

ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK VISION PLAN

An Urban Treasure in Need of a Comprehensive Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK IS A PARK IN CRISIS.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

PLAN OVERVIEW



WHAT IS VISION PLAN?

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

WHAT IS 'NOT' VISION PLAN?

Detailed design or construction plans

Detailed plans for day to day park management and maintenance

Detailed budgeting for park enhancements



THE PROCESS

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



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

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



Accessibility



Nature and Ecology



Sustainability



History and Culture



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

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

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



Accessibility

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



Nature and Ecology

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



History and Culture

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



Sustainability

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

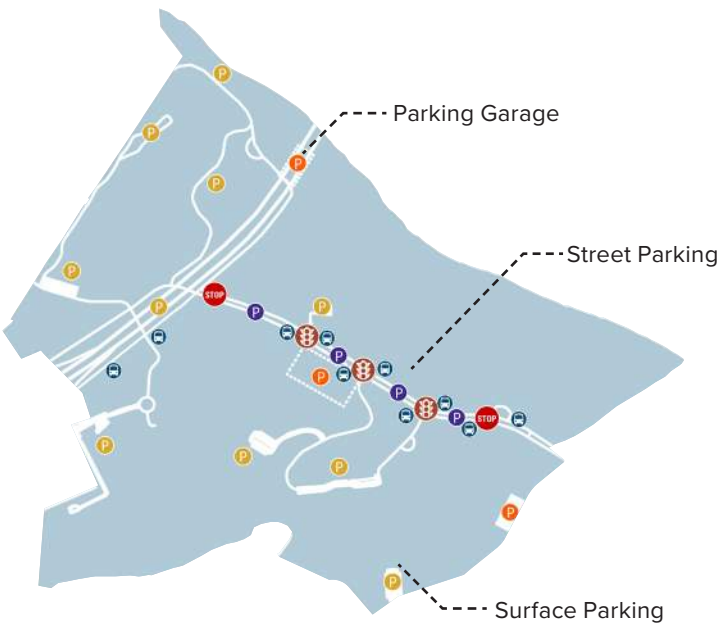
- 1** Design park elements that are welcoming to individuals and small groups and able to accommodate large groups.
- 2** Support equitable access, with special focus on:
 - Safety
 - Accessibility
 - Events and programs for diverse cultures
- 3** Support new and enhance existing learning opportunities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

FRAMEWORK OF THE VISION PLAN

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

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

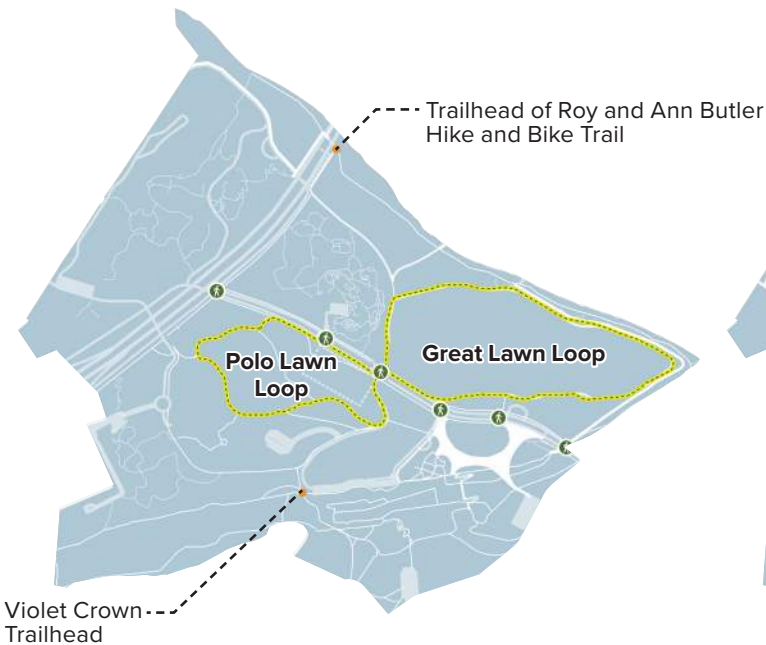
VEHICLE CIRCULATION AND PARKING



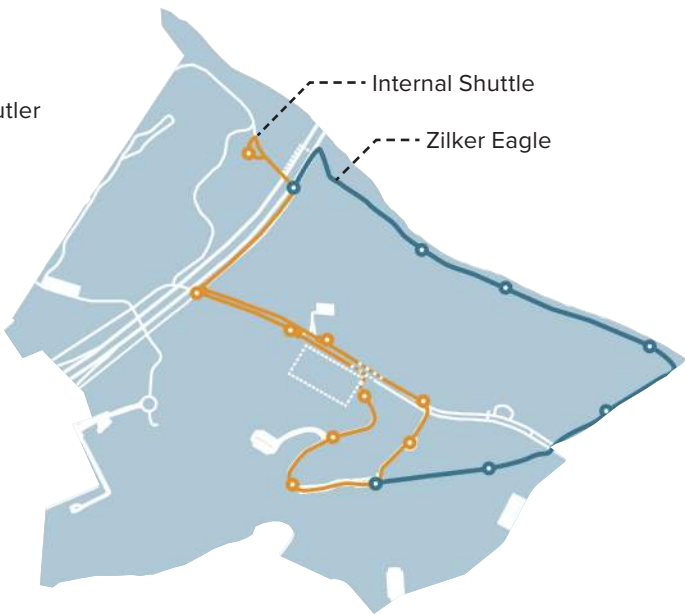
WAYFINDING / INTERPRETIVE STORY



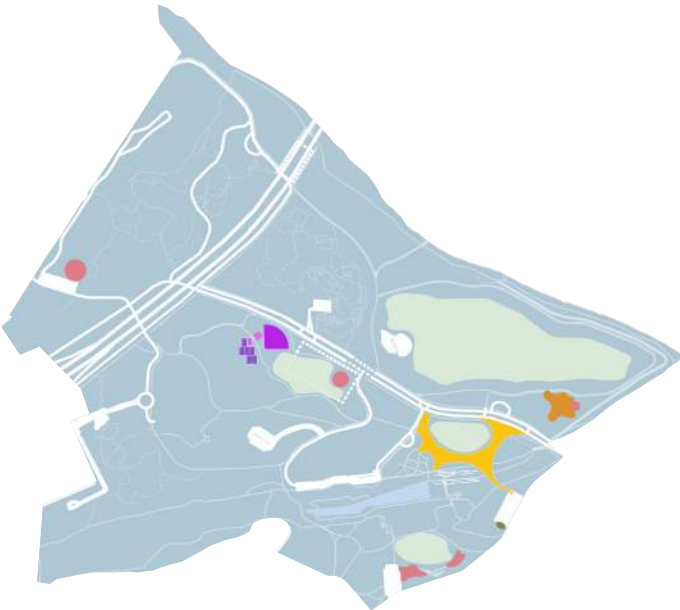
PEDESTRIAN/BIKE NETWORK



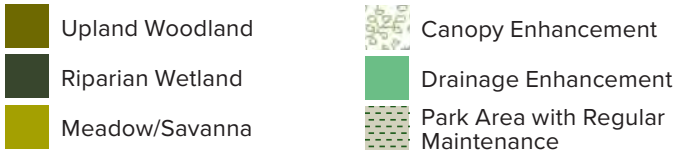
INTERNAL CIRCULATOR



NEW PROGRAMMING



ECOLOGY



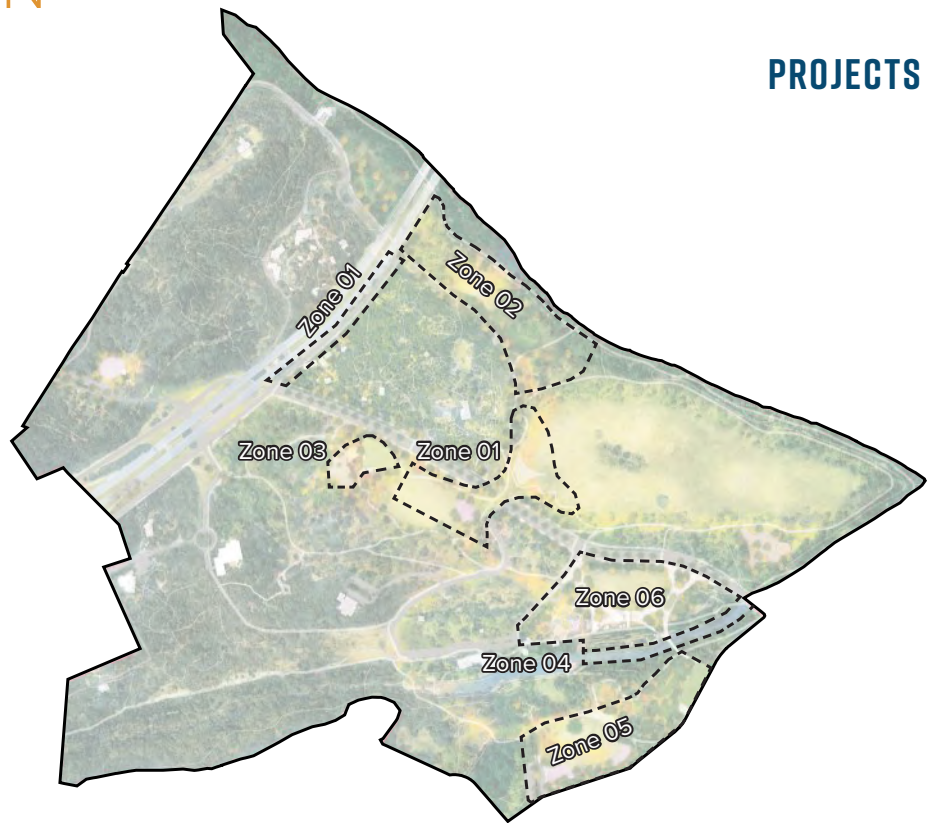
IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

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

PROJECTS



ZONE 01: LAND BRIDGE

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

ZONE 02: LANDFILL

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

ZONE 03: SPORTS AREA

- » Restoration of Polo Field
- » Sports Area

ZONE 04: WELCOME CENTER

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

ZONE 05: SOUTH SIDE OF BARTON SPRINGS ROAD

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

ZONE 06: BARTON CREEK

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

PROJECT TIMELINE

YEAR 1-3

Restoration of Barton Creek Banks	Barton Springs Road Improvements
External Shuttle	Barton Creek Water Access
Additional Restrooms	Internal Shuttle
Drainage Improvements	Closing Lou Neff Road to Vehicles
Wayfinding Design	South side new playgrounds
Establishing Partnerships	Nature Play at Zilker Preserve Trailhead
Zilker Park Umbrella Organization	Departmental Partnerships
Mitigation of Erosion Issues	Interpretive Storyline

Tree Canopy Enhancement	
Invasive Plant Control	

NEAR TERM

Land Bridge	Zilker Hillside Theater
Closing Andrew Zilker Road to Vehicles	Underground Parking Garage
Restoration of Old Zilker Hillside Theater Area	Restoration of Polo Field
Enhancement of existing playground	Additional Trails
Removal of Surface Parking	

MID TERM

Parking Garage(s)	New Trailhead to Nature Preserve
Restoration of Landfill Area	Ped/Bike Bridge on Lady Bird Lake
Additional Bridge along Barton Creek	Welcome Center
Relocation of Ped/Bike Bridge along Barton Creek	Extended Zilker Eagle Route
	Zilker trailhead to Butler Hike and Bike Trail

Removal of Surface Parking	
Tree Canopy Enhancement	
Invasive Plant Control	

LONG TERM

Sports Area	Canopy Walk
Stratford Dr Realignment	

SUMMARY

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

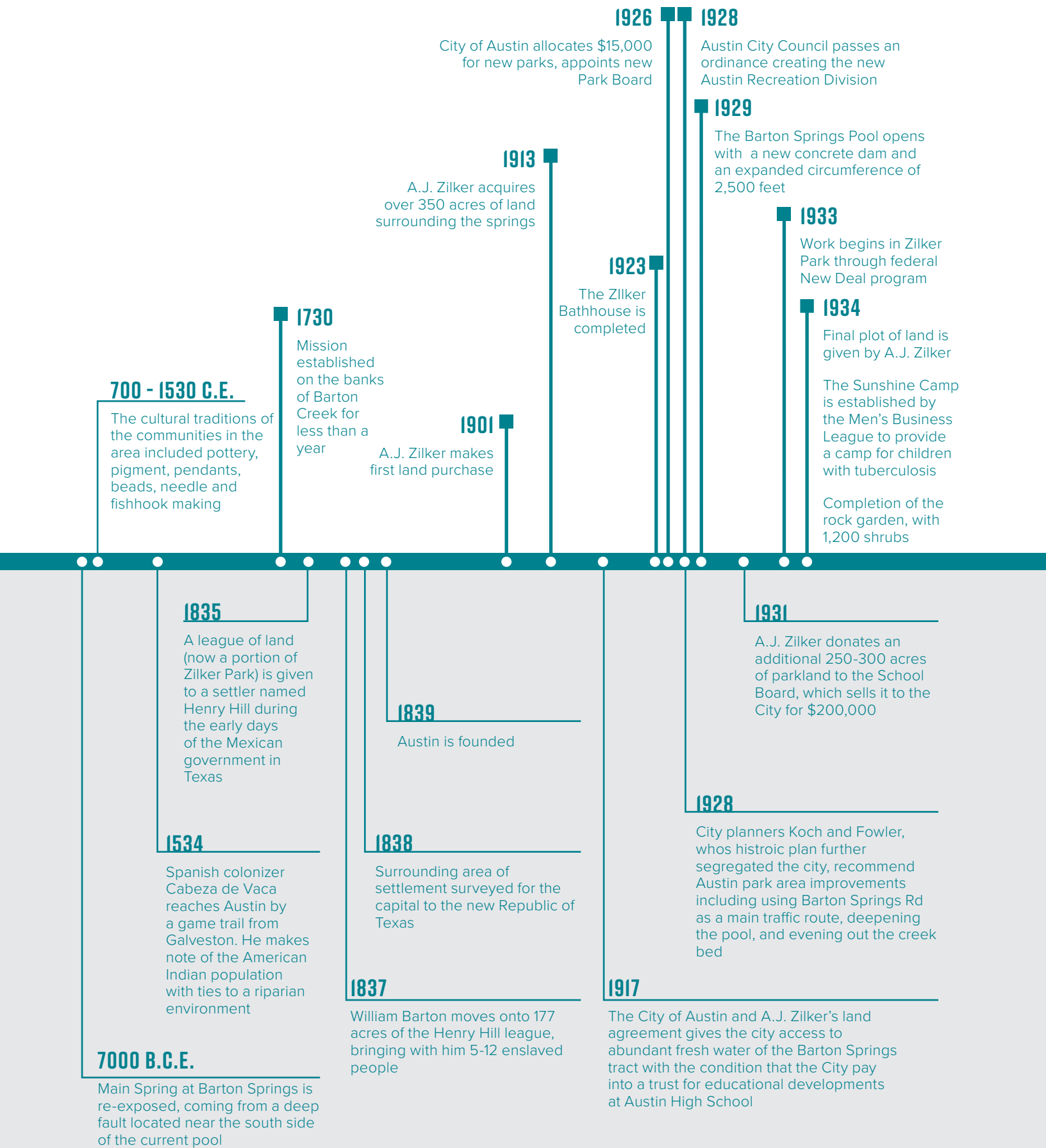
CHAPTER ONE

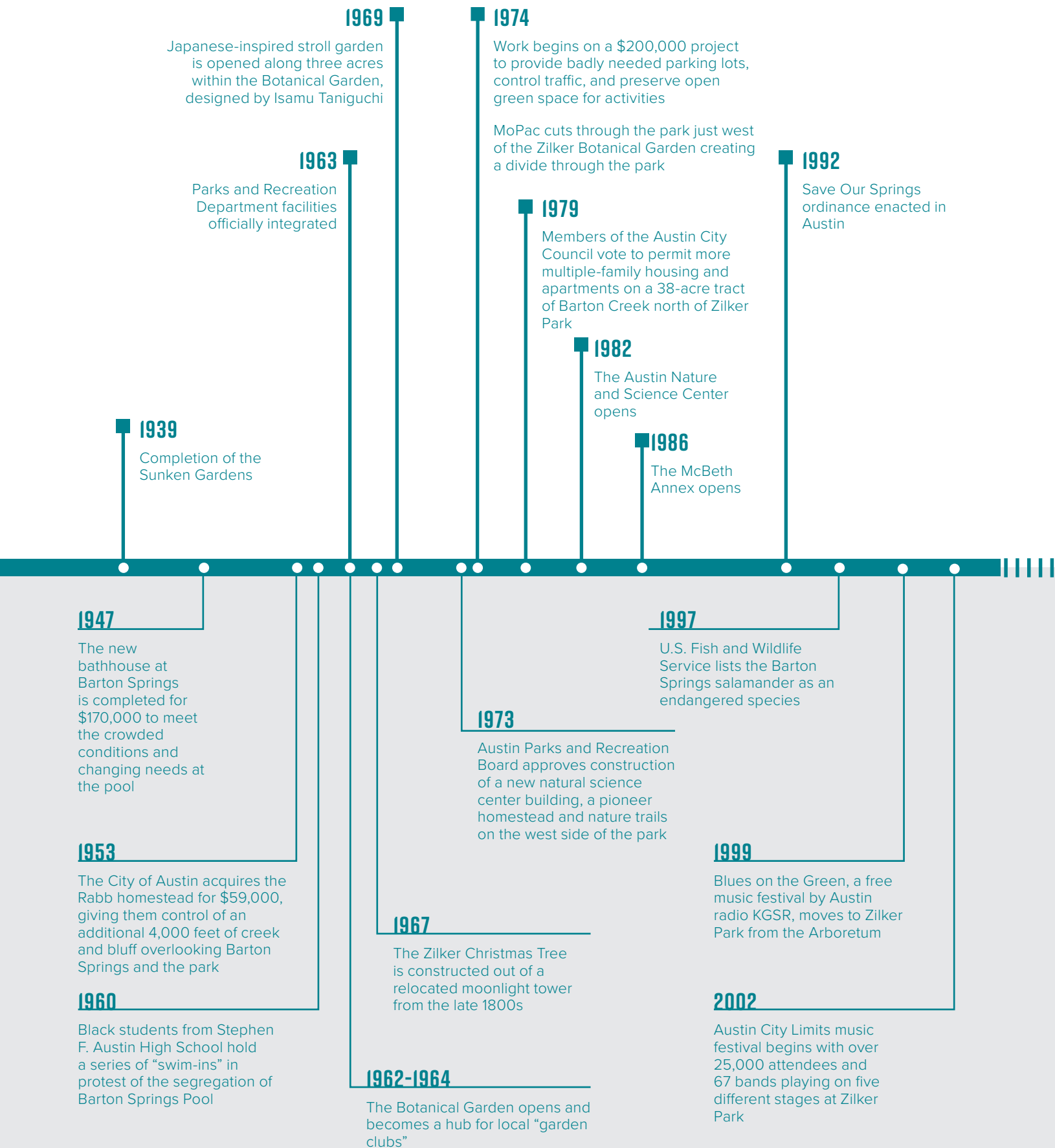
IN THIS CHAPTER

Historic Timeline
Historic Context

HISTORY OF ZILKER PARK

HISTORIC TIMELINE





HISTORIC CONTEXT

SUMMARY

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

INTRODUCTION

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

PREHISTORY

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

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

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



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

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

SPRING CREEK

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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



Stone arch bridge over Barton Creek, circa 1890.

Source: Austin History Center

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BARTON SPRINGS PARK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BARTON SPRINGS PARK

- 1 The springs were used by the Zilker Family for their gatherings and celebrations.
 - 2 As a result of the land deal between Zilker and the City, the land around Barton Springs to the public in 1917.
 - 3 As the city grew, so did the public interest in developing a city park system; the City Plan Commission was formed in 1926.
 - 4 Over the years, several improvements were proposed including construction of a concrete trap dam, that created Barton Springs Pool
-

included recommendations that called for the deliberate segregation of the city. By using the premise of “separate but equal” accommodation of the races in the provision of facilities and conveniences, including schools and parks, tacit separation was accomplished without the use of segregation by zoning. It would be decades before Austin parks and schools were legally desegregated.

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

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

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

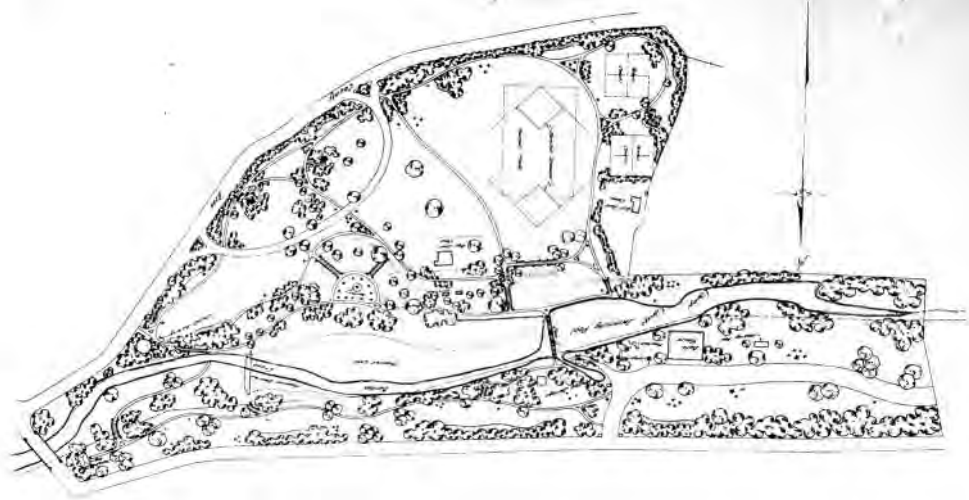
The following year, the Council considered bids for paving, curbs, gutters, and for parkways and driveways in Barton Springs Park. They also approved the plans for a concession stand and caretaker’s cottage, both designed by Hugo Kuehne. The concession stand, designed to suggest the appearance of a wind-powered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

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

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



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



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



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



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

ZILKER PARK (1934 TO 1938)

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



Sunken Garden, 1993.
Source: Alan Pogue

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

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

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

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



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

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

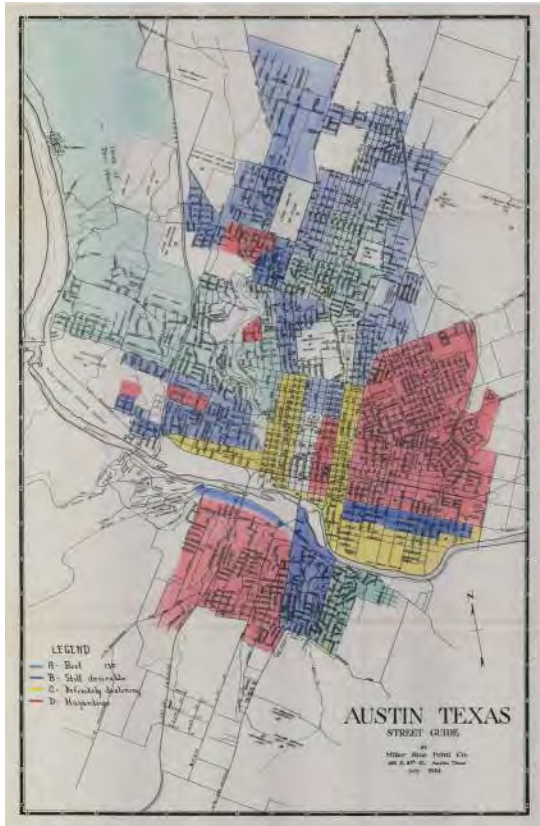
In April 1934, Andrew Zilker made a third gift to the city of 32.5 acres, located west of Barton Springs Park, on the north bank of the creek. Zilker suggested that this new park be called Page Park, in recognition of the work of Charles H. Page, Sr. in the design and construction of the improvements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

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

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

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

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



Austin Redlining Map, 1937.

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

AUSTIN REDLINING MAP, 1937

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

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

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

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

POST-WAR PARK IMPROVEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



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



Zilker Christmas Tree, 1970.
Source: Austin History Center

ZILKER HOLIDAY TREE

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

Source: Austintexas.gov

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

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

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

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

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



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



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



JOAN MEANS KHABELE

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

Joan Means Khabele.
Source: City of Austin



Equity, Diversity, and
Inclusion

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

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

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

CONTEMPORARY PARK IMPROVEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMARY

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

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

CHAPTER TWO

IN THIS CHAPTER

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

PURPOSE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, VISION, AND GOALS

PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE PLAN

THE SIX INFLUENCES ON THE VISION PLAN

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



Crowded Barton Creek Spillway



Accessibility Issue with Erosion along Barton Creek

THE PURPOSE AND VISION OF THE PLAN

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

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

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

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

CURRENT CHALLENGES IN ZILKER PARK



Crowded Informal Parking Lot during Weekends



Erosion Around Barton Creek

CALL FOR ACTION

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

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES



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



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

FIELD TRIPS

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

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

INCLEMENT WEATHER ALTERNATIVES

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

MOVING BETWEEN FACILITIES

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

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

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

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

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

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

SHARED STORY ABOUT ZILKER PARK FROM COMMUNITY SURVEY I

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



Girl Scout Cabin

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES



LACK OF PARKING

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

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

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

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



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

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

REMOVAL OF PARKING

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

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

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

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

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

PRIORITIZING ACCESSIBILITY

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT TO ZILKER

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

INTERNAL CONNECTIVITY

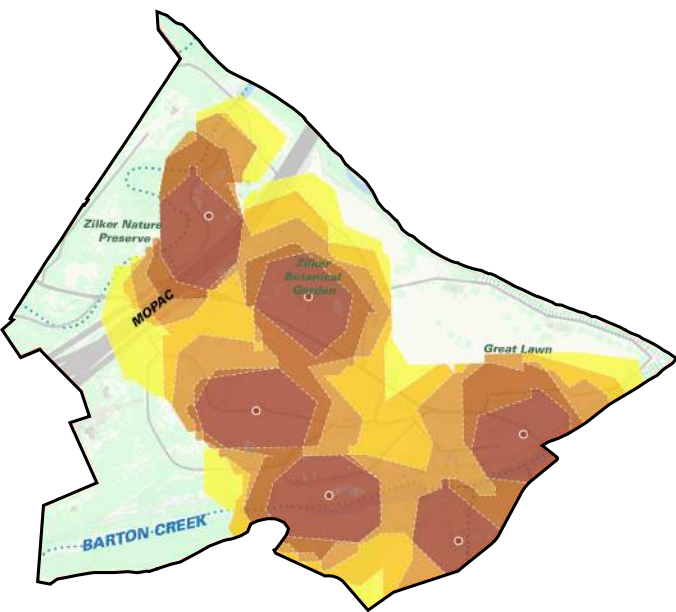
Barton Springs Road is a major divider of the park with minimal signed crossings. It is very dangerous to cross as a pedestrian or cyclist and no internal circulation exists other than by bicycle or personal vehicle.

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

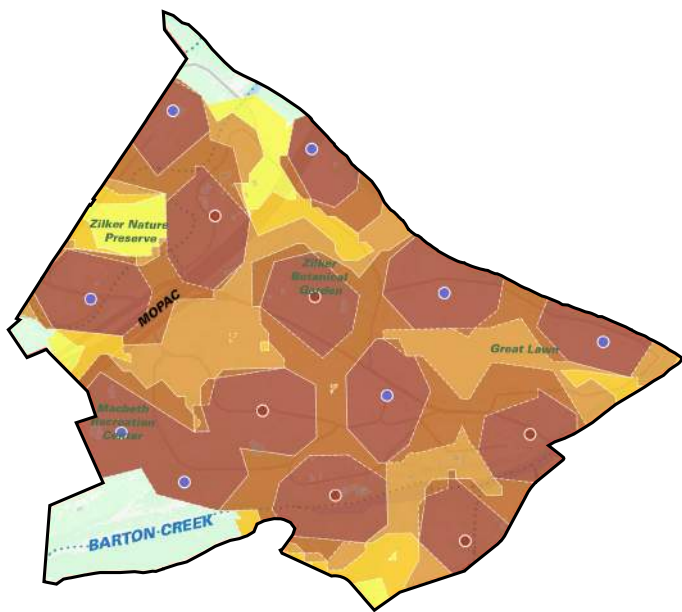
In addition to the Zilker Eagle, an internal shuttle that uses the existing roadways and wide shared pathways, and makes frequent stops, could allow greater access to and from bus stops, ANSC, sports area, ZBG, and pool.

INADEQUATE RESTROOMS

RESTROOMS



EXISTING RESTROOMS



PROPOSED RESTROOMS

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

LEGEND

- 1-min Walking Radius
- 2-min Walking Radius
- 3-min Walking Radius
- 4-min Walking Radius
- 5-min Walking Radius



Zilker Park Trailhead Restrooms
Source: 2021. Malla Photography



Zilker Restroom on the South Side of Barton Springs Pool

PROGRAMMING CONFLICTS



Fenced Great Lawn



Metrobike Station along Barton Springs Road

EVENTS

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

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

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

LACK OF SUPPORT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

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

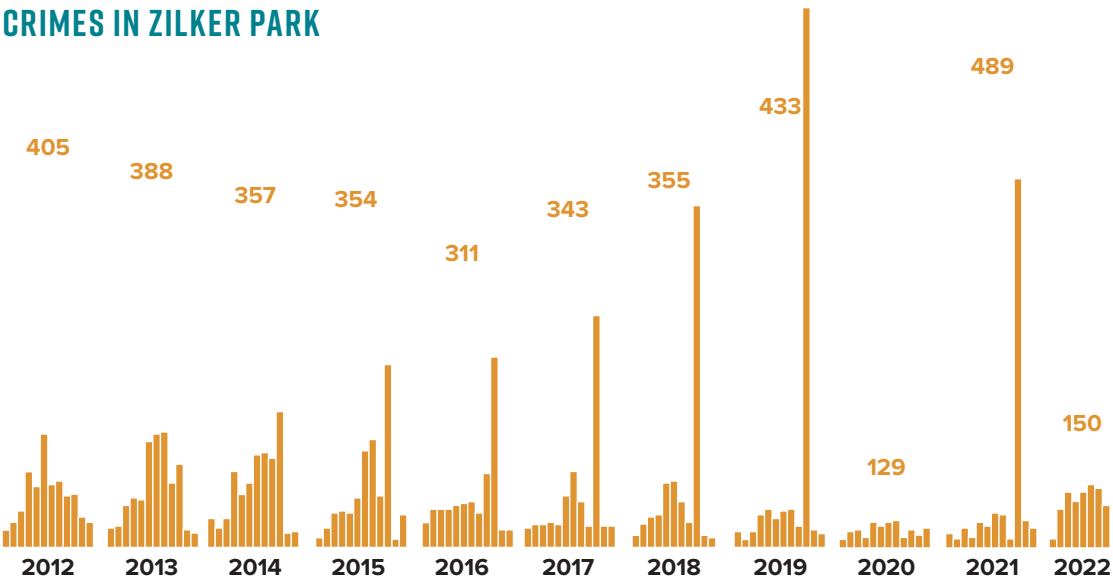
Additional transportation infrastructure is also needed. The two MetroBike stations and 7 bus stops within the park should be expanded along with additional ways to access the park for people from each part of the city and beyond.



SAFETY

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

CRIMES IN ZILKER PARK



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

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

LIGHTING IN THE PARK

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

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

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

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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

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

WATER QUALITY IMPACT

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

AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONTAMINATION

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

ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS



Stormwater damage



Barton Springs Spillway Area

INVASIVE SPECIES AND SOIL DISTURBANCE

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

INTEGRATE ECOLOGY WITH PARK USE

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

HABITAT RESTORATION

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



TREES IN ZILKER PARK

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

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

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



SUSTAINABILITY



EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



NATURE AND ECOLOGY



HISTORY AND CULTURE



ACCESSIBILITY

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



Sustainability

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



Nature and Ecology

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



History and Culture

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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



Accessibility

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

GOALS

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

RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

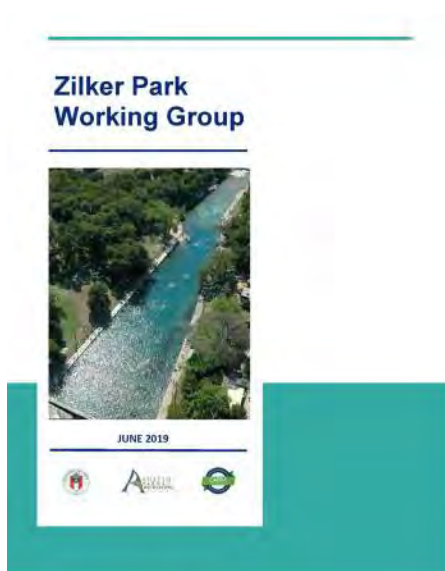


PARD LONG RANGE PLAN FOR LAND FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

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

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

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



2019 ZILKER PARK WORKING GROUP REPORT

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

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

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

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

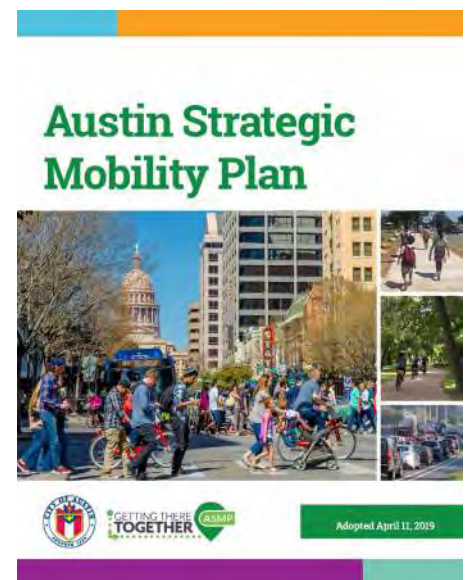
The alternative recommendations joint statement also offered the following medium and long-term recommendations. PARD should preserve and protect Zilker Park as an irreplaceable public asset to be operated primarily as open space for present and future generations. The Zilker Park Master Plan should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

AUSTIN STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN

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

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

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



RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

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



BARTON SPRINGS POOL MASTER PLAN

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

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

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

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

2020 AUSTIN CLIMATE EQUITY PLAN

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

Some of the goals and strategies of this plan are:

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

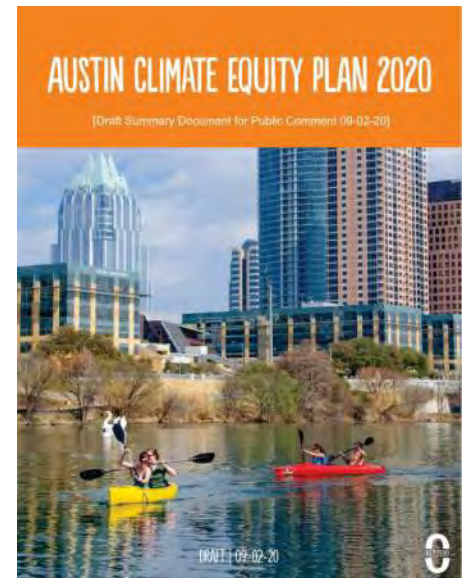
Achieve at least 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050, with a focus on increasing canopy cover equitably. Strategies to meet this goal include protect canopy cover on City lands, promote tree protections and landscape regulations, and increase community tree planting. The Zilker Park Vision Plan responds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

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

WATERSHED PROTECTION STRATEGIC PLAN

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

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



RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS



Zilker Park Natural Resources Inventory & Management Guidelines



The Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake

SIGLO GROUP

ZILKER PARK NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY & MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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

THE TRAIL FOUNDATION

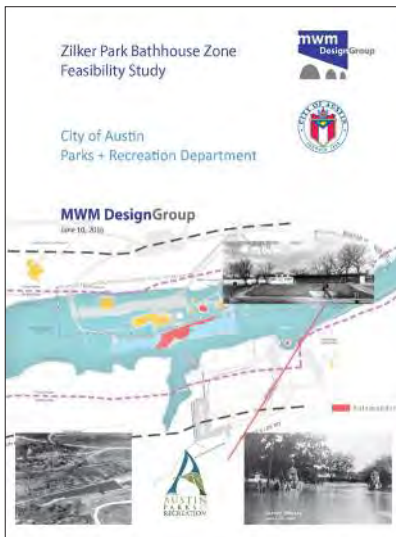
THE BUTLER TRAIL AT LADY BIRD LAKE

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

ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

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



Zilker Park Bathhouse Zone Feasibility Study

CITY OF AUSTIN

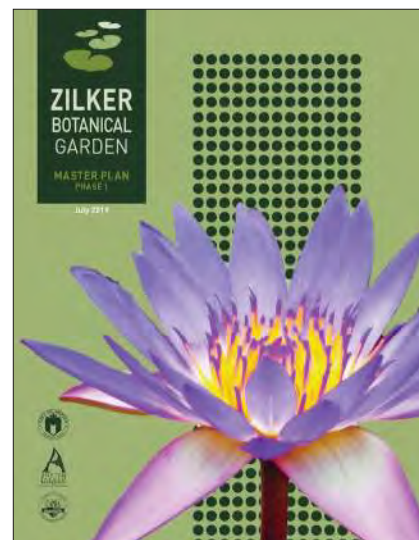
ZILKER PARK BATHHOUSE ZONE FEASIBILITY STUDY

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

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

CITY OF AUSTIN 2019 ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN MASTER PLAN

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



Zilker Botanical Garden Master Plan

CITY OF AUSTIN ZILKER PARK NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

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

Zilker Park National Register Historic District

CITY OF AUSTIN ZILKER PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

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



Zilker Park Cultural Landscape Report

RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS



Environmental Site Assessment

TRC COMPANIES, INC.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENT PHASE I

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



Capital Metro Transit Development Plan

TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT & DESIGN, INC.

CAPITAL METRO TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

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



THE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

SAFE AND MOBILITY STUDY RESULTS FOR THE BUTLER TRAIL 2021

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

CITY OF AUSTIN

PARKLAND EVENTS TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

THE CITY OF AUSTIN, ADA OFFICE

2015 ADA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MOPAC EXPRESSWAY SOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

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

ROLLINGWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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

CAMPO

CAMPO 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

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



Parkland Events Task Force Final Report and Recommendations



2015 ADA Implementation Report



CAMPO 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

SUMMARY

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

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

CHAPTER THREE

IN THIS CHAPTER

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

SITE ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

REGIONAL CONTEXT



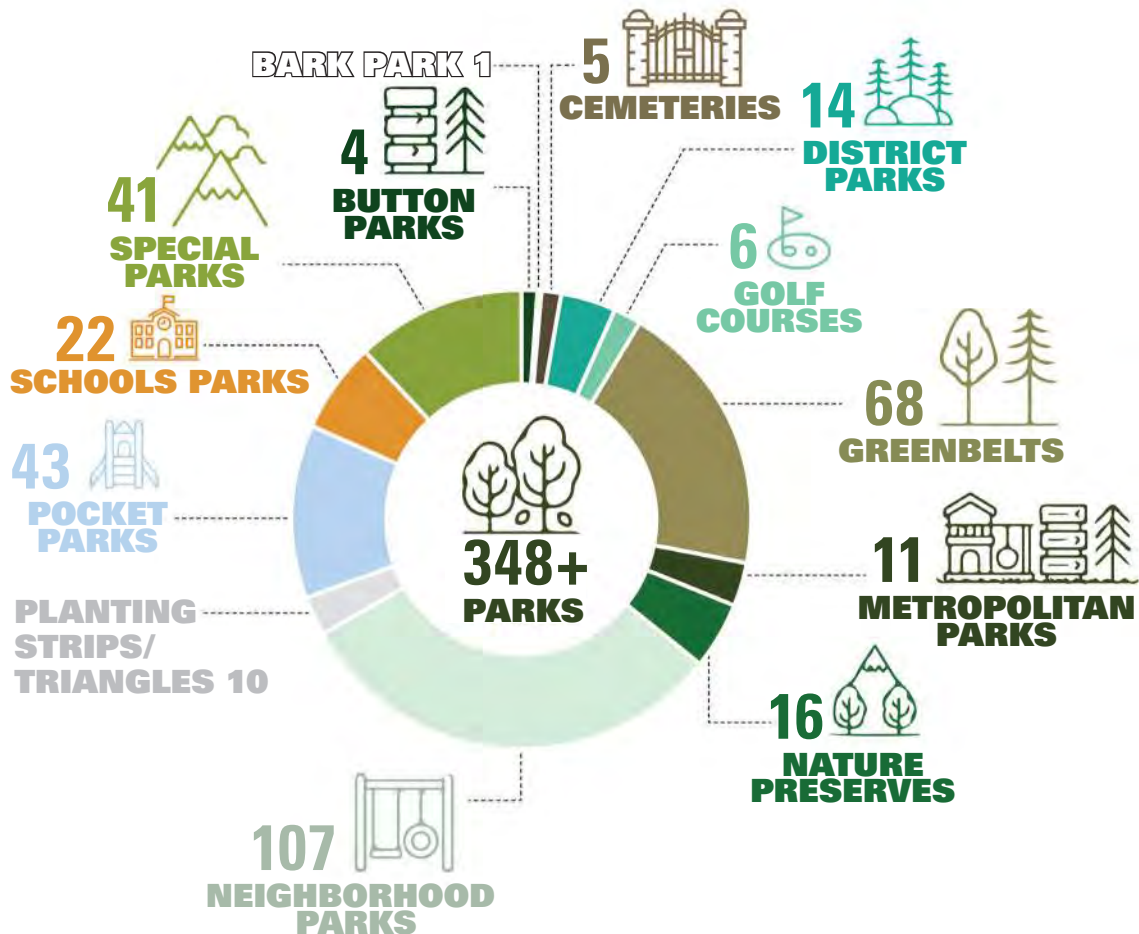
AN URBAN OASIS



Downtown and
High-Density

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

ZILKER PARK WITHIN THE AUSTIN PARK SYSTEM



ZILKER METROPOLITAN PARK

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

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

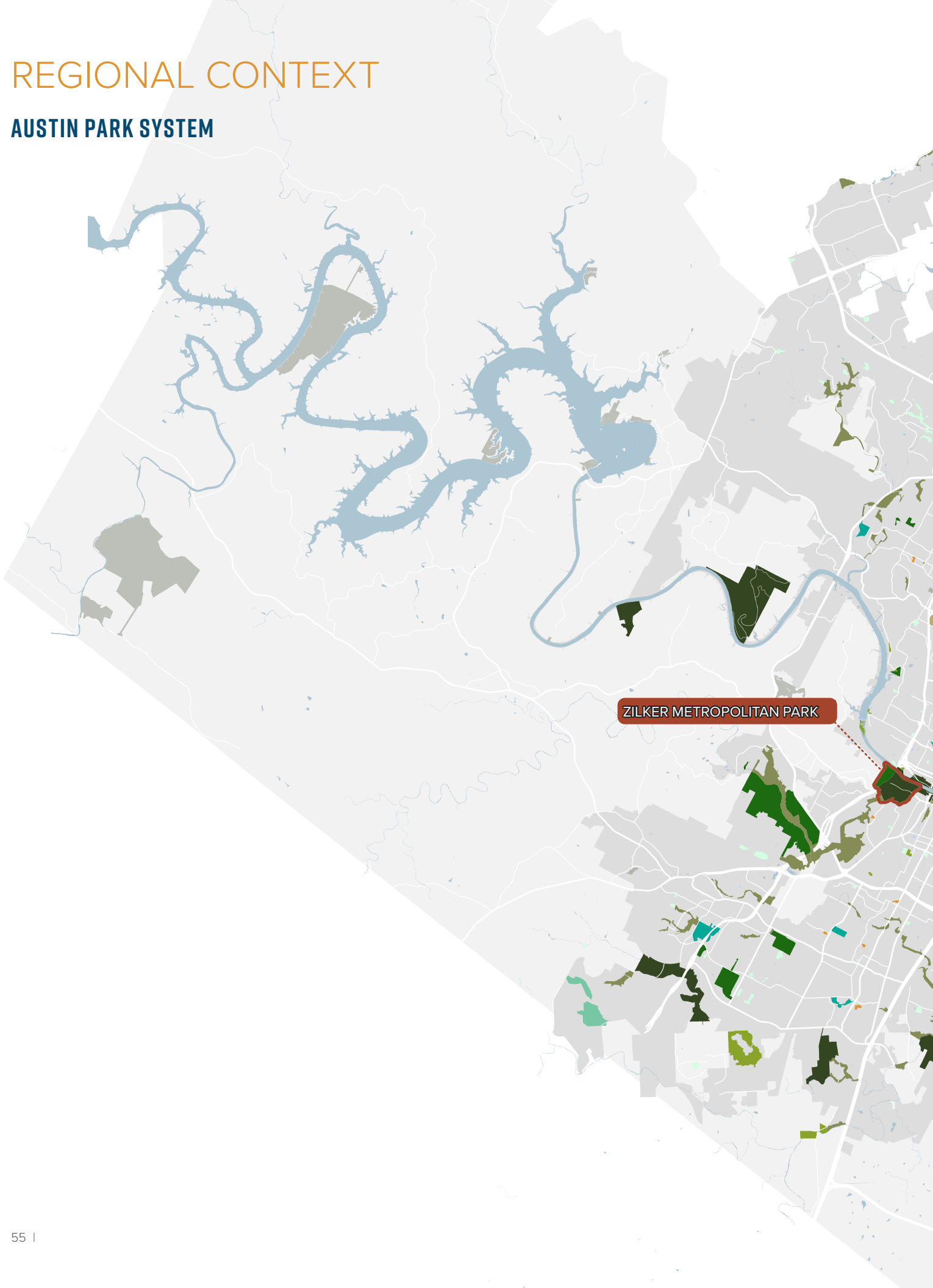
METROPOLITAN PARK

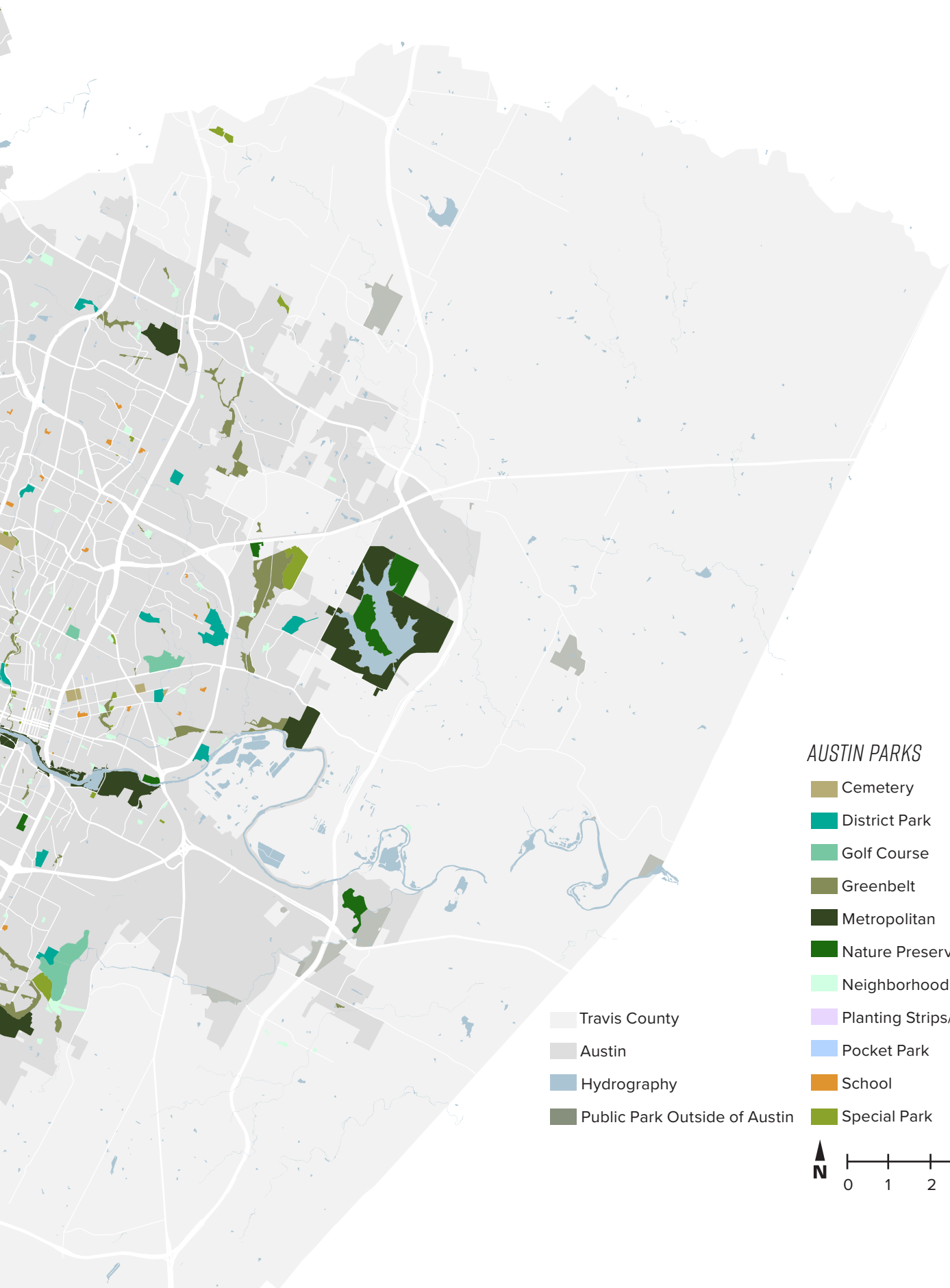
This type of the park focuses on natural resource values and recreational diversity. They often include water-based recreation and environmental education.

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

REGIONAL CONTEXT

AUSTIN PARK SYSTEM

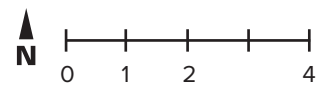




AUSTIN PARKS

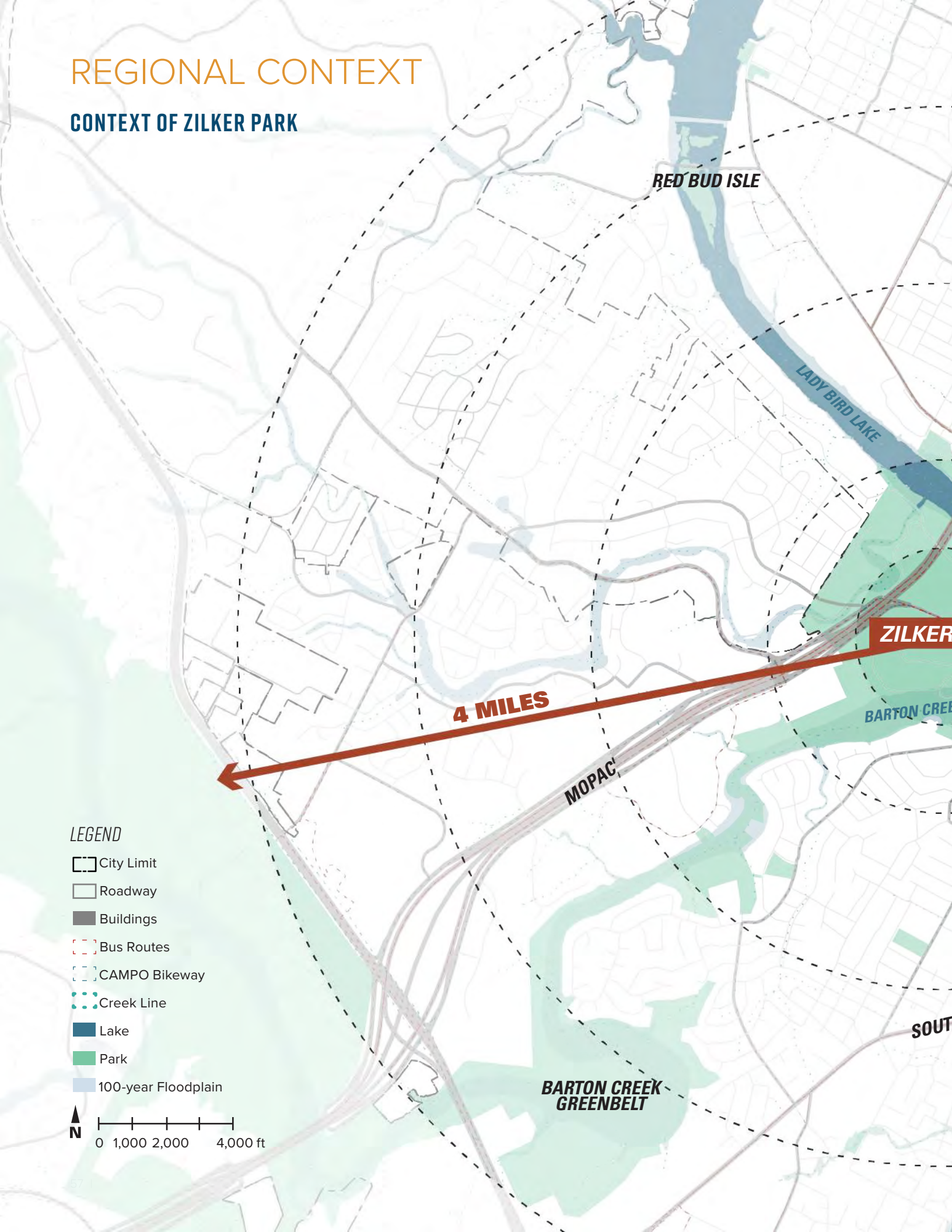
- Cemetery
- District Park
- Golf Course
- Greenbelt
- Metropolitan
- Nature Preserve
- Neighborhood Park
- Planting Strips/Triangles
- Pocket Park
- School
- Special Park

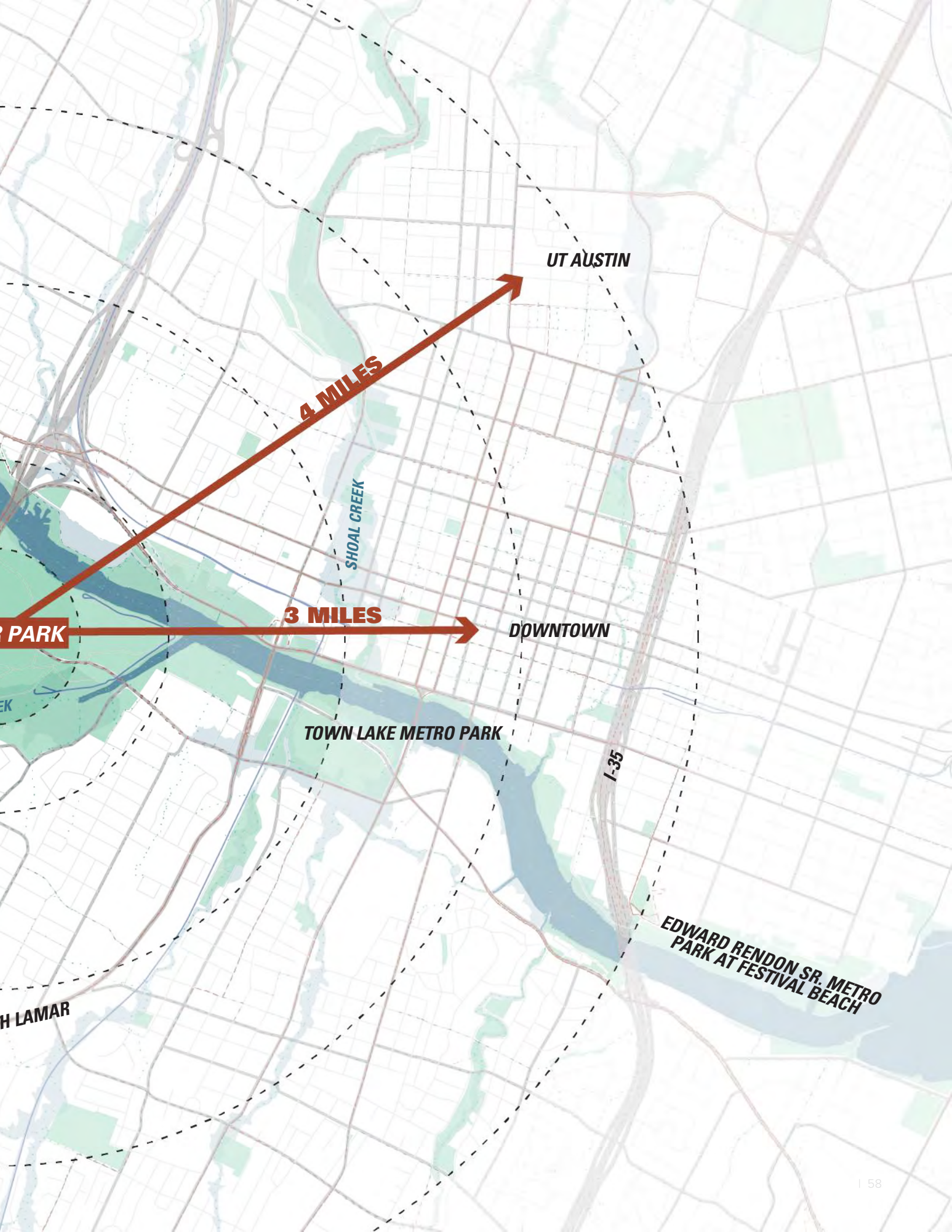
- Travis County
- Austin
- Hydrography
- Public Park Outside of Austin



REGIONAL CONTEXT

CONTEXT OF ZILKER PARK





UT AUSTIN

4 MILES

SHOAL CREEK

3 MILES

DOWNTOWN

TOWN LAKE METRO PARK

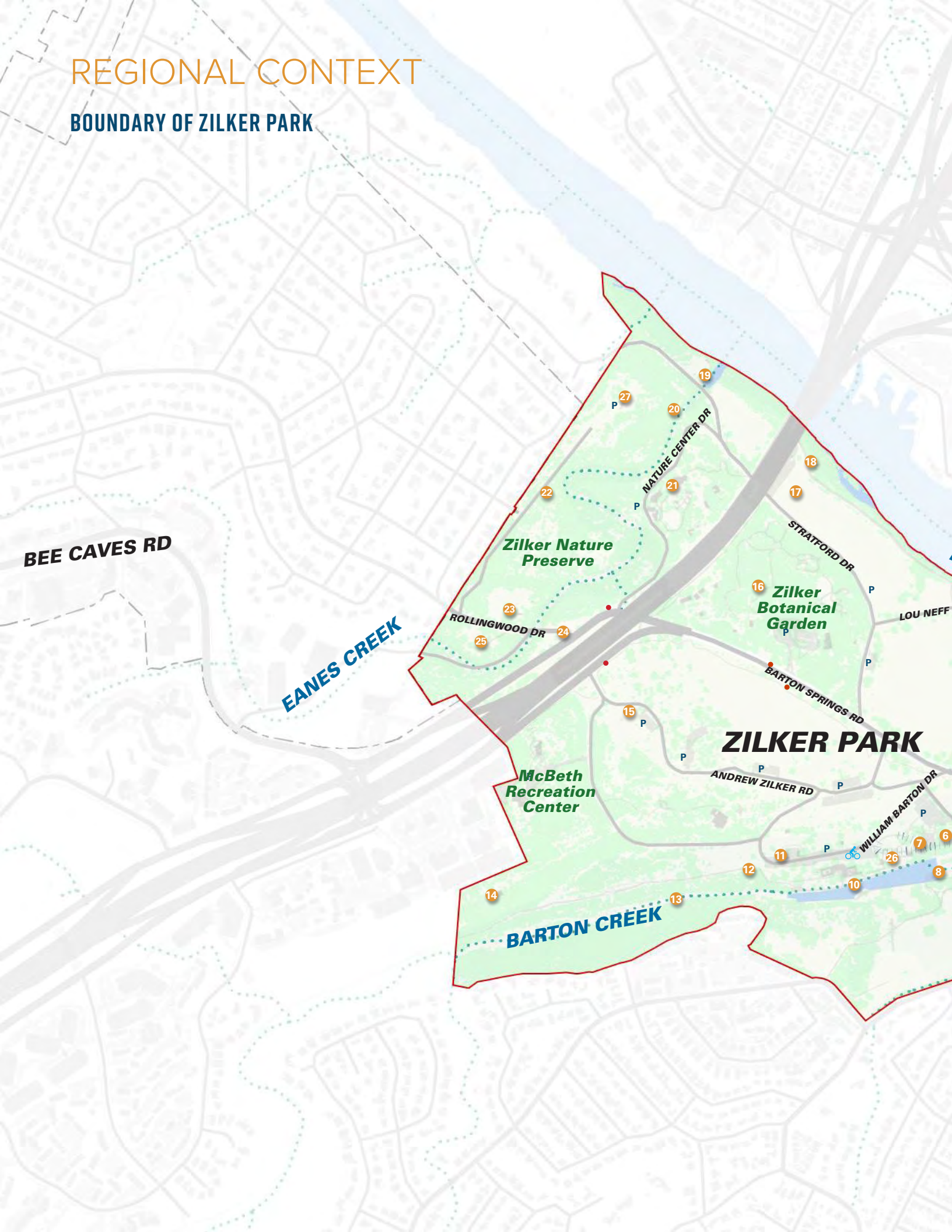
I-35

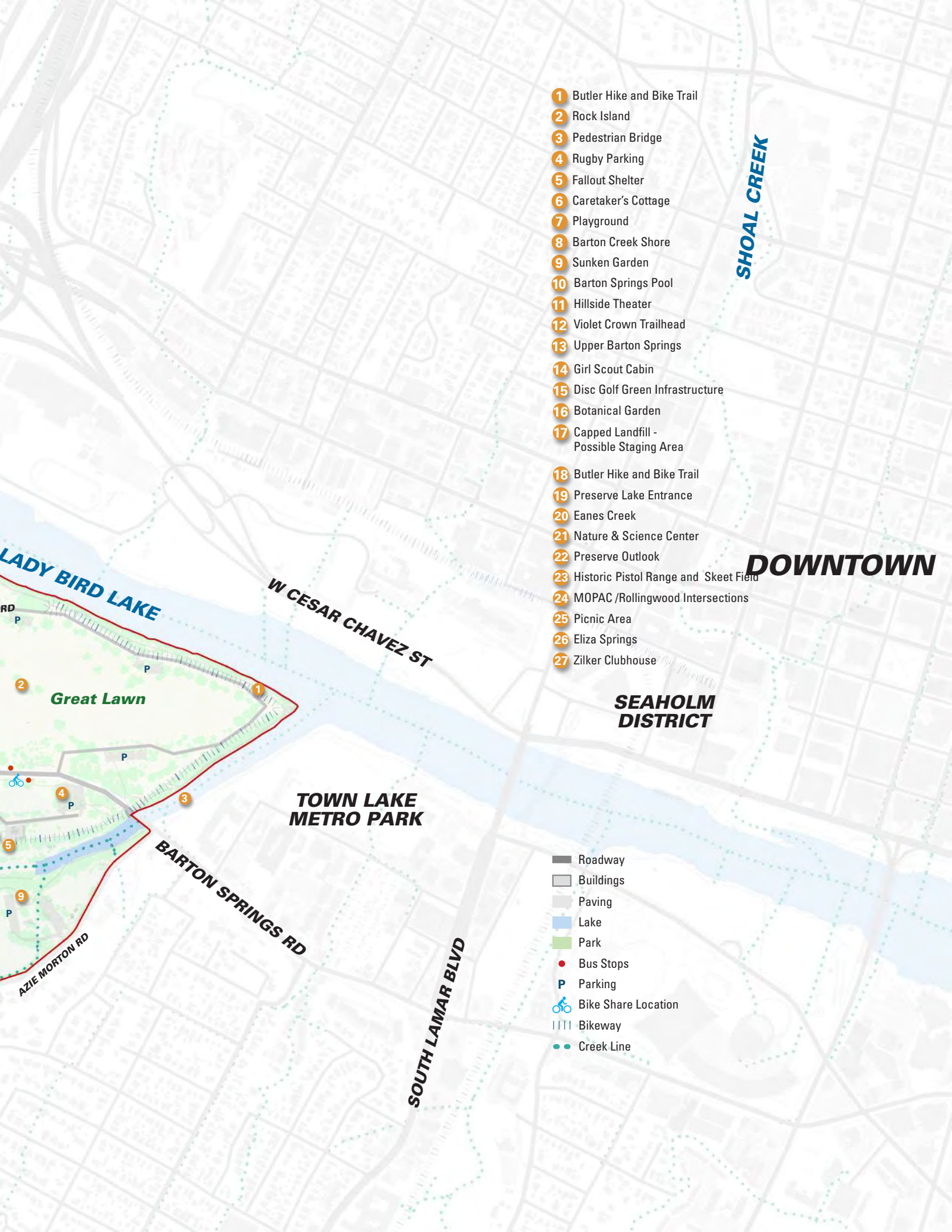
EDWARD RENDON SR. METRO
PARK AT FESTIVAL BEACH

H LAMAR

REGIONAL CONTEXT

BOUNDARY OF ZILKER PARK





- 1 Butler Hike and Bike Trail
- 2 Rock Island
- 3 Pedestrian Bridge
- 4 Rugby Parking
- 5 Fallout Shelter
- 6 Caretaker's Cottage
- 7 Playground
- 8 Barton Creek Shore
- 9 Sunken Garden
- 10 Barton Springs Pool
- 11 Hillside Theater
- 12 Violet Crown Trailhead
- 13 Upper Barton Springs
- 14 Girl Scout Cabin
- 15 Disc Golf Green Infrastructure
- 16 Botanical Garden
- 17 Capped Landfill - Possible Staging Area
- 18 Butler Hike and Bike Trail
- 19 Preserve Lake Entrance
- 20 Eanes Creek
- 21 Nature & Science Center
- 22 Preserve Outlook
- 23 Historic Pistol Range and Skeet Field
- 24 MOPAC /Rollingwood Intersections
- 25 Picnic Area
- 26 Eliza Springs
- 27 Zilker Clubhouse

SHOAL CREEK

DOWNTOWN

SEAHOLM DISTRICT

W CESAR CHAVEZ ST

TOWN LAKE METRO PARK

BARTON SPRINGS RD

SOUTH LAMAR BLVD

LADY BIRD LAKE

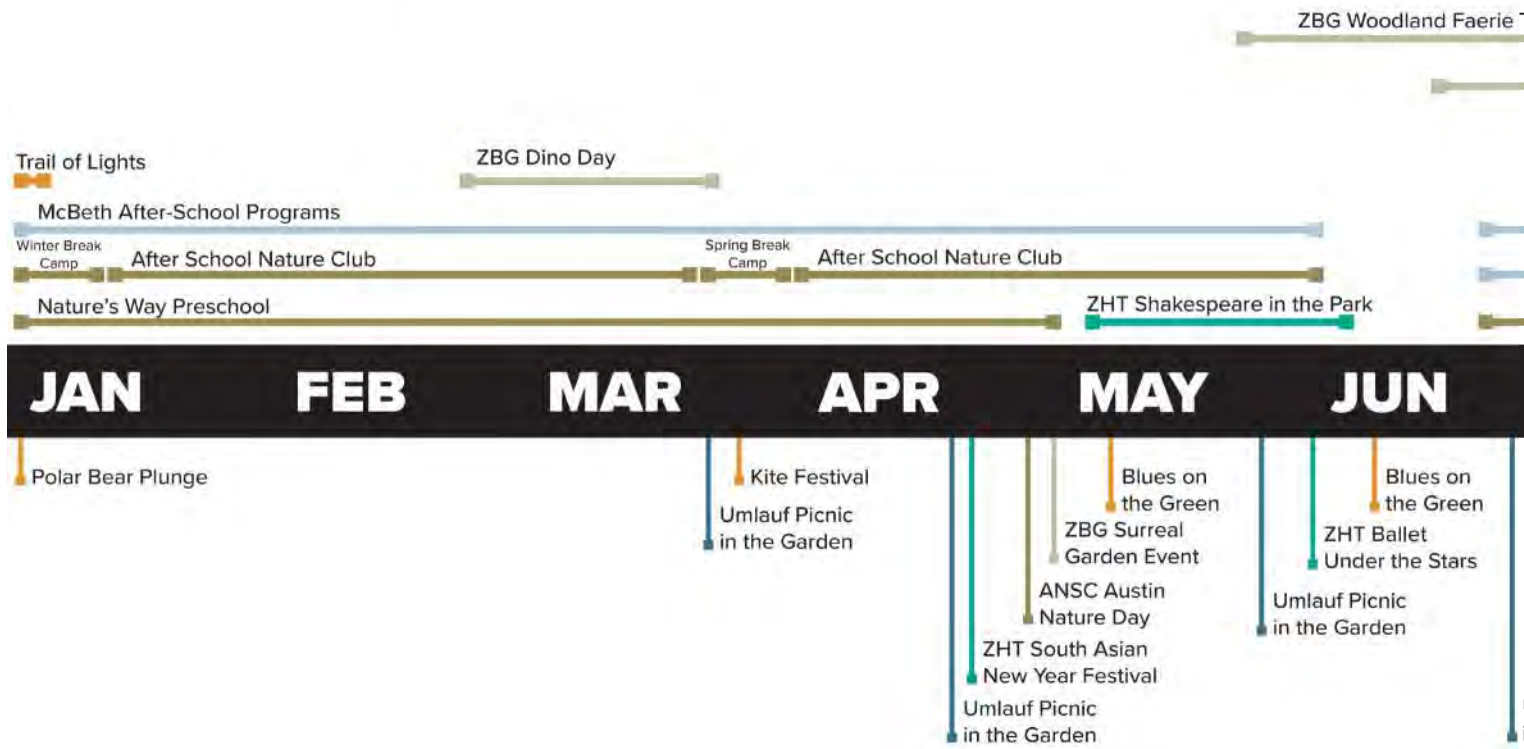
Great Lawn

RD

AZIE MORTON RD

- Roadway
- Buildings
- Paving
- Lake
- Park
- Bus Stops
- P Parking
- 🚲 Bike Share Location
- |||| Bikeway
- Creek Line

EVENT CALENDAR OF ZILKER PARK



TYPES OF PROGRAMS IN ZILKER PARK

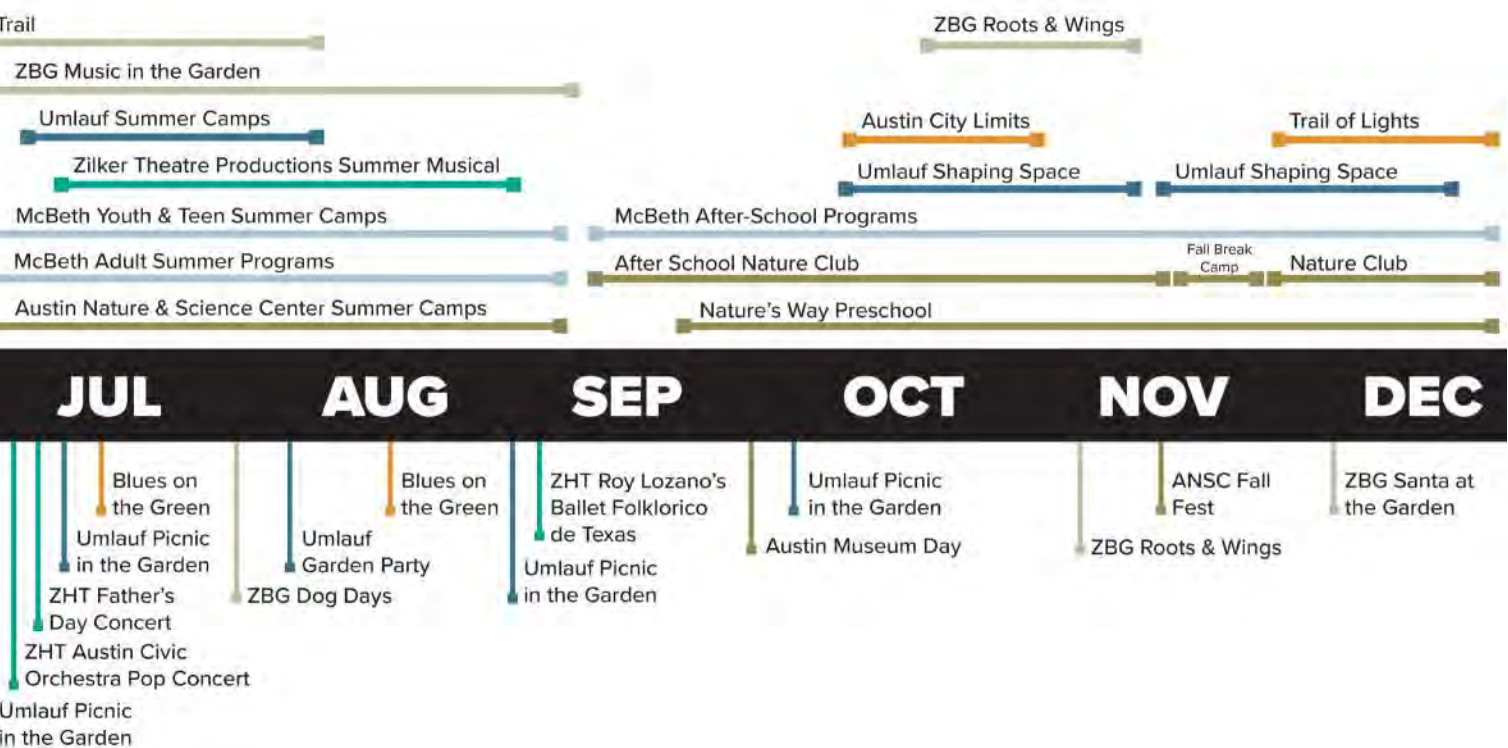


Zilker Park hosts a variety of events year round, the largest of which are Austin City Limits Music Festival, the Trail of Lights and the ABC Kite Festival. ACL and the Trail of Lights impact roughly 135 acres of the park, closing the Great Lawn and surrounding roads and using adjacent areas like the polo fields for supporting infrastructure. Both of these events bring over 400,000 visitors to the park while the Kite Festival brings in another 20,000. All three events draw visitors from throughout the state of Texas with ACL being the biggest draw nationally.

There are also many smaller events at the park throughout the year. Primary hosts include Zilker

Botanical Garden, Austin Nature and Science Center, Zilker Hillside Theater, Umlauf Sculpture Garden, the City of Austin, and McBeth Recreation Center. Most hosted programming is offered to all ages with the remaining programming being geared towards youth and children. The summer is the busiest time of the year for these events with the first quarter of the year being the least programmed.

City Ordinance Section 8-1-15 designates a maximum of 24 special event days for Zilker per calendar year. Additional closure days of portions of Zilker may occur for operations of the park, including limited access due to set-up, take-down, or maintenance.



ENTERTAINMENT & CULTURE	DESTINATIONS	OPERATIONS	NATURE EXPLORATION
 <p>HILLSIDE THEATER ZILKER TRAIN</p>	 <p>ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN AUSTIN NATURE&SCIENCE CENTER UMLAUF SCULPTURE GARDEN & MUSEUM GIRL SCOUTS CABIN POOL SNACK BAR GREENBELT ENTRANCE BARTON SPRINGS POOL SHEFFIELD EDUCATION CENTER MCBETH RECREATION CENTER ZILKER CLUB HOUSE</p>	 <p>PARKING CARETAKER'S COTTAGE STORAGE & MAINTENANCE RESTROOMS</p>	 <p>UPPER BARTON SPRINGS EANES CREEK VIOLET CROWN TRAIL ZILKER NATURE PRESERVE NATURE'S WAY PRESCHOOL</p>

Destinations such as the Zilker Botanical Garden would like to expand their programming to offer more evening or longer running events and to incorporate more artist collaborations or traveling exhibits. Much of their expanded programming is limited due to concerns over parking or circulation issues that a popular or well attended event might bring.

Self-guided recreation, nature exploration activities, and visits to Barton Springs Pool make up the bulk of consistent year-round visitation to Zilker Park. Visitors come the park to swim, paddle, bike, enjoy the Great Lawn, and use the trail network within and connected to the park. Zilker Park Boat Rental and Rowing Dock

reported a combined total of 24,581 rentals and Barton Springs Pool saw a little over one million visitors in 2019. There are various sports that take place within the park including Little League, disk golf, rugby, soccer, and informal yoga and volleyball. The Great Lawn is the largest unprogrammed field for active or passive recreation and is a prominent destination within the park.

The need for more restrooms, shade and increased ADA accessibility limits the ability for visitors to enjoy the park. Traffic, congestion, and lack of parking were indicated as the largest barriers to frequent visitation and enjoyment of the park.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY MOBILITY AT ZILKER PARK

1 Although visitors today can access Zilker Park through a variety of transportation options, not all modes of travel to the park are equally convenient or safe. Because of this, most park visitors arrive via private automobile.

2 Barton Springs Road provides the primary vehicle access to the busiest parts of the park: from MoPac to west of Barton Creek. Barton Springs Road is the only vehicular connection across the creek and is the primary multimodal gateway into the park for most visitors.



GETTING TO THE PARK

TRANSIT

Zilker Park is currently served by one Capital Metro Route – Route 30 (Barton Creek Square route), which connects the Westgate Transit Center at US 290/SH 71 and Menchaca Road and Barton Creek Square Mall in Southwest Austin to Downtown Austin, stopping as far north as 12th and Guadalupe. Within the park, Route 30 operates on MoPac Expressway frontage roads and Barton Springs Road. The route serves seven stops within the park. However, there are no ADA compliant bus stops. Coming from Downtown, Route 30 stops at the following locations:

- At signalized pedestrian crossing of Barton Springs Road near Lou Neff Road
- At the entrance of the Zilker Botanical Garden
- At the Nature Center Access Road

Coming from Southwest Austin, Route 30 stops at the following locations:

- Along the MoPac Expressway frontage road near the McBeth Recreation Center
- Along the MoPac Expressway frontage road near the Disc Golf Course
- Across from the entrance of the Zilker Botanic Garden
- At signalized pedestrian crossing of Barton Springs Road near Lou Neff Road

The following map shows the alignment of Route 30 and ridership at stops near and within the park.

The busiest bus stop within the park is the stop pair located at Barton Springs Road near Lou Neff Road, which serves several of the park's primary amenities including the Great Lawn and Barton Springs. According to the most recent CapMetro data, in February 2020 eight people used this stop on a typical weekday,

while 25 people used the stop on a typical Saturday. However, it should be considered that 2020 was not a typical year, with the City taking official COVID-19 precautions starting in March 2020.

Route 30 typically operates approximately every 30 minutes, both during the weekdays and on weekends. Capital Metro temporarily increased the frequency of Route 30 to every 15 minutes during weekends in the summer months in 2019 as part of a pilot project.

Origin-Destination survey data collected by Capital Metro provides a snapshot of how transit users are accessing the park. Since Route 30 does not travel north or east of Downtown, nearly half of riders that use a stop within the park transfer to another route. Most transit riders walked to the bus and few riders took a bike with them on the bus, meaning that transit users are primarily on foot once they arrive at the park. Zilker Park is served by several of the city's highest profile trails – including the Butler Trail along Lady Bird Lake and the Barton Creek Greenbelt & Violet Crown Trail. Despite this trail access, getting to Zilker Park can be challenging by active modes (biking, walking, scootering).

BICYCLE

Bicycles are widely used throughout Zilker Park despite a lack of dedicated bicycle facilities. Due to the lower speeds of park roads, bikes are often seen on Lou Neff Road, Andrew Zilker Road, and Stratford Drive. There are partial bike lanes painted on Barton Springs Road but cyclists report the dangers of speeding cars and dropoff from road to grass or gravel. The park also features two MetroBike docks within the park boundary, one at the Capital Metro bus stop near Lou Neff Road, and the other at the entrance to Barton Springs Pool. While there are several additional docks located near the park there should be more within the park boundary to serve amenities such as the trail heads, the southern entrance of Barton Springs Pool, the Austin Nature and Science Center, and the Zilker Botanical Gardens.

MICROMOBILITY

Dockless scooters and bicycles, known as micromobility, are a popular way to access Zilker Park. Usage data shows that the peak of access to Zilker Park falls in the late afternoon to early evening, with the highest usage around 7 p.m. Access is about twice as high on weekends than at the same time on weekdays,

and access dips significantly in the early morning hours. Weekly usage follows the trend of most parks, with the bulk of access occurring on the weekends and the dip occurring mid-week.

PEDESTRIAN

Other than the Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail and Barton Creek Greenbelt Trail, dedicated pedestrian facilities within Zilker Park are very limited. There is a paved, off-street sidewalk called the “Zilker Metro Park Loop” located to the east of the MoPac Expressway frontage road and south of Barton Springs Road. There is also a short segment of paved sidewalk between the Capital Metro bus stop and the Butler Trail on the north side of Barton Springs Road.

PARKING

Parking opportunities within Zilker Park are dispersed throughout the park, primarily in off-street parking lots that accommodate between 50 and 100 vehicles per lot. Between formal parking lots, on-street parking on Lou Neff Road, and informal lots such as the Polo Field and the former landfill gravel lot between Mopac and Lou Neff Road, there are almost 2,450 parking spaces within the boundary of Zilker Park. Of those spaces, approximately 875 of the spaces are located in formal lots (lots with marked spaces) and on-street parking stalls that serve general park attendees. These spaces require payment on approximately 57 days of the year on weekends and holidays from March through September. Of these spaces, approximately 230 are on-street spaces along Lou Neff Road.

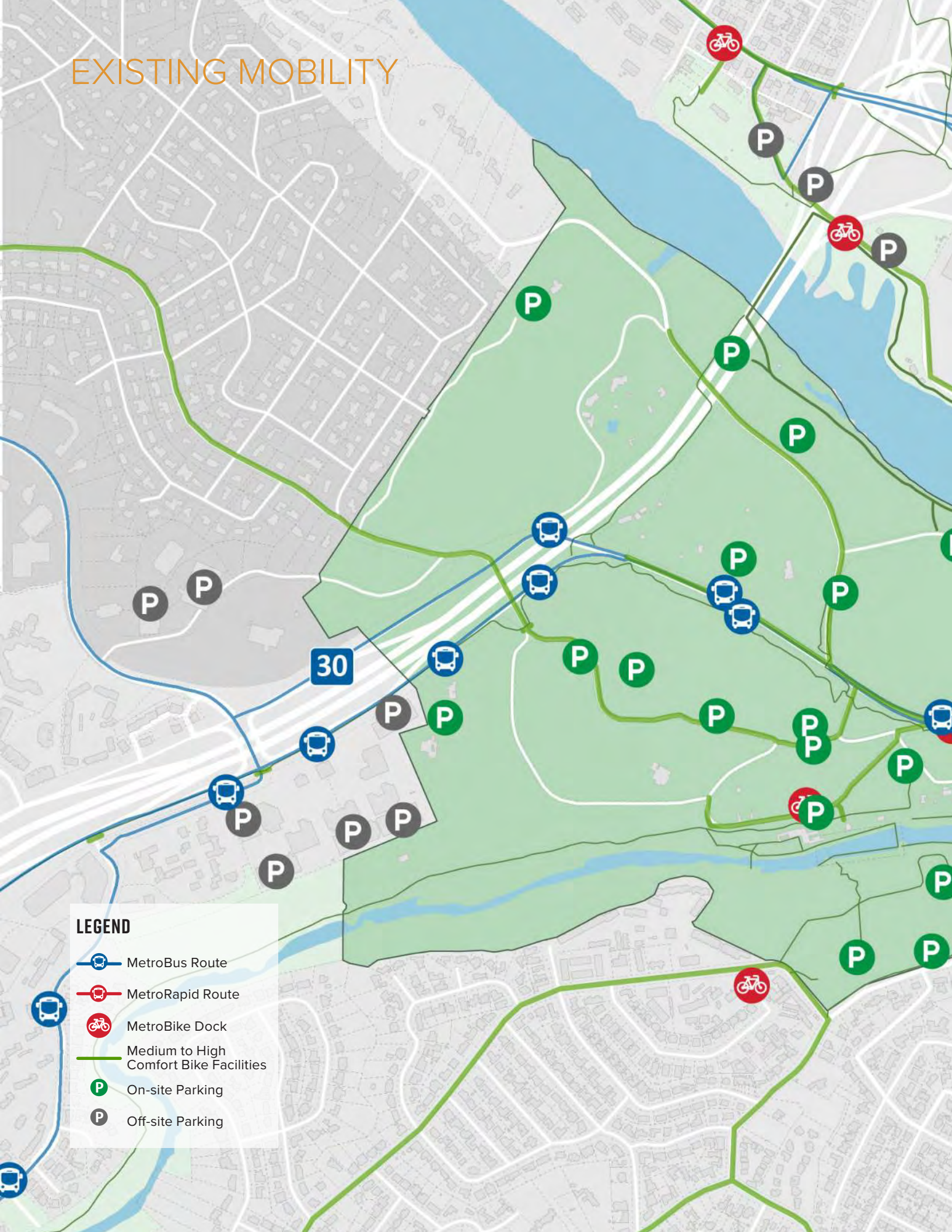
SAFETY

The highest incidences of crashes in the Zilker Park area were found at major intersections near the park, including:







- » MoPac Expressway / Bee Cave Road
- » MoPac Expressway / Barton Springs Road
- » Barton Springs Road / South Lamar Boulevard

Among crashes involving a cyclist or pedestrian, many of the incidents occurred primarily along South Lamar Boulevard, South Congress Avenue, and in the Downtown core. While there were crashes that occurred on Barton Springs Road and within the park itself, there were no recorded fatalities between 2016 and 2020 near or in the park.

EXISTING MOBILITY



LEGEND

-  MetroBus Route
-  MetroRapid Route
-  MetroBike Dock
-  Medium to High Comfort Bike Facilities
-  On-site Parking
-  Off-site Parking

A map of the Zilker Park area in Austin, Texas. The map shows the Colorado River flowing through the center. To the north and west are urban areas with street grids. To the east and south are green spaces, including Zilker Park. Transportation infrastructure is highlighted: a green line for Highway 663 runs north-south; a blue line for Highway 4 runs east-west; a red line for Highway 803 runs south-southwest; and a blue line for Highway 30 runs east-west. Various icons are placed on the map: red circles with a white bicycle icon for MetroBike Docks, blue circles with a white bus icon for bus stops, and green circles with a white 'P' for parking lots. The map also shows green lines for trails and blue lines for waterways.

EXISTING MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

Although visitors today can access Zilker Park through a variety of transportation options, not all modes of travel to the park are equally convenient or safe. Because of this, most park visitors arrive via private automobile.

The map shows the primary transportation options within and near Zilker Park and highlights the need for more MetroBike Docks, medium to high comfort Bike Facilities, and internal circulation options.

SITE TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

SUMMARY

- 1 Vehicular circulation within the park is dominated by Barton Springs Road, which travels east/west through most of the park. Most of the park's parking lots and major destinations that are accessible by vehicle are accessed through park roadways.
- 2 During major events, Barton Springs Road and Stratford Drive are closed to general vehicle traffic, although closures are limited to event hours for all events other than Austin City Limits Music Festival.
- 3 Parking opportunities within Zilker Park are dispersed throughout the park, primarily in off-street parking lots that accommodate between 50 and 100 vehicles per lot.
- 4 Most transit riders walked to the bus and few riders took a bike with them on the bus, meaning that transit users are primarily on foot once they arrive at the park.

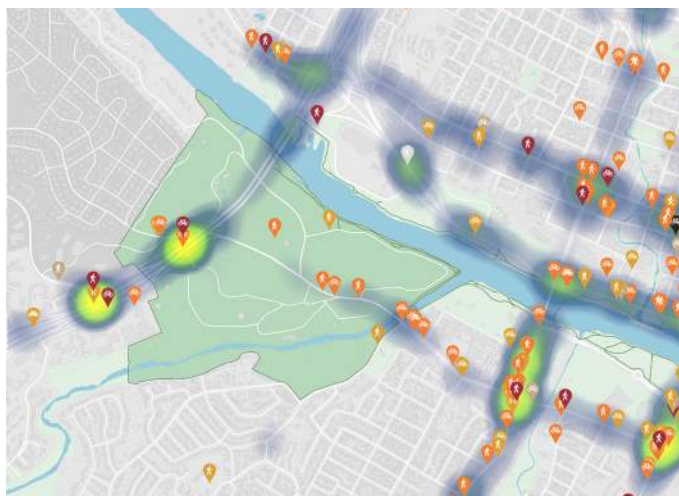
TRAFFIC CIRCULATION



LEGEND

- ← One-way Traffic
- ↔ Two-way Traffic
- Pedestrian Signal
- Adjacent Trails
- Butler Trail
- ADT Average Daily Traffic

SAFETY



LEGEND

- High Density of All Crashes
- Low Density of All Crashes
- Unknown
- No Injury
- Potential Injury
- Fatality levels of Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes
- Non-Incapacitating Injury
- Incapacitating Injury
- Fatality

TRANSIT



LEGEND

- MetroBus Route

MetroRapid Route
- Average Daily Rider Activity

Low

High

PARKING



LEGEND

- Total Spaces

Paid Lot

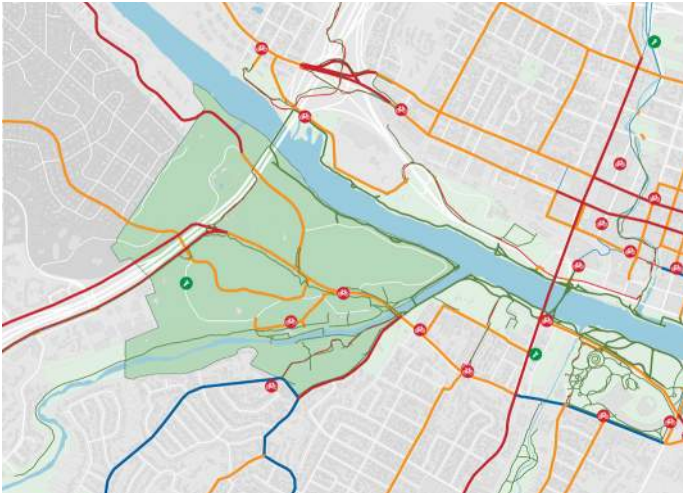
Free Lot

Informal Lot
- Off-site Parking

No On-Street Parking

On-Street Parking

BIKE



LEGEND

- MetroBike Dock

Bike Repair Station

Adjacent Trails

Butler Trails

Urban Trails Planned
- Level of Comfort for Bike

High

Medium

Low

PEDESTRIAN



LEGEND

- Sidewalk

Crosswalk

Stairs

Pedestrian Traffic Signal
- Adjacent Trails

Butler Trails

Urban Trails Planned

ECOLOGY

SUMMARY

- 1 The land known today as Zilker Park has been an important gathering place throughout human history.
- 2 There are three Recognized Environmental Conditions in the park that require remediation.
- 3 Zilker Park is an important part of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone and presents opportunities for green infrastructure implementation.
- 4 Erosion within the park is primarily caused by unmanaged stormwater and human disturbance.

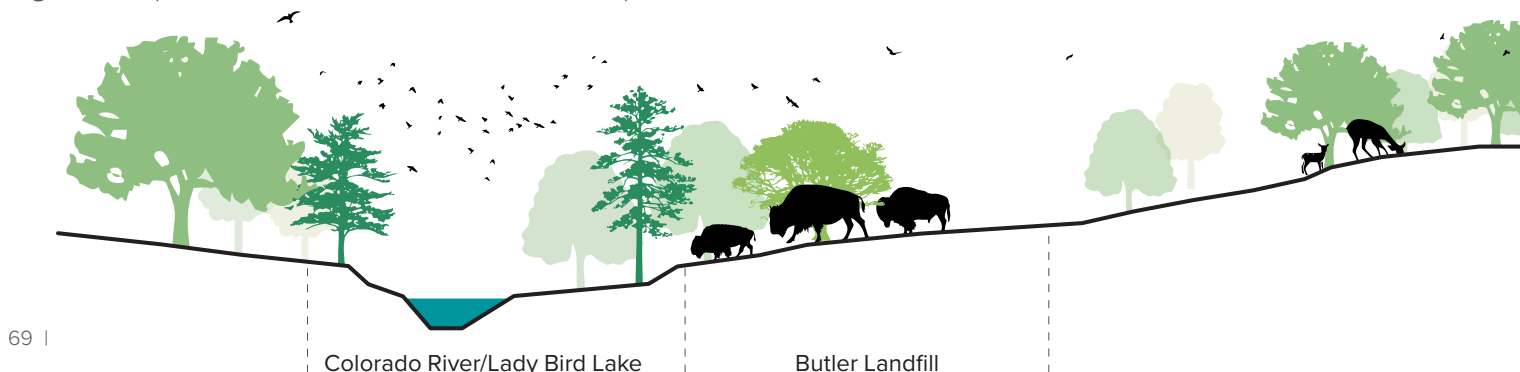


HISTORIC LAND USE CONTEXT

For the purposes of this report, Zilker Park's landscape history can be roughly divided into three periods: Forest, Savanna, and Springs; Industrial & Agriculture; and Recreational. The Forest, Savanna, & Springs period (7000 BCE–17th century) shows the landscape before widespread colonial settlements and represents thousands of years of Indigenous habitation. It highlights some of the tribes who frequented the springs, including the Tonkawa, Lipan Apache, and Comanche. This landscape was characterized by a

naturally dense forested landscape, a low and wide undammed Colorado River, plentiful wildlife, and naturally flowing spring water in Barton Creek. The Industrial & Agriculture period covers the 18th to 19th centuries and ends approximately 300 years after colonists first arrived. This time period in Zilker Park was characterized by highly extractive activities, such as mining, farming, and milling along Barton Creek's banks. These intensive land use changes removed tree canopy, decreased wildlife, and increased erosion. The final Recreational period (20th to 21st century) shows

Figure 1: Representation of Zilker Park before European settlement





ECOLOGY OF ZILKER PARK



Large numbers of visitors and lack of proper infrastructure increases soil compaction and erosion issues.



Barton Springs Pool is an amenity for people as well as a habitat for endangered species and important part of Austin's local hydrology.



50% of the park trails do not currently offer adequate shade.

land use up to today, which shows Zilker Park as a city-owned public space. The modern landscape in Zilker Park is characterized by a higher and more consistent water level on the north side of the park, created by the damming of the Colorado River and formation of Lady Bird Lake. Additionally, heavy public use, soil compaction, trampling, and contamination is also present throughout the park.

These sections highlight not only Zilker Park's accelerating landscape changes, but also how land uses have changed and why. Themes that have emerged from these three historic periods include:

- » A transition in land uses from a natural landscape to agricultural and finally to recreational;
- » A landscape where the proportion of wild lands decreases steadily over time;
- » A decrease in wildlife abundance and diversity over time, especially a decrease in megafauna; and
- » A transition from tribes camping along Barton Creek, to a few independent mill owners and homesteaders, to a modern landscape visited by hundreds of people daily.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION



Zilker Park has three main areas of environmental contamination concern: the Butler Landfill, the Pistol and Skeet Range, and the West Butler Landfill. In anticipation of future renovations on site, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was completed for Zilker Park in 2019 by TRC Environmental Corporation.

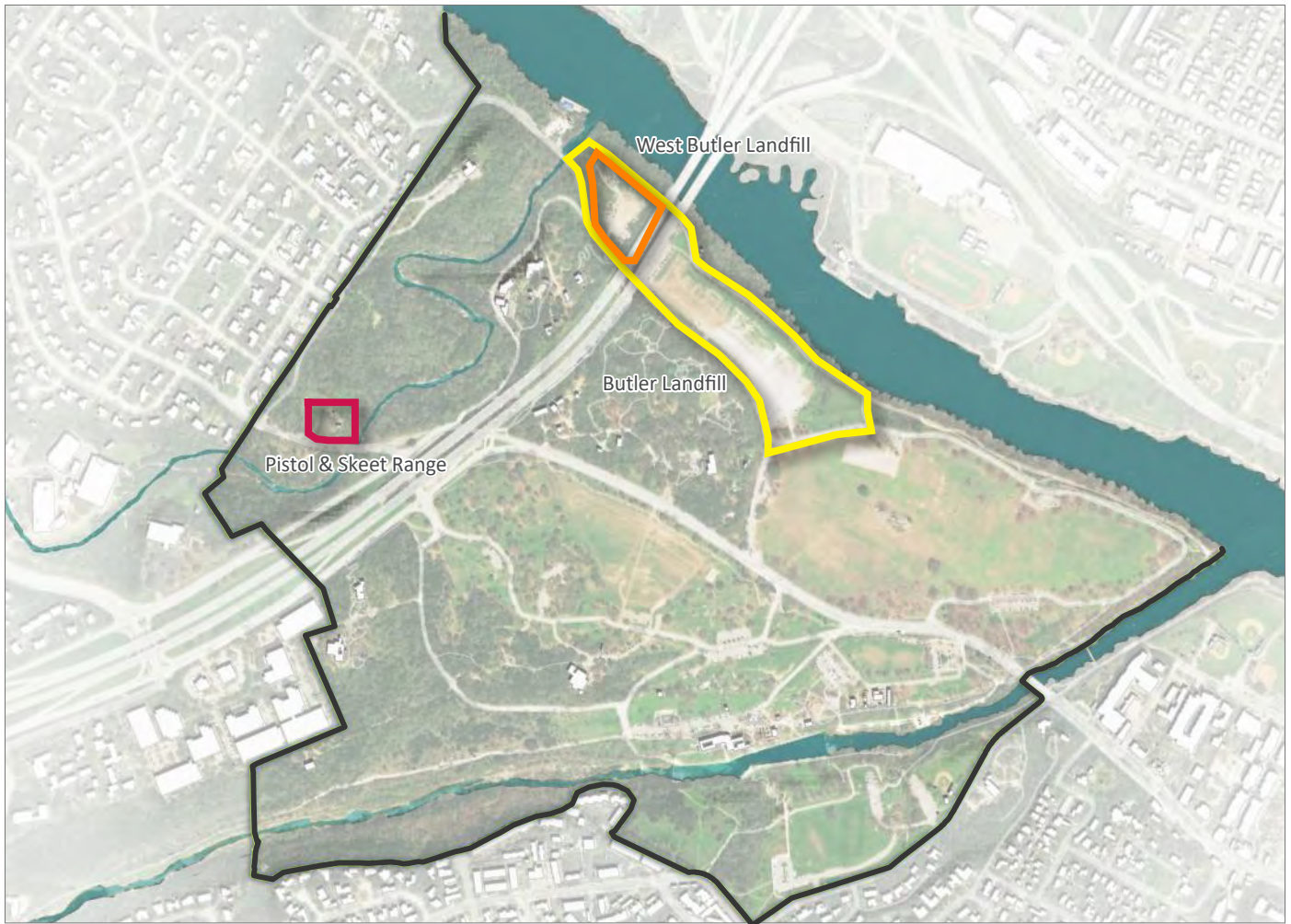
BUTLER LANDFILL

The 25-acre Butler Landfill has a maximum depth of 30 feet. This location originally served as a clay quarry for the Butler Brick Factory through the early 1900s, but after termination of quarry operations, the location was operated as a municipal landfill by the City of Austin from 1948 to 1967.

Several investigations and groundwater monitoring events have been conducted. While the earlier events did not find constituents of concern (COCs), later monitoring events did detect them. These later investigations found that waste materials were exposed in several areas throughout the landfill and that the lower portion of material within the landfill is saturated by the waters of Lady Bird Lake. A range of contaminants exceeded recommended maximum levels including arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, magnesium, lead, iron, and manganese. Due to this, the 2019 Environmental Assessment classified Butler Landfill as a Recognized Environmental Condition (REC).

Wetlands border the capped Butler Landfill on the eastern and northern sides. The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) advises that ponded areas should not exist over closed landfills. Based on the 1998 Task 5 Report, the boundary of the fill extends eastward towards the Zilker Zephyr tracks and under the eastern





ponded area. As of 2019, when the Zilker Park Working Group completed their report on the park, WPD and Parks and Recreation Department were planning to assess this area and consult with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to determine if additional action is necessary relative to this pond.

WEST BUTLER LANDFILL

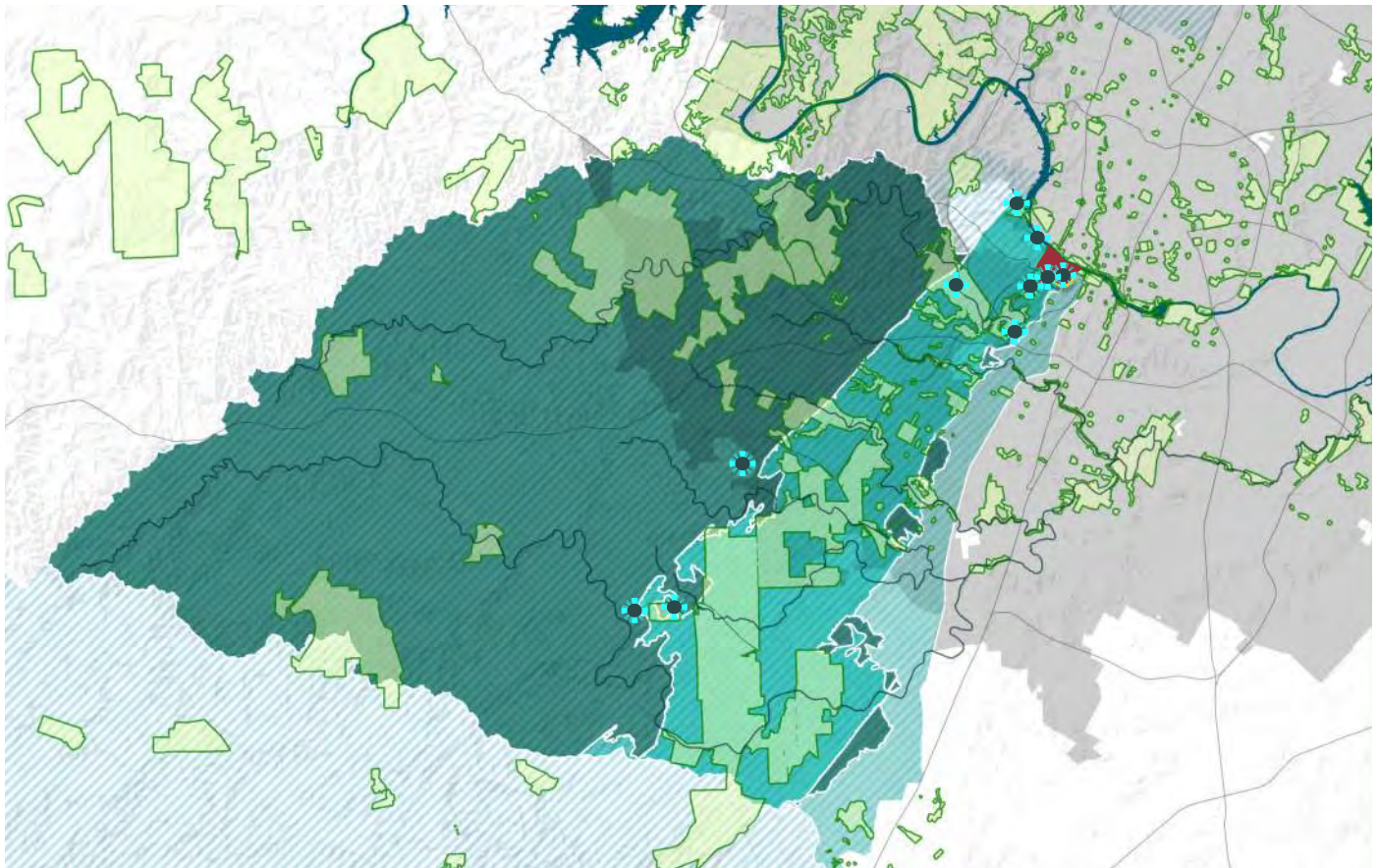
This area lies atop the northwest corner of the Butler Landfill and is currently used for storage of equipment and landscaping materials such as soil, brush, and gravel. Due to the presence of asphalt, electric-powered carts and small vehicles with lead-acid batteries, surplus lawn maintenance equipment, and chemical containers without cover or impervious pavement, this area has a possibility of leaking hazardous substances or petroleum products to the environment. This area is a REC, due to the material threat of a future release into the environment.

PISTOL AND SKEET RANGE

The 2.5-acre Pistol and Skeet Range was originally developed in the 1930s. Based on aerial photographs and interviews with PARD staff, the western portion was used for skeet shooting (Skeet Range), while the east side was used for pistol and rifle shooting (Pistol Range). The range was heavily used on a daily basis by the Austin Police Department and citizens between the 1930s and 1970s. The Pistol Range property was used by the Austin Nature & Science Center for archery, equipment storage, and supply storage in portable buildings after the mid-1980s. Historic and recent soil investigations have identified elevated concentrations of arsenic, antimony, and lead. The Pistol and Skeet Range, including the wooded area to the north, is therefore a REC.

ECOREGION & EDWARDS AQUIFER

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT











Zilker Park lies in the transition zone between the Edwards Plateau and Blackland Prairie ecoregions, blending aspects of the two. Hydrologically, Zilker Park sits atop the Edwards Aquifer and within the Colorado River corridor. The park includes sections of both Barton Creek and Eanes Creek and is home to the iconic Barton Springs. These factors combine to create a beloved, ecologically significant landscape in great need of planning and stewardship. This section describes the site's hydrology, topography, geology, soils, plant communities, and wildlife. This information is the foundation of the Natural Resource Inventory Report's management guidelines.

The Edwards Aquifer lies under the eastern and southern borders of the Hill Country and gives rise to the iconic springs of Central Texas. The Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer covers 250,000

acres and includes the Barton and Eanes Creek watersheds. The recharge zone is the critical area where water enters the aquifer through cracks and pores in the limestone. The recharge zone covers over 56,000 acres including the 387 acres of Zilker Park. Water from the recharge zone flows out in the prolific Barton Springs system that feeds Barton Springs Pool and creates habitat for the endangered Austin Blind Salamander and Barton Springs Salamander. Because the limestone through which water enters the aquifer does not filter out contaminants, this critical, fast-moving water system is impacted by resource management decisions throughout the contributing and recharge zones. Activities in the park impact the recharge zone and areas immediately adjacent to the springs.

LEGEND

-  Springs
-  Major Roads
-  Ecoregion Boundary
-  Lakes and Waterways
-  Conserved Land
-  Edwards Aquifer
-  Contributing Zone
-  Recharge Zone
-  Transition Zone
-  Zilker Park
-  Austin City Limits



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

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

As climate change intensifies and results in higher temperatures and more extreme weather events, the many forms of green infrastructure will become increasingly important. Climate vulnerability and tree planting priority in Austin from the City of Austin Green Infrastructure Assessment shows areas that are climate vulnerable as a result of urban heat island temperature increases, lack of urban forest,

and lack of shade over impervious cover. In addition, these areas coincide with higher levels of social vulnerability and worse health outcomes.

While the general area around Zilker Park exhibits a low to moderate tree planting priority, this park serves as a city-wide refuge to enjoy the outdoors in a location that has relief from higher temperatures as a result of the urban forest, shading, and water-related cooling. In addition, the changes suggested in the Zilker Park Natural Resource Inventory and Natural Area Management Guidelines recommend the improvement of canopy in the park and addition of green stormwater infrastructure. The result is a park that is adapting to and mitigating climate change. These same concepts are integrated into the Zilker Park Vision Plan to create a sustainable park that addresses climate change.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

TOPOGRAPHY

Zilker Park is comprised of low-lying lands near waterways and steep cliffs carved by creeks. The lowest points in the park are at roughly 428' in elevation and the high points in the park are between 554' and 562' in elevation.

GEOLOGY

Zilker Park includes 6 types of geology. The geologic layer is often exposed at the surface and lies on top of the Hydrogeology layer.

SPRINGS AND SEEPS

Zilker Park not only plays a role in the recharge of the Edwards Aquifer but is also home to the 4 springs complex and an additional 10 smaller springs and seeps.

SOIL

Zilker Park includes 15 soil types. These soils have been heavily impacted by agriculture and urbanization over the past 150 years as well as ecological changes in climate and topography.

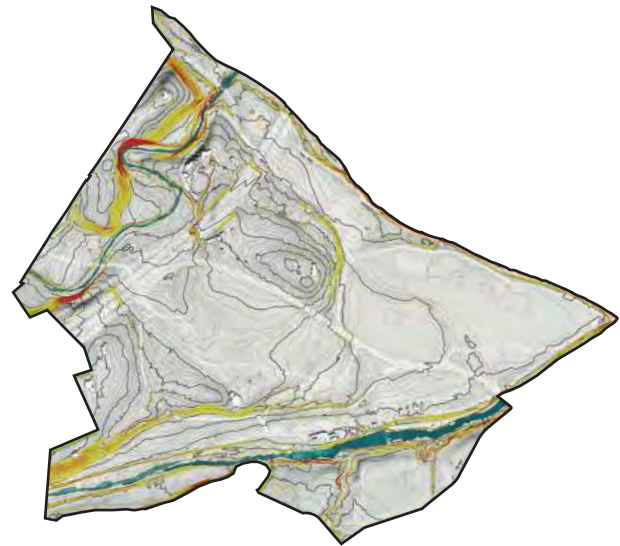
HYDROGEOLOGY

These are the geologic elements that define the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer. These layers dictate subsurface movement of water. The only hydrogeologic member within Zilker Park that is not within the recharge zone is Del Rio Clay.

HYDROLOGY

Floodplains play an important role in regulating water quality, because they filter water through their soils. The extra moisture creates denser plant growth, providing important wildlife habitat. Floodplains can be harmed by trampling and high runoff during storms that erode soil and wash away plants. The park also accepts flood waters on its 106.6 acres within the 100-year-floodplain.

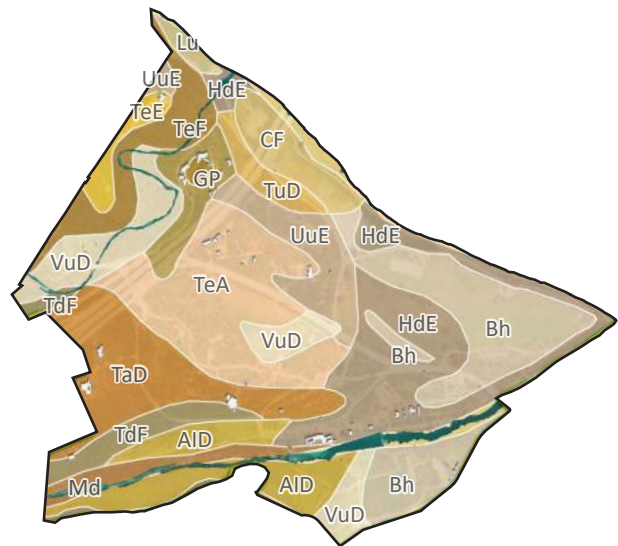
TOPOGRAPHY


















LEGEND

	2' Contours		25-35% Slope
	10' Contours		35-60% Slope
	15-25% Slope		60-86% Slope

SOIL



LEGEND

						Tarrant Series		
	Urban					Lincoln + Urban		Bergstrom + Urban
	Hardeman + Urban					Cut + Fill		Altoga + Urban
	Poorly Graded Gravel					Volente + Urban		Mixed Alluvial

GEOLOGY



LEGEND

- Edwards Formation
- Tributary Terrace Deposits
- Georgetown Formation
- Lower Colorado River Terrace
- Del Rio Formation
- Alluvial

SPRINGS & SEEPS



LEGEND

- Main Springs
- Seeps & Springs

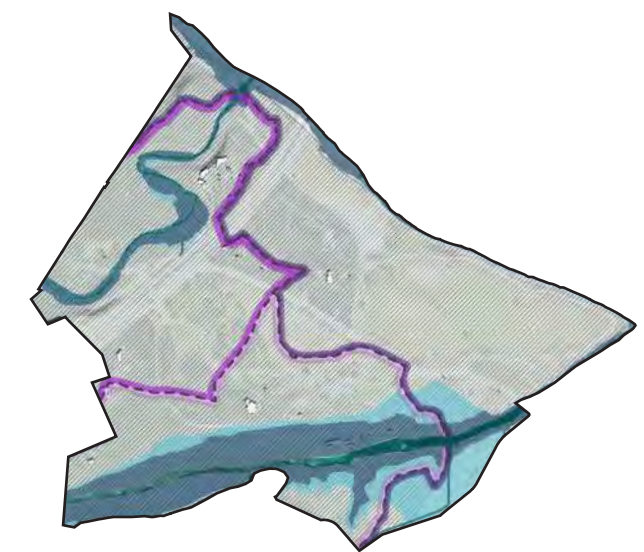
HYDROGEOLOGY



LEGEND

- Georgetown Limestone
- Grainstone Member
- Regional Dense Member
- Leached/Collapsed
- Kirschberg Member
- Del Rio Clay

HYDROLOGY



LEGEND

- Watershed Boundary
- Barton Creek Watershed
- Eanes Creek Watershed
- Lady Bird Lake Watershed
- 25 Year Floodplain
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Recharge Zone

PLANT COMMUNITIES

EXISTING PLANT COMMUNITIES



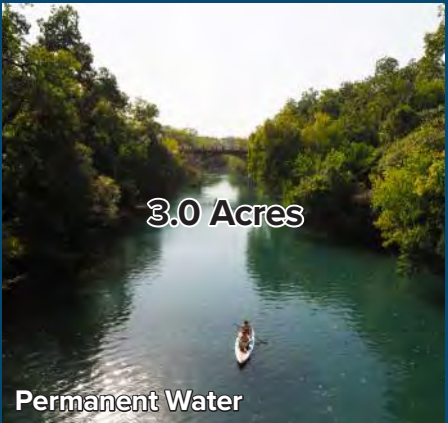
Zilker Park's habitats were grouped into 16 plant communities, which are influenced by the park's soil and geology as well as the history of human disturbance. These plant communities include over 380 plant species. The Oak/Juniper/Elm Woodland has 173 native plant species and 34 invasive and exotic species. The Barton Riparian woodland is inundated during floods, and in the lower areas, these plants must stay underwater for months. This woodland has a diverse canopy, understory and herbaceous layer with 78 native species and 15 invasive and exotic species. The plant diversity within the Intermittent creek bed is generally low, because it is often inundated. The Eanes Creek Riparian

Woodlands has 65% more species than the Barton Creek Riparian woodland, which is likely a result of less human impact. The Degraded Barton Riparian Woodland lies downstream of the pool and sees a high amount of human impact. The Degraded Barton Creek Shoreline could be one of the most robust plant communities in the area but overuse and upslope storm water outfalls prevent this. The Lakeshore Riparian Woodland is one of the few areas along Ladybird Lake that has not been cleared in the last 100 years. The Open Meadow is currently mowed at a rate that prevents native grass and forbs from being able to flower and seed.

LEGEND

- 1 Spring
- 2 Oak/Juniper/Elm Woodland
- 3 Barton Riparian Woodland
- 4 Intermittent Creekbed
- 5 Eanes Creek Riparian Woodland
- 6 Degraded Barton Riparian Woodland
- 7 Degraded Barton Creek Shoreline
- 8 Barton Springs Pool
- 9 Permanent Water
- 10 Lakeshore Riparian Woodland
- 11 Wetland
- 12 Open Meadow
- 13 Disc Golf Course
- 14 Zilker Botanical Garden
- 15 Austin Nature & Science Center
- 16 Maintained Parkland & Infrastructure

EXISTING PLANT COMMUNITY TYPOLOGIES





INVASIVE SPECIES

Over 70 non-native species were recorded during the plant survey, with 38 species considered invasive due to their aggressive growth and spread. Of these, 20 species were included in at least one of these three lists: Texas Invasives, the City of Austin's Top 24 Invasive Species list, or the Natural Resource Inventory by Siglo Group. The high priority species from this list include Arundo, bamboo, bastard cabbage, Bermudagrass, catclaw vine, Chinaberry, Chinese parasol tree, Chinese pistache, Chinese tallow, Nandina, hedge parsley, Japanese honeysuckle, Johnsongrass, King Ranch bluestem, Ligustrum, Malta star thistle, paper mulberry, sweet autumn clematis, and tree of heaven.

SOIL DISTURBANCE

The primary causes of soil disturbance in Zilker Park are stormwater flow, poorly functioning or absent infrastructure, mowing and use of other heavy machinery, off-trail recreation, formal recreation without suitable supporting infrastructure and erosion of trail material. Soil disturbance is problematic in all areas but is particularly concerning along environmentally sensitive waterways. Field data were taken on soil erosion issues at 140 points throughout the study area.

TREE SURVEY MAP










LEGEND

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| ● Hackberry | ● Huisache |
| ● Live Oak | ● Black Willow |
| ● Pecan | ● Cottonwood |
| ● American Elm | ● Green Ash |
| ● Cedar Elm | ● Red Oak |
| ● Juniper | ● Honey Mesquite |
| ● Box Elder | ● Other Oaks |
| ● Bald Cypress | ● Invasive Species |
| ● Sycamore | ● Other |
| ● Gum Bumelia | |

EROSION AND SOIL IMPACTS



Table 1: Erosion Types

TYPES	DESCRIPTION
 Informal Trails	Informal trails are paths created by foot traffic and are not created or maintained by park staff. Informal trails with trampled vegetation and compacted soils often lead to sheet erosion, rills, or gullies.
 Trampling	Trampling is a result of off-trail foot traffic not confined to a trail. It destroys vegetation and prevents its reestablishment.
 Compaction	Compaction is a loss of soil porosity. It inhibits plant growth and can lead to erosion.
 Sheet Erosion	Sheet erosion is the removal of thin layers of soil due to precipitation and shallow surface flow.
 Rill and Gully Erosion	Rill erosion is the formation of one or more small channels less than 1 ft deep; gullies are deeper than 1 ft.
 Bank Erosion	Bank erosion is found along both creeks and the Lady Bird Lake shoreline. It is a result of their urban setting and the powerful force of water after major rain events.
 Erosion on Formal Trails	In some areas, decomposed granite is leaving the trail and entering either natural areas or waterways. This material can bury native plants and make the soil more susceptible to erosion, thus lowering the quality of the natural area.

Source: Zilker Park Natural Resources Inventory & Management Guidelines. Siglo. 2021

REGULATIONS

CWQZ, WQTZ, AND CEFs

Critical Water Quality Zones and Water Quality Transition Zones setbacks limit development. CEFs or Critical Environmental Features require that a Environmental Resource Inventory be obtained prior to site design.

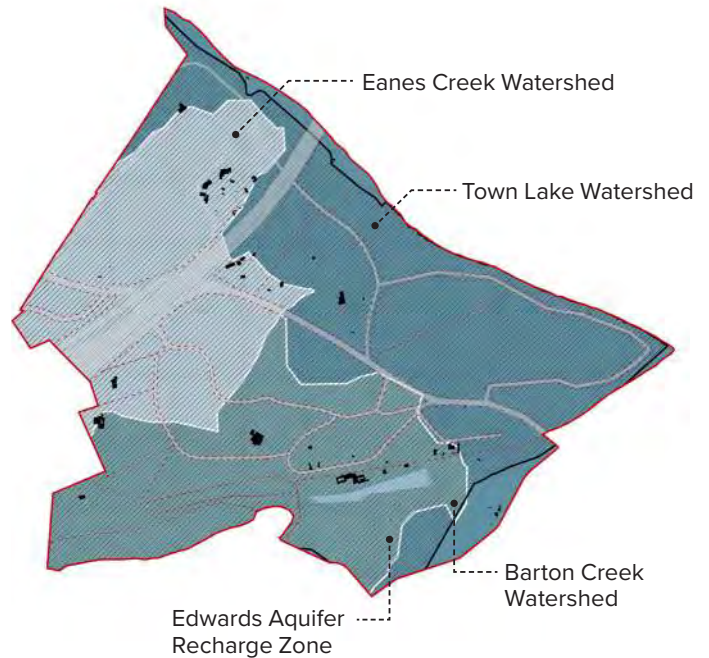
Most of the Zilker Park Vision Plan area is located within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, which will require review by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Additionally, if applicable, development may be subject to §25-1-84 if development is proposed on top of previous landfill sites.

Many of the tracts contain Critical Water Quality Zone (CWQZ) and/or Water Quality Transition Zone (WQTZ) setbacks, which restrict most development. Obtaining an Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) is recommended prior to site design due to the presence of existing Critical Environmental Features (CEFs) on many of the parcels. Additional features and or revised buffer areas may be established that could impact site layout and development. Any proposed development should be located outside of these protected areas. Many of the tracts are also encumbered by the 100-year floodplain.

Generally, development applications may not be approved if a proposed structure encroaches on the 100-year floodplain. A variance may be granted if the following is determined:

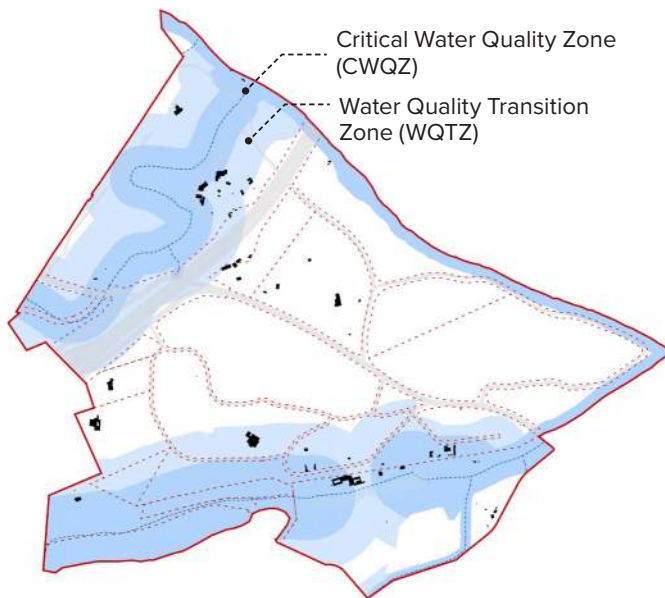
- The finished floor elevation of a proposed building is at least two feet above the 100-year floodplain;

WATERSHEDS

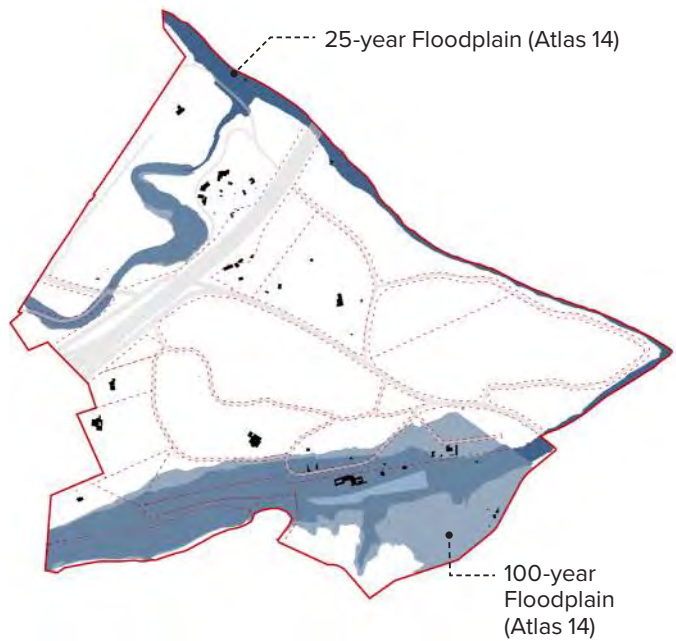


- Normal access to a proposed building is by direct connection with an area above the regulatory flood datum;
- A proposed building complies with the requirements of Flood Resistant Construction and Flood Loads;
- The development compensates for the floodplain volume displaced by the development;
- The development improves the drainage system by exceeding the requirements of Criteria for Approval of Development Applications, as demonstrated by a report provided by the applicant and certified by an engineer registered in Texas;
- The variance is required by unique site conditions; and
- Development permitted by the variance does not result in additional adverse flooding impact on other property.
- There is an exception for existing historic buildings within the flood plain to remain.

WATER QUALITY BUFFERS



FLOODPLAIN



Additionally, development applications with a proposed building or parking area that encroaches on the 100-year floodplain may be approved if the encroachment is:

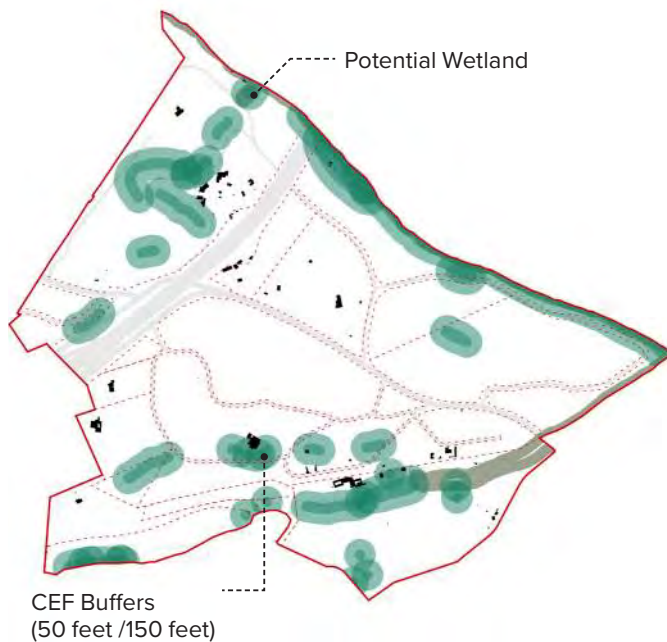
- A parking area that is smaller than 5,000 square feet or an unoccupied structure that has an area of less than 1,000 square feet, and the director determines that the proposed development:
 - » will not have an adverse effect on the 100-year floodplain or surrounding properties; and
 - » otherwise complies with the land development code requirements;
- A new building for residential use that replaces an existing legally constructed building for residential use on the same property and that does not increase the number of legal dwelling units on the property;
- A building authorized by a waterway development permit issued under Chapter 9-10 before September 25, 1983; or

- A building in the 100-year floodplain of:
 - » Lady Bird Lake;
 - » The Colorado River downstream from Longhorn Dam;
 - » Lake Austin; or
 - » Lake Travis.

To be approved, development in the floodplain must be no lower than 2 feet above the 100-year floodplain, as measured from the lowest elevation of any proposed building; comply with the requirements of Flood Resistant Construction and Flood Loads sections; compensate for the floodplain volume displaced by the development; and result in no adverse flooding impact on other properties.

REGULATIONS

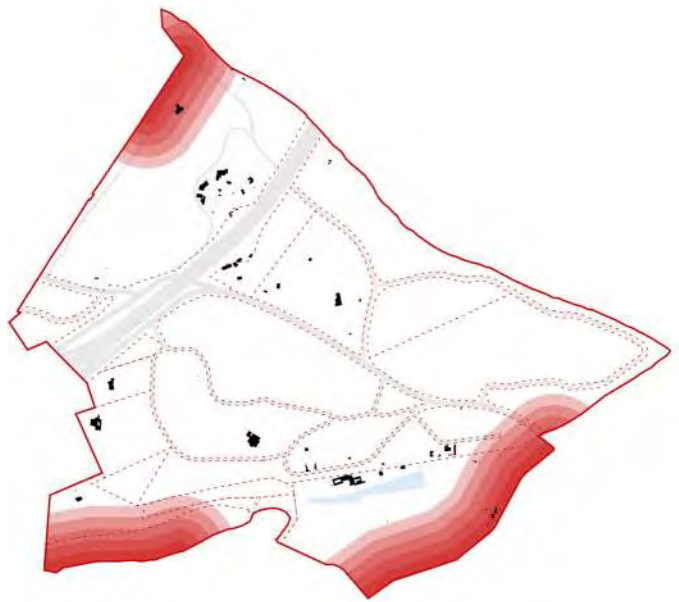
CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURE (CEF) BUFFERS



CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURE BUFFERS

Based on Austin City Code, a Critical Environmental Feature (CEF) buffer is most critical to preserving the function and characteristics of a CEF. This area should be covered by vegetation and any construction must be low-impact. Hiking trails are allowed within the buffer if they are at least 50' from the CEF.

COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS



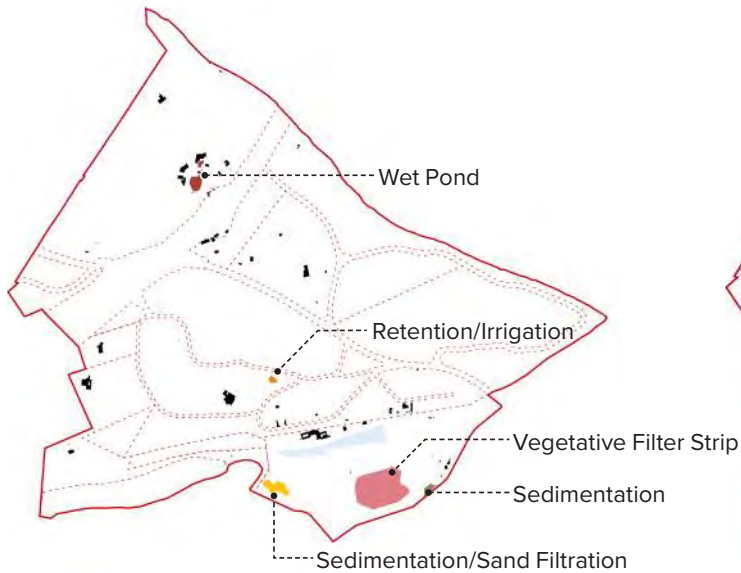
COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS

The Property along the southern and northwestern boundaries is subject to Compatibility Standards. These regulations may have a direct impact on the development or redevelopment of Tracts 1, 14, 17 and 18.

Any development in an SF-6 or less restrictive zoning district located 540 feet or less from property in an SF-5 or more restrictive zoning district/use will be subject to compatibility development regulations. A formal compatibility analysis is recommended.



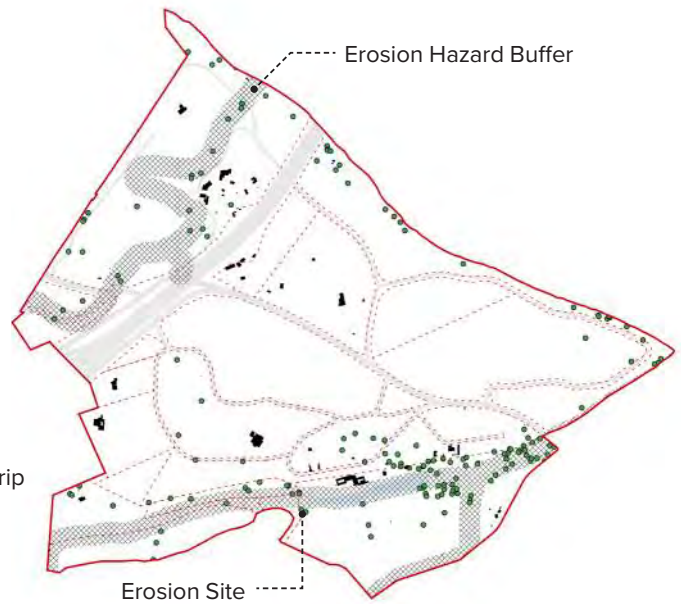
STORMWATER QUALITY CONTROLS



The following building setback and height step-back requirements are triggered because the property is 540 feet or less from property in an SF-5 or more restrictive zoning district/use

- 25 feet from triggering property = No Structures
- 25 feet to 50 feet from triggering property = Two stories or 30 feet, whichever is less
- 50 feet to 100 feet from triggering property = Three stories or 40 feet, whichever is less

EROSION



- 100 feet to 300 feet from triggering property = 40 feet plus one foot of height for each additional 10 feet in distance from triggering property
- 300 feet to 540 feet from triggering property = 60 feet plus one foot of height for each Four feet in addition to 300 feet from property



TRANSPORTATION

Consultation with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) or Austin Transportation Department will be required for any development that is proposed within State-controlled or City-owned right-of-way (ROW).

Portions of Barton Springs Road, Lou Neff Road, and Stratford Drive may not be considered Public ROW by the City of Austin, but rather a park roadway. This has design implications on impervious cover and detention and water quality treatment requirements, among other things (public ROW is not considered when calculating impervious cover, but park roads are considered when calculating impervious cover calculations). Parks and Recreation Department should provide definitive information regarding the categorization of these roads and the physical extents of the portions of these roads that are considered park roads.

TREE PROTECTION

Any proposed development or redevelopment will be subject to the current heritage and protected tree regulations per Land Development Code §25-8, Division 3 (above 19 feet height Heritage Trees). A permit granted by the City of Austin Arborist is required to remove protected and heritage trees. An administrative variance is required to remove heritage trees 24 to 30 inches in diameter; Land Use Commission approval is required to remove heritage trees 30 inches in diameter or greater.

Obtaining a tree survey is highly recommended prior to any site design to determine the size, species, and health of existing trees on the property.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A number of parcels also contain existing structures 50 years in age or older; demolition of such structures, along with any structures on the two parcels with the Historic Landmark Combining District in the zoning designation will require approval by the City of Austin Historic Preservation Office and potentially the Historic Landmark Commission. A Certificate of Appropriateness will be required should any changes to existing structures in Historic Landmark Combining Districts be proposed.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Coordination with the Austin Fire Department early in the site design process is recommended to determine if any of the underground storage tanks indicated on the site by City of Austin GIS data contain hazardous materials that require additional buffering, relocation, or removal.

SUBDIVISION AND PLATTING

The majority, if not all, of the Property does not appear to be subdivided. Correspondence with the program manager in the Land Use Review Division indicates that the City of Austin and its property, including Zilker Park, is exempt from the requirements of platting. Legal lot determinations and the requirement to subdivide to develop or redevelop, therefore, are not required to obtain the majority, if not all, permits.

In the past, the development or redevelopment of City of Austin-owned parkland encountered one issue related to the subdivision of land regarding Austin Water Utility or Austin Energy utilities crossing lot or tract lines. Although not platted, Zilker Park is made up of multiple tracts of land. Historically, a solution to this issue has been to use a Declaration of Easement, granted by the City of Austin to itself.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

Per §25-2-625(D), for tracts with “P” base zoning that are less than 1 acre in size, the site development regulations of an adjoining zoning district apply for a distance of 100 feet into the site. The minimum lot size requirement of an adjoining zoning district does not apply to a use by the City of Austin. For a site one acre in size or greater, site development regulations are established by the approval of a conditional use site plan, which require approval at the Land Use Commission. For a parks and recreation services (special) use, per §25-2-625(E), the minimum site area is 10 acres. Site plans must include the locations of sale of beer and wine, if applicable. The Land Use Commission may not consider a site plan for approval until it receives a recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Board.

Some tracts within the Zilker Park Visioning Plan boundary contain one or multiple site plans in review or approved. This Vision Plan recommends that a civil engineer review existing site plans for total impervious cover proposed or built on each tract to determine how much, if any, impervious cover remains for future projects.



This map shows the intensity of the regulations which apply to Zilker Park.

The regulations, if overlaid in their entirety on one map, indicate that areas that can be developed more than today's condition are limited. This indicates that variances, updates to ordinances, and/or a development agreement for Zilker Park should be examined.

LEGEND

- This area has multiple regulations prohibiting most of development. It is determined as Critical Water Quality Zone, 25-year floodplain, or erosion site.
- This area has a regulation prohibiting development which is Water Quality Transition Zone (WQTZ).
- This area can be developed but has several regulations or under other jurisdiction which needed additional approval.
- This area can be developed but has several regulations such as compatibility standards.
- All of Zilker Park site is within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone or Barton Springs Zone. This limits impervious cover to 40% for commercial and/or multifamily projects.

WATER WITHIN THE PARK

- 1 There is no reclaimed water system within the park at this time. City Code does not allow for these systems in the ecologically sensitive areas of the park.
- 2 There are 13 abandoned wastewater lines and 2 abandoned lift stations within the park. Wastewater outflows into Barton Creek are in disrepair and have caused erosion.
- 3 There is no formal storm sewer system within the park. Stormwater is primarily directed to outflows directly connected to Lady Bird Lake or systems adjacent to the park.

Summary provided below is based on the information available at the time of this report. All existing utilities should be verified prior to actual development of the subject property.

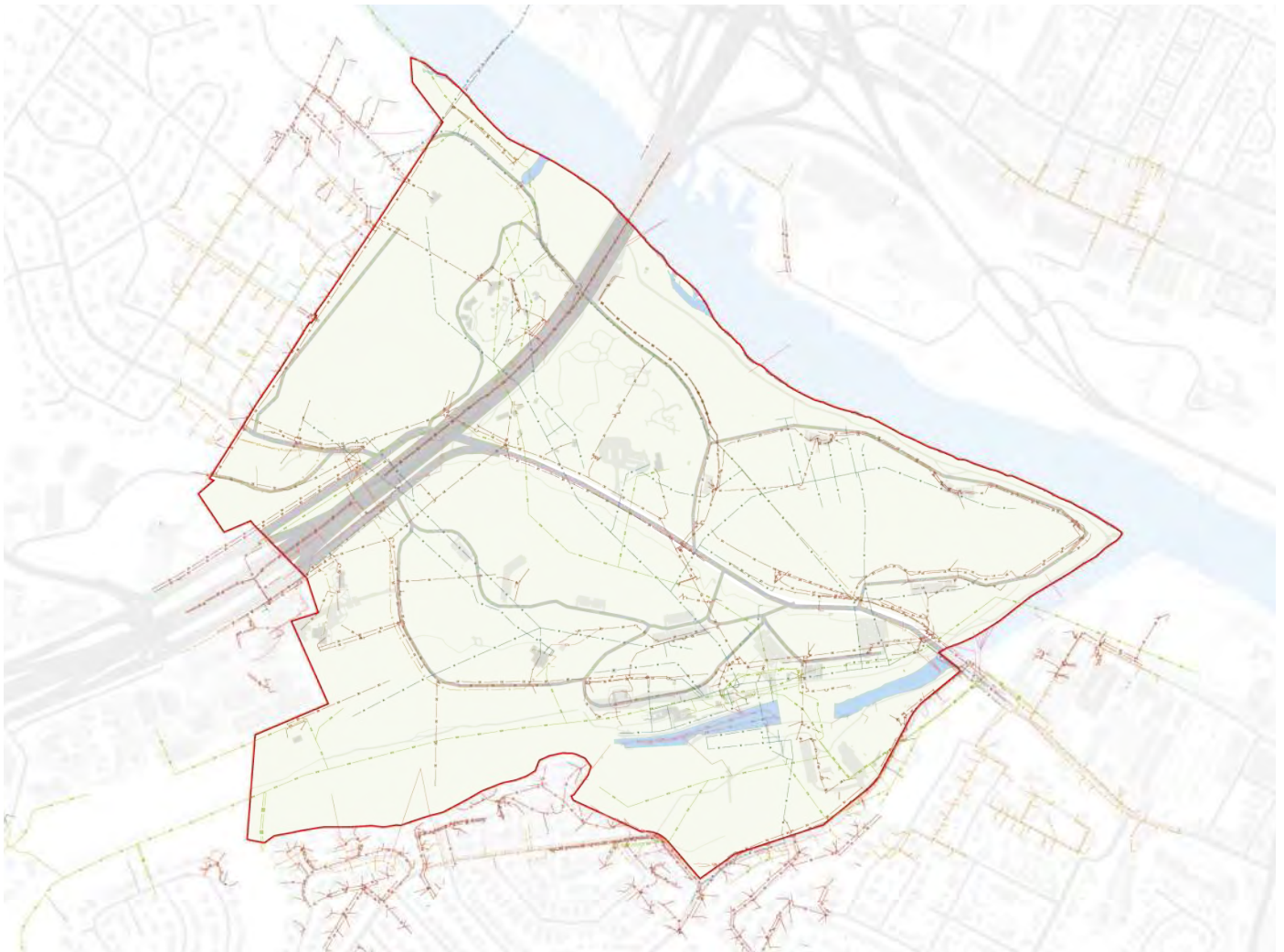
WATER

Austin Water Department (AW) is the water and wastewater service provider for the Zilker Park development. The area of interest is located within the Central South pressure zone. Several AW water and wastewater lines run through and around the park of the proposed site boundaries as as identified below:

- The largest mains within the site are a 12-inch Ductile Iron (DI) and 12-inch Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) water mains associated with project W-1987-2018 and W-1987-1500, respectively that run along South MoPac Expressway Northbound then turn east through the park. The 12-inch PVC main is currently proposed to tie into a proposed 12-inch DI main running along Andrew Zilker Road.
- A 2-inch Cast Iron (CI) watermain associated with Project W-1971-0053 that runs through the park from the Southwestern portion of the park to tie into the existing 3-inch CI watermain located in the central portion of the park. The main ties into the existing 6-inch CI running from the southeastern side of the park to northeastern side park to connect to the existing 12-inch DI running along Barton Springs Road.
- A 6-inch CI proposed for abandonment running from the center of the park to the southeastern portion of the park and ties into the existing 6-inch CI currently proposed to be abandoned and replaced with a 12-inch PVC main associated with Project W-2021-0014 at the Water Intersection 3305 located within Azie Morton Road.
- An 8-inch CI watermain that runs along Stratford Drive from the northwestern to the northeastern portion of the park with an associated project W-1964-1064.
- An abandoned 8-inch CI line located in the northwestern portion of the park running north across the Colorado River from Stratford Drive to Atlanta Street.
- Several interconnecting lines throughout the park that services the existing development.
- There are several existing fire hydrants within the site area.

WASTEWATER

All wastewater located within and around the project study boundary is collected at the South Austin Region Wastewater Treatment Plant through



the AW collection system and is maintained privately or by AW. Below are the wastewater lines:

- An 8-inch Concrete (Conc) gravity main located in the northwestern portion of the park which collects into the Bluffington #1 Lift Station.
- Bluffington #1 Lift Station waste is collected through an existing 8-inch CI force main associated with project A5811 running southeast to tie into an existing 15 PVC gravity main associated with Project A5810.
- A privately maintained lift station (Rollingwood #1), with a 6-inch (UNK) pipe material associated with Project No. 2002-0609 running north from the southwestern portion of the site area and ties into the existing 15-inch PVC associated with project A5810.
- The 15 PVC associated with Zilker Park A5810 ties into an existing 12-inch PVC, which ties into a 12-inch Concrete gravity main associated with Project A5809, which ties into a 10-inch Concrete gravity main associated with project A5808.
- The 10-inch concrete gravity main associated with Project A5808 ties into an existing 10-inch DI gravity main with associated Project S-1992-2011, which ties into the existing 33-inch FRPM gravity main at wastewater manhole (WWMH) number 29127.
- A 36-inch Fiberglass (FG) gravity main located in the southeastern portion of the park with the associated Project W-2001-0036 running northeast through the park and ties into an existing 42-inch Vitrified Clay (VC) gravity main, which ties into the existing 42-



951

feet of the Zilker Loop
Trail lies within an
erosion hazard zone

1007

feet of the Butler Trail
lies within an erosion
hazard zone

8

of 10 pieces
of stormwater
infrastructure lie within
an erosion hazard zone

inch Conc gravity main which ties into the existing 33-inch Fiberglass-Reinforced Polymer-Mortar (FRPM) gravity main associated with Project W-2005-0003 and S-2005-0006 at WWMH # 29127.

- A 24-inch Conc and an 8-inch VC gravity main running along Azie Morton Road along the eastern side of the site area that collects waste from surrounding developments from the southeastern portion of the park.
- A 10-inch Asbestos Cement (AC) main associated with Project A10435 and A10434 that ties into a 10-inch Conc main associated with Project A4430 and A4429 running southeast and ties into an existing 8-inch PVC gravity lines associated with project A4428 and A4427.
- An abandoned 8-inch CI line associated with project A5813 located in the northwestern portion of the park west of South MoPac Expressway Southbound.
- There are several abandoned lines and lift stations located east central of the park and listed as follow:
 - » 4-inch VC abandoned gravity main
 - » 6-inch VC abandoned gravity main
 - » 6-inch Conc abandoned gravity main
 - » 6-inch AC abandoned gravity main associated with project A7344
 - » 6-inch DI abandoned gravity main
 - » 6-inch PVC abandoned gravity main associated with project B440 and A3672
 - » 8-inch Conc abandoned gravity main associated with project A7344
 - » 8-inch DI abandoned gravity main associated with project A7344
 - » 8-inch PVC abandoned gravity main associated with project A4427 and A4428
 - » 10-inch CI abandoned gravity main associated with project A2664

- » 10-inch Conc abandoned gravity main
- » 6-inch DI abandoned gravity main associated with Project S-1977-0001
- » 24-inch Conc abandoned gravity main associated with project A2497
- » Abandoned Zilker Lift Station
- » Abandoned Barton Creek Lift Station
- The state of the pipes out-falling into the creek has caused the erosion issues.
- A 6-inch CS gas line that runs along South MoPac Expressway Northbound and crosses South MoPac Expressway westward at the Andrew Zilker Road and South MoPac Expressway intersection and runs along Rollingwood Drive to service the developments located west of the site.
- A 2-inch CS gas line running along Dellana Lane with a sharp turn westward at the Dellana Lane and Rollingwood Drive intersection then runs along Rollingwood Drive.
- A 2-inch PE gas line tied into the 6-inch CS gas line, north of the Andrew Zilker Road and South MoPac Expressway intersection that services existing development inside Zilker Park.
- A 2-inch PE gas line tied into the 6-inch CS gas line, north of the Andrew Zilker Road and South MoPac Expressway intersection and runs along Columbus Drive that services existing development inside Zilker Park.

RECLAIMED WATER

According to the AWD Maps, there is no reclaimed water associated with or around the site of interest. The nearest reclaimed water service is an existing 30-inch main that crosses Lady Bird Lake and extends to West Riverside Drive on the east side of South Lamar Boulevard, with a proposed service shown to extend towards South Lamar Boulevard. Furthermore, using reclaimed water within the critical water quality zone is prohibited by City of Austin.

NATURAL GAS SERVICE

Texas One Gas is the service company for the area. Gas service is presently available within the boundaries of the site area and are described as follows:

- A 6-inch Coated Steel (CS) gas line located in the northeastern portion of the site and has a short run from the east to west along Barton Springs Road. The gas line is tied into a 6-inch Polyethylene (PE) gas line at the southern side of Azie Morton Road and Barton Springs Road intersection. The 6-inch CS gas line continuously runs through the park westward across South MoPac Expressway until it reaches the Stratford Drive and Lou Neff Road intersection and starts running along Stratford Drive located northwestern portion of the site area.
- A 2-inch PE gas line located near the eastern side of the site that runs along Azie Morton Road and currently services developments located east of the park.

ELECTRIC SERVICE

Zilker Park is located within the Austin Energy service zone. Electric service is presently available within the boundaries of the site area as follows:

- A primary overhead wire located in the western portion of the park that runs north and south along Zilker Clubhouse Road. The primary overhead ties into an existing primary overhead located in Dellana Lane to the south and crosses the Colorado River to the north.
- A primary underground cable that runs along the southern side of Stratford Drive to service the existing development known as Rowling Dock.
- A service overhead wire located in Stratford Drive and Elgin Avenue that services an existing development east of Zilker Clubhouse Road.
- A primary overhead wire that runs eastward from the intersection of Vance Lane and Vale Street to Nature Center Drive that services the existing development enclosed by Nature Center Drive and

UTILITY

South MoPac Expressway. The overhead ties into an existing primary underground cable that ties into an overhead that runs along South MoPac Expressway southbound.

- A primary overhead wire is located at the intersections of Zilker Clubhouse Road and Rollingwood Drive running along Rollingwood, which ties into a primary overhead wire running along Dellana Lane and continues running eastward along Barton Springs Road. The primary turns southeast at the Barton Springs Road and Stratford intersection and cuts across the park to tie into an existing primary overhang west of the Barton Springs Pool, then runs north along Barton Creek to tie into an existing primary at Barton Springs Road and Barton Creek intersection.
- A streetlight overhead running through South MoPac Expressway.
- A primary overhead running along South MoPac Expressway southbound and ties into a primary overhead running along Dellana Lane.
- A primary overhead running along South MoPac Expressway northbound and ties into a primary overhead running along Barton Springs Road.
- A primary underground cable that runs along Stratford Drive from the intersection of S. MoPac Expressway and Stratford Drive intersection and crosses Lou Neff Road and ties into an existing primary overhead at the Stratford Drive and Barton Springs Road intersection.
- A primary underground that ties into the primary underground between Park Road and Barton Springs Road on Stratford Drive and runs along Park Road and ties back into Barton Springs Road on the western portion of the park.
- A service underground cable running along Barton Springs Road between Barton Creek and Stratford Drive.
- Service underground cables along Park Road.

- There exists a primary underground cable located in William Barton Drive in the western portion of the park.
- There exists a primary overhead that runs along Columbus Drive and ties into and services overhang running along Columbus Drive.
- There exists a primary overhead running along Azie Morton Road and Barton Hills Drive in the southwestern portion of the park.
- There exists a primary overhead running between Andrew Zilker Road and Columbus Drive to service existing development.

TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICE

John D. Koughl with MCI has provided an email confirmation that MCI has aerial fiber along Azie Morton Road, however, no service maps were provided. Azie Morton Road is located on the eastern side of Zilker Park and runs north and south between Barton Springs Road and Barton Hills Drive.

STORM SEWER

Generally, there is not a storm sewer system within the Park area, but rather, storm sewer infrastructure associated with direct discharges to Lady Bird Lake, culvert crossings under roads, and connections to the storm sewer systems adjacent to the Park. Storm infrastructure are described below as seen in the City of Austin Property Profile:

- Storm network running along Barton Springs Road and runs from the east to drain into Barton Creek.
- Curb inlets along Barton Springs Road with drainage pipes that runs eastward and drain into Barton Creek.
- A drainage system located in the southeast portion of the park along the development and south on Barton Hills Drive and drainage pipes with header along Azie Morton Road, collecting storm sewer water and discharged into Barton Creek. In addition, the following ponds are identified to be within the Zilker Park area:

- A privately maintained pond identified as a Vegetative Filter Strip (VFS) area located adjacent to Azie Morton Road where it intersects with Lund Street.
- A City of Austin maintained pond identified as a sedimentation only pond area located adjacent to Azie Morton Road east of the VFS mentioned above. west of the VFS area mentioned above.



People enjoying Barton Creek along the degraded shoreline near the Pool Spillway.

FINANCIAL

Zilker Park, like many destination parks in cities across the US, saw temporary closures to Barton Springs Pool, the Zilker Botanical Garden, and the Austin Nature and Science Center, along with along with a corresponding drop in revenue. Despite the closures in 2020 and into 2021, visitors returned or moved to other destinations in the park or close by, especially Barton Springs Spillway, along Barton Creek, and in Lady Bird Lake. As result, expenses for operations and maintenance in Zilker increased while revenue remained low due to continuing closures and a lack of events. While events have resumed and the Pool, Garden, and Science Center have reopened, record usage at Zilker continues as well.

Funds collected by PARD at Zilker through concession agreements as well as park usage fees (pool admission fees, rentals of picnic sites, event locations like the Zilker Clubhouse or even large multi-day events like the Austin City Limits Music Festival) are paid into the City's general fund, a portion of which are "returned" to the Parks and Recreation Department via annual budget appropriations. The Parks Department, by and large, does not keep any of the fees collected by city ordinance directly but shares in them. This is true for most US city's park fees.

Finally, while nonprofits can raise funds and apply those funds for park improvements, programming, and operations, those funds are a small portion of total park spending. Based on research performed by The Trust for Public Land, six percent of annual spending in the 100 largest U.S. cities for parks comes from nonprofit park organizations. For Austin specifically, TPL's ParkScore index reported in 2020 that 13% of funding came from a dozen park nonprofits, totaling \$20.7M, putting Austin 17th out of 100 in terms of nonprofit funding share. The bulk of this spending is for capital projects by The Trail Conservancy, Waterloo Greenway, Pease Park Conservancy, and others.

REVENUE

This section will detail concession revenue for Zilker Park and event and other fee revenue. Events in Zilker are governed by city ordinances and practices that grew out of recommendations from the Parkland Events report in 2017.

Under chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, public parkland is protected by prohibiting the rental or lease of public parkland. In addition, to change the land from designated parkland, the city would vote to

CONCESSION AGREEMENTS

PARD enters into concession agreements with vendors doing business in the park. Concession agreements within Zilker park boundaries have not been updated since 2012. Additionally, payment structures are inconsistent and the current agreements present challenges to retaining and acquiring new vendors.

CONCESSION	TERM	ANNUAL PAYMENT
Zilker Park Boat Rentals	Originated: 2/2/06; Four amendments to 2/28/21, Extended to 2/28/24 (four amendments)	Minimum of \$18,000. Amounts reassessed 18 months, 36 months and every 12 months thereafter
Zilker Train	Austin Parks Foundation will operate the train. As of 12/1/2022, the train is not yet in operation	Proceeds will go toward operation and maintenance of parks
Zilker Café	No vendor under contract as of 12/1/2022.	\$70,000 (\$17,500 due quarterly)
Rowing Dock	Originated: 11/01/2000, Amended 10 times, expires 4/30/23	\$667/month

change the disposition or not. This limits private entities from taking of parkland and requires all amenities where fees are charged for reservable spaces, such as picnic shelters, Zilker Clubhouse, or other amenities, be for fair use of those facilities.

PARK CONCESSIONS OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Council authorizes the Parks and Recreation Department to operate permanent concessions in Town Lake Park/Lady Bird Lake Park area. Town Lake Park is defined as parkland on the north and south banks of Lady Bird Lake (formerly Town Lake) including Zilker Park and Auditorium Shores (City Code Section 8-1-71 to 8-1-73). Located within Zilker Park are four permanent concessions:

- Rowing Dock (kayak, canoe and stand up paddleboard (SUP) rentals)
- Zilker Park Boat Rentals (kayak, canoe and SUP rentals)
- Zilker Café (temporarily closed while awaiting new vendor)

- Zilker Zephyr (new contract with the Austin Parks Foundation, Foundation still working through mechanical and construction issues with the new train)

As shown in the table below, the concession terms that the city uses are traditional and the approach has not been altered in many years.

Permanent concession agreements in Austin parks are generally long-term contracts and held by long-standing operators who pay a combination of annual payments and a percentage of gross sales to the city. Concessions within Zilker Park are governed by the broader city code chapter mentioned earlier.

SUMMARY

- City Council has identified 4 permanent park concessions for Zilker Park
- Each Concession Agreement can take years to complete and are generally 5 to 10 years long
- Payment to the City is inconsistent and often puts financial burden of capital improvements on the vendor

PERCENTAGE OF GROSS	CAPITAL INVESTMENT	EXTENSIONS	OTHER NOTES
10% of revenue *gross revenue defined as gross income excluding sales tax	\$35,000 reinvestment obligations were included in the contract, but that does not represent the total amount of capital investment the business has provided over the contract term. The total amount spent is much more.	Reassess every 12 months	Structures and permanent improvements owned by the City, boats and equipment owned by the vendor.
			Previous vendor owned train.
8% of the gross, payable in an annual lump sum	Any additional equipment required for food services	Up to two 5-year extensions	Pending new vendor
1% of annual net revenue and 8% of annual net revenue above \$80,000, payable in an annual lump sum	The \$102,000 references the required commitments included in Amendment 7 (2012) for parking, etc. However, this doesn't include other optional capital improvements that the vendor has completed throughout the contract term.	Extended 10 times, four were extensions of time up to 4/30/22	Boats and equipment owned by the vendor, as delineated in Amendment 11.

FINANCIAL

OTHER FEE REVENUE IN ZILKER: RESERVABLE FACILITIES, LARGE EVENT PERMITTING

The Parks and Recreation Department's Office of Special Events manages the reservations, scheduling, and fee collection for Zilker Park, as well as other reservable facilities. The City has posted rules and fees on its [website](#). Fees, rules, and procedures are established by city ordinance and are reviewed annually by park staff and the City Council.

In addition to reservable facilities and special events, the Parks Department benefits from the transportation enterprise fund established by the City. Parking meters have been installed and are managed by the Austin Transportation Department with Zilker Park benefiting from the revenue obtained.

Events also create revenue for the City. These revenues, paid through the fees for usage established by the Parks and Recreation Department's Office of Special Events, with review and approval annually through the City Manager's Office, and City Council, are paid back into the City's general fund. The exception is the parking and gate entry fund, which allows fees collected for seasonal (May to September) and partial week (Thursday-Sunday) parking in Zilker lots to remain with PARD.

Large events, including the Trail of Lights, Blues on the Green, The ABC Kite Festival and Austin City Limits Music Festival are subject to the negotiation of an event agreement. Per the parkland event guidelines and ordinances, large events must cover all costs borne by the City as well as provide usage fees as determined by whether tickets are sold and how many days those events take place.

The city has formulas for payment for events that are included in the event agreements, including ticket sales, police, fire, EMS, transportation, and additional parks costs. Any ticketed events have a variable ticket fee assessed as well, often between \$1-\$3 per ticket per day, based on the ticket prices as well as length of the event.

For example, the ACL Music Festival in 2019 paid a total of \$2.4 million in city fees, including:

- \$1.62 million to PARD, including \$1.4 million in ticket fees.
- \$500,000 to Austin Police Department

- \$60,000 to Austin/Travis County EMS
- \$20,000 to Austin Public health
- \$30,000 Transportation fees (including Capital Metro)
- \$110,000 to Austin Fire Department

These are largely to cover the costs that City departments incurred in managing the festival. Additional expenses for security, first aid, inside the festival gates are borne separately by C3 Presents, the operator of Austin City Limits Music Festival.

REVIEW OF EVENTS, PROGRAMMING AGREEMENTS, ORDINANCES THAT AFFECT ZILKER PARK (CITY OF AUSTIN)

Special events in city parkland are governed by a set of ordinances passed by Austin City Council and managed by the Parks and Recreation Department Office of Special Events. Specifically, ordinances limit the number of days of events and the total number of unique events that can take place in Zilker Park, as well as other reservable sites such as Auditorium Shores. The parks department's revised ordinances have existed for some time. They reinforce the cap on large events at Zilker and how they have been managed and regulated.

The 2015 Parkland Events Task Force met over the period of a year and made several specific recommendations, many of which were codified in changes in city ordinances in 2016 and 2017.

- For Zilker Park, the recommendation was to reduce a total of 29 event days in Zilker to 24 through gradual attrition. The listed large events include:
 - » The Austin City Limits Music Festival: 6 days
 - » The ABC Kite Festival: 1 day
 - » Blues on the Green: 4 days
 - » Zilker Relays: 1 day.
 - » The performances at the Zilker Hillside Theater were not considered large events. Generally they have 22 performances per year.

The Task Force recommendations required that the city have its costs covered for hosting large events, as well as making sure that they have plans for sustainability, transportation, and other needs.

NONPROFIT PARTNERS OVERVIEW: PARKNERS

Several nonprofits work to provide programming, operations support, as well as capital dollars in and around Zilker Park. Most are small nonprofit groups that are volunteer in nature and have specific agreements with the Parks and Recreation Department. They are:

- Austin Parks Foundation
- Barton Springs Conservancy
- Friends of Barton Springs Pool
- Girl Scouts of Austin / Girl Scout Cabin
- Hill Country Conservancy
- Sunshine Camp / Young Men's League of Austin
- Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy / Austin Area Garden Council
- Zilker Theatre Productions (Beverly S. Sheffield Zilker Hillside Theater)

PUBLIC FUNDING

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, most city parks agencies and nonprofit park partners saw tremendous drops in revenue as most events and in-person programming were. While this is slowly changing with the next phase of the pandemic, it is unclear how quickly such revenues will recover. Further, as documented by the National Recreation and Parks Association and researchers at Pennsylvania State University, economic downturns cause particular challenges for parks systems. Parks and recreation agencies are the first to see budget cuts and the last to see cuts restored, as documented by studies looking at the period 2003-2013.

CONCESSIONS AND EARNED INCOME

Further, any funds collected through concession agreements as well as park usage fees (pool admission fees, rentals of picnic sites, event locations like the Zilker Clubhouse or large multi-day events like the Austin City Limits Music Festival) are paid into the City's general fund, a portion of which are "returned" to the Parks and Recreation Department via annual budget appropriations. The Parks Department does not keep any of the fees collected by city ordinance directly, but shares in them. This is true in most U.S. cities for park fees.

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 vendors 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, including rowing programs, paddling or stand-up paddleboarding.

The City contracted with Huston-Tillotson University to undertake a (Lady Bird) Lake capacity study through its environmental justice academic program. A plan and recommendations, based on study and analysis of vendors, watercraft usage, and enforcement was delivered in January 2023, which will provide input on the possibilities and give 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 affects the two existing watercraft-focused concessions operating from Zilker.

Apart from the Huston-Tillotson study, there are several key messages provided in the economic section of the Site Analysis and Needs Assessment (SANA) in the spring of 2021:

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 if approved. Temporary or permanent relocation of amenities and access will likely be required.

The Zilker Eagle, as of this writing, is still testing and troubleshooting, but 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 if approved. Temporary or permanent relocation of amenities and access will likely be required.

For all of Zilker Park, only one location exists for a permanent food vendor at the Zilker Cafe. No vendor is currently under contract after the Department was denied a conditional use permit to sell wine and beer at this location.

SUMMARY

The Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan is for all of Austin. As the first comprehensive planning initiative for the entire park, the planning team recognized a need for comprehensive engagement to all 10 City Council Districts. While the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic limited much of the initial engagement, the planning team completed 5 virtual Community Meetings and a final in-person Open House along with more than 100 in-person pop-ups, and 50 small group discussions. In addition to the community meetings, online surveys, in-person pop-up events, and targeted small group conversations have provided greater access to people across Austin, emphasizing equitable outreach and inclusive opportunities from communities often left out of the conversation of citywide projects. With more than 5,500 participants and more than 8,000 comments received and using an equity-centered approach to explore the input, the process has connected with people across Austin with a vision for Zilker Park to be a park for all of Austin.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Vision and Goals
- Equity and Inclusion
- What We Did
 - Community Engagement
 - Technical Advisory Group
 - Other Opportunities
- What We Heard
- Who Took The Surveys

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE VISION AND GOALS

VISION

The Zilker planning team sought a transparent and well-documented community engagement process that engaged the city as a whole and also focused on key groups or people involved with the park, emphasizing equity as part of the process. The process was centered on the guiding values and built on community input throughout.

GOALS

The Zilker Vision planning team committed to creating opportunities for the entire Austin community to provide input on the future of Zilker Park, focusing on areas of accessibility, inclusion, history, and ecology. The community engagement goals included:

- » Educate the community about Zilker Park's history, current City of Austin programs, operations, and future City of Austin operational needs, and provide opportunities for comment.
- » Gather community input, feedback, and stories to develop a plan for the future of Zilker Park that represents the diversity of Austin.
- » Identify and educate the community on environmental considerations and respond to those considerations throughout the project.
- » Utilize equity strategies to develop community connections with and engage traditionally underserved and marginalized communities in Austin.
- » Provide opportunities for engagement that are accessible to all abilities.
- » Identify and engage with PARD Parkners and other organizations, concessionaires, and groups associated with park programming.
- » Connect with communities around interpretive storytelling and placemaking to identify key opportunities in the park.
- » Correct any misinformation about the vision for the park and acknowledge any concerns or challenges identified by community members.

- » Create an environment of excitement for the proposed Vision Plan and future park development.
- » Create community support for the proposed Vision Plan and future park development.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

For any project, the planning team identifies the anchors for making decisions. This decision criteria guides how it will evaluate the input that is received to incorporate it into each stage of the process. For the Zilker Park Vision Plan, the following criteria are considered when consulting the community input:

- » City Code of Ordinances
- » ImagineAustin
- » Strategic Direction 2023
- » Our Parks, Our Future: PARD Long Range Plan
- » Other Department Policies or Guidance, such as the Austin Climate Equity Plan
- » Zilker Park Vision Plan Guiding Principles and Goals
- » Previous rounds of community input

Input received on the draft Vision Plan goes through these criteria to be sorted and coded. All comments are read and compared. Comments in common are counted, though the process is not treated as a vote, since the same participants can share their comments multiple times through multiple methods.

The sorted comments are read through again to identify where consensus can be found, what could be possible, and what may not be possible due to the decision criteria or elements that fall outside the scope of the park plan. Every effort is made to balance competing interests.

The planning team also compares the input received in previous rounds of engagement from public comments and from key stakeholders.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

VISION

The City of Austin focuses on racial equity, recognizing that race is the most consistent predictor across all quality of life outcomes. With the focus on equity defined by the City of Austin Equity Office and a recognition of our conflicted history in this space, the Zilker Park Vision Plan team worked to develop an engagement process that emphasized that Zilker is for all of Austin across all intersectionalities.

PRINCIPLES

The following principles were identified in the Community Engagement Plan:

- » Invite community members that are representative of Austin's demographics, including a wide range of ages, races, ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, and traditionally underrepresented.
- » Reduce barriers to participation by creating a fun, culturally sensitive, inclusive and engaging process that allows for honest feedback.
- » Establish a respectful and reciprocal partnership with the community to better understand resident needs and priorities and to inform the development of the Vision Plan.
- » Increase education and understanding through tailored, engaging content that helps communities develop a deeper understanding of the Vision Plan.
- » Commit to ongoing learning and improving the approach throughout the process.
- » Develop and execute a process that advances systemic equity.

These principles were combined with common best practices of going to where community members are, connecting with community leaders, providing multiple meeting options and times, small group discussions, and disaggregating final data to explore differences among various demographic groups.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Language access is a key component in outreach and engagement within Austin. It is well-known that many community members prefer communication in their primary language, so the Vision Plan team strived to provide opportunities for information and feedback to these community members for engagement techniques and events. American Sign Language (ASL) were available at each Community Meeting. In addition, various pop-up events were staffed by team members who speak Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, Mandarin, or Korean.

DIGITAL AND NON-DIGITAL ACCESS

The planning team also acknowledges there is a digital divide when it comes to access to online materials. While many individuals do not have home computers, data shows the digital divide is shrinking, especially when considering smartphone access. Online efforts considered accommodations for smartphones where possible, and in-person opportunities were frequent through “pop-up” events throughout the city.

- » Additional Outreach and Communication
 - Community Ambassadors
 - Extra Pop-up Events
 - Flyer in Multiple Languages: English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Hindi
 - Small group meetings with community leaders and groups focused on equity and inclusion at Zilker Park



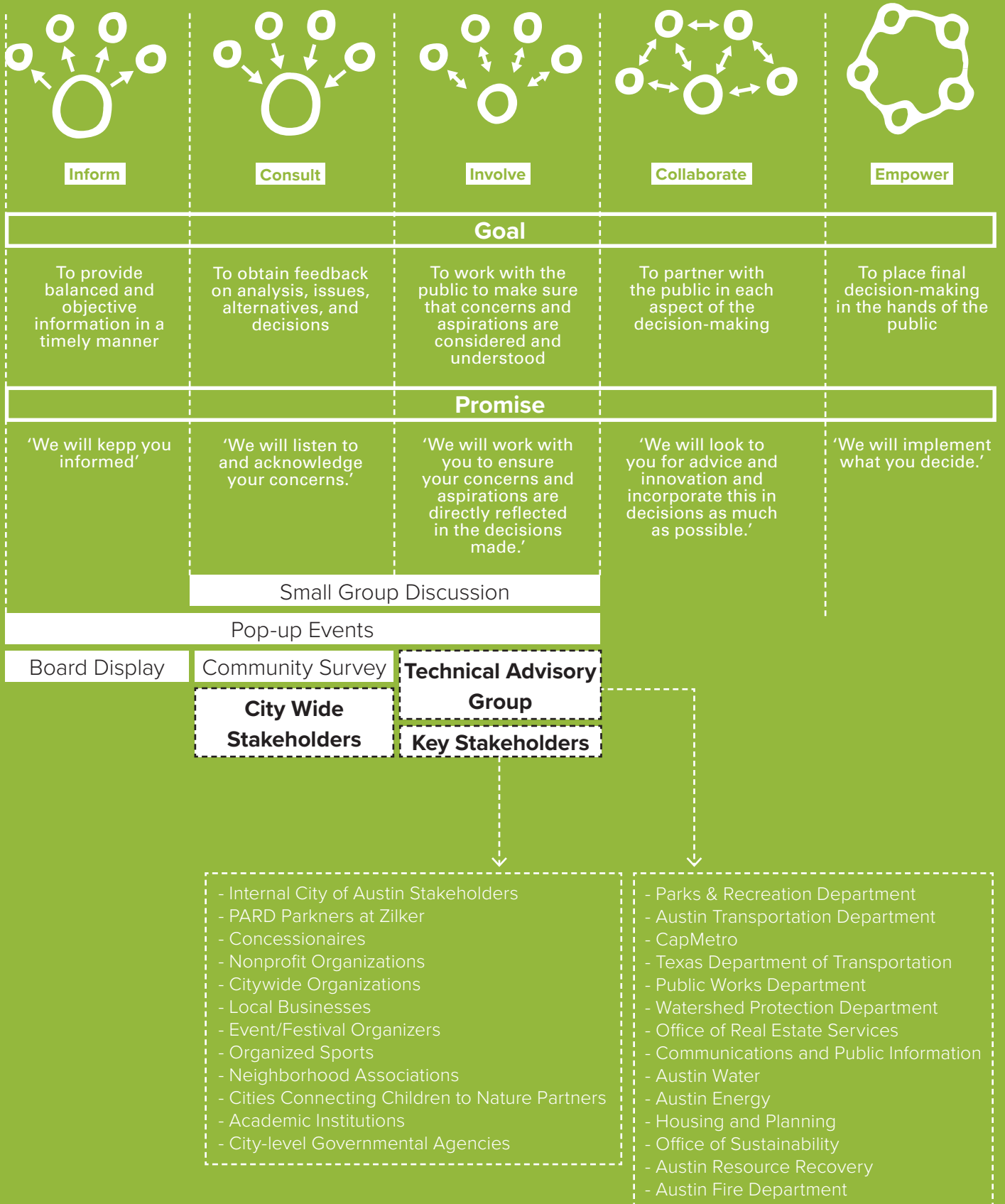
Community Meeting #2 Flyers in Multiple Languages



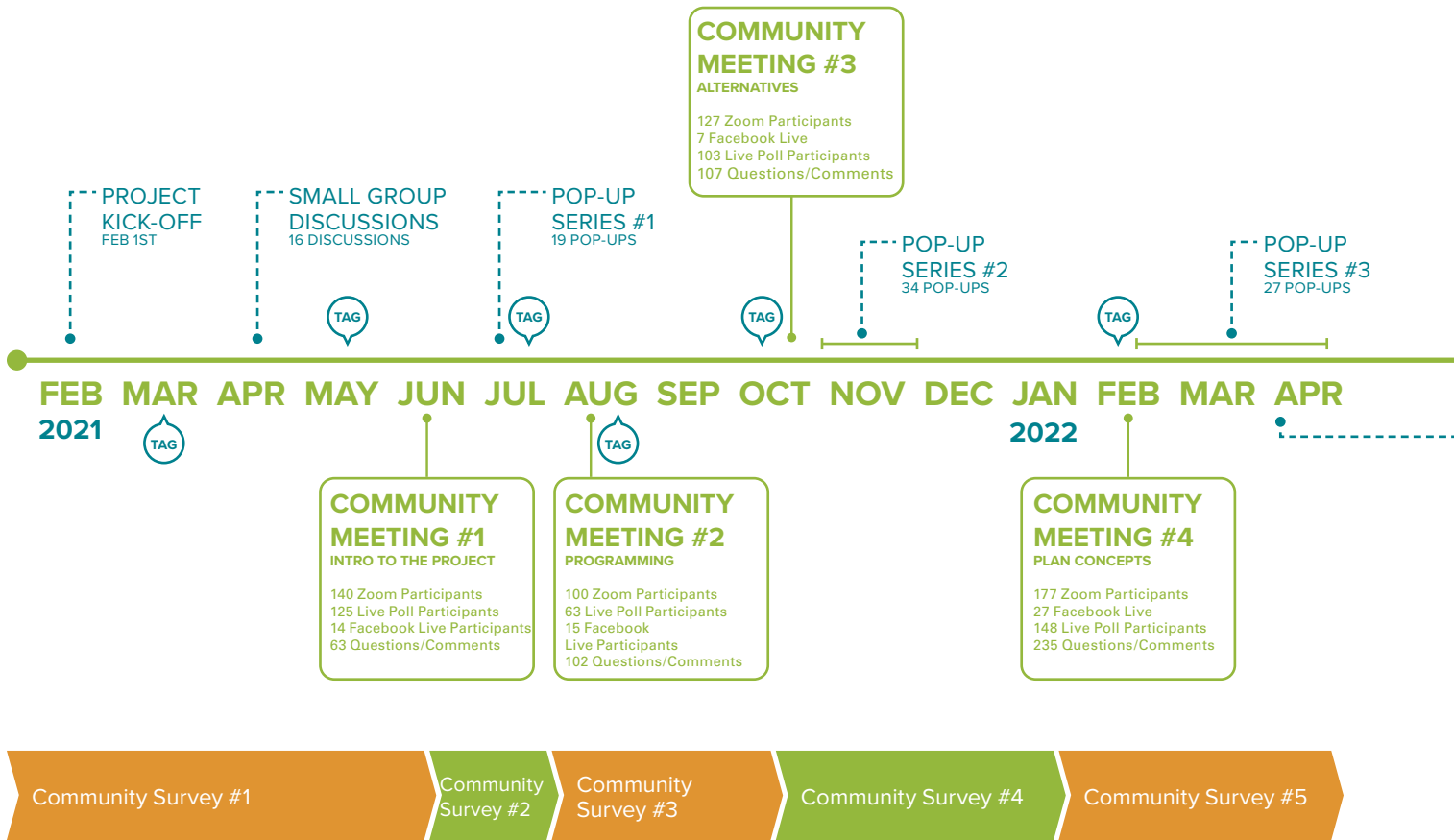
HOW THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INFLUENCES THE VISION PLAN

The project team uses the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Participation to identify the level of engagement. For the public, the plan identified the participation level as "consult" with the purpose of obtaining feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions. At the "consult" level, the organization commits to "keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision" (IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation). Additional key stakeholders were noted at the "involve" level, including the Zilker Neighborhood Association and organizations now included in the Zilker Collective Impact Working Group. The team has worked with these organizations to ensure their concerns and aspirations are reflected in the process, even when it may not be possible to include all of them in the plan. As a standard method for identifying criteria-based decisions, the planning team created a set of planning values to guide how input should be assessed. The team presented a draft of these values, called "Guiding Principles and Goals" for community feedback. Since then, the community input and feedback have been explored through the lens of these shared park values.

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The engagement process from community members included a series of five virtual meetings and one in-person Open House to connect with and receive feedback. To accommodate the special circumstances surrounding COVID-19, each meeting was hosted virtually with one final in-person open house. Each meeting provided information on the status of the planning process and welcomed input that was used in conjunction with feedback from other phases of engagement to help shape the vision plan.

- » Virtual Meeting Format
 - Hosted on Zoom and Facebook Live
 - Live polling and Q&A session
 - Translation and interpretation to ASL, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Hindi
 - Meeting recording, materials, and polling questions posted to the website
- » In-person Open House

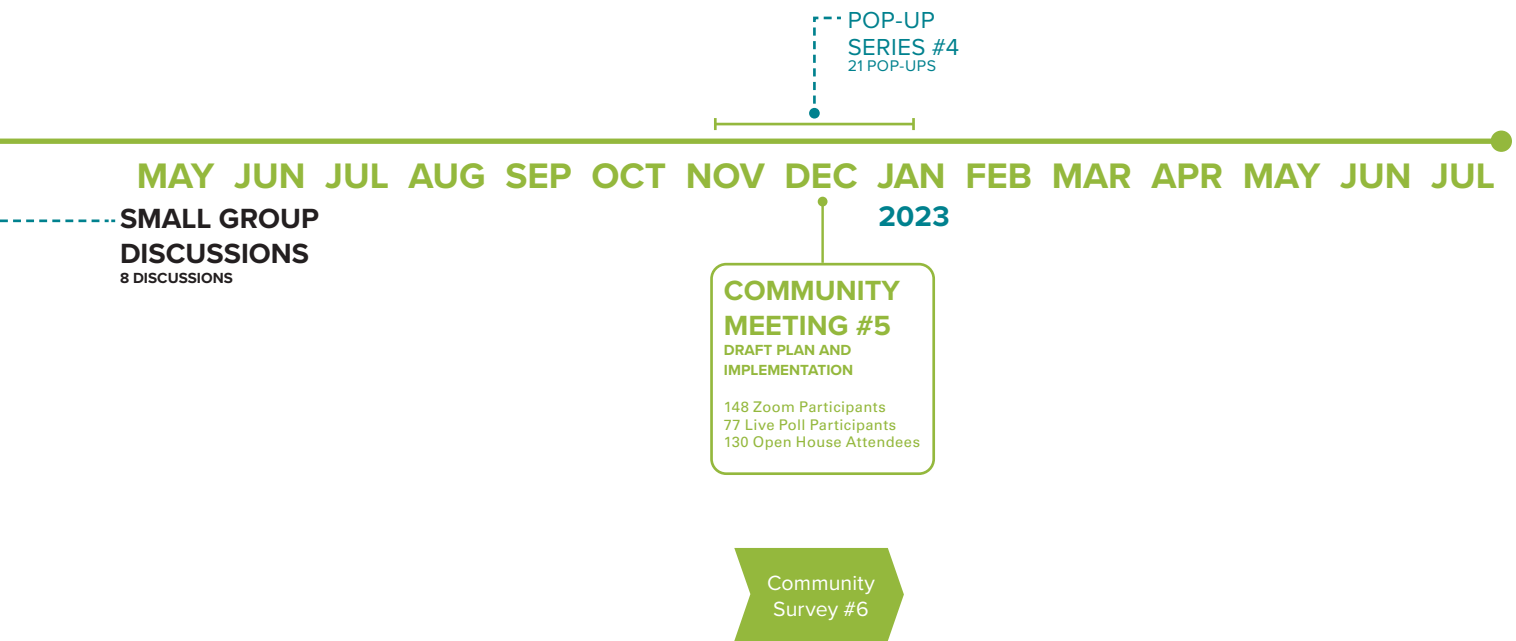
COMMUNITY SURVEYS

A total of six rounds of surveys were available, connecting 16,646 number of touches and/or participants throughout the process. Each survey focused on a different topic: Vision Workshop, Programming, Design Concepts, and Draft Vision Plan. Participants could respond to the survey questions during the live meeting, online, or in-person at various pop-up events held in each district and Zilker Park.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

SPEAKUPAUSTIN

The project team also invited the public to share stories and experiences as well as brainstorming ways “the future of Zilker can be inclusive to all” on the project SpeakUp Austin page. Participants had the opportunity to submit stories throughout the entirety of the vision planning process.



STORYMAP

The project team used Storymap, which is a web-based application to share maps and narratives about the context of the site.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The project website was updated throughout the process with community engagement opportunities and recordings and presentations from previous meetings. The site can still be visited at [AustinTexas.gov/ZilkerVision](https://austintexas.gov/ZilkerVision).

POP-UP EVENTS

Pop-Up events were organized to connect with members of the community at locations across Austin in all 10 districts and Zilker Park. These stations provided the community with an opportunity to reach a broader audience and receive additional feedback. Overall, the planning team hosted more than 100 pop-up opportunities.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Small group discussions were small-scale, focused conversations around particular topics or subjects. Conversations focused particular interests, such as equity and inclusion, partnerships, ecological uplift, and others. All meetings were documented and posted on the project website for transparency.

PILOT COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

The Department piloted a community ambassador program in summer 2020 based on a similar program from the Office of Sustainability during the Climate Equity Plan process. Two ambassadors were selected who interviewed 10 community members each about Zilker Park, providing in-depth input that could have been missed otherwise.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP



Site Visit with TAG Members

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was comprised of City of Austin representatives from various departments who provided technical expertise on different elements and concerns in and around Zilker Park. The members of the TAG ensured the planning team understood the relationship with Zilker and other City of Austin goals, policies, plans, and constraints. All meetings were recorded and posted for review by community members.

TAG MEMBERS

- » City of Austin: Parks & Recreation Department, Austin Transportation Department, Public Works, Watershed Protection, Office of Real Estate Services, Marketing and Communications Office, Austin Water, Austin Energy, Housing and Planning, Office of Sustainability, Austin Resource Recovery, and Austin Fire Department
- » Other Governmental Entities: Capital Metro and TxDOT/CTRMA
- » Meetings
 - Meeting #1, March 3, 2021
 - Meeting #2, May 5, 2021
 - Meeting #3, July 7, 2021
 - Meeting #4, August 18, 2021
 - Meeting #5, October 27, 2021
 - Meeting #6, February 23, 2022
 - Meeting #7, October 18, 2022



OUTREACH AND MEDIA

Various methods were used to share information on the process and engagement opportunities to reach broad audiences across all 10 districts. All promotional materials and content were translated into Spanish and available in other languages upon request.

MEDIA

Press releases were distributed prior to each community meeting to share details, project background, and to raise awareness about the upcoming input opportunities. Several major media outlets covered and highlighted the planning process.

- Austin American-Statesman
- Fox 7
- KXAN
- The Austin Chronicle
- Community Impact
- Austin Monitor
- Austin Culture Map
- Towers
- Patch
- KAZI
- KVUE
- Reporting Texas (The University of Texas at Austin)
- Austin ParksCast
- Univision
- KUT

SOCIAL MEDIA

The City shared updates, community meeting details, and other opportunities on all of PARD's social media accounts, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor.

EMAILS

PARD staff sent email notices to community members across several mailing lists. The email notices contained information about the project and engagement opportunities including, community meeting schedule and materials, survey links and results, and pop-up event schedules. Newsletters from facilities across the Department also shared information about the Zilker Vision Plan process.

SIGNS AND BANNERS

Signs and banners were placed in high-traffic areas throughout Zilker Park to promote the project website and engagement opportunities. Each sign had a QR code for park users to easily access the survey and project website using their phones throughout Zilker Park and in all metropolitan and district parks. The Department also invested in Over The Street banners through the Transportation Department.

FLYERS

The City distributed flyers with project information at the various pop-up events, parks facilities, and numerous local businesses throughout Austin.



WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF BASELINE SURVEY

- 1 4,062 Participants, 10,253 Views, 4,606 Comments
- 2 Most of the visitors use personal vehicles to get to Zilker Park but mostly walk, jog, or run within the park.
- 3 The biggest obstacle of visiting the park is lack of parking but with better trail connections, the visitors would walk, bike, or use public transit more.

COMMUNITY SURVEY I: BASELINE

[View Full Result](#)

The first survey was for setting up the baseline. It opened in November 2020 and has received over 108,000 responses from over 4,000 survey takers. Those who answered were mostly long-term Austinites, mostly white, within income over \$100,000. This determined a baseline of who were needed to reach out more to participate in the process. Below are the answers that had the largest percentages:

- » What would encourage you to walk, bike, or use public transit more to travel to the park? **19% Better Trail Connection**
- » When visiting Zilker Park, how do you get there? **86% Personal Vehicle**
- » Once at Zilker Park, how do you move around the park? **97% Walk, Jog, or Run**
- » What are your favorite recreational amenities or activities? **61% Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, 61% Barton Springs Pool and Bathhouse**
- » What would you like to see improved at Zilker Park? **56% Restrooms**
- » If you do not visit or avoid visiting, why? **54% Lack of Parking**

COMMUNITY MEETING I: VISION WORKSHOP

This meeting focused on the overall Guiding Principles and Goals of the Zilker Park Vision Plan. During the meeting, the project team introduced the project, reviewed the results of the Baseline Community Survey, shared an overview of the Site Analysis and Existing Needs Report, and asked for feedback through polling questions and a live Q&A session.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Support for improved access to the park through transit and improved options for parking
- » Comments regarding large events in the park (funding, traffic, operation hours, accessibility, environmental impact)
- » Opposition to Zilker Café Conditional Use Permit

- » Questions regarding equity of engagement efforts
- » Ideas on how to generate funds for the park (pool operations, event days, allocation of funding, food/concessions)
- » Concerns for environmental impacts to Barton Springs Pool

OUTCOMES

- » Input received from Community Meeting #1 showed overall support for the Draft Guiding Principles and Goals from most participants. This informed the next phase of the plan and allowed the project team to develop concepts for potential programs including enhancements, amenities, activities, events, traffic, and parking.

[Meeting Recording](#)
[Meeting Presentation](#)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

140
Zoom Participants

125
Live Poll
Participation

14
Facebook Live
Participation

63
Questions/
Comments

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY SURVEY 2

- 1 833 Participants, 370 Comments.
- 2 30% of the visitors spend money on pool entry and 24% on parking.
- 3 38% of people visit more than weekly.
- 4 61% of the visitors drive to Zilker Park.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 2: VISION

[View Full Result](#)

The responses received from the second community survey combined the results of the live polling exercise during the meeting and the online survey posted to the website after the meeting. The purpose of this survey was to gain an understanding of the community's top values within Zilker Park, mobility and usage patterns, and overall feedback on the Guiding Principles and Goals and Vision Plan process.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Barton Springs Pool, ACL Festival, and activities on the Great Lawn are the top favorite experiences for park visitors
- » Traffic congestion and lack of parking are the biggest barriers to enjoying the park
- » Overall support for the Draft Guiding Principles and Goals; additional feedback helped refine and improve them
- » Comments regarding improvements to transit opportunities

COMMUNITY MEETING 2: PROGRAMMING

The focus of the second community meeting was to share information on current park programming and get feedback from the community on future programming considerations. The meeting included information on input received from the first community meeting and survey, an overview of current programming, a review of other similar parks, and a discussion on current funding and strategies.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Support for additional cultural events and educational programs to make all Austin residents and visitors feel welcome
- » Support to improve park accessibility through transit upgrades

- » Comments and ideas regarding inclusivity in the park
- » Support for improvements to park amenities (restrooms, trails, parking)
- » Comments regarding equity of engagement efforts

OUTCOMES

Input received during Community Meeting #2 showed support for improvements and changes to programming at Zilker Park. During the meeting, the project team expanded the ideas presented through thoughtful discussion about strategy and priorities with the community. The input was used to form recommendations for future programming and design alternatives to support these programs, including enhancements, amenities, activities, events, traffic, and parking.

[Meeting Recording](#)
[Meeting Presentation](#)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

100
Zoom Participants

63
Live Poll
Participation

15
Facebook Live
Participation

102
Questions/
Comments

WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF SURVEY 3

- 1 820 Participants, 370 Comments
- 2 Facilities: Provide accessible land and buildings for diverse recreation for all and parks maintenance throughout the city.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 3: PROGRAMMING

[View Full Result](#)

The purpose of the third community survey was to evaluate current and future programs of Zilker Park through understanding community preferences and priorities.

- » Several comments expressed a preference to move festivals, large events, and parking from the Great Lawn
- » Support for additional restrooms, nature parks, and walking trails
- » Support for improvements to accessibility through ramps, handicap parking areas and paved trails
- » Comments about disapproval of parking as a funding source and requests for more information about anticipated revenue from each funding source

COMMUNITY MEETING 3: ALTERNATIVES

The third community meeting focused on design alternatives for improving mobility and transportation, programming, environmental features, historical resources, and more. The meeting gave an overview of activities to date and input received and presented design alternatives that considered programming, accessibility, mobility, transportation and ecology. Participants answered live poll questions and shared comments via chat during the discussion.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Suggestions and ideas regarding parking and transit improvements such as shared parking garages, increased connectivity through trails and shuttle systems
- » Support for ecological enhancements such as a buried parking area with a green roof and trees, phytoremediation, and climate change mitigation

- » Comments about the relocation of Austin City Limits and Trail of Lights
- » Support for improvements to park amenities such as restrooms, volleyball courts, trails, car, and bike parking; and ideas for additional amenities like lockers, pickleball and tennis courts
- » Questions regarding the source of funding options are coming bonds, general funds, or community fundraising
- » Comments and ideas for additional programs such as educational programs and cultural events to make the park more inclusive

OUTCOMES

The feedback received during Community Meeting #3 provided ideas to refine the design alternatives presented and offered new ideas for accessibility, transit and ecological enhancements, preferred park amenities, and programs, and additional connectivity opportunities.

[Meeting Recording](#)
[Meeting Presentation](#)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

127

Zoom Participants

103

Live Poll
Participation

6

Facebook Live
Participation

107

Questions/
Comments

SUMMARY OF SURVEY 4

- 1 955 Participants, 3,902 Views, 1,304 Comments
- 2 Several comments expressed the need for focusing on improvements to the ecological health of the park and reducing parking space and large events.
- 3 Participants support reducing pavement and increasing trees in the park.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 4: ALTERNATIVES

[View Full Result](#)

Due to the complexity of the project, multiple survey versions were created to provide varying levels of input from participants.

- » Support for utilizing some of the underused parts of the park for park programming, while keeping other spaces for less activity
- » Support for food and vendor options limited to 1 or 2 areas
- » In the Nature Preserve Zone, participants are most interested in exploring new trail entrance(s) to the Preserve
- » In the MoPac Zone, participants are most interested in exploring non-vehicular/active transportation paths
- » In the ZBG Zone, participants are most interested in exploring changes to landfill area by removing waste materials or adding soil
- » In the Great Lawn Zone, participants are most interested in exploring non-vehicular/active transportation paths
- » In the Polo Field Zone, participants are most interested in additional safe crossings on Barton Springs Road
- » In the Barton Springs Zone, participants are most interested in ways for increasing ecological function
- » In the Trailhead Zone, participants are most interested in increasing ecological function

COMMUNITY MEETING 4: PLAN CONCEPTS

The fourth community meeting focused on presenting three design concept themes: Stitch, Edges and Regenerate. The meeting gave an overview of activities and community input received to date and presented the elements of the three concepts. Participants answered live poll questions and shared feedback via chat during the discussion.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Suggestions and ideas regarding inclusion of diverse demographic participation such as additional pop-up locations and alternative community meeting times

- » Request for specific details regarding pavement square footage, cost of elements and funding for each concept
- » Support for the land bridge and underground parking
- » Support for preservation of natural and cultural heritage
- » Concern for relocation of the hillside theatre due to traffic noise and location inconvenience
- » Support for dedicated bike lanes for the hike and bike trail

OUTCOMES

The feedback received during Community Meeting #4 helped in the development process of the draft Zilker Park Vision Plan. The feedback provided ideas to refine the design concepts and shared views on preferred park elements and overall design.

[Meeting Recording](#)
[Meeting Presentation](#)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

177

Zoom Participants

148

Live Poll
Participation

27

Facebook Live
Participation

235

Questions/
Comments

WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF SURVEY 5

- 1 708 Participants, 858 Comments, 6,485 Views
- 2 Concept A: 74% of participants like the land bridge concept
- 3 Concept B: 50% of participants like the additional pedestrian/bike bridge connections across Barton Creek
- 4 Concept C: 55% of participants support the boardwalk on Lady Bird Lake

COMMUNITY SURVEY 5: PLAN CONCEPTS

[View Full Result](#)

To assist community members with different ways to think through the concepts, multiple versions of the survey were created to allow community members to share in ways they preferred.

WHAT WE HEARD: CONCEPT PREFERENCE

- » 35% of participants showed support for the idea that Concept A: Stich best meets the overall guiding principles and goals, 27% answered Concept B: Edges best meets the goals, and 21% answered Concept C: Regenerate best meets the goals
- » Support for keeping the rugby field, polo field, and disc golf course
- » Support for clearing invasive species, preserving water quality, and restoring the natural environment of Zilker Park
- » Conflicting opinions for the use of parking garages and Zilker Park for large events such as Trail of Lights and ACL
- » Support for the Great Lawn remaining an off-leash dog area
- » Preference for minimal impacts to the park
- » Debating result between keeping Zilker Hillside Theater where it is (52%) and desire for the new location (48%)
- » Concern for reduction of car lanes on Barton Springs Road
- » Preference for the kayak/stand-up paddleboard/canoe access to be near Butler landfill, east of MoPac
- » Preference for keeping Stratford Drive in its current alignment and allowing access to vehicles

COMMUNITY MEETING 5: DRAFT PLAN

The community was invited to participate in Meeting #5 (offered virtually and in-person) to review the draft Vision Plan and provide input.

VIRTUAL MEETING

During the virtual meeting, participants were split into breakout rooms where they listened to four 25-minute presentations about the draft plan's different aspects, including Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Nature and Ecology; Accessibility and Mobility; and Finance and Implementation. A brief Q&A session followed each

presentation with a final Q&A session with participants back in the main room.

OPEN HOUSE

In addition to the virtual meeting, the team hosted an in-person open house at McBeth Recreation Center in Zilker Park, where community members were encouraged to ask questions, visit with project team members, and provide feedback.

- » Saturday, December 10, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
McBeth Recreation Center
2401 Columbus Dr., Austin, TX 78746

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Concern over the costs of parking and equitable access to the park
- » Investment of PARD time and funding to support large events
- » Comments regarding tradeoffs of using space for new purposes and losing original function (e.g., Moving the amphitheater)
- » Landfill restoration process to support plants and wildlife
- » Discussion about the planning process, regulations, and collaboration with organizations and non-profits
- » Questions about spillway restoration: the impact of high traffic and dogs on the spillway
- » Questions/concerns about traffic impacts of parking and accessibility solutions
- » Impacts of mobility and accessibility on the ecology of the park
- » Questions about parking access to specific areas within the park
- » Concerns over the safety of parking plans and access during events
- » Ease of using shuttles for people with a lot of equipment, dogs, etc.
- » Funding and Implementation
 - Questions regarding funding availability and the timeline for implementation
 - Pricing strategy for parking
 - Discussion about consolidated sports area – space availability, terrain change, costs, parking
 - Costs and benefits of moving ACL to another park

OUTCOMES

With 130 attendees, the open house had representation from every council district in Austin. The highest number of attendees came from district 5 (25%) and the lowest from district 6 (2%). 298 written comments were collected during the open house with many more in-person discussions.

The feedback received during Community Meeting #5 helped finalize the draft Vision Plan, which will be reviewed by various boards and commissions and ultimately presented to the City Council for adoption.

[Meeting Recording](#)
[Meeting Presentation](#)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

148

Zoom Participants

77

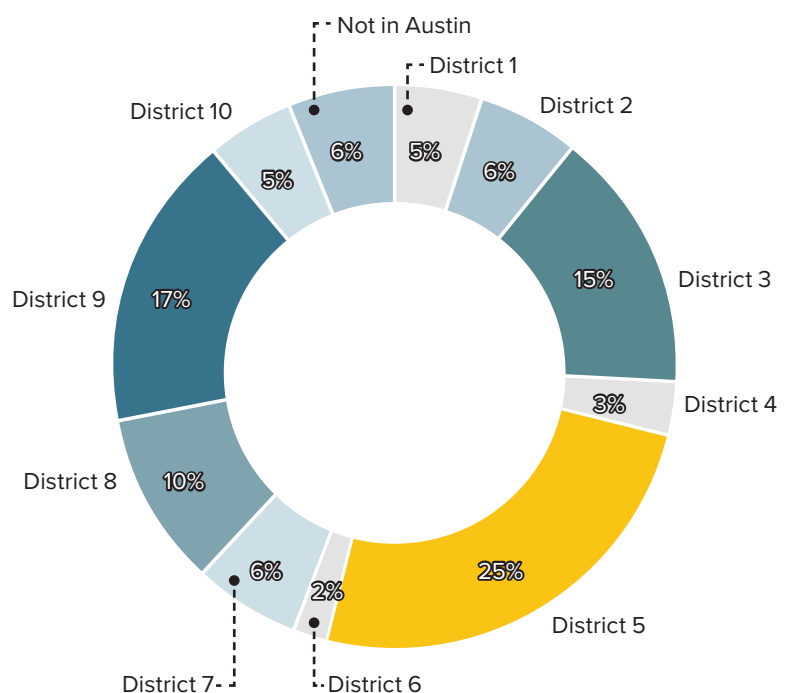
Live Poll Participation

130

Open House Attendees

298

Questions/
Comments from
Open House



WHAT WE HEARD

SUMMARY OF SURVEY 6

- 1 2,898 Participants, 3,430 Comments, More than 2,300 Commenters, 26,904 Views
- 2 Draft Plan was available to comment on from November 15, 2022 to January 8, 2023
- 3 Online Survey was from November 15, 2022 to January 9, 2023
- 4 The project team released 7-min draft walk through video online with the draft document
- 5 There are more than 6,000 views on the draft walk through video.
- 6 About 30% of commenters reside around Zilker Park (Zip Code: 78704, 78745)
- 7 About 85% said they see challenges in using the new or updated spaces.

COMMUNITY SURVEY 6: DRAFT VISION PLAN

There were several opportunities to provide input on the initial draft Vision Plan, including leaving a comment on the full draft plan document, reviewing the draft plan map, and completing the online survey. In addition to these opportunities, the community was encouraged to connect with the project team through community meetings, pop-ups, and the project email. Multiple Austin media outlets also shared about the opportunity to provide feedback.

WHAT WE HEARD

- » Among survey participants, 23% were ages 25-34, 19% were 35-44, 16% were 45-54, 16% were 55 - 64, 9% were 65-74, 8% were 18 – 24, and 4% were other.
- » 52% of participants were female, 42% were male, 6% preferred not to answer, and 2% were other.
- » Among participants, 68% were white, 14% were Latinx or Hispanic, 14% preferred not to answer, 3% were Asian/Asian American, 2% were Black/African American, 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native, and 1% Race or Ethnicity not listed.
- » Zip Codes: District 5 had the most participants (20%), followed by District 9 (15%), not sure (15%), District 8 (10%), I do not live in Austin (7%), District 7 (6%), District 3 (5%), Others (5%), District 1 (4%), and District 4 (4%).
- » Over half of the respondents said they were most excited about the land bridge (55%), followed by the reestablished banks of Barton Creek (49%) and the new pedestrian/bike bridges (39%). The sports area and welcome plaza had the fewest responses, with 9% and 4%, respectively.
- » About one-third of respondents said Accessibility (36%) “Fulfills” the vision plan’s guiding principles and goals, followed by Nature and Ecology (34%), Sustainability (27%), Diversity Equity and Inclusion (24%), and History and Culture (23%).
- » About one-third of respondents said they were “unsure” that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (36%) fulfilled the draft plan’s guiding principles and goals, followed by History and Culture (34%), Sustainability (28%), Nature and Ecology (34%), and Accessibility (27%).
- » Nearly half of the respondents said Sustainability (46%) “Does not fulfill goal” in the draft vision plan, followed by Nature and Ecology (44%), History and Culture (43%), Diversity Equity and Inclusion (40%) and Accessibility (37%).

POP-UP SERIES

Overall there were 4 rounds of pop-up series for the vision plan process. After the first pop-up series where community members were encouraged to provide feedback primarily through the survey (paper or online), the planning team heard comments were being missed and that participants who did not want to complete the survey did not have a clear way to share their thoughts. For the last two pop-up series, participants have been encouraged to share comments that are written down and posted, provide feedback on proposed amenities, respond to the survey, or review the full draft plan in person at the pop-up or online after. All comments collected are then entered on PublicInput.com and associated with the particular pop-up.

- » Series 1: 19 Pop-Ups (June 30 to August 8, 2021)
- » Series 2: 34 Pop-Ups (August 10 to October 4, 2021)
- » Series 3: 27 Pop-Ups (October 25, 2021 to January 9, 2022)
- » Series 4 : 21 Pop-Ups (November 15, 2022 to January 8, 2023)

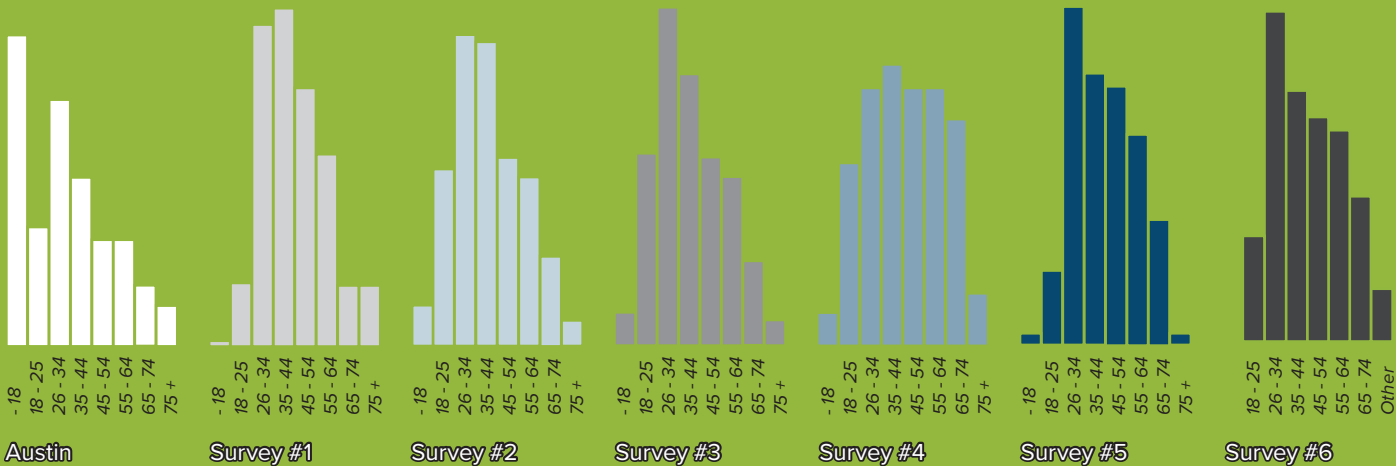
ADDITIONAL METHODS

Community Meetings and Surveys are still relied upon for connecting and hearing community voices. Additional methods are also used to reach community members who are often underrepresented in meetings and surveys. These methods included pop-ups in key locations, small group conversations with community leaders, and community ambassadors to connect more deeply and directly with people who may not participate otherwise. These efforts and the exploration of the comments are balanced with overrepresented demographic groups to seek a better understanding of thoughts from all of Austin.



WHO TOOK THE SURVEYS

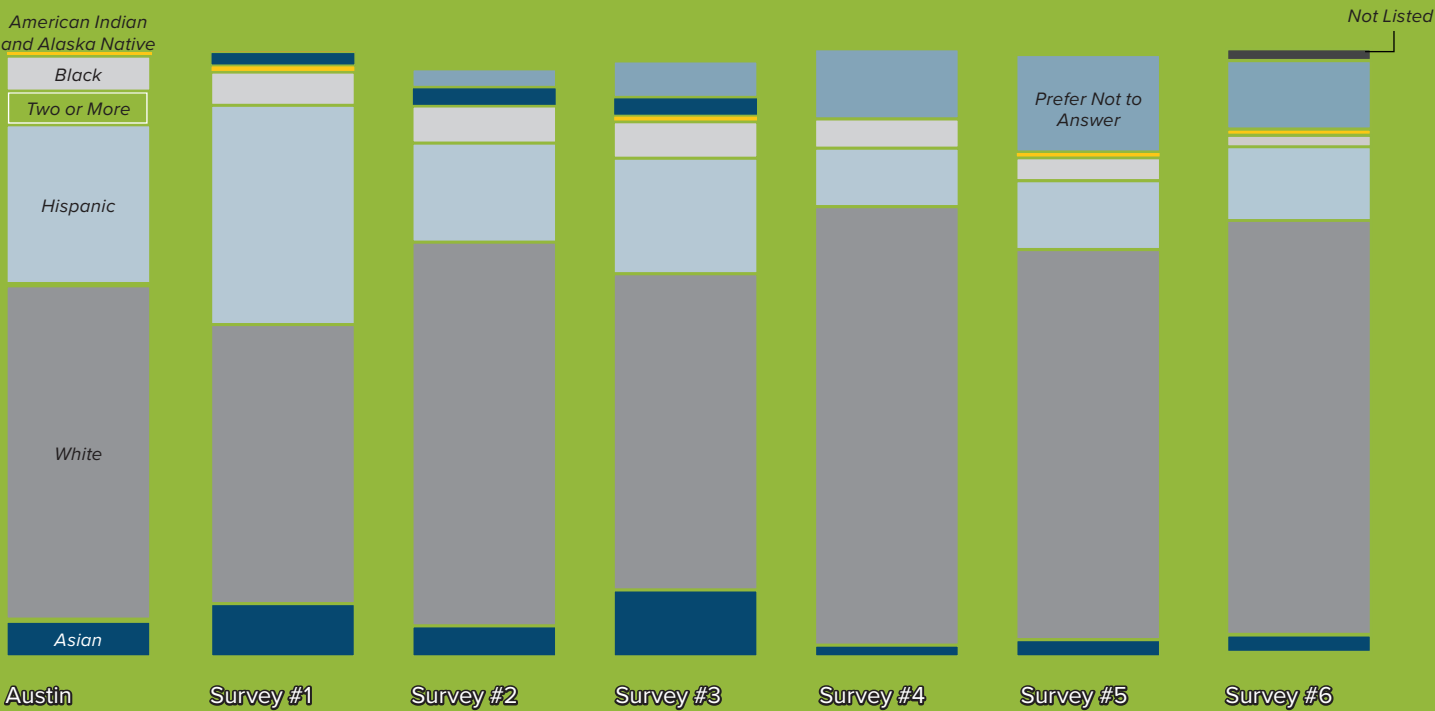
AGE



FEMALE, MALE, OTHER

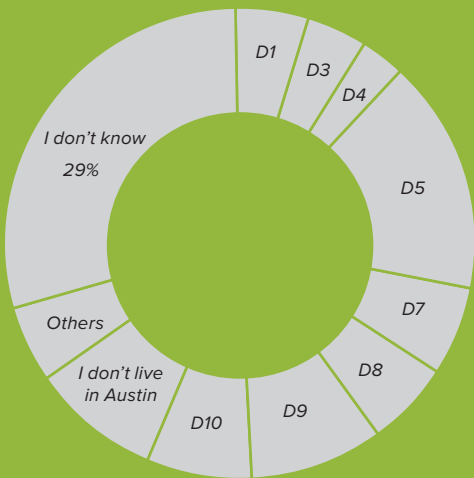


RACE/ETHNICITY

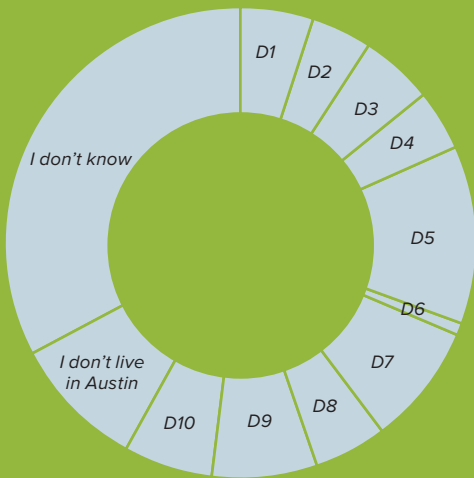


COUNCIL DISTRICT

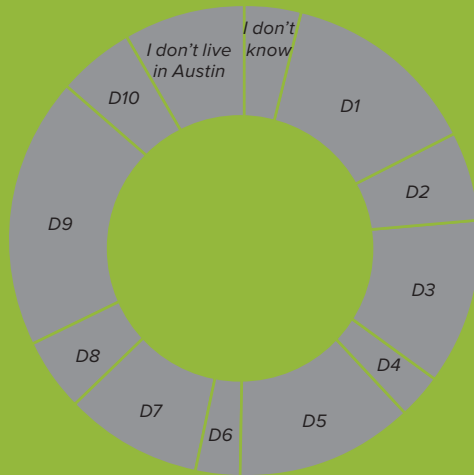
Survey #1



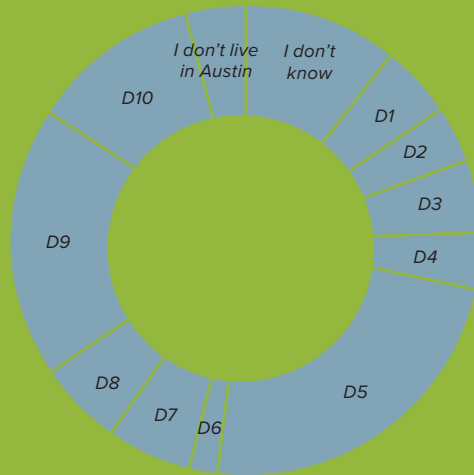
Survey #2



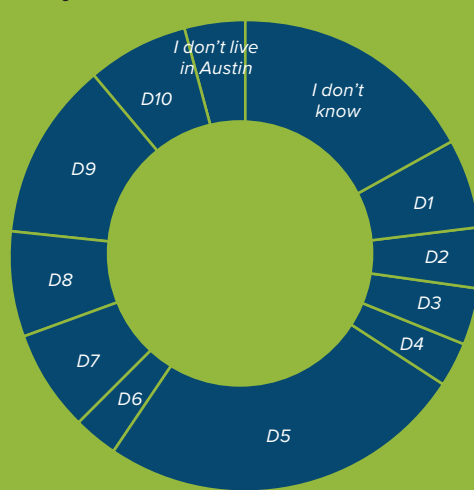
Survey #3



Survey #4



Survey #5



Survey #6

