

Historic Downs Field

Facility Use and Maintenance Agreement

Parks and Recreation Board
November 27, 2023



Presented By: Christa McCarthy

Background

Downs Field has been the focal point for athletics in East Austin for nearly a century.

- Samuel Huston College acquired the land in 1927 and built a baseball field.
- In 1938, Samuel Huston College sold the field to Austin Public Schools for \$10,000 where Anderson High School played football.
- A decade later, the City of Austin built Downs Field a mile and a half away from its current location at 12th and Springdale.
- In 1954, the City of Austin and the AISD swapped land and Downs Field was rededicated at its current location.
- Anderson High School, Huston-Tillotson (HTU), local Black Senators, semipro team, and youth teams played on the field in the subsequent years.
- In 2015, recorded as a Historic Texas Landmark.
- Currently, HTU and Austin Metro Baseball League have a shared field use and maintenance agreement with the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

Goals

Downs Field has historic significance to both the City of Austin and the Black Community. As such, there is a community and shared Department desire to provide public access to this space to celebrate its historic and cultural significance.

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department seeks to continue its partnership and negotiate and execute an agreement with Huston-Tillotson University (HTU) to provide National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Baseball, while providing community access.

Current agreement with HTU is in its third amendment which expires 12/31/23.



Contract Terms and Conditions

The basic terms and conditions of the agreement are as follows:

- Establish a three year contract term with two 2-year extension options for a total of seven years with Huston Tillotson University
- Establish facility operations and maintenance roles and responsibilities for Huston-Tillotson University
- Create an equitable practice and game schedule to appropriately meet the needs of Huston-Tillotson University
- Waive field and utility fees in exchange for Huston-Tillotson University providing year-round maintenance of Downs Field
- Require Huston-Tillotson University to establish and conduct at a minimum of two volunteer program/events for PARD or the community at Downs Field.
- Set aside dates in the season calendar for scheduled community use of the facility in support of community, historical and cultural activities.

Next Steps

- Finalize legal review and draft of the Huston-Tillotson University Facility Use and Maintenance Agreement
- Austin City Council – **December 14, 2023**



Committee Action

Recommend that the City Council authorize the negotiation and execution of an agreement between the City of Austin and Huston-Tillotson University and to waive utility and field use fees.