



PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION YYYYMMDD-XXX

Date:

Subject: Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

Recommend that the City of Austin Council Support the Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan

1 Whereas the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (“PARD”) recognizes that Zilker Park
2 requires significant maintenance, development, and restoration to address current and future issues
3 relating to, but not limited to, preservation of green space, ecological degradation, accessibility
4 challenges, and overuse due to increased visitation¹;

5
6 Whereas the PARD has undertaken a multi-year, community-driven process to develop the Zilker
7 Metropolitan Park Vision Plan (“Vision Plan”) to address the multitude of issues facing Zilker Park²;

8
9 Whereas the guiding principles of the Vision Plan are: 1) Improving accessibility to allow for a safer
10 and more connected park; 2) Protecting, enhancing, and restoring the ecological treasure that is the
11 park; 3) Respecting and celebrating the park’s historic and cultural resources; 4) Championing
12 sustainability best practices for the park; and 5) Serving the entire community of Austin³;

13
14 Whereas Zilker Park serves all, no matter their zip code, and is a destination for domestic and
15 international tourists;

16
17 Whereas community input into the development of the Vision Plan was sought, including 122 pop-
18 ups, 24 small group discussions, 7 Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings, 5 virtual meetings, 1
19 in-person open house, 6 community surveys, and 5 Parks and Recreation Board working group
20 meetings⁴, with proactive outreach to underserved communities that historically have not been taken
21 into consideration and have often been left out of the conversation;

22
23 Whereas the concerns of visitors to Zilker Park, who care deeply about their ability to use and enjoy
24 the Zilker Park, have had a significant impact on the direction of the Vision Plan;

25
26 Whereas the residents of the City of Austin have diverse needs, access Zilker Park differently, and
27 enjoy Zilker Park in a variety of ways meaningful to them,

28

¹ <https://www.austintexas.gov/ZilkerVision>

² *Id.*

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https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Planning_and_Development/Zilker_Vision/Zilker%20Park%20Vision%20Plan%20Draft%20updated%202023-05-11%20web.pdf

⁴ *Id.*

29 Whereas multimodal access is critical to Zilker Park and allows visitors to choose to walk, bike, use
30 public transit, drive, or any transportation combination thereof;
31
32 Whereas the Zilker Park Unified Non-Profit (“Non-Profit”) will serve as the main point of contact
33 for PARD and be the coordinating organization for Zilker Park stakeholders, organizations, and
34 interested parties⁵;
35
36 Whereas the Non-Profit allows PARD to streamline Zilker Park operations, increase park efficiency,
37 and better leverage funding for projects that benefit the public⁶;
38
39 Whereas PARD will retain ownership of the park and define the terms of the Non-Profit
40 partnership⁷;
41
42 Whereas PARD will retain management and planning presence, including but not limited to
43 implementing the Vision Plan, overseeing capital improvements, undertaking day-to-day operations
44 and maintenance of the park, handling reserved area reservations, and permitting and managing large
45 events⁸;
46
47 Whereas the Non-Profit is aligned with Austin City Council Resolution 20200312-041, which states,
48 “The City Council expresses support for the concept of parkland agreements between nonprofit
49 organizations and PARD if the agreements further the mission and vision of the department with
50 regard to non-enterprise fund public parks and trails in an effective, efficient, and inclusive
51 manner.”⁹;
52
53 Whereas the Non-Profit is aligned with Strategic Direction 2023’s “Health & Environment” strategy
54 8, which identifies “leverage[ing] innovative financing models and partnerships to support, maintain,
55 and expand parks, open spaces, recreational facilities, and our urban trail network”¹⁰;
56
57 Whereas the Non-Profit is aligned with Our Parks, Our Future: PARD Long Range Plan 2020-2030:
58 In Chapter 4.E. “Optimize & Improve Efficiency of Operations,” the Long Range Plan identified
59 partnerships as a sustainability strategy for developing, improving, maintaining and programming
60 spaces¹¹;
61
62 Whereas public/non-profit partnership models are used as a best practice nationwide for
63 metropolitan parks, such as Central Park Conservancy for Central Park¹² and the Prospect Park
64 Alliance¹³ for Prospect Park in New York City, New York; Hermann Park Conservancy¹⁴ for
65 Hermann Park in Houston, Texas; Golden Gate Park Conservancy¹⁵ for Golden Gate Park in San

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https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Planning_and_Development/Zilker_Vision/Zilker%20Park%20Vision%20Plan%20Draft%20updated%202023-05-11%20web.pdf

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=337546>

¹⁰ <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=341820>

¹¹

<https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/longrangeplan/Our%20Parks%20Our%20Future%20FINAL%20Plan%202019-12-27.pdf>

¹² <https://www.centralparknyc.org/>

¹³ <https://www.prospectpark.org>

¹⁴ <https://www.hermannpark.org>

¹⁵ <https://www.parksconservancy.org>

66 Francisco, California, and the Boston Natural Areas Fund¹⁶ for the East Boston Greenway in
67 Boston, Massachusetts;

68
69 Whereas the City of Austin has established comprehensive guidelines to vet non-profit parks
70 partnerships, ensure their sustainability, and continually evaluate their efficacy¹⁷;

71
72 Whereas the Vision Plan is the first step in the park's future development, operations, maintenance,
73 preservation, and restoration, and community members will have frequent opportunities to
74 participate in the public engagement process during every significant stage of execution of the
75 Vision Plan;

76
77 Whereas the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board acknowledges the critical need for the
78 Vision Plan to improve environmental conditions, mobility to and within the park, equitable access
79 to the park, and the experience of Austin residents using the park;

80
81 Whereas the members of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board value equity, access,
82 inclusion, and sustainability;

83
84 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board:

- 85
- 86 1) Recommends that the Austin City Council approve the Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision
87 Plan;
 - 88 2) Recommends that appropriate environmental, financial, design, and traffic studies be
89 undertaken before the implementation of any project or phase of the Vision Plan in order to
90 encourage advancement of the Vision Plan;
 - 91 3) Recommends that a traffic study be undertaken in the planning phase to determine whether
92 reducing Barton Springs Road to one lane will sufficiently increase multimodal and public
93 transportation access and passage through Zilker Park;
 - 94 4) Recommends that an environmental study be undertaken regarding the current impact and
95 the potential impact of removing the existing surface parking lots, as well as the impact on
96 the local environment of adding the proposed parking garages;
 - 97 5) Recommends further evaluation of the placement of the Hillside Theater, including
98 consideration of alternate locations other than the proposed location;
 - 99 6) Recommends that the agreement governing the relationship between PARD and the Non-
100 Profit ensures a high degree of transparency into the financial and contractual obligations of
101 the Non-Profit in order to allow PARD to vet the partnership in accordance with PARD's
102 adopted partnership policies; and
 - 103 7) Recommends that this Recommendation be presented to all boards and commissions.

¹⁶ <https://www.cityofboston.gov/parks/pdfs/os5b.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://cityparksalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Combined-PARKnership-Configurations-and-Base-Terms.pdf>

Vote

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

DRAFT