WESTERN AREA

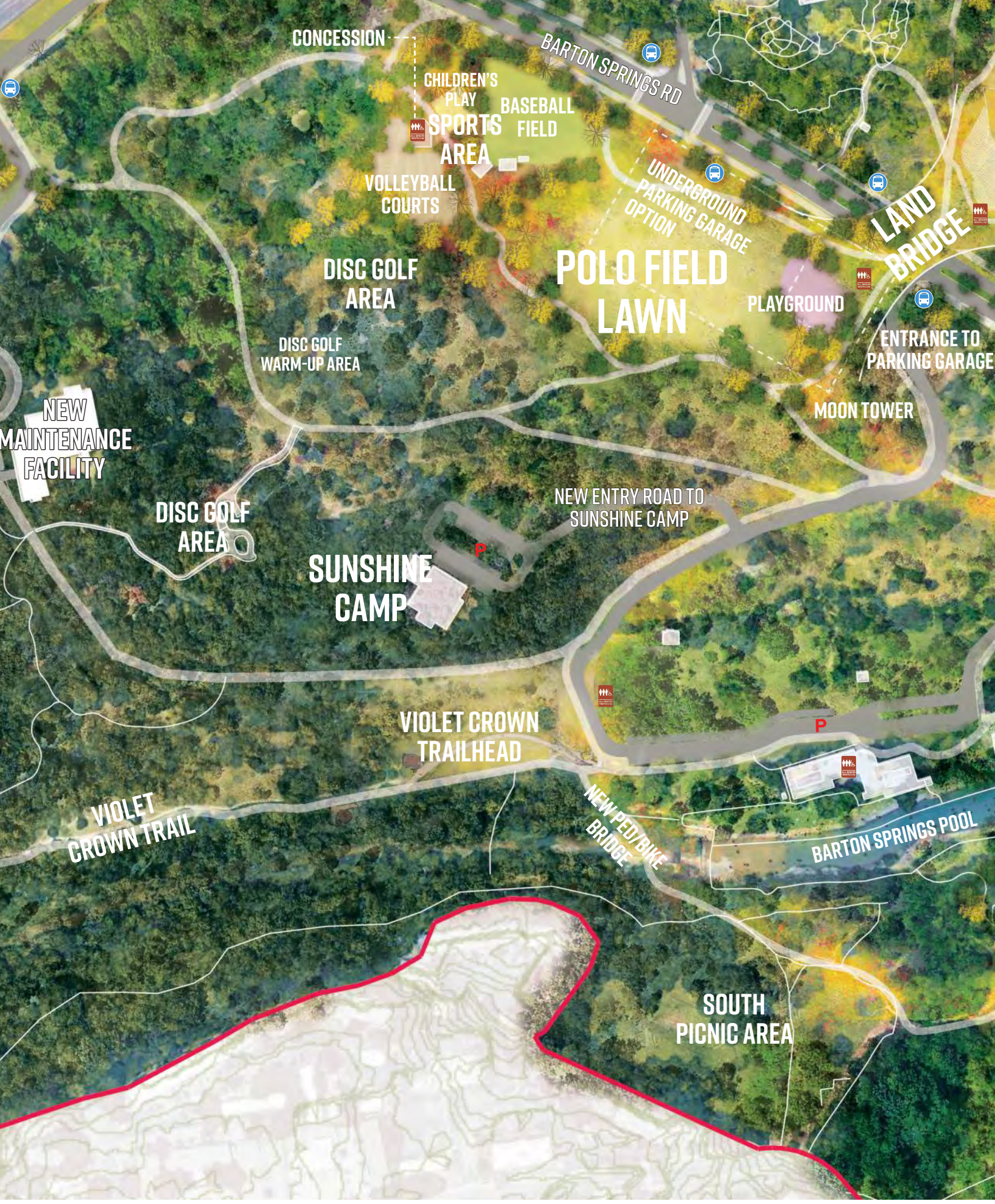
16 With the new entry road to the Girl Scout Cabin, the southern part of Columbus Drive becomes a nature trail.

17 As Andrew Zilker Road becomes pedestrian and bike only trails, the Disc Golf Area can be extended to the south.

18 Columbus Drive will be partially closed with a roundabout. The nature trail will be continued from Barton Creek Greenbelt to Lady Bird Lake over the land bridge.

19 The new pedestrian bridge on the west side of Barton Springs Pool will improve connectivity across Barton Creek.




CONCESSION
BARTON SPRINGS RD
CHILDREN'S PLAY
BASEBALL FIELD
SPORTS AREA
VOLLEYBALL COURTS
UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE OPTION
LAND BRIDGE
DISC GOLF AREA
POLO FIELD LAWN
PLAYGROUND
ENTRANCE TO PARKING GARAGE
DISC GOLF WARM-UP AREA
MOON TOWER
NEW MAINTENANCE FACILITY
DISC GOLF AREA
NEW ENTRY ROAD TO SUNSHINE CAMP
SUNSHINE CAMP
P
VIOLET CROWN TRAILHEAD
P
VIOLET CROWN TRAIL
NEW PED/BIKE BRIDGE
BARTON SPRINGS POOL
SOUTH PICNIC AREA

ZILKER SPORTS AREA







THE ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK VISION PLAN IS A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PLANNING PROCESS

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

During the visioning process, the planning team utilized the feedback, received from community members from all 10 Council Districts toward the design. The following pages show how what we heard from small group discussions, pop-ups, surveys, and community meetings influenced the plan and how the Guiding Principles were used as a foundation. Survey results were not definitive in consistently providing a direction, so the team balanced feedback with other sources of input and drew from other city of austin plans, the guiding principles, and continued to explore and identify the most beneficial options in alignment.

BARTON SPRINGS ROAD CONFIGURATION OPTION

A-Stitch 2 lanes of travel	--> Ranked 4th on the Top 5 Element Question from A-Stitch
B-Edges 2 lanes of travel, on-street parking	--> Ranked 13th on the Top 5 Element Question from B-Edges
C-Regenerate 1 lane of travel, on-street parking	--> Ranked 10th on the Top 5 Element Question from C-Regenerate

08.18.21 TAG Meeting

Barton Spring Road is one of the main connectors from Downtown to MoPac. For that, it is hard to reduce the number of lanes but is great to have separated pedestrians and bikers.

10.01.21 PARD Leadership Meeting

We need to think to use all options in different locations in the park. The level of crossing being over or underground would depend on a lot of factors.

12.21.21 Austin Transportation Department Meeting

Parking along BSR - parallel only; underpass preferred to land bridge due to cost; support medians and curb extensions.

Community Survey #5 Comments

- Imagine the traffic due to the people parallel parking.
- I like:... keeping parking on Barton Springs Rd for disabled parking or unloading spots to naturally slow down traffic...

08.26.22 Austin Transportation Department Meeting

ATD is supportive to reduce Barton Springs Road to one lane each direction with street parking.

PLAN DIRECTION

Move forward with one lane of travel in each direction with parallel parking. Allow flexibility for further considerations with Austin Transportation Department.

PLEASE RANK YOUR PREFERRED BARTON SPRINGS ROAD CROSSING OPTION.

A-Stitch Land Bridge	**31%**	--> Ranked 1st on the Top 5 Element Question from A-Stitch
B-Edges Underpass	**25%**	--> Ranked 4th on the Top 5 Element Question from B-Edges
C-Regenerate Surface Crossing	**22%**	
A,B and C Pedestrian Bridge	**22%**	

Community Survey #1 Comments

- Consider a land bridge
- Bury Barton Springs Road and Connect park to the pool area

10.01.21 PARD Leadership Meeting

A 'hybrid' combining under/over might be one way of implementing the land bridge concept.

Community Survey #5 Comments

- Underpasses for peds/bikes are not inviting.
- I've been dreaming of land bridge over Barton Springs Rd.
- I love the land bridge and the additional crossings of Barton Springs road.

08.26.22 Austin Transportation Department Meeting

There is not technical issue with the realignment but it will not be mobility priorities cause Stratford Drive is not a major roadway like Barton Springs Road in case of the capacity.

PLAN DIRECTION

Use various types of crossing based on the locations and contexts.

HOW ENGAGEMENT SHAPED THE PLAN

WHAT IMPROVEMENT OF STRATFORD DR DO YOU PREFER?

A-Stitch
Align on east side of MoPac
35% --> Ranked 8th on the Top 5 Element Question from A-Stitch

B-Edges
Align on west side of MoPac
25% --> Ranked 12th on the Top 5 Element Question from B-Edges

C-Regenerate
1 lane of travel, on-street parking
40%

08.18.21 TAG Meeting

There are a lot of buses approaching Nature and Science Center along Stratford Dr.

Community Survey #4

- 45% Leave as it is
- 35% Reroute to the west side of MoPac
- 20% Reroute to the east side of MoPac

55%

02.23.22 TAG Meeting

Realigning Stratford on west side of MoPac affects the preschool and facilities at Austin Nature and Science Center.

08.30.22 CTRMA Meeting

- Underground option sounds concerning
  - 36' median current now: Shoulder to shoulder
  - Requirement of air vent, fire department
  - It is costly option and complicated
- For the alignment on the east side needs more coordination

PLAN DIRECTION

Continue coordinating with CTRMA about the possibility of Stratford Dr realignment.

WHICH LOCATION FOR ZILKER HILLSIDE THEATER DO YOU PREFER?

A-Stitch
To Great Lawn
13%

B-Edges
Move to Landfill/Lakeside
29%

42%

C-Regenerate
Current Location with Improvements
58%

05.19.21 Small Group Discussion with Park Staff

Don't actually think the existing location is the best place to have a theater due to not enough parking, accessibility, and outdated facilities.

04.14.22 PARD Facilities Group Meeting

Putting Zilker Hillside Theater on the water, people would love that.

Kite Festival Pop-Up Event

Expand Hillside Theater

Community Survey #5 Comments

Moving the theater seems to bring a lot of potential disruption to theater attendees with mixing with people on the Great Lawn, their music, their dogs.

04.08.22 Meeting with CTRMA

We are doing noise analysis and will make the level below 66 decibel with proper mitigation.

06.14.22 Zilker Hillside Theater Production Team

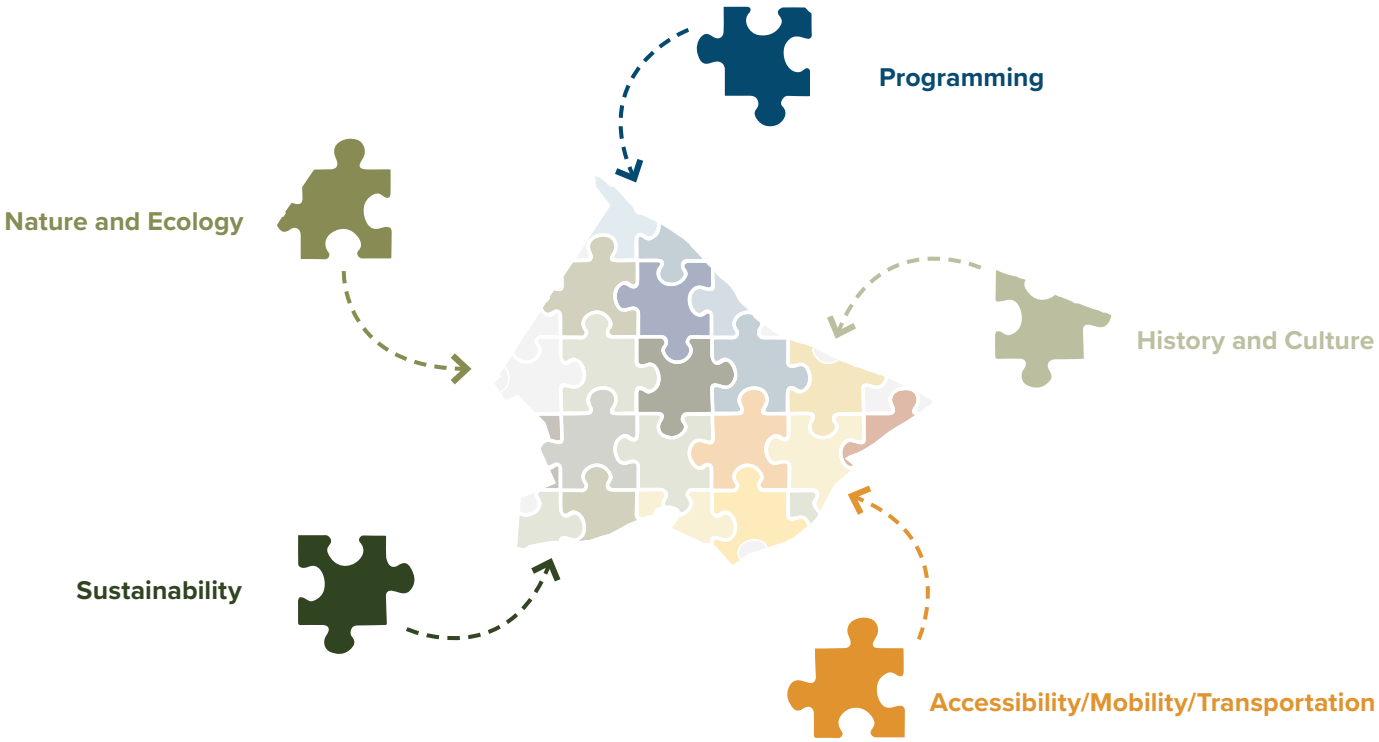
Prefer great lawn location than landfill area due to safety, liability, and noise issue.

PLAN DIRECTION

Show options in greater detail for both locations, detailing the pros/cons with each for more clarity.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE VISION PLAN

ZILKER PARK AS PUZZLE PIECES



Zilker Park is a complicated puzzle with many pieces - nature and ecology, programming, sustainability, history and culture and accessibility/mobility/transportation. All aspects are considered within the plan, creating a tension of possible uses. For example, how should the park address Austin's growing population and Zilker's draw as a destination, while respecting the precious ecological systems that exist on site? How should the plan address real access challenges (connectivity within the park, getting to the park) when limitations beyond the City's control (upcoming MoPac Expressway design, CapMetro plans) create potential roadblocks to implementation?

The answer to this question is by consistently returning the Guiding Principles and Goals and seeking clarity through community engagement where possible.

ZILKER PARK IN CONTEXT



EXTERNAL SHUTTLE OPTIONS TO ZILKER PARK

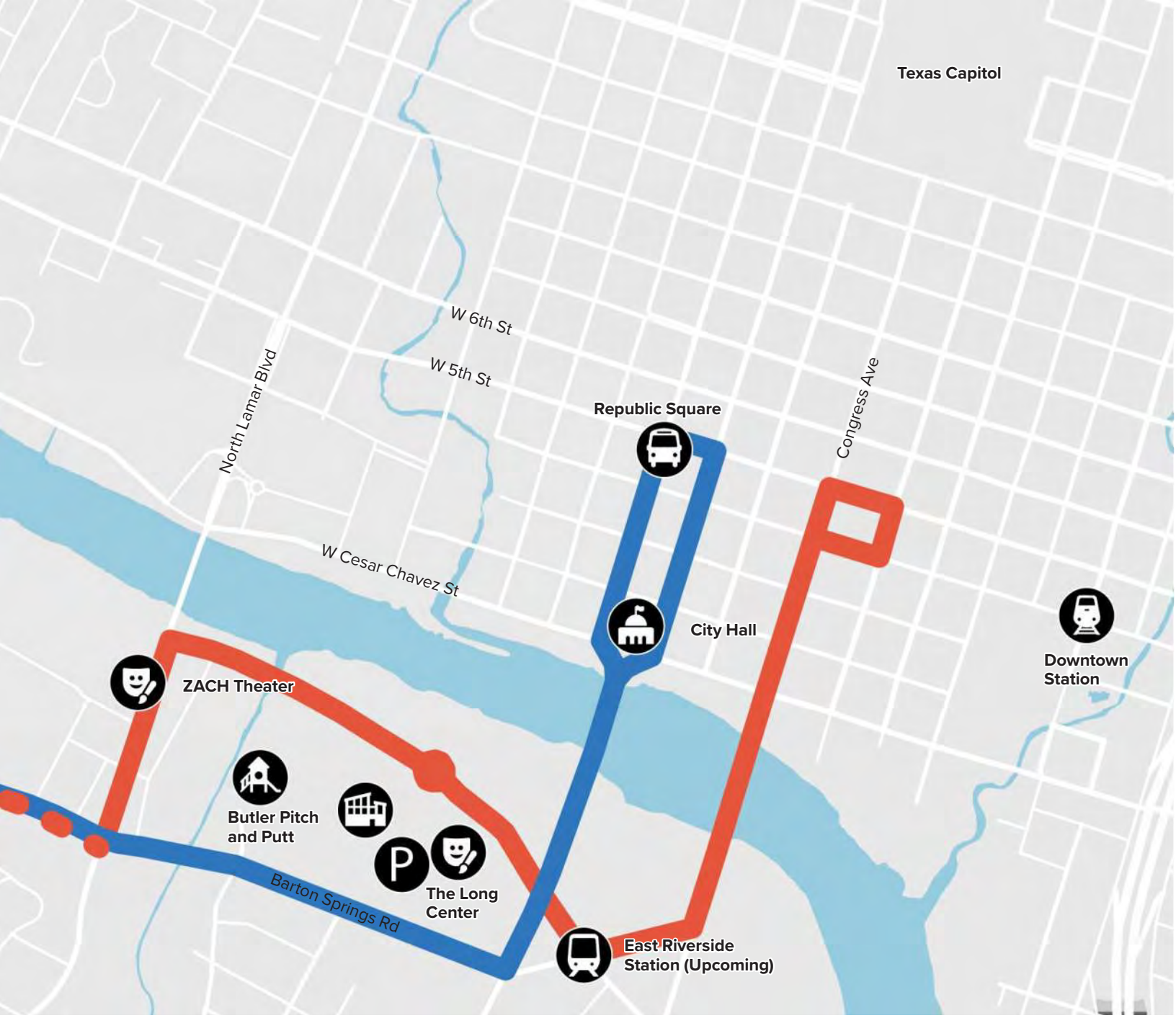
An external shuttle could help to decrease the need for parking, especially as Project Connect moves forward.

The purpose of the shuttle is to connect the Zilker Park to high frequency transit stations or downtown, bridging off-site parking sites and supporting travel throughout the park. As a result, Zilker Park will be more accessible to all community members.

As shown above, the Vision Plan suggests two options for off-site shuttle connections: Route Option A along East Riverside from Downtown to the DAC, and along Barton Springs Road into Barton Springs Pool and Violet Crown Trailhead area, and Route Option B is from Republic Square and One Texas Center to Zilker Botanical Garden and Austin Nature and Science Center. Route Option A could connect to the nearest future light rail station located at Auditorium Shores, servicing the future Orange and Gold Lines, bringing high capacity transit within 1.25 miles of Zilker – within range of first/last mile goals.

Below are the elements that should be considered when evaluating the design of an external shuttle.

- Bidirectional with clear start and end points (not a continuous loop)



- Protection from congestion-related delays
- Appropriate speed and safety
- Vehicles that load and unload quickly
- Directly serves most significant flow of people
- Permanence of origin and destination
- Appropriate for park users such as dog owners and families
- Capacity
- Accessibility

LEGEND

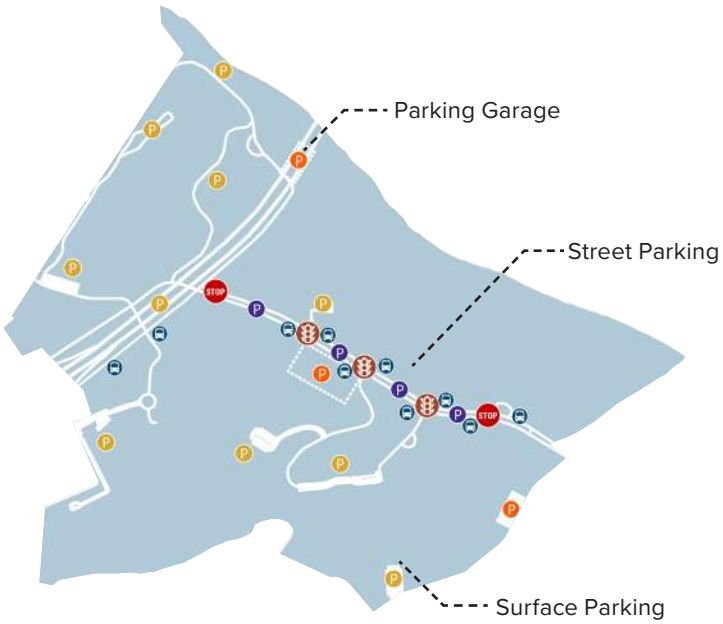
- Zilker Metropolitan Park
- Route Option A
- Route Option B
- Hydrology

FRAMEWORK OF THE VISION PLAN

Table 3: Comparison Table

		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 Woodland 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**	**19.5**
Programs	Caretakers Cottage		Renovated
	Quonset Hut		Renovated
	Sunken Garden		No Change
	Hillside Theater		Relocated
	Girl Scout Cabin		No Change
	Zilker Club House		No Change
	Rowing Dock		No Change
	Zilker Park Boat Rentals		Relocated
	Lookout Point		No Change
	Playgrounds		Existing + 4 New
	Volleyball Courts		Relocated
	Disc Golf		No Change
	Baseball Field		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.		

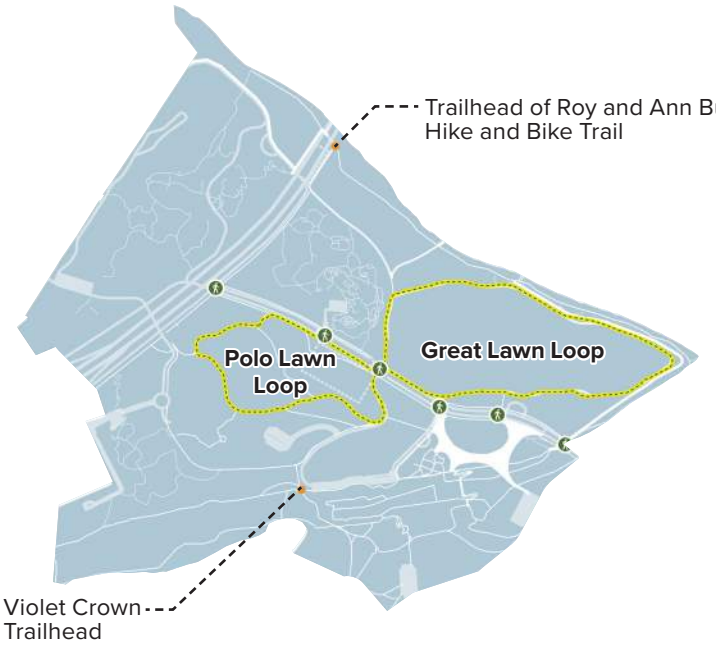
VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND PARKING



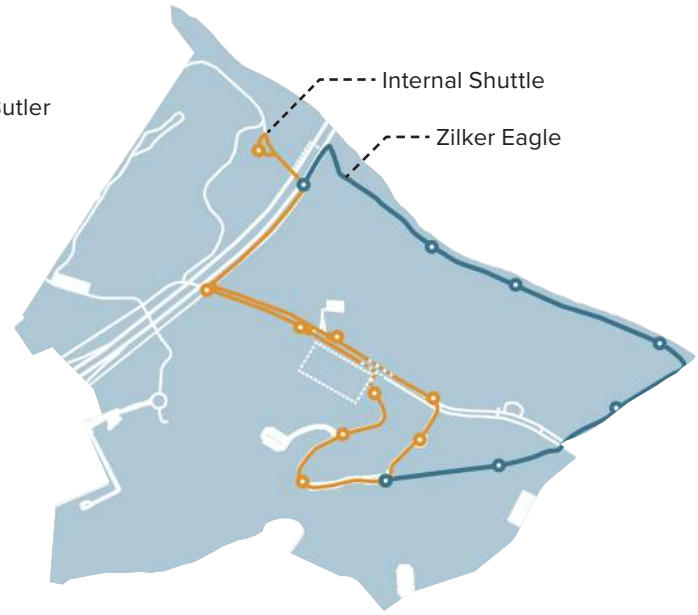
WAYFINDING / INTERPRETIVE STORY



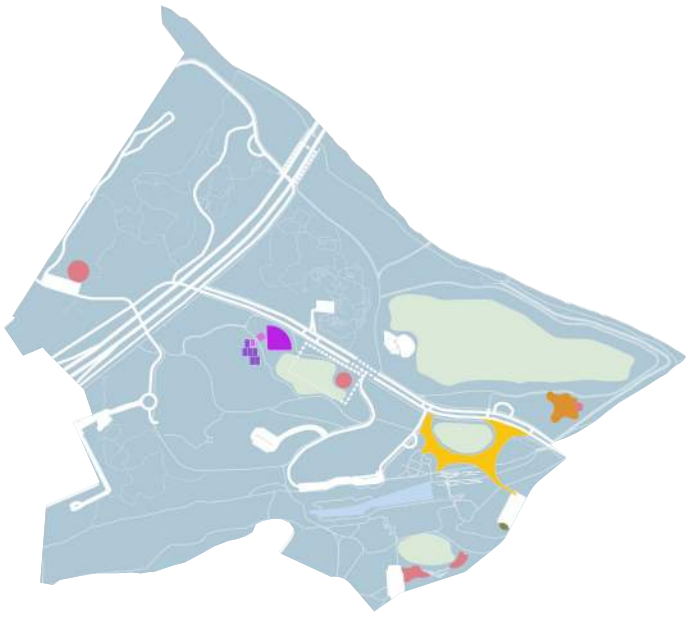
PEDESTRIAN/BIKE NETWORK



INTERNAL CIRCULATOR



NEW PROGRAMMING



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

ECOLOGY



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

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILITY



VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND PARKING

Accessibility was one of the top reasons visitors avoid Zilker Park. It is critical to support more attractive multimodal travel options are currently available. At the same time, the plan should be clear that people who drive to Zilker Park find a straightforward parking system that provides a range of affordable options and directs users straight to their parking space without creating excess circling in the park , endangering park users and creating unnecessary emissions. In the vision plan, the safety of park users is prioritized through road design without impeding the experience of those on foot or wheels. Accessible paths help users navigate between destinations and allow visitors to discover more of the park's amenities. For remote parking off-site, a shuttle easily connects people who park outside of the park into the heart of the park. Also, the better pedestrian connections at park entrances make remote parking connections realistic and attractive. The removal or impervious parking and roadway will be carefully planned with substitutional parking or traffic analysis to respect the goal of preserving natural environments in the park.

LEGEND

- Traffic Light
- Vehicular Stop Sign
- CapMetro Stop
- Internal Shuttle Shop
- Zilker Eagle Stop
- Parking Garage
- Street Parking along Barton Springs Road
- Surface Parking

The Vision Plan accomplishes this by:

- Improving Barton Springs Road, including a road diet, traffic calming, creating a median, and reducing the speed limit from 35 to 25mph
- Realigning Stratford Drive to run parallel to MoPac in order to streamline access to parking and minimize vehicular traffic in the heart of the park
- Closing parts of Andrew Zilker Road, William Barton Road, and Columbus Drive in order to streamline circulation patterns while maintaining accessibility to parking at key park destinations such as Barton Springs Pool, the Sunshine Camp, and McBeth Recreation Center
- Closing Lou Neff Road to vehicular traffic to improve the connection between the Great Lawn and Lady Bird Lake and Barton Creek.
- Building accessible sidewalks adjacent to all roadways and parking locations
- Consolidating parking lots into parking garages at strategic locations throughout the park
  - Parking garage construction can be phased as surface parking to assess demand before investing significant capital in parking capacity
- Exploring reduced parking rates for individuals or families who qualify for assistance
- Piloting long-term vision recommendations to understand impact on park usage
  - Such as Lou Neff closures or Barton Springs Road diet on weekends in early implementation years
- Encouraging “Car-free park” days as both an interim and long-term measure
- Creating passenger and rideshare pick-up/drop-off zones
- Introducing a unified wayfinding system

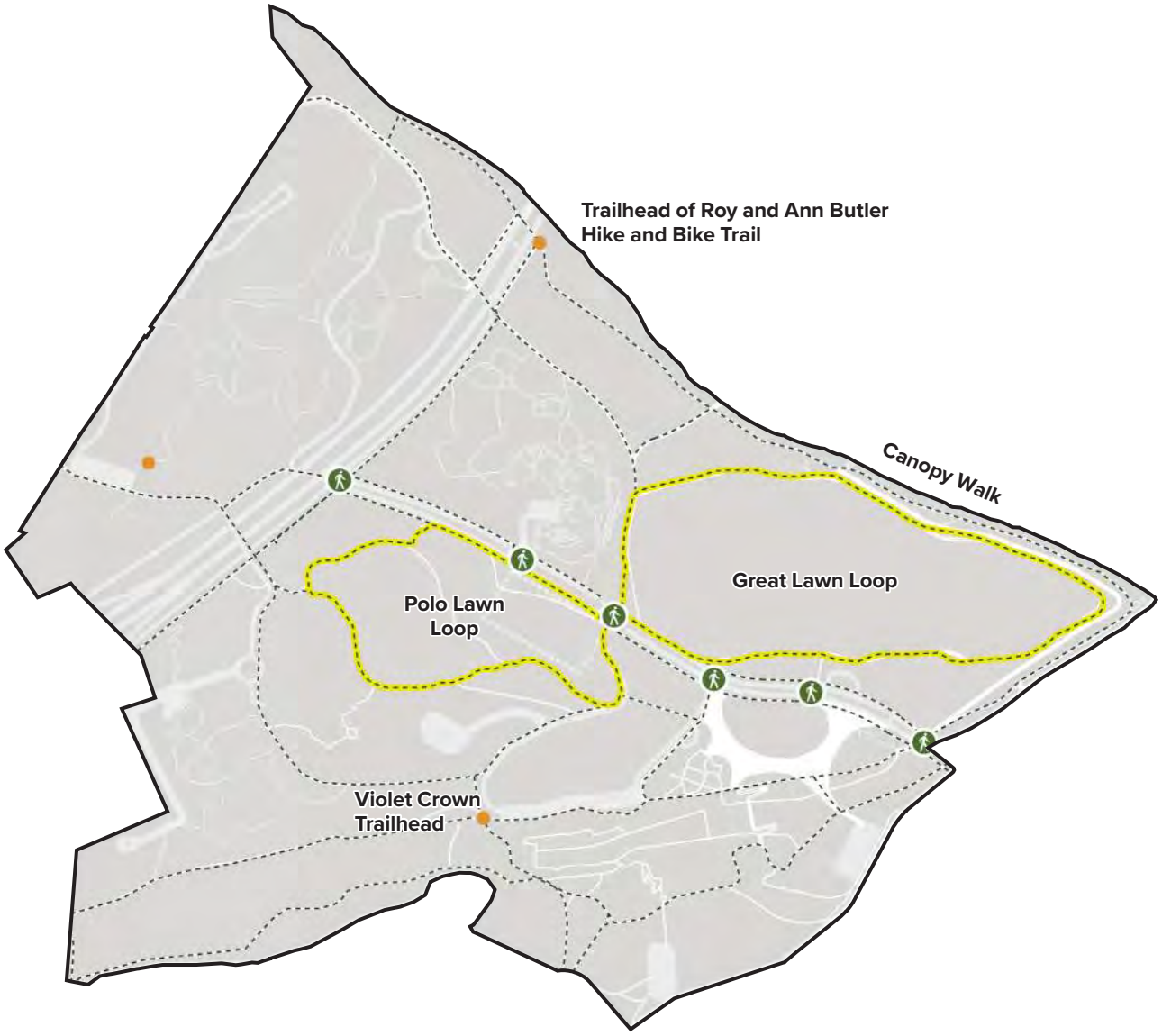
TRANSIT

In the Vision Plan, transit can be a viable and attractive option for a broad range of Austinites to get to and from Zilker Park. Multiple transit route options with easy transfers when needed can encourage visitors to take public transit without overly complicating the trip. Connections to and from the future Project Connect transit system will ensure transit. Transit users don’t wait long for the next bus, shuttle, or train. Multiple travel options creates greater accessibility to Zilker Park for a wide variety of park users.

The Vision Plan accomplishes this by:

- Creating an internal circulator that provides access to key park destinations
- Creating an external circulator service that connects to nearby transit and off-site parking assets to serve as a first/last mile access option for Zilker Park such as the future Orange Line station
  - Combining internal and external access goals, providing frequent, linear access
- Improving CapMetro service into the park by redesigning the route to serve more valuable connections for Zilker visitors, better connecting to the transit system, and improving service frequency during busy times
  - Park stakeholders have the opportunity to advocate for this service change within the City and CapMetro amid Project Connect service redesigns
- Improving walking, micromobility, and bike connections with wayfinding between internal and nearby transit assets
- Reestablishing the Zilker Eagle for recreational and light mobility purposes, including exploring extension of the route to serve on-site parking near MoPac and Stratford Drive
- Introducing a unified wayfinding system to the park

TRANSPORTATION/MOBILITY



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY

Biking into the park should be easy, fun, and safe, regardless of the skill or ability of the rider. In the Vision Plan, the park entrances are connected to the surrounding and regional bike network and clearly marked. Once inside the park, biking conditions further improve, providing a sense of calm and relaxation that our city's park system provides for all users. Bikeways are protected and suitable even for children who are new to using a bike. Bike access is available to all the major park destinations and ends with attractive bike parking in front of destinations. Zilker Park becomes a major destination for the region's bike network and bicycle and motor vehicle conflicts are reduced.

Walking is an easy mode of transportation to choose, with direct, clear connections to enter the park from each direction and also between destinations within the park.

LEGEND

- Vehicular Network
- New Loop Trail
- Pedestrian and Bike Network
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Major Pedestrian/Bike Trail
- Minor Pedestrian/Bike Trail
- Trailhead

The Vision Plan accomplishes this by:

- An additional pedestrian/bike bridge crossing Barton Creek away from vehicles
- providing direct access into the park crossing on Lady Bird Lake
- Expanding the existing pedestrian/bike bridge north of Barton Springs Road and realigning it to Toomey Road
- Improving the Roberta Crenshaw Pedestrian/Bike Bridge, including exploring possibility to partner with TxDOT and CTRMA to include pedestrian/bike path under northbound travel lanes
- Building an enhanced trail/pathway system creating accessible non-vehicle pathways across the park, directly connecting major destinations
- Making significant walking/biking enhancements for safety and comfort on the Barton Springs Road Bridge and street access approaching east and entering the park – to remedy significant existing comfort gaps and connect to current and future transit and bike networks
- Creating additional safe pedestrian/bike crossings of Barton Springs Road
- Calming traffic and speeds on Barton Springs Road
- Improving connections to Butler Trail
- Introducing a unified wayfinding system to the park
- Extending the Violet Crown Trail/Barton Creek Greenbelt entrance/trailhead to higher visibility and more accessible location

BICYCLE SPECIFIC

The Vision Plan accomplishes this by:

- Adding a network of bike and scooter parking, including E-bike charging, at key park destinations
- Expanding MetroBike dock locations in coordination with Capital Metro

PEDESTRIAN SPECIFIC

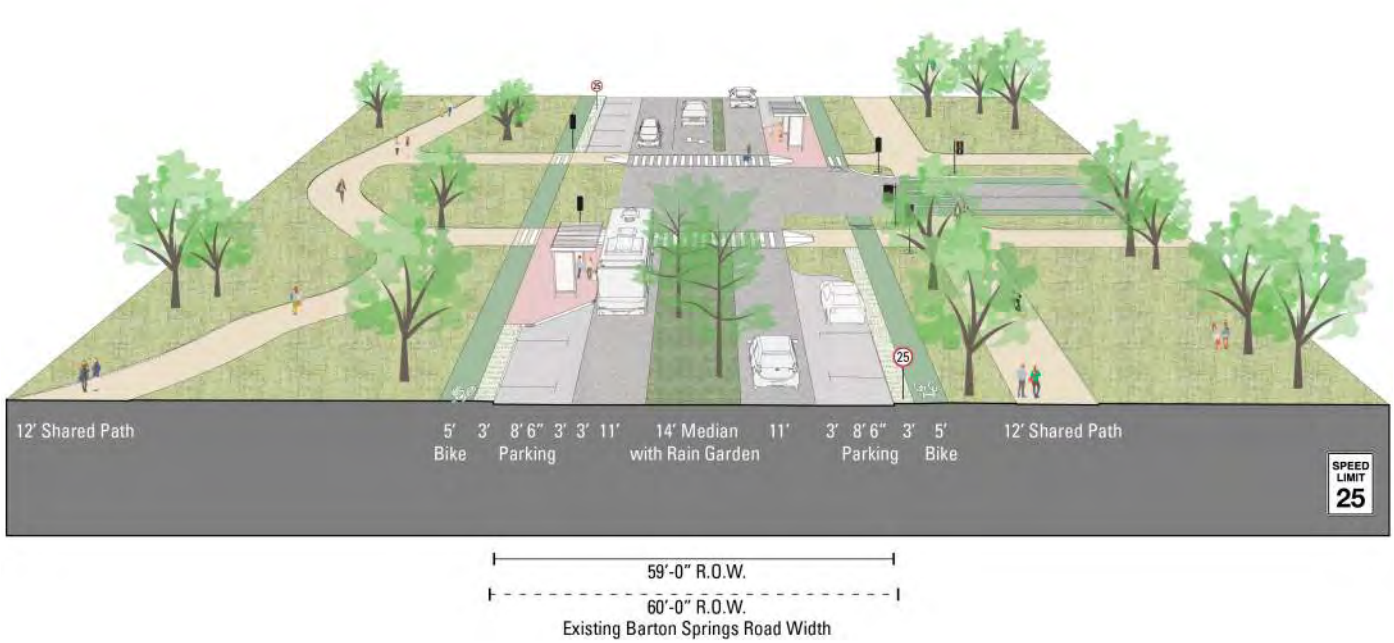
The Vision Plan accomplishes this by:

- Creating a connected inter-park path system with prioritized pathways and more direct walking connections to make distances between key features and parking easier to manage
- Incorporate a walking/jogging loop into new trail/path system
- Creating a Land Bridge Crossing to connect the two halves of park across Barton Springs Road
- Incorporate a walking/jogging loop into new trail/path system
- Enhancing and building new sidewalks – while the pathway system will provide the most direct access points, roadways to parking areas also need sidewalks (which are currently missing in many cases)



Canopy Walk in Serralves Park.
Source: https://scalemag.online/architecture/the-canopy-walkway-in-serralves-park/

PROPOSED BARTON SPRINGS ROAD CONFIGURATION





Bus Stop with Green Roof



Raingarden in Median

Barton Springs Road cuts through the heart of Zilker Park without providing sufficient safe ways to cross from one half to the other. To make the park safer, traffic calming is necessary.

Traffic calming improves the safety of pedestrians and bicycles by slowing down the speed of vehicles through physical design of roads. Below are the strategies to achieve a safer Barton Springs Road through traffic calming:

- Modify the road to one-lane each way, parallel parking on both sides, and protected bike lane with 3-foot buffer from the road.
- Improve drainage, directing stormwater drainage into planting area and it needs to be done in collaboration with Austin Watershed Protection Department.
- Create a 14-foot median with trees to improve safety for crossing pedestrians while also reducing the heat island effect by providing shade over the road.
- Install shelters at bus stops along Barton Springs Road to increase visibility and provide shelter from the sun with strategies to reduce surface temperature, such as green roofs.



WHAT ABOUT CAPACITY?

There is often concern about reducing the capacity of a four-lane undivided roadway in half by converting it to a two-lane with a turn lane cross section. Practitioners have found some cases of the four-lane undivided road operating as a de facto two-lane with a turn lane roadway due to turning movements and driver behavior. Therefore, the effective capacity reduction is much less than the theoretical reduction assumed before implementation.

Source: Road Diet Informational Guide, FHWA Safety Program, US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/guidance/info_guide/rdig.pdf

ECOLOGY

ECOLOGICAL UPLIFT



Ecological uplift happens by repairing and restoring natural systems through active management. Ecological uplift can include increased biodiversity, increased soil health, greater water cycling, and more robust human and nature interactions. Manifestations of ecological uplift at Zilker Park can include increasing biodiversity in a parking lot through the planting of pollinator plants, enhancing climate resilience through increases in tree canopy and shade that mitigate and allow for adaptation to climate change, enhancing drainage to allow water to infiltrate into the ground and support photosynthesis, as well as the restoration of complete plant communities into forests with multiple levels of vegetation including tree canopy, understory, and groundcover. Areas of ecological uplift benefit the plants and animals that live there and connect humans to nature in more significant ways.

LEGEND

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

BUTLER LANDFILL

A 2019 Environmental Assessment classified the Butler Landfill as a recognized environmental condition (REC) due to contaminants like arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, magnesium, lead, iron, and manganese that exceed safe levels.

The Butler Landfill presents a great opportunity for ecological uplift and remediation of contaminants. The highest and best use for this area from an ecological perspective—considering its adjacency to the Lake and location within Zilker Park—is to extract the waste material or add additional soil to the top of the cap and restore the area to a woodland or savanna. This scenario results in the greatest increase to the ecological health of the park and enhancement of the user experience. The area is one of the last opportunities the city has to create lakeshore parkland that can alleviate pressure on other park amenities and create a robust passive recreation experience to interact with nature. The result could be up to 17 acres of robust plant and wildlife habitat with an integrated user experience. This use takes advantage of topographic changes, as a result of either extracting the landfill debris or increasing soil volume on top of it. While this is the best ecological use for the space, the importance of parking for the Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin Nature & Science Center, Butler Trail, and event facilitation is recognized. Therefore, this recommendation should be taken into consideration when attempting to find a compromise between ecological function and pragmatic use of the park space.

WEST BUTLER LANDFILL (FORMER 'BONEYARD')

The Zilker Park Working Group elected to eliminate the West Butler Landfill as soon as possible. This site is not officially considered a hazard, but because of the current use (storage of equipment, batteries, chemical containers, asphalt, etc.) it should be treated as a potential hazard and cleaned up prior to recreational use.

The highest and best use from an ecological perspective here is to return the area to woodland. This will widen the riparian buffer along Lady Bird Lake, creating new wildlife habitat, enhanced ecosystem services, and outdoor experiences for visitors. Appropriate recreation opportunities here range from nature trails to low impact play areas (like a climbing wall).

PRECEDENTS OF LANDFILL RESTORATION

The images below show other parks in the U.S. that have undergone active management to restore natural ecologies that can be enjoyed by visitors



Staten Island, NY



Crissy Fields, CA



Byxbee Park, CA

HISTORIC PISTOL RANGE

Soil investigations have identified elevated concentrations of arsenic, antimony, and lead within the Pistol Range. This area, including the wooded area to the north, is considered a hazard until remediated, and is not suitable for recreation and/or ecological restoration. Once remediated, this area could be appropriate for light recreation opportunities that do not alter the footprint of the woodland.

The first task within the Pistol Range should be to install drainage enhancement downhill from the contaminated area as soon as possible. This will intercept stormwater flows coming off the Pistol Range before contaminated waters reach Eanes Creek.





The Highland, MI

DRAINAGE ENHANCEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Drainage enhancement can address the root cause of erosion: fast-moving water often coming off roads, parking lots, and buildings. Rain gardens, swales, berms, and grading changes can slow water flowing across a landscape. When water moves more slowly, it has longer to soak into the soil, reducing erosion, preventing sediment and pollutants from entering streams and springs, and increasing groundwater supplies. Drainage improvements offers other benefits, including increased creek flow and wildlife habitat.

At Zilker Park, drainage improvement has already been used to decrease stormwater flows into Barton Springs Pool and at the existing Disc Golf Course. Just over 14 acres have been identified as potential locations for improving or installing drainage enhancement (Figure 5.4 from NRI). These areas have standing water after heavy rain, periodically carry large volumes of stormwater, are open with no active recreation, have significant water-related erosion, or are near impervious surfaces that create runoff. In addition, a well-planned and designed drainage enhancement can heighten the aesthetics and quality of the user experience in these areas.

RAIN GARDENS, SWALES, AND BERMS

A rain garden is a depression where water can pond after rain and soak in gradually. Swales are linear rain gardens, sometimes with water flowing through them. Berms are earthen mounds that reduce downslope travel of water and allow for infiltration. Swales and Berms are often used together to create an effective chain of rain gardens. Swales can be created from existing erosion paths (unless the erosion is too severe) either by hardening the path and directing water to a depression, or by slowing and spreading water flow to allow it to soak in. Both rain gardens and swales work best over soils that absorb water quickly. They also require plants that can withstand repeated wet-dry cycles (Table 5.2 from NRI). It should be noted that rain gardens and other types of water quality basins in the Barton Springs Zone may be required to have a liner to prevent infiltration of pollutant-laden stormwater and other contaminants (ECM 1.6.2.C).

UPPER BARTON CREEK

- Main areas to prioritize installation of drainage enhancement by management unit (locations in management unit maps NRI pages 130 to 160):
- Install drainage improvements south of Barton Springs Pool to intercept water as it moves downhill toward the pool.
- Install drainage improvements south of Columbus Drive to capture and filter runoff from the roadway before it reaches the creek and pool.

LOWER BARTON CREEK

- Install rain gardens between the trail and the streambank on the north side of the creek, near Barton Springs Spillway, to filter stormwater flows from slope.
- Install drainage improvements upslope near Azie Morton Road.

BARTON SPRINGS POOL AREA

- Substantial drainage enhancement installations are needed in this area to capture stormwater runoff before it enters Barton Creek and reduces runoff from the seven parking areas in the unit.
- Installation of rainwater catchment systems on existing and new buildings will reduce runoff and create educational opportunities.
- Install rain gardens in the pool areas to reduce sheet flow into the pool and create a more aesthetically appealing user experience.
- Capture one half inch of each rain event from from all impervious cover in Barton Springs Pool and associated maintained areas using drainage enhancement.

LADY BIRD LAKE SHORELINE

- Install drainage enhancement to capture stormwater runoff from Mopac and all parking areas.

ZILKER NATURE PRESERVE

- Evaluate potential for drainage improvements to address water from Arnulfo Alonso Way and the Historic Pistol Range before it reaches Eanes Creek.

ZILKER SAVANNA & MEADOW

- Add rain gardens and swales in recommended areas to decrease runoff from roads and parking lots.
- Incorporate drainage enhancement into new sports fields and on the downslope side of all new fields, buildings, and disc golf area.

BUTLER LANDFILL

- Build rain gardens that capture stormwater from Stratford, MoPac, and any remaining parking.
- If the landscape is altered by cutting or filling, incorporate low points for water to collect and percolate into the ground.

GREAT LAWN

- Build rain gardens that capture stormwater from Lou Neff road and parking areas.

MOPAC

- Where feasible, install rain gardens to capture stormwater.

CRITICAL INTERVENTION POINTS

SLOPE FAILURE ALONG BARTON CREEK

Riparian woodland enhancement is recommended for this entire area but should not be started until degrading factors including upslope stormwater and trampling are solved. Formal water access, formalizing the trail, and creating physical barriers to plantings in this area is critical. Once these issues are mitigated, invasive species control, woodland thinning of small caliper hackberries, and soil compaction remediation should proceed. This prepares the site for a combination of planting and seeding to enhance this very degraded, very used, and very ecologically significant piece of the park. A vignette for this area has been created to show a potential restoration path forward and its possible outcome.

» Shoreline goals:
  - Repair and restore erosion and trampling issues along 1,000 linear feet of Barton Creek shoreline between the pool and Lady Bird Lake over the next 4 years.
  - Increase species diversity in this area by a 20 species over the next 2 years.

TREE CANOPY ENHANCEMENT

Canopy enhancement adds shade trees in the formal park areas where that expansion does not interfere with park use and improves the user experience. It is recommended where additional tree cover will provide shade, improve water quality, and reduce the impacts of impervious cover on localized heating. There are 66 acres of recommended canopy enhancement along the edges of roads, parking lots, and walkways (Figure 5.7 in NRI). Canopy enhancement should use live plantings whenever feasible with irrigation during establishment. Where possible, trees should be planted at the same time as drainage enhancement is installed, because the additional water in the soil will create healthier trees. By adding more shade trees, Zilker Park will increase in comfort, contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and create a more naturalistic park aesthetic.

All new construction should promote a healthy urban canopy with the goal of at least 50% canopy cover in a 10 year period and should include a diversity of species in the canopy understory and groundcover layers. A list of canopy trees can be found in the Recommended Plant list by sorting for "Large Trees". Understory and groundcover layers can be found in Table 5.2 as well (Table 5.2 in the NRI).

» Canopy goals
  - Plant at least 200 canopy trees in the next 2 years
  - Increase shade over the Butler and Violet Crown trails to 60% over the next 10 years (currently at 39%).



Swale at Hardberger Park near San Antonio



Limestone terraces along Waller Creek to slow down water flow



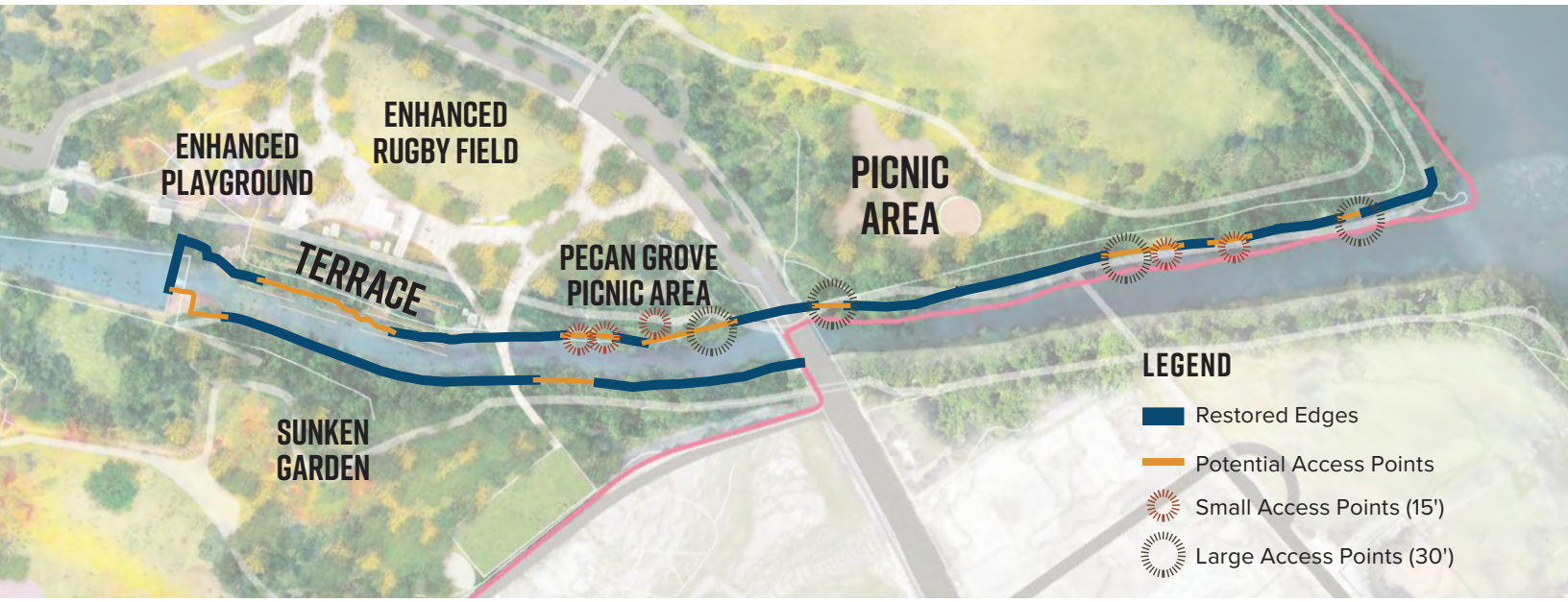
A rain garden at Dell Medical

BENEFITS OF DRAINAGE ENHANCEMENT

1. Encourages mental and physical health through outdoor activity.
2. Reduces the risk of soil bed erosion by retaining runoff in landscaped areas and slowing the water flow.
3. Reduces water management efforts by minimizing rainwater flowing into sewer systems.
4. Combats urban heat island effect through cooling effect of vegetation.
5. Increased educational opportunities, raising visitors' understanding of environmental issues

ECOLOGY

BARTON CREEK SHORELINE RESTORATION



Erosion along Lower Barton Creek is severe. It is not only making the area inaccessible and unsafe but also creating more unstable conditions for vegetation. To stop visitors from further harming the creek, controlled water access points need to be established. This can reduce the impact on water quality and native planting by restricting human impact and allow the environment to recover. This should be also done using low-impact development principles and land sensitivity analysis. Additionally, a personalized Operations and Maintenance Plan is needed to address the issue of economic stability and guarantee that the creek will continue to be a financially viable concessions area as it is now and into the future.

The plan for lower Barton Creek needs to address the items below:

- Create site plan that addresses formal trails, water access, invasive removal, soil removal, along with a robust planting plan
- Plant mottes in woodland expansion areas
- Construct planned improvements that result in ecological restoration and an enhanced user experience
- Stabilize Hike-and-Bike Trail and reduce gully erosion
- Ongoing management

BARTON CREEK ACCESS POINTS GUIDELINES

Restoration of the Barton Creek shoreline will include water access points to support other areas of the shoreline. Access points will reduce impacts to other areas and mitigate existing erosion issues and prevent future issues while creating a better user experience.

Below are some guidelines to consider for future access points:

- The map above shows potential water access points within the Zilker Park.
- The small or large access points are existing desired water access points along the trail that currently need attention.
- Access points should not be wider than 30 feet.
- They should be spaced throughout the area. Their sizes suggest the complexity of the area. Steeper areas will be less/smaller access points and flatter areas will have more access points.
- Spacing based on topography and existing areas should be used.
- After determining the access points, ecological uplift for the rest of area should occur as a part of the project.

EXISTING CONDITIONS
LOWER BARTON CREEK

Stormwater Flow
Stormwater flows quickly off of the hillside, along the trail, and eventually to Barton Creek.

Erosion
Severe erosion is occurring, exposing tree roots and making it difficult for plants to propogate on the shoreline.

Unregulated Water Access
Heavy human use accessing the water's edge has caused severe erosion as well as compaction.



PROPOSED CONDITIONS
LOWER BARTON CREEK

Enhanced Woodland
Enhanced canopy and understory species will slow down water flow off of the slope and increase habitat for native species.

Trail Edge
Fences and large rock edges can deter people from exploring off trail.

Drainage Improvements
Established vegetation can slow down water on its way to Barton Creek as well as deter people from short cutting.

Formalized Water Access
By formalizing a trail and space near the water, ecological degradation will be minimized, allowing riparian communities to thrive.



This graphic demonstrates the Lower Barton Creek transformation. Drainage improvements work in collaboration with enhanced woodland and formalization of the trail edge and water access to create an exceptional space for humans and critters.

Existing condition shows degradation from lack of stormwater management upslope, trampling, and flooding that has resulted in compacted soils, erosion, an incomplete canopy, struggling vegetation, and a degraded user experience.

Proposed condition shows the ecological health and enhanced user experience that results by addressing upslope stormwater with drainage enhancement, formalizing trails and water access, installing physical barriers to plantings, decompacting soils, and planting robust native canopy, understory, and groundcover vegetation.



CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Sustainability

Climate change is integrated into the Vision Planthrough adaption, mitigation, and resiliency strategies. The plan is aligned with the Austin Climate Equity Plan as well as the Climate Resilience Action Plan.

Adaptation refers to humans adapting to life in a changing climate. By expanding woodlands and increasing street trees, impacts of extreme heat and urban heat island effect will be reduced, making Zilker a refuge from climate change and a place where people can comfortably enjoy the outdoors.

Mitigation refers to the efforts to reduce or prevent climate change. Increasing vegetation and improving soil health will result in greater carbon sequestration, enabling Zilker to play a small role in pulling carbon out of our atmosphere and reducing global temperatures.

Resiliency refers to a landscape's ability to deal with the effects of climate change. By increasing native species diversity and building more drainage enhancement, the park will be less susceptible to castastrophic failure and reduces the chance of flooding, erosion, and water quality impacts, while preserving habitat.

IMPERVIOUS COVER CONCERNS

There are currently 51 acres of impervious cover within Zilker Park and the Vision Plan could increase this number if existing impervious cover is not removed. Impervious surface should be reduced from this number (51 acres), not exceeded. This can be done by removing existing parking lots, decreasing road width, transitioning paved paths to pervious cover, adding green roofs to buildings and parking structures, and other future strategies and they become viable. All remaining impervious surface should have adjacent, downslope drainage enhancement that will slow and filter stormwater runoff. All remaining impervious cover should also be lined with canopy trees in order to combat the heat island effect where possible. Reducing impervious cover in the floodplain and in water quality buffers is one of the best ways to increase water quality and the ecological health of Zilker Park. These actions should be prioritized throughout the park.

GREEN BUILDING CERTIFICATIONS

New facilities and projects costing more than $2 million will need to be SITES certified, according to a recent ordinance established by the City of Austin. In our fast changing world, Austin is the first city to implement this legislation, doing its share to promote sustainable development and environmental health.

SITES provides a comprehensive framework for designing, developing, and managing sustainable and resilient landscapes and other outdoor spaces. Landscape architects, engineers, and others are guided by SITES, a framework with a sustainability focus, toward techniques that safeguard ecosystems and increase the variety of advantages they continuously provide our communities, such as climate regulation, carbon storage, and flood reduction. While encouraging project teams to be adaptable and creative as they create attractive, practical, and regenerative landscapes, SITES supports the specific requirements of each site by offering performance measurements rather than prescribing techniques. Landscapes with SITES certification help lower water demand, filter stormwater runoff, create habitat for wildlife, use less energy, enhance air quality, boost chances for outdoor leisure, and more.

GOALS OF AUSTIN CLIMATE EQUITY PLAN

1. By 2030, legally protect an additional 20,000 acres of carbon pools on natural lands and manage all new and existing natural areas with a focus on resilience.

2. By 2030, protect 500,000 acres of farmland from development in the 5-county region through legal protections and/or regenerative agriculture programs.

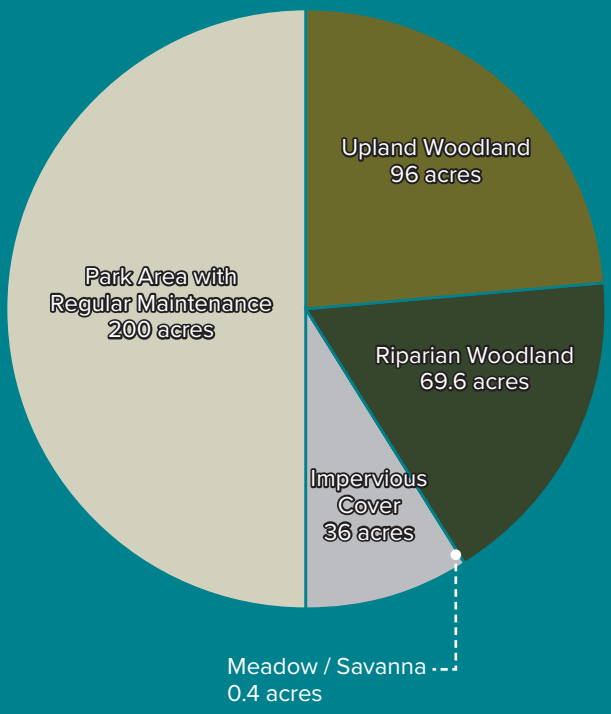
3. Achieve at least 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050, with a focus on increasing canopy cover equitably.

4. By 2030, include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community co-benefits.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

EXISTING CONDITION

LANDCOVER



TOTAL CARBON IMPACT BY LANDCOVER

HARDSCAPE

Impervious Cover	+ 12,501 tCO^2

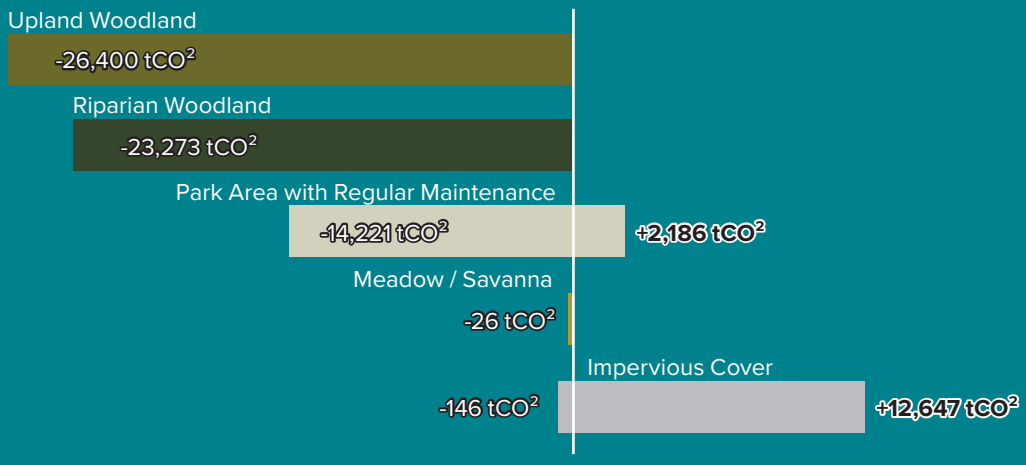
SOFTSCAPE

Upland Woodland	- 26,400 tCO^2
Riparian Woodland	- 21,035 tCO^2
Meadow / Savanna	- 26 tCO^2
Park Area with Regular Maintenance	- 9,235 tCO^2

STORED AND SEQUESTERED CARBON

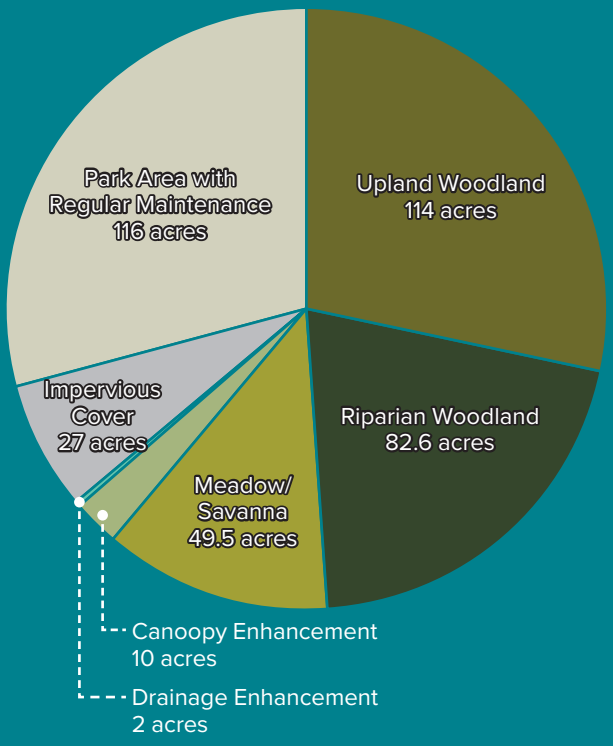
EMITTED CARBON

64,066 tCO^2 Stored | **- 43,842 tCO^2 Net** | 14,833 tCO^2 Emitted



PROPOSED CONDITION

LANDCOVER



TOTAL CARBON IMPACT BY LANDCOVER

HARDSCAPE

Impervious Cover	+ 9,823 tCO^2

SOFTSCAPE

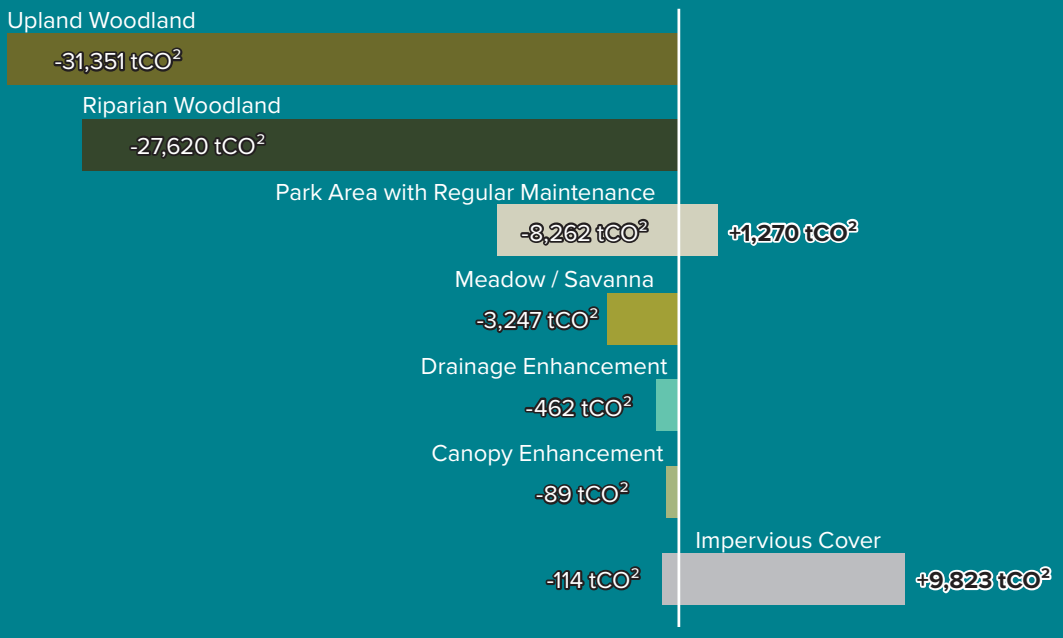
Upland Woodland	- 31,351 tCO^2
Riparian Woodland	- 27,620 tCO^2
Meadow / Savanna	- 3,247 tCO^2
Drainage Enhancement	- 452 tCO^2
Canopy Enhancement	- 88 tCO^2
Park Area with Regular Maintenance	- 6,992 tCO^2

+28%

STORED AND SEQUESTERED CARBON

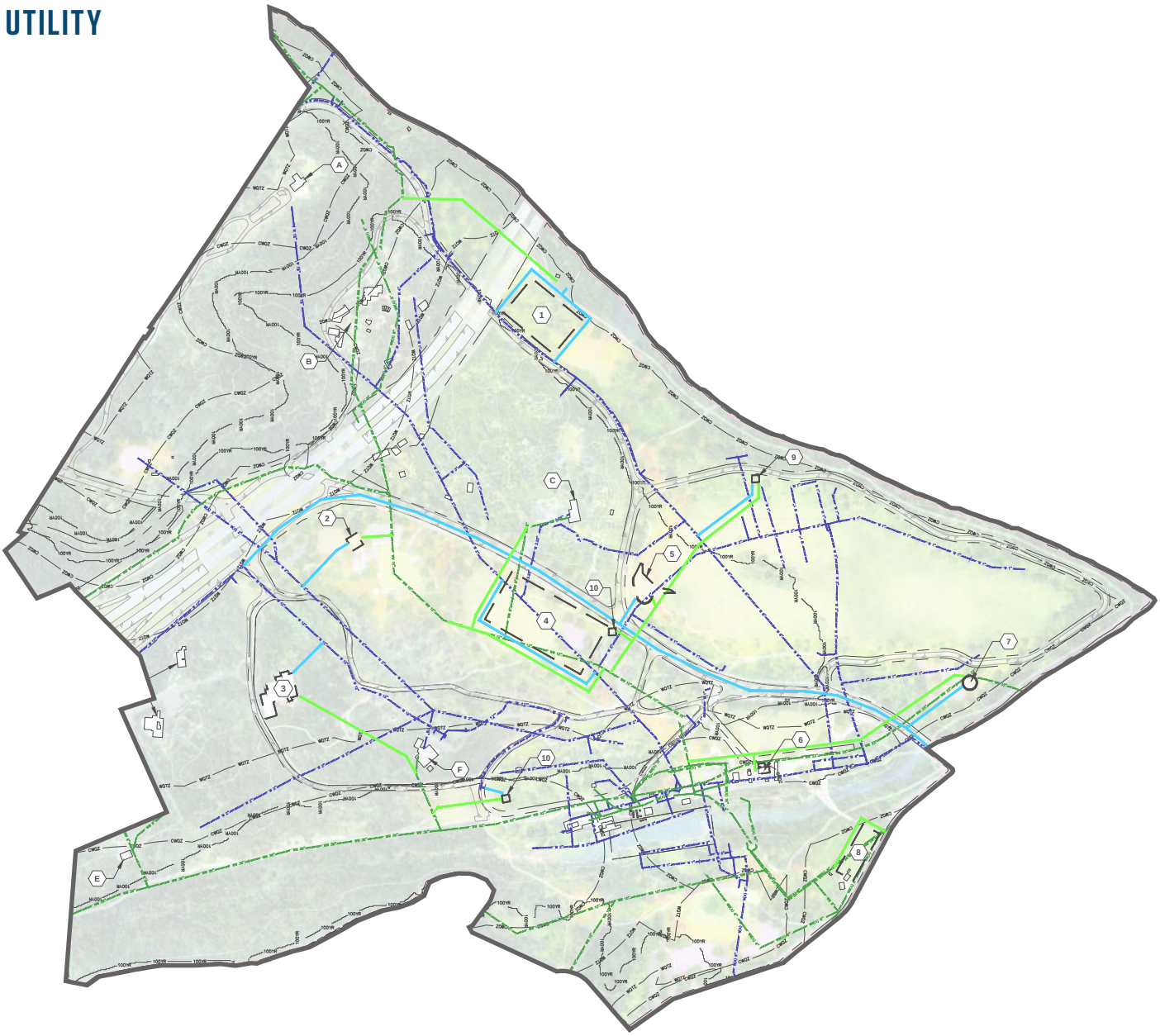
EMITTED CARBON

71,145 tCO^2 Stored | **- 56,025 tCO^2 Net** | 11,104 tCO^2 Emitted



INFRASTRUCTURE

UTILITY



LEGEND

- Existing Water Line
- Existing Wastewater Line
- Proposed Water Line
- Proposed Wastewater Line

» Buildings with existing utility services to remain:

- A – Zilker Clubhouse
- B – Austin Nature and Science Center
- C – Zilker Botanical Garden
- D – McBeth Recreation Center
- E – Girl Scout Cabin
- F – Sunshine Camp

» New buildings that will require new utility services:

- 1 – Parking Garage #1
- 2 – Sports Area
- 3 – New Maintenance Facility
- 4 – Parking Garage #2
- 5 – Zilker Hillside Theater
- 6 – Welcome Center
- 7 – Concession
- 8 – Parking Garage #3
- 9 – Stand-alone Restrooms

UTILITY PLAN

WATER

- There is existing water piping within the Park that is over 50 years old that should be evaluated during future projects for upgrades, including pipe material (from cast iron to PVC).
- Provide additional fire hydrants and fire water coverage as needed for new buildings and structures (i.e., parking garages).
- Coordinate with Austin Water to submit Service Extension Requests to determine if new infrastructure is required or upgrades to the existing system.
- Improvements to address fire flow coverage are anticipated with new structures proposed.
- Investigate existing water meters within the Park and consider if upgrades are needed or additional meters/sub-meters for the proposed improvements.
- Explore opportunities to extend reclaimed water to park with future projects for irrigation water supply.

WASTEWATER

- Existing wastewater gravity interceptor main through park conveys flows to the South Austin Regional Wastewater Treatment Plan, and should be considered during project implementation.
- There is existing wastewater piping within the park that is over 50 years old that should be evaluated during future projects for upgrades, including pipe material (from concrete to PVC).
- Coordinate with Austin Water to submit Service Extension Requests to determine if new infrastructure is required or upgrades to the existing system.
- The public wastewater trunk lines crossing through the park are connected to areas outside of the park and should be considered prior to relocating.
- Maintain the existing Bluffington Lift Station #1 located in the northwest corner of the park.
- Consider the removal of the abandoned Zilker Park Lift Station #5 and Barton Creek Lift Station located on the south side of Barton Springs/Barton Creek, which are both identified in the Austin Water GIS system maps.

INFRASTRUCTURE

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

- Zilker Park is located within three different watersheds: Lady Bird Lake, Eanes Creek, and Barton Creek. Implementation of the Vision Plan should maintain existing drainage patterns such that rainfall runoff stays within the watershed in which is originated.
- Provide water quality treatment for all new or redeveloped impervious cover.
- Where prohibited by code (i.e., within CWQZ that is also within the 100-year floodplain), provide equivalent water quality treatment at an alternate location in the park.
- For improvements within the Barton Creek watershed, which is part of the Barton Springs Zone watershed regulation area, provide water quality treatment that complies with current requirements.
- Evaluate Eanes Creek and Barton Creek within the park for potential opportunities to improve stabilization, erosion, and other creek health concerns.
- Evaluate existing impervious cover areas and consider providing drainage enhancement quality infrastructure for existing untreated areas
- Investigate a regional or comprehensive approach to stormwater management for the entire park in lieu of a project-by-project approach
- Provide stormwater detention as required by the Land Development Code for increases in peak flow runoff from existing conditions, unless otherwise not required (i.e., development immediately adjacent to and discharging directly to Lady Bird Lake is exempt)
- Review existing stormwater management areas within the park and upgrade to current code requirements as needed, as part of the project implementation

FACILITIES

CARETAKER COTTAGE

The Caretaker Cottage was recently remodeled, and the existing infrastructure appears to meet the existing usage. Unless the intended use of the facility were to be revised, it is not anticipated that revisions would be necessary to the Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MEP) infrastructure for the building.

MECHANICAL

Based upon field observations, the Caretaker Cottage is heated and cooled by a heat pump split system manufactured by carrier. The four-ton split system was manufactured in 2015 and is in good condition. Barring any significant repurposing of the Caretaker Cottage or change of occupancy type the existing split will be usable for another 15 to 20 years. Use changes impact the outside air requirement. Any future use changes could require adjustment to the outside air intake size and location as well as impact the latent load experienced by the heat pump. This could require minor modifications to the existing system. Any changes which would add significant internal load (use as an assembly space, introduction of a server computer, etc.) will require modification to the HVAC system.

Based upon the condition of the existing system no modifications or repairs are required at this time.

ELECTRICAL

The Caretaker Cottage was recently renovated so that no further electrical work is needed within the interior.

The electrical service is routed overhead from a pole-mounted 25kVA transformer to a weather head on the exterior of the building. The service is then distributed from there to the Cottage and to the Quonset on one meter. If the Quonset is remain, that the building should have its own service and not rely on service from the Caretaker Cottage. This would allow more capacity for the Quonset site and utility costs could be recovered for private use of the Cottage. We also recommend, if budget allows, that overhead electrical distribution be revised to underground to avoid outages caused by tree limbs, wind, ice, or other possible risks.

PLUMBING

The existing facility has water and wastewater services serving the building, which is equipped with a restroom. No evidence of natural gas was found at the building. The rainwater from the roof was routed to a cistern, but the cistern was disconnected and not in use. The gutters were clogged and full of debris. It is recommended that maintenance be provided to clear the debris in the gutter and to reconnect the cistern. No other concerns were identified at the time of this report.



Rainwater Treatment of Caretaker's Cottage



Ventilation of Caretaker's Cottage



Electric Pole Beside Caretaker's Cottage



Equipments of Caretaker's Cottage

INFRASTRUCTURE

QUONSET MAINTENANCE BUILDING

The Quonset site is currently serving as a mechanical maintenance repair shop, vehicle storage and materials yard with a few offices for maintenance personnel. If the site is utilized for a different usage, the existing conditions may need to be revised. Below is the information on the existing MEP infrastructure.

MECHANICAL

The existing mechanical systems serving the Quonset maintenance bay and interior offices are in poor conditioned with inadequate air balance. The original Quonset appears to have been once heated with a natural gas unit heater. This heater is in poor condition and disrepair. Repurposing of this existing space (or renovation within its current use) will require ventilation as well as new unit heaters for heat. Ventilation could be naturally induced through use of low and high louvers, with free area equaling 4% of the total floor area. Ventilation could also be mechanically induced through the use of exhaust fans and louvers through the envelope. Modifications to the envelope would need to be carefully planned to preserve the historic nature of the space. If enclosed fully, the Quonset would require HVAC via split system or otherwise. The existing office space is heating and cooled by a split system located adjacent to the restroom. It appears this system is not providing adequate outside air as to pressurize the office area, as such the office can become humid during unfavorable outside conditions. The restroom is served by an in-ceiling exhaust fan. It is recommended any future modification or repurpose of the Quonset include all new HVAC systems according to the needs of the new use.

ELECTRICAL

The Quonset has electrical service from the same transformer and meter as the Caretaker Cottage (see above), routed overhead to a weather head on the exterior of the building. From there, it is distributed to various load centers within the building. The electrical equipment in the original portion of the building is in poor condition and should be replaced, as well as equipment located on the exterior. The panel and disconnect switches in the building addition are still in good condition and can remain, if that area is not modified.

PLUMBING

The original Quonset has natural gas serving a unit heater, but did not appear to be in service. This suggest that gas service is likely available for buildings on the site (or nearby), if not necessarily used currently. This would allow for natural gas equipment and heat if so desired. The natural gas service appears to be provided by service near the street.

No water or sanitary was identified in the original Quonset building, but the addition to the space has a restroom and electric water cooler with water and waste connections. Therefore, there is both a water and wastewater service nearby that could be used to provide utilities to fixtures and restrooms on the site. The existing domestic water pressure was sufficient to serve a flush valve water closet. This suggest that there is sufficient water pressure to serve other fixtures.

Existing condensate appears to discharge to grade in places it could freeze and be a nuisance. This is not compatible with current City of Austin code requirements and could be a hazard if algae grows or the water freezes, causing a slip hazard. It is recommended that the condensate be routed to an appropriate drain and comply with discharge requirement by the authority having jurisdiction.

HILLSIDE THEATER

The Hillside Theater usage may or may not be utilized differently in the future. There is existing infrastructure at the site for MEP that may require removal, modifications, or renovation, depending on how the site may be used in the future below are existing conditions.

MECHANICAL

The existing support spaces bordering the hillside theater are equipped with split system HVAC and roof mounted condensing units. Typical life span of this type of equipment is 15 to 20 years. It is anticipated that the reprogramming of the hillside theater space will require replacement or removal of these existing systems. New equipment will be sized and selected according to the needs of the back of house spaces and sound booth and may be limited to simply natural ventilation depending upon final programming.

ELECTRICAL

Over the life of the Theater, the electrical service has been modified to allow for added loads (sound system, air conditioning, theatrical lighting, etc.) and renovations. It is anticipated that the reprogramming of the space will require replacement or removal of the existing electrical equipment. When this occurs, capacity should be provided in the electrical service to allow for flexibility of Events and future loads. We recommend, if budget allows, that overhead electrical distribution be revised to underground to avoid outages caused by tree limbs, wind, ice, etc.

PLUMBING

The existing facility has water and wastewater services serving the theater, which is equipped with a restroom. No evidence of natural gas was found.



Ventilation of Quonset Hut



Equipment for the Quonset Hut



Equipment for the Quonset Hut

FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

EXISTING FACILITIES WITHIN THE PARK



POTENTIAL FACILITIES TO ACTIVATE

1. Zilker Clubhouse
   Meeting Space, Conference Space
2. Austin Nature and Science Center
   Exhibits, Hand-on Discovery Labs, Classrooms, Meeting Space
3. Zilker Botanical Garden
   Multi-Purpose Meeting Space
4. McBeth Recreation Center
   Meeting Space
5. Girl Scout Cabin
   Meeting and Program Space
6. Sunshine Camp
   Office Space, Classroom Space, Exhibits
7. Barton Springs Pool Bathhouse
   Exhibits, Meeting/Classroom Space
8. Caretaker's Cottage
   Exhibits, Meeting/Classroom Space
9. Quonset Hut
   Outdoor Classroom, Exhibit Space

The plan proposed to utilize existing resources to offer public welcoming services and to support the mission of education—instead of adding a new building.

- Barton Springs Bathhouse: Currently being fitted with 2,500 sq. ft. of exhibit and programmable space. Long-term potential as exhibit space, particularly as it relates to Eliza Spring. Additional possibility for small meeting space.
- Eliza Spring: An important site for education and interpretation.
- Sunken Garden: Enhance pedestrian access, create viewing prospects with interpretation.
- Zilker Ponds: Connect by way of paths to other elements in the Bathhouse or Barton Springs Pool area. Rehabilitate and fit the site with interpretive content.
- Austin Nature and Science Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, Girl Scout Cabin: Coordinate their yearly schedule to utilize the facility year-long such as meeting space or exhibits. It can prevent vandalism if the facilities have programs or visitors all the time.



Example of Kiosk

WELCOME CENTER

Such a hub would be a major point of orientation for visitor to the park. It might contain educational or interpretive displays or be a staging area for recreational or educational programming for youth, seniors, or visitors or all ages. This does not have to be a new building but could be accomplished by repurposing an existing building such as the Zilker Clubhouse, Quonset Hut, Caretakers Cottage, or Girl Scout Cabin.

The visitor center functions in lower-key terms that don't endeavor to be a front-and-center face for the park. Instead, it focuses on existing historic resources—in particular, the Caretaker's Cottage and the historic Quonset Hut. Theses facilites are beneficial for their practicality and for their proximity to the pool, the creek and the spring activity. It is intended to complement ecological restoration recommendations in other parts of the Vision Plan.

The Caretaker's Cottage is repurposed for welcome and classroom activities. It would also hold office spaces. To complement this repurposing, the nearby Quonset Hut need to be used as an outdoor classroom. In this way, current educational activities that involve exploratory excursions to the creek followed by a classroom-setting review of findings is accommodated within a compact, convenient geography.


Example of Shaded Pavilion

FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

GUIDELINES

- Caretaker's Cottage: Single-topic exhibit, meeting/program space, office.
- Quonset Hut :Outdoor classroom. Provides space for some programming for school-age children currently being hosted in the Bathhouse. Its proximity to the Creek is an asset.
- Maintenance Yard: Repurpose as Welcome Center. Take advantage of elevated prospect to view across the creek (and provide interpretation) to the Sunken Garden outfall.
- Zilker Park Boat Rentals: The planning process confirmed a desire for remaining the Zilker Park Boat Rentals concession in the park. However, ecological recommendations to restore and reduce erosion in Barton Creek may affect the location of this concession. The Vision Plan recommends consideration of a relocation of the concession upslope but the specific location will require coordination and guidance from the Watershed Protection Department and further environmental evaluation.
- The 100-year floodplain presents a serious constraint to any visitation strategy centered around the Creek or the Pool. It dictates that allowable floor levels for new construction cannot be set lower than 24" above the 100-Floodplain.
- Because new buildings within the floodplain are not a possibility, using the existing historic resources presents an logical option (within limits). Existing historic buildings are allowed to continue being used as long as the level of hazard is not increased. This suggests that the existing buildings become even more valuable assets because of their proximity to the attraction that is the creek and the Pool.



Example of Shaded Seating Area



Example of Outdoor Classroom

NEW ZILKER HILLSIDE THEATER

The new Zilker Hillside Theater should be designed for performing arts and theater, including the proper support areas.

- Should be able to support more visitors than current location, up to 5,000 people in lawn seating.
- Should have air-conditioned backstage area for actors dressing rooms, storage, and restrooms, and loading area.
- The details of design should be consulted with Zilker Theatre Productions along with appropriate PARD staff.

PARKING STRUCTURE

The parking structures will require careful design to provide cohesion to the park's natural environment and atmosphere. The elevation should blend in to the park scenery by using vertical vegetation and green roof. The parking garage at Brakenridge Park in San Antonio is a good precedent.

In addition to the aesthetic design, the function and layout must be carefully considered. Such considerations could allow for multi-use such as a ground floor activated with restrooms, office or meeting space, or concession and flexible use as needs evolve in the future.

The rise of Electric Vehicles should also be accounted for, with charging stations included in future designs.

Most importantly, environmental studies and analysis will be required before proceeding with such a project.



Example of Vertical Vegetation



Parking Garage at Brackenridge Park



Example of Green Roof



Example of Retail under Parking Garage

INTERPRETIVE STORY

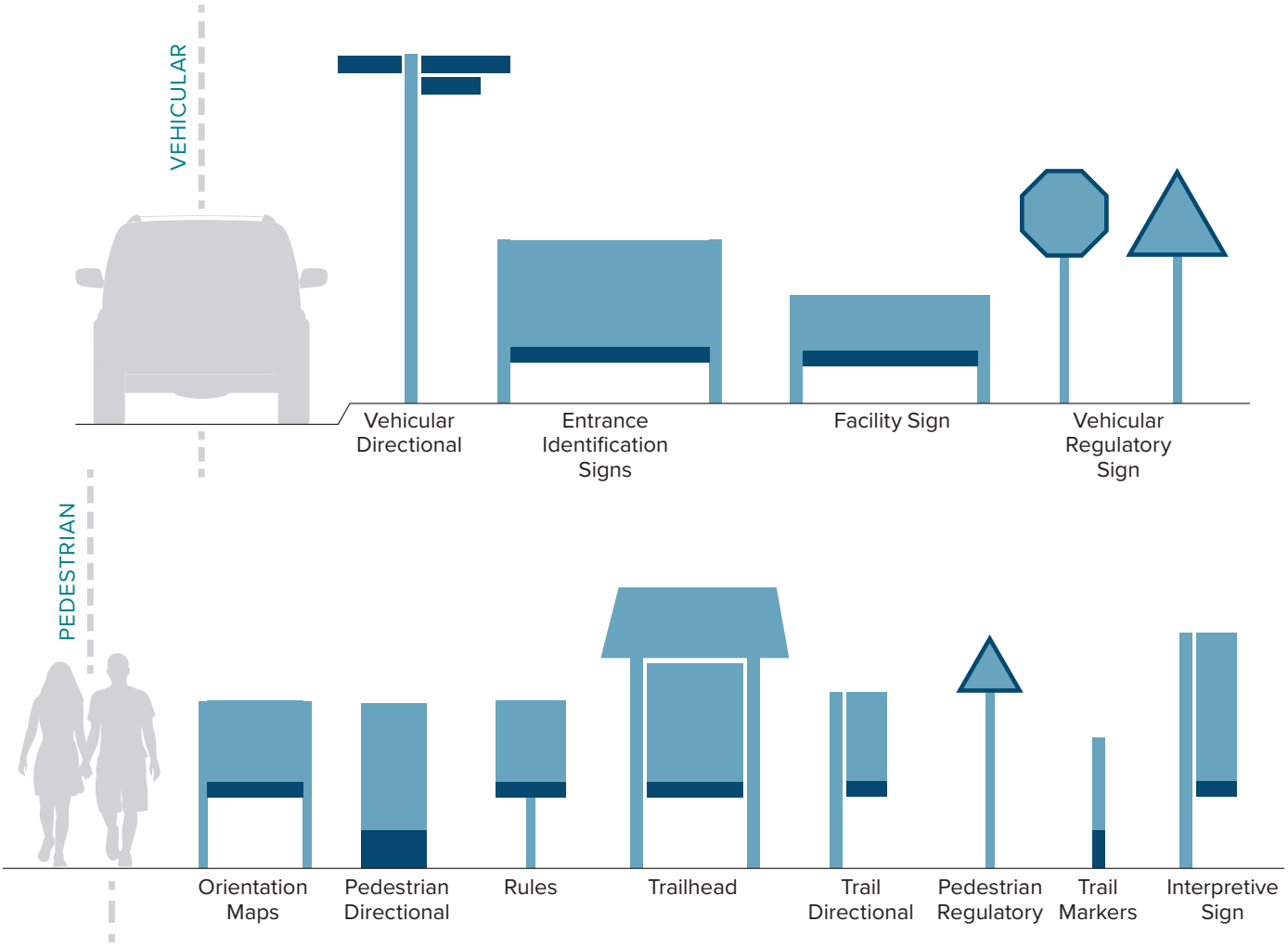
WAYFINDING / INTERPRETIVE STORY MAP



The storylines and the map in this chapter are only a road map. Anyone doing interpretive and signage planning in the future will need to conduct additional research and develop themes, in addition to writing the actual interpretive products and locating the signages.

- Park Entry Sign
- Facility Signage
- Vehicular Directional
- Park Rule
- Pedestrian Directional
- Interactive Signage
- Trailhead

SIGNAGE FAMILIES



A well-considered wayfinding program aids navigation but can also engage visitors when a thoughtful strategy is employed. Zilker Park does not have a cohesive signage system currently and this issue has brought up during community engagement process. The signage in a park can be divided into four types. Type 1 are such as entrance identification signs or facility/donor signs. Type 2 are directional signs which can be vehicular, pedestrian, or trail directional. The third type is about regulatory or rules in the park. The last type is informative signs like interpretive signs.

Besides the development of the vision plan, separate planning efforts is needed specifically to address wayfinding needs and opportunities, and present a unified the navigational strategy that defines the programming, function and visual character of the park signage. The wayfinding vision plan would provide a design framework to consistently inform future signage design and function.

Table 4: Types of Signage

TYPES OF SIGNAGE	
Type 1	Entrance Identification Sign
	Facility/Donor Sign
Type 2	Vehicle Directional
	Pedestrian Directional
	Trail Markers & Directional
Type 3	Rules Sign
	Vehicular Regulatory Sign
	Pedestrian Regulatory Sign
Type 4	Orientation Map
	Interpretive Sign

INTERPRETIVE STORY

INTERPRETIVE STORYLINE

This framework focuses on Zilker Park as a whole. Specific destinations within the park (Barton Springs, Zilker Botanical Garden, and Austin Nature and Science Center) already have their own vision and interpretive plans that are in various phases of implementation, and are only mentioned as they relate to the larger whole. It is assumed they will be interpreted as stand-alone destinations as well.

STORYLINE I: BARTON SPRINGS HAS BEEN A CONSTANT, BUT EVOLVING, DESTINATION FOR HUMANS FOR AT LEAST 10,000 YEARS.

- Indigenous occupation: Archeological sites reveal that Indigenous people camped, hunted, fished, and quarried rock here for at least 9,000-10,000 years before European colonizers arrived.[1] The Vara Daniels site, which lies beneath the Great Lawn and rugby fields, is one of the "largest deeply stratified sites known in Texas."[2] Today, it serves as evidence of Indigenous people's long-term presence on this land, and presents an opportunity for contemporary Austinites to learn more about the generations of Native people who preceded them here.
- Euro-American settlement and business enterprises: Beginning in the 1830s, Euro-American settlers brought their agricultural traditions and commercial/industrial enterprises to this landscape. Within the present-day park boundaries, men including William Barton, Ashford B. McGill, and Dr. Barclay Townsend farmed and ranched; Michel Paggi, Jacob Stern, and the Rabb family all operated mills on the creek; Michael Butler mined clay for his brickworks; and Andrew J. Zilker used the spring water for his icemaking business and pasture for the horses that pulled his delivery wagons. While Barton Springs was already a popular swimming destination by the mid-1800s, Paggi built a dam on Barton Creek in the 1870s to create a swimming hole and a bathhouse to accommodate swimmers.[3]
- Park origins and development: Through a series of land deals between 1917 and 1934, Andrew J. Zilker transferred three parcels of land that would become Zilker Park to the City of Austin. However, Zilker did not profit from these transactions; rather, he specified that the proceeds from the first two deals be placed in a trust for Austin High School, and gifted the third parcel of land outright. The subsequent development of Barton Springs and the surrounding land reflected popular ideas about recreation at the time (active recreational facilities in a naturalistic environment). Under the City of Austin and various New Deal institutions, the park's naturalistic features and recreational facilities were expanded and remnants of its commercial and industrial past were removed. As the city grew and automobile ownership became more accessible, the park became a popular destination for white, middle class Austinites.[4]
- Modern gathering space: Today, Zilker Park is a blend of active recreational facilities (e.g., Barton Springs, hiking trails) and gathering spaces for events large and small, public and private (e.g., Zilker Clubhouse, Girl Scout Cabin, picnic tables for private gatherings; large open spaces for public events like ACL, Blues on the Green, the Zilker Kite Festival and Austin Trail of Lights). Austinites have also built a culture of informal gatherings at sites throughout the park, such as the Monkey Tree on Azie Morton Road.

STORYLINE 2: ZILKER PARK'S EXTANT BUILT ENVIRONMENT TELLS PART OF THE STORY OF AUSTIN'S SETTLEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND EVOLVING IDENTITY.

- Zilker Park's built environment reveals clues to some aspects of Austin's history:
  - Settlement and Early Industry: The old Rabb homesite and the location of the Paggi grist and ice mill (at Sunken Garden/Old Mill Spring) both evoke Austin's early industrial period and speak to how crucial access to flowing water was for many people and industries.
  - Expansion: As Austin's population expanded, it outgrew some of Zilker Park's facilities. One of these was the Barton Springs Bathhouse. Completed in 1947, architects Delmar Groos and Dan Driscoll designed the new bathhouse with a Streamline Moderne aesthetic. This style strayed from the rustic-style park buildings constructed during the 1930s, but both approaches had something in common: they took inspiration from Zilker Park's landscape. The bathhouse was sited around the location's large trees, and the low-slung building took inspiration from the horizontal limestone terraces found throughout the park.[5]
- Zilker Park by Austinites for Austinites: Zilker Park's design was led by two local men: engineer Frederick A. Dale and architect Charles H. Page. Other Austinites were also involved in its design and construction: Hugo Kuehne designed the Caretaker's Cottage and the first Barton Springs bathhouse; plants for the Rock Garden came from the home garden of Dr. T.S. Painter on W. 33rd St.; young architect Bubi Jessen designed the iconic entry columns; materials and labor for custom light fixtures were donated by Gage Brothers, Weigel Iron Works, and Fox and Schmidt; and the Austin Police Department helped fund and build the shooting range.[6]
- Zilker Park and the New Deal: Many of Zilker Park's most iconic features were developed under various public works programs during the Great Depression.
  - Funding: Most of the Texas parks projects that were developed during this time were intended to be state parks. Zilker Park was an exception, and it received funding thanks, in part, to Congressman James P. "Buck" Buchanan, who represented Austin in the House of Representatives and was able to use his position on the House Appropriations Committee to fund work in his district.[7]
  - Design: The park was developed under various New Deal programs, and its design was especially influenced by the National Park Service's emphasis on highlighting the natural topography and flora, and

BENEFITS OF SHARING INTERPRETIVE STORY

1. It illuminates the power of place. Clear educational messages and content inform the public of each site's historic significance.
2. It does more than provide just dates and facts, but also inspires a feeling of stewardship in site visitors, strengthening awareness of cultural and natural resources.
3. Thoughtful and well designed signage programs demonstrate community pride in local heritage.
4. It provides a high-quality interpretive experience without the requirements of staff or facilities to maintain.

INTERPRETIVE STORY

constructing rustic-style buildings using natural materials.[8]

- Construction: In 1933, Charles Page secured funding from the Civil Works Administration (CWA) to build the park, including the stone entrance columns and the beloved Zilker Clubhouse, both of which still stand today.[9] In 1934, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company 1814 designed and built roads, cleared land, and constructed park facilities (picnic tables, barbecue pits, and lighting).[10] The National Youth Administration (NYA) repaired flood damage in 1935-1936 and built the Sunken Gardens in the late 1930s, and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) helped improve the park's lily pond.[11] Without this substantial federal investment, Zilker Park would look very different today.

STORYLINE 3: ZILKER PARK HAS A LONG HISTORY AS A CONTESTED LANDSCAPE.

» White settlement and white supremacy at Barton Springs:
  - Enslavement of African Americans. When William Barton settled on the banks of Spring Creek (known today as Barton Creek) around 1837, he brought his wife, children, and up to 30 African Americans he enslaved with him.[12] The Bartons ranched cattle here. The African American men and women whom Barton enslaved likely worked in the Barton Family's ranching and domestic activities, increasing the Bartons' wealth through their uncompensated labor.
  - Settlement on Indigenous lands. As a white settler in Indigenous people's traditional homelands, William Barton was in frequent conflict with Comanches who claimed the land as their territory.[13]

» Exclusion of non-white and lower income citizens: When the City of Austin took ownership of Zilker Park in 1917, it instituted fee-based access, which solidified the pool as the domain of the white middle class.[14] The implementation of the 1928 Master Plan, and specifically its recommendation for segregated facilities for Black citizens, codified this racial division. It wasn't until Black activists, such as Joan Means Khabele, Bertha Means, V. Saundra Kirk, and Willie Mae Kirk, fought to integrate Barton Springs that the park became officially accessible to Black Austinites. Nevertheless, racial disparities persisted: many Black community members continued to feel unwelcome in the park and at the pool well after the facilities were officially desegregated.[15]

» Community organizing and activism: Since the late 1960s, community members and grassroots activist organizations, including the Zilker Park Posse, Save Barton Creek Association, Save Our Springs Alliance, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, have challenged development plans that would negatively impact the springs and the park (e.g., development in the Barton Creek watershed, construction of MoPac Expressway in the park).[16] They have also supported scientific research and education, and advocated for better regulations to protect and preserve Barton Springs, Barton Creek, and Zilker Park.[17]





STORYLINE 4: THE EBB AND FLOW OF WATER INDELIBLY SHAPES THE ECOLOGY OF ZILKER PARK.

- Water as it shapes the landscape: The creeks and river create riparian habitat where water-loving plants thrive, wildlife is drawn to the fresh water, and resident bird populations seek out prime nesting and feeding locations.[18] In the western half of the park, which is more characteristic of the Edwards Plateau, oak-juniper woodlands grow in shallow soils that formed atop limestone rock. Here, rainwater flows down through the limestone and into the Edwards Aquifer far beneath.[19] The plants that grow in this area are adapted to the faster draining soils.
- Springs as habitat:[20] The springs in the park and the Edwards Aquifer beneath it support the endangered Barton Springs and Austin Blind Salamanders. As the park was developed and new buildings and features were constructed, the springs' flow was disturbed and the salamanders' populations decreased. Through careful planning, habitat restoration, and limited development, the salamander populations in Zilker Park are growing.[21]

STORYLINE 5: ZILKER PARK OFFERS AUSTINITES THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE GREAT BIODIVERSITY IN A RELATIVELY SMALL AREA.

- Ecotone: Zilker Park provides habitat for more than 600 plant and animal species.[22] It straddles the Edwards Plateau and Blackland Prairie ecoregions and blends characteristics of both. Within the park's 351 acres, Austinites can spot armadillos while hiking through oak-juniper woodlands typical of the Texas Hill Country, paddle along shoreline communities of bald cypress trees and snapping turtles, and wade in a natural pool fed by the same springs that support two species of endangered salamander.
- Biodiversity: At least 224 species of birds – more than 85% of the wildlife species that call the park home – can be found in Zilker Park. They include a diverse array of species drawn to the varied habitats that make up the park. Migratory songbirds stop to rest in the park on their way to their northern breeding grounds, and egrets and herons hunt along the banks of the river and in the creeks. [23]



Donation Signs


Outdoor Classroom with Interpretive Signages

INTERPRETIVE STORY



Layering Interpretive Signage


Accessible from a multitude of Viewpoints


Interpretive Signage Located in Gathering Space

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

When developing interpretive signage, planners should consider the following factors:

LAYERING

Offering interpretive information in successive layers of depth allows visitors to engage with content based on their particular interest levels. The complete suite of interpretive signage should include high-level overview signs and more in-depth specialized signs. Individual signs should also be designed to accommodate those with passing, moderate, and deep interest in the content. Using headlines, lead text, body copy, captions, and sidebars to layer information allows users to engage with bite-sized "chunks" of information and decide how deeply they want to delve depending on their interest.

MODALITIES

Visitors learn in varied ways. Incorporating tactile, visual, text-based, manipilative, and interactive elements into signage offers a wide variety of users the opportunity to engage with the content they find most accessible.

CONSOLIDATION

Where possible, consolidating interpretive signage at existing gathering points (e.g., trailheads) and structures (e.g., restrooms, parking structures) will reach a larger number of users and also prevent the landscape from being littered with signage. However, consolidation of signage should be thought of as a guideline rather than a rule. Any efforts to consolidate signage into "nodes" will have to be balanced with the need/desire for visitors to be able to view and/or experience the resource being interpreted. In some cases, it will make more sense to locate an interpretive sign closer to a resource and away from an existing gathering point/structure.

ACCESSIBILITY

Community input revealed strong support for considerations of equity in the Zilker Vision Plan. In that same vein, planners should consider interpretive signs' accessibility from a multitude of viewpoints. In addition to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act, placement, legibility, language, and reading levels should also be considered.

Beyond the text and images on a sign, the design of the sign and its support structure are opportunities to engage visitors playfully and/or create a sense of place. At Zilker Park, appropriate design inspirations could include the park's New Deal-era architecture and its flora and fauna.

ENDNOTES

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2 Collins, “Vara Daniel Site.”

3 McGilvray, Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report, 39-47.

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6 Michael Barnes, “Life in the middle of Zilker Park,” September 23, 2018. Accessed August 12, 2021. https://www.austin360.com/ENTERTAINMENT/20160906/Life-in-the-middle-of-Zilker-Park; McGilvray, Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report, 60, 62-63; “Zilker Park is Haven of Rare Natural Beauty: Many Beautiful Features Added By Man's Work,” Austin American, July 1, 1934: A10. At least one article states that Page also donated his services; see “New Zilker Park to be a Haven for Picknickers,” Austin Statesman, May 31, 1933: 11.

7 L. Patrick Hughes, “New Deal Work Programs in Central Texas,” 1999. Accessed on February 18, 2022. https://www.austincc.edu/lpatrick/his2341/new.html.

8 McGilvray, Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report, 62.

9 “The Living New Deal,” n.d. Accessed February 16, 2022. https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/zilker-metropolitan-park-austin-tx/.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 The author could not locate a definitive source that listed the names or exact number of people William Barton enslaved on this land. The Handbook of Texas notes that when Barton’s father died in 1828, William continued to enslave the five African Americans his father had previously enslaved. In 1940, J. Mason Brewer wrote that when Barton settled along modern-day Barton Creek, he “brought with him twenty-five to thirty slaves.” When Barton died in 1840, his will listed 11 enslaved people among his property. As primary source research is outside the scope of this project, the author elected to err on the conservative side and state that Barton enslaved “up to 30” individuals on this land. See Mary Jayne Walsh, “Barton, William,” The Handbook of Texas, n.d. Accessed March 11, 2022; https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/barton-william; J. Mason Brewer, An Historical Outline of the Negro in Travis County (Austin: Samuel Huston College, 1940), 12; and Limbacher & Godfrey Architects, Barton Springs Pool Master Plan, December 2008, 29.

13 McGilvray, Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report, 42.

14 McGilvray, Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report, 51, 60, 62-63; Michael Barnes, “Life in the middle of Zilker Park,” September 23, 2018. Accessed August 12, 2021. https://www.austin360.com/ENTERTAINMENT/20160906/Life-in-the-middle-of-Zilker-Park.

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17 Vice Chair, Parks and Recreation Board, an email to Zilker Park Vision Plan team, September 28, 2022.

18 Siglo Group, Zilker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines, 40-42.

19 Siglo Group, ZIlker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines, 29, 37, 40.

20 Per PARD’s request early on in the Vision Plan process, this Interpretive Plan does not delve deeply into interpretation of Barton Springs. That subject matter is more appropriately addressed in an Interpretive Plan specific to Barton Springs and interpreted in depth in the exhibits at the Barton Springs Bathhouse. See the 2008 Barton Springs Pool Master Plan for additional information (179).

21 Siglo Group, ZIlker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines, 14, 67-69.

22 Siglo Group, ZIlker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines, 28.

23 Siglo Group, ZIlker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines, 63-67.

6

SUMMARY

For a park like Zilker Park, the implementation will last decades due to complexity of the existing systems within the park, funding availability and external projects and considerations outside the park's boundary. There should be an appropriate implementation, budget, and operation/management plan. Each implementation project will need an appropriate budget and operation and management plan. The speed of each project will be determined by funding availability and park management.

The physical improvements recommended in the Vision Plan are divided into projects based on their location within the park. The projects may be combined into larger packages based on funding availability.

The chapter continues with plans for park operation, management, and funding with an outline of potential partnerships—the vital ties to organizations and communities for the project.

CHAPTER SIX

IN THIS CHAPTER

Projects
Project Packages
Timeline
Operation and Management
Concessions
Financial

IMPLEMENTATION

PROJECTS

ELEMENTS OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR ZILKER PARK

1. Projects to improve the park physically and systematically.
2. Identify a variety of funding sources.
3. Changes in operation and management systems.
4. Partnerships to accomplish goals important to multiple organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The Zilker Park Vision Plan is too complex to follow the traditional implementation process for park vision plans. Implementation of the plan is divided into smaller projects rather than phases to achieve more flexibility and closer collaboration with partnerships such as other City departments.

The Vision Plan identifies four elements for implementation: projects that are tactile and make the parks system physically and systematically better, identifying a variety of funding sources, changes in operation and management, and partnerships to accomplish cross-organizational objectives. Physical and systematic changes are recommendations like investments in existing and proposed facilities and park renovations. Funding sources to explore include, General Funds, General Bonds, Parkland Dedication Funds, grants, and partnerships. Critical changes in operation and management have impact on how Zilker Park operates daily. Examples include suggestions for PARD staff roles and more sustainable maintenance practices. Finally, cross-organizational partnerships with Government organizations, other City departments, the City Council, neighborhoods, and nonprofits can help ensure the successful implementation of proposed projects.

PROJECT TYPES

The projects can be categorized into four different types. Administration projects provide a foundation for the Parks Department and its partners to ensure the implementation process makes progress, continues to be aligned with the goals established here, and is communicated. Ecological uplift projects are projects that concern the protection and health of the ecology of the park. Accessibility projects concern transportation, visitor circulation, connection to existing roads and trails, and pedestrian and bicycle network improvements. Facility and program projects include projects that improve existing facilities or programs and projects that create new facilities or programs.

ADMINISTRATION

- ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS
- ANNUAL BUDGET/ MAINTENANCE REVIEW
- DEPARTMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS
- ZILKER PARK UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION

ECOLOGICAL UPLIFT

- RESTORATION OF BARTON CREEK BANKS
- RESTORATION OF LANDFILL AREA
- RESTORATION OF POLO FIELD
- RESTORATION OF OLD ZILKER HILLSIDE AREA
- MITIGATION OF EROSION ISSUES
- TREE CANOPY ENHANCEMENT
- INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL
- DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

ACCESSIBILITY

- STRATFORD DRIVE REALIGNMENT
- ADDITIONAL BRIDGES ALONG BARTON CREEK
- CLOSING ANDREW ZILKER ROAD TO VEHICLES
- ZILKER TRAILHEAD
- CANOPY WALK
- PARKING GARAGES
- EXTENDED ROUTE FOR THE ZILKER EAGLE
- ADDITIONAL TRAILS
- NEW TRAILHEAD TO NATURE PRESERVE
- REMOVAL OF SURFACE PARKING
- BARTON SPRINGS ROAD IMPROVEMENTS
- CLOSING LOU NEFF ROAD TO VEHICLES
- INTERNAL SHUTTLE
- PED/BIKE BRIDGE ON LADY BIRD LAKE

FACILITY/PROGRAM

- ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING PLAYGROUND
- BARTON CREEK WATER ACCESS
- SOUTH SIDE NEW PLAY AREAS
- PLAYGROUND ON THE LAND BRIDGE
- NEW PICNIC AREA WITH CONCESSION
- INTERPRETIVE STORYTELLING
- NATURE PLAY
- SPORTS AREA
- ZILKER HILLSIDE THEATER
- ADDITIONAL RESTROOMS
- LAND BRIDGE
- WELCOME CENTER

PROJECTS PACKAGES

ZONES



Zone 1: Land Bridge
Zone 2: Landfill
Zone 3: Sports Area
Zone 4: Welcome Center
Zone 5: South Side of Barton Springs Pool
Zone 6: Barton Creek Area

PROJECTS AND ZONES

The projects can be combined into a package based on zones within the park. This package can happen all at the same time or project-by-project based on available funding sources.

The zones as outlined are where most of the major improvements to Zilker Park will take place. Other projects like ecological uplift projects throughout the park, projects within the Zilker Preserve, and other miscellaneous projects could happen as funding becomes available and are not fully dependent on a sequential process.

ZONE 1: LAND BRIDGE

The land bridge area contains five different projects: the restoration of Polo Field from informal parking, realigning Stratford Drive to the west side of Zilker Botanical Garden, construction of an underground parking garage, construction of a land bridge, and the relocation of the Zilker Hillside Theater. The project sequence can be changed based on operation and maintenance resources within the park.

ZONE 2: LANDFILL

Zone 2 is the Butler Landfill area which includes three different projects. The Butler Landfill will be restored to a natural area. A parking garage recommended under MoPac, and the Zilker trailhead to the Butler Hike and Bike Trail would be located next to this facility.

ZONE 3: SPORTS AREA

The Sports Area concentrates various sports amenities scattered throughout the park into a singular area to create an active node. The projects in this Zone are: of the Polo Field and construction of the Sports Area, including new fields, trails, and a surface parking lot

Table 4: Project Packages by Zone

PROJECT PACKAGES BY ZONE				
Zone 1: Land Bridge				
Restoration of Polo Field	Stratford Dr Realignment	Underground Parking Garage	Land Bridge	Zilker Hillside Theater
Zone 2: Landfill				
Restoration of Landfill Area	Parking Garage	Zilker Trailhead to Butler Hike and Bike Trail		
Zone 3: Sports Area				
Restoration of Polo Field	Sports Area			
Zone 4: Welcome Center				
Removal of Surface Parking	Enhancement of Existing Playground	Welcome Center		
Zone 5: South Side of Barton Springs Pool				
Parking Garage	Removal of Surface Parking	Drainage Improvements	South side new play areas	
Zone 6: Barton Creek				
Controlled Barton Creek Water Access	Restoration of Barton Creek Banks	Additional Bridge along Barton Creek	Relocation of Ped/Bike Bridge along Barton Creek	

under the MoPac with direct pedestrian crossing to the sports area.

ZONE 4: WELCOME CENTER

The Welcome Center is the front gate of Zilker Park and becomes the central space for school gatherings or tourists. The improvement of the area starts with the removal of the existing surface parking. However, this only can happen when parking is accommodated elsewhere as per the plan, such as the parking garage on Azie Morton Road, parallel parking along Barton Springs Road or the underground parking at the land bridge. Improvements to the existing playground and renovation of the Caretaker's Cottage and Quonset Hut are projects within Zone 4.

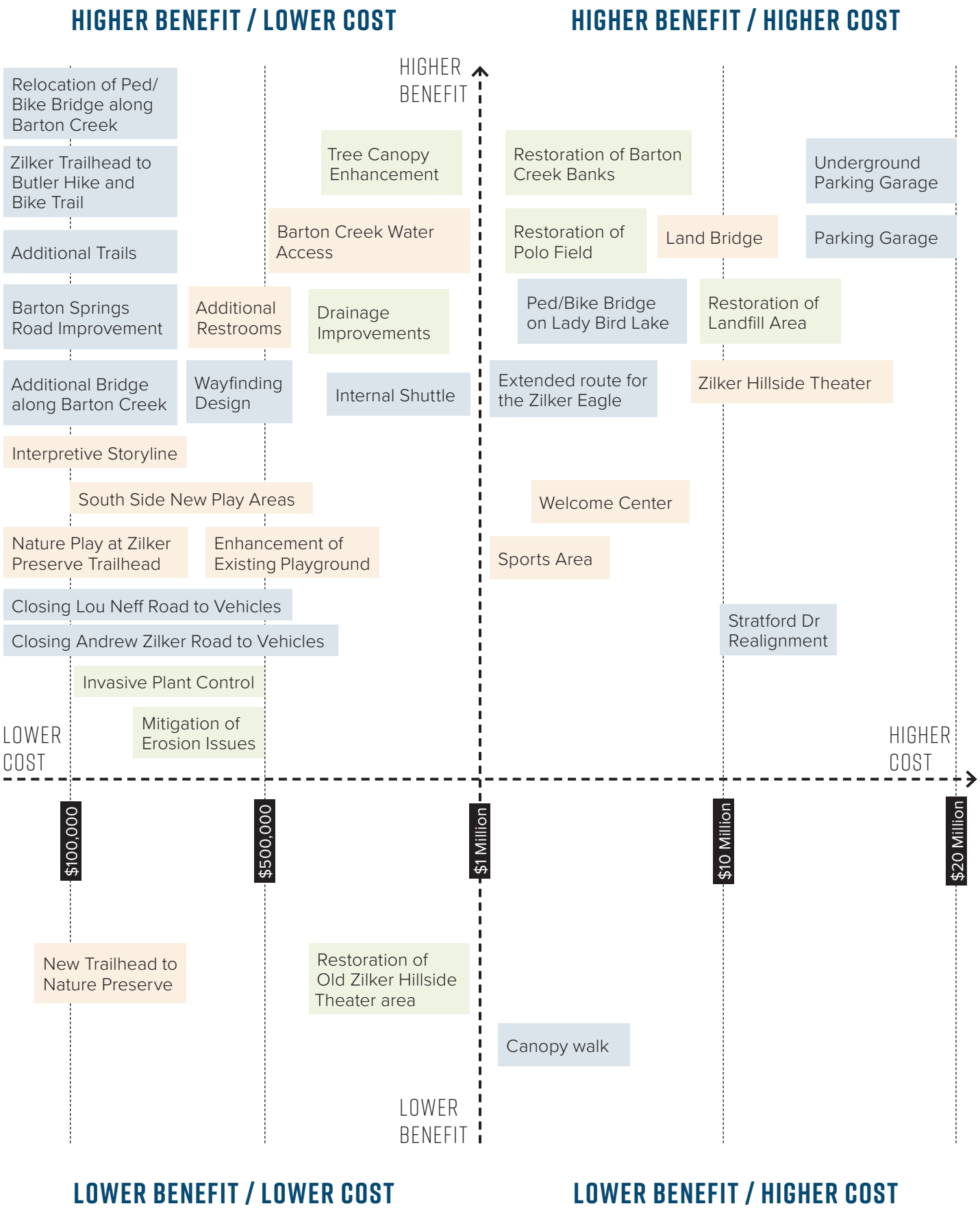
ZONE 5: SOUTH SIDE OF BARTON SPRINGS POOL

Existing surface parking will be removed to allow for drainage improvements and ecological uplift interventions. Furthermore, with the addition of new playscapes and gathering spaces, this area becomes more activated for everyday use.

ZONE 6: BARTON CREEK

The restoration of the banks of Barton Creek is one of the most critical projects in Zone 6. It is envisioned that safe, accessible walkways elevated up from the creek level would be built with hardscape areas for water access. Planted areas would allow for restoration of vegetation and for future generations of heritage trees to be established. Pedestrian and bike bridges along Barton Creek at Toomey Road, the west side of Barton Springs Pool, and a crossing south of the Barton Springs Road bridge are included in this zone. These connections are vital to establish accessibility not only to this area but to the entire park.

PROJECTS BENEFIT AND COST RELATION



Benefit and cost relation analysis is a key strategy for prioritizing between multiple projects. The quadrants on the left side show the benefit and cost relation among the projects in the Zilker Park Vision Plan. Each quadrant indicates higher benefit/lower cost, higher benefit/higher cost, lower benefit/lower cost, and lower benefit/higher cost. The projects in higher benefit/lower cost have been prioritized over the lower benefit/high-cost projects. This diagram helps the City to prioritize the projects, based on cost and stakeholder and community feedback.

The cost axis of the diagram indicates cost ranges based on estimations completed during the planning process. In the past several years, the market has been volatile as the world has experienced supply chain issues and inflation. It will be critical to reevaluate costs when each project moves forward.

In general, the benefit of each project is based on community input received throughout the duration of the project and discussions with City departments and various implementers.

This diagram is an excellent tool which helps to understand and compare the benefit/cost projections for each project. By integrating future community input, this diagram will be further informed by the priorities voiced directly from the public.



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

TIMELINE

The project timeline was established based on the previous benefit and cost relation analysis. However, as mentioned earlier, the timeline of projects is fluid based on available budget opportunities. This timeline is a guideline for decision-making but is flexible.

The timeline spans from years 1-3, near term, mid term, long term, and ongoing projects, such as tree canopy enhancement, invasive plant control, reducing user impact, and removal of existing surface parking.

CORRELATION AMONG PROJECTS

The next critical factor in the timeline is the correlation between the projects. The Vision Plan is divided into smaller projects, some of which are dependent upon the completion of others before they can begin. An example of this is removal of surface parking lots within the park. These are dependent upon other parking spaces becoming available, either through construction of a structured parking garage, addition of on-street parking along Barton Springs Road, viable transportation to the park via shuttle system, or increased public transit options.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARKING PROJECTS

Careful calibration of alternative ways to arrive at Zilker will be needed as existing surface and temporary parking spaces are removed. Surface parking should be removed to align with the plan when the following conditions are present: a. internal shuttle and external shuttle systems are running, b. shared use parking is viable through third-party software platforms, c. alternative parking spaces are constructed as projects are realized.

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
- Canopy Walk
- Stratford Dr Realignment

- » Substitute Parking
- » External and Internal Shuttle
- » External Parking Garages

PARKING GARAGES

There are up to three parking garages suggested in the Zilker Park Vision Plan. However, the ultimate number of garages may change based on:

- » The capacity of each parking garages
- » Access to external and Internal Shuttles
- » The capacity of external parking garages
- » More frequent CapMetro bus service to Zilker Park
- » Project Connect light rail station at the Long Center comes online

The quantity and size of parking garages can be reconsidered as these other criteria are met.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships within City departments and outside groups can influence the timeline. Examples of this include funding from nonprofits, City departments, neighborhoods, or other sources. Partnerships with other groups are encouraged to successfully achieve the goals of the Vision Plan.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIP



Zilker Volunteer Day by Austin Parks Foundation

Zilker Park is Austin's busiest park, 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.

HISTORY OF ORGANIZATIONS IN ZILKER PARK

Nonprofit and volunteer groups as well as concessions have been operating in Zilker Park since its early days as a public park. For example, Girl Scouts have been meeting regularly in the park since the 1950s. Volunteer groups and nonprofits assist park programming and maintenance efforts. PARD is continuously challenged to keep up with the sheer volume of daily service requirements stemming from millions of visitors annually so this help is needed. However, with so many organizations and groups working in Zilker, the Department faces a significant challenge in coordinating and connecting these organizations to create sustainable, holistic improvements to the park as opposed to small improvements here and there.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

With the Vision Plan, there's an opportunity to create a coordinated effort between the Department and a partner. To be recognized as an official park partner, the organization must meet the PARD Partnership Criteria, and all significant agreements would go to City Council for final approval before being executed. Once executed these partnerships are actively managed by PARD staff to ensure Council-approved agreement standards and annual deliverable being met.

PARK COLLABORATIONS IN AUSTIN

Zilker Park is a collection of destinations that draw millions of visitors annually, as well as entities that have long-standing relationships and agreements with the City. Sunshine Camps and the Girl Scout Cabin are smaller, lesser-known destinations, while the Austin Nature and Science Center, the Botanical Garden, the Hillside Theater, and Barton Springs Pool serve a wide range of visitors arriving by a variety of transportation modes.

In the years leading up to the vision process, collaboration has been evident:

- The Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy was organized by the many garden clubs and groups that have used the grounds for meetings, workshops, and events over decades. The

CURRENT NONPROFITS IN ZILKER

Zilker Park Collective, The Trail Conservancy, Barton Springs Conservancy, Friends of Barton Springs Pool, Austin Parks Foundation, Hill Country Conservancy (Violet Crown Trail), Girl Scouts of Austin, Sunshine Camp, Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy, Zilker Hillside Theater, McBeth Recreation Center, Friends of Austin Nature and Science Center

Conservancy now tackles fundraising, hosting events, and working hand-in-hand with PARD.

- The Barton Springs Conservancy has raised millions of dollars for improvements in and around the pool, including the forthcoming bathhouse restoration. In addition, they supported the Vision Planning process by funding the Zilker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines that gave the vision planning process a significant head start.
- The Hill Country Conservancy, collaborating with PARD, is funding improvements to the trailhead for Barton Creek Greenbelt, on top of their ongoing efforts to build and maintain the Violet Crown Trail.
- The Austin Parks Foundation has funded the return of a revamped Zilker Eagle train, as well as numerous other improvements throughout the park.
- The Trail Conservancy continues to upgrade the much-loved Butler Trail, recently adding a joint effort to program, operate, and maintain the length of the trail around Lady Bird Lake.

Prior efforts across Zilker Park by these and other nonprofits and volunteer groups include improvements to the Great Lawn, planting and care of many of Zilker's mature trees in the picnic groves, and funding of restoration work along the Barton Creek Greenbelt. While these efforts are welcome, they are, by nature, piecemeal or partial efforts.

Recognizing the benefits of partnering with nonprofits in parks, City Council passed Resolution 20200312-041, expressing its "support for the concept of parkland agreements between nonprofit organizations and PARD if the agreements further the mission and vision of the department with regard to non-enterprise fund public parks and trails in an effective, efficient, and inclusive manner."

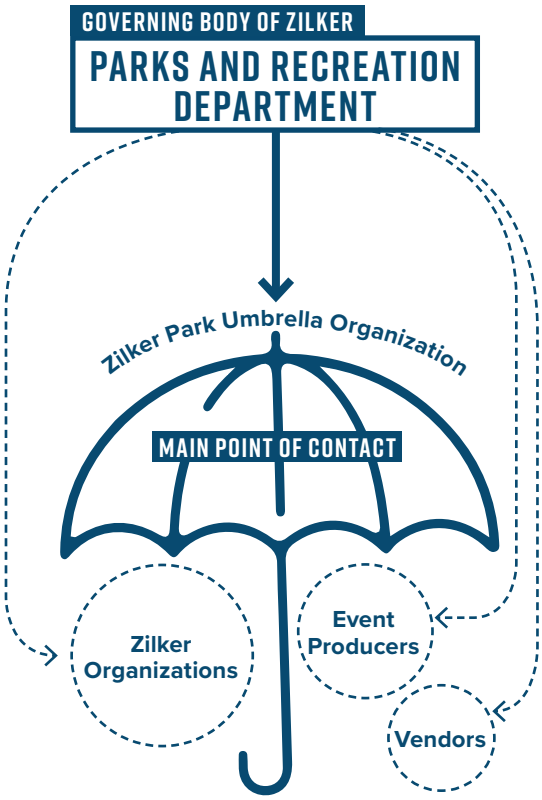
These collaborative efforts are not limited to Zilker Park or Austin, but reflect a national trend of nonprofit park organizations working collaboratively with city parks departments to "fill the gap" in public park needs. In the past years, park nonprofits have contributed an additional $12 to $14M in funds annually for programming, operations, and capital improvements in Austin parks. While only 10 percent of the annual city parks budget, it can make a significant difference.

There are some excellent examples for such a model, including the Prospect Park Alliance in Brooklyn, NY; and the Bronx River Alliance in the Bronx, NY. Both organizations were formed by a coalition of "friends of" groups who work closely with the New York City Parks and Recreation Department to advocate for the park, raise public and private funds, organize, and deploy robust volunteer programs, and supply additional staff and resources to aid the city parks department in caring for the park. This model could be applied to Zilker Park as well.



Potential Partnerships

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIP



Relationship of Zilker Park Umbrella Organization and Parks and Recreation Department

ROLE OF A ZILKER PARK UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION

Zilker Park has had nonprofit involvement in the park for decades. Dozens of nonprofit organizations support Zilker Park and the Parks and Recreation Department through programming, advocacy, stewardship, and fundraising. Over time, it's become clear that the multitude of nonprofit support could be organized in such a way that facilitates clear communications with the various organizations, ensures coordination with events and projects, and allows for focused advocacy that could benefit the park.

The Vision Plan recommends a unified (or umbrella) Zilker Park nonprofit that can serve as a main point of contact for the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, acting as liaison and coordinating body between the many active organizations and interested parties. In a growing city that places more demands on the Parks and Recreation Department, PARD must find ways to streamline operations, increase efficiency, and better leverage outside funding for projects that benefit the public.

The idea that PARD should seek and support partnerships for a public purpose is based on policy direction from City Council and embedded within plans adopted by City Council. Austin City Council Resolution 20200312-041 states:

The City Council expresses support for the concept of parkland agreements between nonprofit organizations and PARD if the agreements further the mission and vision of the department with regard to non-enterprise fund public parks and trails in an effective, efficient, and inclusive manner.

In addition to the City Council Resolution, "Our Parks, Our Future: PARD Long Range Plan 2020-2030" identified partnerships as a sustainability strategy for developing, improving, maintaining and programming spaces (pp. 22, 125, 130, 179). The Long Range Plan went through significant community engagement before adoption by City Council. In addition, Strategic Direction 2023's "Economic Opportunity & Affordability" outcome (SD23, p. 9) identifies "leveraging public-private partnerships" as a strategy for strengthening the small-business sector, which includes concessions at Zilker. SD23's "Health & Environment" Strategy 8 identifies "leverage[ing] innovative financing models and partnerships to support, maintain, and expand parks, open spaces, recreational facilities, and our urban trail network" (p. 22). The recommendations below align with the Council resolution and Council-adopted Long Range Plan and Strategic Direction 2023.

PARD will maintain a strong management and planning presence in Zilker Park, including phasing and implementation of the Vision Plan, overseeing capital improvements, day-to-day operations and maintenance, reserved area reservations, and permitting and management of large events (ACLMF, Kite Festival, Blues on the Green, Trail of Lights).

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Peter, a local food truck vendor, told us: "I'd love to spend time at Zilker. Every vendor wants to be there, but it's so limited, if you miss it, you have to wait a long time. . . . I'm excited about the possibility of seeing more vendors offering diverse food options to all types of people at Zilker."

The Vision Plan recommends that PARD formally review its current operations and capital plans to ensure implementation of the most efficient and accountable model for management of a complicated capital plan, increased operations and maintenance capabilities, and coordination with nonprofit partners, concessionaires, and volunteer groups.

In addition, a unified (umbrella) nonprofit, formalized as a partnership with the City per City Council Resolution 20200312-041 and other City and Department guidance, could provide additional unique functions alongside PARD. Among the proposed features are:

- Advocacy for the plan in both the final approved form (early 2023) and as implementation phases are determined by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.
- Work with the broader parks, open space and environmental coalition known as Austin Outside to campaign for public funds (bond elections, annual budget increases, allocation of previously approved bond funds) for capital improvements, restoration, and expanded operations and maintenance for Zilker and the entire Austin Parks and Recreation system.
- Advocacy for operations and maintenance funding, as well as private fundraising for capital improvements, programming, operations, and maintenance. This includes advocating for an increase in annual funding to the Austin Parks & Recreation Department, solicitation of additional funds from private donors or grantmaking organizations and raising funds via fundraisers for specific improvements.
- Coordinating efforts with existing nonprofit partners and focusing on park-wide efforts, including establishing and managing a park-wide volunteer corps. Building on the work of It's My Park Day, the bi-annual city-wide volunteer workday, to expand regular opportunities park volunteers. These efforts will require coordination with the PARD PARKnerships program which includes or is an umbrella program for the Adopt-A-Park program comanaged by PARD and the Austin Parks Foundation.
- Beyond this initial set of possibilities, the Zilker unified nonprofit could tackle a range of efforts from ecological restoration to enhanced levels of horticultural care, programming, enhanced concessions, and more. Such efforts will need to be considered in a partnership agreement, using the model that PARD has laid out and which is detailed below.
- A unified nonprofit could create additional transparency through regular meetings with the Department, community engagement opportunities, and a central resource for understanding the calendar of events for families and visitors.

The City of Austin has the ability through its established PARKnerships program, City Council resolution, and state law to enter into agreement with parks nonprofits to provide public a range of services and benefits. In 2020, in response to Council Direction and Department Long-Range Plan recommendations, PARD spent eighteen months researching park partnerships in the state and nation, meeting with various stakeholders regarding our current partnerships and drafting a program and policy that reflects Austin's values and commitment to our green spaces. The PARKnerships Program is guided by Austin's values and commitment to trust, equity, collaboration, and stewardship. Such agreements lay out roles and responsibilities for the city and nonprofits, and ensure coordination, collaboration and city oversight.

Each agreement for a partnership for public good goes through a public process with final approval and adoption by City Council. The Vision Plan recommendation does not recommend specific details for the organization but does suggest exploration of partnership responsibilities. As with the implementation of other projects proposed in the Vision Plan, future community engagement will be part of the process.

On February 27, 2023, the Parks and Recreation Board (PARB) passed Recommendation 20230227-5. The recommendation stated the Parks and Recreation Board "cannot support the inclusion of the language in the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan referring to the Zilker unified (umbrella non-profit)" with reference to a public

engagement process. In addition, PARB recommended, "that this [recommendation] be presented to all boards and commissions and City Council along with the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan, until there is a public process of community engagement to discern the type of entity, if any, the public feels is appropriate to have a role in the operation, management, concessions management, advocacy, and fundraising for Zilker Park."

The full recommendation along with the Department response can be found in Appendix A. The recommendation for the umbrella organization remains in the Vision Plan based on the City Council direction from 2020 and the PARD Long Range Plan, as well as successful examples in cities such as Dallas, Houston, Chicago, and New York, as articulated by Council.

To summarize, in alignment with City guidance, the Vision Plan recommends a collaborative approach between PARD and a unified parks nonprofit that coordinates and streamlines the existing partnerships at Zilker with a focus on advocacy, ecological restoration, ongoing volunteer stewardship of the park, funding, and coordination between the City and the many groups and organizations already working to care for and improve Zilker Park.

MOVING TO ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Austin Parks and Recreation Department is shifting toward sustainable land management techniques that bring urban ecology to the forefront of how the City manages open space and parkland. This is corroborated by much of the public input from the Vision Planning process and laid out as a framework within the Zilker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines Report completed in 2021. The City Council policy to have every park improvement project over $2 million in value as a SITES (a sustainable landscape certification) certified project points towards a paradigm shift in park management to ecological restoration through the lens of adaptive management. This shift is further supported by additional efforts by the Barton Springs Conservancy, The Trail Conservancy, and City staff associated with the urban forest and watershed protection. This paradigm shift also recognizes that much of our parkland in Zilker is utilized for passive recreation activities where the enjoyment of nature and the quality of that natural experience are critical components of the user experience.

The management shift utilizes ecological restoration best practices to enhance the ecological health and immense value of Zilker Park. It repairs degraded landscapes by addressing erosion, invasive species, and soil health. It increases functionality through green stormwater infrastructure and canopy enhancement. It implements ecological restoration practices that enhance and expand meadows, savannas, and woodlands. The results:

- Protect and maintain endangered species habitat and water quality
- Repair environmental degradation
- Restore and enhance plant communities
- Repair and improve wildlife habitat
- Enhance the user experience
- Facilitate environmental stewardship.

These ideas are further articulated in the Zilker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Management Guidelines.



CONCESSIONS

As noted in the Site Analysis Need Assessment as part of Zilker Park Vision Plan issued in spring 2021, the City of Austin uses a traditional concessions model that focuses on long-term contracts with concessionaires, usually 5 to 10 year terms. These contracts require a combination of annual payments plus a percentage of revenue from the vendor to the City.

In addition, the concessionaires are required to provide capital improvements in the areas of the public realm in which they operate. This is especially true for the majority of concessions that operate at Zilker or in the encompassing Lady Bird Lake Corridor, primarily focused on water-based recreation.

The City has contracted with Huston-Tillotson University to undertake a (Lady Bird) Lake capacity study through its environmental justice academic program. This study includes a plan and recommendations informed by the analysis of vendors, watercraft usage and enforcement. This was delivered on December 2022 and provided input on the possibilities and gave more information as to the extent of usage and possible capacity of Lady Bird Lake and connected water bodies. While this is larger than Zilker, it does affect the two existing watercraft-focused concessions operating from Zilker.

In addition to the information from the Huston-Tillotson study, the Vision Plan updates key messages included in the SANA from spring of 2021. These include the following updates:

Both watercraft concessions operating in Zilker Park will be subject to changes in location, operating facilities, and access, based on elements of the Vision Plan as approved. Temporary or permanent relocation of amenities and access will likely be required.

The Zilker Eagle is expected to be operational by the end of 2023. Like watercraft concessions, it will be subject to changes in location, operating facilities, and access, based on elements of the Vision Plan as approved. Temporary or permanent relocation of amenities and access will likely be required.

There is only a single food vendor with a permanent location adjacent to the Zilker Café. In a well-publicized set of hearings in 2021, the approved operator was denied a conditional use permit by the Austin Planning Commission to serve beer and wine. The concession contract was terminated before the vendor started operations. The concession contract was terminated before the vendor started operations. As of December 2022, there is no vendor under contract.

Opportunities exist to provide additional food and drink concessions in multiple locations around the park, including but not limited to temporary or seasonal vending operators. Given the millions of people who visit the park annually, this seems like both a good placemaking opportunity as well as a revenue opportunity. The Vision Plan recommends consideration of the following opportunities:

- Encourage temporary vending opportunities for food and drink at Zilker in several designated locations. Such a pilot project could provide input for a longer-term concessions strategy. PARD has existing contracts with local mobile food and drink vendors that it could use to develop an initial season-long pilot program. Such an effort would provide great input on where (and what) food and drink concessions work best.
- For pilot food and drink concessions efforts, consider moving to a flat fee per order versus a percentage of sales plus an annual fee. This is a growing trend in many city parks (with public/nonprofit partnerships) to bring greater diversity in services and

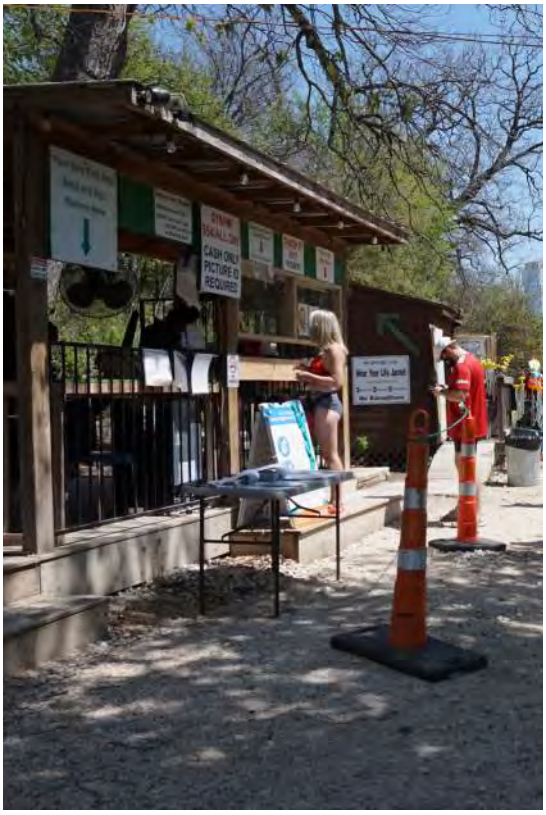
the types of concessions, while simplifying the accounting and verification duties of the city. Establishing a rotating set of vendors by days of the week for an entire season or year would also give PARD the ability to see which vendors are the most successful in terms of products offered and total sales.

» Consider a concessions management role for the proposed unified Zilker nonprofit. Traditionally, city parks departments handle concessions in parks and public spaces. Such agreements, developed in accordance with city codes and approved policies, specify processes for vendor selection, management, and disbursement of revenues received from vending. These agreements can provide flexibility to adjust the number of vendors, locations, and offerings base on needs and successes. Such agreements specify processes for vendor selection, management, and disbursement of revenues received from vending, providing flexibility to adjust number of vendors, locations, and offerings based on needs and success. We'd recommend that any funds collected be directly spent on operations and maintenance efforts by the city / nonprofit parks partner, versus depositing them into the city's general fund.

» Consider a change in city codes/ordinances that allows all concessions revenue to be dedicated to Zilker for maintenance and operations. As we noted in our presentations last summer, Zilker generates in excess of $5.3 M per year from fees, events, space/site rentals, and concessions. All funds from Zilker are collected into the city's general fund, which funds a portion of the PARD budget annually. We cover this recommendation in greater detail in the O&M Funding section below.



Zilker Eagle


Zilker Park Boat Rentals

FINANCIAL

CAPITAL FUNDING

Public funds used for capital improvement projects have strict requirements based on how those funds were obtained. Most capital projects funding in Austin Parks is from general obligation bonds, approved by city voters and restricted for capital projects. A smaller source of funds, with additional restrictions, is the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, which focuses on adding parkland and improved amenities for growing populations. Neither can be used for programming, operations, or maintenance.

The Vision Plan intentionally focuses on funding for operations and maintenance, since more mechanisms are designed to support capital investments. As traditional sources like grants, donations, public funding, and value-capture tools become available, capital investments in Zilker Park can be completed in phases identified throughout the Vision Plan

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FUNDING

The greatest challenge facing city parks departments as well as their nonprofit parks partners across teh country is providing consistent funding for operations and maintenance. While programming can be funded through grants, sponsorships and fees, operations and maintenance (O&M) is often invisible. Given that the majority of funds for O&M come from the City's general fund, and the general fund is under constant pressure (and competition) from many other departments, other sources of revenue to fund O&M are critical.

O&M funding frequently is derived from a few major sources, including earned income, contributed income, and creative public funding approaches. The mix of sources, described below, will enable the sustainment and enhancement of the park envisioned in this planning process.

CURRENT OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE EXPENSES

Overall, expenses at Zilker Park continue to increase, which is no surprise given the steady increase in visitors and usage. Between 2017 and 2022, PARD spent an average of $6.5 million, an increase of $1.47 million since 2017. This included all operating costs for Zilker Grounds Maintenance, Barton Springs Pool, the Austin Nature and Science Center, Zilker Hillside Theater, and the Zilker Botanical Garden.

Looking specifically at Zilker Grounds Maintenance, the average annual cost between 2017 and 2022 is just over $2 million. This has increased from $1.47 million in 2017 to $2.48 million in 2022.

Overall, Zilker Park expenses are just 6.2% of the total 2022 PARD operating budget of $106.45 million. In turn, the PARD budget is just 2.26% of the total City operating budget for 2022.

The National Recreation and Parks Association reports on Park O&M costs through its annual Agency Performance Review. Their report is based on data gathered from over 1,000 public parks and recreation agencies. The 2022 report noted that the median for parks operations and maintenance is $7,823 per acre, with the top quadrille median at $9,269 per acre and the bottom quadrille median at $3,959.

Determining Zilker Park's cost per acre is a bit tricky, given that several areas are primarily staff costs for safety and programming (Barton Springs Pool, Austin Nature and Science Center) versus maintenance. Using the Zilker Grounds Maintenance 2022 budget, the cost is $7,065 per acre. Using half of Zilker's overall budget (essentially combining grounds maintenance and Botanical Garden costs), the cost rises to $9,259 per acre. PARD should assume a minimum cost of $10,000 per acre going forward.

FUTURE OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE SOURCES

Securing any additional funding for park operations is challenging. To support the argument for increased funding, this section aims to connect the beneficiaries of better maintenance (e.g., residents, visitors, businesses, public and private operating partners) directly to the funding sources. Selected sources were specifically vetted for their relevance and precedent success in Austin and Texas.

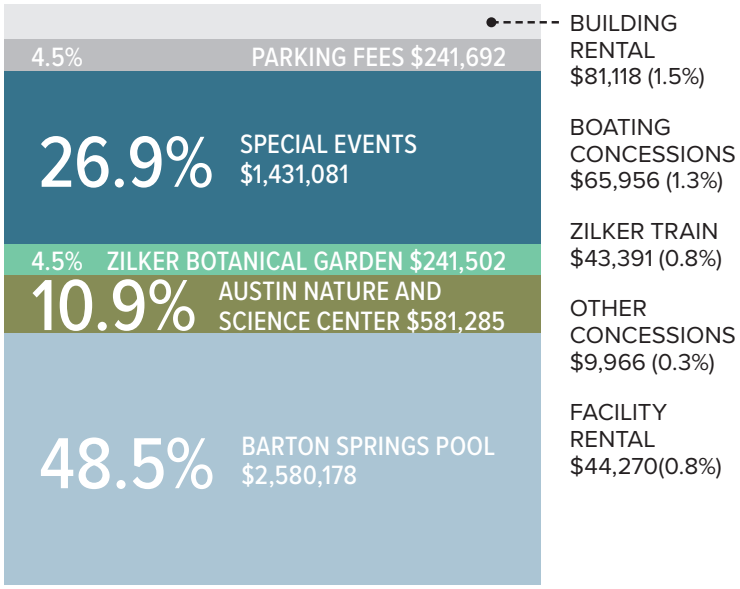
EARNED INCOME

Primarily, Zilker Park should explore expanding concession opportunities and revenues. Only one food and drink concession is currently permitted in Zilker, and it has not been operational for some years. The Vision Plan recommends piloting a temporary concession program with a rotating set of food and drink concessions in key locations in the park on a seasonal (annual) basis. To avoid confusion and unnecessary complication, concessions should be charged a standard fee per order (ticket) to level the playing field. The total number of food and drink concessions should be carefully managed to ensure that the park isn't overwhelmed by commerce and that participating vendors are operating consistently and transparently.

REVENUE AND EXPENSES OF ZILKER PARK

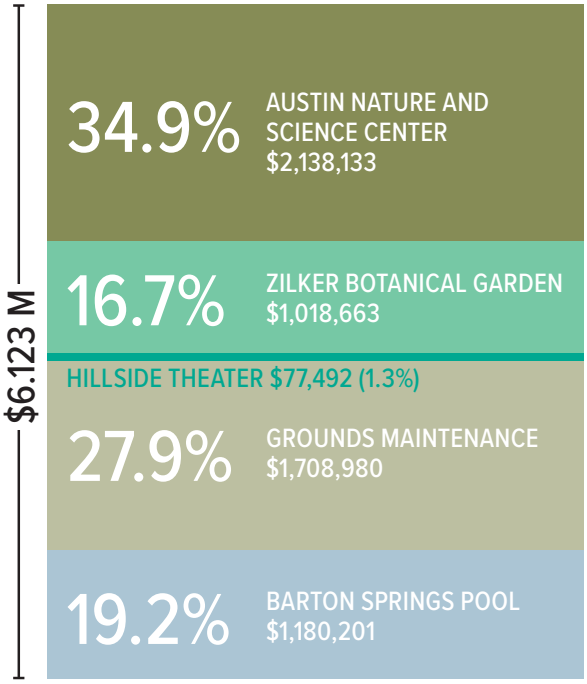
REVENUE ACCRUED IN ZILKER $5.32 M

86.87% OF ZILKER EXPENSES
41% OF PARD GENERAL FUND INCOME



EXPENSES FOR RUNNING ZILKER PARK $6.123 M

7.2% OF PARD OPERATION BUDGET
0.67% OF GENERAL FUND BUDGET



FINANCIAL

The seasonal pilot program could be implemented using existing PARD temporary food concession contracts or via an annual request for proposal process. The results of the pilot over several seasons can better inform if additional consessions are sucessful, where permanent food concessions in Zilker Park may be located, what infrastructure is required for temporary food concession hookups (water, wastewater, electrical, hardened pad, etc.), and how to manage such a program longer term.

Many community members expressed concern over the “commercialization” of Zilker Park through this process. The Vision Plan aims to avoid too many concessions while also supporting local businesses and the park by taking advantage of the ample opportunities to provide modest food and drink concessions in multiple locations around the park, including but not limited to temporary or seasonal vending operators. Given the millions of people who visit the park annually, thoughtful concessions would improve park experience for visitors, advance placemaking, and generate additional operating revenue. PARD should consider the following opportunities:

- Encourage temporary vending opportunities for food and drink at Zilker in several designated locations. Such a pilot project could provide input for a longer-term concessions strategy. PARD has existing contracts with local mobile food and drink vendors that it could use to develop an initial season-long pilot program to gather input on where (and what) food and drink concessions work best.
- For pilot food and drink concessions efforts, consider moving to a flat fee per order versus a percentage of sales plus an annual fee. This is a growing trend in many city parks (managed by public/nonprofit partnerships) that allows a greater number of vendors to participate in such a program and simplifies accounting and verification duties. Establishing a rotating set of vendors by days of the week for an entire season or year would also give PARD the ability to see which vendors are the most successful in terms of products offered and total sales.
- In conversations around equity and inclusion at Zilker Park, the planning team heard that one way to encourage people to enjoy Zilker who still do not feel welcome due to historic practices is





by inviting diverse concessionaires who represent historically marginalized groups. This is more likely under this recommendation.

- Consider a concessions management role for the proposed unified Zilker nonprofit. Traditionally, city parks departments handle concessions in parks and public spaces. Increasingly, nonprofit parks partners are being contracted to provide these services for specific parks, subject to an agreement with the city. Such agreements specify processes for vendor selection, management, and disbursement of revenues received from vending, providing flexibility to adjust number of vendors, locations, and offerings based on needs and success. Any funds collected should be directly spent on operations and maintenance efforts instead of depositing them into the city's general fund.
- Consider a change in city codes/ordinances that allows some concessions revenue to be dedicated to Zilker for maintenance and operations. As we noted in our presentations last summer, Zilker generates an excess of $5.3 M per year from fees, events, space/site rentals, and concessions. All funds from Zilker are collected into the city's general fund, which funds a portion of the PARD budget annually.

Zilker Park could also increase parking fees and dedicate this revenue towards park operations.

The parking program generates several hundred thousand dollars in revenue at Zilker (after expenses are paid), PARD should explore whether parking fees can be increased or variable rates can be introduced, based on demand as is being done in a growing number of cities across the US. Restrictions on use of funds may be limited to capital improvements or repairs, but this could create a possible growing source of revenue that could support the growing needs of the park.

Finally, this report examined reserving all revenue from events, rentals, fees, concessions, and any other revenue that is currently deposited into the general fund to directly fund Zilker O&M. This would yield an average of $5.05 million annually, 36.5% of PARD's annual general fund income of $13.85 million. However, as Austin moves towards equitable citywide access to quality park space, this approach is unlikely to yield sufficient funding for the park system. Rather, Zilker Park and its supporters should be positioned as champions within park system to support increased funding for all parks.





FINANCIAL

CONTRIBUTED INCOME

- When nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, or individual donors donate funds to support parks, this is called “contributed income.” One key strategy for funding Zilker O&M is through securing contributed income for this purpose. The proposed unified nonprofit partner would serve as an advocate for the park. As the Vision Plan begins implementation and for standard O&M, the unified nonprofit partner would work with other nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, and individual donors to raise funds to support these efforts. The contributed income process could include the following:
- Advocacy for public funding for O&M. As mentioned in the governance section, the unified Zilker nonprofit can take the lead in advocating for funding as part of the annual city budget process.
- O&M funding built into donations for capital projects. As demonstrated by The Trail Conservancy and others in Austin, major gifts now frequently include 10 to 20% for a fund for replacement and repairs. This can help with increasing O&M funding across the park.
- Sponsorships and support for programs and events. The unified Zilker nonprofit could seek out sponsorships for programming and events being held at Zilker. A portion of funds raised can be used for O&M costs associated with programs and events. While this will require careful coordination with existing efforts, it can open opportunities for funding for a range of programming at the Beverly Sheffield Education Center, the Austin Nature and Science Center, the Hillside Theater, and other locations around the park. Details, including recognition dos and don’ts, would need to be addressed in partnership agreement(s) with PARD.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- Volunteer Program development and management. A key part of the work of the unified nonprofit is to develop and manage a volunteer program for Zilker Park as a whole. Organizations such as the Austin Parks Foundation, Pease Park Conservancy, and The Trail Conservancy provide a model for how an ongoing volunteer program can help with O&M efforts across the park, as well as care and maintenance of newly restored areas.

The unified nonprofit partner could to 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, but especially in areas targeted for ecological restoration. Again, details in agreement(s) with PARD would be key.

While this proposal isn’t a direct source of O&M funding, it can provide a growing and flexible resource in knowledgeable volunteers working side-by-side with City and nonprofit staff. Parks of similar size see thousands of hours of work donated annually. Strategies employed by other cities and nonprofit partners include:

- Assumption of food and drink concession program management. As mentioned in the Concessions section, growing food and drink opportunities creates a new revenue stream.
- Increasingly, nonprofit parks partners are being contracted to provide these services for specific parks, subject to an agreement with the city. Such agreements specify processes for vendor selection, management, and disbursement of revenues received from vending, providing flexibility to adjust number of vendors, locations, and offerings based on needs and success. We’d recommend that any funds collected be directly spent on operations and maintenance efforts by the city.

Additional contributed income may come from various donations, including both corporate sponsorships and individual donations. The creation of a park-specific organization, whether specifically on behalf of Zilker Park or supportive of Austin’s entire park system, could include a membership structure that incentivizes

corporations and individuals to contribute annually to park operations.

Finally, grants at the regional, state, or federal level typically focus on capital projects; however, some may be available to support ongoing operations. In particular, the national momentum around both equitable programming and climate resilience may point towards opportunities for operating grants.

PUBLIC FUNDING AND VALUE CAPTURE

Austin's park system creates significant value for the city of Austin, including its residents, visitors, and businesses. Zilker Park, as one of the crown jewels of the park system, is positioned to help champion a new effort to raise operating dollars for both the park and the park system as a whole. At the local level, the following options are the most likely to generate substantial revenue, though the implementation considerations remain significant:

- Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). HOTs help to direct some of the spending from visitors back into the City's general fund by leveraging a sales and use tax on most overnight accommodations in Austin. Austin's HOT is currently at the state maximum of 17%, with 11% going to the City of Austin and an additional 6% going to the State of Texas. Zilker Park and the Austin park system are one of the core drivers of tourism in the city, suggesting there may be some ability to dedicate revenue to park operations.
- Public Improvement District (PID). A PID sets a boundary around a specific set of businesses and/or residences to set a special additional property tax for the district. The funds from the tax are then directed back into the district to support operations and various programs. Austin already has three PIDs, including the Downtown PID, East PID, and South PID. To support operating funding for Zilker Park, funding opportunities could include extending the existing Downtown PID to include Zilker Park or creating a new PID around the Zilker Park area.
- Municipal Management District (MMD). MMDs act similarly to PIDs, with funding typically based on commercial property tax or a district-specific sales tax. An MMD establishes a board of directors for the district that oversees the funds. There is not a specific cap on the amount of funds that can be raised, but to levy an assessment, the board of directors would need to gather petitions in support of the plan. This is most successful in highly commercialized neighborhoods, unlike the mostly-residential Zilker Park area.
- Local Motor Vehicle Rental Tax. The State of Texas allows local governments to impose a tax on motor vehicle rental companies located within the boundaries of the taxing entity. The City of Austin currently has a 5% local motor vehicle rental tax which is dedicated to financing capital investments at the Town Lake Park Community Events Center Venue project, currently generating roughly $10M annually to the City of Austin (pre-pandemic). This could be replicated but applied to ongoing citywide park maintenance, creating a new source of dedicated funding.
- Parks Bond. A voter referendum can be designed to create either capital or operating funding for parks throughout Austin. In 2018, Austin voters approved $925 million in bond propositions including $139 million for parks and recreation. With additional research, outreach, and modeling, a voter referendum could be designed to equitably and sustainably create a new source of operations and maintenance funding for Austin's park system.

CONCLUSION

Securing sufficient operating funding for Zilker Park, and more broadly, Austin's dynamic and quintessential park system, will require layering a series of funding sources that are appropriate and feasible for the desired program or use. By regularly evaluating earned income, contributed income, and public funding opportunities, Zilker Park can lead Austin in sustainably and equitably funding park operations.

7

CHAPTER SEVEN

IN THIS CHAPTER

Glossary
Parks & Recreation Board Recommendation
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APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

- 100-year flood plain – p 93 – The land area predicted to flood during a 100-year storm, which has a 1% chance of occurring in any given year. The 100-year flood plain is used by the federal government to administer the federal flood insurance program and by the City of Austin to regulate development within the flood plain area.
- Active modes – p 76 – Active modes of transportation and mobility, such as biking, walking, scootering.
- ADA – p 30. 92 – The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities engaging in everyday activities. The law addresses access to government services and activities in public places. In 2004, extensive provisions were added to the accessibility guidelines to provide accessibility to recreational facilities, including boating facilities, play areas and swimming pools.
- Adaptation – p 175 – Adjustment to environmental conditions, such as humans adapting to life in a changing climate.
- Adaptive Management – p 28, 188 – An iterative process, sometimes called adaptive resource management, to work toward ecological restoration goals, tempered by simultaneous monitoring of the effects of previous management methods. Hypothesis testing is used to inform decisions about future actions and allows for shifting of goals and strategies as new information emerges.
- Berm – p 170 – A linear mound or ridge of earth, typically used to direct the flow of surface drainage.
- CapMetro – p 30 – The Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the public transportation provider in Austin. CapMetro operates bus, paratransit and commuter rail services in the city and surrounding region.
- Carbon sequestration – p 175 – The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide, as a method of reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in an effort to reduce global climate change. Specific to Zilker Park, the Vision Plan recommends increasing vegetation and improving soil health to enhance carbon sequestration.
- City climate goals – p 30 -
- Climate Resiliency – p 175 – Climate resilience is the ability to recover from climate-related shocks such as flood or drought, or the mitigation of vulnerability to those shocks. Increasing climate resilience is intended to reduce the climate vulnerability of communities to the effect of climate change.
- Compatibility Standards – p 95 – A zoning regulatory tool used to protect and preserve existing neighborhood character and scale. In Austin, compatibility standards are applicable to property adjacent to residential zoned (SF-5 or more restrictive) property, and regulate allowable height, setback and building area on surrounding properties within which new development may occur.
- Constituents of concern – p 65 – Any substance defined as a hazardous substance, hazardous waste, hazardous material, pollutant or contaminant, petroleum hydrocarbon, asbestos, PCB or similar substance, the generation, recycling, use, treatment, storage, transportation, release, disposal or exposure of which is subject to regulation under Environmental Law.
- Critical Environmental Feature – p 93 – Critical environmental features (CEF) are defined and protection requirements outlined in the City of Austin Environmental Criteria Manual and Land Development Code. Critical environmental features include caves, sinkholes, springs, canyon rimrocks and bluffs, and protection of them by provision of a surrounding buffer area is required to protect water quality in the area of the CEF.
- Critical Water Quality Zone – p 93 –Critical Water Quality Zones (CWQZ) are defined and development requirements outlined in the City of Austin Land Development Code. Critical water quality zones

occur in watersheds outside those defined as urban watersheds, including rural and suburban watersheds and the Barton Springs Zone. CRWZ boundaries generally follow those of the 100-year flood plain or are defined as a set number of feet from the centerline of the waterway, with the width increasing as the size of the waterway increases.

- Detention – p 97 – A detention pond is a stormwater control measure, designed to provide controlled release of storm runoff during or immediately following a storm. Depending upon the design conditions and regulatory requirements, detention features may be off-site, on-site, on-stream or regional.
- Dillo-type – p 36 – The Dillo was a downtown circulator shuttle bus operated by CapMetro between 1984 and 2009.
- E- bike – p 161 – An electric bicycle, equipped with an electric motor to assist while one is pedaling. An e-bike provides assistance with pedaling but does not fully propel the rider.
- Ecological uplift – p 36, 124, 167 – The quantifiable environmental benefit of restoration actions undertaken. The environmental gain, or uplift, resulting from conservation actions or projects.
- Edwards Aquifer – p 63 - The Edwards Aquifer is an artesian aquifer and groundwater system, an underground layer of porous, water-bearing rock that is roughly 300-700 feet thick and 5,400 square miles in area. The Edwards Aquifer Region extends from Brackettville to Austin, in a gentle arc shape. It is divided into three primary zones – the contributing zone, the recharge zone and the artesian zone. Zilker Park and Barton Springs Pool fall within the Edwards Aquifer Region.
- Edwards Aquifer Contributing zone – p 67 – The contributing zone of the Edwards Aquifer is the drainage or catchment area of the Aquifer and occurs in the Texas Hill Country.
- Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone – p 93 - The recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer is the area where Edwards limestones outcrop at the land surface. The Edwards limestones are fractured and faulted and allow large quantities of ground water to flow into the Aquifer. Zilker Park and Barton Springs Pool fall within the recharge zone.
- Edwards Aquifer Transition Zone – p 93 – The transition zone is a thin strip of land south and east of the recharge zone, also with fractured and faulted limestones, with caves and sinkholes that allow surface water to pass. The transition zone is part of the artesian zone, where water is drawn out of the aquifer at wells and springs. A portion of the eastern end of Zilker Park falls within the transition zone.
- Environmental Resource Inventory – p 93 – A document required under the City of Austin Land Development Code and Environmental Criteria Manual for proposed development on properties in select locations, including within the Edwards Aquifer recharge or contributing zone. The environmental resource inventory (ERI) must identify critical environmental features and propose protection measures for them and must provide environmental justification for proposed spoil disposal location and roadway alignments and propose methods to achieve overland flow. The ERI must include a hydrogeologic report, a vegetation report and a wastewater report.
- External circulator – p 160 – Short distance, fixed-route, circular transit option that takes riders around a specific area with major destinations. Typical circulator vehicles are trolley, jitney or other small bus-type vehicles. The external circulator noted in the Vision Plan is envisioned as connecting transit hubs or destinations outside Zilker Park with an entry point to Zilker Park.
- Forbs – p 71 – A herbaceous flowering plant, that is not a grass, sedge or rush. Sometimes referred to as phorb. Forbs have stems and leaves, produce seeds and die back at the end of the growing season. Forbs are found in grasslands and understory plantings.

GLOSSARY

- Green infrastructure or green stormwater infrastructure – p 63, 68, 170 – Green infrastructure filters and absorbs stormwater where it falls. It augments so called “gray infrastructure,” systems of gutters, pipes and tunnels, which moves stormwater away to treatment plants or direct discharge to water bodies. Green infrastructure uses plant or soil systems, permeable paving, stormwater harvest and reuse and/or landscaping as ways to store, infiltrate, evaporate or transpirate stormwater and to reduce flows to sewer systems or water bodies.
- Guiding principles – p 27 – Sustainability, diversity and inclusion, nature and ecology, history and culture, and accessibility.
- Hydrology – p 45 – The study of the movement, distribution and management of water on the planet.
- Impervious Cover – p 97 – The area of any surface that prevents the infiltration of water into the ground, such as roads, parking areas, concrete paving and buildings.
- Internal circulator – p 160 - Short distance, fixed-route, circular transit option that takes riders around a specific area with major destinations. Typical circulator vehicles are trolley, jitney or other small bus-type vehicles. The internal circulator noted in the Vision Plan is envisioned as connecting destinations within Zilker Park.
- Interpretive program – p 29 – Interpretive programs are the methods used to connect people to places and sites through educational materials. Interpretive programs may include exhibits, websites, live programs, special events, publications, signage and audio or video presentations. Successful interpretive programs build intellectual or emotional connections to the stories told and information provided and will encourage the development of stewardship and support for the messages and places.
- Invasive species – p 71, 73, 173 – An invasive species is a living organism that is not native or indigenous to a particular area or ecosystem and causes harm. The term is often used to describe plants that have been introduced to a site, often with good intentions, that have caused unintended consequences.
- Land Bridge – p 184 – A manmade, engineered bridge connecting two sides of a site, typically over a traffic roadway. In park settings, earth and plantings are used at the surface of the land bridge to continue the natural experience of the park.
- Lithostratigraphy – p 70 – The classification of rock formations based upon the lithological character of the rock strata and their stratigraphic relations. Lithology describes the composition of properties of rock units. Stratigraphy describes the rock layers and layering.
- Low impact play – p 170 – Low impact play or activity includes movement that is gentle on joints and performed with a fluid motion. Common examples are swimming, cycling, yoga, nature hiking, disc golf and pitch ball games like bocce and petanque.
- Megafauna – p 64 – Large or giant animals of a habitat or geological period, now extinct in many instances.
- MetroBike dock – p 161 – A public bike share system in Austin, owned and operated by a partnership of the City of Austin, CapMetro and Bike Share of Austin. The bike share system is intended to support trips that are too far to walk but too short to drive.
- Metropolitan park – p 54 – A metropolitan park serves city-wide population and is the largest park type operated by the Parks and Recreation Department in Austin, over 200 acres in size. Metropolitan parks in Austin are typically natural resource-based and include swimming areas, open play areas, picnic facilities and trails for hiking, bird watching and interpretation of nature.
- Micromobility – p 76 – Use of small, lightweight vehicles operating at speeds below 15 miles per hour and driven by users. Micromobility vehicles include bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, skate boards and other small mobility vehicles without license plates.

- Mitigation – p 175 – In the broad sense, mitigation is the process of making something less damaging, harmful or severe. In the context of the Vision Plan, mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent climate change, and strategies to do so are described in the Plan document.
- Mode split – p 30 – The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan outlines a 50/50 mode split between drive alone vehicles and other modes of travel, as a top strategy. The mode split includes non-vehicular modes of travel, including walking and bicycling.
- Multi-modal transportation – p 30 – Multi-modal transportation includes a coordinated system of various modes of transportation, and not just cars, buses, rail, bicycles or walking.
- Natural Resource Inventory – p 67 – A list and description of naturally occurring resources in a particular area, such as water bodies, forest land. Cultural resources, including historic , scenic or recreational resources, may also be included. A natural resource inventory provides reference information for land-use and conservation planning and informs local planning and zoning processes.
- Park circulator – p 37 - Short distance, fixed-route, circular transit option that takes riders around a specific area with major destinations. Typical circulator vehicles are trolley, jitney or other small bus-type vehicles. The park circulator noted in the Vision Plan is envisioned as connecting destinations within Zilker Park.
- Parkner – p 84, 101 – Non-profit, conservancy, neighborhood, community or business entities working with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department for park development, maintenance, management and programming.
- Parknerships – p 188 – Austin Parks and Recreation Department Community PARKnerships program serves to coordinate the efforts of partners and volunteers.
- Pervious cover – p 42 – Pervious surfaces allow water to filter into the ground, enhancing groundwater recharge, filtration of pollutants and reducing erosion and flooding.
- Phytoremediation – p 109 – The use of plants to clean up contaminated environments. The method works best where contaminant levels are low, as high concentrations take longer to clean and may limit plant growth.
- Placemaking – p 189 – A participatory process for shaping public space, creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.
- Programming – p 25 – The provision of public activities to or in public spaces.
- Protective Concentration Levels – p 49 - The concentration of a chemical of concern which can remain within the source medium and not result in levels which exceed the applicable human health risk-based exposure limit or ecological protective concentration level at the point of exposure for that exposure pathway.
- Public/private partnerships – p 28 – Collaboration between a government agency and a private sector company or entity that can be used to finance, build and operate projects.
- Rain garden – p 170 – A shallow vegetated depression designed to absorb and filter runoff and drainage from impervious surfaces, like paving, driveways, sidewalks and roofs. Rain gardens are typically landscape with native plants and grasses and help protect water quality and conserve water in an attractive way.
- Re-wilding – p 42 – Conservation efforts intended to restore and protect wilderness areas and natural processes. Re-wilding is focused on restoring ecosystem health and biodiversity by protecting wilderness areas and providing connectivity between such areas.
- Recharge zone – p 67 - The recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer is the area where Edwards

GLOSSARY

limestones outcrop at the land surface. The Edwards limestones are fractured and faulted and allow large quantities of ground water to flow into the Aquifer. Zilker Park and Barton Springs Pool fall within the recharge zone.

- Recognized Environmental Condition (REC) – p 49, 63, 65, 169 – A REC, as defined in ASTM E1527-21 as "(1) the presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at the subject property due to a release to the environment; (2) the likely presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at the subject property due to a release or likely release to the environment; or (3) the presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at the subject property under conditions that pose a material threat of a future release to the environment." (Note that this is the current version of ASTM 1527. The Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for Zilker Park referenced a previous version, ASTM E1527-13.)
- Remediation – p 170 – Environmental remediation is the removal of pollution or contaminants from groundwater, surface water, soil, sediment or other environmental media.
- Riparian – p 71 – Relating to wetlands adjacent to rivers and streams. The interface between land and a river, stream or creek.
- Savanna – p 169 – A mixed woodland-grassland ecological system with trees widely spaced, so the tree canopy does not close.
- Shared use pathway – p 37 – Paved, off-road pathways designed for use by a variety of nonmotorized users, including cyclists, pedestrians, skaters, joggers, scooters, skateboarders and others.
- SITES certification – p 176 – The Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) encourages projects that improve site sustainability and protect and restore ecosystem services. The rating system outlines minimum requirements (prerequisites) and different levels of performance-related points to achieve SITES certification ranging from Certified to Platinum. The program is administered by the Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI).
- Stewardship – p 29 – Environmental stewardship is the responsible use and protection of the natural environment, achieved through active participation in conservation efforts and sustainable practices.
- Stormwater runoff – p 26 – Rainfall or snowmelt that flows over the surface of the ground. Precipitation in an urban/suburban area that does not evaporate or soak in to the ground but runs across the land and into an adjacent waterway is stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff is a source of pollutants, picked up as it flows over streets, paving, sidewalks and lawns, including lawn and garden fertilizers, animal waste, sand, sediment, chemical contaminants and trash.
- Sustainable Land Management – p 188 – Practices and technologies intended to integrate the management of land, water and environmental resources to meet functional needs while ensuring long-term sustainability, ecological system services and biodiversity.
- Swale – p 170 - A linear shallow depression in the earth, typically used to direct the flow of surface drainage.
- Tree canopy – p 173 – The above-ground portion of trees, covered in leaves, which form a canopy above the ground, providing shade below.
- TxDOT – p 30 – Texas Department of Transportation, the state agency responsible for planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining the state's transportation system.
- Urban Ecology – p 188 – The study of ecological processes in urban environments.
- Urban heat island – p 68 – Urbanized areas create heat islands that have higher temperatures than those found in outlying areas. Buildings, roads and infrastructure absorb and re-emit solar heat more

than undisturbed natural landscapes do, creating higher temperatures in urban areas.

- Water Quality Transition Zone – p 93 –Water Quality Transition Zones (WQTZ) are defined and development requirements outlined in the City of Austin Land Development Code. Water quality transition zones occur parallel to all critical water quality zones and extend from the outer boundary of the CWQZ for a set number of feet, with the width increasing as the size of the waterway increases. Development and construction activity is limited in the WQTZ, with some exceptions and allowances for open space and parks/
- Water Quality Treatment – p 97 – A water quality control structure, system or feature that provides water quality benefits by treating stormwater run-off.
- Wayfinding – p 30, 160 – The Society for Experiential Graphic Design (SEGD) defines wayfinding as information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space.
- Woodland – p 169 – Land covered with trees and woody vegetation, such as a timberland or forest.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Parks & Recreation Board

Recommendation Number 20230227-5: Recommend further Public Engagement surrounding the DRAFT recommendation for a Unified Non-Profit Role in Operation and Management of Zilker Park

WHEREAS, Zilker Metropolitan Park is a significant public resource for the citizens of Austin, providing critical land for the preservation of the area's natural environment, recreational and exercise space for public enjoyment, protection of the pristine waters of Barton Springs, as well as habitat for the region's important flora and fauna;

WHEREAS, Zilker Park is currently undergoing a planning process known as the Zilker Park Vision Plan, for which a consultant was hired to engage with the public to discern the community members' desires for the future of Zilker Park and to create a draft Zilker Park Vision Plan; and

WHEREAS, the public engagement process for the Zilker Park Vision plan was seriously flawed and not representative of Austin's overall resident park goers, and just two examples of this are (a) information from participants at pop ups hosted across the city was not recorded and participants were simply told to answer the online surveys, and (b) the online surveys were confusing and heavily biased "push polls" designed to encourage support for massive building projects, including the leading questions on the final survey asking survey takers to identify which projects within the plan they were most excited about, most of the choices were construction projects, and there was no option to answer "none of the above," and

WHEREAS, no one or almost no one, during the public engagement process, asked for or supported the further privatization of Zilker Park management and operations and the vast majority of public input on this was opposed to continued and further privatization of park operations; and

WHEREAS, no community engagement surveyed the public desire to create an umbrella organization, a single-point-of-contact non-profit group to take over Zilker Park decision-making and management, ceding control that should belong to the publicly funded and accountable Parks and Recreation Department; and

WHEREAS, the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan was completed in November 2022, was open for public comment until January 8, 2023, and is planned to be presented to Boards and Commissions and the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board will be making a full review of the plan and recommendation to City Council in the future but only after it is reviewed by other Boards and Commissions; and

WHEREAS, the "Operation and Management" section of the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan recommends "a Zilker unified (umbrella) non-profit, that can serve as a single point of contact for the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, serving as a go-between for the many active organizations and interested parties"… "in a formalized partnership with the city…"; and

WHEREAS, the "Operation and Management" section of the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan recommends the Zilker unified (umbrella) non-profit be tasked with advocacy for the Zilker Park Vision Plan, to engage in private fundraising for capital improvements, and to work with a coalition known as Austin Outdoors to campaign for public funds and advocate for private funding, capital improvements, programming, operations, and maintenance, as well as many other potential roles; and

WHEREAS, the "Operation and Management" section of the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan recommends the Zilker unified (umbrella) non-profit be given a role in concession management within Zilker Park and further recommends changes in the revenue sharing and fee models for concessions contracts within Zilker Park; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, in overseeing park operations, maintenance, and programming, follows specific guidelines to keep taxpayer-funded spending accountable and transparent to the public;

WHEREAS, despite good intentions, non-profit organizations are not governmental entities subject to open meetings, public information, bidding, contracting, and other laws intended to allow for transparency and accountability to residents in expenditure of public funds and development of public assets; and

WHEREAS, the recommendation for a unified non-profit partner and recommendations for the partner's role, the change to concessions structures, and other operations and management

recommendations would be a significant change to the management of Zilker Park and unprecedented for a municipal park in the City of Austin; and

WHEREAS, there is no description of the public engagement undertaken during the engagement portion of the Vision Plan development regarding the role of a Zilker unified (umbrella) non-profit to oversee programming, concessions, advocacy, and other roles described, nor is there any indication of public support or lack thereof for a Zilker unified (umbrella) non-profit;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RECOMMENDED that the Parks & Recreation Board:

1) Because of the above-referenced concerns about the public engagement process, cannot not support the inclusion of the language in the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan referring to the ZIlker unified (umbrella non-profit); and

2) Recommends that this resolution be presented to all boards and commissions and City Council along with the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan, until there is a public process of community engagement to discern the type of entity, if any, the public feels is appropriate to have a role in the operation, management, concessions management, advocacy, and fundraising for Zilker Park.

Date of Approval: February 27, 2023

Record of the vote: The motion to recommend that the Parks & Recreation Board: 1) Because of the above-referenced concerns about the public engagement process, cannot not support the inclusion of the language in the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan referring to the Zilker unified (umbrella non-profit); and 2) Recommends that this resolution be presented to all boards and commissions and City Council along with the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan, until there is a public process of community engagement to discern the type of entity, if any, the public feels is appropriate to have a role in the operation, management, concessions management, advocacy, and fundraising for Zilker Park was approved on Chair Cottam Sajbel's motion, Vice Chair Faust's second on a 6-2 vote with two vacancies. Those Board Members voting aye were: Chair Cottam Sajbel, Vice Chair Faust, Board Members Moore, Hugman, Barnard Taylor. Those Board Members voting nay were: Board Members Villalobos and Flowers. Board Member Rinaldi absent

Attest: Tim Dombeck Tim Dombeck Digitally signed by Tim Dombeck Date: 2023.02.28 09:26:09 -06'00'



M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M. Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: March 21, 2023

SUBJECT: **Staff Response to Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan Umbrella Nonprofit (Recommendation No. 20230227-5)**

This memorandum is in response to the Parks and Recreation Board Recommendation No. 20230227-5. The Parks and Recreation Department has received the recommendation outlined below.

> *The Parks and Recreation Board cannot support the inclusion of the language in the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan referring to the Zilker Unified (umbrella) non-profit.*
>
> *[The Parks and Recreation Board] [r]ecommends that this [recommendation] be presented to all boards and commissions and City Council along with the Draft Zilker Park Vision Plan, until there is a public process of community engagement to discern the type of entity, if any, the public feels is appropriate to have a role in the operation, management, concessions management, advocacy, and fundraising for Zilker Park.*

The Parks and Recreation Board (Parks Board) recommendation to remove language associated with considering a partnership with a unified non-profit group in support of Zilker Park conflicts with previous City guidance. During public comment portion of the Parks Board February meeting, much of the expressed concern was directly connected to the "handover" or ceding of control of Zilker Metropolitan Park to a for-profit entity. To be clear, this has never been considered and is not part of the draft Vision Plan. In fact, Zilker, like all parkland, benefits from protections in place in local city ordinance and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code that prohibits the sale, conveyance, leasing, or gifting of a park to a private entity without a majority vote of the public. After careful consideration of the recommendation and public comment, the Department has developed its response to the recommendation as outlined below.

Department Response

The Vision Plan recommendation of the umbrella nonprofit will remain in the draft Zilker Park Vision Plan. The umbrella nonprofit recommendation is a response to citywide guidance through City Council resolution and City Council-approved plans and direction:

- *Austin City Council Resolution 20200312-041:* "The City Council expresses support for the concept of parkland agreements between nonprofit organizations and PARD if the agreements further the mission and vision of the department with regard to non-enterprise fund public parks and trails in an effective, efficient, and inclusive manner."

- *Our Parks, Our Future: PARD Long Range Plan 2020-2030:* The Long Range Plan went through significant community engagement before adoption by City Council. In Chapter 4.E. "Optimize & Improve Efficiency of Operations," the Long Range Plan identified partnerships as a sustainability strategy for developing, improving, maintaining and programming spaces (pp. 22, 125, 130, 179).

- *Strategic Direction 2023:* SD23's "Economic Opportunity & Affordability" outcome identifies "leveraging public-private partnerships" as a strategy for strengthening the small-business sector, which includes concessions at Zilker (p. 9). SD23's "Health & Environment" strategy 8 identifies "leverage[ing] innovative financing models and partnerships to support, maintain, and expand parks, open spaces, recreational facilities, and our urban trail network" (p. 22).

When the draft Vision Plan goes before Council, the Parks Board recommendation will accompany it. At that time, Council may provide direction.

The second recommendation also identifies a need for a "public process of community engagement to discern" details of the organization. Consistent with the implementation of all park vision plans, additional community engagement typically takes place in the design or implementation phase. The Zilker Vision Plan will include clarification that a community engagement process should take place to receive input as to the roles and responsibilities of a future umbrella nonprofit and subsequent future agreement. Additionally, for awareness, governance by the Texas Business Organizations Code with additional IRS considerations guides the structure and formation of a nonprofit organization. The Vision Plan recommends a nonprofit organization due to the requirement of public benefit.

Before an agreement is entered into with any such entity by the City of Austin, the standard established public process would be in place, which will include Parks and Recreation Board recommendations and requires City Council approval.

Finally, as mentioned in the draft Vision Plan, the proposed umbrella nonprofit is not envisioned to have a role in the operations and management of the park.

The Parks Board recommendation is now attached to the draft Vision Plan in Appendix A with a notation in the "Organizational Partnership" section of Chapter 5: Implementation. Language has also been added to provide background information on the umbrella organization recommendation and clarify the rationale for its inclusion in the Vision Plan.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Jodi Jay, M.B.A., CPRP, Assistant Director
Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow, Assistant Director
Lucas Massie, M.Ed., CPRP, Assistant Director
Suzanne Piper, DBA, Chief Administrative Officer