



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20240807-003

Date: August 7, 2024

Subject: Cities Connecting Children to Nature

Motion by: Jennifer Bristol

Seconded by: Perry Bedford

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission was presented a staff update from Melody Alcazar, Program Manager – Cities Connecting Children to Nature, City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes the CCCN initiative continues to strengthen partnerships across departments, AISD, and with NGOs across Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes the CCCN initiative known as Green-School-Parks ensures students and teachers have opportunities to learn and play in natural spaces; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes the CCCN initiative known as Green-School-Parks ensures historically underserved neighborhoods have access to campuses where they can exercise, play, socialize, and learn. These communities lack access to parkland alternatives, which means the schools help the city achieve the goal of all residences living within a quarter mile walking distance from a park; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes school campuses with improved habitat, like the ones in the Green-School-Park program, offer increased ecosystem services such as reduction in heat island effect, storm water runoff, and carbon sequestration; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes the CCCN initiative continues to raise awareness about the need for children and families to have a daily connection with nature to ensure their physical and mental health and development; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission recognizes the CCCN initiative strengthens and helps achieve the climate, environmental, equity, and health goals of various departments and strategies within the city, and with the supporting NGOs; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission offers support of the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission offers support of the Outdoor Learning Environments program.

THEREFORE, the Environmental Commission recommends continuing funding for the initiative. Additionally, we recommend expanded resources and support for:

1. Joint Use Agreement with AISD, and the Green-School-Parks initiative to ensure members of the community can utilize the school campus as parkland during out-of-school time. These agreements also ensure that students have daily access to greenspaces where they can play, explore and learn.
2. Recommend that the City of Austin work with AISD to find solutions to keep the public access gates open to grant access from the neighborhoods to the campuses during out-of-school-time.
3. Recommend the City of Austin find ways to better support the goals of the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.
4. Continue to fund the CCCN full time employes in the PARD budget.
5. Continue to integrate Nature Play and natural playgrounds at parks and new developments.

VOTE: 8-0

For: Perry Bedford, Richard Brimer, Jennifer Bristol, Hanna Cofer, Mariana Krueger, Colin Nickells, Melinda Schiera, David Sullivan

Against: None

Recuse: None

Absent: Peter Einhorn and Haris Qureshi

Attest:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Perry Bedford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "B".

Perry Bedford, Environmental Commission Chair