution of appreciation to Zilker from the school board. Andrew Zilker was proclaimed Austin's "Most Worthy Citizen" of 1927. In his remarks, Zilker spoke about his love for the springs, and that it should belong not to an individual, but to all the people of Austin.

Once the City acquired Barton Springs, it had an abundant source of municipal water, if needed. However the rains came, the drought was broken and the water supply was steadied without tapping the springs. Instead, the city leaders began to think of the springs as a municipal amenity and a tourist attraction. By 1920, Austin was dubbed the “Automobile City of Texas” by the *Austin Statesman*, and there were 6,000 vehicles in the county. In 1921, work began on several automobile tourist camps in Austin parks, including one at Barton Springs Park. The tourist camp was touted by marketing brochures and depicted on city maps at the time. Within a few years, the vision for the use and development of the park changed, and the Council voted to discontinue the tourist camp at the site in 1928.

Related to automobile access to the park, Barton Springs Road was extended across the creek with a new concrete bridge constructed in 1926. The road itself was asphalt paved by 1925 and extended across the creek. Bee Cave Road, in its location at that time, extended along the north edge of the Barton Springs Park property, separating it from Zilker’s ranch and pasture lands.

In support of recreational uses at the park, the Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club funded the construction of a public bathhouse on the north bank of the creek by 1923. The building had dressing rooms for men and women on the second floor and a wide promenade on three sides. The two-story wooden structure was designed by Hugo Kuehne, Austin native, MIT trained architect and an organizer of University of Texas School of Architecture. Kuehne established a private architectural practice in Austin in 1915 and completed many projects for the City of Austin. He also served on city boards and commissions, including the Parks Board and the Planning Commission.

Public interest in developing a city parks system came in to full force in the mid-1920s. A 1923 editorial in the *Austin Statesman* decried the limited supply of public parkland, finding the supply of less than one acre for every 1,000 inhabitants deficient. The editorial noted that the city was growing and advocated setting aside large tracts for parkland to avoid the possibility of later having to tear buildings down to create parks. Continued growth in Austin also taxed the existing city infrastructure of utilities, amenities and public services. As a remedy, the City Council instructed the new City Manager, Adam Johnson, to prepare a plan of action to solve the problems.

To assist in this effort, an unpaid advisory board called the City Plan Commission was created in 1926, charged with addressing a list of problems including street conditions, traffic issues, utility routing and civic and public improvements. The commission was also directed to study subdivisions, parks, community centers, zoning and flood protection. To fulfill their responsibilities, the commission recommended the city hire the Dallas firm of Koch and Fowler Engineers to prepare a city plan for Austin.

The firm produced a comprehensive city plan with recommendations to address the problems and issues the City Plan Commission had been asked to solve. The plan was adopted by the City of Austin in 1928 and

## BARTON SPRINGS PARK

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- 1 The springs were used by the Zilker Family for their gatherings and celebrations.
  - 2 As a result of the land deal between Zilker and the City, the land around Barton Springs to the public in 1917.
  - 3 As the city grew, so did the public interest in developing a city park system; the City Plan Commission was formed in 1926.
  - 4 Over the years, several improvements were proposed including construction of a concrete trap dam, that created Barton Springs Pool
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included recommendations that called for the deliberate segregation of the city. By using the premise of “separate but equal” accommodation of the races in the provision of facilities and conveniences, including schools and parks, tacit separation was accomplished without the use of segregation by zoning. It would be decades before Austin parks and schools were legally desegregated.

With respect to parks, the document recommended a five-year plan for the development of parks across the city, ranging from small neighborhood playgrounds to large nature reserves. The Koch and Fowler plan spoke favorably of Barton Springs Park and made specific recommendations for improvements that might be made in the park, including a recommendation to expand the park to the east.

Based on the findings of the city plan, the first parks board, actually a committee of businessmen from the Austin Lions Club, was formed in 1928, and a bond election for park and playground acquisition and development funds was passed the same year. Also the City established the Recreation Department and hired its first paid Superintendent of Recreation, James Garrison.

In October, the City Manager presented his program of proposed improvements at Barton Springs to include a dam, retaining wall, storm sewer and other improvements at the pool. The Council approved the proposed improvements and authorized \$50,000 for the work. The drawings for the dam and retaining wall work were prepared by the City Engineer’s office in October 1928. The work included the current downstream dam and a children’s wading pool (later removed) installed in the shallow end of the pool. The drawings also included a sidewalk on the north bank of the creek adjacent to the children’s wading pool. The construction work was completed later that year.

The following year, the Council considered bids for paving, curbs, gutters, and for parkways and driveways in Barton Springs Park. They also approved the plans for a concession stand and caretaker’s cottage, both designed by Hugo Kuehne. The concession stand, designed to suggest the appearance of a wind-powered mill, was built on the north bank of the creek, to the east of Eliza Spring. It was demolished in 1959 when the current concession stand was built. The Caretaker’s Cottage is still in use as an office for park staff.

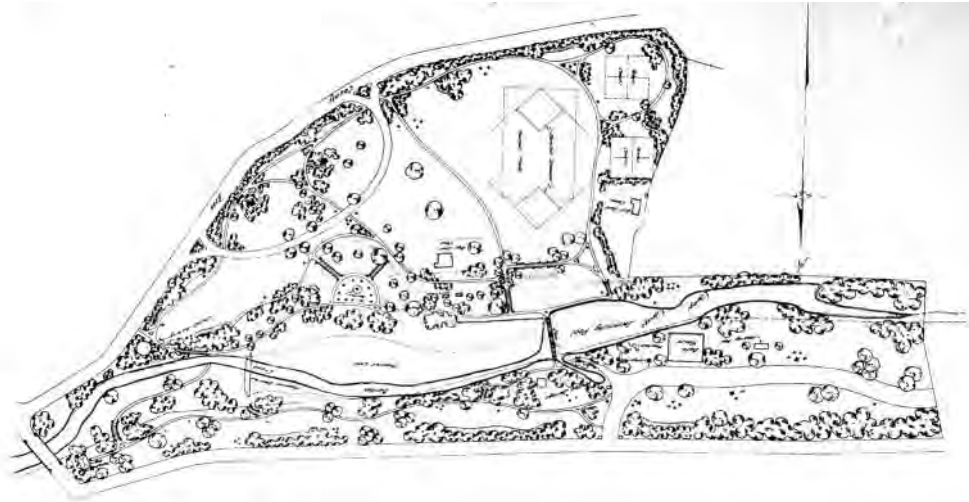
In late 1929, the Council received bids for the construction of baseball diamonds and bleachers, and the construction took place the following year. The baseball diamonds remain today on the south bank of the creek. At the end of the year, the Parks Board recommended the construction of a concrete trap dam above the children’s wading pool (the current upstream dam), sidewalks on the north and south sides of the pool, retaining walls on portions of the north and south sides of the pool and the removal of accumulated gravel from the pool. The work was completed along with added playground equipment, fences, and backstop improvements. Two huts, or clubhouses, were also built on the south side of the pool for Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop use.

Within a year of the final payment for Barton Springs Park, the grounds were filled with active recreational amenities, many intended for use by children. The concentration of organized recreational facilities – pool, playgrounds, athletic fields, clubhouses – was consistent with park design trends of the early years of the twentieth century. Reform or Playground Movement parks emerged in large urban cities, as a progressive response to the isolation and confusion of city living. Structured play in neighborhood-scaled parks “provided not just recreation but built a stronger sense of community.” In the case of Barton Springs Park, the active recreational facilities were built around the site of an enduring, spring-fed swimming hole, only recently transformed with dams, low walls, and paved walkways into a more structured natural pool.



City of Austin and Suburbs, 1925, Dixon B. Penick. Excerpt showing Barton Springs as a “free tourist camp.” Texas General Land Office, Map 76203





Plan Showing Development of Barton Springs Park, 1928.  
 Source: *A City Plan for Austin, Koch & Fowler*



Aerial view of improvements at Barton Springs Park  
 Source: *Austin History Center*



General Plan, Zilker Park, No. S.P. 30, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1934. Drawing by Charles Page  
Source: Austin Parks and Recreation Department

## ZILKER PARK (1934 TO 1938)

In 1931, Zilker made a second donation of land to the public under the same arrangement as the first gift. He gave an additional 280 acres of land adjacent to the first gift to the school board on the condition that the city purchase the land for use as a public park for \$200,000. Perhaps beginning to feel the pinch of the Great Depression, the Council asked for more favorable terms, in the form of a reduction on the interest rate to be paid. Mr. Zilker declined, wishing to endow the school fund to the greatest extent possible. The question was put to the voters, who approved the purchase of the new parklands. Ultimately, the Council paid one-quarter of the purchase price in a lump sum, saving the interest expense that way. In 1931, Zilker was again named Austin's "Most Worthy Citizen." The deed for the new park was conveyed in August 1932. In May 1933, the Council passed a resolution creating a single park from the tracts of land, to be called Zilker Park, in appreciation of the generous gifts of Andrew Zilker.

The new parkland required a considerable investment in planning and design to convert the ranch, farmlands,

old quarry, and clay pit sites into a beautiful recreational amenity. Once the plans were laid, another investment in the construction of the improvements would be required. For similar projects, such as Shoal and Waller Creek improvements, the city worked together with the Texas Reconstruction and Relief Commission (TRC). The city provided materials, tools, and technical supervision, and the TRC provided labor. The federal government provided the funding, which was administered by the state agency. A similar arrangement would be used for the work at Zilker Park. Throughout the development of the park during the Depression, several different federal relief agencies provided support and funding to the project with administration by companion state and local entities, including the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Youth Administration (NYA). The Works Progress Administration (WPA) may also have provided labor forces for work in Zilker Park.





Aerial view, Barton Springs Park and Zilker Park, circa 1934.  
Source: Austin History Center

Charles H. Page, a local architect, was appointed to the Park Board in 1933. Page practiced architecture in Austin since before the turn of the century, and his firm specialized in the design of schools and courthouses. He completed work on the Travis County Courthouse shortly before his appointment to the Park Board. Page prepared the overall design for the development of Zilker Park, which he presented to the Park Board at the end of 1933.

The design of Zilker Park, a much larger and more expansive area than the original Barton Springs Park, reflected current trends in park design. Unlike the structured play areas for active recreation, much of Zilker Park was designed for more passive recreation activities with abundant hiking paths, bridle trails, and curved scenic drives. Striking natural features were highlighted, including rock outcroppings and wooded groves. The structures designed for the new park, including clubhouses, trail houses, overlooks, comfort stations, bridges, culverts, and entrance features,

followed National Park Service's rustic building patterns. Natural materials and forms were used for the construction, typically with rubble limestone, painted wood, broad roof overhangs, and shingled roofs.

The existing circulation patterns through the park were changed in dramatic ways, both to incorporate the current park design trends and to provide access to the large added area. The alignment of Bee Caves Road, which tightly hugged the north edge of Barton Springs Park, was shifted to cross the former pasture lands to the north and east. The new road alignment was curved to provide scenic views of wooded areas, the creek and river courses, and dramatic rock outcroppings. The northwest section of the park, which included a tall promontory overlooking the river, with dramatic views of the city center across the way, was left natural and rustic. This section of the park was designed to be used for hiking and horseback riding as a means of access, in addition to the rustic vehicle lane to the top of the point. Initially, Page worked with the RFC to begin





Sunken Garden, 1993.  
Source: Alan Pogue

implementation of the park development plan by the construction of stone picnic units with tables, benches and barbeque grills, as well as pedestrian trails, roadways and bridle paths. He also secured the support and funding of the Civil Works Administration for the project. Funded for \$94,000, the Zilker Park project was the most generously funded CWA park project in the state. CWA workers constructed the stone entrance pylons, new Boy Scout and Girl Scout Huts, the Rock Garden (Zilker Ponds), Sunshine Camp and picnic tables, built park roads, planted trees and shrubs in the arboretum, rehabilitated the old Ashford-McGill House for use as a trail house and began work on the Mirror Pond in the bed of Dry Creek, in the western section of the park.

In the spring of 1934, the CWA was closed, and the Zilker Park project was shifted to the control of the National Park Service, through the Civilian Conservation Corps. CCC Company 1814 set to work in the park at the end of April. The CCC work diaries note that the rustic light standards at the entrance to the Barton Springs

area were built that spring, as was the Mirror Pond. CCC workers also rehabilitated the existing skeet house into a trail shelter and the police department pistol range into restrooms, built Lookout Point on the western promontory and a second lookout (demolished in 1937) at the confluence of Barton Creek and the Colorado River. They paved roads in the park and did general planting and beautification work.

Although the project emphasized the new, undeveloped tract to the north of the Barton Springs Park tract, there were changes and improvements made in the vicinity of the pool. A bandstand was added on the hill above the north bank, and above that a “rock garden” (the Zilker Ponds) was built. The entrance road and parking areas were also reconfigured. As the work was nearing completion, an enthusiastic article in the local newspaper described the project and the rerouting of traffic:





Aerial view, Barton Springs Park and Zilker Park, circa 1934.  
Source: Austin History Center

“..... the old asphalt road from the bridge to the entrance of the swimming pool will be abandoned as a roadway. Cars headed for the pool in the future will enter the park, then bear to the left over a hill by the old reptile institute, pass through the old gravel pit and into the pool’s parking area at the present exit on the southwest. Returning autos will come out over a short stretch built from the old entrance to the county road. Traffic thus will be moved in a loop with congestion at the point of entrance to the pool eliminated. The old road will not be torn up, Dale said, but will be leveled down for use as a roller skating surface up to the old Barton Springs entrance point. Beyond that, it will be cut away to give a view of Charlie Page’s rock garden.”

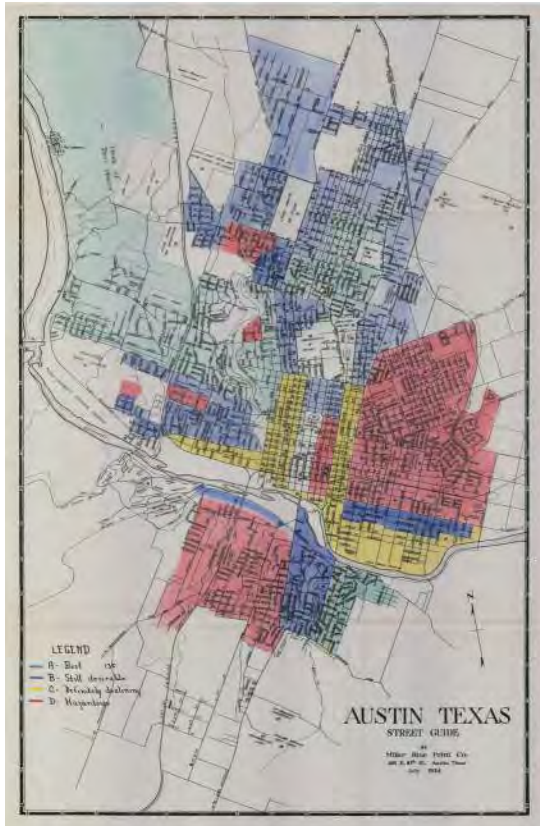
In April 1934, Andrew Zilker made a third gift to the city of 32.5 acres, located west of Barton Springs Park, on the north bank of the creek. Zilker suggested that this new park be called Page Park, in recognition of the work of Charles H. Page, Sr. in the design and construction of the improvements to Zilker Park under

the RFC, CWA, and CCC, but Mr. Page declined the honor. The three tracts make up present-day Zilker Park. This final gift of land was just that, a gift outright, without any money changing hands. The Council was again moved to publicly thank Zilker. Zilker, who had made the gift while ill and bedridden, died a few months later. His funeral was attended by dignitaries from the state, county and city government and the school board. In 1950, Zilker Elementary School was named in his honor.

The park was opened to great fanfare in the summer of 1934. It has been well and faithfully used by the citizens of Austin ever since the grand opening. The major activities of the 1930s were program and activity oriented. A tradition for organized entertainment at the pool was begun in these years, with swim meets, diving exhibitions, holiday pageants, celebrations, and regular dances at the dance pavilion and band stand. Large crowds of spectators looked down on the pool from the north bank. In 1933, the Lions Club petitioned the Council “to have erected at once long rows of cement seats on the north side of the Barton Springs bathing pool in order to better accommodate the large crowds that visit this resort.” The City Manager was asked to look into this, and several years later the gallery seats were built.

There were also two big flood seasons in 1935 and 1936, and the pool was closed for extended periods during those years. The flood of June 15, 1935, was perhaps the largest flood on record since 1869. The water coming down the creek and the water rising from the river converged at Barton Springs, ascending to the level of the roofs of the wooden bathhouse and concession stand. The bandstand was completely destroyed and washed away in the flood. It took six days of intensive cleaning by 65 laborers and the entire Recreation Department staff from lifeguards to playground leaders to clean the site and get it open in time for the big Fourth of July celebration at the pool that year.

After these floods, the Recreation Department made repairs to the wooden bathhouse and cleaned the grounds and the pool. Additional assistance was provided by another federal relief agency, the National Youth Administration. The NYA was created in 1935 to provide training and employment to youths 16 to 25 years of age. Again, the city provided supervision, materials, and tools, and the NYA provided funding and labor. In 1936, a new bandstand and comfort station



Austin Redlining Map, 1937.  
Source: NARA II RG 195, Entry 39, Folder "Austin, Texas," Box 153.

## AUSTIN REDLINING MAP, 1937

The neighborhoods around Zilker Park were among those 'redlined' in the 1930s by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), meaning they were given a poor rating that prevented their residents from accessing the types of federal loans that allowed other, more highly rated, neighborhoods to build generational wealth. Often poor HOLC ratings were given solely because neighborhood residents were not white.

were built on the hillside overlooking the pool. The bandstand, an open-air platform, was used for the singing and music events held in the park throughout the swimming season. The comfort station, restrooms for men and women at the level below the band stand platform, was a welcome addition to the site.

In 1938, another NYA project was begun at the Old Mill Spring, Austin's first "municipal sunken garden." The project was designed by Delmar Groos, one of the architects who designed the Deep Eddy Bathhouse for the Recreation Department the year before. Groos had worked for the Recreation Department in his youth as a lifeguard and basket boy at Barton Springs and was listed as the manager of the Pool in the 1935 city budget. He studied architecture at the University of Texas and established a practice with Dan Driscoll, an architectural engineer, in 1935. The Sunken Garden, a series of terraced flagstone platforms stepping up from the spring pool, was designed as a gathering and picnicking place. A flagstone stage and picnic tables to seat 300 were built on the stone terraces.

Even with the repairs to the wooden bathhouse made by the Recreation Department, the severe flood damage compromised the building. The floors of the dance pavilion heaved and buckled under the standing water, and dances were no longer held at the building as a result. The park and pool, though, grew in popularity, and 1938 was a record year for attendance.

## POST-WAR PARK IMPROVEMENT

During World War II, Zilker Park and Barton Springs hosted large groups of bivouacked troops, with special swimming, musical and recreational events staged for the men. Community singing and musical performances continued at the hillside above the pool. Swimming declined in the summer of 1945 due to a polio scare, but music remained popular, particularly at the end of the summer when gasoline rationing was lifted. In 1946, an enclosed ballcourt (now used as a maintenance facility) was built near the Caretaker's Cottage.

Also in 1946, the old wooden bathhouse was razed, and construction began on a new masonry bathhouse to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the city park. The new bathhouse was designed by Dan Driscoll, with assistance from Delmar Groos and Chester Nagel. Driscoll had worked as a staff architect for the Recreation Department in the late 1930s and was an architect with the City Engineering Department when the bathhouse construction drawings were prepared in 1945. The new bathhouse included a central service office with good views of the approach from the park and entrances to the public restrooms and dressing rooms. Tickets and basket tokens were issued from the service office. The basket rooms were efficient, sanitary rooms, with a custom designed basket-hanger system that took up a minimum of space.



The building materials were selected for maximum durability and minimum absorption. The project was published in *Architectural Record* magazine, a leading architectural journal, and described as a model of efficiency, beauty and durability. The new Bathhouse was dedicated on March 23, 1947, and the highlight of the year for the Recreation Department. A bronze plaque was unveiled with the inscription:

“In memory of Colonel Andrew Jackson Zilker. Friend of the people and of school children of Austin, he gave this beautiful park as a rich endowment dedicated to the happiness of the citizens of his beloved city, and their neighbors.”

In the 1950s, attendance at the park and the pool was strong. The Parks and Recreation Board found that more playgrounds were needed in the city, and plans were developed for a play area in Zilker Park in 1952. A permanent, concrete stage was constructed at the Zilker Hillside Theatre in 1952, to provide singing, fine arts, and theatre presentations. Nature and wildlife programs began at the new theatre the following year. A new, permanent band shell and lighting were added to the Zilker Hillside Theatre in 1957. On the south grounds, the parking area at the south entrance to Barton Springs was enlarged and graveled in 1952.

In 1955, the City acquired the old Rabb house and surrounding 29 acres of land on the south bank of Barton Creek. The Parks and Recreation Department had identified this as a vital property acquisition as early as 1953. The Builders Development Corporation assembled the Rabb land holdings and other adjacent parcels to create the new Barton Hills subdivision. The City purchased the property to provide a buffer between the new subdivision and the springs. The old Rabb house had partially burned in 1943, but Rabb family members continued to live there. After the City acquired the property, the remainder of the house was burned in 1956.

The old mill concession stand was demolished, and a new concession stand was built in 1960. The structure is still in use today, located between Eliza Spring and the Bathhouse.

In 1960, students from Austin High School, including a daughter of longtime Parks and Recreation Board member Joan Means Khabele, began holding swim-ins at the Pool to protest the tacit segregation that had occurred in years past. In 1961, Azie Taylor entered the pool for a swim with some white friends, bringing quiet attention to the need for integration. The following year, the tacit policy was officially changed, and the springs were integrated and open to all the citizens of Austin.

The Zilker Eagle miniature train was put into operation in 1961, a surprising source of revenue for the park ever since. The train station is located near Eliza Spring, close to a large children’s playground. The track runs along the south edge of the great lawn, overlooking the creek and river to one side and the rock island



A Baptism at Barton Springs, 1924.  
Source: Pipkin and Marshall Frech, Eds. *Barton Springs Eternal*.



Improvements at Barton Springs, 1926.  
Source: *Austin History Center*



Isamu Taniguchi in his Garden, 1970.  
Source: *Austin History Center*





Zilker Christmas Tree, 1970.  
Source: Austin History Center

## ZILKER HOLIDAY TREE

The Zilker Holiday Tree stands 155 feet tall and is composed of 39 streamers, each holding 81 multicolored, 25-watt bulbs—totaling 3,309 lights. At the top of the tree, a double star measures 10 feet from point to point. The double star displays 150 frosted bulbs. This unique spiral pattern of lights was created by City of Austin electricians. At its circumference, the tree measures 380 feet. The base of the tree is made up of 19 utility poles, each 14 feet tall, arranged in a circle around the Moonlight Tower.

Source: [Austintexas.gov](http://Austintexas.gov)

and great lawn to the other. The train and track are undergoing renovation and are expected to be back in operation soon. In 1971, the Zilker Playscape was opened adjacent to the train station.

The Zilker Botanical Garden and Austin Area Garden Center were opened in the northwest area of the park in 1964. The Austin Area Garden Center building sits on a hill overlooking the Zilker Botanical Garden and was designed by Kuehne, Kuehne and Milburn architects. Hugo Kuehne, who had designed some of the earliest buildings erected in the original Barton Springs Park in the 1920s and served on the early Parks Board, designed the garden center as one of his last architectural projects. The handsome, low-slung building uses the rustic material palette of rubble limestone, painted wood, and broad shingled hipped roof planes in an understated, modern building.

The Zilker Botanical Garden is a group of unique, individual gardens representing native and regional plant materials. The original landscape design was done by Parks Department landscape architect Fritz von Osthoff and includes ornamental, cactus, rose, fragrant, native plant, meditation iris, and day lily gardens. The garden design also includes small buildings and architectural relics of cultural and historic significance, which were saved and relocated to the Botanical Garden before the City Historic Preservation Office and preservation ordinance were established. The relocated structures include the Swedish log cabin, the Mamie Wilson Rowe Summer House, the cupola from the Bickler School, a masonry key-shaped window opening from the Michael Butler House, and a small curb footbridge from Congress Avenue. Antique light standards that once stood on Lavaca Street and the Esperanza Schoolhouse were also placed in the Botanical Garden.

The Taniguchi Japanese Garden was opened in 1969, a gift of Isamu Taniguchi, who spent 18 months creating the paths, ponds, bridges, tea house, and planting areas by hand. Taniguchi was a farmer who immigrated to the United States from Japan in 1915. He was moved to create the garden as a gesture of gratitude to the city where his two sons were educated, and as a symbol of universal peace.

The McBeth Recreation Center and McBeth Recreation Center Annex are in two buildings on the western edge of Zilker Park. The recreation centers provide programs for differently abled children and adults. Originally built by the Knights of Columbus as a local chapter building in 1958 and as a state headquarters building in 1960, the modernist buildings are sited in a heavily wooded area of dense tree canopy. The City of Austin acquired the buildings in 1981 and 1988 and renovated them for use as recreation centers.



Dedication Ceremony for the new Bathhouse, 1947.  
 Source: Austin History Center



Taniguchi Japanese Garden, circa 1970.  
 Source: Austin History Center





# JOAN MEANS KHABELE

ONE OF THE PEOPLE WHO  
WORKED TO END SEGREGATION  
AT BARTON SPRINGS POOL

Joan Means Khabele.  
Source: City of Austin



Equity, Diversity, and  
Inclusion

"1960 spring, I went to Austin High School and the principal called me in and said, I consider you to be the leader of the black kids in your class so I want you to go and tell them that none of you can go to the senior picnic because Barton Springs and Zilker Park are segregated..."

They didn't really have it properly locked off. You just go around this way and you are in. You know how big Barton Springs is. How do you control all the people in there? So we started swimming...

It was spreading like wildfire across the country. Eventually, they changed the city ordinance. I found that almost everything that opened, we had to march, protest petition, and go to the council. These things just don't open by themselves."



## CONTEMPORARY PARK IMPROVEMENT

The most significant change to Zilker Park since its creation was the construction of MoPac Boulevard over and through the western section of the park. The arterial highway extends from far north to far south Austin on the western side of the city. It flanks the Missouri-Pacific Railroad right of way in the segment north of the river, but the roadway itself continues to the south where the railroad turns to the east on the north bank of the river. The design and public engagement process took almost twenty years to complete, and construction took five years for the first phase of the project, which opened to use in 1974.

The highway bisects the park, with roughly the westernmost quarter of the park separated from the remainder of the park by elevated roadways and grade-level access roads. Barton Springs Road, originally designed as a scenic parkway route, now serves as a high-speed entrance to and exit from the highway.

In recent decades, historic designations and environmental conservation measures have been applied to Zilker Park, to preserve and protect the unique cultural and environmental resources of the place. In 1985 the Barton Springs Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1990 Barton Springs Pool was designated City of Austin Historic Landmarks. In 1992, citizens of Austin led the initiative for the Save Our Springs Ordinance to protect the aquifer and the springs. In 1996, the Austin Nature and Science Center opened a new satellite facility in the Bathhouse, including a gift shop, classrooms and an exhibit hall. In 1997 the Zilker Park Historic District was listed on the National Register. Also in that year, the Barton Springs Salamander was listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Degradation of the quality and quantity of water feeding Barton Springs was cited as a primary threat to the species. The Parks and Recreation Department and the Watershed Protection Development and Review Department formulated guidelines for the management of the surface habitats of the salamander, changing the operation and maintenance procedures at the Pool to gentler practices. The Austin Nature and Science Center

opened in 1982 and in 1998 the educational exhibit Splash! Into the Edwards Aquifer was opened at the Bathhouse by the Austin Nature and Science Center. The permanent exhibit tells the story of water migration through the Edwards Aquifer ecosystem.

Routes for hiking, biking and jogging were enhanced in recent decades in the park with the completion of the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake and the Barton Creek Greenbelt. The Butler Trail passes through the north edge of the park, along the bank of the Colorado River and Barton Creek. The Violet Crown Trail begins along the southwest section of the park on the area of Andrew Zilker's third and final land gift to the citizens of Austin to complete the original Zilker Park.

New elements and features have been added to the Zilker Botanical Garden and Nature Center areas of the park in recent years. A prehistoric garden, with fossilized dinosaur footprints, a small children's garden and a butterfly garden have been installed, as have sculptures, an arbor and a human sundial feature. A salamander conservation center and an aviary were added to the Nature Center compound.

Adjacent to the park and related to its cultural history, the road along the south edge of the original Barton Springs Park tract was renamed by the City Council in 2018. Once named Robert E. Lee Road, likely an association with the route traveled by Lee when he served in the US Army in the 1850s and was assigned to Texas to help protect the western frontier, the road was renamed Azie Taylor Morton Road. Azie Taylor Morton was the first and only Black person to serve as Treasurer of the United States, appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1977. Azie Taylor grew up in St. John Colony, a Texas Freedom Colony in Dale, TX near Austin, and came to the city to attend high school and college. She graduated from Huston-Tillotson College with a Bachelor of Science degree in commercial education in 1956. Around 1961, she visited Zilker Park with some white friends and went swimming in Barton Springs Pool, helping to end segregation at the site and open the pool to all citizens of Austin.

## SUMMARY

As Austin continues to grow the inadequate infrastructure at Zilker Park becomes more apparent. The erosion due to lack of controlled access to the water and poor stormwater management, the practice of using lawns as overflow parking lots, the lack of diverse transportation options, and unsafe or absent pedestrian routes and ADA accessible amenities all add up to a park in crisis. The Zilker Metropolitan Vision Plan's main objective is to provide a visionary framework to direct the preservation, future development, and care of Zilker Park, a treasured component of Austin's culture. The Park and the activities that take place there are the heart of Austin. Zilker Park needs a vision plan to make sure it is viable and accessible for future Austin residents. This framework involves identifying the need for recreational amenities, recommending improvements to the park's current facilities and programs, and putting an emphasis on the park's historic, cultural, and ecological characteristics.

Sustainability, equity, diversity and inclusion, nature and ecology, history and culture, and accessibility are the five driving concepts for the goals. In planning for the Guiding Principles and Goals, the planning team consulted 15 prior master plans, site assessments, and reports. These documents covered topics ranging from the environment and climate change within our urban context, to transportation and accessibility goals, and the cultural landscape of the park. The results of these studies were folded into the process of studying the geographic, demographic, and environmental context of the park.

# CHAPTER TWO

## IN THIS CHAPTER

Purpose and Vision of Plan  
Central Issues Facing Zilker  
Guiding Principles and Goals  
Relevant Planning Documents

# **PURPOSE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, VISION, AND GOALS**



# PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE PLAN

## THE SIX INFLUENCES ON THE VISION PLAN

- 1 Balancing Competing Interests
- 2 Urbanizing Recreation Within a Historic Context
- 3 Striving for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity
- 4 Linking Programming, Funding and Maintenance
- 5 Improving Mobility to and Inside the Park
- 6 Protecting the Ecological Heritage of Zilker



Crowded Barton Creek Spillway



Accessibility Issue with Erosion along Barton Creek

## THE PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE PLAN

Zilker Park is a well loved park at a turning point in its history. It is a vehicle centric park without adequate parking, infrastructure, accessibility, or stormwater management to meet the demands made on it. The primary goal of Zilker Metropolitan Vision Plan is to develop a visionary framework to guide the restoration and future improvement and stewardship of Zilker Park, which is a cherished part of Austin's culture.

The location is synonymous with everyday outdoor recreation – by people who swim, picnic, or enjoy walking the trails – to large festivals and events that are iconic and economic drivers for the city. Zilker Park is the setting for people's memories of childhood birthday parties, evenings under the stars watching a play at the Hillside Theater, or cooling off on a scorching summer day at Barton Springs. These pieces of the park and the events that occur within them make up the heart of Austin, and Zilker Park is in need of a vision plan to ensure that the Park remains viable and accessible for future generations of Austinites.

Natural areas and trails are some of the current elements of the park that meet people's needs, but parking issues, crowding issues and access were indicated as problems to solve for. Other issues are evident as one walks around the park, some of which are pictured here like areas that see intense storm drainage and erosion problems, and inaccessible areas along the Creek.

The Vision Plan develops a visionary framework to guide the restoration and future stewardship of Zilker Park. The recommendations were created using a comprehensive lens, starting with an understanding of how Zilker is used today, exploring broader City and Parks and Recreation goals, listening to community members and groups across Austin, and understanding urban park challenges and opportunities in other similar cities. The Vision Plan includes recommendations for programming, maintenance, environmental features and ecology, historical preservation, cultural resources, transportation, circulation, parking, concessions, operations, and management.

# CURRENT CHALLENGES IN ZILKER PARK



Crowded Informal Parking Lot during Weekends



Erosion Around Barton Creek

## CALL FOR ACTION

As the population of Austin grows, so does visitation to Zilker Park. The environment has suffered, including degraded banks along the creek and erosion at points of stormwater runoff. Some of the facilities within the park need upgrades and have access issues, making it difficult for visitors to navigate between the various things to do within the park without vehicles.



# EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES



Sunshine Camp

Source: Sunshine Camp, 2022. <https://www.sunshinecamps.org/zilkerpark/>



Barton Springs University

Source: Barton Springs University, 2022. <https://www.bartonspringsuniversity.org/bsu-2022-photos.html>

## FIELD TRIPS

With its abundance of natural resources, Zilker Park today serves an educational function – from the Barton Springs University program to the abundance of science and nature camp programs at the Austin Nature and Science Center (ANSC). However, there are many desired updates and improvements to the educational aspects of Zilker Park that this plan will recommend.

First, in terms of physical planning, Zilker Park should provide improved and safer access for school groups taking field trips to the park. This includes bus drop-offs, bus queuing, and efficient, safe connections between the various Zilker Park facilities. During the regular school year, school groups often visit the ANSC and the area by Barton Springs Pool. The community feedback informed the team of some of the bigger challenges for these groups.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER ALTERNATIVES

If storms or rain events occur during the field trip, class groups do not currently have a place to shelter. A centralized place for welcoming groups to the Park and accommodating shelter for inclement weather events is envisioned as a program within the Welcome Center.

## MOVING BETWEEN FACILITIES

Currently there are not safe, comfortable connections between Park facilities such as Barton Springs Pool, the ANSC, Zilker Botanical Gardens (ZBG). Connections should facilitate class-size groups to move from facility to facility to expand the programming of a field trip day at the Park. Shaded sidewalk connections that avoid vehicular traffic are provided for in the plan, and an internal shuttle circulator, paired with the Zilker Eagle, would allow even large groups to spend a longer day in the Park and experience multiple Park venues.

Along with improved spaces for school groups, additional restroom facilities will be needed to accommodate the likelihood of more frequent groups. New restrooms are located within the plan, arranged to provide access throughout the park.

## EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

PARD should explore partnerships with grade-level schools (public, private, charter and homeschools), higher education institutions, and early care facilities like pre-K and daycare programs. With improved access and circulation to and within the park, school programs may be better able to plan for and accommodate learning within Zilker Park and in this way new sidewalk connections can be dotted with interpretive storytelling. Outdoor learning spaces will also be a new way to accommodate educational opportunities within Zilker Park's natural spaces.



## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Zilker Park's educational programs today create memorable, unique ways for Austin's students to learn about their natural environment. These programs are successful despite having "shoestring" budgets. The plan recommends building upon the long-lasting success of the existing programs and expanding programs to add more park rangers or other docent-type staff or volunteers that can orient visitors to the park, assist those with disabilities and create an inclusive environment, lead tours and provide interpretive oral storytelling of the park's history.

## SHARED STORY ABOUT ZILKER PARK FROM COMMUNITY SURVEY I

"Zilker Park is an incredible teaching venue. Students from kindergarten to college visit to learn about hydrogeology, endangered species, and development. Educational components like the Splash! Exhibit are a critical part of the visitors' experience."



Girl Scout Cabin



# ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES



## LACK OF PARKING

For visitors to Zilker Park that do not live directly adjacent to it, getting to the park and circulating around it are some of the top challenges today. Cars are the way that most people access the park today. On an typical busy day, the permanent and temporary parking lots are often full, causing cars to circle around the park in search of a space resulting in frustrated drivers and illegal parking on grass and in critical root zones. With park roads that were not intended for thousands of car trips during normal trips, there can be major traffic congestion on Lou Neff Road, Stratford Drive and Barton Springs Road.

The parking that exists today was built to serve a much smaller and car-centric city. The plan proposes a configuration of parking that accommodates the number of spaces currently found in the park, including the temporary lots, while removing above ground parking from the core of the park. In the plan parking is found at the perimeter of the park, along Barton springs road, and within three potential parking garages. A goal of the plan is to preserve access to the park while encouraging other modes of transportation, therefore even as Austin grows in population, the plan anticipates additional transit support, allowing the parking spaces remain the same and hopefully diminish over time.

Options for off-site parking include many privately-owned garages and surface lots. While ownership and management structures make contracting with the private entities difficult, there are now third party platforms that feature emerging parking management solutions and technology such as phone apps connected with private parking lots at the Q2 Stadium. Other large facilities and event programmers in Austin are using this platform to be the contracting and insurance-carrying entity for contracting parking spaces, including both surface lots and parking garages.

Today the ANSC and ZBG struggle with access and parking to their facilities. ZBG's singular vehicular entrance off of Barton Springs Road is challenging to enter, and traffic on Barton Springs Road prevents anything but a right hand turn out of the park upon exiting. The ANSC has very little parking, and access is mostly accommodated from Stratford Drive and the gravel lot under and to the east of MoPac. Both of these facilities heavily rely on the gravel lot on the landfill for visitor parking, and the ANSC must also use the gravel





lot for school drop-offs. Buses dropping off groups to these facilities use the gravel lot to park while the field trip occurs.

The Butler Landfill and the Polo Field are degraded landscapes that have been used for years for parking, construction tear down and setup areas for Austin City Limits Music Festival (ACL), and overflow parking lot for other major events. The plan shows an ecological uplift of these sites, growing the usable parkland area and allowing for more use of the park, even during large events like ACL.

## REMOVAL OF PARKING

Personal vehicles have only been around since the 20th century, so we can only imagine what people will be using to travel in the future. It is not unreasonable to imagine that the need for parking could diminish as better transit options, micro-mobility and other modes of transportation, become used more frequently in Austin. It is realistic that parking lots in the park could be converted back to a park use. The following are ‘factors’ that the City should monitor so that as certain mobility

milestones are achieved, parking can be converted to park use:

- » Frequent bus route (every 15 minutes or less) that serves the population and requires no transfers
- » Project Connect line has a station within a 10-minute bike ride or 3-minute shuttle ride of the park
- » Internal Zilker Park circulator
- » Pavemint or similar parking space finding platform has a contract with same amount of spaces provided
- » Violet Crown Trail to land bridge to the Butler Hike and Bike trail connection is completed.



# ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

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- 1** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that was enacted on July 26, 1990. The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications.
  - 2** The Austin ADA Program Office ensures that all city services and programs are accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.
  - 3** The Parks and Recreation Department ADA Transition Plan aims to provide a framework towards providing facilities that are accessible and welcoming for all citizens. (<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/americans-disabilities-act-transition-plan>)
- 

## PRIORITIZING ACCESSIBILITY

In 2015, the City conducted an audit of accessibility issues within Zilker Park. Many of the recommendations have yet to be completed due to budgeting issues. The plan recommends revisiting this report and prioritizing improvements to those facilities that are not near-term suggested improvements or projects as part of this plan.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT TO ZILKER

There is a bus line but it is infrequent and does not provide efficient, easy access for most Austinites. Even if a visitor takes the bus, once one steps off the bus, there are minimal to no sidewalk connections to get to most of the major destinations. The bus stops themselves are not shaded and most do not even have a concrete pad.

## INTERNAL CONNECTIVITY

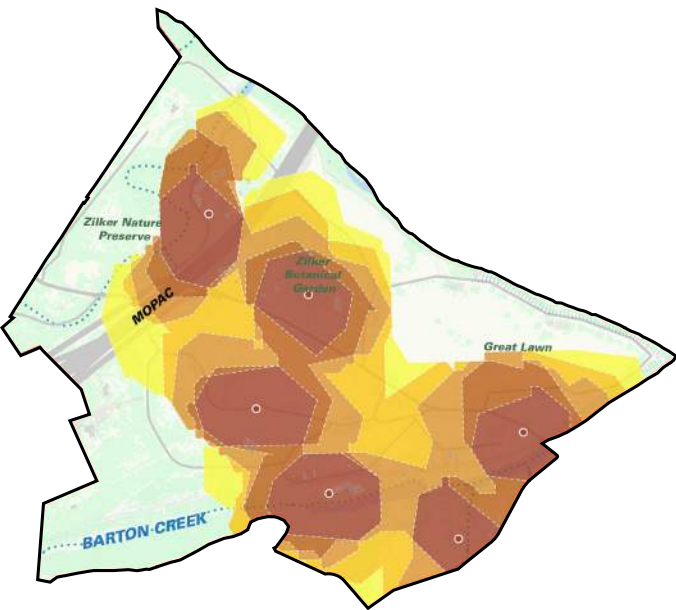
Barton Springs Road is a major divider of the park with minimal signed crossings. It is a very dangerous to cross as a pedestrian or cyclist and no internal circulation exists other than by bicycle or personal vehicle.

Zilker Eagle has been envisioned to take on a broader role in the park's future. Given the limitations of the Zilker Eagle's current location (steep grades, pedestrian-train conflicts, narrow space under Barton Springs Road), the plan envisions a future for the Zilker Eagle that moves and expands the loop to the north side of the park. This loop would have stations at a handful of locations – the land bridge, the parking area near the ZBG/ANSC, and the Toomey Road connection – allowing visitors to cover more areas of the park without having to walk the entirety. For successful operation, a maintenance yard and train storage area must be incorporated along the current rail alignment and on the north side of the park, if moved or expanded in the future.

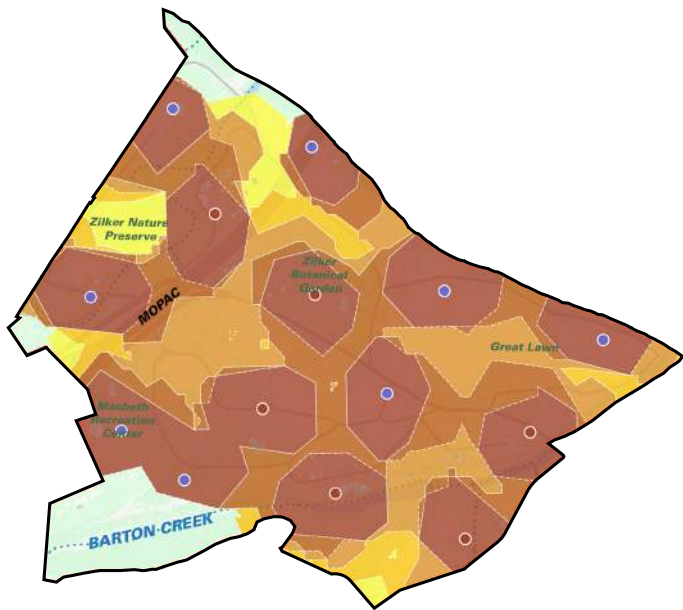
In addition to the Zilker Eagle, an internal shuttle that uses the existing roadways and wide shared pathways, and makes frequent stops, could allow greater access to and from bus stops, ANSC, sports area, ZBG, and pool.

# INADEQUATE RESTROOMS

## RESTROOMS



EXISTING RESTROOMS



PROPOSED RESTROOMS

There are 6 locations for public restrooms, excluding portable restrooms, in Zilker Park currently. This includes 2 within ZBG and ANSC facilities. This is not enough to serve the 350-acre park. The diagrams above are showing a 1 minute to 5 minutes walking radius from the current restrooms and how many restrooms are needed to serve the entire park. Based on the analysis, Zilker Park needs at least 8 more restroom locations to cover most of the parkland within a 5 minute walking distance.

LEGEND

1-min Walking Radius

2-min Walking Radius

3-min Walking Radius

4-min Walking Radius

5-min Walking Radius



Zilker Park Trailhead Restrooms  
Source: 2021. Malla Photography



Zilker Restroom on the South Side of Barton Springs Pool

# PROGRAMMING CONFLICTS



Fenced Great Lawn



Metrobike Station along Barton Springs Road

## EVENTS

Austin City Limits, Blues on the Green, Kite Festival, Zilker Summer Musical, Zilker Botanical Garden Events, and Trail of Lights are beloved events that occur in Zilker Park. 76% of respondents, from Zilker Park Vision Plan Community Survey #2 responded they enjoy all of the events in the park or at least one of the large events. However, there are programming conflicts and they need better synchronization.

The biggest issue identified by the community is that is that the large events close the park in the prime weather time. Austin City Limits Music Festival happens only for two weekends but the park is closed before for setting up and after to clean up. This conflict means visitors cannot access much of the park. City Ordinance Section 8-1-15 designates a maximum of 24 special event days for Zilker per calendar year. Additional closure days of portions of Zilker may occur for operations of the park, including limited access due to set-up, take-down, or maintenance. The plan identifies considerations to balance these closures so that park can be used even during major events.

Also, the events in Zilker Park should set an example for green best practices. Events cause an impact on the environment through intense human activities such as the construction of stages, energy use, transportation, and waste. Decisions in the early stages of planning can have a significant impact on the nature of the environmental impact an event will have. It is therefore advisable to put environmental sustainability at the heart of all decision-making and to develop a basic environmental assessment and event execution plan at the beginning of the preparation phase. Policies to address environmental issues should also take into account supplier behavior, such as through green procurement policies.

## LACK OF SUPPORT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The lack of appropriate infrastructure for park programming is also an issue. For instance, Zilker Hillside Theater is challenged due to the lack of utility support. The location of major utilities within the park should be reviewed for appropriate site uses. Additional infrastructure support will also reduce the reliance on generators which impact the environment.

Additional transportation infrastructure is also needed. The two MetroBike stations and 7 bus stops within the park should be expanded along with additional ways to access the park for people from each part of the city and beyond.



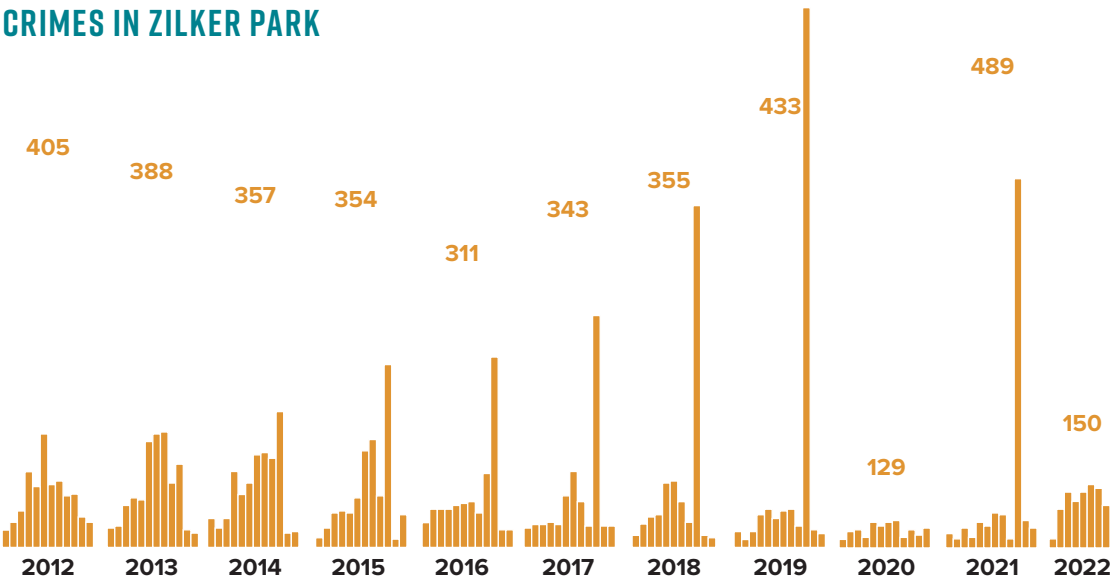




# SAFETY

This graph is based on [Austin Police Department Crime Dashboard](#) for the Parks and Recreation Department, showing total number of crimes by month.

## CRIMES IN ZILKER PARK



Zilker Park is not a crime-free area, unfortunately. There are an average of 383 crimes per year in the past 10 years. 49.9% of the crimes are thefts and mostly happen during weekends. One fact worth noting is that most of the crimes happened in October, likely during Austin City Limits. For instance, in 2019, there were 355 crimes overall but there were 322 crimes in October, and 309 of them are during Austin City Limits weekends. In line with rates across the country, the total number of crimes have increased since 2016, except in 2020, with the influence of COVID-19.

The Vision Plan should consider environmental design factors that improve safety such as clear sight lines, creating greater visibility, and encouraging visitor traffic in high-risk areas.

## LIGHTING IN THE PARK

A brighter park does not necessarily mean a safer park based on recent studies. However, park users report feeling safer. Lighting is critical to improving the perception of safety by maximizing visual and physical access to spaces.

When asked what keeps people from using Austin Parks during the PARD Long Range Plan process, “Lack of lighting” was ranked 6th and “Crime or safety concerns” was 1st. People often do not feel safe in Zilker Park, especially at night.

An overall increase in lighting for the park is beneficial to the community by daunting crime and encouraging after-dark community activities while respecting the nature experience and park aesthetic. The Parks and Recreation Department’s “Park Security Lighting Project” should be applied to Zilker Park to increase safety and security at parks by installing solar-powered LED lighting without grid-supplied power.



# ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Zilker Metropolitan Park is central to the history, culture, and ecology of Austin, Texas. Ecologically, the site includes a diversity of plant communities influenced by topographic changes, variation in soils, hill country geology, impacts from a long history of site use, and periodic flooding that have shaped the landscape. These communities range from riparian habitat by the water's edge to woodlands on steep slopes. Zilker Park plays an indispensable role as a refuge for residents and wildlife. Lying along the eastern boundary of the Edwards Plateau ecoregion, Zilker Park contains four major springs and shoreline for three waterbodies, is home to two endangered salamander species, offers habitat for 33 bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and supports over 600 species of native flora and fauna. All of this ecological culture is at significant risk if the park continues down its current path.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2012, the City of Austin adopted the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, which included Priority Program #4: Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city. It also established a definition of green infrastructure as a strategically planned and managed network of natural lands, parks, working landscapes, open spaces, and green stormwater controls that conserve and enhance ecosystem services and provide associated benefits to human populations.

As climate change intensifies and results in higher temperatures and more extreme weather events, the many forms of green infrastructure will become increasingly important. Climate vulnerability and tree planting priority in Austin from the City of Austin Green Infrastructure Assessment shows areas that are climate vulnerable as a result of urban heat island temperature increases, lack of urban forest, and lack of shade over impervious cover. In addition, these areas coincide with higher levels of social vulnerability and worse health outcomes. The result is a park system that is adapting to and mitigating climate change. These same concepts must be integrated into the Zilker Park Vision Plan to create a sustainable park that addresses climate change. The plan proposes increasing shade over impervious cover, restoring degraded shoreline through terracing and the implementing green infrastructure and stormwater management techniques throughout the park.

## WATER QUALITY IMPACT

The ecology of Zilker Park is defined by its waters. Zilker Park faces several critical water quality issues such as controlling and reducing stormwater runoff from impervious cover, reducing the impacts of users on waterways, and protecting the spring areas. Good water quality is a top priority for Barton Springs Conservancy because water from the springs supports the park's endangered salamanders and the park's overall ecological health. These issues can be addressed in part by adjusting land management practices within the park. The Vision Plan addresses these issues by proposing bank restoration that allows visitors controlled access to the water, a decrease in impervious cover throughout the park, and stormwater mitigation strategies.

## AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONTAMINATION

Zilker Park has three main areas of environmental contamination concern—the Butler Landfill, the Pistol and Skeet Range, and the West Butler Landfill. In anticipation of future renovations planned for various areas on site, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was completed for Zilker Park in 2019 by TRC Environmental Corporation. The following Site Analysis and Need Assessment sections detail the type of contamination present in each of these three areas. This information can be used to plan future mitigation and restoration actions.

# ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS



Stormwater damage



Barton Springs Spillway Area

## INVASIVE SPECIES AND SOIL DISTURBANCE

Invasive species and soil disturbance are the primary threats to ecological health in Zilker Park. Invasive species are generally introduced from other countries or regions and cause economic and/or ecological harm. They are one of the primary ecological threats in Zilker Park. Their aggressive growth threatens native plant communities by altering soil chemistry, direct displacement (“crowding out”), and changing the light in or below the canopy. In doing so, they also impact native animals and insects by interfering with their food, shelter, and protection. Any action or infrastructure that removes, compacts, or covers soil will have an impact on a site’s ability to support a healthy ecosystem. The primary causes of soil disturbance in Zilker Park are stormwater flow, poorly functioning or absent infrastructure, mowing and use of other heavy machinery, off-trail recreation, formal recreation without suitable supporting infrastructure, and erosion of trail material. Soil disturbance is problematic in all areas but is particularly concerning along environmentally sensitive waterways such as Barton Creek.

## INTEGRATE ECOLOGY WITH PARK USE

Unfortunately, Zilker Park is being degraded by the volume of users coming to enjoy the park without adequate infrastructure or design to support them. Off-trail recreation, water access, and trail conditions are impacting Zilker Park’s natural areas. Many of these problems can be addressed by providing infrastructure that meets the needs and volume of park users. The Zilker Vision plan addresses the following needs: trails, water access, gathering locations, trail size and maintenance, as well as physical barriers to environmentally sensitive areas.

## HABITAT RESTORATION

Zilker Park serves as a refuge and migration corridor for wildlife in the highly developed Austin area. More than 260 wildlife species have been observed in the park, including 6 amphibians (2 of which are endangered salamanders), 2 fish, 1 mollusk, 224 birds, 9 mammals, and 20 reptiles. The proposed plant communities described in the The Vision Plan have habitat features that support a variety of wildlife. For example, the 16 acres of enhanced and expanded meadows feature native grasses and wildflowers to attract pollinators. The meadows will create prime conditions for the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Eastern Meadowlark, both of which are classified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by the Texas Department of Parks & Wildlife (TPWD).





## TREES IN ZILKER PARK

Most trees are relatively small, except for pecans, which have an average diameter at breast height of 19.5 inches. However, there are 70 trees over 19 inches, qualifying as protected by the City of Austin. Of those, 31 are heritage trees, 26 of which are pecans.

During the ice storm of 2023, many trees were damaged and are still being assessed.



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



## SUSTAINABILITY



## EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



## NATURE AND ECOLOGY



## HISTORY AND CULTURE



## ACCESSIBILITY

The Guiding Principles are fundamental values confirmed by the community that drive the overall purpose of the Vision Plan. They provide a framework for decision-making and exploring input through the lens of these shared values. The corresponding goals are tied to action. They are specific, measurable, attainable, and time-bound. The Guiding Principles are built on community engagement that took place early in the planning process.





## Sustainability

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The plan should champion sustainability best practices for the park.
- » The plan should be forward-looking and should embrace both its challenges and its opportunities for future generations.
- » Zilker Park should serve as an example of sustainability, protecting and enhancing our natural spaces and assets.

### GOALS

- 1** Implement adaptive management strategies to create a resilient landscape in the face of climate change and dynamic user needs.
- 2** Achieve balance between metropolitan use and ecological/environmental concerns.
- 3** Balance revenue and ecological/environmental health with operations and maintenance of the park.
- 4** Provide equitable opportunities for access to the park and enjoyment of amenities.
- 5** Explore new and harness existing partnerships that extend the reach of the Parks Department to accommodate new opportunities.



## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » Zilker Park should serve the entire community of Austin.
- » Programs should be aligned with community interest.

### GOALS

- 1** Design park elements that are welcoming to individuals and small groups and able to accommodate large groups.
- 2** Support equitable access, with special focus on:
  - Safety
  - Accessibility
  - Events and programs for diverse cultures
- 3** Support new and enhance existing learning opportunities within the park.
- 4** Sustain the implementation and maintenance of the park and stewardship of the park utilizing volunteers and partner organizations.



## Nature and Ecology

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The Plan should treat the Park as an ecological treasure.
- » The plan should recognize the park's relation to water and explore opportunities for interaction with the lake and creek without compromising environmental integrity.

### GOALS

- 1** Protect, enhance, and restore land and waterscape elements that are imperative for ecological function.
- 2** Establish an interpretive program to educate visitors, especially for the youth about the park's sensitive features. Public stewardship should be developed as part of the interpretive program.
- 3** The Plan should champion best practices in green design, planning and land management.
- 4** Ensure safe and sustainable access to the water including entry to Lady Bird Lake and Barton Creek, while protecting them.
- 5** The Plan should protect Zilker's natural resources for generations to come.
- 6** Support and rehabilitate native plants and species.



## History and Culture

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The park is a metropolitan park which has a regional draw and focus.
- » The Plan should treat the Park's historic and cultural resources as a valued legacy to be celebrated for future generations.

### GOALS

- 1** The Plan should honor and respect the Park's historic and cultural resources and should integrate them into the future life of the park.
- 2** The Plan should offer a framework that provides a successful balance between historic preservation and current/future needs.
- 3** The Plan should tell the deeper and complete stories of the people and the history of the park to better enrich the visitor experience and to elevate a sense of public stewardship.
- 4** The Plan should create opportunities for local artists and art to be a part of park spaces. These opportunities may include music, performance, and temporary exhibits.
- 5** Celebrate the stories of the people that lived on the land throughout history, including the indigenous people, and bring to light those stories that are not often heard.
- 6** Establish and integrate education components such as an education center to encourage and convey cultural and historical aspects of the park.





## Accessibility

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- » The plan should knit the segmented pieces of the park together, ensuring a more accessible, safe, and connected park.
- » The park should be a place you can reach with multiple travel options.

### GOALS

- 1** Ensure there are multiple safe, enjoyable, and convenient modes of transportation to access the park.
- 2** Improve and incentivize non-automobile mode access to, from, and within the park, in support of the City's ambitious mode split and climate goals.
- 3** Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation between the north and south side of Barton Springs Rd. Make travel through the park and to various parts of the park intuitive, safe, and easy by foot, bike, and accessible paths.
- 4** Examine the surrounding trail network to create and extend safe active travel within and through the park.
- 5** Create accessible multi-modal transportation networks within the park.
- 6** Improve the wayfinding to and from different park destinations. Provide clear circulation, entryways, gateways, and connectivity between facilities within the park and throughout the park elements.
- 7** Use transportation assets efficiently, to preserve park space for ecological and recreation systems.
- 8** Collaborate with CapMetro and TxDOT to review, analyze, and recommend the transportation system to and around the park.
- 9** Achieve a high level of ADA accessibility within the park.

# RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

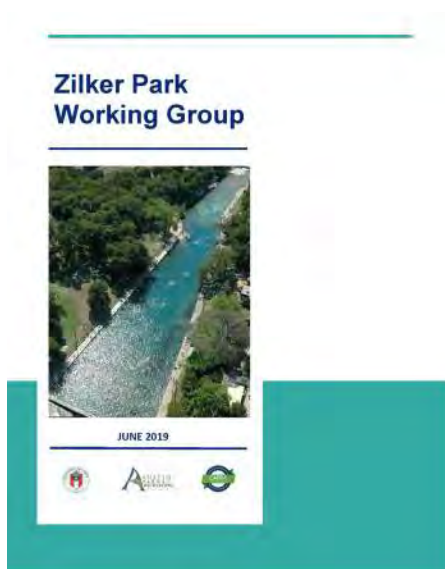


## PARD LONG RANGE PLAN FOR LAND FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

The Long Range Plan was finalized in 2019 and provides guidance for Austin's park system with goals that inspire and are achievable. The plan identifies how and where to invest in the system to ensure it supports our residents, employees, and visitors as Austin continues to grow and change. Some of the reasons for this document are that the population of and developed land within Austin are both increasing and the need for parkland is on the rise. The Parks Department is striving to keep up with growth. PARD partners with other city departments, non-profit organizations, conservancies, community groups, and businesses to enhance and improve parks, increase recreational and cultural opportunities, preserve natural areas, celebrate arts and culture, and maximize the public benefit at minimum taxpayer cost.

Priorities for future planning that came out of the community engagement for this document included improving connections and access, and investing in existing parks.

Recommendations specific to Zilker include upgrading and improving site conditions at the Zilker Clubhouse, continuing the Zilker Loop Trail development and Barton Creek Crossing upstream from the pool, constructing a loop trail extension and bridge, and implementing a master plan.



## 2019 ZILKER PARK WORKING GROUP REPORT

In 2019, City Council created a Zilker Park Working Group with representatives from each City Council District and key stakeholder groups. The idea for making the short-term recommendations was to initiate pilot programs and gather data that could help inform the Zilker Park Vision Plan process. These are just a portion of the relevant recommendations.

In regards to illegal surface parking on lawn areas, this plan recommends reducing available Polo Fields parking in phases over time. The Millennium Parking Garages (Chicago) are specifically referenced as a potential model. The Zilker Park Vision Plan uses this recommendation to remove parking on the polo fields entirely and implement an underground parking garage and parallel parking along Barton Springs Road to serve the parking needs in the area.

The alternative recommendations in this plan were issued in a joint statement from: Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, Zilker Neighborhood Association, Save our Springs Alliance, City Council District 7, City Council District 5.

These recommendations argue for a less gradual approach with hard Short-Term deadlines, citing specific concern over a lack of definitive plan for removing the gravel over the Butler Landfill. The Zilker Park Vision Plan incorporated these recommendations by removing surface parking and event access from the Butler Landfill, and creating a definitive restoration plan for the site within the Ecological Uplift programming.



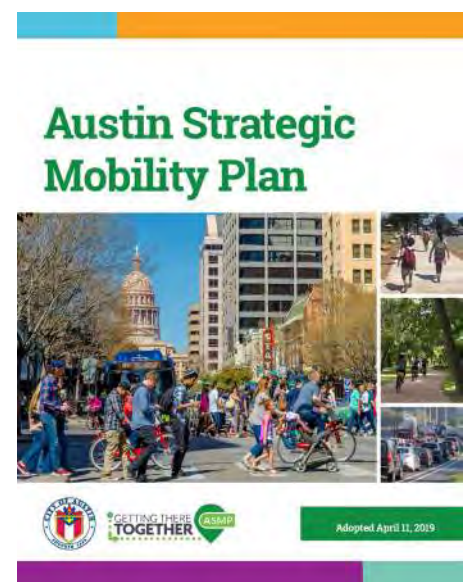
The alternative recommendations joint statement also offered the following medium and long-term recommendations. PARD should preserve and protect Zilker Park as an irreplaceable public asset to be operated primarily as open space for present and future generations. The Zilker Park Master Plan should establish a viable, actionable plan that minimizes vehicular traffic in and through the park and surrounding neighborhoods by identifying a range of alternative, affordable transportation and parking strategies for park patrons. The Zilker Park Vision Plan responded to these recommendations by preserving flexible open fields, while also offering more diverse programming as asked for in the Long Range plan and recommending that Barton Springs Road be put on a road diet and reduced to one lane in each direction following a traffic study conducted by the Austin Transportation Department. The Vision Plan also recommends increasing public transportation routes to the park, an internal circulator for the park, using the Zilker Eagle to connect amenities within the park, an increase in protected bike lanes, and other support for micro-mobility options.

## AUSTIN STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

Issued in April of 2019, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan outlines recommendations related to placemaking, economic prosperity, sustainability, and health and safety. The plan calls for the construction of a transportation network that encourages social interaction through quality urban design and connects users to the many places that make Austin unique. Lowering the risk of travel-related injury and promoting public health will protect Austinites. Active transportation access for all ages and abilities on sidewalk, bicycle, and urban trail systems should be built. Active transportation initiatives should be advanced and Austinites should be connected to services and opportunities for better health.

A review of the transportation network maps from the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan reveal the following priorities that affect Zilker Park:

- Barton Springs road is part of the High-Injury Network. The Vision Plan addresses this concern by recommending that Barton Spring road be reduced to one lane in each direction with protected bike lanes and pedestrian crossings.
- Stratford Drive is considered a substandard Street and Barton Springs Road is listed as a Bicycle Facilities improvement project. All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Facilities Map indicates that Stratford Drive is substandard street that needs sidewalk improvement and improved bicycle facilities. The Vision Plan addresses these concerns by recommending re-routing Stratford Drive along Mopac for vehicles, and creating a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists in its place within the park. The Vision Plan also recommends protected bike lanes along Barton Springs Road.
- Bicycle facilities improvement is needed on Andrew Zilker Road. The Vision Plan addresses this need by recommending closing Andrew Zilker Road to vehicles and making it a pedestrian and cyclist shared use path.



# RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

- Barton Springs, Rollingwood Drive, Dellana Lane, Nature Center Drive, Stratford Drive have absent sidewalks, while Barton Springs Road has existing sidewalks on the sidewalk prioritization list. The Vision Plan addresses these concerns by recommending that all sidewalks be completed, connected, and meet ADA requirements.



## BARTON SPRINGS POOL MASTER PLAN

Completed in 2008 the Barton Springs Pool Master Plan is driven by consideration of water quality and salamander habitat improvements, grounds improvements, infrastructure improvements and facilities improvements with the goal of returning the site to its rightful glory where the water was cleaner and the experience of the pool was more enjoyable and the ability to accommodate the significant user demands on Austin's most popular park amenity. Among the sprawling array of recommendations, these are specifically relevant to this planning effort:

- Create a Visitor's Center at or near the Beverly S, Sheffield Education Center. The Vision Plan responds to this recommendation by suggesting a welcome plaza near the Beverly S, Sheffield Education Center that incorporates other historic buildings in the park.
- Recognizing that about 75% of the existing trees were a single species (pecans)—diversify the tree canopy, The Vision Plan responds to this concern by recommending an increase to the shade canopy that also improves species diversity within the park.

The Barton Springs Pool Master Plan also acknowledged a few important issues beyond its scope:

- Recognizing the problem of overcrowding and lack of parking—improve transit connections. The Zilker Park Vision Plan responds to this concern by suggesting an internal circulator within the park, removing a majority of surface parking from the core of the park and offering parking options underground or at the perimeter, recommending contracts with third party parking facilitators and increased public transportation to the park.
- Recognizing the scarcity of public accommodations in the park and the burden it places on the facilities in the bathhouse—add more public restrooms. The Zilker Park Vision Plan responds to this concern by recommending the construction of at least 8 more restrooms throughout the park to ensure a 5 minute walkshed between each one.
- Recognizing the congestion around Eliza Spring and within the Barton Springs zone generally—relocate the Zilker Zephyr (Zilker Eagle) track route. The Zilker Park Vision Plan suggests a more northern route for the Zilker Eagle that could also support internal circulation.



## 2020 AUSTIN CLIMATE EQUITY PLAN

The signs showing climate change in Austin are clear and the natural system has significant role to handle this change. Completed in 2020, this reports set up goals and strategies to keep Austin's natural lands and farm land and reduce carbon emissions for a climate equity.

Some of the goals and strategies of this plan are:

By 2030, legally protect an additional 20,000 acres of carbon pools on natural lands and manage all new and existing natural areas (approximately 70,000 acres total) with a focus on resilience. Strategies to achieve this goal include protecting natural lands, managing natural lands for resilience, increasing community access and positive perceptions of public land, and protecting water sources. The Zilker Vision Plan Responds to this goal by recommending the implementation of the Ecological Uplift strategy, improving accessibility and safety within the park, and creek bank restoration and stormwater mitigation strategies.

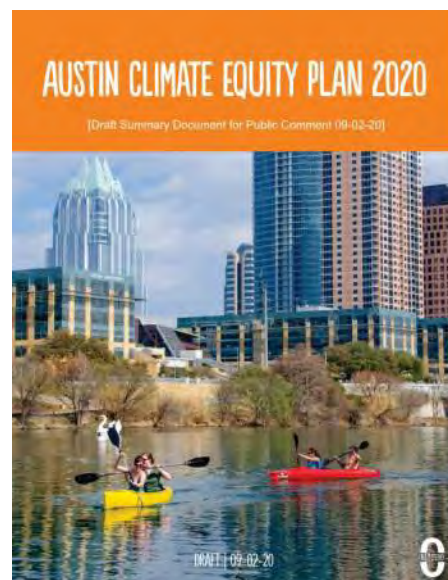
Achieve at least 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050, with a focus on increasing canopy cover equitably. Strategies to meet this goal include protect canopy cover on City lands, promote tree protections and landscape regulations, and increase community tree planting. The Zilker Park Vision Plan responds to this goal by recommending an increase in the shade canopy by XXXXXXX percent through the use of diverse tree species and suggesting that all trails provide shade to visitors.

By 2030, include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community co-benefits. Strategies to achieve this goal include prioritizing carbon neutrality for public lands, reclaim public space and prioritize green infrastructure, promote community stewardship and promote carbon farming.

## WATERSHED PROTECTION STRATEGIC PLAN

The Watershed Protection Strategic Plan updated in August 2016, greatly expands the scope of the area evaluated for problem identification and solution proposal, building on the original 17 core watersheds studied in 2001 to present key parameters in 49 watersheds. The goals of the plan are to reduce the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution in the Austin communities. The detailed goals are below:

- Protect lives and property by reducing the impact of flood events. The Zilker Park Vision plan incorporates this goal by recommended implementation of stormwater mitigation strategies and the repair of eroded creek banks within the park.
- Protect and improve Austin's waterways and aquifers for citizen use and support of aquatic life. Similarly the Vision Plan supports this goal through stormwater mitigation, Ecological Uplift, and eroded bank repair with controlled access to the water for visitors.



# RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS



Zilker Park Natural Resources Inventory & Management Guidelines



The Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake

## SIGLO GROUP

### ZILKER PARK NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

This report was finalized in April 2021, and a summary can be found in the “Environmental” section of this report.

## THE TRAIL FOUNDATION

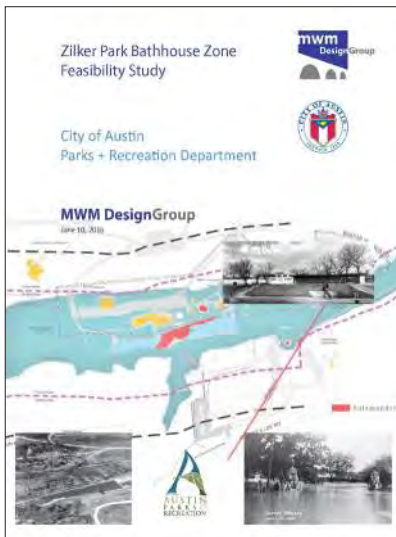
### THE BUTLER TRAIL AT LADY BIRD LAKE

The Butler Trail Urban Forestry and Ecological Restoration Guidelines Environmental Site Assessment presents thorough research of the history, plant and animal species, soil, and erosion in the area where Zilker Park meets Lady Bird Lake.

## ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

### ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Zilker and some surrounding neighborhoods do not currently have a formal neighborhood plan adopted by the City to guide land use decisions. However, in other planning documents the Zilker Neighborhood Association has prepared, there is an emphasis on decreasing the amount of parking in Zilker Park now, and instead using current parking areas for park use. There is also a desire for more public transit and bike options, and a wish to avoid privatization of park elements. The ZNA would like the issue of climate change mitigation addressed as part of the Zilker Park Vision Plan.



Zilker Park Bathhouse Zone Feasibility Study

## CITY OF AUSTIN

### ZILKER PARK BATHHOUSE ZONE FEASIBILITY STUDY

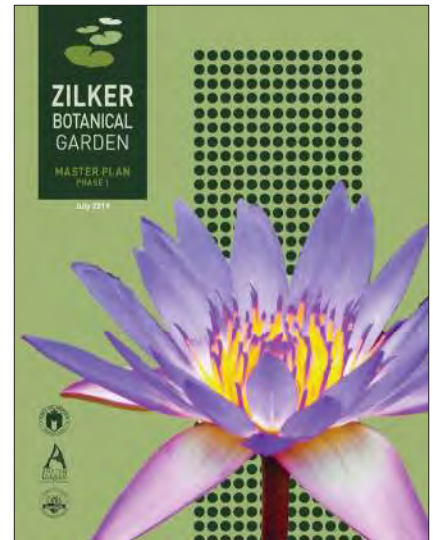
Adopted in 2016, This study examines the feasibility of various improvements to grounds and facilities in the Barton Springs Pool area. Its recommendations incorporate the goals of the 2008 Barton Springs Pool Master Plan as well as the challenges of the numerous environmental, historical and local regulations that apply to this area. Move forward with planned and funded projects including:

- Install parking meters
- Daylight the Eliza Springs outlet
- Build the Violet Crown Trailhead restrooms
- Remove and relocate the existing maintenance facilities.



## CITY OF AUSTIN 2019 ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN MASTER PLAN

Issued in July of 2019, the Zilker Botanical Garden Vision Plan is highly relevant to the Zilker Park Vision Plan and makes recommendations related to event facilities, wayfinding, mobility, and more.



Zilker Botanical Garden Master Plan

## CITY OF AUSTIN ZILKER PARK NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Zilker Park Historic District was entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. The National Register Historic District (NRHD) encompasses the entire area of Zilker Park, approximately 350 acres. The historic district designation is based on two of the four applicable National Register criteria for designation. Under Criterion A, for association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, the park is noted for conservation and entertainment/recreation at the local level of significance for its association with the development and design of municipal parks in Austin during the early 20th century. Under Criterion C, for a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, the park is noted for architecture and landscape architecture, again at the local level of significance, for numerous elements built within the park that represent the Reform Park Movement design philosophy and Depression-era public works programs. The Zilker Park NRHD describes a total of 69 resources within the district boundary, including buildings, objects, sites and structures.

Zilker Park National Register Historic District

## CITY OF AUSTIN ZILKER PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

Prepared by Julie McGilvray in 2012, the Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report recommends the creation of a preservation management plan with appropriate treatment planning for historic buildings, structures, and sites within Zilker Park and states that an integrated approach to site management, preservation, and conservation is necessary. The report also suggests pursuing SITES certification in the future as many of the requirements are already in place, including an inventory of resources, the site history, native plants preference, recreational land use, educational land use, and integrity of hard and softscapes.

Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report

# RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS



Environmental Site Assessment

TRC COMPANIES, INC.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENT PHASE I

The assessment's purpose was to identify Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) at Zilker Park as defined by the ASTM E 1527-13 standard. Three RECs were identified: 1) Butler Landfill, due to the constituents of concerns at levels above their respective Protective Concentration Levels exceedances and the potential from comingling of groundwater within the landfill with surface waters at Lady Bird Lake. 2) Pistol and Skeet range area, including the wooded area to the north due to the presence or likely presence of lead at levels which indicate an impact to environment. 3) Area at the northwest portion of Zilker Park currently used as the West Butler Landfill, due to the storage of the asphalt, electric powered carts and small vehicles with lead-acid batteries, surplus lawn-maintenance equipment, and chemical containers without cover and/or impervious pavement, which represents a material threat of a release of hazardous substances and/or petroleum products to the environment.



Capital Metro Transit Development Plan

TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT & DESIGN, INC.

## CAPITAL METRO TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Route 30 (which serves Zilker Park) was proposed to operate every 30 minutes (on weekends and weekdays) (pg. 53). Proposed changes in this route would affect ADA paratransit coverage for customers served by route 30.

Connections 2025 also proposes a Mobility Innovation Zone, Zone H (Zilker/Barton Hills), located near Zilker Park. Mobility Innovation Zones pilot mobility solutions (such as shuttles, car sharing, and vanpools), especially where traditional fixed-route transit is difficult to implement.



THE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

## SAFE AND MOBILITY STUDY RESULTS FOR THE BUTLER TRAIL 2021

The Safety and Mobility Study Results for Butler Trail include several recommendations, including the creation of a trail head in Zilker Park and incorporating a trail loop within the park that includes the Butler Trail as a segment. It also suggests making Zilker Park feel like an extension of the trail space. The study recommends considering adding a bridge across Barton Creek and closer to Lou Neff Point that can connect from the higher elevation both sides. Also, the study outlines recommended trail widths and surface material standards. These standards are under review with permitting and the update of the master urban trails plan for the city.



## CITY OF AUSTIN

### PARKLAND EVENTS TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Parkland Events Task Force convened in 2015 and 2016 to make recommendations for events in heavily used parks, such as Zilker Park, Auditorium Shores, and Festival Beach. They have all been subject to caps in the past. The Task Force recommended reducing the number of event days from 29 days to 24 days and suggested other parks such as Bolm Road, John Trevino, Onion Creek, and Walter Long as venue alternatives. The City should ensure all city costs are covered (fees, fines, etc.) for hosting large events. The report recommends developing and using a standardized pre-event and post-event evaluation matrix, ensuring vegetation, trees, and environmentally sensitive areas are protected, and that events are green.

## THE CITY OF AUSTIN, ADA OFFICE

### 2015 ADA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

According to the 2015 PARD Public Facility ADA Self-Assessment Survey, programs and services provided by both PARD and third-party vendors should be accessible to people with disabilities. Several Zilker park facilities are historic and will require creative design modifications to ensure accessibility.

## TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### MOPAC EXPRESSWAY SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

In 2013, TxDOT and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority started an Environmental Study for the MoPac Expressway, from Slaughter Lane to Cesar Chavez. This study determined the Express Lane(s) Alternative as the Recommended Build Alternative. These include the addition of two new Express Lanes in each direction from Cesar Chavez Street to Slaughter Lane.

### ROLLINGWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Although it is not included in any formal discussions, the City of Rollingwood has previously mentioned interest in 1) purchasing the Zilker Preserve, 2) being involved with decisions related to any activity that will affect traffic through the city, and 3) potential improvements to trails that connect Rollingwood and Austin.

## CAMPO

### CAMPO 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Appendix A of the 2045 Plan Document, the Regional Transportation Plan Projects Lists, includes the following MoPac Expressway South Improvements near Zilker Park.



Parkland Events Task Force Final Report and Recommendations



2015 ADA Implementation Report



CAMPO 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

## SUMMARY

Zilker Park has been shaped through the years by its hydrology, history of land use, and the needs of the city that now surrounds it. As the city grows so does its impact on Zilker Park.

By studying the park through its interaction with Austin's transportation network, its ability to be sustained and funded over time, and its place as a home for some of the city's largest events, we can see the park as an anchor within this vibrant city. This Vision Plan seeks to preserve the park's natural features, improve people's access, identify funding for necessary maintenance, and provide proper infrastructure for its millions of annual visitors. There is a healthy foundation of existing policy that can be built upon to protect this ecological and recreational treasure.

# CHAPTER THREE

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- Regional Context
- Event Calendar
- Transportation/Mobility
- Ecology
- Regulations
- Utility
- Financial

# **SITE ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT**



## REGIONAL CONTEXT



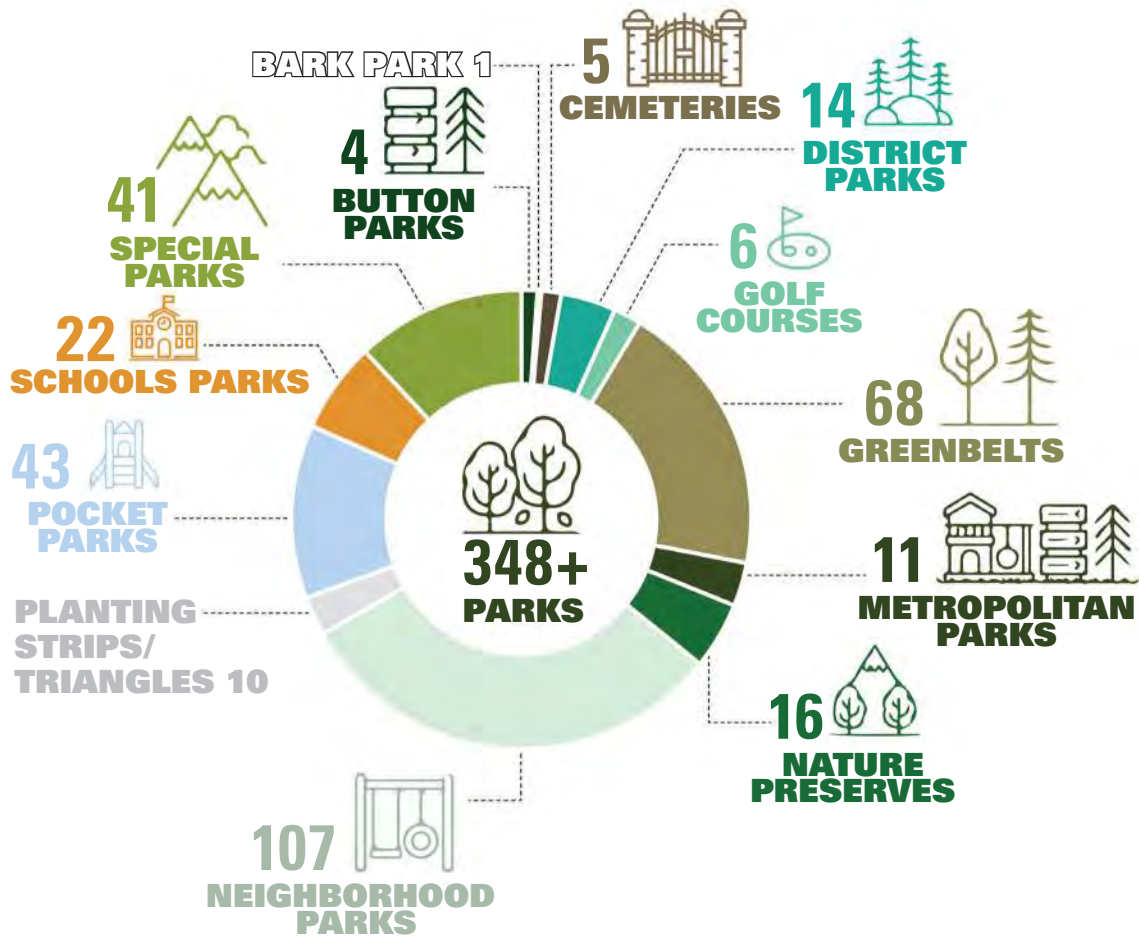
# AN URBAN OASIS



Downtown and  
High-Density

Zilker Park sees about 2.6 million visitors annually with an average of 7,200 people visiting per day. Located in the heart of Austin, this park is one of the most visited places in the city. Many of these visitors are drawn to the hiking and swimming options within and near Zilker Park. The Park is connected to the Roy and Anne Butler Hike and Bike Trail, the Violet Crown Trail, the Barton Creek Greenbelt, and Ladybird Lake. Barton Springs Pool is not the only swimming hole within this recreational area. Campbell's Hole, Sculpture Falls, Twin Falls, and Gus Fruh are all popular places to get into the water. On nice days, these swimming holes are filled with Austinites of all ages and backgrounds, united by the urge to swim in cool water on a hot day.

## ZILKER PARK WITHIN THE AUSTIN PARK SYSTEM



## ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK

- Size: 351 Acres (Zilker Park Vision Plan boundary is 402 acres with 51 acres of Barton Creek Conservancy)
- Address: 2100 Barton Springs Road, Austin, Texas (78746)
- Facilities: Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin Nature and Science Center, McBeth Recreation Center, Austin Sunshine Camps, Barton Springs Pool, etc.

Zilker Park is classified as a Metropolitan park in Austin Park System. It means the park serves city wide population and has access to major arterials with more large and specialised features and facilities.

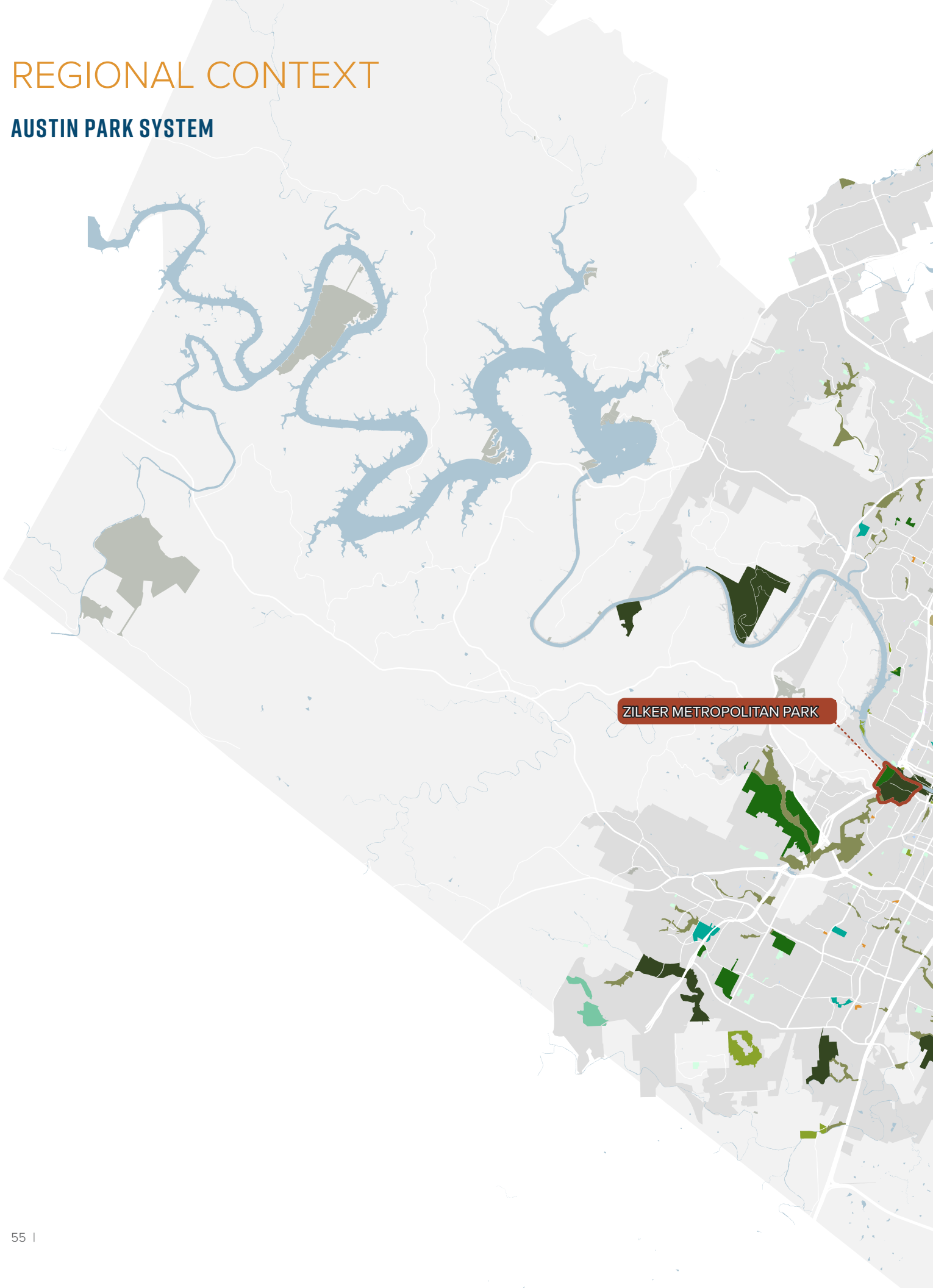
## METROPOLITAN PARK

This type of the park focuses on natural resource values and recreational diversity. They often include water-based recreation and environmental education.

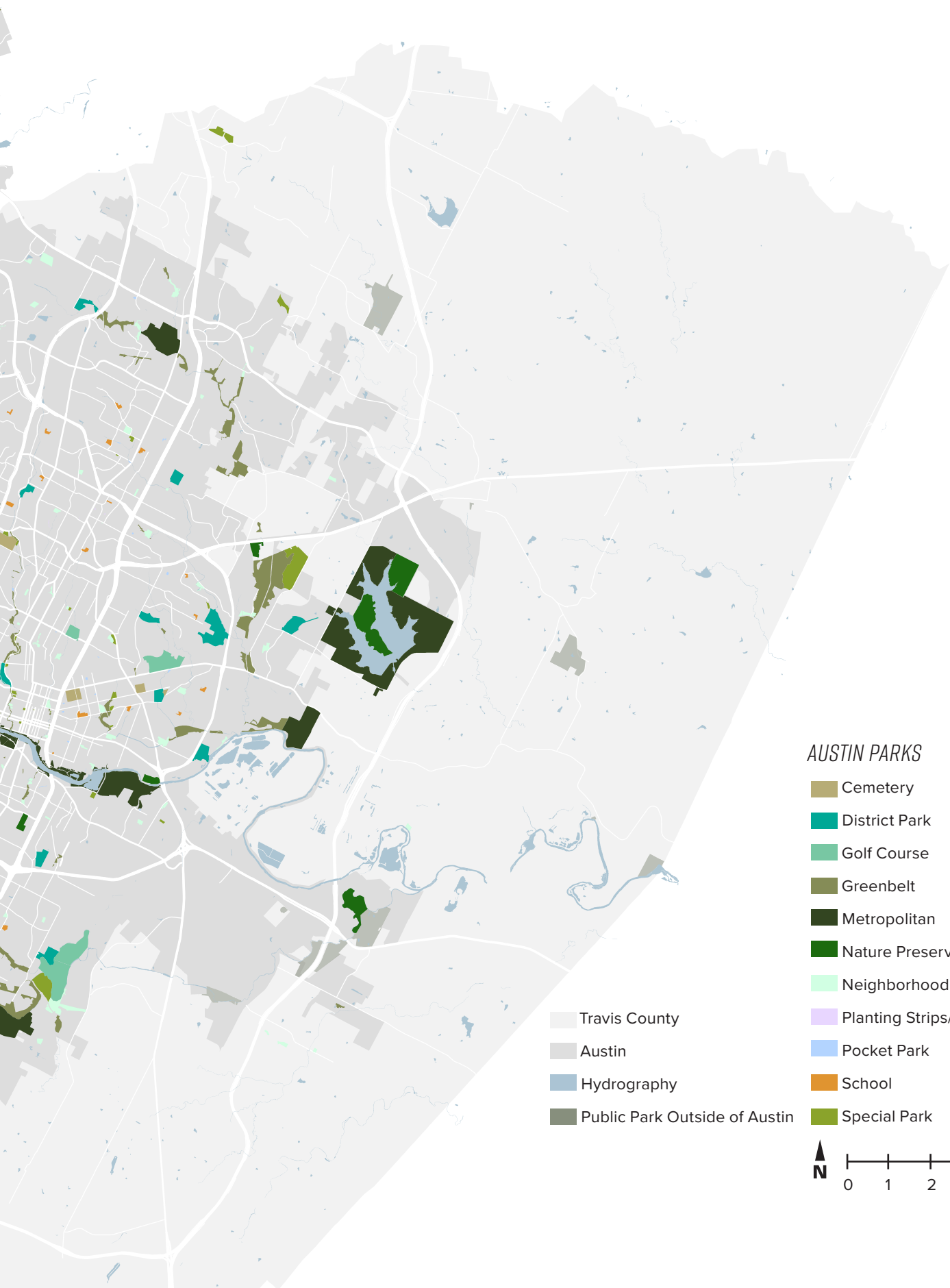
- Size: 201+ Acres
- Service Area: Citywide
- Access: Major Arterials (All Transport Modes)
- Feature: More Large, Specialized Features and Facilities

# REGIONAL CONTEXT

## AUSTIN PARK SYSTEM







## AUSTIN PARKS

- Cemetery
- District Park
- Golf Course
- Greenbelt
- Metropolitan
- Nature Preserve
- Neighborhood Park
- Planting Strips/Triangles
- Pocket Park
- School
- Special Park

- Travis County
- Austin
- Hydrography
- Public Park Outside of Austin

