



PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION 20260323-6

Date: March 23, 2026

Subject: Fiscal Year 2026 – 2027 Budget Recommendation

Motioned By: Pedro Villalobos

Seconded By: Nicole Merritt

Rationale:

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board has taken into account both Board member and resident input, as well as input from Austin Parks and Recreation (APR) staff;

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board recognizes the demand for Parks and Recreation facilities, maintenance, programming, and safety measures will continue to grow significantly during the 2027 fiscal year, as it has the past several years;

WHEREAS, the FY 2025-26 Enhancements Report identified a significant number of Austin Parks and Recreation enhancement requests that were not included in the FY26 Proposed Budget, representing substantial unmet operational, staffing, and infrastructure needs across the department;

WHEREAS, APR security and emergency management needs remain unaddressed, with a request for a Security Division estimated at \$2,788,155 annually and \$300,000 in one-time funding to manage, train, and coordinate security and emergency management and conduct annual security audits across all APR assets;

WHEREAS, significant aquatics infrastructure and staffing needs remain unfunded, including maintenance and staffing for Barton Springs Pool, Givens Pool, Montopolis Pool, Northwest Pool, and other facilities, representing millions of dollars in unmet need;

WHEREAS, the Land Management Program remains critically underfunded, with a budget of only \$828,000 and four FTEs overseeing the entire 10,300 acres under city management, and the FY26 budget process did not include the requested three additional FTEs and associated funding (~\$1,203,056 annually and \$49,000 one-time) needed in FY26 alone, with a further two FTEs (~\$630,762 annually and \$99,000 one-time) deferred to FY27;

WHEREAS, according to a 2024 report by CoreLogic, Austin ranks fifth in number of homes with moderate or greater wildfire risk, with a reconstruction cost value of over \$40 billion, and most city parkland natural areas remain unmanaged for ecosystem health and are threatened by heat, drought, disease, and wildfire, presenting safety risks to both park users and neighbors;

WHEREAS, the city does not yet have a comprehensive tree inventory that would allow for effective urban forest planning and maintenance, and a full citywide tree inventory remains unfunded despite a Council resolution directing it; the Urban Forest Mitigation Fund has \$2.5M designated for parkland tree inventory but lacks full funding for the entire city;

WHEREAS, APR's recreation centers and senior centers remain under-resourced in both programming and physical capacity, including unmet needs for summer camp staffing, senior outreach, senior transportation, and therapeutic recreation programs;

WHEREAS, youth athletic field maintenance, pool operations and safety, lifeguard recruitment and retention, and community recreation administrative capacity all represent documented unmet needs that were not funded in the FY26 budget process;

WHEREAS, APR's operations and maintenance workforce remains understaffed relative to ideal service levels, with new park developments coming online in FY26 and FY27 adding further demand without corresponding staffing increases;

WHEREAS, the Parks and Recreation Board strongly believes the City should strive to meet the needs of residents today while also strongly supporting efforts to reduce future risk to residents of the City of Austin;

THEREFORE, The Parks and Recreation Board recommends to the Austin City Council:

- 1) The allocation of sufficient additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to establish a Security and Emergency Management Division for Parks, including the hiring of 7 FTEs to manage, train, and coordinate security and emergency management and conduct annual security audits across all APR assets. (~\$2,788,155 ongoing / ~\$300,000 one-time)
- 2) The allocation of additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to address park ranger staffing needs, including at least one additional operational seasonal team (Park Ranger Supervisor, Park Ranger II, and four Park Ranger I's) to address problem behaviors and increase safety at high-volume parks. (~\$254,388 ongoing / ~\$75,000 one-time)
- 3) The allocation of sufficient additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to appropriately fulfill the need for additional land management efforts focused on wildfire prevention and ecosystem health, including:
 - a. Fully staffing and funding the Land Management Program's phased FY26–FY27 expansion, including the five additional FTEs (3 in FY26, 2 in FY27) and associated contractual support, commodities, vehicles, and computers needed to implement the APR land management plan and the Climate Equity Plan, and to address wildfire fuel mitigation on new acquisitions. (~\$1,203,056 + \$630,762 ongoing across phases / ~\$49,000 + \$99,000 one-time)
- 4) The allocation of \$10,000,000 to fully fund a comprehensive public tree inventory across all City-owned properties, as directed by Council resolution 20240418-051. The Urban Forest Mitigation Fund's existing \$2.5M should be applied toward parkland, with the remainder used to complete the citywide inventory. This data will

- enable the city's Urban Forester to implement a comprehensive urban forest management plan including robust tree planting and replacement efforts. Methods should follow national best practices and involve collaboration with relevant partners. Data should be stored for easy access and sharing across departments.
- 5) The allocation of additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to address the under-resourcing of recreation centers and senior centers, both in physical capacity and programming, including adults and children with disabilities, including but not limited to:
 - a. Additional part-time and/or hourly staff to accommodate more children during summer camps at facilities where space has been identified and expansion is possible, to total no fewer than 5 FTE (~\$150,000)
 - b. Funding to sustain the Senior Transportation Unit's seven temporary drivers following expiration of federal grant funding (~\$211,792 ongoing)
 - c. Funding for the Senior Outreach Program (Varsity Generation) to address the critical gap in temporary staffing serving seniors 50+ in underserved Austin communities (~\$74,620 ongoing)
 - d. Resources to expand the Therapeutic Recreation Program at Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center, including a CTRS Inclusion Coordinator, an Administrative Specialist, and additional temporary staff (~\$435,992 ongoing, starting FY27)
 - 6) The allocation of additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to address aquatics safety, staffing, and infrastructure needs, including:
 - a. Funding for lifeguard recruitment and retention, including training stipends, uniforms, and certification fees for new and returning lifeguards who complete required hours (~\$573,182 ongoing)
 - b. Staffing and operational funding for newly constructed or renovated aquatic facilities, including Givens Pool, Montopolis Pool, Northwest Pool, and the St. Johns Splash Pad, as these come online
 - c. Funding for pool maintenance needs including plumbing service and repair (~\$204,000 ongoing), tension covers for four pools (~\$188,500 one-time), and pool shell surface replacements (~\$200,000 one-time)
 - d. Replacement of Automatic External Defibrillators to comply with Texas State code (~\$11,595 ongoing / ~\$65,836 one-time)
 - 7) The allocation of additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to address the operations and maintenance of newly developed parks coming online in FY26 and FY27, including increased staffing for litter abatement, mowing, bathroom cleaning, and related services. (~\$944,124 in FY26 / ~\$467,424 in FY27, with 6 FTEs each phase)
 - 8) The allocation of additional funding on top of any proposed APR FY2027 Budget to address staffing needs for the APR Operations and Maintenance team, financial services, human resources, and information systems management, in order to move further toward an ideal level of service across APR operations, including:
 - a. 4 FTEs for Additional Staffing Support Service Human Resources (Training Specialists, HR Advisor Senior, Occupational Safety and Health Coordinator) (~\$437,038 ongoing)

- b. 4 FTEs for APR Financial Services (starting FY27) (~\$593,314 ongoing)
 - c. 3 FTEs for APR ISM Service Enhancements (IT Software Engineer, IT Data Analyst, IT Systems Administrator Senior) (~\$412,863 ongoing / ~\$87,500 one-time)
- 9) The allocation of one-time funding to address documented parkland encroachment issues, including survey services and debris removal along greenbelts. (~\$200,000 one-time)
- 10) The allocation of funding to sustain the Kids Cafe meal service program at Turner-Roberts Recreation Center, Dove Springs Recreation Center, and Montopolis Community Center, covering staffing and food purchases for year-round services for children in out-of-school programs. (~\$94,776 ongoing)

Vote: The motion to approve this recommendation was approved on Board Member Villalobos' motion, Board Member Merritt's second on an 8-0 vote. Board Members Abou-Emara, Orme and Taylor absent.

For: Stephanie Bazan, Kathryn Flowers, Lane Becker, Ted Eubanks, Jennifer Franklin, Diane Kearns-Osterweil, Nicole Merritt and Pedro Villalobos.

Against: None.

Abstain: None.

Absent: Luai Abou-Emara, Shelby Orme and Kim Taylor.

Attest: Tim Dombeck, Board and Council Liaison, Austin Parks and Recreation.

Tim Dombeck _____